

# Stepping Stones

SPRING 2015

**Building strong foundations and a brighter future  
for Howard County children with special needs and their families**

## Playgroup!

The Family Support and Resource Center is pleased to announce several playgroups for parents and their children that receive Early Intervention Services (ages birth through preschool). Come join us for an informal morning of play and actual adult conversation!

Playgroups are located throughout the county. Please join us at the playgroup closest to you, or come to the one that works for your schedule!

Siblings are always welcome. Please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161 with questions.

All groups meet 9:30-11:00 a.m. during the school year (not June-August). If there is no school due to a scheduled holiday or weather closure/delay, playgroup will not meet.



### Second Tuesday of the Month

Infants and Toddlers Playgroup  
Oakland Mansion  
5430 Vantage Point Road • Columbia  
Use lower level entrance

### Third Tuesday of the Month:

Infants and Toddlers Playgroup  
North Laurel Community Center  
9411 Whiskey Bottom Road • Laurel

### Forth Monday of the Month:

Infants and Toddlers Playgroup  
Dayton Oaks Elementary  
4691 Ten Oaks Road • Dayton  
In Recreation and Parks room

### First Wednesday of the Month

Down Syndrome Playgroup  
Oakland Mansion  
5430 Vantage Point Road • Columbia  
Use lower level entrance

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## Family Advocacy and Parent Education Program

Do you have questions about special education services and rights? Questions about IEP hours, school services, modifications, accommodations, regulations under state and federal law, or other special education issues? Do you need guidance on how to request additional help or understanding documents you received from the school? The Howard County Autism Society is here to help. We provide advice and support on special education issues and services in Howard

County through consultations, workshops, and seminars. If necessary, free phone consultations with the Maryland Disability Law Center can be arranged. This service is free of charge and open to all families, regardless of their child's disability. For more information, visit [howard-autism.org](http://howard-autism.org), visit the Special Education News Center website at [specialed.howard-autism.org](http://specialed.howard-autism.org), or call 410-290-3466. You can also post questions to [AskUsSpecialEdQuestions@Howard-Autism.org](mailto:AskUsSpecialEdQuestions@Howard-Autism.org).

## FAMILY SUPPORT AND RESOURCE CENTER

Howard County Public School System  
8930 Stanford Blvd., Columbia, MD

[Andrea\\_Holz@hcpss.org](mailto:Andrea_Holz@hcpss.org) • [Ann\\_Scholz@hcpss.org](mailto:Ann_Scholz@hcpss.org) • 410-313-7161

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year to each of our HCPSS families! The 2014-2015 school year is rapidly speeding by. Our work has been consumed with ensuring students have access to daily rigorous instruction, preparing for the PARCC and Early Childhood assessments, working with the District Management Council on a Special Education Opportunity Review which has yielded strong recommendations for principals and leaders that will benefit our students, and preparing for the February professional learning day to strengthen our teachers' and teacher leaders' knowledge about IEP and IFSP processes including Prior Written Notice and ESY decisions.

Our Department of Special Education and Student Services leadership staff, teachers, support staff and related providers continue to work tirelessly to meet the needs and challenges of all students, while promoting their independence throughout each school day. If we each take this on together -- families, staff, coaches, community members--promoting one's independence-- our students will be better prepared for our ever changing world.

In case I don't see you to say goodbye to you, I would like to thank you for all of your support, advocacy, questions, ideas, information sharing and phone calls over the years. You are the best parents and community members that I know of and I have learned so much from you, that benefits children and young adults with disabilities. I will be retiring July 1, 2015 and will cherish the work we have been able to do in partnership together. Wishes for an excellent second half of the year.

Patty



Patty Daley  
Executive Director  
Special Education and Student Services

## Resources for Young Children

The Early Intervention Office has developed a website of resources for families to use to foster their young child's skill development. The Family Resources website for HCPSS students, birth through preschool, is a selection of books, documents, websites, and apps that parents may find useful on a variety of topics such as routines, potty training, sleep, behavior, communication, etc. It can be found at [ecfamilyresources.weebly.com](http://ecfamilyresources.weebly.com). The site will grow and change, so be sure to visit often.

## Care Center

The CARE Center, Child and Adolescent Resources and Education, is a free information and referral service for Howard County families. Are you a parent looking for child care or parenting classes? Maybe you're a grandparent raising a grandchild and need support. Are you a parent dealing with behavior issues or adolescent concerns? Do you have a child with special needs or mental health concerns and want to find county resources? The CARE Center is here to help parents find services and programs by identifying needs and finding solutions. Call the CARE Center at 410-313 CARE (2273), email [children@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:children@howardcountymd.gov) or visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/children](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/children).



