

Stepping Stones

FALL 2011

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

The Family Support and Resource Center **WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!**

The Family Support and Resource Center is an information and support resource for families of children, from birth to age 21, who have developmental delays or disabilities. We are part of a network of centers around the state, supported by the Maryland State Department of Education.

As parents of children with special needs, we understand how overwhelming life can be.

We are here to help you navigate the education system, find community resources, and support you and your family in your journey.



Our services include:

- Helping you understand the Special Education process, including the IFSP and IEP process
- Providing support to parents
- Helping you with identifying resources available in your child's school and community
- Advertising and sponsoring workshops
- Facilitating parent support groups

We look forward to hearing from you!

At a Glance

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BROADWAY KIDS

The Broadway Kids program is a partnership between Loyola Clinical Centers and the Columbia Center for Theatrical Arts that inspires and educates children with special needs. The program utilizes a collaborative speech-language and performing arts method to improve social communication skills in children, creating an educational and rewarding performance experience.

Sessions are run by experienced musical theater professionals in conjunction with a team of graduate students in speech-language pathology and a clinical

supervisor from the Loyola Clinical Centers. Goals include using the body and voice to convey emotion, using intelligible speech, varying pitch, and having fun!

Participants in the Broadway Kids program recently performed "Free to Be... You and Me," a musical from the 1970s. The actors included participants with Down syndrome, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, apraxia and receptive-expressive language disorder. The performance was well received by all those in attendance.

Broadway Kids . . . continued on page 3

Family Support and Resource Center

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410.313.7161

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Welcome back to school for the 2011-2012 school year. We hope you have settled in after all of the surprising weather events in September.

As we continue to move forward to ensure that all Howard County Public School System students meet or exceed achievement targets in reading and mathematics, we would like to reflect on the growth and performance of students with disabilities over the past school year:

Elementary School Reading	+7.6% on Maryland School Assessment
Elementary School Mathematics	+4.6% on Maryland School Assessment
RECC Pre-K Program	+8% Maryland Model for School Readiness
Middle School Reading	+8% Maryland School Assessment
Middle School Mathematics	+4.2% Maryland School Assessment
High School Assessments	Awaiting High School Assessment results
Graduation rate for students with disabilities	Awaiting High School Assessment results

Our school system goals remain the same:

Goal 1: Each child regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or socio-economic status, will meet the rigorous performance standards that have been established. All diploma-bound students will perform on or above grade level in all measured content areas.

Goal 2: Each school will provide a safe and nurturing school environment that values our diversity and commonality.

Department of Special Education Objective:

Incorporate the presumed competence tenets and high expectations for all students, including students with significant needs, in our work with systemwide staff, site-based teams and families.

Key focus areas in the Department of Special Education include:

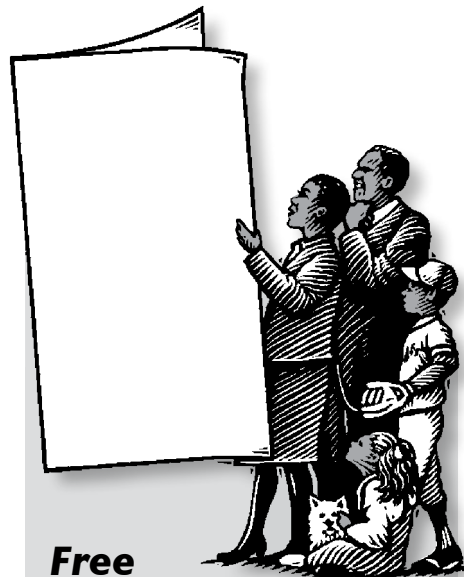
1. Accelerating achievement.
2. Disproportionality.
3. Parent/community partnerships.
4. Program compliance and nonpublic schools.

We are excited about the 2011-2012 school year and the work we are doing to promote and provide access to excellent programs and services to each and every student with a disability. Be it Allied Sports, writing expectations related to the Common Core State Standards, mathematical practices outlined in the Common Core State Standards, or using the lens of Presumed Competence for All Learners, Staff, and Parents,

we are committed to ensuring that every student in the HCPSS experiences rigor and is supported in their day-to-day learning. Thank you in advance for partnering with us on our journey toward excellence in teaching and learning in the Howard County Public School System.

