



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
313 N. Seneca Suite 114
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.familiesstogetherinc.org

Volume 86

Sept. 2010



Family Engagement Within MTSS

Taken from the booklet entitled "Family Engagement: A Critical Component to Building an Empowering Culture in the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)" which was developed by Families Together,

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center and the MTSS Core Team with funding from the Kansas State Department of Education, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG).

Requirements for family engagement are found in almost all federal and state education statutes and regulations. The 2002 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines parent involvement as "the participation of parents in regular, two way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities; including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting the child's learning." The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures parents have the opportunity to be members of any decision making team for their child. The Kansas State Board of Education recognized the importance of family engagement by endorsing the PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships in January of 2008. Family engagement is a critical component in creating an empowering culture within schools.

Family engagement is a key aspect of Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). For this reason, schools must make a concerted effort to involve families as early as possible. The PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships focus on what families, schools, and communities can do together to support positive student outcomes. Each of the six standards includes quality indicators for successful partnerships. The standards are available on the National PTA website, www.pta.org. Additional information on the standards is available at the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) website www.kpirc.org.

Within the Kansas MTSS framework, an empowering culture is a key component that supports the effective instruction of students. Families should be involved from the beginning as a school creates an empowering culture to support implementation of MTSS. Families need information on how data for MTSS will be collected, how it will be used and what supports will be provided to their child. The supports provided through MTSS do not replace a parent's right to request assessment of his/her child for special education or any other entitlement services offered by the school.

The PTA National Standards for Family School partnerships contains six standards that provide a framework for achieving a high standard of engagement for families and the community. To see the six standards and their components you can receive the booklet "Family Engagement: A Critical Component to Building an Empowering Culture in the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)" from your nearest Families Together Center or check the website at www.familiesstogetherinc.org.

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Media Outreach Campaign Focuses on Making Jobs the First Option for People with Disabilities

Within this issue of the Families Together, Inc. newsletter are a brochure and a poster highlighting a media outreach campaign aimed at increasing employment for young men and women with developmental disabilities.

The poster and brochure call attention to the web site Employment1st.org, where readers can see stories about young men and women with developmental disabilities who have succeeded in the world of employment. An additional set of posters will be included in the next newsletter.

Employment1st.org also includes important information for parents, guardians, educators and others about how employment success was achieved, with links to where assistance is available and to 'best practices' used in gaining successful, competitive employment.

The theme of the campaign: Making jobs the first option for people with disabilities. The project is sponsored by the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities and is being created by Lawson Phillips Associates, Topeka.

Across Kansas, there are many people trapped by attitudes toward their physical and mental disabilities, attitudes that deem them unemployable.

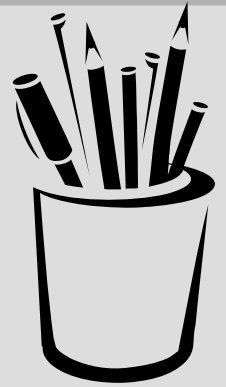
The website, Employment1st.org, shows how wrong these attitudes are. A competitive job, a 'real' job, allows all of us entry into the life of our community. And like all of us, people with developmental disabilities want to live as full citizens in the community.

The poster and brochure highlight the information and success stories on the Employment1st.org website. People visiting the site can download the poster and brochure online as well.

Survey of Parents Critical to OSEP Visit

In November, a team from the Office of Special Education Programs will visit Kansas to verify that the Department of Education is insuring a Free Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities. Families Together has been asked to survey parents to gain their input before the visit. Please visit our website to complete the survey. The survey will be available from September 15th until October 14th. It is only a few questions, but it will give you the opportunity to let the visitors know, from your perspective, how services to children and youth with disabilities in Kansas are being provided and what you know about this provision of services. If you would like a paper copy of the survey, please call the center nearest to you and we will be happy to send you a copy. Thank you, in advance, for taking a few minutes to give your opinion.

A Note From the Director's Desk...



Dear Parents and Education Advocates:

Where did the summer go?! I hope yours was restful and energizing as you prepare for another year of school. At Families Together, Inc., our staff spent the summer working to create events that will encourage, educate and empower each of you to be great advocates for the children and youth in your life.

In response to the evaluations you have given us at our past events, Families Together is offering some new conferences this year. In addition to the Family Enrichment Weekends and our large Statewide conferences, we are offering "topic specific" Saturday Conferences in several locations across the state. See the information in this newsletter about these new offerings.

If you have a son or daughter 14 or older, take a look at the great Transition Conferences being offered this fall. Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) will be offered in four locations to help you and your young adult get great ideas about employment possibilities for EVERY person (and we do mean EVERY person). Mark your calendar for the training in your area!

