



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

Families Together, Inc.

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Wichita, KS 67203

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Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364
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(All toll free numbers for Kansas
parents & education advocates)

www.familiestogetherinc.org

Volume 72

Spring 2007

Conference Highlights

Submitted by Lori Burnshire, Wichita Center and Leia Holley, Kansas City Center

For 25 years, Families Together, Inc. has been encouraging, educating and empowering Kansas families. Throughout this school year, staff in the Garden City, Topeka, Wichita and Kansas City centers, along with several of our families and community partners, has reflected on the many changes and advances in services for students with disabilities. Families Together's core belief is that all individuals should be valued for their strengths as contributing members of Kansas communities. Throughout the school year we continue to spotlight successful inclusive practices during our conferences and workshops.



To kick off one of many celebrations focused on the progress Kansas has made during the past 25 years, Governor Kathleen Sebelius joined Families Together, Inc. and the Kansas State Department of Education in proclaiming December 4-8, 2006 Inclusive Schools Week. For the first time, Kansas officially joined the Annual National Inclusive Schools Week sponsored by the National Institute for Urban School Improvement. The 6th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week, highlighted and celebrated the progress our nation's schools have made in using inclusive practices to ensure a quality education for an increasingly diverse student population, including students with disabilities, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and English language learners.

To continue the celebration, the Wichita Center hosted one of our two Annual Inclusion Conferences on December 9. Make Inclusion An Action Verb was the message conveyed at the Inclusion Conference, which was held in Wichita. Dr. Paula Kluth, an independent consultant specializing in inclusive schooling, jump started the amazing day with a vision of what inclusive schooling should look like. Dr. Kluth shared stories of inclusive schooling which went beyond "physical inclusion" and gave ALL students access to appropriately challenging academic curriculum.

The nearly 200 conference participants including parents, educators and others came from across the state to gain knowledge on topics ranging from assistive technology in the classroom, to building family, school and community partnerships for the good of all kids.

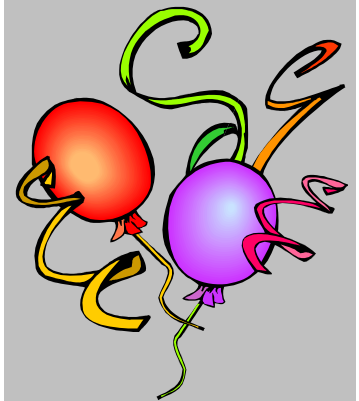
Afternoon sessions included a presentation on the Circle of Friends Program which models the importance of friendships for students with, and without disabilities. Mother and son team Tami and Skylar Schwindt shared their family's journey around the "monopoly board" (special instructions included), as Skylar, a young man with cerebral palsy, inspired us all to experience life and all its possibilities.

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Attending picnic

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ zip _____
Phone _____
e-mail _____
Need bus transportation _____ (yes or no)

Attending banquet

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ zip _____
Phone _____
e-mail _____
Need bus transportation _____ (yes or no)

Please mail to
Wichita Center
3033 W. 2nd Ste. 106
Wichita KS 67203

Thank You from the Garden City Center

A very special thank you to all of the companions who spent the day with our children!

Thank you to all of our group leaders who kept the children busy!

A big thank you to all of the people who volunteered their skills and entertainment for the children's activities.

Most of all, thank you to the following people, agencies and businesses for contributing to our Enrichment Weekend and 25th year birthday celebration.

Western Kansas Foundation
Natural Therapeutics - Carolyn Deaver
Chris Lampe
Arbon - Stacy Gilbert
Harold Orr Bob Aiken
Mary Kay - Eva Guereca & Delmy Calderon
Mexican-American Ministries - Cruz Elia Corpus
Tim Hendershot "D.J. Flame of Mobile Music Masters"

A Note From the Director's Desk...



Dear Families and Education Advocates:

See the cut out on this page of information about the events to Celebrate with us: 25 years of serving Kansas Families!!

Please come to one or both of the events and to the Open House in the Center nearest to you. This is a great way to meet other families of children with disabilities, get information that you need to be a good advocate for your son, daughter, or the child to whom you are appointed.

The Family Picnic will be held in the WSU area in Wichita on June 2. More details about the schedule will be on our website or in materials mailed to you. All the materials and activities at the picnic will be free to families.

A banquet to honor the founders and the parents who have "cut down the big trees" in the path before us will be held on June 30. We are very lucky to have been able to have the banquet at the exact location as the first Families Together, Inc. Family Enrichment Weekend in June of 1982: The Lawrence Holidome in Lawrence Kansas!

