



Educating, Assisting, Supporting, and Informing through this newsletter...
A newsletter for and by parents with sons & daughters with disabilities and education advocates.

Families Together, Inc.

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Statewide Spanish parent line 1-800-499-9443

(All toll free numbers for Kansas
parents & education advocates)

www.familiestogetherinc.org

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Peytn Belongs

By Lori Burnshire

Each day at 3:10, Peytn would emerge from the front doors of the middle school with a smile on his face and something to fidget with in his hand. And, each day he would find me standing under the large tree to meet him. From there we would walk together along the row of buses rapidly filling with students. The roar of the bus engines was overwhelming. Yet, still smiling, Peytn would use his thumbs to gently push the underside of each earlobe until the lobes covered the openings to his ears as we walked on.

It was usual to hear an occasional "Hi Peytn" or "See you tomorrow Peytn" from students on the bus. However, on this day I noticed an arm, stretching out of the very back window on the very last bus and frantically waving a white envelope. As we get closer a girl's voice yells out over the hum of the engine "Peytn! Peytn! Here, it's an invitation to my birthday party, I hope you can come!" Without missing a beat, Peytn slid his thumb from his ear, raising his shoulder to take its place and retrieved the envelope.

As we settle in the car and Peytn opens his invitation, I can't help but reflect on his school experience. Even before Peytn started preschool, our family knew we wanted him to be included with all kids. We felt strongly about the benefits of inclusion but mostly we felt it's what was right for Peytn. Despite our best efforts, our preschool and elementary road to inclusion had a number of speed bumps. It was a good lesson in what worked and what didn't work. By the time middle school rolled around it seemed we had finally found that winning combination for inclusion; a dedicated team of teachers, para's and related service staff; a school principal who had high expectations for all students; and a circle of middle school friends who welcomed Peytn in school and extracurricular activities. At home we hoped to enhance that experience by continuing to include Peytn in family and community activities. Whether it was cheering for his brother at a baseball game, shopping at the local grocery store, or getting to know the neighbors during evening walks through the neighborhood, we encouraged Peytn's participation whenever possible. It wasn't long before folks in the community began to know Peytn by name. It also wasn't long before we noticed marked improvements in Peytn's social, behavioral and academic skills.

Peytn is now a junior in high school where his inclusionary education continues. He continually surprises so many with his abilities. He has demonstrated talents which may have remained hidden had he not had an opportunity to be included in regular classes. He recently received an award for a self portrait painted in art class. During his sophomore year, in computer class, he developed an autism awareness presentation which played on

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the school's big screen TV during National Autism Awareness Month. All created while learning side by side with his typical peers. The next exciting event on the high school horizon is planning for prom!

As we plan for Peytn's future after high school we celebrate the benefits of his inclusion more than ever. Together, school, home and community have helped prepare Peytn for his journey into adulthood, along side everyone else, right where he belongs.

Family Time

The importance of reading to children at a young age cannot be overemphasized. The case is even stronger for families who have children with special needs. Building upon this concept, the Wichita Center has created a new literacy program called "Family Time." The project has been made possible by a grant from the Kansas Division of Early Childhood. Shannon Maloney-Scholler leads "Family Time" on the third Saturday of every month at various sites around the Wichita area. "The most important thing is that Family Time provides a fun learning experience for families. Not just for the kids, but for the parents and siblings too," says Shannon. Wichita's Public TV station (KPTS) is also a partner in this project, providing book bags and books for the children who participate. Each 90-minute program consists of three segments: an opportunity for parents and their children to participate in a story time, an informational component for parents on childhood health issues, and time for parents to network with each other and with specialists in the fields of health and education. Parents who have children up to age 6 years who have learning disabilities, special health care needs, or physical or developmental disabilities are invited to attend. Siblings are also invited to participate. For more information, contact Shannon at 316-945-7747 or at shana@familiestogetherinc.org.

A Note From the Director's Desk...



