

MATTHEW'S STORY

Presented By Rosemary Shulman



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FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
Building Strong Families ... One Child at a Time.

Rosemary Shulman



- FASD Clinic Intake Coordinator
- Parent of a 26 year old son with FASD and 23 year old daughter with FAS
- Rosemary advocates for medical, therapeutic, and educational providers be mandated to be FASD informed throughout their training programs
- Rosemary is an IEP Parent Advocate and incredibly knowledgeable about how service dogs can help individuals with FASD.



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When behavior is misunderstood,
children are harmed.



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The system saw behavior,
not disability.



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Falling Through the Cracks

- ADHD diagnosed in kindergarten
- Services delayed or denied
- Academic struggles ignored

The gap was only the Mississippi River, not the Grand Canyon.



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FASD is among the most overlooked and misdiagnosed developmental disabilities worldwide.

In our family, the child welfare system's failure to disclose prenatal alcohol exposure led to years of misdiagnoses.

Meaningful education about the harm caused by prenatal alcohol exposure is sorely lacking.



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Special Education Services...

Were denied...

Then delayed...

Academic struggles were ignored.



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- Academic failure → behavior escalation
- Behavior became the focus
- Punitive responses replaced support





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Inappropriate Placement Can be Dangerous

- Restrictive placement
 - Needs misunderstood
 - The environment became unsafe



Chain Reaction

- Child acts out
- Labeled a behavior problem
- A child would rather be bad than look stupid



This was not just a failure of services.
It was a systematic misunderstanding
of a brain-based disability.

Cannot filter and process environmental stimuli properly,

Becoming easily overwhelmed and overstimulated.

This pattern was consistently documented in every assessment and report card.

Irrefutable evidence that Matthew should have qualified for an IEP in 3rd grade

Under specific learning disorders with impairments in:

- Reading comprehension
- Memorization
- Arithmetic facts
- Math reasoning

None of the 177 documented incident reports in his records were ever sent to me.

- He was restrained 27 times
- Placed in seclusion 104 times
- Attempted to escape campus 133 times to avoid seclusion

- Injured 12 times, 2 serious, life-threatening incidents
 - First, a student poisoned his drink
 - Second, a student approached him from behind and struck him in the head with a hammer twice
 - A baseball cap, an afro, and missing his temple by millimeters
 - Saved his life



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Advocacy Changed Our Outcome

- Persistence matters
- Documentation matters
- Outcomes can change

The Truth Came Out

- Appropriate supports were provided
- And for the first time in 10 years, Matthew was able to learn and gain back confidence in his own abilities
- The private school was a fantastic fit



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Baseball is Our Connection and Mutual Love

Team sports can be hard for attention-challenged, neurodiverse children.

He was really good – a 10-year-old all-star champion.

To be sure of the unkind coach's perseverance and patience,

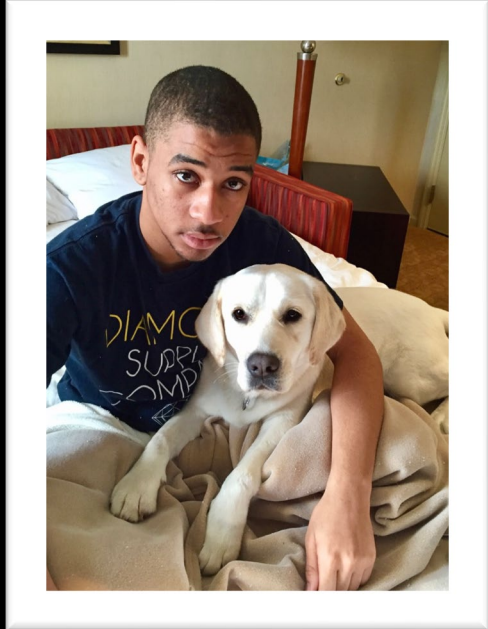
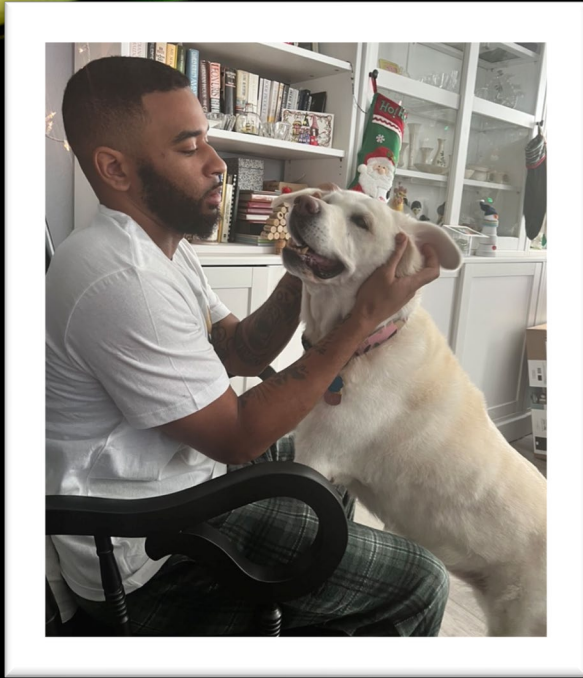
I joined the board and volunteered for the hard jobs.