Patty Daley, Director
Department of Special Education

Judy Pattik, Coordinator
Department of Special Education



Free Government Publications

In recognition of the value and importance of providing access to information related to disabilities, the Department of Education has over the past several years produced a variety of free publications in the area of students with disabilities, employment and civil rights, which we hope will be of interest to you. These publications are currently available to order from the ED Pubs website at <http://www.edpubs.gov/> or by calling toll free, 1-877-4-ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics Include:

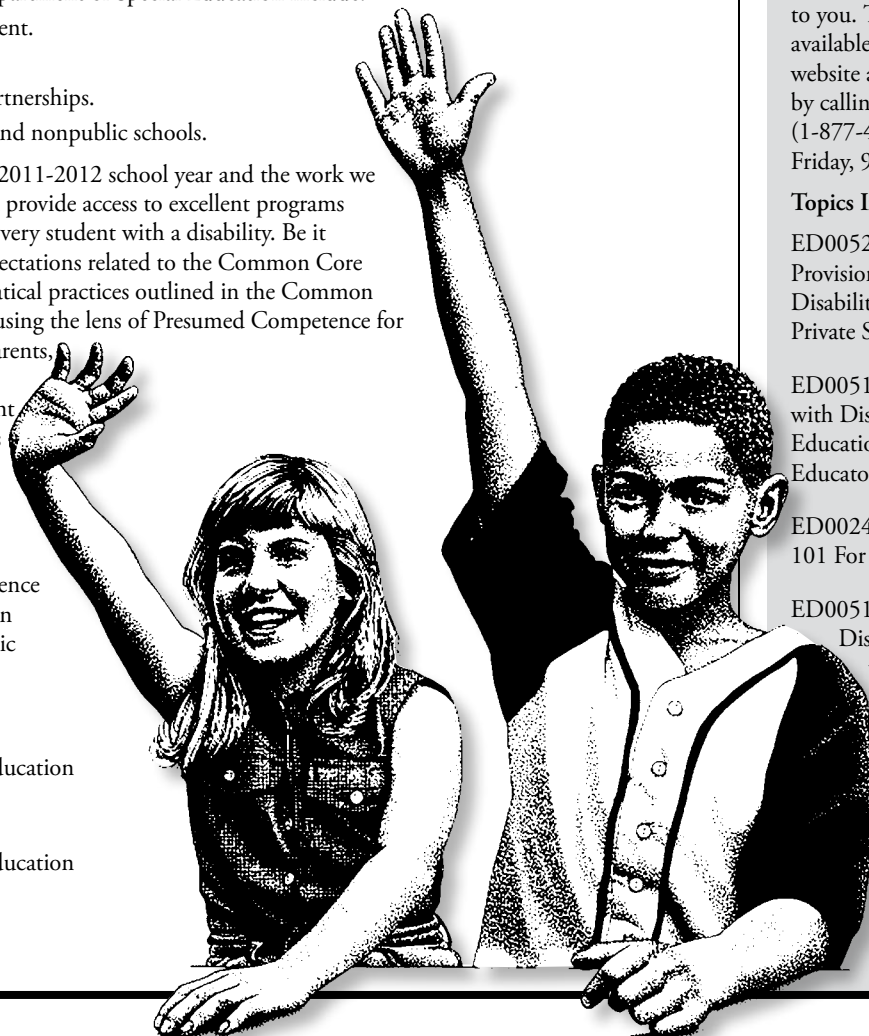
ED005200B - USDE: The IDEA: Provisions Related to Children w/ Disabilities Enrolled by their Parents in Private Schools

ED005196P - Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators

ED002493H - Disability Employment 101 For Your Business

ED005114P - How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights

ED005121B - Student Placement in Elementary and Secondary Schools and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act



MEMBERS OF THE IEP TEAM

Our guide to who may be present at your child's IEP or IFSP meeting:

YOU! – You are the most important member of your child's team.

SCHOOL-BASED PERSONNEL:

Instructional Team Leader (ITL) – Is responsible for the organization and administration of your school's special education team.

Special Education Teacher – Provides specially designed instruction for students through an IEP, and may serve as the student's service coordinator.

General Education Teacher – Provides educational and instructional service in the general education classroom.

Administrator – Provides on-site leadership for the instructional program; can serve as the chairperson of the team.

Psychologist – Provides consultation and evaluation in the areas of cognitive development, social-emotional development, and behavioral intervention.

Counselor – Provides lessons designed to help students gain the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level.

Occupational Therapist (OT) – Provides activities in the areas of perceptual fine motor, sensory motor, oral motor, and self-help skills.

Physical Therapist (PT) – Facilitates the typical movement of gross motor skills for students needing such services.

Nurse – Provides consultation, nursing assessments, and individual plans of care regarding student's health concerns.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) – Works with a student to help develop skills to be successful listeners and speakers.

