



Finding Peace of Mind

A ParentVOICE Empowerment Story

When Linda found MHA's ParentVOICE program last February, she was at her "breaking point." Her 17 year old daughter Makayla was in jail for simple assault; charges Linda decided to press this time. Makayla had previously punched her mom while she was driving, was suspended from school for 43 days due to fights and behavior, and punched holes in the walls at home. This particular morning, Makayla exploded, and her brother Mason ran to get a neighbor to protect his mother. After the police arrived and arrested Makayla, Linda knew she had to put a plan in place for her daughter's treatment before she was released. With a week off from her job at Duke Energy, recovering from her black eye and other injuries, Linda researched treatment options through her Employee Assistance Program but found that she couldn't afford intensive in-home therapy at \$100 per session, 2-3 times per week. When she was researching support groups, however, she found MHA.

MHA's ParentVOICE program offers free parent to parent support in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties for families of youth experiencing mental health, emotional or behavioral challenges. Linda reached out to Cathy Johnson, our sole Family Partner serving Cabarrus County. She said, "When I talked to Cathy, I was in tears. I had hit road block after road block and there were few mental health interventions available."



Left: Certified Family Partner Cathy Johnson and Makayla at ParentVOICE program's monthly Empowerment Group for parents and caregivers which includes dinner and enriching activities for youth.

Right: Linda with Makayla, "I've never given up on my child. She has been screaming for help, and I was determined to find it. That's unconditional love."



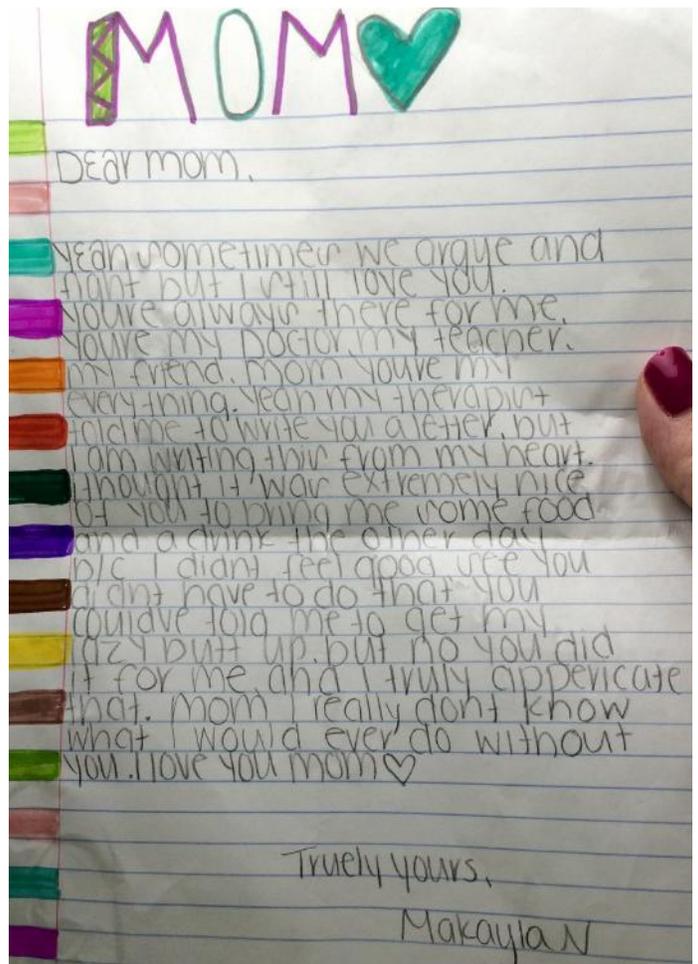
"This picture was taken April 2012. Makayla was 13 (she is 17 now) and Mason was 9 (he is 13 now). This was the year Makayla's oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), anxiety, and depressive disorder took a big twist in the worst direction," said her mom, Linda.

"Cathy was very welcoming. I was a single mom with a great job, but I couldn't afford the care Makayla needed," shared Linda. They had already tried many medications, outpatient therapy, even hospitalizations. Part of MHA's role is connecting community members with the resources they need, providing compassion, empathy, expertise and a listening ear. Soon, Cathy called Linda back and said, "I have good news for you." Cathy found two providers with a government grant for which she thought their family would be eligible. Linda said, "We met their requirements and the following week all three of us started therapy in our home environment, which was so helpful. **Cathy was a godsend to me; if it had not been for her, I would not have found this care. She's been my guardian angel.**"

Linda also needed Cathy as a Family Partner to ensure Makayla's needs were met at school. "Cathy helped me advocate with school administrators to get her a 504 Plan. The school dragged their feet but Cathy was persistent—she knows the law, and Makayla was eligible due to her mental health diagnosis," said Linda. 🙏



Continued from side one— “Before I got involved with MHA, I was embarrassed and hopeless. But because of the positive results, I no longer feel ashamed. I have seen what the right mental health treatment can do and want to encourage others that help is available,” asserted Linda. “Makayla realized her behavior is not who she wants to be. She apologizes more; she catches herself from hitting me—skills she acquired through therapy. Now Makayla wants to help others, further her education, and become a therapist. **Through MHA, we were able to get the help we needed. Cathy knew what I was going through and guided me throughout the process. She helped me make sound decisions for Makayla’s betterment,**” added Linda. 🦋



Left: Makayla and Linda sharing love and peace signs at the mall.

Right: Recent letter from Makayla to her mom includes, “I really don’t know what I would ever do without you.”

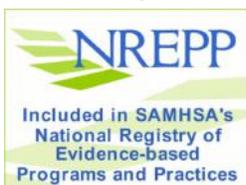
Community Partners on MHA’s ParentVOICE Program

*“As the leader of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) School-Based Mental Health program, I see many families struggle to engage with behavioral health services due both to stigma and challenges navigating the behavioral health system. **I have found no better way to build a parent’s confidence in their ability to ensure that their children receive appropriate behavioral health and educational services, than to support them in engaging with ParentVOICE.**”*

- Cotrane D. Penn, Ph.D., CMS Mental Health Program Specialist

“ParentVOICE gives our families peace of mind, knowing that there is someone else there to support them that is knowledgeable about the court and school processes, and that will do so without the parents having a financial obligation. I am extremely grateful to ParentVOICE for the service it provides and certainly hope the partnership will continue to grow for the benefit of the children and families we serve in Youth Treatment Court, and juvenile court in general.”

- Judge Donald R. Cureton, Jr. Mecklenburg County Youth Treatment Court Program



ParentVOICE Family Partners all have lived experience as parents/grandparents of children with emotional, behavioral or mental health concerns, and expertise in navigating the mental health, child welfare, education, and juvenile justice systems. Each earned national and/or state certification as Family Partners, as well as certification as Triple P Providers.

Triple P—Positive Parenting Program is the most extensively researched parenting program in the world. Triple P is included in the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).