I am excited to share with you that the Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania program turned 25 years old this year! The program was started in 1996, with the mission of linking families who have a child or adult with a disability or special need to a Peer Supporter (mentor) for purposes of support and information. Who better to share your concerns and hopes for the future than another family whose child has the same condition and/or concerns and can truly relate.

It has been our privilege to connect thousands of families together this past 25 years, which we would not have been able to do without our amazing volunteer Peer Supporters. They are the families who have been willing to open their hearts and take the time to listen and when asked share their stories, so those feelings of isolation and in some cases hopelessness are validated and in its place the feeling that you are not alone and hope for the future.

The program has grown significantly the past 25 years and in an effort to have the program continue to flourish for the next 25 years we have rebranded. The rebranding started with a new logo. The new logo as depicted above and below is very visual and depicts the “journey” of peaks and valleys that all families who have a child with a disability or special need take. I wanted to share our new logo and honor the logo that we have used for 25 years, so the picture you see below is also the first slide on the scroller for our “new” website. Yes, we have a new website too...please take a look...www.parenttoparent.org
To acknowledge the longevity of the program, “new” rack cards were developed where the concept of “now and then” stories are shared from five original staff in 1996, who helped start the Parent to Parent of PA program. The stories share the “journey” of their children as they moved from children to adults. We will be sending the stories out monthly via MailChimp, so if you are not signed up for our electronic newsletter, please email Kim Huff, Database Coordinator and Social Media Manager at khuff@parenttoparent.org to be added to our electronic mailing list.

The new rack cards are available in English and Spanish and can be ordered for distribution on the new website at www.parenttoparent.org
If you would like to learn “How Are Matches Made” and “What a Peer Supporter Does” and other necessary information about the program or to become a Peer Supporter, you can ask to have our redesigned Outreach and Peer Supporter Welcome packets sent to you electronically and or by mail by calling the state office number at 717-540-4722.

How Are Matches Made?

1-888-727-2706
717-540-4722

Caller and Peer Supporter letters are sent with contact information to set up a time to talk

Caller shares relevant information and match is defined

Database search to find a Peer Supporter that can provide support for the same conditions or concerns

Search for a Peer Supporter

Exchange Information

Intake

Contact Us

Additional Ways to Contact Us

www.parenttoparent.org

Complete the Get Matched Form or the Authorization to Release Information Form (ATRI)
What Does a Peer Supporter Do?

Getting Connected:
- Peer Supporter agrees to provide support
- Contact information is exchanged
- Peer Supporter contacts the Referred Parent within 24-48 hours

Future Contacts:
- Determined together by the Peer Supporter and the Referred Parent
- Each match is unique and sometimes lifelong friendships develop

How to Provide Support:
- Listen
- Be open-minded
- Nonjudgmental
- Allow the parent to express honest emotion
- Protect confidentiality

Two new trainings have also been developed this past year. The first training is our Peer Supporter Online Training. Using the Articulate application hosted on a Moodle platform we now have a very interactive training for our Peer Supporters to learn how to correctly support a Referred Parent guided by Best Practices established by Parent to Parent USA.
We are highly encouraging all of our new and seasoned Peer Supporters to become trained on the following topics:

We are currently working on adding a Self-Care Module to the Peer Supporter Online training. This topic will share how to take care of yourself as you take care of others. Look for this new addition in October 2021!

The second training is an important extension of the first training entitled, “Building Protective Factors for Strong and Thriving Families.” The training was customized for Parent to Parent of PA by the Center for Schools and Communities. In the introduction the video states that, “We believe while all families have needs, they also have strengths to keep their families strong.” In this training you will learn about the following five Protective Factors to keep your family strong:

Because we know your time is valuable and sometimes (or maybe always) very limited, as described above these trainings can be completed in the convenience of your own home and
You can start and stop the training until you complete it. Once completed you will receive a customized printable Certificate along with a new Parent to Parent of PA tote bag as a thank you from the program. It will be sent to you in the mail. You will also be marked in the Parent to Parent of PA database as a “trained” Peer Supporter!

As you can tell we have been very busy this past year developing new materials for our Referred Parents and our Peer Supporters, including trainings to help the Peer Supporters feel more comfortable mentoring a family they have agreed to support. But how can you reach us, if you are interested in our free and confidential services? We have worked with ATT this year to reroute our 1-888-727-2706 to regional cell phones numbers instead of office landlines. Now when you dial the 1-888-727-2706 Toll free number in your region, you will reach a Regional Coordinator who can, when available, answer your call live or if you prefer texting, you can do that too to set up a time to connect. Not sure what region you live in, you can choose option 4 to be connected to the state office in Harrisburg, PA. I have also listed the new cell phone numbers for the staff below:

Northwest Region: Judy Campbell- 724-923-1858
Southwest Region- Nicole Zilli- 724-552-7821
North Central- Susan Bolig- 272-231-9742
Northeast Region- Nicole Lindsay- 570-780-0109
Southeast Region- Michelle Smithman- 215-260-1618
Southeast Region- Amy Fisher- 717-869-3451
Southeast Region Georgina Perez Liz- 267-518-0156 (Bilingual Regional Coordinator- Spanish)

Everything is “new” except the reputation we have built over the past 25 years, the amazing staff and their combined decades of experience and the continued passion we have for families who are raising a child or adult with a disability or special need allowing us to fulfill our “new” mission statement of:

“Connecting families with children and adults with a disabilities or special needs throughout their journey.

Please consider reaching out to us so we can all support each other on the “journeys” we are traveling.

Sincerely,

Fiona Patrick
Director

Chastity DiFrancesco
Supervisor