

## **A Mother's Perspective**

### **The Appointment of Robert Kennedy, Jr. to Chair a Commission on Vaccine Safety from a Mother's Perspective**

by *Mary Wildman*

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has been asked by President-elect Donald Trump to chair a one-year commission on vaccine safety and scientific integrity. This was the best news that a parent who blames vaccines for their child's autism could ever imagine. I, Mary Wildman, am one such parent.

My husband, Davy, and I have always believed that our youngest son, Nickolas' autism was caused by a negative reaction to the MMR vaccine when he received the shot at 12 months old. Nickolas was developing typically. Every milestone was right on target and he even started to talk. After the vaccination, Nickolas stopped talking and hasn't said a word since. You see, it was because Nick stopped talking that I blamed the vaccine. I had believed at the time that the high fever that Nick developed when he was vaccinated had caused deafness, but it wasn't deafness after all, it was autism. In addition to Nickolas no longer talking, he also stopped playing typically with his toys, he stopped playing with his brother, and he had developed many negative behaviors, sensory issues, and aggression.

I had always believed that if we didn't share our experiences of what happened to Nickolas when he was vaccinated, then no one would know that there was a problem. They wouldn't know to investigate the vaccine issue and to make the vaccines safer for everyone. So, in November of 2000, our family was fortunate to have our story featured on a segment of the television show, 60 Minutes. The late Ed Bradley came to our home in Evans City, PA to interview our family and to meet Nickolas. I believe that the producer of the program chose our family because I had so many baby videos of Nickolas behaving typically before he plunged into the world of autism.

Nickolas, now 20 years old, is in his final year of school at Pressley Ridge School for Autism. He still has difficulty learning tasks that come so naturally and effortlessly to other students. We aren't sure what Nickolas will do after graduation, but we are investigating all options for him. We know for sure that Nickolas wouldn't be happy just sitting on our sofa, so finding a program for him is imperative.

With the appointment of Robert Kennedy, Jr. and a commission on vaccine safety and scientific integrity, I have to believe that the truth will finally be divulged. As an environmental attorney, Mr. Kennedy has been a longtime environmental activist and an outspoken vaccine critic. He has gained admiration in vaccine skeptic circles for his 2014 book, *Thimerosal: Let the Science Speak*, in which he argued that a mercury-based preservative used in some vaccines was linked to autism. He is very knowledgeable about the workings of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which approves the vaccines and recommends the childhood vaccine schedule.

Please know that our family is not anti-vaccine; after all, we had our children vaccinated. We believe that vaccines need to be safe for everyone, so families won't have to go through what we have had to endure with Nickolas. Robert Kennedy, Jr. is the best possible person to head this commission on vaccine safety and get to the bottom of this explosion in neuro-developmental disorders, including autism. This should be encouraging news to all, including those who truly stand on the side of science. A separate vaccine safety commission that is independent and not connected to the CDC, nor to the pharmaceutical companies sounds like a great move. Remember, it's all about protecting our children and doing what is best for them.