Parents and Education Advocates:

In this very busy time of the year, I hope that your child or the child for whom you are an advocate are pleased with the way the first part of the school year has gone. If not, Christmas break can be a great time to take a break and think about ways to improve the school/family relationship.

If you, or someone you know, is looking for a great organization to make an end of the year contribution, may I suggest Families Together? In these difficult economic times, government grants are under much scrutiny. In order to make sure that Families Together continues to be an organization that can assist families, having donated funds will allow us to continue operations in spite of other government decisions. Thank you for your help in keeping this agency strong!

Please come to the great Statewide Conferences that are in December and February. Bring members of your child's team and spend a day thinking about how you can all work together to help your child find success in school. The speakers, breakout sessions, and vendors at each conference will be an inspiration for the whole team!

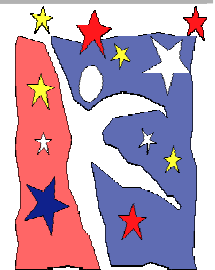
Have a blessed holiday season.

[Connie](#)

Thank You, Education Advocates!

Submitted by [Darla Nelson-Metzger](#), Topeka Center

The holidays are nearing and it is a great time to recognize the generosity of the human spirit. We want to express our appreciation for your gifts of time, concern, advocacy, and energy to the children that you serve. Many of you have opened up your homes for children in care in addition to the role you serve as an education advocate. Others of you are volunteering to advocate for children outside of your home, fitting this role into your busy life. We thank you all! Part of our job at Families Together is to support educational decision-makers. If you need assistance or have questions, please don't hesitate to call! We welcome the opportunity to help you help kids in care! Have a safe and joyous holiday and again, thank you!



Happy Holidays

from Families Together



Ms Wheelchair Kansas

The Ms Wheelchair Kansas program annually selects one woman, who is wheelchair mobile and who will successfully advocate, educate, and empower all people on a state level.

If you would:

- like to be a contestant
 - like to nominate someone to be a contestant
 - like to be a financial sponsor
 - like to provide a donation
 - like the current Ms. Wheelchair Kansas to come speak at an event
 - like more information about this program
- please contact Carrie Greenwood at **785-267-5982** or go to www.mswheelchairkansas.org



Inclusion Award

There are many amazing Kansas parents, educators, and community members who have discovered unique ways to assist the growing population of students with disabilities, and who truly understand that given supports and services, these students can be valued, contributing members of our families, schools, and communities. Hopefully you either are one of these generous people, or you can lead us in the right direction to someone who is!

We invite you to nominate an individual who helps families and communities to maximize the potential of children with disabilities for our annual Inclusion Award. Nominations must be received by the Kansas City Center of Families Together by noon, January 23, 2009. Anyone may make a nomination, or be nominated, granted they have worked to make a difference for Kansas children with disabilities. All nominations become the property of Families Together and will not be returned. Please also send a photo of the nominee and student(s), if possible.

Supporting Single Mom's Grant

By [Leia Holley](#), Kansas City Center

The alarm rings as Staci fights the urge to hit snooze just one more time. It was yet another long night. Tony was jumping on his bed and hitting his head on the wall most of the night. The remaining portion, he was putting anything and everything in his mouth. The light of day brings yet another hole in the wall and the edges of books chewed. As she gets ready (the boys finally sleeping), she hear, Jimmy, her youngest son, screaming. She runs in to find Tony standing on top of the dresser biting his hand. She gets Tony dressed wrestling with him to keep his shoes on. Thomas the Tank Engine comes on the television and like magic, Tony sits and stares. He flaps his hands a few times then giggles. She and Jimmy pick out his clothes for the day. Then, hearing the bus, she grabs Tony's backpack only to discover he has stripped off all his clothes. She dresses him as quickly as possible and rushes him to the bus. She waves at the bus and longs to see Tony wave or look at her with his precious blue eyes. As the bus drives away, her thoughts flash to work and how angry her boss will be if the school calls again today. Now to get Jimmy off to preschool and...