Thanks to all who attended our Step-by-Step Walks this year. The last ones will be in Kansas City on September 18 and Hutchinson on September 25. Donations will be accepted until the Thanks for Giving Celebration in November. We want to make sure that Families Together, Inc. remains a strong organization to support families like yours for years to come.

Connie



FAMILY STORY

Companionship—Then and Now

Submitted by Brianne Montes

Not many people are able to see the people in their lives as blessings. Usually we go through life taking others for granted and not realizing their profound impact on our lives until it is too late to thank them for their influence. In a few, very rare cases we get to acknowledge that influence and thank those individuals. My sister, Julie, is one of those individuals. Siblings have unique relationships with one another. There seems to be a common progression of these relationships from friends, to annoying roommates, and back to friends again. Luckily Julie and I have been friends since the day she was born and because of her presence in my life I have had many unique experiences over the past 30 years.

Julie has several disabilities, including cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Due to Julie's unique developmental needs, my parents were put in contact with Families Together, Inc. One of the training tools used by Families Together is their Family Enrichment Weekends (FEWs). These weekends are designed to allow parents the opportunity to learn how to advocate for their children who have disabilities in a distraction-free environment. The only way to make this possible is by having dedicated volunteers to help all children engage in planned activities while their parents are in trainings. Each child has a dedicated volunteer. Without volunteers, Family Enrichment Weekends would not be possible.

When I was a child my parents took the opportunity to participate in several Family Enrichment Weekends. I always looked forward to a weekend in a hotel and swimming in an indoor pool. Being the third in a family of six children made me appreciate some things that other kids may not realize were treats. I also looked forward to meeting other kids my age with siblings who have disabilities. It wasn't always easy defending Julie in school but I knew that these weekends would be free of that anxiety. When I was matched with my companion, I knew that I would have a friend for the day. We would do crafts and watch movies. The days always flew by and my companion was right there by my side to make sure I was well taken care of. These weekends not only made me feel normal for having a family member with a disability, but I also gained many valuable friendships with other kids attending the weekend.

Recently, I was offered the opportunity to be a companion at an Family Enrichment Weekend in Manhattan, Kansas. This was my first experience as a companion and the first time I had been to a weekend in over 15 years. The environment was just as I remembered with many diverse families all grateful to be taking part in this experience with other families. When we, as volunteers, were matched with our children for the day, it was a memorable occasion. My sister, Teresa, was paired with a child who had Down Syndrome and was so excited to have the opportunity. I was assigned to the infant room where there were so many wonderful kids. It was gratifying to see all children playing and interacting.

The experiences I've had at Family Enrichment Weekend would not have been possible without Julie's presence in my life. She is an example of kindness and unconditional love to the world and the lessons I've learned from her have made me a better person. I am now able to see the blessings brought into my life by my sister who has a disability and can share those blessings with others in similar situations.

Companionship at the Family Enrichment Weekend has given me an opportunity to return some of the good I've received from my sister.



7 Things to Tell the Teacher

Sharing key information about your child can help teachers make a connection.

by Emily Graham taken from www.schoolfamily.com

What can you tell a teacher that will help him do his job better? You might be surprised. While your child's teacher is the expert in education, no one knows more about your child than you do. It's just as important for parents to tell teachers about issues at home that may affect school performance as it is for teachers to report how children are doing in the classroom.

Students do best when parents and teachers work together as partners. The start of a new school year is a great time to open a dialogue with your child's teacher. Not sure where to start? Here are seven things teachers wish you would tell them. Sharing this information with a teacher will help her better understand your child's needs and lay the groundwork for a cooperative relationship throughout the school year.



1. Health conditions: If your child is diabetic, uses an inhaler, is allergic to peanuts, or has a serious health condition, her teacher should know. It's also helpful to let the teacher know whether your child has been diagnosed with conditions like ADHD, which may affect behavior and concentration.

2. Family issues: Fill in the teacher if your family is going through a major change that could affect your child, such as a divorce, a death in the family, or a move. Even if your child seems to have adjusted well, alert teachers so they can watch for behavioral changes.

3. Personality traits or behavior issues: Maybe your son is painfully shy and is worried about making friends at a new school. Or perhaps your kindergartner has been having tantrums at home and you're concerned she'll do the same at school. It's best to make teachers aware of these issues before they become a problem at school.

4. Strengths and weaknesses: Your daughter is a star student in math but is embarrassed to read aloud. Your son loves language arts but struggles with science. If you tell teachers these things up front, they'll have more time to help your children improve in the areas they need it most.

5. Learning style: You've spent years teaching your kids, from potty training to tying shoelaces, so you have a good idea of their learning styles. If your child learns better through hands-on activities than through listening to explanations, mention that to his teacher. Also share any teaching strategies that you've found work well with your child.

