

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Jodi Tepoel: Hi, my name is Jodi Tepoel. I am a former parent of three young boys who all attended Head Start in Adel, Oregon. I -- my oldest child is now eight and started attending Head Start when he was three, and has been diagnosed with Aspergers, as well emotional defiance behavior, being emotionally disturbed, and ADHD. And because of Head Start and the support that I've gotten from them, he is becoming successful in school. He did not make it through kindergarten; he was suspended 14 times in two-and-a-half months, which is just abhorious to me.

But the -- the Head Start staff that I worked with there when he was first diagnosed still call me daily and check in with me and make sure that there isn't anything that they can't do. They ask how -- he has twin brothers, as well, that are five that just -- just graduated Head Start and are now in kindergarten, but he -- they ask how they are doing and if there is anything we -- they can do to support them or support me or support Rylan in being successful. I've continued to be a Policy Council member because I so firmly believe in Head Start. It's -- it's an amazing program.

It's an amazing staff that we have out in the Gorge area with McClemage Family Council. I just -- I -- I can't emphasize enough the importance that Head Start gives to children, because it is a head start. And I think without them my son would have been -- fallen through the cracks. He would have been lost. And they -- Head Start has been able to help me find resources to give him the support that he needs aside from them.

So we've been able have diagnoses; I've been able to have family counseling. I've been able to have the other support outside for the twin boys as well so that they know that they're, you know, just as important and just as -- as necessary as he is. And I -- I just -- you know, I wish I could stay on Policy Council a lot longer because three years is just not enough to be -- to get things done that I want. So I -- I just -- I -- I don't know what to say to make people understand and believe that this is the program that is a million times worth every single penny you put into it.

I have twins and I have -- and then I have an eight-year-old, also. We do a lot of outside activities. We do -- I'm working on getting gardens put in the Head Start programs. That's because I really believe in -- in fresh foods and -- and healthy starts and that kind of stuff. And they like to help me do a lot of the gardening. We do a lot -- lot of litter pickup because I abhor litter tremendously. Yeah, we just -- a lot of outside stuff. You know, we -- we appreciate nature and appreciate what we've been given, and we do our best to take care of it and, you know, give back to -- give back what we have been given.

So, doing the pay it forward deal. I was saying I have -- I have three boys that all went through Head Start. My oldest one is eight and he has been diagnosed with Aspergers, oppositional defiant behavior, emotional disturbance, and ADHD. And it was because of Head Start that he was able to get these diagnoses, and I was able to get the support and help that I need.

And then -- that even to this day, I still get calls or I'll run into people in the store and they'll be like, "How are you doing? How's Rylan doing? What can we do to help you? Let us know if there is anything else." It's, you know... I mean, the support that I have is just tremendous. And -- and -- and they've given me lead ways, too. I mean, "Have you thought about talking to these people?" Or, "Have you done this before?" And it's things like I would never think about, you know, because I get so wrapped up and so consumed in the day-to-day life that's going on, and the heaviness and -- you know?

So it's -- it's really nice to have that -- that support outside and those people that -- that truly care, that really, really, really care, you know? And it's not a false care, it's -- it's a, you know, from the heart kind of a thing. So...

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