



The Link

"Linking Exceptional Families in Contra Costa County"

Volume XVI, Issue 1 Published quarterly

Fall 2007

NEWS FROM CARE PARENT NETWORK

WHAT'S NEW AT CARE

Does your child's disability impact their expressive language? Have you heard aphasiac, dysphasiac, oral motor apraxia in reference to your child? Do you wish you could find ways to communicate more naturally? If so, bring your questions!

Maybe you have used Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), visual schedules or experimented with switches. If so, bring your experiences!

Maybe you have devices or equipment that you have tried with your child that have worked, others that haven't. If so, bring your equipment and share what's out there!

Please join us for our first meeting and help decide how we can learn together about the vast and growing field of Alternative and Augmentative Communication and what it has to offer our children.

Not being able to speak is not the same thing as having nothing to say.

The first meeting of the AAC Parent Group will be September 19, 2007: This exploratory meeting is for parents with children using AAC who are interested in forming a support group. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 101 for more information.

SPECIAL AUTISM CLASS FOR PARENTS

Kaiser Permanente is offering a class entitled Autism and Your Child: Charting the Course. It is for parents of children in elementary through middle age school who have recently received a diagnosis of autism, pervasive developmental disorder, or Asperger's Syndrome. The class meets for four weeks (October 23, 30, November 6 and 13) from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Department of Mental Health, Kaiser, Walnut Creek. To register call Sylvia Castillo, LCSW at 925-295-5349. Fee for the class is \$50 per family.

AUTISM RESOURCE

A new report has recently been released regarding coordination of diagnosis and service delivery for children with autism. The report is part of a series on Promising Practices for Supporting People with Autism Spectrum Disorders and can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PromisingPractices/Downloads/CA-CollaborativeClinics6-7.pdf>. [Other briefs on autism spectrum disorders are at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PromisingPractices/HCBSPPR/](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PromisingPractices/HCBSPPR/), under the Report Category "Other Special Topics."

I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.

Louisa May Alcott



NEWS FROM CCS

CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH -- UNTREATED CAVITIES AND FLUORIDE VARNISH

Dental disease, including untreated cavities, is the most common chronic and infectious disease affecting children in the United States. It is five times more common than asthma. Children with disabilities and other special needs have their own set of obstacles to good oral health. These may include sugar in their medications, reduced salivary flow, restricted diets, oral sensitivities and difficulty managing their own daily brushing, and other prevention practices. Because of competing medical and physical problems oral health is sometimes reduced to a lower priority. These factors may all lead to a higher risk for tooth decay for the child with special needs.

Often, the first visible sign of tooth decay (demineralization) is a chalky "white spot" lesion. Lifting the lip and looking along the gum line can be a way to find them in an early stage. These chalky white spots can actually be "remineralized" or hardened with the use of a fairly new product called fluoride varnish. This is a highly concentrated fluoride treatment that is safe and effective. It is a key factor in the prevention and reduction of tooth decay. It is painted on all of the teeth and hardens on contact with saliva. Children can eat and drink afterwards but they should not brush the teeth until the next day. This type of fluoride treatment works best if it is left on the teeth overnight. Fluoride varnish can be used 3 times in a two-week period for remineralization of white spots. For more general prevention purposes, it can be applied 3-4 times a year.

So remember, for a healthy mouth children's teeth need to be brushed and flossed daily. Be sure to provide healthy snacks and see the dentist at least two times each year. Look at your child's teeth regularly to observe any changes. At your next visit, ask your dentist or pediatrician if fluoride varnish may be an effective treatment to assure a bright smile for your child.



EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

- Pony Walkers -- 3 Small, 1 Medium, 1 Large
- Ring Walker - Medium
- Hydro-Lift Bath Seat
- Rifton Walker without Attachments - Medium
- Rifton Stander with Tray - Prone - Medium
- Hydraulic Self -Stander
- Otterbach Reverse Walker - Small
- Jenx Prone Stander - Small with cute dinosaur face on it



RESOURCES

NEW RESOURCES

The National Center for Learning Disabilities has published a new Parent Advocacy Brief entitled Preschool Services Under IDEA. This publication is intended to help parents understand their child's educational rights, and provides information to assist parents in obtaining an assessment for their child. You can find this advocacy brief at www.nclld.org.

