

SAMPLE FAMILY TEAM LETTER

My son Tiernan is five years old. He has red hair, big blue eyes and the most adorable freckles. He loves trains, animals and dinosaurs. Looking at Tiernan you would never know that he has a debilitating disorder known as autism. Autism affects every aspect of Tiernan's life...and the lives of everyone around him. Tiernan has come a very long way since his diagnosis in September of 2003. Since then, he has learned to speak, to read, to hold a conversation with some help. In school, Tiernan is well above where he should be academically. But for all of his intelligence,



Tiernan still cannot interact appropriately with others. He has trouble processing the world around him. He has many sensory issues that prevent him enjoying the things that we all take for granted. It's hard to enough to focus on our daily lives, much less imagine what the future holds for him; and for the rest of the family. Madilyn, who is 2 years old, is not exhibiting any autistic tendencies. We also have a one month old son named Cole. While this is a terribly exciting time, it's also frustrating because we know that boys are 4 times more likely to be autistic than girls, and siblings of an autistic child are 3-5 times more likely to be afflicted. The statistics are terrifying.

Autism is a complex brain disorder that often inhibits a person's ability to communicate, respond to their surroundings or form relationships with others. Autism spectrum disorders affect people of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and occur in as many as one in 150 births, making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. And the numbers are still rising! Currently the cause of autism is unknown. There are no specific medical treatments or a cure for autism. Most people with autism require lifelong supervision and care. Only 7% of children with autism go on to be independent. Recent studies suggest that more than 1 million Americans are living with an autism spectrum disorder. Despite the strikingly high prevalence of autism, autism research remains one of the lowest funded areas of medical research by both public and private sources. But funding for research is woefully inadequate. Only through biomedical research will we ever understand what causes autism and develop methods to diagnose autism. Someday, with your help, we will find a cure!

As a family, we have decided to make an effort to increase autism awareness. This year I am chairing the Inaugural Jersey Shore Now Walk for Autism. The Walk will be held in Manasquan on September 30, 2006. There are so many ways that you can help our cause. You can choose to sponsor us in the event with a tax deductible donation or walk with us. The proceeds of the Walk will be used to support the efforts of Autism Speaks. Autism Speaks is the largest non-governmental supporter of autism research in the United States. If you are interested in finding out more about them, please check out their website www.autismspeaks.org. Please help us raise money for this extremely important cause by increasing awareness among your friends and coworkers. We realize that there are many charities that vie for your attention, but any contribution, large or small, will be greatly appreciated.

As always, thank you for your consideration, support and prayers. It means more to us than we could possibly express. We look forward to hearing from you!

Janice, Kevin, Tiernan, Madilyn and Cole McGreevy