



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.

Wichita Administrative Center
3033 W. 2nd Suite 106
Wichita, KS 67203
(316) 945-7747 or 888-815-6364

Kansas City Center 1-877-499-5369
Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364
Topeka Center 1-800-264-6343
Statewide Spanish parent line 1-800-499-9443

(All toll free numbers for Kansas
parents & education advocates)
www.familiestogetherinc.org

V

June 2008

Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS): The Kansas Framework for Response-to-Intervention (RtI)

Submitted by Dr. Alexa Posny, Kansas Commissioner of Education and Colleen Riley, Kansas State Director of Special Education

In Kansas, we believe that every child should learn and achieve to high standards, both academically and socially. This includes all students, including students with disabilities. We have sought to build a system of prevention, support and early intervention to ensure they are learning from the instruction they are receiving.

What We Know

- The earlier school staff can assess students' needs and identify those with difficulties, the quicker and less expensive the task is to help those struggling learners catch up
- The longer a student goes without assistance, the longer the remediation time and the more intense the services must be
- There is emerging evidence many students who struggle in the early grades cannot catch up if we wait until 3rd or 4th grade to deliver intensive remediation

Across the nation, many schools use a variety of different interventions and numerous ways to monitor student learning under the names of "early intervening services" and "response to intervention." In Kansas, for almost two decades we have used student improvement teams, based on a body of research that shows providing intervention as early as possible for both academics and behavior works to prevent more serious problems later. This body of research has also expanded our understanding of what is best for all students. Thus, in Kansas, we refer to this systemic approach to helping all students learn, as the Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS). Simply put, MTSS is a continuum of increasingly intense research-based interventions provided to students that respond to their academic and/or behavioral needs. It includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the interventions provided. The outcome is to ensure that each Kansas student achieves to high standards.

The main goal of MTSS is to provide an integrated systemic approach to meeting the

Continued on page 2...



Inside this Issue...



From the Director's Desk p. 2

Adaptive Trikes p. 2

Family Story p.3

Peer Tutoring p. 4

Special Rodeo p. 4

Education Advocate Update p. 5

Inclusion Award p. 5

Autism Kit p. 5

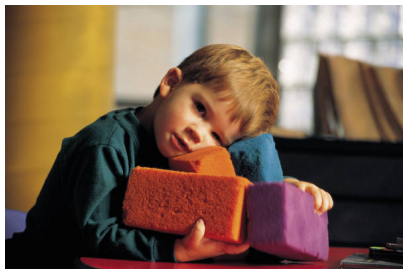
Family Voices p. 5

Resources..... p. 6

English/Spanish Article p. 7

Calendar of Events.....p. 8

...continued from page 1



needs of all students and to use resources in the most effective and efficient way enabling every child to be successful. Most importantly, MTSS does not necessarily require “adding on” to what is already effectively being

done in your child’s school. Instead, it involves reviewing current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness as well as those that do not. MTSS calls for us to replace practices that do not result in student improvement with those that do. MTSS is the guiding framework for school improvement activities to address the academic and behavioral achievement of all students that includes the early identification and quick response to the needs of any struggling learner. This framework seeks to be prevention oriented and resolve the disconnected nature of the supports within our schools. In doing so, it promotes the use of research supported practices throughout the educational system.

We know that we have the most important work still ahead of us. Collaboration with all stakeholder groups—especially parents—within our state is imperative to the success of this initiative. To begin with, we will create opportunities for meaningful dialogue with all of you including both general and special educators, about ways we can work together to support students within a multi-tiered system of support. Information regarding progress made toward this end will be shared with you as it is developed.

We are excited about this collaborative approach to helping all students succeed. We look forward to working with you in this important endeavor; e.g., a statewide systemic approach to help all students learn, especially struggling learners. KSDE is supporting the website www.kansasmtss.org as the location for people to learn more about the exciting work occurring within our schools in Kansas.

FYI

www.metootrikes.com

Trikes that are reasonably priced compared to other special needs trikes...

I founded MeToo Trikes™ to provide an affordable adaptive tricycle to allow more kids to ride. It is amazing to see how many children who are unable to stand or walk without assistance can pedal independently. In addition, children who are unable to pedal can still enjoy the benefits of riding a trike by taking advantage of the convenient push-handle system. *Kristen Revis*

A Note From the Director’s Desk...



