

THE NETWORKER

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Matrix Parent Network is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1983 to serve families of children with special needs. We serve Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties.

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SOME MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

The Power of Parent to Parent Support



Sistine Chapel Ceiling painting detail, Michelangelo

Why would anyone want to share their deepest emotions, their pain, and their anxieties with a stranger? Why would connecting with someone else in a similar situation bring comfort? What makes people, with absolutely nothing in common but their child's diagnosis, form a meaningful bond? Why is parent to parent support so important, so necessary, and so rewarding for everyone who finds it?

A little history will help answer some of these questions. Over 35 years ago some amazing mothers of children with disabilities found each other and decided to provide resources and support for themselves and other families.

These Matrix founders believed that information was power. They knew that if families of children with special needs were aware of the available services, they would make more informed decisions. They also knew they were qualified to talk with families about these services and what to expect because they had used so many of them.

These Matrix Moms provided resources and support from the unique perspective of being parents themselves. Their approach differed from that of professionals, who seemed to monitor how information and support were made available. Learning about resources and services was a good

first step, but it was not enough. Families wanted to connect with other families for emotional support. Thus, the parent to parent core of Matrix was born.

The questions I posed at the beginning of this message have some very simple answers. Human nature drives us to seek our "tribe" or our community of like-minded people we have things in common with.

Often parents who have children with differences find that people in their usual circles of support cannot relate to or understand how they feel.

Finding someone who has walked the same path and had similar experiences is so rewarding. Strangers become close friends, supporting each other. At a recent Matrix event with friends and families, one parent remarked it was so lovely to be with folks who didn't even blink when her child had a small meltdown.

Last summer, a group of mothers started running together to train for Matrix Milers. They bonded and shared about their children. One of the women remarked that more important than getting in shape and increasing her speed was the acceptance and support she experienced from the others runner/moms.

Support comes in many shapes and sizes and Parent to Parent Support seems to be shaped to fit many of us in the best way possible.



Nora Thompson
Executive Director

Parent to Parent Support