Elementary Reading Specialist – Initiates and oversees programs to assist students in need of reading intervention.

English for Speakers of Other Languages Specialist (ESOL) – Consults with parents and teachers about language needs of students whose primary language is not English.

Work Study Coordinator – Works in conjunction with the IEP teams to deliver Work Study services to students who require assistance while seeking and maintaining supported employment.

Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) – Works with families to help students who are frequently absent, or who have serious problems adjusting to school.

CENTRAL OFFICE-BASED PERSONNEL

Behavior Specialist – Helps construct behavior intervention programs (BIPs) to address the needs of students with behavior challenges.

Resource Teacher – Works closely with schools and parents to offer assistance, promote collaboration between general and special educators, and monitor IEP/IFSP implementation.

Adapted Physical Education (APE) Instructor – Helps students with disabilities participate in the physical education program at their school.

Instructional Access (IA) Team – Observes, evaluates, and provides consultation services for students who need augmentative communication systems or adaptations involving technology.

Home and Hospital Teacher – Instructs students on an individual basis in a home, hospital or community setting in a variety of subject areas for the period of time a referred student is unable to attend school.

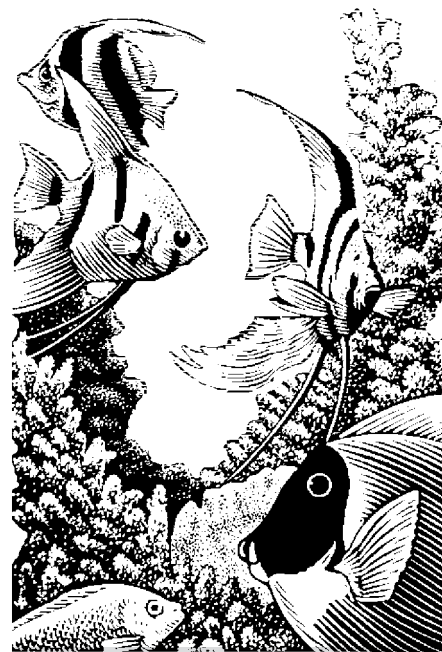
Itinerant Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments – Provides assessment, consultation, and individualized instruction to students having a visual impairment which adversely affects their educational performance.

Itinerant Teacher of Students with Hearing Impairments – Provides consultation and instruction in total communication, language development, auditory training, and skills needed in the classroom setting.

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL FOR CHILDREN WITH IFSPs:

Service Coordinator – Serves as the family's primary contact for questions and concerns.

Early Intervention Specialist – Provides developmental and instructional experiences for infants and toddlers through an IFSP, and may serve as the service coordinator.



National Aquarium

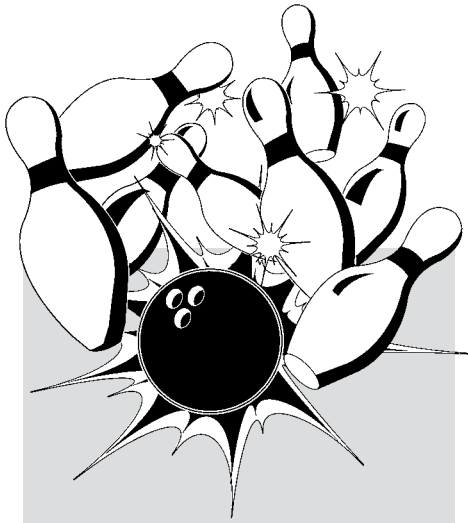
Does your child love the aquarium, but hate the crowds? The National Aquarium's First Saturdays and First Sundays program allows visitors with special needs and their guests to enter 30 minutes before the aquarium opens to the general public. If you have any questions or need additional information about this program, please contact Jennifer Hamilton 410-659-4291(voice), 410-727-3022 (TTY) or email jhamilton@aqua.org.

