



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.

Administrative Center 3033 W. 2nd, Suite 106, Wichita, Kansas 67203 (316) 945-7747 www.familiestogetherinc.org
Wichita Center 1-888-815-6364 • Topeka Center 1-800-264-6343 • Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364 • Kansas City Center 1-877-499-5369
Statewide Spanish parent line 1-800-499-9443 (All toll free numbers for Kansas parents & education advocates)

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IDEA 2004: A New Law

Adapted from Pacesetter Newsletter

The information below is a sample of the changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Information in the article comes from a variety of sources, including Bob Brick of PACER Center and Kathy Boundy of the Center for Law and Education.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Short-term objectives. In IDEA 2004, short-term objectives for meeting each child's measurable annual IEP goals cease for most children. They are required for only the few children identified as having significant cognitive disabilities (generally less than 1 percent of all students being assessed) "who take alternate assessments aligned with alternate achievement standards" - different from those established for all other students. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), caps, at 1 percent, the number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who can be counted or reported as proficient for having met the alternate standards on these particular assessments that measure different standards. [*note: other students with disabilities may be assessed based on alternate assessments aligned to the same standards set for all students or based on assessments with accommodations.*]

Progress reports. Schools must report a child's progress toward meeting the annual IEP goal. The new law, however, removed "the extent to which the progress is sufficient to attain the goal by the end of the year." Parents may understand that their child is progressing all year, only to realize in June that it was *not enough* to meet the goal. Parents can ask specifically if the amount of progress reported is sufficient to enable the child to meet his or her annual goals. If it is not, parents can ask what additional steps will be taken to get there.

Transition. The IDEA states that not later than the first IEP to be in effect when a student with a disability is 16 years old, the IEP must include appropriate measurable post-secondary goals for education, training, employment, and independent living skills and needed transition services (including courses of study). The IEP containing these elements must be updated annually. Parents can request that the student's IEP, when appropriate, include a statement of interagency responsibilities and any needed linkages, because this language is no longer in the statute.

Team attendance and participation. A new section authorizes IEP team members to be excused from attending the IEP meeting if their area is not being discussed. However, written parental consent is required before members of the IEP team can be absent from the meeting. IEP meetings provide an opportunity to inform all persons connected with a particular child's education about the child's disability as it relates to educational and other needs. The new provisions allow other ways to participate in meetings (e.g., conference calls). New provisions also authorize combining reevaluation meetings and other IEP meetings and, in certain instances, changing the IEP without meeting.

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Transfers between school districts. When a child with disabilities moves between school districts during the school year, the new district must provide services comparable to those in the IEP and be in effect before the transfer. In a transfer within the state, the services must continue until the new district adopts the previous IEP - or develops, adopts, and implements a new one. If the transfer is to another state, the new school district must also continue to provide services comparable to those on the incoming student's IEP, until the new district conducts and evaluation of the child (if necessary) and "develops a new IEP."

Discipline

Stay put. The right of a student with a disability to "stay put" in his or her current educational placement pending an appeal is eliminated for alleged violations of the school code that result in removing the student from his or her current educational placement for more than 10 days after a finding that no manifestation exists between the student's alleged behavior or action and his or her disability. The previous law denied "stay put" rights during the pendency of an appeal by a student challenging the denial of a manifestation, or the alleged misconduct, or the proposed interim educational placement, *only to students with disabilities involved with illegal drugs or weapons or determined dangerous to self or others.*

Case-by-case determination. Discipline provisions now allow school personnel to consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to change the placement of a child with a disability who violates a school code of conduct.

Manifestation determination review. Under the new law, the school district, parents, and relevant members of the IEP team (no longer the IEP team and "other qualified personnel") will determine (based on information in the student's record, including the IEP, teacher observation, and relevant information provided by the parent), if the behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability- or if the conduct was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the student's IEP. Under prior law, the school district had to find that a manifestation existed between the behavior prompting disciplinary action and the child's disability, unless the IEP team and "other qualified personnel" found 1) that the student's IEP - programming and placement- was appropriate and special education, related services, including appropriate behavior intervention strategies, were being implemented consistent with the student's IEP,

2) that the student's disability did not impair the student's ability to understand the impact and consequences of his or her behavior, or to control the behavior at issue. Because of the significant changes, educators and advocates recognize that parents will need to pay careful attention to the behavioral needs of their child in developing the IEP.