Dear Families and Education Advocates:
We are so excited to share with you the recent donations and grants which Families Together, Inc. has received!

In order to enhance the services to families of children and youth with special health care needs, Families Together, Inc. has been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to become a Family-to-Family Health Education and Information Center. This grant has just begun on June 1. If you have a child or young adult with special health care needs, we will be contacting you about the needs that you have for training and information. We are eager to find out how we can be of assistance.

In addition, six foundations have found Families Together, Inc. to be worthy of their funds. The K. T. Wiedemann Foundation has provided funds to increase outreach in the Wichita area to Hispanic families of children with disabilities. The Women of Wichita Charitable Foundation has funded renovations in the greeting area of the Wichita Center and a library of materials for families of children with Autism. The Finnup Foundation has funded library materials and office needs in the Garden City office. Another foundation will be announcing a grant in the late summer to provide funds for the purchase of a phone system in Garden City which can more adequately serve English and Spanish speaking families. The Lattner Family Foundation has graciously provided monies to increase individual services for families in Wichita. And the Enterprise Rent-a-car Foundation has provided additional funding for our core services to families.

The staff is humbled and honored to be able to use these additional funds to serve you better. Please thank any of these funders for us.

If you know of a foundation, or employer who would be willing to partner with Families Together, Inc. to provide services to families of children with disabilities, please call Michael Webb or me at the Wichita/Admin Center.

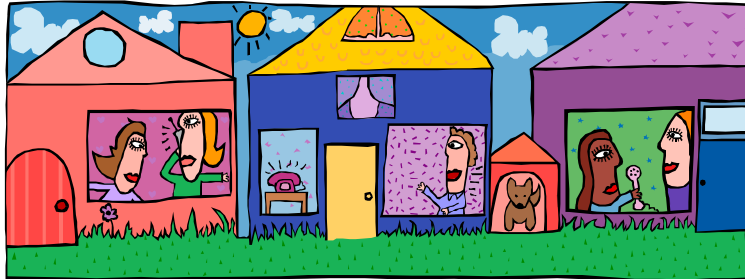
Have a wonderful Summer!!

Connie



Family Story

Family Story submitted by Michael Webb, Wichita Center



The Wichita Center staff of Families Together had the pleasure of meeting several families from south-central Kansas at our Parent Networking Conference (PNC) in Pratt on April 11-12. One family that made a lasting impression and has already become an active partner in our organization is the Bonner family of Wichita.

Walt and Linda Bonner have successfully faced the challenges of raising a blended family, as well as raising a child with special needs. Linda's kids are Kyle (13) and Brandon (11). Walt's kids are Adam (15) and Destany (13). Kyle has Down syndrome.

Walt is in the Air Force and until recently was stationed at McConnell AFB. He has been transferred to Charleston AFB in South Carolina and will be there for at least three years. Linda is working on her master's degrees in social work and also on her MBA at Newman University in Wichita. She received her bachelor's degree from Newman in family counseling and addiction studies. She did her internship with the Family Advocacy program at McConnell.

As part of her course work, Linda is developing a new model for residential care for families who need to find housing for their adult children who have special needs but who want alternatives to group homes. Linda's business plan is to create housing units where parents and children can live in close proximity with each other after the parents reach the age when they are no longer able to provide a sufficient level of care-giving.

Linda's first experience with Families Together was when Kyle was a baby, and she used Families Together to make a parent-to parent match. Our April PNC gave Linda the opportunity to become involved again with our programs, and to introduce Walt to our organization "I liked the resource book with all the information," said Linda. "A lot of school issues were discussed, so it's good to have the resources given to us so we can use them after the conference. Everyone was so nice, both the Families Together staff and the other families." As a result of meeting Walt and Linda, we were invited to participate in McConnell's Family Festival of Fun on April 19th. One of the priorities in our current strategic plan is to reach families who are learning about Families Together for the first time, so Walt and Linda helped us take a big step in that direction by introducing us to the McConnell community.

Adam and Destany will be moving to South Carolina this summer to be with their dad while he is stationed there. Kyle and Brandon will stay in Wichita with Linda until she finishes school. She plans to graduate in June 2009.

We salute the Bonner family for their commitment to their children, their work with the special-needs community, and their service to our country.