Broadway Kids

Continued from front page

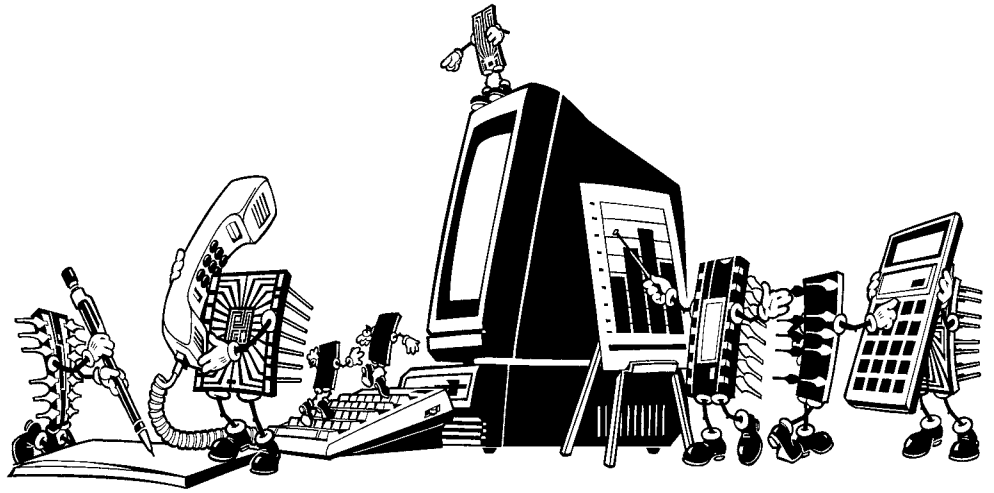
Broadway Kids is currently running a fall session, and will offer another session in the spring. The program typically includes three months of weekly practices, ending with an on-stage performance at Loyola's Columbia Graduate Center. Please call the Loyola Clinical Centers at 410-617-1200 to register or get more information on this exciting program.





Allied Sports

Allied Sports is an extracurricular high school sports program that enables students with and without disabilities to participate in competitive sports with other Howard County high schools. This program is designed for students who are interested in playing a sport, but may not possess the level of skill required for a varsity or junior varsity team. There are four Allied Sports offered in Howard County, including soccer in the fall, bowling in the winter, and golf and softball in the spring. All activities are co-ed with appropriate rule modifications to ensure a safe and successful experience for all students, regardless of ability. The goals of the Allied Sports program and those of the existing interscholastic program are similar. Both programs strive to teach students good sportsmanship, to build positive self-esteem, to acquire new sport-specific skills, to improve physical fitness, and to develop the concept of teamwork. If you have a high school student who may be interested in playing an Allied Sport, please see the Athletic and Activities Manager at your school or call the HCPSS Office of Athletics at 410-313-6631.



DSE Expands its Team Approach to Addressing Student Needs in the Least Restrictive Environment

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the Howard County Public School System's Department of Special Education (DSE) has more closely aligned the work of staff within the Assistive Technology Unit and the Least Restrictive Environment Team to better support students with disabilities in accessing instruction, communication, written language, and/or a given environment in the least restrictive environment. Through the collaborative efforts of speech-language pathologists, special educators, and technical assistants, this **Instructional Access (IA)**

Team now provides students with disabilities even better access to more rigorous learning opportunities while working on their grade level curriculum. The DSE is very excited by this creative partnering that paves the way for promising student outcomes for students. When it is determined that a student requires support and/or assistance from the AI Team, the school-based instructional team leaders will contact their school's representative to request support. For further information, please talk to the Instructional Team Leader at your student's school.

Sports Plus: A Parent's Story

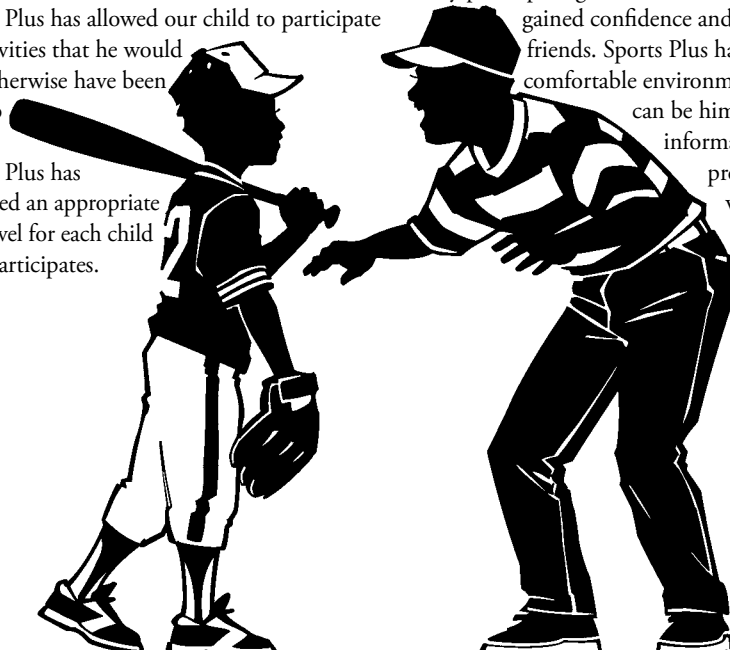
Our son has been enrolled in Sports Plus activities for the past three years. They offer a variety of activities including soccer, track and field, and indoor winter sports.