# SECAC Staff Recognition Evening

The Howard County Special Education Community Advisory Committee (SECAC) is seeking nominations for our annual Staff Recognition Evening. Each year, families are encouraged to nominate a person or group of people who have significantly enhanced their child's educational experience as they relate to four specific categories. The stories that families share of their student's success helps us highlight the innovative strategies and ideas that are working in each school, and allows us to share those ideas with families and staff.

Nominees may be teachers, bus drivers, guidance counselors, psychologists, administrators, nurses, paraprofessionals, occupational, physical and speech therapists, or any other HCPSS staff member. SECAC will accept nominations from parents, guardians, or students. You may nominate an individual staff member, or a group of individuals who work with your child.

The categories include:

## **Inclusive Practices:**

Is meaningful inclusion a school-wide philosophy that enables all students to participate in the daily activities of the school community? Is your student a valued part of that community?

## **Promoting Independence:**

Has the staff done something that enabled your student to make great strides in his or her independence? Did someone on your student's team presume your student could be competent in accomplishing a skill independently, and did the student face the challenge and prove them right?

## **Progress in Academic Areas:**

Is your student making more academic progress than you have seen in the past? Why? What is the staff doing that is working so well?

## **Promoting Parent/Staff Partnerships:**

Is your school including you in the decision making process? Are you an active member of the IEP team? Is your input and opinion solicited and valued, and is there effective communication between the school and home?

If you are nominating an individual, please describe in 50-200 words some action, attitude or approach that you feel has made a difference related to one of the four listed categories. If you are nominating a group, please describe in 50-400 words how the group has worked together to provide an exceptional educational experience for your student in one of the areas. If you are nominating a bus driver or bus aide, those nominees do not need to fit into one of the categories. Nominations must include correctly spelled names of each nominee and their title, the school and or bus company they work for, and your name, phone number and email address. If you have pictures of your child (with or without the nominee) and would like to contribute them to our SECAC Recognition Evening presentation, forward them with your nomination letter.

Please email your nomination to [secacnomination@yahoo.com](mailto:secacnomination@yahoo.com) by Friday, April 10, 2015. You will get a confirmation of receipt. All nominating families, the nominees and administrators will be invited to join us as we recognize these outstanding individuals.

There is no first, second or third place - we believe that all nominees should be recognized for their work!

For more information, please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.



## **Health Coverage Options**

What will happen when your child with special health care needs ages out of his or her current health care plan? Parents and guardians may not be aware of the choices available for coverage when children age into adult plans. Young adults may be able to continue with dependent coverage or access private or public plans. Young adults with special health care needs may be eligible for more than one plan. It's important to take a look at all the options before making a choice. For more information read this two-page article that highlights the questions families need to ask. A list of resources is included in the information. [http://pealcenter.org/images/EP-insur.\\_age\\_out.pdf](http://pealcenter.org/images/EP-insur._age_out.pdf)





## Free Respite Care

The Bethel Assembly of God church in Jessup is offering a free respite care program as part of their special needs ministry. The respite program is open to elementary-aged children with disabilities and their siblings. It takes place the third Saturday of every month. The church provides one-on-one trained, background-checked volunteers for every child with a disability, and a small ratio for siblings.

It is requested that families submit a parent packet so the church can plan for their child's individual needs and make sure that there is enough staffing for everyone coming.

The respite ministry is part of a national program called rEcess (with the organization 99 Balloons). For more information, please visit [www.99balloons.org/bethel](http://www.99balloons.org/bethel). While the other parts of the church's ministry are geared toward families already in the church, the respite program is meant to meet a need in the community.

# Top 10 Things Parents Need to

Maryland implemented new, higher standards for student learning in all schools across the State in 2013. The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards are based on the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by Maryland and over 40 other states, and provide students with the relevant, real-world knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers. In order to measure student mastery of the new standards, this year Maryland will implement new statewide tests – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments – which replace the current Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The PARCC tests in English 10 and Algebra will replace the High School Assessments (HSAs) in those subjects this year, while the HSAs in Government and Biology will continue to be administered. As we continue this transition to the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education has compiled a list of the 10 most important things parents need to know about testing.