Interim alternative educational settings. Under IDEA 2004, a child is entitled to programming and services necessary for him or her to receive a free appropriate public education while he or she is in an interim alternative education setting. In addition to receiving an education consistent with the state's education standards, the student must receive services that allow him or her to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward meeting the goals in the IEP.

Special circumstances. Schools have always had the authority to respond to an emergency and to unilaterally remove any student with or without a disability who is causing serious bodily injury to another. Now schools can also unilaterally remove children for 45 days for "inflicting serious bodily injury." This term is defined as involving a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a body member, organ, or mental faculty.

45-day limit. The 45-calendar-day limit on removing students for these offenses is changed to 45 school days, a significantly longer time.

Functional Behavioral Assessments. The requirements for Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavioral Intervention Plans are maintained in the discipline provisions.

Early intervention

Age eligibility. The new law lets states serve children through early intervention programs until they enter elementary school rather than requiring them to transfer to public school programs at age 3. To use the option, parents must provide informed consent that their children will not receive their right to FAPE from the public school as they are entitled to receive under Part B, and the children must have already received Part C early intervention services.

Learning disabilities

Eligibility changes. The new definition of "specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, in which a disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

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Pilot projects

Multi-year IEPs. Up to 15 states can now apply to participate in a pilot project that, among other things, will allow local school districts to offer, with parental consent, a multi-year Individualized Education Program (IEP), not to exceed three years.

Paperwork reduction. Upon federal approval, 15 states proposing to reduce excessive paperwork and non-instructional time burdens can waive statutory and regulatory requirement of up to four years. Requirements related to civil rights or the right of a child to a free appropriate public education cannot be waived.

Funding

When they passed the first federal special education law in 1975, lawmakers pledged to pay 40 percent of the cost of educating students with disabilities, but did not make it mandatory. To date, about 19 percent is the highest level of federal support. The new IDEA outlines a "glide path" to full funding over the next seven years. Shortly after passing the law, however, Congress increased special ed funding for the next fiscal year at \$1.7 billion less than what IDEA calls for in the first year of the "glide path."

2005 Inclusion Conference Highlights

Submitted by Kristen McFarren, Kansas City Center

Parents, young adults with disabilities and professionals shared stories, strategies, resources and discovered new ways to reach for their dreams for children who have disabilities. This year's statewide "Together We Can Learn" inclusion conference was hosted at the Sheraton Overland Park Hotel, Overland Park, Kansas, held on February 12, 2005. The annual conference attracted more than 100 parents, teachers, service providers and others interested in the inclusion of children with disabilities. The resounding themes were dreams and sharing individual stories.



Great opportunities for networking and coming together in the interest of all children's dreams were abundant at this year's conference as several vendors and exhibitors came from across the state to inform and engage. The variety of breakout sessions received high marks from participants as each session addressed a different aspect of inclusion in schools and communities for children and young adults with disabilities.

"What Is It That You Believe?" was the initial question of the day presented by Dan Wilkins, founder of the Nth Degree in Ohio. Dan is an outspoken advocate and visionary for people living with disabilities and the culture to which they belong. He also founded and now operates the Nth Degree, a progressive, forward-thinking, graphic design company geared towards issues related to the independent living movement, inclusion, diversity and disability rights movements. Participants journeyed through history with Dan as he weaved a story of what was and what can and will be if we truly believe in dreams and share our individual stories. Conference participants began the day with Dan's guidance, thinking about beliefs and expectations of those with special needs and community acceptance. With humor and story-telling, Dan inspired each person to discover their own belief system and to share these thoughts, feelings and great opportunities with the community in which they live. Inclusion is then fostered by the realization that we all have commonalities from our past and our future. We are all one when we share the power of our voices!

These themes were again echoed in Dan Wilkin's breakout session, "The Power of Story." Dan discussed the amazing connection of collective wisdom and enlightenment, understanding and change. We all have stories gained through our own unique experiences and only through sharing these stories will we come to full understanding of others' beliefs and experiences leading to the enlightenment of our communities. The power to shape and change our communities is derived by uniting our individual stories into collective wisdom. Conference participants left Dan's breakout session freshly rejuvenated with purpose and respect for the power we all possess to enlighten and change.

