

THE FUNDING PROJECT

CONNECTING FAMILIES TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES

FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, AUTISM AND CANCER



Statistics have shown that it takes on average \$250,000 to raise a child from birth to age 18. However, the costs are extremely dire for a family who will raise a child with special needs. That number skyrockets to \$1 million dollars or more.

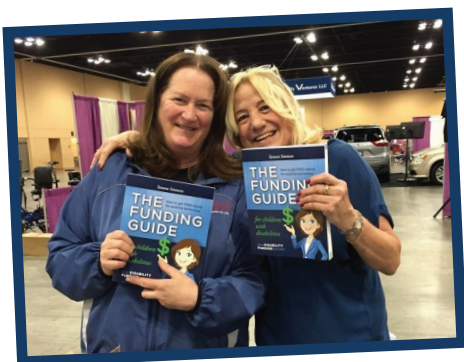
Much of the financial burden is imposed on the family. In far too many cases, the insurance company does not cover the costs to provide the necessary adaptive and specialized medical equipment a child with special needs will require to live a normal life. The stress this evokes for the entire family is overwhelming.

Parents are not equipped or experienced to find resources for financial help. In most cases, they are not even aware that assistance is available and it exists. In other cases, they are too humble to ask.

To make it easier for families to find funding sources, Tammy Simmons, founder of The Funding Project, has spent over 10,000 hours of funding research to compile all the necessary information to help them succeed. Her books, *Disability Funding Guide*, *Autism Funding Guide*, and the *Cancer Funding Guide* have been crucial in helping thousands of parents.

Simmons is co-owner of the family-owned, The Bike Rack in St. Charles, and director of development of its non-profit, Project Mobility, which provides adaptive cycling events and awards adaptive bicycles for children, adults, and wounded veterans with disabilities, autism or cancer. These bikes can be up to ten times more than the average \$200 to \$500 for a regular bike.

She learned first-hand how well-laid plans can go awry. Simmons' funding journey began when she set out on a mission to raise money for her brother's son,



Jacob, who has Cerebral Palsy. Over 20 years ago he was to receive a new and promising treatment using Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and at the last minute the insurance company did not approve the treatments. Simmons decided to help out and raise the \$12,000 he needed. Not having a clue on how to do that, she sat down at her computer and after a few weeks she raised the money needed. Jacob received his treatments and Hal didn't have to pay anyone back. It was free money!

There are many exciting success stories that have happened because of the Disability Funding Guide, but the most successful to date is the story of Melissa and Jody Copp, who have two sons using wheelchairs. Their home was made fully accessible through HGTV's hit show *Fixer Upper* with Chip and Joanna Gaines with football legend Tim Tebow; and received a new back yard from Make-a-Wish Foundation and a Disney trip from Variety of Texas. Not only did all of this happen, but in less than 48 hours Chip Gaines encouraged his fans to help and their donations paid off the Cops' mortgage! To see the full story and letter, visit thefundingproject.org.

Since the day Simmons began raising money for her nephew Jacob, she has had a few, as Oprah calls them, "lightbulb moments." One such moment occurred when she spoke to a mom who had reached out for help. The mom talked about seeing Melissa's story on HGTV and she asked Simmons to help her become the next Melissa Copp.

"I explained to her that would be impossible since (at that time *Fixer Upper* ended) it was really once in a lifetime," says Simmons. "But I told her she could get the same result, she just had to do it differently. She could reach out to many foundations and do one room at a time, having more people helping fund it. That is what she did and the last time we spoke she was working on her 3rd room."

Simmons could not stop thinking about what the mom had said.

"She told me if she had been handed my book when her daughter was two days old in the NICU instead of the pamphlet of resources the nurse said would help, her daughter would get the things she needs as she grows up," says Simmons. "She told me that pamphlet was a joke, that my book would have changed their lives and they would not have had to struggle

financially all those years. She told me I needed to get my book in every NICU to help these kids with their huge financial needs."

Simmons then formed The Funding Project to help many more families all at once, instead of one at a time, and get her books in every NICU throughout the country.

The Funding Project's mission is to provide the education, resources, and inspiration for parents, therapists, social workers, and more, by teaching them how to raise the funds needed for the products, services, and therapies that their child with a disability, autism, or cancer needs that insurance won't pay for.

The Funding Project achieves its goal through three main components: getting the Funding Guides into hospitals to be distributed to families and healthcare professionals; educating families through in-person or virtual workshops to teach families how to raise needed funds; and educating healthcare professionals through in-person or virtual workshops and training to teach them how to use the Funding Guides.

The books have been instrumental in helping parents to find ways to pay for their children's needs. Her first *Disability Guide* book inspired and enthused Simmons to continue her mission and to take it to another level to help children with autism and cancer.

Simmons has attended many conferences, held workshops, and has made connections with many companies who are able to offer sponsorships and support as a result.

"I hope to continue this mission and work with more hospitals and provide the Funding Guides and workshops to those vulnerable parents who do not know where to turn," said Simmons. "I am proud to have been able to help parents fill out grant applications to receive funding for their children's special needs."

Simmons' enthusiasm to help others resonates with every breath she takes and there's no stopping her to achieve even more.

If you are interested in holding a workshop for a group or your organization, email tammy@thefundingproject.org.

For more information, visit www.thefundingguides.com and www.thefundingproject.org