**1. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in English language arts/literacy and mathematics will be given each spring.**

Students in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 will be given the new assessments. These tests, aligned to the new standards, mark a major step forward for education in Maryland.

**2. The new PARCC tests are designed to be given online, but paper and pencil versions are available.**

Many classrooms will be administering the PARCC tests on computers or tablet devices, but due to technology constraints felt in some classrooms, there will be paper and pencil versions of the test available at least through 2017.

**3. The PARCC assessments represent a complete reset of Maryland's state testing system.**

Scores will not be comparable with the old MSA tests in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The new tests look at different content and use an entirely new grading system. Data for the 2014-15 administration will represent a new baseline for students and schools.

**4. The PARCC assessments are a better measure of student learning.**

These are not the typical multiple choice bubble tests that have been prevalent for decades. The new PARCC assessments will measure problem solving skills that students need to be successful in college and careers. The PARCC tests will also provide timely information about what individual students are learning and whether or not they need extra help.

**5. The science MSA will continue to be administered.**

The computer-based MSA science exam is still given to students in Grades 5 and 8 in March or April, as it has been administered for the past decade.

**6. Federal law requires that all Maryland students take an annual statewide assessment, or the State risks losing millions of dollars in funding.**

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), all students in Grades 3-8 must be tested every year in reading and mathematics. Annual testing is important to help ensure that all students are making progress.

**7. Scores on the first full administration of the PARCC assessments will be available by the end of 2015.**

Information on student achievement in mathematics and English language arts/literacy will be available for students, parents, and educators and will include specific information about progress toward college and career readiness.

# Know about Testing in Maryland

## 8. Parents of students with disabilities will be contacted by their child's IEP or 504 team to discuss allowable PARCC accessibility features and accommodations.

Accessibility features and accommodations will continue to be tailored for individual student needs. There are some accommodations in current IEP or 504 plans that:

- Are no longer allowable for the PARCC assessments.
- Are included for all students as an accessibility feature, or
- Have specific guidelines that IEP or 504 teams must consider when selecting the accommodation, such as text-to-speech, calculator, scribe, or word prediction.

## 9. The PARCC tests in Algebra and English 10 replace the Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs) in Algebra/Data Analysis and English 10.

Students will not be required to pass the Algebra and English 10 PARCC assessments in order to receive a Maryland High School diploma until 2016-17. They must still take and pass the Biology and Government HSAs to graduate, and must complete and pass all their coursework.

## 10. If you have additional questions about testing, ask your child's teacher or principal.

These educators and administrators will have the most accurate information about what is happening in your child's classroom and school. They can also share ideas on what you can do at home to help your child succeed.

### For additional information and resources, please visit:

PARCC Website: [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)

PARCC Practice Tests: <http://parcconline.org/practice-tests>

Maryland State Department of Education: [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)

Maryland school, district, and state scores: [www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org)

## ABLE Act Becomes Law

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2013 was introduced in the 113th Congress and easily passed in the US House of Representatives (404-17). Two weeks later, the US Senate voted to pass the ABLE Act as a part of the Tax Extenders package. On December 19, 2014, the President of the United States signed the Tax Extenders package, making the ABLE Act the law of the land.

The ABLE Act will amend Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. The bill aims to ease financial strains faced by individuals with disabilities by making tax-free savings accounts available to cover qualified expenses such as education, housing, and transportation. The bill would supplement, but not supplant, benefits provided through private insurances, the Medicaid program, the supplemental security income program, the beneficiary's employment, and other sources.

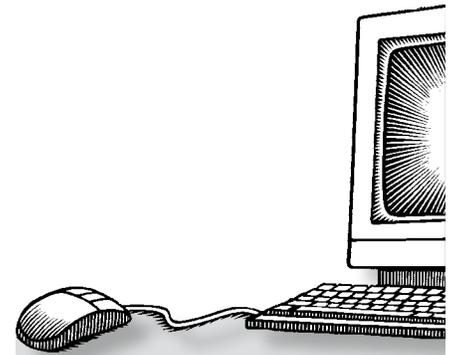
The ABLE Act provides individuals with disabilities the same types of flexible savings tools that all other Americans have through college savings accounts, health savings accounts, and individual retirement accounts. The legislation also contains Medicaid fraud

protection against abuse and a Medicaid pay-back provision when the beneficiary passes away. It will eliminate barriers to work and saving by preventing dollars saved through ABLE accounts from counting against an individual's eligibility for any federal benefits program.