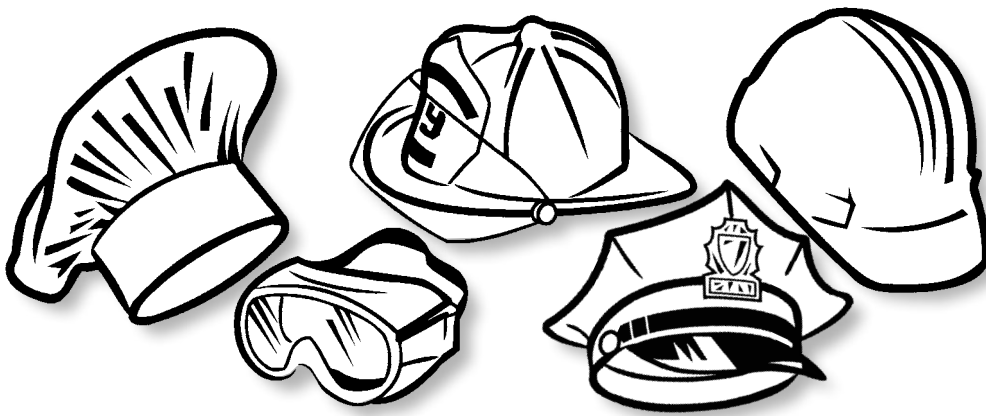
Sports Plus has allowed our child to participate in activities that he would not otherwise have been able to do.

Sports Plus has provided an appropriate skill level for each child who participates.

They allow parents to participate along with their child, as desired. They have wonderful staff and volunteers who make learning the skills fun!

By participating in these classes, our child has gained confidence and made new friends. Sports Plus has provided a comfortable environment where he can be himself. For more information on the program please visit www.playsportsplus.org or call 301-452-3781.





CAREER EXPLORATION DAY: A Job Shadowing Program for Students with Disabilities

The Howard County Public School System, Howard County Department of Citizen Services, Columbia Workforce Center: Office of Workforce Development, and Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) are pleased to announce Howard County's fifth annual Career Exploration Day.

This April 2012 event is a half-day job shadowing program for students attending high school in Howard County. Local government and business employees serve as mentors for young people expressing interest in specific types of work. The program is limited to 36 participants; students in their final year of school have priority.

Program Goals

- Exposing students to government and business environments to increase knowledge about potential opportunities
- Providing students opportunities to observe employees during a typical work day

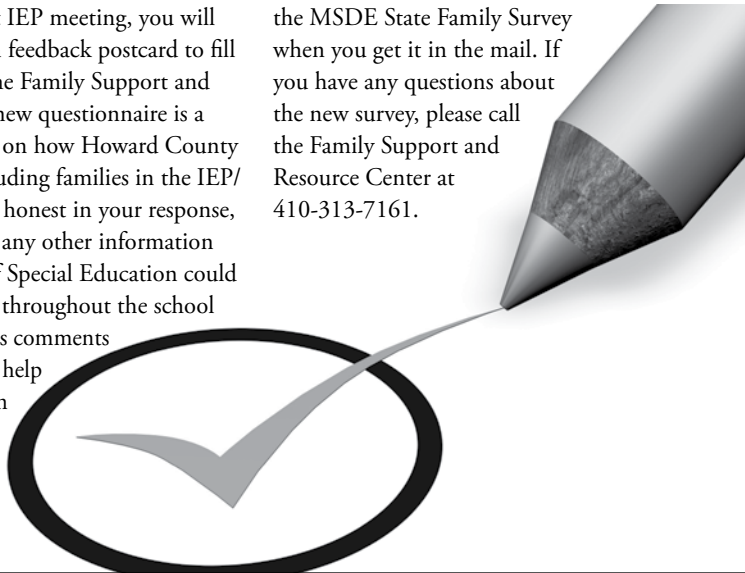
- Providing students opportunities to complete work tasks typical to their assigned work sites
- Providing students opportunities to reflect upon the shadowing experience and connect observations to vocational goals
- Increasing knowledge of disability issues and methods for accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace (e.g. Braille, modified work space, etc.)
- Creating a welcoming environment for future colleagues with disabilities

Applications will be available in December, 2011. For further information or to obtain an application packet, contact your high school work study/transition teacher or Dawson Robertson, Work Study/Transition Program Coordinator, at 410-313-5640. Application deadline is January 31, 2012.

Yes . . . another feedback form!