Peer Tutoring Tips

When students with disabilities listen and learn from their peers, there are many benefits which include:

- Improvement in social skills in and out of the classroom
- Respectful relationships with peers that are reciprocal
- Emergence of team work skills and the desire to be a contributing member
- Faster rate of learning and greater retention of academic material
- Improved self-esteem for all students involved in the tutoring process

Here are a few ways you can encourage peer tutoring in your school:

- **Ask for volunteers** - select peer role models who are motivated and have time to help
- **Identify a helper rotation** - peer tutors can move from student to student in case of a personality mismatch
- **Monitor relationships** - make sure peers are not doing TOO MUCH for the person they are tutoring
- **Buddy up for field trips and special activities** - these are more relaxed and fun opportunities to interact
- **Provide orientation** - make sure your peer volunteers know something about working with students with disabilities
- **Get parent buy-in** - highlight roles and expectations so tutors and parents understand the goals of the peer tutoring program
- **Switch roles** - find ways for the student who is being tutored to teach something back to their tutor
- **Celebrate successes** - host a party for everyone involved in the peer tutoring program and identify ways the students with disabilities have increased their capabilities.



2008 Kaw Valley Special Rodeo

Sponsored by: *The Kaw Valley Rodeo Association (KVRA)*

Friday, July 25, 2008
7:00 PM
Wells Arena, Cico Park
Riley County Fair Grounds
Manhattan, Kansas

The Kaw Valley Special Rodeo is an opportunity for children with special needs to participate in rodeo events with pro rodeo "partners" assisting in fun and noncompetitive activities. All events are designed to be appropriate to the special needs of the children. Safety considerations are foremost at all times. Each child can choose any or all of the events they want. Accommodations are made for children with wheelchairs, crutches or braces.

There is no cost for participating children. The ages are 5 to 12 years old. Each child will receive a cowboy hat, bandana, a contestant number and a t-shirt. The KVRA encourages the children and parents to stay and be their guests for the regular PRCA Rodeo. Due to the limited

number allowed to participate, the children need to sign up in advance. This will also allow the staff to know of special needs a child may have and to have tickets mailed in advance.

For detailed information and to enroll your child in the 2008 Special Rodeo, **please by contact by July 21st:**

Sandy Chandler
1530 Pierre St
Manhattan, KS 66502-4243
785-776-0338

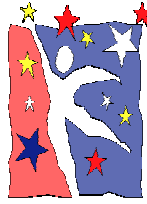
The Special Rodeo will start at 7:00 pm, but participants will need to be at the Wells Arena by 6:30 pm to get ready. The entire thirty five minute performance is announced by the official rodeo announcer. Following the completion of the events, each child is individually recognized with his/her pro rodeo contestant and is awarded a medallion and autographed picture of the child with he/her cowboy "partner".

This is the 15th year the Kaw Valley Rodeo Association has hosted a special rodeo for children with physical, mental or learning disabilities.



Education Advocate Update

Submitted by Kari Herr, Topeka Center



Hooray for summer - time to take a nice refreshing break before the next school year! Did you know that we love for advocates to take the training more than once?

Since there have been changes to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) based on the December, 2004 re-authorization, this summer might be a good time to re-train. We just happen to have plenty of room at the

HUTCHINSON TRAINING:

WHEN: Wednesday, June 11, 2008
TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (lunch on your own)
PLACE: Hutchinson Public Library
2nd floor Auditorium
910 N Main St.
Hutchinson, KS 67501

To register, please call Kari or Misty at Families Together, Inc. 785-233-4777 or 1-800-264-6343.

Also, advocates and case managers, do you still have your annual survey buried somewhere on your desks? Please return those to us as soon as possible, so that we can update both your information and that of the students who you serve. Thank you for taking the time to complete the surveys - we really appreciate it!

REMINDER: Any time a student moves and you are aware of it, would you please call our office, 1-800-264-6343. We need to know ASAP, so that we can locate another education advocate and update our files.

I guess that's it for now. I hope that your summer is long, cool, and relaxing (think lemonade under a shady tree!).

Thank you for your dedication to students in Kansas!