6. Study habits: Does your son speed through math homework but labor over reading assignments? Do your daughter's grades suffer because she spends so much time at skating lessons? Tell teachers about your children's study habits and any issues they face in completing the work. Teachers often can offer suggestions to make homework time go more smoothly.

7. Special interests: Knowing more about your child's hobbies or interests can help the teacher forge connections in the classroom. Let the teacher know that your young son loves a particular comic book superhero and that your middle school daughter is a gifted painter.

Individual with Intellectual Disabilities, Micah Fialka-Feldman to Speak at Conference in Wichita on His Court Battle to Live in Dorms

Most students in college would agree that dorm life is part of the experience of going to college. For Micah Fialka-Feldman, he got more than just the dorm experience, he got a life lesson that inspires others. After numerous hearings, pleas and petitions from Micah and other students, Oakland University in Michigan told Micah that he could not live in the dorms stating that he was not a degree bound student. Micah was indeed a student, attending classes regularly, participating in extra curricular activities and enrolled in a post secondary program at Oakland for students with intellectual disabilities. On December 23, 2009, the district court, ruled that Oakland University had violated federal law. Micah moved into his dorm during Christmas break and set precedence for others.

On November 6, Micah and friend, Alex Cherup, will speak about his incredible journey at the annual Families Together's Finding the Solutions Conference in Wichita at the Holiday Inn located at Rock Road and Kellogg Drive. For registration information see insert or visit www.familiestogetherinc.org or call (316)945.7747. Parent scholarships are available.

MTSS

Dentro de el Compromiso Familiar

Tomado del folleto titulado "Family Engagement: A Critical Component to Building and Empowering Culture in the Kansas multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)" que fue desarrollado por Familias Unidas, el Centro de Recursos de Información para padres y el MTSS Core Team con la fundación para Kansas State Department of Education, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG).

Requisitos para el compromiso familiar se encuentran en casi todos los reglamentos y estatutos federales y estatales de la educación. En el 2002 el acta (ESEA) de la educación primaria y secundaria define el compromiso de el involucramiento de los padres como "la participación regular de los padres, en dos maneras, incluyendo la comunicación y el involucramiento significativo del aprendizaje académico del estudiante y otras actividades escolares." El 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) asegura que los padres tienen la oportunidad de ser miembros de cualquier equipo de toma de decisiones para su hijo. La Junta de Educación de el Estado de Kansas reconoce la importancia y el compromiso de la familia y la aprobación de PTA National Standards para Family School Partnerships en enero del 2008. El compromiso familiar es un componente esencial para crear una cultura potencial dentro de las escuelas.

El compromiso familiar es un aspecto clave de Kansas MTSS. Por esta razón, las escuelas deben hacer un esfuerzo concertado para envolver a las familias lo más pronto posible. PTA National Standards para Family School Partnership juntos se centran en qué familias, escuelas y comunidades deben estar positivos para apoyar el resultado de los estudiantes. Cada una de las seis normas incluye indicadores de calidad para las asociaciones exitosas. Las normas están disponibles en la página web PTA National, www.pta.org. Información adicional sobre las normas están disponibles en el Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) en la página web www.kpirc.org.

Kansas Multi-Tier System Support (MTSS), dentro de el marco potencial la cultura es un componente clave que apoya la enseñanza eficaz a los estudiantes. Las familias deben estar involucradas desde el principio como escuela que crea una potencia de cultura para apoyar la implementación del MTSS. Las familias necesitan información sobre cómo MTSS colectará, utilizará y qué apoyo se le proveerá al niño. El apoyo previsto a través de MTSS no sustituye el derecho a los padres a solicitar la evaluación de su niño/a de educación especial o cualquier otro servicio ofrecido por la escuela.

La PTA National Standards para las asociaciones de familias escolares contiene seis normas que proveen un marco para lograr un alto nivel de compromiso para las familias y la comunidad. Para ver los seis estándares y sus componentes usted puede recibir el folleto "Family Engagement: A Critical Component to Building an Empowering Culture en el Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)" consulte con su centro más cercano de las Familias Unidas o visite la página web www.familiestogetherinc.org.

2010-2011 FEWs and TECs



Family Enrichment Weekends (FEWs)

FEWs are overnight events for families that include a child, birth through 21, who has a disability, and is still attending school. Parents attend workshops and discussion groups while the kids participate in fun, age-appropriate activities. The kids are matched with a volunteer, usually college students, who assist them throughout their day. Families must submit their application early as these events fill up quickly. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis, with a preference given to families who have not yet attended an overnight event. Please contact the center nearest you for an application.

NEW Team Empowerment Conferences (TECs)

TECs are topic-specific mini-conferences for parents and professionals. We will kick off our first TEC on December 4 in Topeka focusing on Positive Behavioral Supports. Please see the calendar of events for all dates and locations. Please contact the center nearest you for an application to these events or register on-line at

www.familiestogetherinc.org

Look for fliers in the mail for more information on how to register for these events in your area or register on-line. See event calendar on last page for more exciting events.

