

SPECIAL NEEDS

LET'S NETWORK

June 1, 2006

Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

June 25th through July 1st is **DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS WEEK**. In celebration of Deaf-Blind Awareness week, we say Happy Birthday to Hellen Keller.

Planning Your Child's Summer

Making summer plans for your child is quite a balancing act. There are many factors and opinions to consider. Do the best you can making summer plans, then let go of any guilt! This may be easier said than done! Don't expect perfection of yourself or your child. Here are some tips for considering your choices and making a decision:

Define the needs of your child and family:

1. Define your budget and family vacation/activity schedule. Whatever plans you make for your child should fit comfortably within those parameters.
2. Respect your child's social and emotional needs. He may want a break from school work over the summer. Keep in mind that he's probably working hard in school at the time you must decide on summer plans. He may feel less stressed once he's had a week or two of summer vacation. On the other hand, he may be enthused about pursuing a sport or hobby through camp or another organized activity.
3. Think creatively. Aim for a healthy balance by integrating academics and recreational plans for your child.

Consider your child's talents and interests outside of school:

Is there a hobby, sport, or activity your child enjoys but has little time for during the school year? If so,

summer break may provide an opportunity for him to enjoy it through a camp, a local workshop, community group, or at home. Recreational pursuits may provide the fun and confidence boost he needs. It will take pressure off of him, and you, so you can both start the new school year feeling re-energized!

Consider your child's academic needs:

If you and the school agree that a focused academic program would help your child improve or retain his skills over the summer, you may want to:

1. Focus on one or two areas where your child needs the most help.
2. Research your options. If your child has an IEP, he may be able to attend an extended year program (summer school). Other options include private tutoring or educational therapy.

Don't feel guilty if you decide not to pursue a full program. You know your child's overall needs best. If you feel your child needs a break from academics trust your instincts when scheduling your child's summer programs.

Shifting from School Year to Summer Break

As the school year draws to a close, you and your family probably view summer break as a well-deserved reprieve. If your child has learning and/or attention problems, it's important to recognize that the shift from school year to summer break (however welcome) represents a transition phase and may pose special challenges for your child.

Regardless of the summer plans you've made, you may want to ease into summer in a way that addresses your needs as well as your child's. Here are some tips to consider:

1. **Review the summer plans you've made to date.** Where there are gaps, brainstorm ways to address them, such as parents

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- rotating days off work to stay home with younger kids on unscheduled days.
- 2. Involve your child when preparing for family trips and activities.** Depending on her age, she can help you map out driving routes or make a list of the clothing and recreational gear the family will need.
 - 3. Have your child contribute to the family calendar.** Together, you can determine key dates (e.g., community pool opens for recreation swim, July Fourth barbecue) and have your child mark these on the calendar.
 - 4. Post the family's summer schedule.** Mark activities (day camp, vacations, your teenager's work schedule, etc.) on a "family size" calendar posted in a central location. Be sure to note blocks of unscheduled time as well; that way, you can anticipate free time to use as you wish – even if it's just to enjoy a break in the action.
 - 5. Prepare your child for her scheduled activities.** If possible, visit the locations where she'll be during day camp or day care in advance. Have your child talk to counselors, caregivers, as well as other kids have enjoyed those same situations and settings.
 - 6. Be prepared to be spontaneous.** Keep a running list of places and people to visit when time permits and the mood strikes. Summer is a good time to stop by the science museum, bike trail, or concert-in-the-park that you can't seem to get to during the school year.
 - 7. Revamp — but don't eliminate — your child's daily routine.** A daily routine gives most kids with learning or attention problems a sense of structure and security. While certain tasks (like doing homework) can be dropped during the summer, new ones (like packing for daily swim lessons) may be added. For fun, you might loosen up on certain chores during the summer, like designating every Friday as "Don't make the bed" day!
 - 8. Encourage summertime learning.** Summer outings may present opportunities for your child to learn about history, geography, and nature. Look for "teachable moments" and encourage her to listen, read, take photographs, collect postcards, and keep a journal of her adventures. This type of learning can boost the self-esteem of a child who struggles in school.
 - 9. Ask other people (spouse, family members, and neighbors) for help** shuttling kids to activities and supervising them on their "days off." Trade carpooling and kid-watching duties with other parents in your neighborhood.
 - 10. Don't succumb to summer stress!** There is bound to be some bedlam and boredom in any household during the summer. When stress strikes, try to shrug it off and find humor in the situation.

