

VoyageDenver

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Hidden Gems: Meet Erin Schneider of Mountain Summit Consulting

Today we'd like to introduce you to Erin Schneider.

Hi Erin, can you start by introducing yourself? We'd love to learn more about how you got to where you are today?

I am the mother of two beautiful children: a neurotypical daughter and an autistic son. When my son was born, I immediately had a mother's intuition that something was a little different. He was difficult to soothe and was very colicky in his first year. We went from doctor to doctor trying to figure out what we could do to help, but Henry always seemed to defy definition.

As he grew older, we also recognized Henry was speech delayed. His pediatrician suggested a state-funded early intervention program, and that was where Henry had his first exposure to speech and occupational therapy. It helped him, but he aged out of the program at three years old. Without an autism diagnosis, insurance wouldn't cover additional therapy.

We hesitated for more than a year before deciding to get in line to have Henry assessed for autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

After a six-month wait, he was diagnosed with Level Two ASD in April of 2020, right in the middle of the COVID pandemic. The news was hard to hear at first, but I got right to work trying to find the very best help for our son.

I was immediately overwhelmed with long lists of providers, confusing mixes of therapies and endless applications and bureaucracy. It was extremely time-consuming, and I never felt like there was any clear path and no one to guide us. With a lot of time and effort, I found therapy providers that were a great fit for my son and our family, and the progress he has made in the past year has been incredible. I know that couldn't have happened if we didn't find the right help.

Going through this made me realize that other parents out there also want to find the right help to get the best outcomes for their children, but taking on the search is like a full-time job. Parents have enough to juggle already. I decided to put my experience, my network, and my project management skills to work helping other families like ours. In May of 2021, I launched Mountain Summit Consulting to address those needs and work with parents to identify and create shortlists of qualified providers.



I'm sure you wouldn't say it's been obstacle free, but so far would you say the journey has been a fairly smooth road?

Finding the right path for my son was and is a journey filled with twists, turns and roadblocks. Getting Henry's autism diagnosis right at a time when the world was shutting down in response to COVID-19 presented all kinds of challenges. It took time for us to find therapists that would come to the home and provide services. We also had to make sure insurance lined up and figure out how to afford the help our son would need.

All the while, we had major ups and downs with Henry's behavior and had to juggle working and being at home with two cooped-up kids during a pandemic. It was a stressful time, but the more research I did, the more I found out about support programs and professionals that could help us.

Looking back, I am so thankful for how far we've come, but I also can't help but think how much time and heartache could have been saved if I only knew then what I know now. Any parent, whether they have children with disabilities or not, faces hard times and challenges. The important thing to know is that there is help out there and not be afraid to ask for it.

Appreciate you sharing that. What should we know about Mountain Summit Consulting?

Mountain Summit Consulting works with Denver-area parents, offering customized solutions and connecting children with the best therapy and support. Getting news of a diagnosis can be emotional, and parents are immediately

overwhelmed with long, faceless lists of service providers, murky definitions of available therapies, and confusing insurance benefits. Sorting through all of it to find answers and get the right help seems daunting, if not impossible.

I take the time to hear each family's story and understand the specific needs of their child. Equipped with that information, I do the research to identify the service providers that are the best fit for each unique situation. As I put together recommendations, I take into account things like parenting philosophy, insurance, availability, financial situation, and more. In the end, the family receives a short-list of highly qualified options to choose from.

There are nonprofits and listings out there that can provide raw information, but my approach is very hands-on and personal. I seek to get to know each family, their child and their situation so I can match them with the best possible providers for their specific needs. Having gone through this process myself, I know

what families are experiencing. I wished there would have been someone to guide me and give me a helping hand. That's why I founded Mountain Summit Consulting. I want to help remove some of that stress and work from parents and give them more time to focus on their children and themselves.

Any big plans?

Right now, having just launched a few months ago, my main plans are to educate and inform families about the help that is available. There are so many resources for children with disabilities, and they often aren't very well-publicized. My goal is to continue growing Mountain Summit Consulting so I can help as many families as possible.

