



Families Together, Inc.

Like us on [Facebook](#) and keep current with our upcoming events.



- **P2 Front page story in Spanish Family Fling**
- **P3 Education Advocate Update From the Director's Desk Moms Matter Too Event**
- **P4 Calendar of Events**

Connections

Fall 2017

A quarterly publication from Families Together, Inc., the Parent Training and Information and Health Information Center for the state of Kansas

Thank you to Mike and Mary Ellrich for sharing their story. Families Together is glad our services were able to assist your family to create your new normal.

Two years ago a new job took us from Iowa to Kansas. Our son who has Down's Syndrome and Autism, was twelve at the time and was doing well at school. This was not always the case but with the help of his doctor, case manager and school officials, we were able to learn ways that could help our son both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Life was pretty good. Our son was adjusting well and we, as a family, continued to learn more about the services and activities that were available for autism. But with a move from one state to another, we were overwhelmed. Our son no longer had a waiver or services. We felt as if we were in over our heads. We were navigating the system by ourselves, or so it felt. Our son was not coping well with his new school and we were on unfamiliar ground. We were feeling tired and desperate.

A professional who we saw to help with all the new transitions our son was dealing with at school gave us a list of agencies she thought would be

helpful since we were not familiar with Topeka and the surrounding area. Families Together was one of those agencies. A call was made and from that day on, we started to feel more comfortable and in control once again.

Families Together has helped with our son's IEP and helped us understand the IEP. Laurie has listened and given helpful advice. I recently participated with an online discussion on IEP's and transitioning to high school and beyond, which was informative and helpful. We also learned about TASN. We have requested them to come in to observe our son and give advice on how to better help in the classroom. I look forward to participating in more of the workshops put on by Families Together.

Having a child with a disability can seem overwhelming but it does not have to be. Being an advocate for your child, having a good team at school and having agencies like Families Together all help to make the journey easier. We all want the same thing; to help our children become the best possible person that he or she can be.

Thank you to our many funders.

Families Together Inc. has received several grants throughout this past year. We are very thankful for what these additional funds have allowed us to do to help serve Kansas families who have children with disabilities and/or special health care needs.

Wichita Community Foundation

Families Together, Inc. was recently awarded a grant of \$1,191 to support career advancement and development of our nonprofit employees. Several members of our staff were able to attend a workshop on how to better help parents connect with other parents while raising a child with a disability and/or special health care needs.

Sunflower Foundation

There were a few staff members jumping with glee when the Sunflower Foundation awarded us with a matching grant to update our website. When this newsletter goes to print, our new web theme will be available to the public. Please drop by at www.familiestogetherinc.org and let us know what you think on Facebook.

Forrest Lattner Family Foundation

Families Together has been working with Wichita State University on a new Strategic Plan, thanks to funding from the Forrest Lattner Family Foundation.



Gracias a Mike y Mary Ellrich por compartir su historia. Familias Unidas está feliz de que nuestros servicios hayan podido ayudar a su familia a crear su nueva normalidad.

Hace dos años un nuevo trabajo nos llevó desde Iowa a Kansas. Nuestro hijo quien tiene Síndrome de Down y Autismo tenía doce años en ese momento y estaba bien en la escuela. Esto no siempre fue el caso pero con la ayuda de su médico, El administrador de casos y funcionarios de la escuela, pudimos aprender maneras que pueden ayudar a nuestro hijo dentro y fuera del aula. La vida era bastante buena. Nuestro hijo se estaba adaptando bien y nosotros como familia seguimos aprendiendo más sobre el autismo y servicios y actividades que estaban disponibles. Con la movimiento de un estado a otro, estábamos abrumados. Nuestro hijo ya no tenía servicios ni servicios de exención. Nos sentíamos como si era demasiado. Estábamos navegando el sistema por nosotros mismos o por lo que sentía. Nuestro hijo no estaba bien con su nueva escuela y estábamos en terreno desconocido. Nos sentíamos cansados y desesperados.