Participants gained more knowledge and insight from the other breakout sessions as well. There were several speakers from different Kansas agencies to address many topics of concern to parents of children and young adults with disabilities and professionals supporting the children and their families.

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Matthew Stowe, Assistant Research Professor at the Beach Center on Disability, shared an overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and what it says about inclusive topics such as: least restrictive environment, educational placement, access to the general curriculum, the use of supplementary aids and supports, assessments and natural environments for infants and toddlers.

"Helping Your Child Reach High Standards" was the topic of the session presented by Otis Morris, Youth Education Advocate for the Partnership for Children. Otis utilized standards guides and school performance reports to give participants resources in understanding how to effectively advocate for their child's education.

Attendees gained knowledge related to planning for the financial future of their children with special needs in the session presented by Scott Adams, CLU, ChFC MetDesk Specialist with New England Financial. Scott presented options and methods of implementing a future plan and reviewed legal documents, funding options and advocacy services.

Sali Helvey, Executive Director of Community Disability Network, presented a discussion-based session on sexuality training for children with special needs with an emphasis on accurate and age-appropriate information in the interest of keeping children safe.

"Writing IEPs to Ensure Students Have Access to the General Curriculum," was presented by Leia Holley, Kansas City Center Coordinator for Families Together. Leia gave participants insight into tying the elements of student's IEP to the general curriculum.

Jamie Thomas, Positive Behavior Support Research Assistant for the University of Kansas, presented an overview of Positive Behavior Support and addressed the role teachers and parents play on impacting children's behavior.

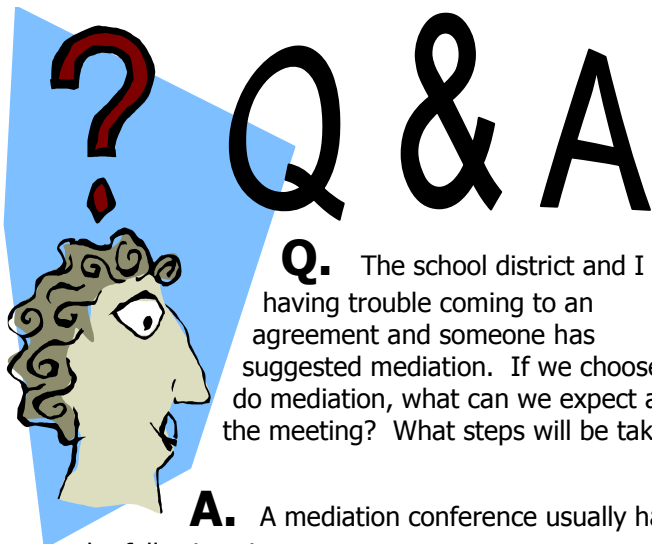
Bob Clark, Rehabilitation Counselor for Kansas Rehabilitation Services, presented a session focused on the application process, eligibility criteria and service delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

Participants gained knowledge and resources about No Child Left Behind and the rights and options of parents from Nancy Kraft, Director of the Kansas Parent Information and Resource Center.

This year's inclusion award recipient was Bethany Carlson, Special Education Teacher for USD 481, White City Schools. With understanding of each child's broader family picture and desire for all of her students to succeed, she displays compassion and genuine patience that cannot be learned from books and classroom experience. Mrs. Carlson was nominated by Tracy Oltmanns on behalf of her daughter, Ashley, who has directly benefited from Mrs. Carlson's gift of teaching. Tracey says, "Bethany is a new teacher who has a willingness to listen and learn, not from inexperience, but rather from her genuine interest in not only the children but their families as well...Bethany is the kind of teacher who will have a positive effect on thousands of children in her career."

The conference came to a close with our ending keynote speakers, Carrie Greenwood and Julia Fonseca, both from the Resource Center for Independent Living in Topeka, Kansas. These two young adults carried the theme of stories, commonalities and growth into their keynote address entitled, "Inside Out." Through interactive activities with the audience, unique visual aids and humor, Carrie and Julia spoke of empowerment of youth with disabilities by eliminating barriers to success, understanding good versus bad labels and promoting inclusion as power. Participants came away feeling inspired and empowered as Carrie and Julia shared their story of growth and experience.

