

## You eliminate isolation, guilt and depression. Helping the "silent heroes"-- typical siblings of children with special needs.

When Jill's House first opened its doors in 2010 to celebrate children with special needs and renew their families, we did not realize the huge impact respite would have on typical siblings.

The "typically developing" brothers and sisters of the children we serve lead anything but typical lives. Out of sheer necessity, their parents pour attention, finances, worry and time on their children with special needs. As a result, the typical children--or "quiet heroes"--often feel neglected, confused, embarrassed and afraid.



*Thank you for bringing relief to typical siblings like Elise and Evie who met at Jill's House's Typical Sibling Night.*

For every child Jill's House serves, there are, on average, two typical siblings at home. These "shadow children" frequently sit quietly in the background, ignoring their own needs and desires. Many of them take on responsibilities as caretakers and have to grow up early. They can't invite friends over because their homes are so chaotic, and they can't go out as a family because their siblings can be so disruptive. So they stay at home, alone. Many also feel significant guilt and shame for wishing things were different. Luckily, respite changes everything for children. For example, Taylor, 17, says the only reason he can go to college without feeling guilty is because of the rest his mom gets from Jill's House.



*Because of you, Taylor (right) can pursue his dream of college and football without guilt or fear in leaving his mom and brother Brady behind.*

Taylor's dad, a former NFL player, left the family when Taylor's younger brother Brady was diagnosed with autism. The boys have not seen their father in more than 10 years. Since then, Taylor has stepped up into the responsibility as the man of his family. Now, Taylor is poised to head to college on a football scholarship of his own. "At first I questioned whether or not I should even go to college," Taylor shared. "I worried about my mom handling it all when I go away. She has already been left behind with so much on her plate."

At 6'2" tall, Brady towers over his mom and has unpredictable behaviors. But Brady's regular visits to Jill's House make it possible for Taylor's mom to get the breaks she needs, plus Brady's after-school visits to Jill's House have helped him manage his behaviors better. "Thank you for being there for my mom and little brother," said Taylor. "Jill's House is the reason I can go to college without feeling guilty about leaving them behind."

When you support Jill's House, you help relieve Taylor and hundreds more children like him from isolation and pain. "We see this population as one that needs rest and relief every bit as much as--or, in some cases, even more than--their parents," said Dana Hecht, Jill's House's director of Family Relations. "We work to bring them together through education and events such as our Typical Sibling Night to let them know we understand how they feel and that they are not alone in their feelings of desperation, seclusion and depression."

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As the year comes to a close, we humbly ask you to help the quiet heroes of the families Jill's House serves. Help give them a few hours or days of relief to just be kids. Please [give today](#).

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