We were a package deal; they got the message.

Raven, our service dog,
saved him.



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Change occurs when you
learn to exercise your rights.



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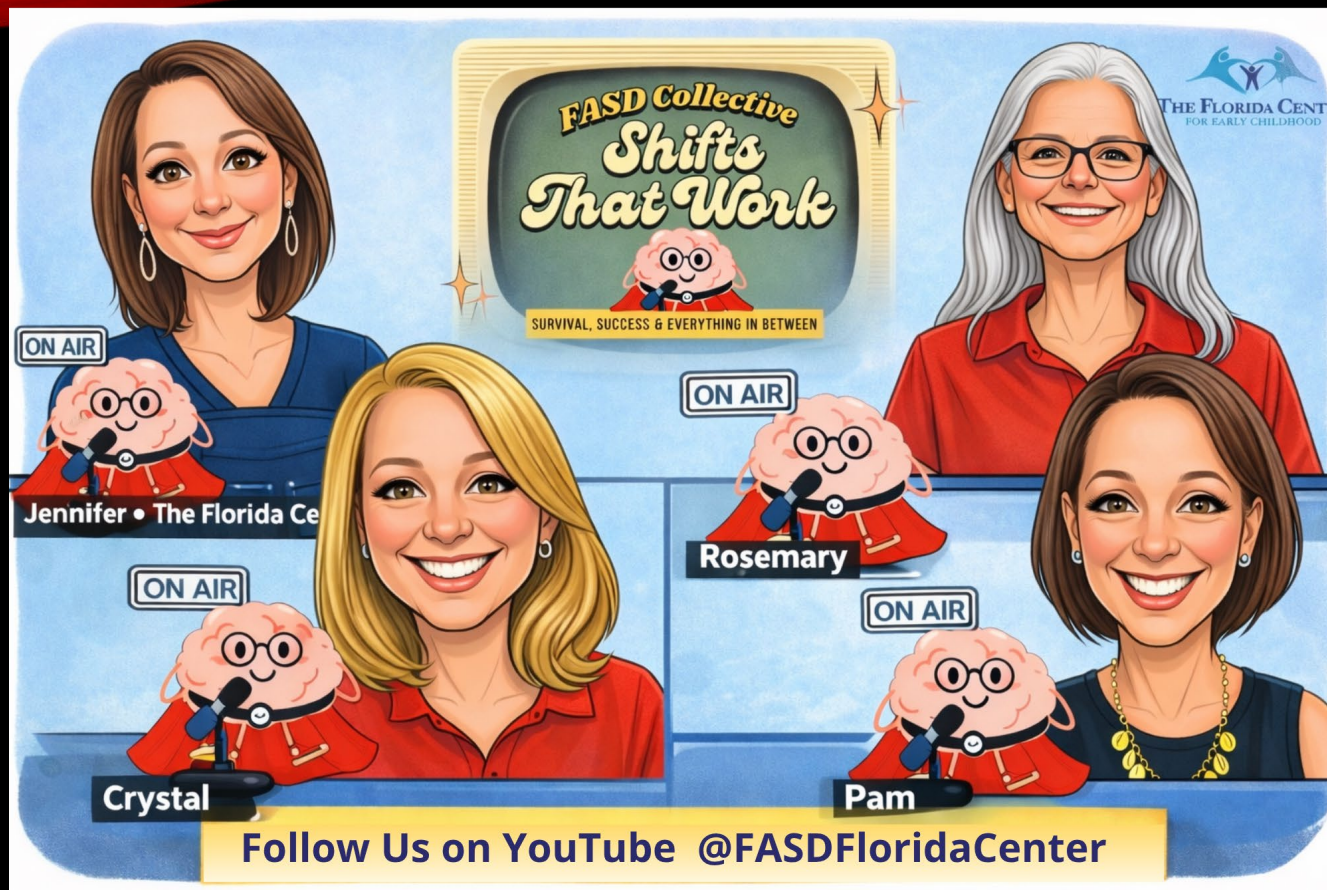




My best revenge is my
son's success.



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Contact Me!

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