



Office of
Jason Crowell State
Senator

The Crowell Connection



Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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Missouri Families Benefit from Autism Funding

Throughout Missouri, there are more families struggling with autism than with pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. The disorder is the 6th most prevalent disability and the second most common developmental disability in the United States. One in every 150 children born are diagnosed with some level of the autism spectrum disorder. This is why I have worked so hard to make sure that the state does all it can to help those families who face the challenge of raising an autistic child.

The fight against the devastating affects of autism can be won through research, education, and treatment. There are organizations throughout the state that are working to improve the lives of the families struggling with autism, and the General Assembly is dedicated to providing funding so that this important work can continue and thrive. This year we will spend \$3.9 million towards autism, which is double what the state spent last year.



Research has found that autism diagnosis and treatment can be especially beneficial if it is started early, as soon as parents notice developmental problems. \$2.4 million will be used to provide more specialized training and expand staff at local centers, reducing waiting lists and expanding access to evaluation and treatment. Families will have quicker access to the care they need, improving the lives of Missouri's autistic children.

Southeast Missouri families struggling with autism will be able to directly benefit from the increased funding. Over the past two years we have been fortunate to secure

\$400,000 in grants for the Tailor Institute in Cape Girardeau. This organization provides help for those who are autistic on the high functioning spectrum, allowing them to reach their full potential. Living independently and obtaining employment are just some of the goals that can be achieved through the Tailor Institute's work.



Staff and patients at the Tailor Institute in Cape Girardeau.

Construction will soon begin on a \$2.6 million Southeast Missouri Autism Center. This center, the first of its kind in Southeast Missouri, will help families that once had to travel as far as Columbia, St. Louis, or Kansas City for treatment. The Southeast Missouri Autism Center will be a destination where young children with autism can go to receive high-quality diagnostic and treatment services from a multi-disciplinary team, where today's and tomorrow's professionals can go to receive the best training available in the region, and where state-of-the art intervention research is conducted. Construction of this facility is planned for the Fall of 2007 and completion is planned for Summer of 2008.



An artist's rendering of the Southeast Missouri Autism Center after completion.

As the impact of autism continues to grow, it begins to affect more and more families in Missouri. It is hard to find a person who doesn't know someone whose life has been affected by autism. The impact is especially felt by the parents of autistic children who watch their children struggle with developmental milestones that others grasp naturally. This is why it is so important to invest time and effort into helping the families that are so profoundly impacted by autism. This year's funding increase will help raise autism awareness throughout the state and improve the options for treatment and research that will

better the lives of Missouri's children.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

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