At the end of your next IEP meeting, you will be given a five-question feedback postcard to fill out and send back to the Family Support and Resource Center. This new questionnaire is a way to get information on how Howard County teams are doing in including families in the IEP/IFSP process. Please be honest in your response, and feel free to include any other information that the Department of Special Education could use to improve services throughout the school system. Your anonymous comments are appreciated and will help build a better foundation for family and school partnerships. It's still important to fill out

the MSDE State Family Survey when you get it in the mail. If you have any questions about the new survey, please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.



Sensory Friendly Films

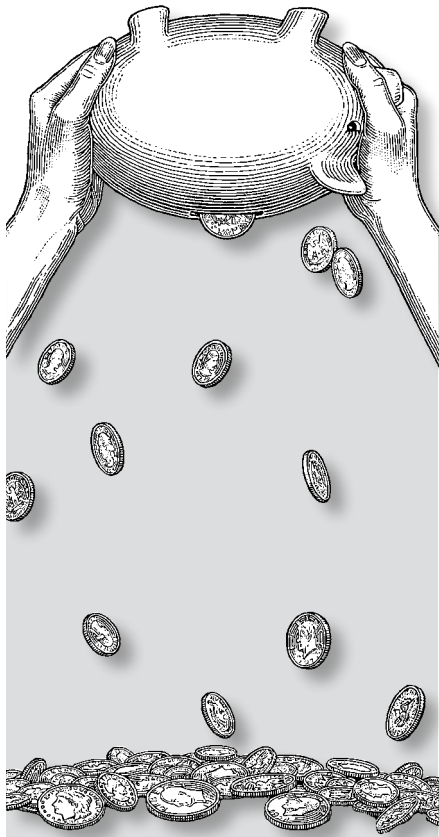
Going to the movies is a rite of passage for most children, but for some children with disabilities, it can be an overwhelming experience. That's where the Sensory Friendly Movie comes in. This movie showing has no trailers. The volume will be kept down and the lights will be kept on (but dimmed). Audience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

November 5: *Puss in Boots*

For more information, please visit www.amctheatres.com/SFF/.





Respite Grants Available

Mark your calendars now! The Family Support and Resource Center and the Howard County Health Department are pleased to announce the Give Me A Break! respite care funding program. This program is designed to help defray the cost of respite care for Howard County residents who have a child (birth through 21) with a disability. Funded by a grant from the Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs, the program is in its ninth year. We will be taking applications for this program the week of November 7. Call 410-313-7161 today to set up an appointment for that week. Funding is limited and the slots fill quickly. You must bring verification of your child's disability (IEP, IFSP or doctor's report) and fill out a W-9 (IRS reporting form) when you come in for your appointment. Because of the overwhelming response to this program, we are only taking applications from families who have not received funding from our office within the past two years.

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.

OCTOBER 2011

AUTISM THROUGH THE LIFESPAN

Thursday and Friday, October 20-21, 2011,
Crowne Plaza Hotel
2004 Greenspring Drive • Timonium

The 2011 Annual Autism Conference brings together nationally recognized experts to address critical topics for autism professionals, educators, and family members, including early diagnosis, the latest intervention strategies, and issues for management across the lifespan. The conference will offer a variety of workshops, from leading experts in the field, that are designed to address lifespan issues for those with ASD including early intervention, adolescence, communication, family, inclusive education, current research, school law and more. For more information or to register, please visit www.cvent.com and enter "11th Annual Autism Conference" in the search. Sponsored by the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD).

NOVEMBER 2011

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUCCESS

Saturday, November 5, 2011, 1-5 p.m.
The McLean School of Maryland
8224 Lochinver Lane • Potomac

This free, informational program is for busy parents of students with ADHD and/or learning disabilities and the caring professionals who work with them. Dr. Lance Clawson will begin the afternoon of information with the Keynote address entitled "The Neurobiology of ADHD and LD: Understanding the Brain-Behavior Relationship." Participants can then choose 2 breakout sessions. Please visit our websites for more program information, presentation details, and speaker information. Sponsored by the Learning Disability Association of Montgomery County, Montgomery County CHADD and the GT/LD Network. For more information or to register please visit <http://www.chadd.net/100>, www.gtldnetworkmc.org/ or www.ldamc.org.

NOVEMBER 2011

MENTAL HEALTH TRANSITION WORKSHOP

Wednesday, November 9, 2011, 6-8 p.m.
Homewood Center
10914 Route 108 • Ellicott City

Gain support in navigating mental health services for transitioning youth. The workshop will include round table discussions facilitated by the Mental Health Authority of Howard County. Additionally, adult and community based providers will be present to provide information and answer questions. Information will also be available on supported employment, residential choices, support groups and programs, funding sources and transportation. All are invited to attend, but parents of students 14 and older are encouraged. Advance registration is not required; however, due to limited space, it is suggested. For additional information or to reserve your space, contact 410-313-6977, or the transition coordinator at your school.