Each state is responsible for establishing and operating an ABLE program. The Department of Treasury will begin to develop regulations that will guide the states in terms of a) the information required to be presented to open an ABLE account; b) the documentation needed to meet the requirements of ABLE account eligibility for a person with a disability; and c) the definition details of "qualified disability expenses" and the documentation that will be needed for tax reporting.

No accounts can be established until the regulations are finalized following a public comment period on proposed rules for program implementation. Many states will begin to accept applications to establish ABLE accounts before the end of 2015.

*Information courtesy of the National Down Syndrome Society.* For more information please visit [www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org)



## Autism Treatment Insurance Laws Webinar

Pathfinders for Autism and the Parents' Place of Maryland have teamed up to offer a free webinar to help explain the most recent changes to the Autism Treatment Insurance laws in Maryland. You may download and view the webinar entitled "Overview of the Autism Treatment Insurance in MD" or you may download an audio only version. The recording plays in Windows Media Player and is not compatible with Mac products. Please visit [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org); click on "Resources and Help" and pull down to "Understanding Insurance."

## Disability.gov's Guide to Employment

Looking for a job when you have a disability can be challenging, especially if you are just starting your career or have been out of work for a while. Fortunately, there are many programs and services available that connect people with disabilities to employment services that offer job training and help finding employment. The web site [www.disability.gov](http://www.disability.gov) features:

- A Guide to Employment
- Blogs
- Workforce Development Resources
- Information About Starting or Growing a Small Business
- Job Accommodations and Supports
- Career Planning and Job Training
- Employment Laws

And remember, it's your ability, not your disability, that matters.



## Sensory Friendly Films

Going to the movies is a rite of passage for most children, but for some children with disabilities, it can be an overwhelming experience. That's where the Sensory Friendly Movie comes in. This movie showing has no trailers. The volume will be kept down and the lights will be kept on (but dimmed). Audience members are free to get up, dance, walk, shout or sing during the show. Bring the family and enjoy a fun morning at the movies in a safe and accepting environment. Sponsored by the Howard County Autism Society and AMC Theatres, Columbia Mall.

Doors open at 9:30 a.m.; the movie starts promptly at 10 a.m. Tickets are \$6.50 a person at the door. Upcoming showings at the AMC Theatres Columbia Mall include:

March 28 - *Home*

April 18 - *Underdogs*

May 30 - *Tomorrowland*

June 27 - *Inside Out*

July 18 - *Minions*

For more information please visit [www.amctheatres.com/SFF/](http://www.amctheatres.com/SFF/) or [www.howardautism.org](http://www.howardautism.org).

## Workshops and Seminars



Interpreters are available for all workshops sponsored by the Family Support and Resource Center. To request an interpreter, please call 410-313-1591 for Spanish, 410-313-1592 for Korean and 410-313-1589 for Chinese.

### MARCH 2015

#### MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND REGIONAL PARENT CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 7, 2015, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Sheraton Silver Spring Hotel  
8777 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring

This workshop is for families of children with a visual impairment/blindness.

Topics include: Impact on the Family of a Child with Special Needs, Life after School for those with Severe Multi-Handicapped Conditions, Adapted Physical Education, ADL Tips and Tricks for the Home, Assessment and Accessibility, and Body Safety Training.

For more information, contact Renee Kirby, Parent Coordinator 410-444-5000 ext. 1489 or [reneek@mdschblind.org](mailto:reneek@mdschblind.org). Lunch is included in this free workshop, but registration is required. Presented by The Maryland School for the Blind and Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind.

#### HELPING 2E LEARNERS SUCCEED AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

Monday, March 9, 2015, 7 p.m.  
Miller Library

9421 Frederick Road • Ellicott City  
Presented by Rose Blucher, M.Ed. and Sarah Wayland, Ph.D. Positive learning experiences motivate students to overcome their challenges.

In this presentation participants will learn how to develop strength-based strategies for addressing academic and social challenges in the classroom and at home. Participants will also learn how to individualize positive attention, and learn about different techniques to help children feel good about learning. Sponsored by IDL, Individual Differences in Learning. For more information, please visit [www.gifteddifferentlearners.org](http://www.gifteddifferentlearners.org)

#### READING FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL READINESS

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 240  
Ellicott City

Learn the foundational skills you can do at home in easy, every day ways to make your child's transition into kindergarten smoother. Learn the importance of asking a variety of questions to children when reading a story. Through active participation, discover ways to increase young children's oral language and vocabulary that is crucial for success. Current research will be addressed and applied to the information presented. Sponsored by the Howard County Office of Children's Services. Workshop fee is \$8 per person. For more information or to register, please visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/familyinstitute/](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/familyinstitute/)

#### WATCHING FOR IRRITABILITY IN ADHD

Tuesday, March 17, 2015, 7-9 p.m.