This year's statewide inclusion conference appealed to all who attended. Parents and professionals came together to realize their shared stories, the stories of children with special needs and how to combine their voices to promote inclusion in our schools and communities. Inspiration was found throughout the day and belief systems were challenged as participants recognized the great potential of those with disabilities. Inclusion benefits the whole community and conference attendees were given the tools with which to implement inclusive practices in the lives of their children, expecting and supporting greatness in all kids!



Q. The school district and I are having trouble coming to an agreement and someone has suggested mediation. If we choose to do mediation, what can we expect at the meeting? What steps will be taken?

A. A mediation conference usually has the following six steps:

1. *Introduction/Opening Statement* by the mediator
2. *Discovering Issues* in which each party has an uninterrupted statement of the issue(s) in

disagreement, additional information about the issue(s), the strengths and needs of the student, options to resolve the concerns, and each party's preferences

3. *Collaboration* in which the mediator helps the participants discuss their feelings and concerns, and identify and discuss areas of agreement as well as possible solutions.
4. *Caucusing* in which the mediator meets individually with each participant to further clarify their concerns and possible solutions
5. *Re-convening* the joint session
6. *Concluding* the mediation with resolution in which both the family and the school write an agreement (which should be incorporated into the IEP, if appropriate), or reach an impasse.

(Note: If caucusing is not used, Steps 4 and 5 are replaced with a *Group Meeting* to clarify concerns and identify possible solutions.)

IDENTIFICANDO ESTUDIANTES ELEGIBLE PARA SSI Y INCENTIVOS DE TRABAJO

Submitted by Isabel Aguilera

Durante el tiempo que nosotros estamos ayudando a los estudiantes con incapacidades planear para sus futuros, nosotros estamos teniendo dificultad identificando los recursos para ayudarles obtene, y mantene empleo, ambos mientras ellos estan en la escuela y despues de que ellos gradúan.

En areas rurales servicios como el transporte, trabajo adiestra o el desarrollo del trabajo no siempre esta disponible, o puede haber una lista de espera larga para estos servicios. Teniendo los fondos para apoyar empleo que los estudiantes y familias pueden controlar, puede significar que un estudiante consigue trabajo, en lugar de sentarse en casa y espera lo servicios.

Incentivos de Trabajo de Seguro Social pueden proporcionar fondos para ayudar a los estudiantes con un incapacidad lograd una meta de empleo. Estos fondos de recursos pueden estar disponibles a su hijo o hija o un estudiante que usted sirve y puede volverse una parte importante de la Plan De Transicion. Un incentivo de trabajo particular llamado, "Plan For Acheiving Self Support" puede proporcionar este fondo para pagar: el transporte, las evaluaciones profesionales funcionales como un Perfil Profesional, el equipo para un trabajo, trabajo adiestra o entrenamiento del trabajo.

Para acceder los Incentivos de Trabajo de Seguro Social como el "PASS Plan" los estudiantes deben ser elegibles para el Ingreso de Seguridad Suplemental (SSI) y tiene ingreso contable que esta reduciendo su pago de SSI debajo de la proporción de Beneficio Federal de \$545 por mes. Ejemplos de ingreso contable que pueden albergarse en el PASS Plan son:

Ingreso Ganado Paternal

Paternal o ingreso de no ganado de estudiante como:

- Beneficios jubilatorios
- Beneficios sobreviviente
- Beneficios de incapacidad
- Subsidios de adopción
- Gananclases del estudiante



SI usted tiene cualquier pregunta sobre lo que es "SSI" o la "PASS Plan" haga contacto con el Centra De Vivir Independiente, mas cerco a usted.

Family Story

Wow--seventh grade is already here! How time flies when we are having fun... Actually it has been fun, this little roller coaster that happens when you have a child with a disability.

Jessica was born prematurely in 1991, and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of one year. It took us time to digest and adjust to this new outlook on life. Many interesting things have happened along this journey, but we thought it might be good to concentrate on our most recent transition from elementary school to junior high.