HOW TO MAKE STUDYING MORE FUN!

Thursday, November 17, 2011, 7-9 p.m.
Central Library
10375 Little Patuxent Parkway • Columbia

Homework and studying can be a stressful time for families of children with IEPs. This workshop is designed to help families take the stress out and put a little fun in homework time. Come to this hands-on workshop to discover online resources and other ways to ease the tension. Presenters Kim McKay, of Parents for Parents, and Nicole Geiger, Resource Teacher for HCPSS, will show you things you can use the next night! To register for this free workshop, please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

NOVEMBER 2011

SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER: SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, STRATEGIES

Thursday, November 17, 2011, 1-2:30 p.m.
Howard County Autism Society
10280 Old Columbia Road #215
Columbia

Ida Zelaya of Sensory Street will review types of sensory challenges and effective assessments, including the specialists best equipped to offer appropriate treatments and introduce life-impacting strategies. To register for this free session, please call 443-330-5370 or visit www.pathfindersforautism.org. This is part of the Brown Bag Seminar Series sponsored by Pathfinders for Autism and the Howard County Autism Society.

DECEMBER 2011

DADS AND KIDS CRAFT PARTY

Saturday, December 3, 2011, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
New Hope Lutheran Church
8575 Guilford Road • Columbia

Calling all Dads!! Bring your preschool or elementary-aged children out to make winter crafts and give mom a few hours to herself. We will provide the crafts and a light snack, all you need to bring is yourself and your little one. This event is specifically for children with developmental delays and disabilities, but siblings are welcomed. Please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161 to register for this free event. If dad can't make it, moms are invited, we just thought it would be fun to get the men together!

DECEMBER 2011

INS AND OUTS OF IEPs AND IFSPs

Thursday, December 8, 2011 7-9 p.m.
Central Library
10375 Little Patuxent Parkway • Columbia

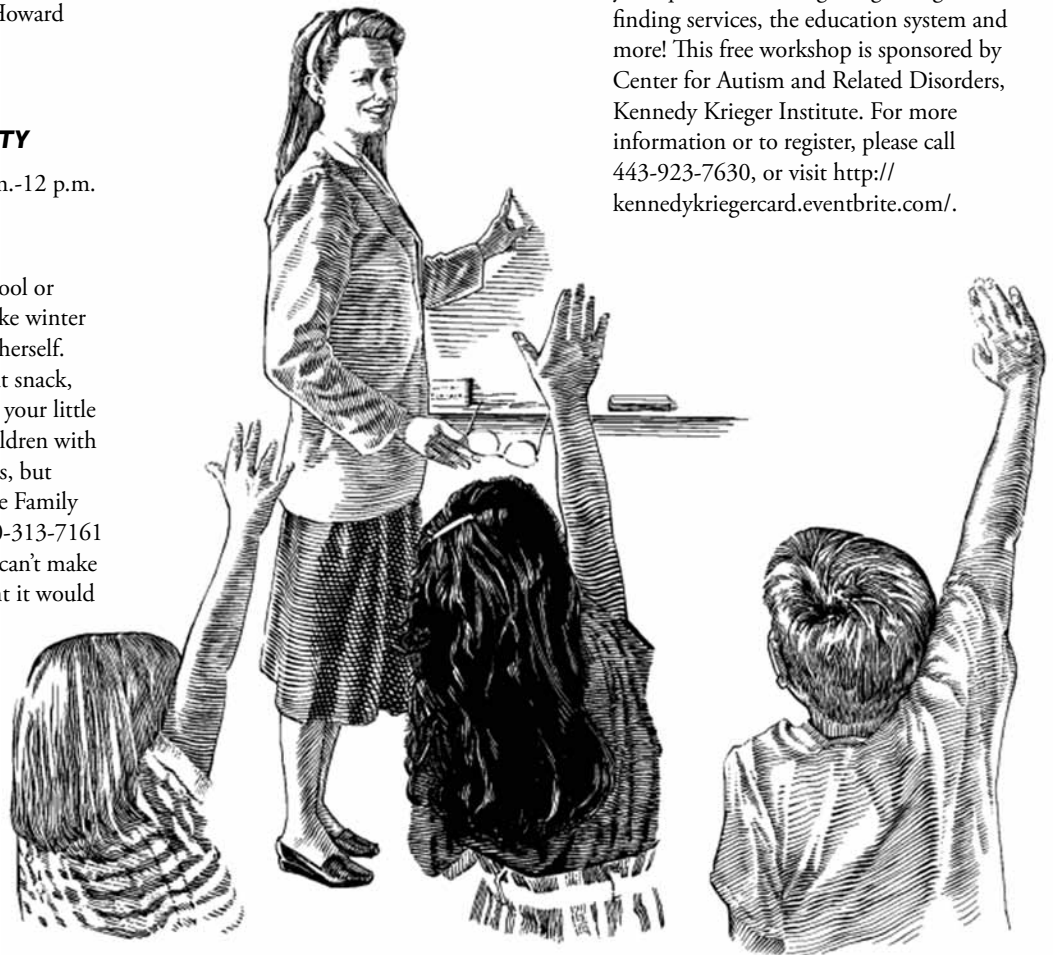
This workshop is specifically designed for parents who are relatively new to the special education process. Presenters Kim McKay and Julie Foley of Parents for Parents will discuss IEP/IFSP basics. Participants will learn how to make the process work for you, and how to be an active and valued member of your child's team. To register for this free workshop, please call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

