

Disability...

By: Wilbur Hawke

One fact of disability is the totally non-discriminatory fashion by which it affects the lives of families. With no regard for economic status, race, gender, age, or personal plans, a chosen group of individuals is entering into this cycle everyday.

"We all have to start somewhere" is no longer an option. You have to begin the process and learn to deal with things that you have no idea how to deal with. Many surveys reflect the number one thing parents identified as needing was information. I have heard the term "empowering" used in describing what happens when we finally access information and skill to become effective advocates. It is a self-empowering and self-advocacy process. NO one can do this for you. If you want the things you are entitled to, you have to become this advocate. This cycle we are involved in has been experienced many times before and in many different ways.

The most prudent thing to do is to learn from the efforts of those going before you and duplicate the successes. Networking allows us to do just that. If we continue to be persistent and remain informed we can be the difference. The best advice given to me was from an overworked, underpaid attorney after hearing me whine for awhile about my problems with the school district.

"Mr. Hawke, IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR ON A WHITE CHARGER TO COME AND RESCUE YOU, FORGET IT. YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO DO THIS YOURSELF"

I followed that advice and have reaped the rewards. This is the reality of what has to happen. There are no shortcuts and the cycle continues as we teach our children to advocate for themselves.