



Kinderling celebrates Disability Pride Month

by Laszlo Jajczay

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In this photo, we see Dr. Douglas engaging with a patient. Photos courtesy of Roshni Karthikeyan.

As the nation marks Disability Pride Month in July, Kinderling—a nonprofit based in Washington—is celebrating by uplifting the voices and stories of neurodivergent children, their families, and the professionals who support them. Kinderling is an organization that supports neurodivergent children by welcoming children with diverse abilities and their families, providing them with the tools and resources they need to succeed and thrive.

Founded to provide early intervention services to children with disabilities and developmental delays, Kindering has grown into a vital resource for thousands of families across the region. With locations in Bothell, Bellevue, and Renton, the organization focuses on inclusive, family-centered education and therapy designed to help children thrive.

At the heart of Kindering's mission are professionals like Dr. Katherine Douglas, a speech-language pathologist who works with children from birth to age three at the Bothell campus.

"I support children who have differences in how they communicate—whether they use spoken words, sign language, or communication devices," said Dr. Douglas, who recently celebrated eight years at Kindering. "My job is to help them participate more fully in their world by teaching ways to express what they need, want, or feel."

Douglas, who holds a clinical doctorate in speech-language pathology, has studied the importance of building strong therapeutic alliances between providers and families, especially across cultural lines. One of her most important tools? Parent coaching.

"I only see a child for maybe an hour a week, so it's crucial to teach parents how to support their child's learning every day," she said. "That might be helping a child learn new words or navigate challenging behaviors like meltdowns in a developmentally appropriate way."

Douglas also emphasizes compassion over correction, especially when children are overwhelmed. "Sometimes parents focus on fixing the problem, asking lots of questions, and it just adds stress," she said. "Instead, it's about helping a child regulate their emotions and find calm."

Stephanie Walsh knows that learning curve firsthand. Her daughter Maisie was born at just 25 weeks, weighing barely over one pound. After a four-month stay in the NICU, Maisie was connected with Kindering therapists within a week of coming home.

"We had occupational, speech, and feeding therapists right away," said Walsh. "It was still overwhelming—but Kindering helped guide us through the maze of resources and support."

Maisie, now a thriving toddler, continues to benefit from the therapies and classes offered through Kindering.

"The support we've received has been incredible," Walsh said. "It's helped us understand who Maisie is, what she needs, and how to support her best."

Both Walsh and Dr. Douglas agree: when raising a neurodivergent child, the journey is deeply individual.

“Parents sometimes expect their child to behave a certain way based on age,” said Douglas. “But development isn’t one-size-fits-all. It’s about meeting each child where they are and recognizing their unique strengths.”

As a parent advocate, Walsh often shares her experiences with others who are just starting on the path.

“There are so many resources in Washington, but figuring out where to start can be overwhelming,” she said. “Connecting with experts and organizations like Kindering makes a huge difference.”

Disability Pride Month serves as both a personal and professional point of reflection for Dr. Douglas, who identifies as autistic and lives with OCD.

“Thanks to the ADA, I can access support and seek accommodations without fear,” she said. “My goal is to ensure the children I work with also receive equitable support—to live their best lives and feel included.”

Walsh shares that same hope for her daughter. “Every parent wants their child to be safe, loved, and valued,” she said. “Disability Pride Month is a reminder that our communities are better when we create space for everyone.”

Both women are finding ways to mark the month in meaningful ways. Dr. Douglas is sharing educational materials with families and celebrating with classroom treats. Walsh recently spoke at the Woodinville City Council meeting as the city officially recognized Disability Pride Month.

To learn more about Kindering and its services—or how the organization is celebrating this month—visit www.kindering.org (<http://www.kindering.org>). For resources on how to support individuals with disabilities, Walsh recommends www.thearc.org (<https://thearc.org/blog/why-and-how-to-celebrate-disability-pride-month/>), a national organization advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.