

Boca Raton News

49th Year / Issue 395

~ Covering Boca Raton and Delray Beach ~ 2 Sections / 48 Pages / 75 Cents

PLANNING AHEAD

Delray mother teaches parents how to ensure their autistic child is taken care of after their death

‘People say my child will be on Medicaid and the government will pay for them, but that’s not good for me.’

KAREN GREENBERG

By NICOL JENKINS
STAFF WRITER

Karen Greenberg knows what it’s like to be knee-deep in motherly duties.

She’s experienced all the normal strains of child rearing, in addition to the pressure that comes with raising a child with autism.

Greenberg’s son, Ricky, was diagnosed with the life-altering illness at birth.

“It never occurred to me that my child would not be normal,” Greenberg said. “When I first heard my child had autism, I prayed and hoped he would get better. You feel like there’s something you’re missing or something you can do to cure him.”

Ricky’s illness has left him virtually non-verbal and acting as a 4-year-old trapped in the body of a 17-year-old.

“Having a child with a disability is like waking up in Denmark,” Greenberg said. “You didn’t know you were going to be there, you don’t know the language, and you don’t want to be there. You feel bewildered.”

Even with all the daily challenges, the Delray Beach mother said she decided to turn her son’s illness into a pillar of hope for other families facing the same



Mother Karen Greenberg and husband Jaret Vogel work hand-in-hand to teach other parents who have children with autism the important of planning ahead to ensure their child’s future.

obstacles.

Greenberg and her husband Jaret Vogel combined their knowledge of financial planning and living with someone who has a disability to teach other parents what

they need to know to ensure their child is taken care of after they are no longer able to do so.

During the seminar, “Life Planning for Families with Disabilities,” Greenberg and her

husband discuss steps such as writing a letter of intent, creating a will, getting a trust fund set up for the child, talking to a lawyer and getting the right insurance.

Greenberg said she decided to teach the seminar because she wanted to bring an awareness to other parents about the necessary steps to keep their child comfortable long after they are gone.

“People say my child will be on Medicaid and the government will pay for them, but that’s not good for me,” she said. “I don’t want my child to be living with only the bare minimums. I want him to be able to have a nice birthday party with presents and be able to have enough means for summer camps and extra clothing and video games.”

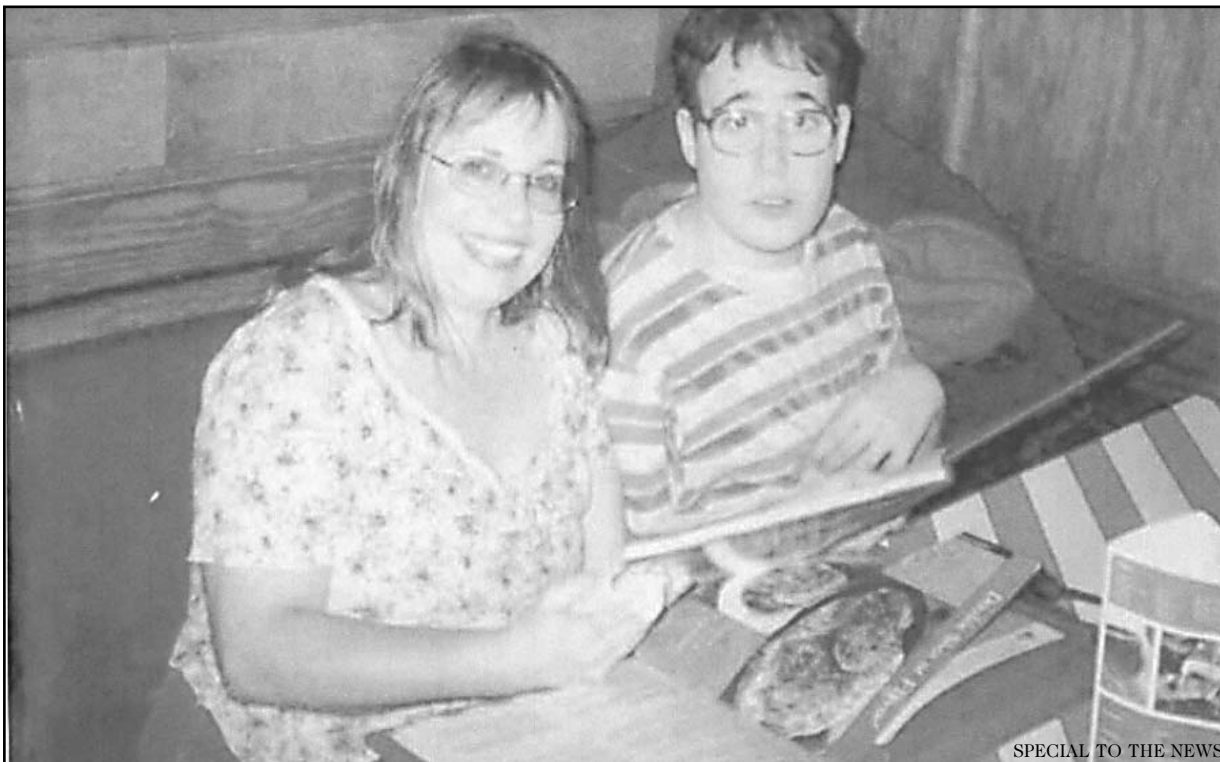
Vogel, a financial planner, said the seminar will bring a wake-up call to some parents who haven’t prepared for the inevitable.

“It came to be a shock to me how so many parents don’t have a will or life insurance,” he said. “If you were to have died yesterday, what would you have wanted for your family? It’s a harsh thing, but it’s a reality check”

Janet Kalman, who has a nephew diagnosed with autism and is Co-president of the Autism Society of America of the Palm Beaches, said the seminar helped her find some answers.

“It’s something that parents with children with disabilities really need to know,” she said. “I went to share the information with my family members so when they get older they can set up a trust fund so my nephew can be taken care of. They’ll walk away with a peace of mind knowing their child can be cared for once they can’t anymore.”

The next seminar will be at the Boca Raton campus of FAU in the College of Education on Tuesday, April 19 starting at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Karen Greenberg at 561-638-6945.



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

◀ Karen Greenberg with her son Ricky, who has autism. The mother had decided to teach other parents how to prepare for their child’s well being after their death.

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