About a year ago we began to plan for Jessica's transition to junior high. Our first step was to have a walk-thru at our neighborhood school. We discovered areas of the school that were structural barriers. We then discussed the possibility of Jessica attending another junior high. This went against everything we had believed was best for Jessica. She has always been involved in a typical classroom, in her neighborhood school with services provided to support her. At the second junior high, it was more structurally accessible. At this point we (the parents AND Jessica) decided that this newer school might be better for Jessica. We began to plan a meeting that would include both our current IEP team and the receiving team. The meeting was an opportunity for current staff to talk about progress that Jessica has made, and for the receiving team to learn about Jessica from all perspectives; school, home, extended family, friends. We talked about our worries with Jessica attending a school outside of our neighborhood, and the fact that she really wouldn't know anyone at this school. It felt a little like everything we had been working to build over the last seven years was being torn down. We had worked to facilitate and build a community where Jessica was a full and active participant.

Over the summer we talked with Jessica about finding some opportunities to volunteer. Jessica attended training for volunteers at our local Humane Society. There, we meet one young girl who was going to be a seventh grader at Southwest also. What luck! So, we worked on building this relationship over the summer. We found out that working with animals (especially barking dogs) was not something for Jessica, but building this relationship was a great thing!

August came and our transition to junior high went fairly smoothly. We were excited to learn that Jessica's resource room teacher had very high expectations for her. We looked for opportunities for Jessica to get to know kids in her school, and ways that she could participate in the school community. We discovered that kids at this age are very busy! At the school one day we saw posters lining the hallways talking about the upcoming school musical. We talked with Jessica about trying out for the musical, but she didn't seem too interested. We then found out about opportunities to participate on the stage crew. Jessica and I stopped by the drama teacher's room to tell him about her interest in helping out, and things took off from there. She helped paint and build sets, created locker signs for the actors in the play, and helped promote the play. Luckily, some set building was done on Saturday mornings, so Jessica and her dad went to help out. This enabled Joe to be around in case anyone had questions concerning Jessica or if Jessica needed to be pushed a little to make sure she was being a full participant. We did have to push Jessica to try new things at school and to go beyond her comfort zone. We also found ourselves facilitating quite a few of her interactions. She did not want to go to her first school dance, so the second one we told her that she needed to go, but she could call us right away if she needed anything. Now, Jessica would not miss a school dance! Only six months into this, she is doing quite a bit on her own. Last week she told us that she wanted to be part of the track team, and that she had already begun to talk with folks about how she could assist with track.

We did leave friends behind, but Jessica brought with her everything that she learned in the elementary school environment; learning to ask peers for assistance, trying to figure out ways that she can have a two way relationship with her friends, etc.

Don't misunderstand, not everything is perfect these days in the Schwartz household...we have a 13 year old girl for goodness sakes! We struggle with issues about how Jessica can do everything she wants to be active in--figuring out that not everything is accessible, and that we usually need to provide the accessible transportation. But, we do feel like we have begun to see some of the pay off of pushing for a good education and high expectations for Jessica.

In conclusion we would give a few suggestions of what we have learned. First, talk and share your story. Some of the best ways we have learned and developed our ideas for Jessica have been in talking and brainstorming with other parents. Second, be sure to talk with and learn from adults with disabilities. This has been one of the most valuable lessons for us. As we continue this roller coaster, we have also made an effort to talk with older youth with disabilities; just to make sure we are on the right track and to gain a different perspective. These adults and youth with disabilities teach us so much and make fantastic role models for our kids.

Jennifer and Joe Schwartz, Lawrence

Transition Council to Host Resource Fair

Submitted by Darla Nelson-Metzger, Topeka Center



The Shawnee County Transition Council will be hosting a resource fair for youth, 13 and up, with disabilities, their families, educators, and other interested persons April 12, 2005 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The purpose of the resource fair is to promote awareness of the available local and state resources which support young adults in their pursuit of achieving independence and successful adult lives. Over 40 agencies will be represented at the fair. Several workshops will be offered, focusing on subjects of interest for transition-age youth and their parents, such as post-secondary options, the role of the community developmental disability organization (CDDO), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, self-determination, and others. There is no cost to attend the resource fair, no registration required and anyone interested may attend. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Topeka Center at 233.4777 or 1.800.264.6343. We hope to see you there!

NICHCY

National Information Center for
Children and Youth with Disabilities

NICHCY has NEW Website!!

