

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

We went in, gave birth...they took him right away. He stopped breathing.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

They're called micro-premies. Like, They fit in your hand. So..They're one pound, six ounces and two of them were one pound, eight ounces.

TSgt Kathy Ford-

Both Devon and I were both having seizures.

Stephanie Virtue-

He wasn't following anything with his eyes. He wasn't hitting his milestones that we had read about.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

At 3 ½ months old she had her first seizure.

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

It literally took them 2 years in the medical system to figure out what was wrong with our son.

TSgt Kathy Ford-

He was born completely blind. They were able to actually fix one of his eyes, so he's partially blind. He can see out of his left eye

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

And they came back and said they didn't know what was going on, but he stayed in the NICU for about two weeks.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

And they diagnosed her with too much gray matter in her right frontal lobe, and that was what was causing all of her seizures.

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

By that time we found out he had cerebral palsy

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

The brain bleeds, and then they needed heart surgery...and then they started to go blind.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

And they told us the only way to stop them would be to do brain surgery.

TSgt Kathy Ford-

The autism came later. He was actually just diagnosed with autism.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

I went from having a normal two year old to literally having an infant I had to re-teach how to do everything.

Col Donald C. Hickman / 75<sup>th</sup> MDG Commander-

Delivering on the promise is what we're talking about from our summit last year. Last year we brought everybody together. We broke out into ten focus groups. We came up with a list of over several hundred brainstormed ideas that we distilled down to 45 action items. At the end of that day, I as the chair of the committee stood up and looked the families in the eyeball and said...I promise you families that Hill Air Force Base will work to make your life better and that we're going solve each and everyone one of these promises.

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

From last year when the first summit happened, we had working groups that got together and discussed with family members and with service providers on the problems we were having with just taking care of special needs children and families here on the installation. From there, we came up with a lot of action items that we could fix. Truthfully, I didn't think it was going to happen. I looked at a lot of them and said it was completely out of our power. The base won't be able to fix it. If it does get fixed, it won't be in my time. It will hopefully be for the next family that comes along, or for those younger Airmen that are fighting those battles now here in the next few years. It was surprising how the entire installation and the medical community came together and said no no, we have to take care of this now.

Marty Kessler-

One of the main things that we were working on with the Tricare policy is that there was a real gap in care for respite care. ...to be able to get out and go on a date. It was real restrictive.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

When he was deployed it was really frustrating because both the boys were in wheelchairs, and for me to take them grocery shopping is really hard. I think I did it once the whole time he was deployed because I can't push two wheelchairs and a cart. I can two wheelchairs or one wheelchair and a cart, but one store was..."well I don't know if we have time for that". I was like "oh that's pretty awesome!...guess I won't be coming here."

Marty Kessler-

They didn't change the language of the policy, but what they did was send out letters to change how they were interpreting that policy. To loosen it up, to allow people to get out of the house.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

It's a lot easier being able to go grocery shopping without worrying about not only the wheelchairs but exposure and all that stuff.

Amy Natwell / 360 Project Officer-

I work at the Family Support, the 360 Project, which is a project here on base to assist families to access services and find resources in the community both on base, as well as in the civilian world

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

The 360 project has helped me because it's given me avenues outside in the community that I didn't know were available to us.

TSgt Kathy Ford-

What they've done, what the 360 project has done is actually gone out there and done the work for us.

Tammy Custer / Exceptional Family Member Program Officer-

The Exceptional Family Member Coordinator Position for the Family Support was established because families were saying they were having trouble wading through all the state information, changing bases, when your changing bases as often as our military do, they have to restart services and it's not always easy to find and while we've always had someone on the medical side taking care of that, there hasn't necessarily been someone to take care of the family support side of things, the making sure that you're finding services, that you're getting hooked to the state services, that you're getting hooked into the local community programs and that's why they established this at 45 bases.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

They've also helped me navigate through the systems, one of the things was that we had never been eligible for respite care and Tammy went to the clinical and advocated for it and actually got me 5 hours a week through the Air Force Aid Society where I don't get it through Tricare because my daughter does go to school 40 hours a week.

Colonel Donald Hickman-

We promised we were going to fix them, we've had several homeruns. I'm proud to say that 43 of those

45 we moved the ball forward. Today, our families with conditions like Autism, down syndrome or a various of physical disabilities, are together with support groups where their peer to peer working together where they weren't a year ago. Today our families are linked up with over 80 service agencies you see behind me working together on a peer to peer relationship.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

It's so much better now than when we first got here, where there wasn't really this kind of organization available.

Stephanie Virtue-

The nice thing about the whole Special Needs program is that you get to meet other people that are going through the same thing. So, it helps.

MSgt Daniel & Jennie Bosche-

The first time we were at the summit, the first table we went to we found something for our son, the second time we're here again, the moment we walked into the room, we found something for our son.

TSgt Kathy Ford-

I'm a single parent, I feel like I do a lot for my son, I wish I could do more, but I feel like what they've done is they're gone out there and tried to find, found those resources for us, so we're not going out there and trying to find them alone or on our own.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-

It's given me avenues outside in the community that I didn't know were available to us.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

They're trying to do all kinds of activities, ice skating and making all kinds of things available so that our kids can be a part of our community.

TSgt Neeley Yarborough-There's a social network on facebook that's really great, I've learned a lot of things through them.

SSgt Jared & Laura Graham-

It's nice to know there's a specific group that's looking out for us and our friends with special needs.

Colonel Donald Hickman-

My vision of the future is that we have well-informed parents and educated parents, and not just the ones that has a special needs child today, but that the next child that's born with a disability that requires this kind of services, has a one stop shop where they can go and say my son has downs, my son has Autism, my daughter has this kind of physical deformity, what do I do and we hand them a portfolio

of information and training to make their life much better than the families had behind me when their baby was born."

TSgt Kathy Ford-

I think the families that are PCSing here or that have PCSd here in the last couple months; I think they're in great hands.