It may be hard to imagine, yet this is a glimpse into the window of many single mothers' homes. According to a new study, a growing number of single mothers are raising at least one child who has a disability. Children with disabilities are more likely to live with a single woman -- whether she is a mother, grandmother or a female foster parent -- than other children.

In order to meet the unique issues facing single mothers raising a child who has a disability, the Kansas City Center wrote a grant to the Kansas City Women's Foundation to provide training for single moms raising children who have disabilities. On December 5, 2009, we will officially be awarded the grant. The monthly events include a dinner, childcare and training.

If you are interested, in finding out more about this exciting new project, contact the Kansas City Center at 913 287-1970.



Family Story

When our son Javier was born, I saw him as a beautiful, rosy-cheeked baby. I never imagined that the following day the doctor would tell us that he had Down Syndrome. When the doctor told us that, I was really surprised. The truth is, I had never stopped to think about the differences among us. When the doctor told us the problem that Javier had, I didn't give it much importance. To me, he was a beautiful baby and I loved him even more. After a few days went by, I did feel frustration. I'm a person that took care of herself during my pregnancies. I didn't smoke or drink. I ate well so that my baby would be born healthy. I always asked myself "Why are there so many people who don't take care of themselves, and they have healthy babies, while I did take care of myself and I had a baby with Down Syndrome?" As time went by, I was more able to understand. I started speaking with positive people like Debbie and Rosemary, who are nurses from the health department. I am very grateful because they helped me a lot with their words of encouragement. Nancy, at Families Together, helped me a lot with her advice. Russell Child Development helped me with their visits, advice and in the center until Javier was 3 years old. Then High Plains started helping us. Javier was a very good boy, sweet and affectionate. He's still the same. He always won the teachers' sympathy and they pampered him. There is one piece of advice that I feel I can give to moms that have a child with a disability - don't feel sorry for them. Treat them the same as any other child without a disability. Give them responsibilities when they're young. Maybe that was my mistake. I thought that because of his disability, he was not capable of doing certain things at home. Now that he's older and stronger, he still thinks that he doesn't have to do anything. Thanks to the teachers that help with their daily support, we are helping him become more independent. Javier is 17 years old and a senior at Lakin High School. He's been a very healthy boy. As far as his behavior goes, the only times we have had problems is when there are changes in the daily routine - when one day is different from another. Javier needs his days to be more or less the same and then things go more smoothly. He likes to do things in an orderly way. Javier depends a lot on people that he comes in contact with in the community. For that reason, I give thanks to God that I live in Lakin, Kansas. I am very grateful to the people here. Everyone, in one way or another, has helped us with our difficulties. When Javier goes to school, there are times when he doesn't want to go into school. If a teacher or another student sees him and invites him to come in, his attitude changes immediately. I'm grateful to all the teachers and paras that have worked with Javier throughout the years. I don't know what would've become of us. Families Together has always helped and supported us with our needs and has invited us to the workshops and presentations. Thanks to Wilma, his case manager, who has helped him get his medical card and be able to have a person stay with him after school until I get home from work. I would advise the parents of a child with a disability to look for and accept the help that is offered. Be informed and let yourself be guided by the experts. Do as much as you can to advance, especially when they're young. Now that Javier is 17, I thank God for sending him to us. I'm proud of him and thanks to him, I have learned to be more compassionate and to understand humanity better.