We are working to get buses from some locations to the events. If you are considering attending the picnic or the banquet, we need to know right away in order to arrange transportation options. We will also be able to have the addressees for the families interested in last minute information about each event. **LET US KNOW BY MAIL, EMAIL OR PHONE TODAY!**

We are working hard to make the banquet financially accessible to all the family who would like to attend. If you would like to make a donation to the 25th anniversary celebrations or know of a business or individual who could sponsor the events, please call Anita at the Wichita Center, 316-945-7747 or 1-888-815-6364.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Families Together!

Continue to partner with your child's school for a successful conclusion to the 2006-07 school year.

Connie

Activities in Garden City

Submitted by Yolanda Corral, Garden City Center



Hello everyone! Greetings from everyone here in our Garden City office. I hope everyone is well and getting over the colds, flu etc. I'm sure most of you are looking forward to the warm days ahead. I know I am! As some of you know we had our Family Enrichment Weekend (FEW) February 16th and 17th. We had a great time celebrating our 25th anniversary. Just imagine! 25 years doing something we love to do, which is helping families who have a child with any disability. We had a wonderful reception where veteran families shared stories and pictures of their families. This year we had 20 families registered with a total of 51 children, 29 with a disability and 12 brand new families! The kids had a great time swimming and making puppets with Bruiser the dog. (Bob Aiken from Estes Park Colorado) The children enjoyed putting on a puppet show, and had a great time. I am so looking forward to our Spanish FEW in October! You will be receiving information as the time gets near. Also, coming up next will be two free workshops for parents and their high school age students. "Fostering Independence in Youth with Disabilities:" The parents will be able to attend their own workshop while their transition-age student will be attending a workshop for youth on transition issues such as: your role in the Transition IEP process, access to supports to reach transition goals, and developing skills needed to become an effective self-advocate. Students will also have an opportunity to understand the job interview process and when to disclose his/her disability to an employer. There will also be presentations from other agencies such as GCCC, SRS-Voc. Rehab. CIL etc. These workshops are scheduled for April 21. A reminder to Spanish-speaking parents; I am here in the Garden City office ready to assist you in anyway that I can. Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns that you might have. Keep in mind that our workshops can also be offered in Spanish if there is that need. Have a happy Spring break! Remember... All children need to hear parents say "I LOVE YOU" It doesn't matter what age!



¡Saludos a todos! de parte de todos aquí en nuestra oficina de Garden City. Yo espero que todos se encuentren bien y terminando con todo gripe y flu etc. Estoy segura que la mayoría de ustedes están esperando los días calurosos. ¡Yo sé que yo sí! Como algunos de ustedes saben, nosotros tuvimos nuestro "Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento" el 16 & 17 de Febrero. Nosotros nos divertimos en gran manera celebrando nuestro aniversario de los 25 años. ¡Simplemente imagine! 25 años haciendo algo que nosotros nos encanta hacer, ayudando a familias que tienen un niño con cualquier discapacidad. Nosotros tuvimos una recepción maravillosa donde las familias veteranas vinieron y compartieron sus historias y retratos de sus familias. ¡Este año nosotros teníamos 20 familias registradas con un total de 51 niños, 29 con una discapacidad y 12 familias nuevas! Los niños se la pasaron muy bien divirtiéndose nadando y haciendo títeres con Bruiser el perro. (Bob Aiken que vino de Estes Park Colorado) Los niños les gustó poner un show con sus títeres, fue maravilloso ver todos los niños tener un gran tiempo. ¡Yo estoy esperando ansiosamente el "Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento" para las familias que hablan español, será en Octubre. Usted se le dará la información conforme pase el tiempo. También, en seguida tendremos dos talleres gratis para los padres y sus hijos de la secundaria. "Criando la Independencia en la Juventud con Discapacidades" Los padres podrán asistir a su propio taller mientras su estudiante de la edad de la transición estará asistiendo a su propio taller en los temas de la transición: su parte en el proceso de la Transición del IEP, acceso a los apoyos que usted necesita para alcanzar sus metas, desarrollar las habilidades que usted necesita para poder ser un abogado eficaz. Los estudiantes también tendrán una oportunidad de entender el proceso de entrevista de trabajo y cuándo revelar su discapacidad a su patrón. Habrá también otras presentaciones de otras agencias como GCCC, SRS-Voc. La rehabilitación, CIL etc. Estos talleres serán el 21 de Abril. Esto es para padres y estudiantes en la Planificación de la Transición lo cual significa creando su futuro y estar tomando las decisiones sobre la dirección que su vida tomará. Si esto es algo que usted y su estudiante necesita haga planes para asistir. También, yo no solo quiero recordar a todos los padres que hablan español una vez más que yo estoy aquí en la oficina de Garden City lista para ayudarlo en lo que yo pueda. Yo no podría tener todas las respuestas pero yo puedo intentar a guiarlo hacia alguien que le pueda ayudar efectivamente. Por favor siéntase libre para llamarme con cualquier pregunta o preocupaciones que usted podría tener. Tenga presente que nuestros talleres también podemos ofrecerlos en español si hay esa necesidad. ¡Tome un descanso Primavera feliz! Recuerde... ¡Todos los Niños Necesitan Oír a los Padres Decir "yo te AMO" no importa la edad!

