



Sweeter Dreams for A Somerset Hills Learning Institute Family

February 17th marked the third consecutive sleepless night in the Juliano household. “I felt as if I was being tortured by my son’s symptoms of autism,” Chuck Juliano described of those nights. “My wife, Carol, and I were completely sleep deprived.”

Kyle, Chuck and Carol’s son, has autism and is a student at Somerset Hills Learning Institute. “Disrupted sleep cycle is a common symptom of autism,” explained the Institute’s Executive Director, Dr. Kevin J. Brothers. Brothers went on to describe stories of children with autism waking in the middle of the night and roaming the house unsupervised and unprotected from household dangers like stoves or cutlery. “Perhaps the most frightening story is one of a child leaving his home and wandering his neighborhood before sunrise, climbing over snow mounds in his pajamas.”

“When Kyle’s sleep cycle became disrupted, Chuck and I took turns staying awake with him attempting to keep him quiet enough for our younger daughter to continue sleeping,” said Juliano. It was not until the third night when the Julianos had to make the difficult decision for Carol to take their daughter to sleep in a hotel that the couple acknowledged the magnitude of the situation. “We couldn’t function as a family at that point,” remembers Juliano.

That is when the Julianos contacted Dr. Brothers and Cara Gaffney. Gaffney, one of the Institute’s Assistant Directors, provides training to the staff in Kyle’s classroom. The same evening after learning of the difficulties Kyle and his family were experiencing, Dr. Brothers and Gaffney were in the Juliano home providing training on how best to teach Kyle to successfully remain in his room and sleep through the night.

“I look back now and giggle. They showed up like the cavalry with their toothbrushes and blow-up mattresses,” laughed Juliano. Dr. Brothers and Gaffney stayed in the Juliano home over night to ensure that the family was sufficiently supported. After nearly two weeks of consistent training and effective intervention, the team successfully taught Kyle to stay in the safety of his room and sleep through the night.

To those who are surprised by the Institute’s dedication to parent training, Brothers humbly explains, “We are committed to serving our students; to helping them shed the symptoms of autism. To think that our efforts should cease when a student leaves the school building is counterproductive to fulfilling our mission.” Gaffney added, “Sleeping, or not sleeping for that matter, is a behavior like any other. Kyle was not displaying this deficit to be ‘bad’ he was simply engaging in a behavior that he needed help changing.”

Because of the Institute’s unique blend of science and compassion, the Juliano family are able to dream again – literally. Kyle has slept throughout the night for 4 consecutive months. “Words cannot express how grateful we are to Dr. Brothers and Cara for their dedication to Kyle and our family,” said Juliano.