Same address - 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

A Note From the Director's Desk...



Dear Families and
Education Advocates:

What an interesting part
of the year!!

Since our last newsletter, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized. This is the Federal Law that provides for the education of students with exceptionalities.

Now, the Kansas Department of Education has introduced a bill (HB 2331) to make Kansas law conform with the new Federal law. However, in Kansas, parents have had more rights in some areas. Families Together and YOU need to stand firm to protect the rights of families in this process.

One other bill, HB 2339, proposes to limit the use of restraints and seclusion of students, and to provide some additional money to organizations, like Families Together, so that we can provide more of the services that families need to learn to partner effectively with schools of behalf of their children.

Because the legislative process can move very quickly, the only way for you to know exactly what is going on from day to day is to pay attention to the news and check the website for the Legislature.

www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-legisportal/index.do

This link is on the front page of the Families Together website, too.

There will be opportunities for families to testify on bills that will affect your family. Please call the Topeka Center, if you would be interested in testifying about Special Education or services to persons with disabilities, 1-800-264-6343 or 785-233-4777.

Together, families can make a difference in the services and supports for students with exceptional needs!

Connie

KANSAS 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
NC Region	1-866-778-7710 or 1-866-279-6760
NW Region	1-866-775-7710
SE Region	1-877-499-5369
SC Region	1-866-884-8810

Make A Difference Information Network 1-800-332-6262

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

KPIRC

(Kansas Parent Information Resource Center)
PO Box 320 • Lecompton, Kansas 66050
785-887-6711 • 866-711-6711 • fax: 785-887-6711
e-mail: nkraft@nekesc.org • website: www.kpirc.org

SUPPORT GROUPS

Autism Awareness Support Group

1st Thursday of each month
6:30 pm (look for signs on doors)
First Southern Baptist Church
2701 W 8th, Coffeyville

SEKDSS (SE Kansas Down Syndrome Society)

3rd Sunday of each month • 2:00-4:00
Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center
629 S Plummer Ave, Chanute

Asperger/Autism Support Group

2nd Tuesday of the month
6:00 pm
Grade School, Girard

Selective Mutism Support Group

Various dates

Does your child not speak at school? Has it gone on for longer than a month? Does your child not speak in many social settings but talks freely at home? This could be caused by a childhood anxiety disorder called selective mutism. To find out more or for local support check out the Selective Mutism Group-Childhood Anxiety Network (SMG-CAN) at www.selectivemutism.org, call 913-481-7209 or e-mail: rgaerni@everestkc.net.

Check Out these Internet Resources!



SPARKLE (Supporting Parent Access to Resources, Knowledge, Linkages and Education)

Project SPARKLE is a program of individualized learning that enhances the ability of parents of children who are deaf/blind to fulfill their roles in the development and education of their children. Through Project SPARKLE, parents will have access to information, training, and resources in their homes via DVD technology and the Internet.

The SPARKLE training program is provided to parents utilizing DVD technology and supported with a Parent Guidebook and the SPARKLE website.

www.sparkle.usu.edu

"My Family Health Portrait" is a computerized tool developed by the Office of the Surgeon General to help create a sophisticated portrait of a family's health history.
www.hhs.gov/familyhistory

Internet Resources for Special Children (IRSC)

The IRSC Web Site is an attempt to bring together valuable information for parents, educators, medical professionals, etc. who interact with children who have disabilities.

www.irsc.org

The Joshua Child and Family Development Center

supports programs designed to improve the lives of children and families living with Tourette Syndrome, Asperger Syndrome, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and ADHD through clinical, education, social and research programs.

joshuacenter.com

Correction...

The last issue had a website listed as www.act4disability.com.

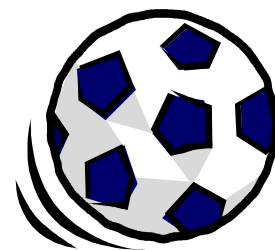
It should have been www.act4disabilities.com

Advocates in Communities Team (ACT) of South Central Kansas is a multi-county team comprised of community developmental disability organizations (CDDOs.), community service providers, families, legal guardians, advocates and other interested parties.