Quote of the Month

"Every child is gifted, they just open their packages at different times" - *Shared by Mrs. DeSousa*

Workshops & Events (Summer)

Dunellen Parent Support Group (DPSG) Faber School, Media Center, 7:00 - 9:00 pm. **July 25**

COSAC Support Group Middlesex County Raritan Valley Academy, Piscataway, 7:00 - 9:00 pm. **May 7**, Speaker: Jed Baker, **June** date not yet scheduled. Facilitator: Melissa DeWees, Psy.D. Parent Contact: Steve Sobel (732) 390-1796

COSAC Support Group Union County Children's

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Specialized Hospital, Mountainside, 7:30 - 9:30pm.
May 23, June date not yet scheduled. Facilitator: Nancy Arvizzigno, MA, LPC. Parent Contact: Deb Ritter (908) 233-8510 (1-5pm only)

June 16, Parents of Children with Autism Social, presented by **Child's Play Social Skills Center**: A Developmental Social, Play and Language Center. Guest Speaker Dr. Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D., President of OAR, speaks on current research at OAR and sexuality in individuals with autism. For more information or to reserve your attendance call Child's Play at 908.722.8884 or email childsplay2004@aol.com. Attendance is limited. Location: Child's Play 3322 Route 22 West, Bldg # 2, Suite 203, Branchburg, NJ 08807.

June 16, 8-4:15, Woodbridge Hilton, 120 Wood Avenue South, Iselin. **Boggs Center** presents Positive Behavior Supports: State of the Art and Evidence Base, featuring Glen Dunlap, Jed Baker, and Linda Bambara. Topics include Autism, Direct Supports, Self Determination, Teaching Social Skills, Functional Assessment, Reducing Phobias, and Support Strategies. \$100 early bird (register by May 19); \$125 after May 19. Contact 732-235-9326 for more information. Peg Kinsell will attend for SPAN.

June 17, The **ARC of NJ** sponsors "22nd Annual Self Advocacy Conference", at the The Doubletree Hotel, Somerset, NJ. For more information call 732-926-8010.

June 19, 1-2:30 pm. **LRE Part B Community of Practice** presents a web tour of the IDEA Partnership web site. You will need access to a website and phone line for the auditory portion of the tour. The web address for the IDEA Partnership is <http://www.ideapartnership.org>. The Partnership web site houses an extensive collection of links that are helpful to schools, parents, and others, including information on IDEA and No Child Left Behind, a Results for Kids Library, Schoolwide Instructional Materials Across Curricula, Academic Enhancements and Differentiated Instruction, Classroom Assessment, and Reviews of Collections of Models, Practices and Tools Evaluated According to Evidence. To register, contact Michele Mitchell at mmitche@wested.org.

June 21, 6:30-8:30 pm, 2312 New Road, Northfield. **Atlantic-Cape May Family Support Organization** presents Sondra Dublinsky on Stages of Accepting Illness. Babysitting & transportation available. Contact Andrea Burleigh at 609-485-0575 x 105.

June 27, The Davis Center presents "What is Sound Therapy?", a free informational seminar on ADD, AD/HD, Autism & Dyslexia, from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Davis Center, One Mannino Drive, Rockaway, NJ. For more information visit: www.thedaviscenter.com or call 973-400-0010.

June 27, Epilepsy Support Group Middlesex County Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. For more information contact Jane at (732) 216-5092

June 28-29, Montgomery High School (near Princeton) presents, Summer Inclusion Conference 2006" The Keys to Inclusion: Unlocking the Doors for Children with Mild to Significant Disabilities, NJ Coalition for Inclusive Education. Contact 732-613-0400 or njcie@comcast.org.

July 5, 7:30-9:30 pm, **Community Campus-JCC**, Edison (adjoining the YMCA). Aspen of Middlesex & Union Counties presents Intricate Minds II: Understanding Elementary School Classmates. Contact 732-321-0880 or go to www.aspennj.org.