Un profesional a quien vimos para ayuda con todas las nuevas transiciones que nuestro hijo estaba tratando en la escuela nos dio una lista de agencias que ella pensaba que serían útil ya que no estábamos familiarizados con

Topeka y sus alrededores. Familias Unidas era una de esas agencias. Se hizo una llamada y desde ese día, comenzamos a sentirnos más cómodos y en control una vez más. Familias Unidas nos ha ayudado con el IEP de nuestro hijo y nos ayuda a entender el IEP. El Personal de Familias Unidas ha escuchado y dado consejos útiles. Recientemente participé en una discusión en línea sobre IEP y transición a la escuela secundaria y más allá de eso que fue informativo y útil. También aprendimos acerca de TASN a que les pedido que vienen a observar a nuestro hijo y dar consejos sobre cómo ayudar mejor en el aula. Espero poder participar en más de los talleres organizados por Familias Unidas.

Tener un hijo con una discapacidad puede parecer abrumador, pero no tiene por qué ser. Ser un defensor de su hijo, tener un buen equipo en la escuela y tener agencias como Familias Unidas, ayudan a hacer el viaje fácil. Todos queremos la misma para ayudar a nuestros hijos a convertirse en la mejor persona posible que él o ella puedan ser.



The weather was perfect for the Family Fling held in Sedgwick County park last month. We had miles of smiles from the young and the young at heart as we enjoyed a Carnival day of fun in the sun.



Staff at Families Together as well as our mascots, Coco and Clyde, want to give a big thank you to everyone who helped sponsor The Family Fling. We especially want to thank our volunteers including Kohl's Cares, Wichita Prairie Pilots Wichita North High students, Air Capital AMBUCS, Wichita City Police, The Wheel of Fortune Ranch Petting Zoo, Rachel Banning of Special Products, Beth Hollenbeck, Tim and Teresa Wallweber, Pat Leon, Tammy Hazlett with Canine Companion Kollege, Andrea Conraseo, Jordan Zuniga and our board members Heidi Cornell and Jennifer Stone and former board member Melanie Jacobs.

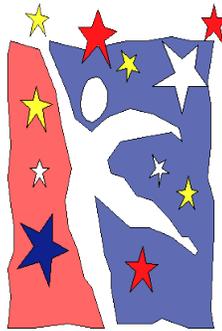
Everyone received a free t-shirt thanks to Spirit AeroSystems, Kemp Financial, Children's Mercy Hospital, Enegren IT group. Craft Sponsors were Bett's Consulting, Skyward Credit Union, Black Hill's Energy. Meal sponsors were Patterson Legal Group and Legacy Bank. Larry Perlman At Your Request Mobile DJ provided music.

Other donations and prizes were donated by: Chick-fil-a, Wichita State University, Davis Moore, Strataca, Exploration Place, Sedgwick County Zoo, Black Hills Energy, Casey's General Store, Botanica, Kansas Aviation Museum, Freddy's Frozen Custard, Tanganyika Wildlife Park, Bagatelle, All Star Sports, Kansas City Royals, Cosmosphere, Cori Broddle, Jazzercise, 8th day Books, Monica Bundt Cake, Autism Avenue and Dart Warz.

Our biggest thank you goes to Amerigroup who was our event sponsor. We could not have done it without you!



ESSA Mandates Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes new protections for children in foster care. One important component is that of immediate enrollment, even without the normal school records. The receiving school must immediately contact the last attendance school to obtain records. This is aided by the Student Record Exchange, allowing a safe and secure way to send and receive student records electronically.

The second protection is the option of remaining in the school of origin. The school of origin is defined as the school the student is enrolled in at the time the student comes into custody or changes placement. The decision to remain in the school of origin is determined by a Best Interest Determination (BID). The BID is initiated by the child's case worker and includes the child, educational decision makers, foster parents, the regular and special education staff, and the child's case manager. Many factors contribute to the decision of remaining in the school of origin, including child safety, child's attachment to the current school, placement of siblings, transportation considerations, and IEP and Section 504 plans. If there is disagreement regarding school placement, the child welfare agency (St. Francis Community Services or KVC) makes the final decision regarding placement.