FYI Autism Speaks Unveils 100 Day Kit, A Unique Resource for Parents of Children Newly Diagnosed with Autism

From: CEC SmartBrief

Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism advocacy organization, today announced the launch of its 100 Day Kit, a personalized resource to assist families in getting through the critical time following an autism diagnosis. In addition to receiving the contents of the kit, which includes information about services and service providers in a family's community, those who register will also be connected with a regional Autism Speaks Autism Response Team member who can provide further insight and guidance. http://www.autismspeaks.org/press/100_day_kit.php

2008 Inclusion Award

Submitted by Darla Nelson-Metzger, Topeka Center

On Friday, March 28, 2008, Indian Creek Elementary school teacher, Lisa Roush was presented the 2008 Families Together, Inc. Inclusion Award. Mrs. Roush is an inter-related special education teacher at the school and was nominated by Tracy Schreiner-Laird on behalf of her daughter, Madison. Madison is a fifth grader and has an autism spectrum disorder. In her letter of nomination, Ms. Schreiner-Laird expresses, "Mrs. Roush is teaching so much more than reading and writing. She is teaching all the children valuable life skills that will enable them to exist in a world of diversity." "That was apparent when Madison came forward to help present the award... the student body chanted her name and made lots of celebratory noise", exclaimed Darla Nelson-Metzger, Families Together Topeka Center staff. "It warmed my heart so deeply, I had tears in my eyes. This is why we do what we do and reminds me how far we have come. It was obvious to me that Madison is truly a valued member of her school community." In addition, Mrs. Roush was named Indian Creek Elementary School Teacher of the Year. The recipient of this award is selected by his or her peers.

Family Voices...

Medical Assistance Grants from United HealthCare Announced

Submitted by Susan Arnold, Topeka Center

The United Healthcare Children's Foundation is offering support to meet the needs of children across the United States with assistance grants for medical services not fully covered by health insurance. Parents and caretakers across the country will be eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for healthcare services that will help improve their children's health and quality of life. Examples of the types of medical services covered by UHCCF grants include speech therapy, physical therapy, and psychotherapy sessions; medical equipment such as wheelchairs, braces, hearing aids, and eyeglasses; and orthodontia and dental treatments.

Any child 16 years old or younger living in any UnitedHealthcare region of the United States (all 50 states) and in need of financial assistance for healthcare services will be considered eligible for a grant. Families must meet economic guidelines, reside in the US, and be covered by a commercial health insurance plan.

Visit United Healthcare Children's Foundation website to learn more about these grants. www.uhccf.org

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

Call us or visit
our website!

1-800-695-0285
www.nichcy.org

Check out these Internet Resources!



About Revolution Health

Revolution Health Group is a leading consumer-centric health company founded to transform how people approach their overall health and wellness. By putting individuals at the center of their own healthcare, Revolution Health allows them to make informed choices and offers more convenience and control over their individual healthcare decisions.

www.revolutionhealth.com

Signing Times

Information for parents and teachers wanting to know more about Signing Time and incorporate American Sign Language into everyday educational opportunities.

www.signingtimeskids.org

Building Family-School Partnerships that Work

When schools and families work together to support learning, everyone benefits.

www.ncpie.org

Center for the Improvement of Child Caring

When children are effectively parented, they feel better about themselves and their abilities. They enter school excited and ready to learn. And, they are more likely to both achieve to their fullest potential at school and to make positive contributions to community life.

www.ciccparenting.org

LD OnLine

LD OnLine seeks to help children and adults reach their full potential by providing accurate and up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. The site features hundreds of helpful articles, multimedia, monthly columns by noted experts, first person essays, children's writing and artwork, a comprehensive resource guide, very active forums, and a Yellow Pages referral directory of professionals, schools, and products.

www.ldonline.org

The Autism Life

This site is to help parents, caregivers, family, and friends learn about and deal with having a child diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This is also a place for the 'experienced' parents and the newly diagnosed both to meet (in our Discussion forum) and find some exciting new links to information, games and activities for their kiddos.

www.theautismlife.com

New Bilingual Staff Member to be Added to Garden City Center

Submitted by Yolanda Corral, Garden City Center

Hello everyone. Greetings from our office in Garden City. I'm sure all of you are getting ready for some summer fun such as; going on vacations, spending some quality time with friends and family, swimming, cookouts and many other fun things! I have so much to tell you. Our Mini-Conference ("**Challenging Behaviors**") was held on April 26 at the Center for Independent Living in Garden City. It went very well. The parents enjoyed having Kathleen Wilson from DRC answer some of their questions. They were able to speak with her one on one with some of their concerns. One of the things parents learned was that we, as parents, can help prevent some of the discipline issues our kids are having at school by being the best advocate our child has. Let the IEP team know beforehand some of the behaviors your child has that could cause some of those discipline problems. After all, no one knows your child better than you. Kathleen and I are planning to have a one on one session with parents sometime in the summer to assist with some of those issues/concerns parents are having. I will provide that information to parents once something is set up.