TOPSoccer

"The Outreach Program for Soccer"

Kansas Youth Soccer
708 Rogers Rd., Suite C
Olathe, KS 66062
Phone: (913) 782-6434



Paralympic Medal Invaluable

From the University Daily Kansan
Written by Tara Schupner



All too often, we fail to recognize the small miracles taking place around us. In particular, we forget about the miracles that must take place for people with disabilities to achieve what are, to us, very ordinary and common feats. And we fail to give those people the recognition and praise they deserve.

For example, a Canadian woman, Chantal Petitclerc, who uses a wheelchair, recently won five gold medals at the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games. She also broke three world records and, because of her, Canada's national anthem was played at the Athens Olympic Stadium for the only time throughout the entire Olympics or Paralympics Games.

Petitclerc returned home to Canada a heroine. However, she found herself sharing the title of Canadian track athlete of the year with a disability-impaired athlete who had failed to win any medals at the Olympics.

Controversy erupted among both people with and without disabilities over the perceived slight to Petitclerc's achievements.

"The controversy crystallizes an issue that has long lurked under the surface but is rarely debated: Is a Paralympic medal worth the same as an Olympic medal? How do you compare them?" Randy Starkman wrote last week in an editorial in the Toronto Star.

A Paralympic medal should be considered worth more than an Olympic medal because of the time, energy, dedication, and physical, mental, and emotional agony that accompanies overcoming a physical disability in order to compete on the international level.

Athletes without disabilities need only train physically and mentally. They do not have to deal with the added stress of reconditioning years of a socially imposed stigma that they cannot succeed in athletics if they are disabled. They do not have to struggle to find money or obtain sponsorships from companies who prefer to give their money to big-name athletes without disabilities.

But that's only a tiny portion of the bigger picture.

People with disabilities everywhere struggle against the concept that their achievements are of lesser value than those of people without disabilities.

People cheer when a high school football player scores a touchdown. Who cheers when a child with cerebral palsy, after months of physical therapy, is able to pick up a football for the first time?

People give a standing ovation after a soloist completes an aria. Who cheers when a child who has never heard a single sound, after years of speech therapy, says "mother" for the first time?

People flock to bookstores and give rave reviews for the latest bestselling novel. Who notices when a child with Down's syndrome writes his own name for the first time?

People gasp when a NFL player is brutally tackled, but who, other than a doting parent, notices when a blind child walks into a wall while learning how to use a cane?

A runner trains for months for a marathon. But children with disabilities often go to therapy for hours everyday, for years, just to be able to walk, read, write, speak, hear, and do many other things we all take for granted.

Every child with a disability has a marathon to train for. Every adult with a disability has gone through years of training to get to where they are now. They all deserve as much recognition as Olympic athletes. They certainly have invested as much work, energy, perseverance, and dedication as the most successful athlete in the world.

Tara Schupner is a Lenexa senior in journalism and English at the University of Kansas. She is deaf.



*"Championing the arts
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Capper Foundation Therapeutic Recreation Program

Submitted by Nan Gatewood, Capper Foundation

Come and play with us. The Therapeutic Recreation program at The Capper Foundation encourages youth with physical disabilities to enroll and participate in a wide variety of recreational activities.

Some of the activities we have scheduled for January through May include: bocchia, wheelchair soccer, kayaking, KU basketball clinic, skating, horseshoes, and trips to the circus and the zoo.



We are very fortunate to have a beautiful warm water therapy pool at The Capper Foundation. We offer fitness swimming, family swim sessions, and swim lessons.

We provide competitive opportunities for athletes with disabilities through Special Olympics and the National Disabled Sports Alliance. We participate in Special

Olympics bowling, swimming, and track and field. The NDSA competitive sports include bocchia, wheelchair

soccer, track and field, slalom, and bowling. We travel to Kansas City and Derby to compete in regional games.

A sample of our summer camp opportunities include gardening, tennis, horseback riding, photography, overnight at Camp Hammond, music, and art. We offer lots of opportunities to swim during summer camp, both at our pool and out in the community. We even travel to Oceans of Fun during our Full Day Water Camp.

Volunteers are an important part of our program. Using our excellent volunteers allows us to have almost a one-to-one ratio of staff to participants.

Our goal is to help people use their leisure time in ways that enhance their health, independence, and well being. Many of our activities improve physical abilities, such as cardiovascular strength, balance, muscle strength, and flexibility. Social interaction, increased self confidence, and learning new skills are also important components of the program.