July 7 & 8, 9 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., RDI Connect sponsors "RDI: Going to the Heart of Autism" 2 Day Workshop, Dr. Steve Gutstein dramatically illustrates the Relationship Development Intervention Program (RDI) via audience participation and hours of video taken from actual intervention sessions. \$275 Fee. For more information contact Kristen Adiska at 866-378-6405 X119; email adiska@rdiconnect.com; web site www.rdiconnect.com

July 17 & 18 (must attend both days) from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., **Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center** presents "Best Practices in Functional Assessment and Developing Effective Treatments for Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders" at the RU Busch Student Center, Piscataway. \$325 Fee. For more information call 732-932-4500 x100 or x134

July 25 & August 22 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. **The Davis Center** presents "What is Sound Therapy?", a

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free informational seminar on ADD, AD/HD, Autism & Dyslexia, at Davis Center, One Mannino Drive, Rockaway, NJ. For more information visit: www.thedaviscenter.com or call 973-400-0010.

July 26 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center** presents "Social Skills: Helping Learners on the Autism Spectrum Build Bridges" at the RU Busch Student Center, Piscataway. \$175 Fee. For more information call 732-932-4500 x100 or x134



Book of the Month

Summer Reading . . .

- *The Out of Sync Child*: Guide for parents of children who difficulties with sensory disorders
- *The Out of Sync Child has Fun*: Activities for kids with sensory integration dysfunction
- *How to Do Homework without Throwing Up*: About facing the challenges of homework for students with a learning disorder
- *A Boy and a Bear*: The Children's Relaxation Book teaches young children how to relax and calm themselves
- *Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention*: Helps children to identify problems
- *The Boys' and Girls' Book of Dealing with Feelings*: Teaches four basic steps
- *Bullies are a Pain in the Brain*: Teaches some good ways to deal with bullies
- *Keeping a Head in School*: A Student's Book about Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders helps students understand their personal strengths and weaknesses
- *Don't call Me Special*: A First Look at Disability is about physical disabilities
- *My First Book of Sign Language*
- *Helen Keller*: Crusader for the Blind and Deaf
- *Games for Reading*: Over 70 games to help your child learn to read and love it
- *Dyslexic Hero*: How Winkler transformed his own unhappy experiences with dyslexia into

stories of resilience and hope

- *Nurturing Resilience in Your Child*: Expert advice on how to promote qualities that help your child bounce back from adversity.
- *Specific Success Attributes in Individuals with LD*: Dr. Marshall Raskind tells of things adults can do to foster these traits.
- *Parenting without Punishment*: Making problem behavior work for you
- *Keys to Developing Your Child's Self-Esteem*
- *Living With a Brother or Sister With Special Needs*
- *Views from Our Shoes*

Resource of the Month

Learning Resource Centers are terrific resource for parents. They are basically a Special Education Library supported through the New Jersey State Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and funded through IDEA - Part B Funds.

The following services are available to parents and educators serving pupils with disabilities ages 3 to 21. A \$2.00 annual membership is required for all services.

Information Services: Current special education information is available at the LRCs through research reports, curriculum guides, professional journal articles, the ERIC microfiche collection, and on-line research services. Bibliographies and other resource reports are compiled, and information retrieval services are provided to assist members in locating information and materials. A reference collection of computer software is maintained for preview purposes.

Materials Circulation Services: The LRCs maintain and loan an extensive collection of professional books, inservice training resources, videocassettes and instructional audio-visual materials to support all areas of the curriculum. Each center also operates a Van Outreach service for the delivery of resources within its region.

Consultation Services: Learning Resource Center staff provide regional inservice workshops, training institutes, statewide conferences, consultations, LRC service orientations and technical assistance to

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teachers, administrators, and parents of pupils with disabilities.

Production Services: Ideas and supplies are available for the development of teacher and parent made learning materials. Services include lettering machines, laminating, transparency making, button making, photocopying, and poster making.

