



Proud Aspy Mom Newsletter | September 2021

Role Models



Mark Steven Kamleiter Saved My Life



Mark Steven Kamleiter

You ever meet someone in desperation and feel connected immediately? That was my first encounter with Special Education icon, Mark Steven Kamleiter. Our daughter was in first or second grade and we felt that everywhere we turned there was a bucket full of NO!

- No she would not be a good fit here.
- No most kids like yours belong in a secluded environment.
- No your kid will never likely succeed in a mainstream space.
- No we cannot make accommodations for your child- (Even though it is in fact the law)
- No - we simply CANNOT help you.

I remember endless days of tears and exasperation. How could I be an attorney and not adequately advocate for our daughter. I called the local bar association that day and asked do we have ANY special needs attorneys in the area. Thankfully I have a good relationship with our bar association and many of my peers in the community were aware of my new challenges. My colleague said there is this guy named Mark. We do not know what he does but he helps families like yours.

When I called the office I honestly felt I would have the same response- NO. Mark answered the phone, listened patiently and said YES! He literally said yes to EVERYTHING. I had no words. I was overwhelmed, exhausted, angry, frustrated and truly at "E" and this man, my angel said I will teach you how to care for kiddos like yours and others.

No question was off limits. Mark was honest and realistic. He shared that I would have a battle on my hands at every turn. Mark candidly shared the statement I now live by- "You do not know, what you do not know. Give them some grace and time to come around. In the meantime- educate yourself until they hear you."

This newsletter marks my "12" and is dedicated to the man who explained to me what an IEP is and why it matters and why it is different from a 504 plan. What a Functional Behavior Assessment is and a Behavioral Intervention Plan is. The importance of Positive Behavior Support, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and the various levels of communications within the special needs community.

Mark passed away on March 8, 2020. I will not forget him or his commitment to shine a light for all who needed it.
Rest my friend~

WE have a duty to educate every child and a duty to make it easier for teachers to educate OUR children

I was extremely fortunate to grow up in a stable environment with strong educators surrounding me. Education was enforced in every aspect of my life. The community cared- it was not just the teachers in my k-12 upbringing. The local police officers and firefighters cared and came out to the school to engage with us and share in our accomplishments. The local stores would proudly announce honor students. The local librarians helped expand our knowledge of a world around us. The princiPALS where in fact "PALS" and were vested in our achievement. Again, I am treading on thin ice when I say- we have to do better.





Disabilities Despite Pandemic hurdles, Ed. Dept. Says

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As an educator I know the challenges in the classroom today are far from the challenges of yesterday- but we still have a duty to educate every child and to make it easier for our teachers to enter this space. Mark, my angel and special needs mentor said this often. He introduced me to COPAA, an organization dedicated to helping parents, attorneys and advocates with all persons with disabilities, but he also shared the greater gift of introducing me to a new community of compassionate leaders who want to do the best we can for our kids and meet them where they are.

Feds Say Nearly Every State Short On Special Educators - Disability Scoop

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Reading articles on education these days can downright shock you. When you look at the articles you wonder how are our teachers holding it together. They need the tools to succeed and that means we have to be a community that cares. I think we can all agree that our kids deserve quality education and our teachers are the conduit to achieving this goal. As Mark would say- there is a solution to the problems of the day- Listen to each other and do the right thing, whatever it is under the circumstances.

Dedicated to Mark Steven Kamleiter 1949-2020



CDC Rolls Out New COVID-19 Resources For People With IDD - Disability Scoop

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