



The Bag That Opened Doors

*Building Belonging Through
Community Partnership*

Wyoming County



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



WHY THIS MATTERS

- Everyday spaces are often not inclusive
- Families face barriers beyond clinical care
- Inclusion has to work in real life, not just on paper



WHAT WE MISS WITHOUT LISTENING



- Assumptions vs. lived experience
- Needs families don't always voice
- Barriers we don't see in data

INTENTIONAL LISTENING

1

**BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS**

2

**MEET FAMILIES
WHERE THEY ARE**

3

BE PRESENT

4

**BUILD TRUST
OVER TIME**

5

**LET FAMILIES
DEFINE THEIR NEEDS**

WHAT FAMILIES TOLD US

“

I can't even grab a coffee.

“

Errands are overwhelming.

“

I don't feel like we belong there.

“

It's just easier to not go.

FROM VOICE TO ACTION

What's Included?

Weighted Lap Pad- provides calming pressure to help with grounding and focus

Noise-Canceling Headphones- Helps reduce overwhelming sounds in noisy spaces

Fidget Toys- Keep your hands busy and your mind at ease

Feelings Chart- A simple tool to help express emotions when words may be hard to find

Local Resource Packet- A guide to local support services and programs in Wyoming County.



WHERE RELATIONSHIPS MADE THE DIFFERENCE



 **Vertical Cafe**
December 30, 2025 · 🌐

We understand the challenges parents have taking their special needs children out to public spaces. If you venture out and have a child on the spectrum or has any type of sensory issues you are welcomed here! Wyoming County Children and Youth has so kindly dropped off a sensory bag to help! If and When you visit with your child just ask for the sensory bag. It comes with a weighted blanket, headphones and a variety of fidget toys!

Thank you Wyoming County Health Department for putting this together! **#autism**
#wyomingcounty #specialneedsparenting See less

 458  36  68  

- Local businesses said yes
- Conversations turned into collaboration
- Supporting and empowering business owners

WHAT CHANGED

- Increased community interest
- New partnership opportunities
- Families feel more welcomed

A screenshot of social media comments, likely from Facebook, showing a list of user avatars, names, and their messages. The comments are positive and express appreciation for something shared. The background is a gradient of purple and blue.

Nicole A Warner
Love this! ❤️
18w Like Reply

Jenn Hall (Top fan)
How wonderful!
18w Like Reply

Sarah Lashley
This is wonderful!!!
18w Like Reply

Naomi Ellis
This is awesome
18w Like Reply

Danielle Ellis Ferry
Loooooove!
18w Love Reply 1 ❤️

Kim Marie Monson Leach
Love this so so much!
18w Like Reply

Marcia Mattoon
That is awesome!
18w Love Reply 1 ❤️

Teri C Williams
That is so sweet that they did that for the kids! God bless ❤️🙏
18w Like Reply

Lisa Snider-Gauthier
Love this!!
18w Love Reply 1 ❤️

Chelsea Lynn
Us parents thank you 🥹❤️ How amazing!!
18w Love Reply 3 ❤️

Sandy Obrien-Jones
Love this so much
18w Like Reply

Darlin Ruthie
This is wonderful! For the record, **Vertical Cafe** is a very sensory friendly place! Our family appreciates that!
18w Love Reply 4 ❤️👍

OTHER WAYS WE'VE LISTENED



- Sensory-friendly events
- Participation in local coalitions
- Advocacy for CYSHCN voices in systems
- Family feedback & relationships

WHAT'S NEXT?



Expand Sensory Bag
Partnerships



Partner with Schools



Continue with Community
Conversations

CONTACT INFORMATION



Public Health
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