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 WEBSITES!



New Advocacy Toolkit Simplifies Legislative Process

Kansas Action for Children has released a new Intro to Advocacy toolkit. The four-page publication is designed to simplify the legislative process so that more citizens can effectively advocate on behalf of Kansas children. Intro to Advocacy includes an overview of how a bill becomes a law, the legislature's timeline, budgets and taxes, and tips for communicating with both legislators and the media.

The toolkit may be downloaded from KAC's Web site, or printed copies may be requested from the KAC office at 785.232.0550 or kac@kac.org. www.kac.org

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. <http://fvkasa.org/index.php>

National Alliance on Mental Illness – Kansas

When a serious brain disorder strikes you or someone close to you, you may feel very much alone. Obtaining access to services and support which can assist you through this difficult time can often be confusing and somewhat overwhelming. Once "in the system", your feelings of isolation and confusion can persist. Service providers may not take the necessary time to fully explain a serious brain disorder and how it affects you or your loved one. What is the diagnosis? What treatment and service options are available? What is expected of you?

NAMI Kansas would like to reassure you that you are not alone. There are many others who have shared questions, anxieties and experiences similar to yours. This web site has been prepared to facilitate access to services and support for persons affected by mental illness, including the consumer of mental health services and family members and others who serve as caregivers. www.nami.org

The Affordable Care Act creates options and affordability. If you're living with a disability, private health insurance may be hard to come by. Even if you can afford to buy it, it probably doesn't cover all of your needs. Worrying about where to get coverage and the cost of your care is the last thing you want to do. The Affordable Care Act is expanding your options for health insurance and making them more affordable. www.healthcare.gov

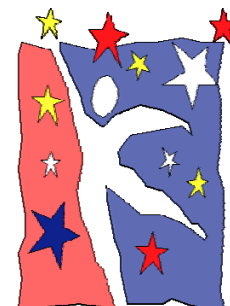
Fall Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Contact
Sept 18, 2010	<i>Families Together Step-By-Step, Shawnee</i> *for more details on the walks go to www.familiestogetherinc.org	877-499-5369
Sept 18, 2010	<i>Families Together Paradise Poker Run, Wichita</i>	888-815-6364
Sept 18-19, 2010	<i>Families Together FEAT Conference, Wichita</i>	888-815-6364
Sept 25, 2010	<i>Families Together FEAT Conference, Garden City</i>	888-820-6364
Sept 25, 2010	<i>Families Together Step-By-Step, Hutchinson</i>	888-815-6364
Oct. 15-16, 2010	Annual NAMI Conference	800-539-2660
October 23, 2010	<i>Families Together FEAT Conference, Overland Park</i>	877-499-5369
October 22-23, 2010	<i>Families Together Spanish Family Enrichment Weekend, Garden City</i>	888-820-6364
Nov 6, 2010	<i>Families Together Statewide Conference, Wichita</i>	888-815-6364
Nov 13, 2010	<i>Families Together FEAT Conference, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343
Nov 20, 2010	<i>Families Together Spanish FEAT Conference, Garden City</i>	888-820-6364
Dec. 2-3, 2010	2010 Oral Health Kansas Conference, Topeka	mmanter@oralhealthkansas.org
Dec 4, 2010	<i>Families Together TEC Conference, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343
Jan 29, 2011	<i>Families Together TEC Conference, Pittsburg</i>	877-499-5369
Feb 11-12, 2011	<i>Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Great Bend</i>	888-820-6364
Feb 26, 2011	<i>Families Together Statewide Conference, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343
Mar 5, 2011	<i>Families Together TEC Conference, Wichita</i>	888-815-6364
Apr 2, 2011	<i>Families Together TEC Conference, Garden City</i>	888-820-6364
April 8-9, 2011	<i>Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343

Start of School Marks a Call to Action

submitted by Darla Nelson-Metzger, Topeka Center

The commencement of school means education advocates need to get back to their duties. It would be a good idea to introduce yourself to your students' teachers, principals, and other school personnel. E-mail is a great way to communicate— send a friendly introduction and explain your role and responsibilities in the special education process. Remind everyone that you need to receive progress notes and grade cards and be invited to any meeting where special education services and/or placement are being discussed.



Kari and I have worked very hard this summer, tracking down the kids in the program and insuring they have representation. It is your responsibility to check up on the kids to whom you are appointed. If you find you do not have the time or desire to fulfill this role, please contact Kari or me as soon as possible.

As always, please feel free to contact the center nearest you if you feel you need assistance with a school issue. Contact the Topeka Center if you need to make a change in your appointment for one reason or another. Kari and I depend greatly on communication from you all. Together, let's make this a great school year for the kids who need it the most!