

## Kim Washburn



Kim is a wife and a mother of seven children. She has lived in the Capital Region since 1986. Like so many others, she struggled to afford preschool for her children. Not only were the private schools expensive, but they didn't provide the type of intensive education that Kim felt she needed for her children and would later find at SCAP Head Start. "Most schools offered two or three days a week or half days. It was impossible to schedule my work around their schedule," said Kim.

Kim didn't know about SCAP Head Start when it was time for her older two children to attend preschool. As a result, her children struggled in kindergarten; they were visibly far behind. "I was surprised when I brought them to school to see some of the other kindergartners already reading! I thought teaching them their ABC's and how to count to ten would be enough. I felt like I had failed my children," stated Kim. Because of their lack of preschool education, her two oldest children were diagnosed with a learning disability in kindergarten. When they reached third grade, they were reevaluated and the results concluded that they did not have a learning disability; they were just behind the other kids when they started school.

Eight years later, Kim had her third child, David. She could tell that David was a little different. "Since there was such a large age gap between David and the first two kids, I thought he was just a late bloomer. He didn't start walking until he was one year old, and instead of talking, he would point and grunt," said Kim. Before it was time for David to go to preschool, Kim saw a flyer for SCAP Head Start at the local Department of Social Services. She was quick to send in her application and get him enrolled.

It wasn't long before David's Head Start teachers noticed some developmental delays, as well. His teacher suggested to Kim that she have him evaluated. Kim had never thought of that before but felt it was a great idea. The evaluation services were available directly through Head Start for free, which Kim said was a huge help. After the evaluation, it was determined that David had autism.

Not only was Head Start dedicated to making sure that David would enter kindergarten at the same academic level as his peers, but their Family Worker, Joan helped her and her husband really understand autism. Joan explained that there was nothing *wrong* with their son; he was just going to have difficulties with certain things.

At Head Start, David was placed in an integrated classroom; with neurotypical students, as well as students with learning disabilities. Kim said, "I never thought that I would get David potty trained, but Head Start did. Now, David is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and is at the same academic level as the neurotypical students. He still has some social issues, but receives help when he needs it. Without Head Start, Kim feels that David would have been left far behind. "I don't think we would have ever seen him work at his full potential. Head Start gave him the opportunity to do so."

Ultimately, three of Kim's children attended SCAP's Head Start Program. One of her daughters also was diagnosed with Autism. Kim raves about how the SCAP Head Start program has truly helped her whole family in multiple ways.

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