



Peer Perspective August 2022

Kids of all ages are getting ready to head back to school and as a parent my heart is full of emotions looking to the year ahead. Looking forward to new classes, activities, and opportunity for my kiddo to connect with, growing in the community. This wasn't always the case. I remember the earlier years - times my child was tearful about going to school and how difficult our mornings sometimes could be. I remember the feeling of panic when I'd receive a call from the school - was my child ill? No, they needed to be picked up from school due to the difficulties they were having. It was a tough time for both my child and me as the parent. Wishing I could change things and do anything to help. I remember those days, especially this time of year as the new year approaches. Now, I'm able to take a deep breath and smile for what the year ahead holds as I know despite bumps that may come along the way, the year will be good. I'm thankful for the services, providers and support that has helped us get to where my kiddo is today.

I love the following poem by April Vernon titled "Special Needs Poem" – gives me all the feels from back then to even now.

"They say that I have "special" needs, and while that's partly true,
The needs that matter most to me are the same ones you have too.
I need to be accepted, I need friends that make me smile,
I need a chance to learn and grow, feeling valued all the while.
Sure, I need some extra help and some things I can't do,
But I hope you'll see beyond all that.... Inside, I'm just like you."

As a Family Peer Specialist, I have the lived experience of raising a child who may need extra help from time to time but inside is just like all of us. I'm privileged to connect with other families who are raising similar human beings, supporting them on their journey as a parent/caregiver. Knowing all too well that this time of year can be a positive time for some, yet stressful for others or maybe a little of both. You are not alone.

Janelle
Certified Family Peer Specialist

We are the evidence; We hold the hope.