Teresa and Armando Beltran



Family Story

Cuando nuestro hijo Javier nació lo vi hermoso rosado y gordito. Yo nunca me imagine que al día siguiente el Dr. nos iba a decir que tenía Síndrome de Down. Cuando el Dr. nos dijo eso yo de verdad me sorprendí muchísimo porque la verdad yo nunca antes había escuchado o tal vez no había puesto atención o no me había detenido a ver la humanidad y pensar que hay muchas diferencias entre los humanos. Todavía cuando el Dr. nos dijo el problema que Javier tenía al instante no le di mucha importancia pues a mi me parecía un niño hermoso y yo lo quería aun mas. Todavía después cuando pasaron los días si sentí frustrada pues yo soy una persona que se cuidaba mucho en los embarazos, no fumaba no tomaba, me alimentaba bien con tal de que mi hijo naciera sano y feliz. Siempre me preguntaba porque hay personas que no se cuidan y tienen niños sanos y yo que me cuidaba tuve un niño síndrome de Down pero conforme fue pasando el tiempo fui comprendiendo, conforme platicaba con personas positivas como las enfermeras del departamento de salud, Debbie y Rose Mary. Estoy muy agradecida porque ellas me ayudaron mucho con sus palabras de aliento, también Familias Unidas, Nancy me ayudo mucho con sus consejos, después las trabajadoras del Russell Child Development me ayudaron muchísimo con sus visitas, consejos y en el centro hasta que Javier tenía 3 años. Después empezó High Plains ayudarnos. Como Javier era muy buen niño, dulce y cariñoso, pues todavía es así, es que siempre se ganaba la simpatía de las maestras siempre lo tenían muy consentido y tal vez es uno de los consejos que yo les doy a las mamás que tienen niños discapacitados que no les tengan lastima que los traten igual que a los niños normales que desde pequeños les den responsabilidades ese fue mi error que yo pensaba que por su discapacidad no era capaz de hacer ciertas actividades en el hogar y ahora que esta grande y fuerte el todavía piensa que no debe hacer nada pero gracias a las maestras que me ayudan y me apoyan diariamente estamos ayudándolo a saber valerse por si mismo. Javier ya tiene 17 años, él va en el grado 12 en la high school de Deerfield Ks. Gracias a Dios ha sido un niño muy sano hasta la presente nada mas se ha enfermado de la gripe y respecto a su conducta en lo único que hemos tenido problemas es cuando hay cambios de rutina cuando un día es diferente a otro, Javier necesita que todos los días estén mas o menos igual y así funciona mejor hacer todo por orden. Javier es muy sociable y muy cariñoso depende mucho de la gente que lo rodea, por eso le doy gracias a Dios de vivir en esta comunidad de Lakin Ks. estoy muy agradecida con toda la gente pues todos de una manera u otra me han ayudado en mis dificultades especialmente cuando Javier va a la escuela hay veces el no quiere ir y yo estoy tratando afuera de la escuela esperando que el entre y no quiere, pero si viene una maestra u otro compañero y lo invitan el inmediatamente cambia su actitud. Estoy muy agradecida con todas las maestras y ayudantes que han trabajado con Javier. Todos estos años sin su ayuda no se que seria de nosotros, también gracias a Familias Unidas que siempre nos han apoyado en lo que hemos necesitado e invitándonos a los talleres y presentaciones. Gracias a Wilma su manejadora de caso por medio de la organización SDSI(servicios del desarrollo del sudoeste) me ha ayudado mucho para obtener su tarjeta médica y también para tener ayuda para que una persona me cuide a Javier después de la escuela hasta que llego del trabajo. Yo les aconsejaría a los padres de niños con discapacidades que no se queden solos, busque y acepten la ayuda que les ofrecen infórmense y déjense guiar por los expertos, todo lo que le puedan avanzar desde que están pequeños es mejor. Ahora que Javier tiene 17 años yo le doy gracias a Dios que no los mando gracias que tengo a Javier no me siento sola el me acompaña casi siempre estoy orgullosa de el y gracias a el yo he aprendido a ser mas complaciente y entender la humanidad mejor solo le pido a Dios que me preste vida y salud para poder cuidarlo.

