



2011 G.E.A.R. Parent Network winning poster, "Hand In Hand" by an 11-year-old Maine artist.

The Forward Pass of Lessons Learned

By Patricia Ehrenzeller

Children's Mental Health Awareness Day - May 3, 2011

Hall of Flags, Augusta, ME

Hello. I'm Tamara's mother, Patricia Ehrenzeller. Since Tamara's been talking about football, I'll talk about passing... the forward pass of family lessons learned.

Every family has its stories. In mine, the one with the most impact was of my great grandfather. Not long after arriving in this country, while working as a laborer, he fell several stories fracturing his skull. My great grandmother was told there wasn't much hope. One week later the doctor had to replace the plate in his head.

I remember him as a very young child and his laugh. His simple answer for his recovery: He had no time to be sick. He had a family. I have a better reason. It was his love and caring for his family that drove him forward.

This is the lesson I took from the story, and what I try to pass on to my family. Every problem or crisis, no matter how dire, is easier when faced together.

Knowledge is power and also a necessity in handling a new field such as autism. The people you must count on for help have had four years or more to prepare. You are lucky to have a weekend before the rush begins. You must be able to speak the language of this new arena.

It is love that pushes us to do the best we can. It is love that gets us there. Knowing this helps us understand our setbacks and celebrate our victories.