Locations: 1501 Livingston Avenue; North Brunswick, NJ 08902; (732) 249-2900 & 2351 Route 130 South; Dayton, NJ 08810 (732) 274-5570.

- Shared by Dr. Molenaar

Next Issue

Get Involved! I'd love to hear from you with suggestions and ideas for September's issue. Let me know what topics you would like to read about. Advise of any events you have on your calendar. Share resources, stories, book reviews and research updates. If you would like to write your own articles, I'd be happy to include them in upcoming issues. Please note, all articles are subject to approval. Feedback on this month's issue is also appreciated. All submissions should be emailed to mmccabe@sns.com

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JUNE UPDATE

In-House

Best wishes to Dr. Molenaar for a long and happy retirement. Dr. Molenaar, the Dunellen Parent Support Group and PTO's Special Needs Committee have had a wonderful and productive partnership. Working together, we've implemented the "Special Needs" Newsletter and ESY Safety Program, started a parent support group, created the "Special Services" link on the Dunellen Schools website, met as a group with the Superintendent to discuss parent concerns and suggestions, met as a group to review documents and enhancements, included parent participation in a panel for new hires and participated in Disability Awareness Week. Dr. Molenaar's support and participation is well recognized and appreciated.

Check out the NEW "Special Services" link on the www.dunellenschools.org web site. This site includes information on student services, programs, resources and supports.

Both Faber and Lincoln Middle School students participated in the Disability Awareness Week Contest. All of the submissions were terrific and the children's participation and effort are commended. The Winners of the DAW contest are:

Grand Prize

Noah Murphy, 5th grade, Mrs. Desousa's Class

Buttito, 3rd grade, Mrs. O'Neill's Class

Maria Frabizzio, Lincoln Middle School

2nd Place

Alex Meyer, 4th grade, Mr. Tennant's Class

Casey Wenzel, 5th grade, Mrs. Desousa's Class

Karissa Dwyer, 6th grade, Mr. Ruskuski's Class

3rd Place

Brianna Martin, 3rd grade, Mrs. Kipnis' Class

Cindy Escobar, 4th grade, Mrs. Whitworth's Class

Kristina Sivak, 6th grade, Ms. Bricker's Class

The winning submissions will be displayed at the Dunellen Theater.

Join us at the **Dunellen Parent Support Group's first Summer Social** on Tuesday, July 25th from 7 - 9 pm in the Media Center at John P. Faber Elementary School. In addition to open discussion, we will be announcing the group's new name, planning our participation in the

Dunellen Street Fair, voting on our Bylaws, nominating additional board members and discussing our goals for the 2006 - 2007 school year.

A Word from the Office of Special Services

We have two new special education teachers starting in the fall at Faber Elementary School. **Melanie McCarthy** will be teaching in the resource program for the older elementary students since Trish Edgerton will be moving to the resource program in Lincoln Middle School. Ms. McCarthy has a Masters of Science in Teaching in Childhood and Special Education from Fordham University. For the last two years, she taught students with disabilities in grades 4-5 in New York. A resident of Scotch-Plains, she has traveled to several European cities and is interested in running, cheerleading, performing arts and scrap booking. **Jaime Aherns** will be teaching the second preschool class in the fall. A resident of Dunellen, she has over five years experiences as an aide and a teacher of students with autism and multiple disabilities at the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission. She has training in discrete trial teaching, applied behavior analysis, verbal behavior, picture exchange communication system and crisis prevention intervention. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Kean University this year with a BA in Educator of Individuals with Disabilities.

It has been a fulfilling and gratifying few years for me in Dunellen. I found the administrators, teachers, aides, child study team members and speech-language specialists dedicated to helping students with disabilities make the most of their developing skills. It was a pleasure to work with the staff and parents designing programs that would foster students' growth and enthusiasm for learning. Over these four years, I have seen students grow, mature and hold themselves up with pride in their accomplishments. The Dunellen Parent Support Group was a welcome addition to our educational community in which parents shared ideas and collected all those extra materials to supplement the classrooms. I appreciate the opportunity and privilege of working with all of you and will remember Dunellen fondly! Thank you for all your support and encouragement.

— Mari Molenaar, Acting Director of Special Services