Ellicott City Senior Center  
9401 Frederick Road • Ellicott City

Presented by Kenneth Towbin, M.D., National Institute of Mental Health. Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) are studying an important but little-understood feature seen in many children with ADHD: irritability. This workshop will address how adults trying to help children with ADHD should think about irritability. The workshop will also discuss research that is beginning to offer clues about brain mechanisms, underlying irritability, and new ways to approach treatment. Sponsored by CHADD, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders Greater Baltimore Chapter. Program descriptions, fliers, schedule changes and other programs are available at [www.chadd-mc.org](http://www.chadd-mc.org). Admission is free to CHADD Members/\$5 contribution requested from non-members.

**MARCH 2015 Continued**

**MATH + LITERACY = FUN FOR PARENTS**

Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 240  
Ellicott City

Through hands-on activities, participants will be able to describe and implement math content and vocabulary, associate picture books with math concepts, and identify math concepts needed for children to be successful when entering kindergarten.

Sponsored by the Howard County Office of Children's Services. Workshop fee is \$8 per person. For more information or to register, please visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/familyinstitute/](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/familyinstitute/)

**UNDERSTANDING IQ TESTS AND OTHER STANDARDIZED TESTING**

Thursday, March 26, 2015, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Woodlawn Library  
1811 Woodlawn Drive • Baltimore

Sponsored by Chesapeake Down Syndrome Parent Group. For more information please visit [www.cdspg.org](http://www.cdspg.org)

**MAY 2015**

**UNDERSTANDING AND TREATING ANXIETY DISORDERS**

Monday, May 11, 2015, 7 p.m.  
Miller Library  
9421 Frederick Road • Ellicott City

Presented by Theresa Shank, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, CPE Clinic.  
Sponsored by IDL, Individual Differences in Learning. For more information please visit [www.gifteddifferentlearners.org](http://www.gifteddifferentlearners.org).

**FINDING YOUR VOICE**

Tuesday, May 19, 2015, 7-9 p.m.  
Ellicott City Senior Center  
9401 Frederick Road • Ellicott City

Finding Your Voice: A Primer for Caregivers presented by Diane Bark, Parent Advocate.

Sponsored by CHADD, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders Greater Baltimore Chapter. Program descriptions, fliers, schedule changes and other programs are available at [www.chadd-mc.org](http://www.chadd-mc.org). Admission is free to CHADD Members/\$5 contribution requested from non-members.

**THE FIRST IEP: TRANSITIONING FROM IFSP TO IEP**

Thursday, May 28, 2015, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Woodlawn Library  
1811 Woodlawn Drive • Baltimore

Sponsored by Chesapeake Down Syndrome Parent Group. For more information please visit [www.cdspg.org](http://www.cdspg.org)



**Project Access Upcoming Events**

Project Access is a program designed to facilitate the transition of high school students with disabilities into postsecondary education, to increase the success rate and retention of freshman students with disabilities, and to improve career counseling and job placement services for students with disabilities. The program at Howard Community College is for students who receive a high school diploma and continue onto college.

Project Access is sponsoring the following events:

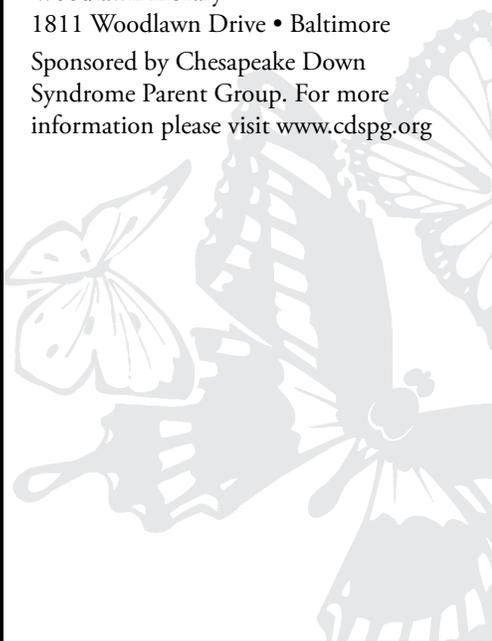
**Project Access College Fair for Students with Disabilities**  
Saturday, March 7, 2015, 12-3 p.m.

