

Meet Mylene and Brian Braggs...

The Founders of Shining Star Therapy

They are best friends. Husband and wife. The parents of three beautiful children. And since the spring of 2007, when they established Shining Star Therapy, Mylene and Brian Braggs have also been business partners.

At a glance, Mylene and Brian are like many couples raising a family. They host playdates, help with homework, prepare dinner, attend school functions, carpool, wash and dry what feels like 212 loads of laundry each week, periodically remind their kids to stop squabbling over nothing, and handle countless other parent-related responsibilities.

After the kids are asleep they talk about what transpired during the workday. How the new patients responded to their first treatment. Whether there were any snags in submitting the day's billing to insurance companies and the State. Which venue to use for their next all-company meeting. How the staff is adapting to the new cloud-based mobile workforce application. And so on.

With years of experience as parents and business owners, the Braggs have a good handle on family life and running the company. There is one area of their lives they don't have down to a science, though: meeting the ongoing special needs of their daughter Gabrielle.

When Gabrielle was seven months old Mylene and Brian received an emergency call from their daycare provider that their baby was unresponsive. Over the course of several weeks, the couple learned that Gabrielle had contracted a rare disease of the central nervous system called Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis (ADEM). ADEM attacks brain tissue. Every child it strikes responds differently to treatment, but it leaves up to 40 percent with neurological deficits. Gabrielle acts and plays like other 9-year-olds in many ways, but she also struggles day to day with age-appropriate

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behaviors and emotions. And there is no way to predict how she will progress in the years to come.

"We are responsible for a special needs child, and two other children, and they are our top priority," explains Brian. In 2013, the Braggs were living in Central Florida. Mylene asked Gabrielle's doctor where in the country they should live to provide Gabrielle with the best academic and therapeutic resources to ensure the best

outcome. The answer was Naperville, Illinois. Six months later the Braggs relocated.

Over the years Mylene and Brian have discovered an unexpected benefit to their personal circumstances. "We are far more empathetic than we used to be," admits Brian. "We have a special needs child. We know firsthand how worrisome and emotional draining it is to care for a child with challenges."

Their personal experiences have shaped the culture of their company, too. When they hire therapists they look for more than expertise. They demand that employees are able to empathize – not merely sympathize – with the children they treat. "Mylene is a gifted, highly-skilled and sought-after occupational therapist," says Brian. "She also sets the expectations for our team, and relies on her instincts and insights to effectively guide our therapists week after week. This ensures they deliver the best possible treatment."

In 2014, the Shining Star team administered 21,000 treatment sessions throughout 17 counties in Illinois. This year Mylene and Brian hope to take on an additional 200-400 patients. "The list of children in need of therapeutic services is staggering. It's upsetting to see it, frankly, and it grows weekly. We are determined to reduce the length of the list. We are dedicated to helping as many children as possible live a more enriching, meaningful, life," says Brian.



Shining Star Therapy
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