Also, I'm happy to announce that in June we will be getting a new bilingual staff member in our office. She will be our Parent Health Care Specialist. The Parent Health Care Specialist will provide assistance, guidance, and support to parents and families of children and youth with special health care needs. We also have a new Spanish speaking staff member in the Kansas City office.

Reminder: Be looking out for upcoming events on our website and Newsletters. This year our "**Spanish Family Enrichment Weekend**" will be held on October 17th-18th. Mark your calendars if you're planning to attend. We will also be having a Mini-Conference on "**Early Childhood**". **Parents: Please take time with your family to relax and reflect on the simple joys of summer. Enjoy!**



*¡Hola! Saludos a todos de parte de nuestra oficina en Garden City, Kansas ¡Estoy segura que todos están preparándose para un poco de diversión este verano, yéndose de vacaciones, dedicando tiempo especial a los amigos y familia, nadando, una carnita asada y tantas otras cosas de diversión para hacer! Tengo mucho que decirles. Nuestra Mini-conferencia (Conductas Desafiantes) que tuvimos el 26 de abril en el centro de CIL fue de mucho éxito. A los padres les gustó realmente tener a Kathleen Wilson de DRC que vino de Topeka, KS. Y contestar algunas de sus preguntas y pudo hablar con ellas uno a uno con algunas de sus preocupaciones. Una de las cosas que los padres aprendieron fue que nosotros como los padres podemos ayudar a prevenir algunos de los problemas de disciplina que nuestros niños están teniendo en la escuela siendo el mejor defensor (Advocate) que su niño tiene. Permita al equipo del IEP saber antemano algunas de las conductas que su niño tiene que quizás podría causar algunos de los problemas de la disciplina. Después de todo, nadie conoce a su niño mejor que usted. Kathleen y yo estamos planeando tener unas sesiones uno a uno con los padres ora en el verano para ayudarles con algunos de esos temas / preocupaciones. Yo proporcionaré esa información a los padres una vez que algo ya este fijo. También, estoy contenta anunciarles que ya para junio nosotros tendremos a un nuevo miembro del personal bilingüe en nuestra oficina. Ella será nuestra Especialista para los padres con el cuidado de la Salud. La Especialista proporcionará ayuda, guía, y apoyo a los padres y familias de niños y jóvenes con las necesidades especiales del cuidado de la salud. Recordatorio: Este pendiente de los próximos eventos que se llevaran a cabo en nuestro sitio Web y nuestro Boletín. Este año nuestro "Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar " se llevara a cabo el 17th-18 de octubre. Marque sus calendarios si usted está planeando asistir. Nosotros también estaremos teniendo una Mini-conferencia de la "Niñez Temprana". **Padres: Por favor tome tiempo con su familia para relajar y reflejar en las alegrías simples del verano. ¡Disfrute!***



Summer Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Contact
June 20, 2008	First Annual Autism Conference, Pittsburg	Mandy Commons P.O. Box 1804 Pittsburg, KS 66762
June 26, 2008	Protecting Your Child with Special Needs, Protecting Their Benefits (For Families with a Child on the Autism Spectrum), Overland Park	816-407-1004
August 1-2, 2008	5 th Annual Cerebral Palsy Conference, St. Louis, MO	http://cme.wustl.edu/cp
August 9, 2008	Kansas City Wizards Autism Awareness Night, Kansas City	913-387-3412
October 1 & 2, 2008	AT EXPO 08, Wichita	620-421-8367
October 10, 2008	Dyslexia Awareness Month Presentation, Kansas City, MO	816-838-7323

Families Together, Inc.
501 Jackson, Suite 400
Topeka, KS 66603