While most of our activities are for ages 5 – 21, we do open our family swim time to all ages. We also have a few adults that join our sports teams.

Dues for the Capper Recreation Club are \$10.00 per year. Each activity has a separate fee, although some activities are free of charge to recreation club members.

If you would like to learn more about the program, please contact Nan Gatewood, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at 272-4060, ext. 7157, or e-mail her at Gatewood@capper.org.

Thank you!

Submitted by Shannon Garrett, Wichita Center

Families Together wishes to thank the following people for their generous contributions:

The Braun Family
The Burke Family
The Hanson Family
The Gregorio Family
The Howland Family
The Jones Family
The Dennis Family
The Perron Family

A special "Thanks" goes out to all of our volunteers who help make Families Together a success.

Our hope is to acknowledge all contributions. If we have missed anyone who has contributed, please call Shannon Garrett at 888-815-6364

Education Advocate Update

Submitted by Alisa Walker, Topeka Center

As the warmer March winds begin to blow, it's time for the 2005 Education Advocate Survey. This survey enables us to keep in touch with all education advocates who serve such an important role in the lives of children in the state.

When you return your surveys, we are able to update contact information and your willingness to serve as an advocate. We are also able to verify that you are still serving as an education advocate for the students to whom you are assigned. If there has been a move, your survey allows us to follow-up with the child's case worker and request current information.

Remember to spread the word about the Education Advocate program. We are always in need of people who care about kids and are willing to help make educational decisions for them. Thank you for your continued support.

Spring 2005 Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Contact
Apr. 1-2, 2005	<i>Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Lawrence</i>	877-499-5369
Apr. 2, 2005	<i>Families Together Transition Mini-Conference, Oakley</i>	888-820-6364
Apr. 6-8, 2005	2005 Issues Forum "Rehabilitation at a Crossroads," Overland Park	573-884-3473
Apr. 8-9, 2005	<i>Families Together Early Childhood Family Enrichment Weekend (ages birth-3 years), Wichita</i>	888-815-6364
Apr. 8-9, 2005	The IDA 11th Annual Spring Conference, Parkville, MO	816-838-7323
Apr. 12, 2005	<i>Families Together Education Advocate Training, Parsons</i>	800-264-6343
Apr. 13, 2005	Joshua Center's "Those DARN Inflexible Kids Conference"	816-763-7605
Apr. 16, 2005	<i>Families Together Transition Mini-Conference, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343
Apr. 19, 2005	<i>Families Together Education Advocate Training, Topeka</i>	800-264-6343
Apr. 21-22, 2005	Third Annual Statewide Kansas Fatherhood Summit, Wichita	785-368-6350
Apr. 22-23, 2005	<i>Families Together Parent Networking Conference, Hutchinson</i>	888-815-6364
May 18-21, 2005	<i>Building for Tomorrow Spring Training Institute & National Autism Symposium, Osage Beach, MO</i>	573-751-4942

99 Drums!

Music & Cultural Camp

April 15-17, 2005

(4:00 pm Apr 15 - 5:30 pm Apr 17)

On the campus of the Kansas State School for the Blind; Kansas City, KS

Contact: 913-281-1133 or
accarts@accessiblearts.org

...bringing together a group of children (including at-risk youth, children with disabilities, and their non-disabled peers) to experience music and dance in a celebration of diverse cultures in an inclusive environment...

Additional information and printable on-line registration flyer at:

www.accessiblearts.org



Family Voices

Submitted by Susan Arnold, Topeka Center

The National Health Information Center (NHIC) is a health information referral service. NHIC puts health professionals and consumers who have health questions in touch with those organizations that are best able to provide answers. NHIC was established in 1979 by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The 2005 Listing of Toll-Free Numbers for Health Information is available on this website, and more health related information. **www.health.gov**

The MCH 2010 Kansas Statewide Needs Assessment draft document is posted online and there is a request for comments through early May. View this document at: **www.kdhe.state.ks.us/bcyf/mch.2010html**

The Data Resource Center on Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs is a new site with information from the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs sponsored by the federal Maternal & Child Health Bureau. See the results at: **www.cshcndata.org**.



The Garden City Center has a new address!

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