A Success Story

Submitted by Jane Rhys, DD Council

I have been an education advocate since 1993. Over the years I have had many different students, some of who have experienced moderate success and many who had little success in school. In 2003 Darla at Families Together called me and asked if I was willing to take on an elementary student who had severe behavior problems. I agreed and she told me about Antwan or "Twan." Twan was ten years old, in fifth grade, in full time special education class, and on the Kansas Home and Community Based Services waiver for Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Children. I went to the school to meet him and found a small, wiry African American boy with a huge smile that was seldom seen. Twan was on a shortened school day because he frequently became upset and exploded. He also had a full time personal care attendant who removed him from the classroom when he exploded.

His teacher was a nice person but clearly not able to control a student with Twan's rage. She and I got to know each other well over the next year. Twan had a typical background for a foster care student. His dad was unknown and his mother's rights were terminated. Twan bounced around among different relatives, finally finding a home with a Great Aunt who died unexpectedly.

Because of his behaviors, his teacher e-mailed me daily reports and I spoke with Twan almost weekly. The principal of his school went out of his way to befriend Twan and developed a good relationship with him. Twan was on grade level in all classes but refused to take standardized tests. He had behavior cycles and would start out OK in class then deteriorate. He did signal his frustration by rolling his pencil, then escalating his behavior. However, we were hopeful because he was, at times, able to maintain good behavior.

Fifth grade soon ended and we made plans for sixth grade. For sixth grade, Twan's personal care attendant hours were reduced. He did have some behavior problems in sixth grade but also did well, smiling and making friends this year. He moved on to seventh grade at the middle school and, although there were some rough spots, he was making progress. At the end of the year his teacher called about a school field trip. Twan could not go unless accompanied by an adult so I went with his class to the Kansas Historical Society Museum and the Brown Museum. Twan was a real pain on the trip, talking too loudly and generally goofing off instead of listening to the presentations.

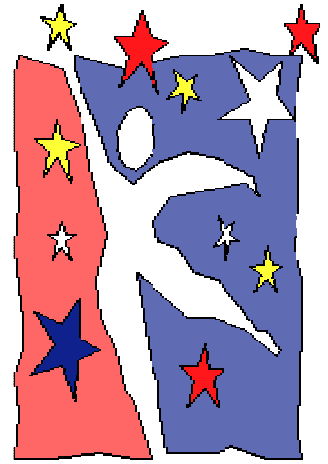
In September of his eighth grade year his case worker called and said he was being moved to a new foster care home and transferring to a different school district. I went to the new school, signed all the paperwork, and met his primary IEP implementer. Twan did fairly well although there were some behaviors at Christmas when he was up for adoption with a family in Lawrence. Later I heard that it fell through.

I work a lot with the Legislature and arrange for one or more students to be a page each year. In January I talked to the secretary of Senator Betts about Twan's becoming a page. I picked Senator Betts because he was a younger man who liked working with youth and I thought Twan would like him. In February, not having heard back, I called the Senator's secretary. All page slots were full so I started looking for another opportunity. Senator Betts secretary called me later and asked if Twan would like to "shadow" Senator Betts. I asked Twan who thought that would be cool. So on Wednesday, February 28 I picked Twan up at his middle school and drove him to the Capitol. I gave him a brief tour and took him to Senator Betts office. Twan was able to go on the page tour to the top of the building and also had his picture taken with Senator Betts and the Governor. Shadowing involved Twan's attending all the various meetings and committees with the Senator.

Senator Betts spent a lot of time talking to Twan and asking him what he wanted to do in life. He was in a Committee meeting so could not take Twan to lunch so I took him. During lunch Twan discussed his day. He was impressed with all that the committees did including the wide variety of bills. Senator Betts is on the Senate Judiciary and Ways and Means Committees. Twan discussed the different bills he had heard about and what people who were testifying had said. He also told me that Senator Betts had told him about scholarships for children in foster care. He was interested and asked me about college. He wanted to know if it was possible to go to college and work. I was able to tell him that my brother, sister, and I had all worked during college and that it was not easy but could be done. I promised him that, when he was ready, we would sit down at a computer and do a search on all available scholarships and grants to see about helping him fund college. He was quite excited and said Senator Betts thought he could go to college. Senator Betts also shared some of his family life while growing up which made Twan understand that others also experienced problems.

In 2003 I would not have believed that Twan would be interested and fully capable of shadowing a Senator and understanding some difficult concepts on Legislative committees. Senator Betts was also a wonderful person for Twan to shadow. He had Twan sit next to him at Committee meetings, provided him with all the same handouts, and discussed what happened after each meeting. He took the time to make sure Twan had a full legislative experience and he gave of himself.

