

Medications and supplements often out of reach for impoverished families

MaryLynn Schiavi, Correspondent 3:56 p.m. EST November 27, 2015

Wish 3: Funding to provide over-the-counter medications and nutritional supplements to families in need — \$712



(Photo: MARK R. SULLIVAN)

For families living at or below the poverty line the cost of nutritional supplements or the unexpected need to purchase over-the-counter cough and cold medications stretches the family's resources to the limit and forces them to choose between medication and food.

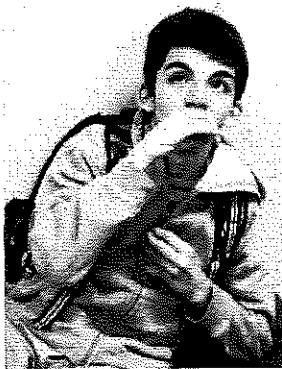
The financial drain can be even more difficult for families with parents or children who have developmental/intellectual disabilities that can impact their lives on many levels.

In an effort to assist such families, The Parents & Children Together (PACT) Program administered through the Arc of Somerset County works with parents and children in a variety of ways to help them live healthful

and productive lives.

PACT is a community-based, parenting-education program for families headed by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program helps families access community services so they can live, work, and parent independently. PACT is currently serving 16 families primarily in Somerset, but also offers assistance to those in Middlesex and Hunterdon counties.

PACT staff members attend and participate in child evaluations, communicate with teachers to enrich student learning and address issues that might interfere with progress in school, participate in the child's transition from school to post-secondary education, paid employment, or a training program for employment and help families access and utilize primary and preventative health care.



The Arc of Somerset County's Parent and Children Together Program. This program helps impoverished families who have children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For this wish, we are trying to raise enough money to provide over-the-counter cold and cough medications and nutritional supplements for families who otherwise can't afford the help. Here Nicholas Chase, age 15 of Bound Brook is part of the program is photographed at the ARC of Somerset in Manville on November 12, 2015 (Photo: MARK R. SULLIVAN)

Children in a PACT family have unique difficulties that translate into social and economic barriers, according to Jeanne Guarnieri, director of PACT.

"Poverty increases the likelihood of poor nutrition and other health problems known to impact success in school," she said, adding that over-the-counter cold and cough remedies, Pediasure and doctor-recommended BOOST drinks are not covered by insurance.

Marje Graham, who has served as a home interventionist for 29 years with the Arc, said that parents in the PACT program want to provide their children with a balanced diet of nutrients, including vitamins and minerals.

Having a supply to offer these families would be a tremendous help, she said, adding, "Through the PACT program we are able to help families to grow together and support one another and this is extremely gratifying."

Print out the coupon to donate. Scroll down for more 2015 Wish Book stories.