



Annual Campaign 2020

Dear Friends of Ohio SIBS,

My empathy for people with special needs began in my childhood. I grew up a few blocks from the Central Ohio Psychiatric Hospital, a massive institution for people with mental illness. (Please don't quit reading! I understand that the life challenges that accompany mental health needs and intellectual disabilities are not interchangeable. This is just where my journey began and, thus, my story begins.)

I went to grade school across the street from that massive hospital. Patients from the hospital routinely walked the grounds of the hospital and I came to know them. They were, quite simply, people in my neighborhood.

One sunny summer day, I was riding my bike on hospital grounds. The hospital was like a castle to me. High above, sitting behind a barred window, was a man with his forearms and hands hanging outside of the bars. I immediately felt moved by this man who I imagined longed to be riding alongside me. From that childhood moment, I was left with a very personal connection to the isolation people can feel when they are "set aside". My passion for what we now call "community integration" was born in that moment.

Some twenty years later I met Rebecca, a woman with Down Syndrome, who is my sister-in-law. I met Rebecca while I was dating my wife, Cathy. Until that time, I had little interaction with people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Rebecca changed my life. She is a wonderful person and has blessed me by instilling in me a passion that people with disabilities should live good lives.

In my first career, I was a state government executive. Because of Rebecca's influence on my life, I have made it a priority to lend my time and experience to various organizations serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Because of Rebecca, I learned about opportunities to use my legal training to assist people with disabilities. I am proud to tell people I am a special needs attorney. Rebecca unknowingly makes me a better attorney.

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Rebecca is very active in her community and is friends with everyone she meets. She has a capacity for empathy that is unmatched by most people. She eagerly works, plays, and participates in her community. She pays taxes, she votes, and generally lives a life much like others in the community. She has taught me to see people, not as a function of their abilities, but as individuals who have endless unique capacities to interact. My life would not be what it is without Rebecca.

And so, I am honored to be chairing the Ohio SIBS 2020 Annual Campaign. Ohio SIBS has just concluded its 20th Annual Conference, "Reaching for New Relationship and Supports". I am delighted that Ohio SIBS decided to launch "Reaching Out", an annual sponsorship campaign, to raise funds to support its ability to continue to be a unified voice and partner for Ohio's adult siblings of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and other advocates.

Please help to expand Ohio SIBS' reach by committing a gift toward this campaign. Gifts of any amount are welcomed and appreciated. Suggested giving levels for the "Reaching Out" 2020 campaign include:

Platinum: \$750 • Gold: \$500 • Silver: \$250

Ohio SIBS accomplishes its mission with part-time staff leadership and limited administrative resources. Your support is crucial. It is a self-funded 501(c)3 (charitable) organization; your support is tax deductible, as allowed by law. We are grateful for all who supported our previous Annual Campaigns and look forward to being able to count more of you as supporters of the 2020 Annual Campaign.

Sincerely,

Blaine P. Brockman

Blaine P. Brockman



Cathy, Rebecca & Blaine