Teresa y Armando Beltran

RESOURCES



FAMILIES TOGETHER TOLL FREE NUMBERS:

Wichita	1-888-815-6364
Topeka	1-800-264-6343
Kansas City	1-877-499-5369
Garden City	1-888-820-6364
Spanish line	1-800-499-9443

www.familiestogetherinc.org

MAKE A DIFFERENCE INFORMATION NETWORK

1-800-332-6262

An information service for children and adults with disabilities, their families, and their service providers.

www.makeadifferenceks.org

KPIRC

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center
(A resource for parents of any child)
3500 SW 10th Room 011E • Topeka, Kansas 66604
785-783-2975 • e-mail: jgroff@kpirc.org
website: www.kpirc.org

NICHCY

*National Information Center for
Children and Youth with Disabilities*

NICHCY Website
www.nichcy.org

- ★ All text-only publications have been reformatted to a new easy-to-read layout
- ★ A side-bar menu makes navigation easy
- ★ The ALL-NEW resource library featuring the Technical Assistance & Dissemination (TA&D) Network makes finding information a breeze

1-800-695-0285—www.nichcy.org

Check out these Internet Resources!



KSDE Friday Facts

www.kansped.org/ksde/fridayfacts/frifacts

Math resources and Websites:

Money Math: Lessons for Life

www.publicdebt.treas.gov/mar/marmoneymath.htm

Foundation for Teaching Economics

www.fte.org

Money Instructor

www.moneyinstructor.com

National Council on Economic Education

www.ncee.net

Math Cats

www.mathcats.com

Fun Brain

www.funbrain.com/numbers.html

Figure This

www.figurethis.org

Cool Math

www.coolmath.com

U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission

www.mymoney.gov/

Social Skills

www.nichcy.org/Research/EvidenceForEducation/Pages/SocialSkillsIntro.aspx

Social skills help us navigate such everyday interactions as:

- exchanging greetings and holding conversations;
- starting friendships and maintaining them; and,
- asking for help and instructing others.





Winter Calendar of Events



Date	Event	Contact
Dec. 13, 2008	Families Together Statewide Conference, Wichita	888-815-6364
Dec. 13, 2008	Families Together Christmas Party, Kansas City	877-499-5369
Feb. 7, 2009	Families Together Statewide Conference, Kansas City	877-499-5369
Feb. 20-21, 2009	Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Garden City	888-820-6364
Feb. 27-28, 2009	Families Together Parent Networking Conference, Junction City	800-264-6343
April 4, 2009	Families Together Transition Mini-Conference, Garden City	888-820-6364
April 24-25, 2009	Families Together Parent Networking Conference, Wichita	888-815-6364

Family Voices...

Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) is a national, grassroots project created by youth with disabilities for youth. We are teens and young adults with disabilities speaking out. KASA knows youth can make choices and advocate for themselves if they have the information and support they need. We are leaders in our communities, and we help spread helpful, positive information among our peers to increase knowledge around various issues. We also help health care professionals, policymakers and other adults in our communities understand what it is like to live our lives and we participate in discussions about how to help each other succeed. KASA believes young people with disabilities will have control over their own lives and futures. We help this happen by teaching youth about their rights, giving peer support and training, and changing the systems that affect our lives to include us. Welcome to KASA! Joining is free and open to anyone who would like to be part of our network. So, read up, join in and pass it on!

On our website: <http://www.fvkasa.org/index.php>

- Learn more [about KASA](#) - who we are, what we do, and how you can join us
- Meet our [National Advisory Board](#) and our [Task Force](#)
- Read [reports](#) from the field - essays about personal experiences and reports from conferences across the country
- Look through our [resources](#) - a wide variety of information sheets and articles about disability-related issues as well as links to useful sites
- Enjoy the projects in [the KASA Cafe](#) - poetry and art from our very creative members
- Participate in our [forum](#) - share your ideas and let your voice be heard!
- Contact us for materials:
Most of the information we have available is on our website, but we also have many [brochures and other materials](#) that we can send you to use for yourself or at a meeting. Send an email to info@fvkasa.org or call us at 785-273-3398 and we'll get the materials out to you right away!

KASA is a [Family Voices](#) project funded by the [U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau](#) and the [Administration on Developmental Disabilities](#)

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