

HOMETOWN HERO:

# Teresa Rimel & Lara Hannebohn

**“For Teresa and Lara both to have accepted Sarah, Geoffrey and I the way that they have with no questions asked and to have allowed us to become family is amazing.”**

Our intro into the world of autism and ASD came not as a result of my child’s diagnosis but as a result of a marriage. My husband’s daughter is on the spectrum, as a result of what I have learned from Lara and her mother Teresa, they are our nominees for Hometown Heroes.

In what would be considered a difficult situation under the best of times, we were introduced to my stepdaughter for the first time shortly after her father suffered a serious car accident. Teresa welcomed us into ‘Lara’s World’ and taught us what we needed to learn to understand the mysteries that are ASD.

When we first met Lara, she was a quiet socially withdrawn preteen who didn’t like to have a lot of activity going on around her. Enter Sarah and Geoffrey, my two loud, active, rambunctious and altogether typical ‘NT’ children. While the transition was not easy for any of us, Teresa was there and helped when we didn’t quite understand what Lara wanted. We went from ‘no thank you,’ which in Lara-speak means, ‘go away,’ to ‘Geoffrey, this way,’ meaning, ‘I want to play.’ We were all patient and thanks to the education that Teresa was always willing to provide things are going well for the most part.

Lara knows that Sarah and Geoffrey are her brother and sister and that if she needs anything either one of them will help her. She has taught us to value what makes us all different and to accept people no matter what their abilities are.

Teresa’s strength of character is awe-inspiring to all who have met her. In the 3 years we have known her, she has gone back to school, created an Autism Awareness Program that is in its 3rd year at Point Pleasant Elementary School, and fought tooth and nail to try and get Lara the help that she needs.

‘Lara’s world’ was once just her bedroom, but now with the help of Sarah and Geoffrey, we have been able to take her out into the world more often. Her strength at accepting change in a world that was once built entirely on routine floors me.

For Teresa and Lara both to have accepted Sarah, Geoffrey and I the way that they have with no questions asked and to have allowed us to become family is amazing. That strength and love they showed us has made us all stronger and together we know that we can overcome any obstacle. This is why I have made Lara and Teresa our Hometown Hero nominees.

**NOMINATED BY:** Jennie Hannebohn, Sarah and Geoffrey Conkle