I have been involved with foster care students since being a teacher in the 1970's. These children have experienced much difficulty in their short lives. I feel that anything I can do to broaden their experiences, to show them life outside of school, to get them to think about being an adult, is well worth my investment in time and effort. Not everyone can do this but I urge all Education Advocates to look for ways to make life meaningful for these students. I know not every student will succeed and another student of mine who was a page last year is now in a level six placement due to increased behavior problems. But, when even one succeeds, it erases all the bad experiences and replaces them with an absolutely wonderful memory!



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
785-749-2617 • e-mail: nkraft@nekesc.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!



<http://idea.ed.gov/>

The US Department of Education provides information on **IDEA 2004**. There are links to Part C (birth - 2 years) and Part B (3 - 21 years)

Let's Face It is an information and support network for people with facial differences, their families, friends and professionals. Let's Face It has a new web site and email address. There will be no more printed publications.

email: faceit@umich.edu

web address: www.dent.umich.edu/faceit

www.familyeducation.com

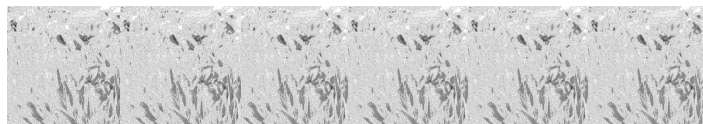
Sign up for one (or more) free email newsletters and receive the latest advice, solutions, and information on parenting and enjoying family life. Find links to invaluable resources on how to accommodate and encourage a child with special needs. Get helpful information, expert advice, and tips from other parents on such topics as how to recognize the signs of a learning disability, and how to choose the best education options for a gifted learner.

www.woodbinehouse.com

This is a great source for books on disabilities. There are resources for parents, children, teachers and professionals.

The AAC Institute Parents' Corner offers various resources for parents. A monthly column, generally written by a parent, offers advice and food for thought for families. A listserv exclusively for parents provides an opportunity for sharing of experiences and mutual support. List participants have recently started a file sharing space, where they can share their ideas and support materials they have created for their children. Some of the materials are useful for children with a variety of AAC systems, and some are specific to a certain AAC system. Please stop by and browse what has been contributed so far!

<http://www.aac institute.org/Resources/ParentsCorner/intro.html>



Spring 2007 Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Contact
May 10, 2007	Education Advocate Training, Salina	800-264-6343
May 12, 2007	Families Together Transition Mini-conference, Wichita	888-815-6364
June 2, 2007	Autism Spectrum Disorders Workshop, Manhattan	785-485-5526
June 5, 2007	Families Together Topeka Center 25th Anniversary Celebration, Gage Park	800-264-6343
June 16, 2007	Families Together Transition Conference, Kansas City	877-499-5369
June 23, 2007	Families Together Kansas City Center Open House	877-499-5369
July 29-31, 2007	8th Annual Governor's Conf. on Juvenile Justice, Topeka	785-296-4213
Oct. 26-27, 2007	Families Together Spanish Family Enrichment Weekend, Garden City	888-820-6364
Dec. 8, 2007	Families Together Statewide Conference, Wichita	888-815-6364
Feb 3, 2008	Families Together "Together We Can Learn" Conference, Kansas City	877-499-5369

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Individuals from throughout Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska came together to "Explore Inclusive Education" during the February 17th Annual Together We Can Learn Inclusion Conference in Lenexa, Kansas. "Doug Fisher opened my eyes to inclusive education for all students," stated one administrator. Doug Fisher, national inclusive schools expert and professor at San Diego State University began the conference with an eye opening overview of inclusive schools. According to one general educator, "Doug Fisher gave me some great suggestions and resources on how to create an inclusive classroom." One parent said, "Doug Fisher is passionate about including all children, and it was clear he not only talked the talk, but walked the walk. Thank YOU!" Yet another parent shared, "Doug Fisher really made me think forward as my child is in preschool; relationships with teachers and how to treat/value gifts people with disabilities give to peers and the community."

Parents, educators and administrators who exemplify the BEST inclusive educational practices throughout Kansas shared strategies and resource during breakout sessions. Rud Turnbull, father of an adult with disabilities and Co-Founder/Director of the Beach Center, ended the day. Rud explored the vital elements of building effective teams for all students who learn differently. "Rud—the questions he asked will help us to make decisions for our child's transition. It will remind us of our responsibility," one parent stated. "Rud Turnbull was excellent! I really enjoyed and agree with his thoughts on partnership," said an administrator.

Participants left Families Together's conferences feeling energized, and have gained resources, strategies, and most importantly an opportunity to network with individuals throughout Kansas who are making the inclusion connection one IDEA at time.



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