

# The emotional journey of autism

By Lisa Moore

The emotional journey of autism is not always an easy one. It is an overwhelming path filled with feelings of shock, anger, hope, grief, acceptance, advocacy and unconditional love.

My sweet Bella has non-verbal Level 3 autism, and is now 9 years old. During the years, I have felt every one of the feelings listed above.

I still remember the day we received the diagnosis; I sat in that parking lot filled with anger, shock, and disbelief. This could not be happening to my sweet girl. The doctors are wrong.

When you are told your child has autism, you hope it will at least be diagnosed as high functioning. These children go on to live normal lives with just a little extra therapy and help. They will graduate from school, go on to build careers and families, but my baby will need support the rest of her life unless the Lord intervenes.

As the years passed, it became clear that their diagnosis was correct. So, we began the process of setting up meetings to discuss treatment options. I became hopeful that with early intervention, she would catch up

quickly to her peers.

We began the therapies, school and later had to add medications as the years passed. I kept the prayers going. Every day, I would ask the Lord to heal her. To help her to talk and be able to communicate her wants and needs to us.

With each passing year, Bella was making little progress in therapy and still not talking. My hope soon turned to despair. What if God doesn't heal her? What if she is like this the rest of her life?

When Bella was young, I could mask her autism because her shrieks and actions could sometimes mimic those of other children, but as she grew older, she started to stand out. I could no longer cover it up. I had to face the fact that this is our life. This is her life.

I have spent so many nights crying myself to sleep and begging God to heal her. And night after night, year after year, still no words. I often try to imagine what she goes through being trapped in a body and unable to let us know what she is thinking or feeling. What does she want to eat or drink? What does she want to do? These are questions we ask, and they always go un-



answered. So, we have to make these decisions for her.

When she is crying or upset, we have to try to figure out why. Is she sick, in pain, scared or hungry? The list goes on and on. When it comes to dinner, we have a rotation in place of her favorite foods, so she has something different each meal. Maybe she doesn't want chicken nuggets at that time; she'd rather have fish sticks. Maybe she wants pop instead of Kool-Aid. Maybe she wants a blueberry yogurt instead of a cotton candy one that day.

I have grieved so much for her over the years. I would give anything to take this away from her. I would gladly carry this burden if the Lord would let me. But after years of grieving for a life that may never be, I have slowly come to accept it.

I have looked at the growth she has experienced over these

nine years. She still can't talk, but she is starting to use her speech device to point to items she wants. She has recently started getting our hands and taking us to things she wants. She has started to get snacks out of the cabinet and bring them to us when she wants them. For all of the growth she has experienced, I am forever grateful.

Nine years into this journey, and I finally have peace about her diagnosis. The Lord has blessed me to see the beauty in it. I see the purest of hearts every day. When I look at my beautiful girl, I'm getting a glimpse of heaven on earth. I see love in its purest form. Bella is the definition of unconditional love, and how blessed I am to get to be a part of her beautiful life.

The autism journey is not an easy one, and it's filled with so many ups and downs, but it is a journey that I wouldn't miss for anything. I get to make a difference in Bella's life by advocating for her in every way. I will always fight for her and kids like her to be accepted and included in all things and places. I will always be searching for new therapies or treatments to help improve her quality of life because that is all I want for her. I want her to

have a happy and beautiful life in every way possible. I will care for her and fight for her until my last breath.

No matter what path of the autism spectrum you are currently on, know that there are better days ahead. There is help, there is peace, and beauty in this life, if you choose to see it. And when the bad days come, hold on and know another good day is on the horizon.

I can never thank the Lord enough for giving me our precious Bella. She has been one of my life's greatest blessings. He has been with us every step of this journey, and we couldn't have made it without him. I encourage you to read his word, trust in him, and lean on him during every path of life.

Psalms 127:3: "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him."

1 Corinthians 13:4: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not boast, it is not proud."

1 Corinthians 13:7 "It always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

*Lisa Moore is the regional office manager for Appalachian Newspapers. She can be reached at lmoore@news-expressky.com.*

## Kentucky Power asks PSC for approval for Mitchell Plant cooling tower project

Special to Appalachian Newspapers

Kentucky Power said in a statement on Feb. 17 that it has filed an application with the Kentucky Public Service Commission seeking approval to construct a new cooling tower at the Mitchell Plant in West Virginia.

The statement said the project is necessary to ensure continued access to reliable baseload energy at the lowest cost for customers.

Kentucky Power, the statement said, will invest approximately \$95.5 million to rebuild the cooling tower. For the average residential customer using 1,206 kWh per month, the monthly bill is expected to rise about 2.3 percent when the project is completed in 2029, the statement said.

Beginning in 2027, customers may see smaller, temporary rate impacts of roughly 1 percent during construction; these early impacts are not in addition to the 2.3 percent projected for 2029, Kentucky Power said in the statement.

Kentucky Power's share of Mitchell Plant, the statement said, represents approximately 780 megawatts of baseload coal-fired power serving customers across

Eastern Kentucky. The statement said the new cooling tower will help ensure the plant is available to serve customers now and in the future.

The Mitchell cooling tower project, the statement said, addresses structural deterioration identified during recent reinforcement work. Engineering evaluations determined that continued long-term operation of the current structure is not viable, and construction of a new cooling tower is critical, the statement said.

"We have seen the value of having a baseload generation available, especially in times of extreme weather like we experienced at the end of January," said Cindy Wiseman, president and chief operating officer of Kentucky Power. "Although there are some customers who do not like that this plant is located in a neighboring state, continued investment in our coal plant is hands down the most reasonable solution for customers from both a reliability and cost standpoint. Building a new cooling tower protects reliability, avoids the loss of existing generation, and helps ensure we can continue to deliver dependable energy to our customers in the most

affordable way possible."

The proposed project will undergo review by the Kentucky Public Service Commission. The West Virginia Public Service Commission will also review and issue an order on this project since Mitchell Plant is jointly owned with Wheeling Power. Additional information about the filing is available on the Kentucky Public Service Commission's website.

The case number is 2026-00001.

## Pike man sentenced to five years in drug case

A News-Express Staff Report

A Pike County man has been sentenced to serve five years in prison on fentanyl and methamphetamine trafficking charges.

According to court documents, on Feb. 13, Pike Circuit Judge Howard Keith Hall sentenced Roy Kent Cline, 27, of Smith Fork Road, Phelps, to serve five years on charges of first-degree trafficking in a controlled substance (fentanyl) and first-degree trafficking in a controlled substance (methamphetamine).

The sentence was recommended by the office of Pike Commonwealth's Attorney Bill Slone as part of a plea deal, documents show.

Cline, court documents show, was originally arrested in July 2024 at a

traffic safety checkpoint.

According to an arrest citation, during the stop, Cline was found to be in possession of a backpack which contained 21

grams of fentanyl, more than 3 grams of methamphetamine, a large amount of cash, a large baggie of smaller plastic baggies of a type used in narcotics trafficking and digital scales.

Cline has been held in the Pike County Detention Center since February.



Roy K. Cline

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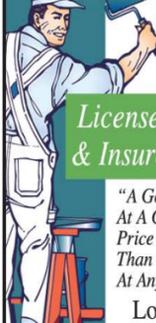
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