These are strong protections for the children you serve as an education advocate. If you have questions, please contact the [Topeka Center of Families Together, Inc.](#)



Mothers Matter Too

Families Together, Inc. held their first "Mothers Matter, Too" mini-conference in Great Bend on September 16th. This unique event was designed specifically for moms, grandmothers and foster moms. Working in partnership with Sunflower Diversified and Oakley Assistive Technology Site, these special ladies received information regarding the services these agencies provide, as well as how to manage stress, all while being pampered.

The women attending could choose to receive a massage and/or a manicure while listening to presentations. All received information packets full of resources to help them learn about financial, emotional and community supports available to them. Thanks to the generosity of Western Kansas Community Foundation, the packets were free to all participants. Drawings for pampering items were made throughout the day. The event ended with women breaking into small groups, making themselves comfortable on the floor, and sharing information about themselves with a focus on their uniqueness, strengths and dreams. With a rose in hand, the women left the event invigorated with smiles on their faces, ready to return to their families with renewed enthusiasm for the important role of being a mom, grandmother, or foster mom.

From the Director's Desk

Dear Parents and Appointed Education
Advocates:

School has been in session for a while now and it is almost time for teacher conferences. Here are some things to consider this time of year:

- How are the first few months of school going? Has your child or the child for whom you serve as an advocate recouped any lost skills from the summer break? If not, this needs to be documented for potential Extended School Year discussions in the spring. Are all the accommodations and modifications and related services being provided as documented in the IEP?
- The State Legislature is not in session so this is a great time to contact your representatives in your home district. Get to know the person who represents your family in the House and Senate and help them understand the challenges you face for your child with disabilities and/or special health care needs. They can't know the needs of their constituents unless we tell them. If you need help identifying your representative, call one of the Families Together offices for help finding who they are.

Families Together, Inc. is celebrating 35 years of serving Kansas families!! If our services have been helpful to you, please consider a donation. Go to www.familiestogtherinc.org and click the Donate button at the top right corner. Any amount will help us continue our services to families throughout the state of Kansas for many more years. PAY IT FORWARD!

Please call one of our offices, if we can help you with the challenges you may be facing accessing services for your son or daughter, or the child for whom you are an appointed advocate. Thank you for being involved parents. Your children and their teachers appreciate your work.

Happy Fall!

Connie

Families Make the Difference

Families Together, Inc. founded in 1982, serves as the Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center for Kansas and provides opportunities for families to come together and meet other families who are navigating the special education and disability services maze. Each year, Families Together, Inc. provides, without fees, direct support to thousands of Kansas families. In addition, through workshops, conferences and partnerships with state, local and national organizations, Families Together provides training to nearly 4,000 families and professionals working with children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs.

Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364

gardencity@famielstogetherinc.org

Topeka Center 1-800-264-6343

topeka@famielstogetherinc.org

Wichita Center 1-888-815-6364

wichita@famielstogetherinc.org

www.famielstogetherinc.org

Nov. 9, 2017	35th Anniversary Reception - Topeka	1-800-264-6343
Jan. 26, 2018	Family Employment Awareness Training Part 1 Garden City (Spanish) (Register here in Spanish)	1-888-820-6364
Jan. 26, 2018	Family Employment Awareness Training Part 1 Garden City (Spanish) (Register here in English)	1-888-820-6364
Feb. 10, 2018	Family Employment Awareness Training Part 2 Garden City (Spanish) (Register here in Spanish)	1-888-820-6364
Feb. 10, 2018	Family Employment Awareness Training Part 2 Garden City (Spanish)(Register here in English)	1-888-820-6364
Feb. 3, 2018	Together We Can Learn - Wichita Health/Education Statewide Conference	1-888-815-6364
April 6 & 7, 2018	Family Enrichment Weekend - Topeka	1-800-264-6343

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Families Together, Inc.

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