DECEMBER 2011

GETTING AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER DIAGNOSIS: WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Tuesday, December 13, 2011, 9:30-11 a.m.
Kennedy Krieger Institute
Creamer Building
Greenspring Campus
(3rd floor large conference room)
3901 Greenspring Avenue • Baltimore

For parents of children who have recently received an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Cathy Groschan, LCSW-C, Clinical Social Worker, leads this discussion and takes your questions about getting a diagnosis, finding services, the education system and more! This free workshop is sponsored by Center for Autism and Related Disorders, Kennedy Krieger Institute. For more information or to register, please call 443-923-7630, or visit <http://kennedykriegercard.eventbrite.com/>.



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.

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.

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 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. For more information, call 410-290-3466 or email 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 or Remy Nirschl at 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 the 2nd Wednesday of each month through May. The meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are held at Norbel School, 6135 Old Washington Road in Elkridge. The meeting is open to the public. Monthly topics and more details can be found at www.chadd-mc.org or by contacting krenzi@norbelschool.org. 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.

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.

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 ADVOCACY AND PARENT EDUCATION: FAPE of Howard County offers one-on-one training and assistance regarding special education questions or concerns. They offer support for families in understanding the IEP process, writing IEPs, complaint resolution, and referrals to other agencies or support groups. They also offer a wide variety of free workshops that focus on Special Education. To subscribe to e-mail workshop announcements, please e-mail julie@parentsforparents.org with "subscribe" in the subject line. To find out more about the organization, call Julie Foley, 410-465-1193.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Accelerating the achievement of underachieving student groups through comprehensive programs of school, family and community partnerships. Jean Lewis, 410-313-6794; Jean_Lewis@hcpps.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, MD 21046. Call 410-290-3466 or visit 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 <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 or contact them at 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 or 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, e-mail howard@ldamd.org 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.

MOMS NIGHT OUT: Moms Night Out meets for dinner the first Tuesday at a local restaurant. The group offers support and networking opportunities for parents of children with special needs in Howard County. To be added to their e-mail list send a note to HoCoMoms@yahoo.com.

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 or 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, 7:30p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia. Call 410-772-9300 or visit 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 FOR PARENTS: Parents for Parents, Inc.(P4P) is a private, non-profit organization founded by parents, for parents. We believe in the power of sharing what we've learned and continuing to learn from other families' experiences. We've been there that moment the doctor or teacher says something is not quite right. No matter the diagnosis, whether it's juvenile diabetes, autism, or a learning disability, where do you turn for help? We can guide you to the services, supports and resources your child needs. Call 410-465-1193 or visit www.parentsforparents.org.

PARENTS' PLACE: 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 offered in Spanish. Visit www.ppm.org or call 410-768-9100 for workshop information. To subscribe to their e-mail newsletter please e-mail info@ppmd.org with "subscribe" in the subject line.

GRANDPARENTS AS PARENTS (GAP): Are you raising a relative's child? Are you a grandparent raising a grandchild? Have you had a child placed with you by an agency? Are you filling a gap in a child's life? For Grandparents as Parents information, call the CARE Center at 410-313-CARE (2273).

THE RESOURCE NETWORK: 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.resourcenetworkatkki.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 e-mail chair@howardsecac.org, visit www.howardsecac.org, or call the Family Support and Resource Center at 410-313-7161.

