

# CAC Corner: The Stare | CPD

**Kelly Smith**

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*This month's CAC Corner was written by CAC member Laura Anderson and originally posted on the [Mother's of Autistic Kids \(Big MAKS\)](#) web site. Anderson is a member of the CPD Consumer Advisory Council, and mother of Ty, a child with autism.*

As a parent of a child with autism you become all too aware of "The Stare". Because many of our kids lack the visual cue that they have a disability ( a wheel chair, walker, distinguishable physical characteristic) the looks and stares can feel like a judgement or criticism. The stares tend to come with the verbal outbursts, flapping, slapping clapping, hooting, screaming (you get the picture). Many of these outward expressions of autism can be excused when the child is younger, but the tables are turned when your son is 6'3#, 180 lbs, has facial hair and a deep bass voice.

We were the recipients of THE STARE Saturday night while being seated for dinner at Chili's. As we walked to our table, Ty (see the above description) sneezed directly over a mans plate. \*STARE\* We hurried to get seated so we could order the gentleman another dinner (yes, we replace many dinners that we take food from – and drinks that we put fingers in). Before we could get Ty into the booth, the gentleman was up out of his seat heading for the manager. My husband, Austin, went after him to

explain that we were going to replace his dinner and to offer our apologies, wanting to let him know that Ty has autism, and has not learned the valuable skill of covering his mouth when he sneezes or coughs.

I watched from several seats away as these two men were engaged in their conversation, trying to catch a word of their exchange, hoping that Austin would stay calm. I assumed we would be asked to leave after replacing the meal.

The man turned away from Austin and walked toward our table...I was ready for the lecture..."You shouldn't take your son out in public, you should teach him, you should..." A conversation we have all heard too many times.

He approached the table and introduced himself as a Special Education Teacher from Ogden and insisted on buying us dessert. He went on to explain his love for his job and the students he worked with, and how happy he was to see us out as a family.

This man is my hero – and he can stare at us anytime he wants to.

Laura – Ty's Mom

*The CPD Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) composed of individuals with disabilities, family members, and staff liaisons advises the CPD director about the Center's impact on systems change, advocacy, and capacity building. The CAC approves the CPD's annual goals and regularly reviews progress towards their accomplishment.*