**Project Access Annual Conference for Parents and Professionals**  
Friday, April 17, 2015, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Project Access Summer Institute**  
Monday – Friday,  
July 6 – July 31, 2015, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

For more information please call 410-992-4800 ext. 4625 or visit [www.howardcc.edu/students/academic\\_support\\_services/project\\_access](http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic_support_services/project_access)

All events are held at Howard Community College.



**WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS**

There is a wealth of information available for parents of children with special needs. Our responsibility is to provide a variety of resources so you can make informed decisions for your family. The Family Support and Resource Center and the HCPSS do not endorse any group or point of view. We do recommend, however, that you sample workshops and seminars that may be of interest to you and browse the following resources to further add to your knowledge of children with special needs. Please feel free to provide us with feedback on any of the events or resources listed in this publication. Thank you.

# Resources \* Resources \* Resources \* Resources \* Resources

**ABILITIES NETWORK:** Abilities Network provides customized services to children, adults and families of differing abilities that focus on one-on-one supports to foster broadened, more inclusive communities through education, training and advocacy. Call 410-828-7700 or 1-800-492-2523 or visit [www.abilitiesnetwork.org](http://www.abilitiesnetwork.org).

**ABILITIES NETWORK SPEAKER SERIES AND DISCUSSION GROUP:** Monthly discussions on disability related topics. This group is recommended for individuals with disabilities, as well as their families and caregivers. For more information, please call Cassandra Hitchcock at Abilities Network, 410-828-7700.

**ARC OF HOWARD COUNTY:** The Arc of Howard County works to improve the lives of children and adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities and their families. Visit [www.archoward.org](http://www.archoward.org) or call 410-730-0638.

**ASPERGERS SUPPORT GROUP, HCAS:** Second Thursday of the month, 7:30 p.m. Howard County Autism Society Resource Center, 10280 Old Columbia Rd, Suite 215 in Columbia. Visit: [www.howard-autism.org](http://www.howard-autism.org). For more information, call 410-290-3466 or email [elainemcauliffe@yahoo.com](mailto:elainemcauliffe@yahoo.com).

**BIOMEDICAL GROUP:** Discussion of biomedical/integrative treatments for autism. Meets every other month on the second Wednesday from 7-9 p.m. Nourishing Journey, 10440 Shaker Drive Suite 105, Columbia. Contact Jennifer Palmer at [jenn\\_palmer@comcast.net](mailto:jenn_palmer@comcast.net) or Remy Nirschl at [mrnirschl@gmail.com](mailto:mrnirschl@gmail.com) for more information.

**CHADD PARENT SUPPORT GROUP:** The Howard County CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder) Parent Support Group meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at the Ellicott City Senior Center. There will be no meeting in March. For more information please visit [www.chadd-mc.org](http://www.chadd-mc.org). The meeting is open to the public. Monthly topics and more details can be found at [www.chadd-mc.org](http://www.chadd-mc.org) or by contacting [LES418@verizon.net](mailto:LES418@verizon.net). All families with children who have learning differences are encouraged to attend.

**CHESAPEAKE DOWN SYNDROME PARENT GROUP:** Serving families of and persons with Down syndrome by providing information and support. A bimonthly newsletter includes information about upcoming workshops and conferences, a calendar of local, state and national activities, articles submitted by members, listings of resources, advocacy information, book reviews, and more. Call 410-321-5434 or visit [www.cdspg.org](http://www.cdspg.org).

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:** The Community Connections is a project of the Department of Special Education at the University of Maryland, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The goals of this project are to increase opportunities for young children with special needs to participate in the community, promote awareness of persons with disabilities, and provide support to people and organizations. Visit [www.communityconnections.umd.edu](http://www.communityconnections.umd.edu).

**DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER:** Depression and Related Affective Disorder Association meets every second and fourth Sunday, 3-5 p.m. in Ellicott City. Call 410-740-2618 or 410-750-0811.

**DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER:** Howard County General Hospital Wellness Center offers hope to people with depression and bipolar disorder. Meets every second and fourth Friday, 6:45-8:45 p.m. for people to share their experiences and coping skills. The center is located at 11055 Little Patuxent Parkway. Call 301-536-8262 or 443-956-8494.

