

**This is Autism Points of View by Autism Speaks, I'm Felipe Maya.**

**In this episode you'll meet the Mullen family which consists of Partners Lauren and Colleen and their three-year-old twin sons, Callan and Brennan - both boys are on the autism spectrum. The family was recently featured in a documentary-style video produced by Autism Speaks in a series that aims to tell the unique stories of individuals and families in the autism community. Colleen and Lauren, describe when they first noticed the signs of autism.**

**Lauren:**

Callan always have had some delays but we didn't, you know, when he was six months, we didn't go to autism. I think I was just kind of, going day by day and, oh it'll come, it'll come, but because Colleen was kind of in and out because of work, you know, traveling a lot. I think she would come home and go, gosh, wow. Why is he not responding to me?

**Colleen:**

The minute I found out that I thought maybe that I had the hunch that Callan might be on the spectrum; I went out and bought books and I started reading them front to back and I was incorporating techniques and I was trying to hold her accountable of doing the techniques and we were trying to do whatever we could until he was able to get a diagnosis.

**Lauren:**

And so we went to the next appointment on August 7th and met with a doctor and spent some time just with Callan and she did a really thorough evaluation and she said yes. Yes, he has autism. Again, we were so focused on Callan because it was more apparent with Callan than it was with Brennan, and then, so in the beginning of Colleen's season in November he was also diagnosed.

**Colleen:**

That early intervention piece is so important that ABA, all the therapies that are available at such a young age when your brain is developing was going to be so critical.

**Lauren:**

We did have some issues with getting the right ABA, but then once we got with crossroads and I think that began in December, end of November, and his progress really just continued and continued to be stable.

**Early screening and diagnosis for autism can make a lifetime of difference. Screening is the first step in understanding your child's world and helping them be the best they can be. Here's Breanna Maggart, Licensed Behavior Analyst and just one of the several therapists and developmental specialists that Callan and Brennan see at the ABA Clinic at Crossroads Center for Children.**

**Breanna Marggart:**

The importance of early intervention cannot be stressed enough, the earlier that we get kids into therapy and they have adequate numbers of hours. The more progress we see with them. The earlier that we can get them in, the quicker, they are catching up with their peers and more quickly closing that gap of the delay between themselves and their peers.

**Lauren:**

We just approach everything as what's the best we can do for our kids, our partnership and then once we had kids - what's the best thing for our children and family? Because without all of those resources and a mother's hunch...

**Colleen:**

And your time.

**Lauren:**

Yeah and my time wouldn't be available though, if she didn't have the job she had. She gets to be the head coach at U. Albany, and she does that primarily so she can provide this to our family. Obviously, she has a passion for coaching and a passion for basketball, but it's mostly driven by what can I do for my family. Thank goodness U. Albany values women's sports and puts her in a financial position for me to be able to do this.

**Colleen is the head coach of University at Albany's women's basketball team. And one day, shortly after learning of her twin sons' autism diagnosis, she opened up to her team and told them the news. To her surprise, afterwards, one member of the team revealed something that gave her hope.**

**Colleen:**

We ran a team meeting and I told the team that I wanted to share something personally with them. Taniya was a freshman. Everybody's sitting around, and we finished up our

meeting and I just said to the team you know, I want to share something personally that's going on with me and my family and I just said you know my son Callan was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and then we did a big group hug and after we did the big group hug, this one comes up to me ,and Taniya told me that she was on the spectrum and that she was diagnosed when she was a young kid and you know and that it was gonna be ok.

**Taniya:**

I was really diagnosed when I was five, but my mom really didn't see the symptoms until I was about six. And it was hard for me because I was so closed then and when I realized I go ok, I have autism. This is who I am. Then I started playing basketball. It was just the moment I made my first basket. It was a magical moment for me because I'm like I can accomplish things.

**Colleen:**

Every time I try to think about projects, the future, what will the future look like for my boys. I just think about Taniya and I think about you know the hope that she's brought to my family. You never know what people are dealing with on a daily basis. You never know what's going on, whether it's somebody at the grocery store, you know that's struggling with a with a kid that's not cooperating or a bad driver in New York City. You really don't know what people are experiencing in their lives and to just choose to be kind.

**Thank you for listening to this episode of Autism Points of View. For a transcript of this episode, resources about screening and early intervention or to watch the video this episode was based on, visit [autism speaks dot org slash podcast](https://autismspeaks.org/podcast). And make sure to subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts to get new episodes as soon as they're available. This episode was written and produced by me and edited by Autism Speaks intern, Nicholas Scognamiglio.**