**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Accelerating the achievement of student groups through comprehensive programs of school, family and community partnerships. Cassandra Miller, 410-313-6602; [cassandra\\_miller@hcps.org](mailto:cassandra_miller@hcps.org)

**HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA:** Support group meets every third Thursday, 7-9 p.m. at 10280 Old Columbia Road, Suite 215, Columbia, 21046. Call 410-290-3466 or visit [www.howard-autism.org](http://www.howard-autism.org).

**HUMANIM:** Humanim has five core service areas: Mental Health, Vocational, Neuro-Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities and Deaf Services. Services are available to children, adolescents, adults and older adults. Humanim seeks to develop access to quality care for those in greatest need regardless of age, gender, geography, ethnicity or human service requirements. Call 410-381-7171 or visit [www.humanim.com](http://www.humanim.com).

**INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING ASSOC., INC.:** Information and support for parents and teachers of highly able children with learning disabilities. Meets every second Monday, 7 p.m., Linden-Linthicum United Methodist Church, Clarksville. Visit [www.gifteddifferentlearners.org](http://www.gifteddifferentlearners.org) or contact them at [info@gifteddifferentlearners.org](mailto:info@gifteddifferentlearners.org).

**KIDS TOGETHER INC.:** The mission of Kids Together Inclusion is to discuss and share information on inclusive education using technology, adaptations, modifications, and problem solving to make general education classrooms accessible to all children. Visit [www.kidstogether.org](http://www.kidstogether.org) or [www.freelists.org/webpage/kidstogether](http://www.freelists.org/webpage/kidstogether) to sign up for the listserv.

**LEARNING DISABILITY ASSOCIATION:** The Howard County chapter of the Learning Disability Association invites parents of children with learning disabilities to join their e-list. The list is used to send information on meetings, seminars and updated information on LD. To be added to the list, email [Idaofgreaterbaltimore@gmail.com](mailto:Idaofgreaterbaltimore@gmail.com) or call 888-265-6459.

**LOCATE: ENHANCED SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICES:** Locate helps parents find child care or summer camp for children with special needs. A trained special needs counselor can assist you in finding inclusive, regulated childcare programs. Call 410-625-1113 or 800-390-3372.

**MARYLAND COALITION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH:** Dedicated to improving services and building a network of information and support across Maryland for children with mental health needs and their families. Call 410-730-8267 or visit [www.mdcoalition.org](http://www.mdcoalition.org).

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS:** NAMI is a national non-profit organization that endeavors to bring a better understanding of mental health issues to families and other members of society through advocacy, support and education. Visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) or [www.namihcmd.org](http://www.namihcmd.org). NAMI offers a new support group for parents of children and adolescents with mental health issues. Meets every second Monday 12 p.m., and every last Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia. Call 410-772-9300 or visit [www.nami.org/sites/namihowardcounty](http://www.nami.org/sites/namihowardcounty).

**OUTREACH TO SPANISH SPEAKING FAMILIES:** Family support and resources are available at Parents Place of Maryland in Spanish. A staff member is available to help families understand their rights in special education and to assist organizations in supporting Spanish-speaking families. Call 410-768-9100.

**PARENTS' PLACE OF MARYLAND:** Parents' Place of Maryland is a parent organization that offers training and assistance to families on special education and health care issues. They provide one-on-one support to help families navigate the special education maze, and help them advocate for the health care needs of their children. All support and information is also offered in Spanish. Visit [www.ppm.org](http://www.ppm.org) or call 410-768-9100 for more information. To subscribe to their email newsletter please email [info@ppmd.org](mailto:info@ppmd.org) with "subscribe" in the subject line.

**THE RESOURCE FINDER:** The Resource Network provides information and resources on developmental disabilities for parents and professionals such as: specific developmental disabilities; local, state and national associations; educational, recreational and child care resources; service providers; and specialists. Call 1-800-390-3372 or visit [www.resourcefinder.kennedykrieger.org](http://www.resourcefinder.kennedykrieger.org).

**SECAC:** SECAC is an independent group of parents, community partners, service providers and educators that provide feedback to the Department of Special Education. Being involved in SECAC enables you to collaborate with the department on local issues and has the potential to facilitate positive changes in the delivery of services and the achievement of all students with disabilities. For more information, please email [chair@howardsecac.org](mailto:chair@howardsecac.org), visit [www.howardsecac.org](http://www.howardsecac.org), or call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