NEW FROM THE BEACH CENTER: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Beach Center has announced a new online resource, the Community of Practice (CoP), whose mission is to foster wisdom-based action in order to positively enhance quality of life for families of young children with disabilities. Wisdom-based action means considering, integrating, and acting upon the best available research, family wisdom, and professional wisdom, in light of the influencing factors of one's own child, family, and community.

Objectives include:

- Families and practitioners will be both informed and inspired to take action in implementing wise decisions.
- Researchers will listen to families' and practitioners' burning questions as a guide for their future research.
- Policy leaders will work in partnership with families, professionals, and researchers to translate the integration of the best available research, family wisdom, and professional wisdom into federal and state policy.

The Beach Center envisions the CoP to be a lively gathering place to exchange ideas, gain new insights, and especially make a sustainable difference to families, and is especially eager to have high family participation. For more information, go to www.beachcenter.org.

SOCIAL LANGUAGE GROUPS

Communication Works has openings for students of all ages who have difficulties with social situations and friendships. Participation in the groups increases children's awareness and use of social skills such as initiating and maintaining conversations, joining in existing groups, understanding and demonstrating appropriate non-verbal cues, thinking about others and much more. Groups offer a safe environment with lots of opportunities to learn and practice a wide variety of social skills. If you are interested in a program that uses a communication-based approach to teaching social skills, visit the website at www.cwtherapy.com or call 510-530-3085 for more information.

TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MDUSD PARENTS

Parents of children with an IEP in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District may qualify for a scholarship to cover registration fees to attend a training focused on special education advocacy. A scholarship fund was created by Disability Rights Advocates as part of settling a lawsuit, and is currently administered by CARE Parent Network. Parents may apply for reimbursement of conference registration fees. The scholarship does not cover travel expenses, child care, or other related expenses. Requests should be approved in advance and reimbursement will be paid upon proof of attendance. For more information, contact CARE Parent Network

BEACH WHEELCHAIRS

Are you in need of a beach wheelchair so your child can enjoy the beach? Both Stinson Beach and Rodeo Beach (in Marin County) have chairs available at no charge. They do request reservations 5-7 days in advance. The chairs even float in the water! For Rodeo Beach call 415-289-7355 (through the Marin Mammal Center) and for Stinson Beach call 415-551-4958. Information is also available at <http://www.natural-access.com/Default.htm>.



SPECIAL THANKS

☆ California Children Services
 ☆ Cheryl Clift
 ☆ Carolyn Dodds
 ☆ Down Syndrome Connection
 ☆ Family and Children's Trust
 ☆ First 5 Contra Costa
 ☆ Jennifer Gorton
 ☆ Lorena Martinez-Ochoa



☆ Colleen O'Healy da Silva
 ☆ Erika Oseguera
 ☆ Lynn Pilant
 ☆ Hector Rivera
 ☆ Rosio Smith
 ☆ Caroline Stimson
 ☆ Rosa Valledor

SUPPORT GROUPS

<u>NAME OF GROUP</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>FACILITATOR(S)</u>	<u>SCHEDULE</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>
Support for Moms	Brentwood	L. Schneiders	1st Tuesday morning	All disabilities
Support for Moms	Danville	C. Clift (volunteer)	3rd Tuesday evening	All disabilities
Parent Support Group	Martinez	L. Schneiders	1st Thursday evening	All disabilities
Central County Group	Martinez	L. Schneiders (volunteer TBD)	3rd Wednesday morning	All disabilities
Padres Latinos	Antioch	A. Gattis	1st Saturday afternoon	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities
Grupo de Autismo	Martinez	C. Zepeda	1st Friday morning	Spanish-speaking parents of children with autism
Caminemos Juntos	Richmond	H. Mariscal (volunteer)	1st Friday morning	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities
Voces de Amor	Martinez	S. Garcia	2nd Wednesday of each month	Spanish-speaking parents of children with special health care needs

If you are interested in attending a support group, please contact CARE Parent Network at 800-281-3023.



FINDING A PLACE TO BELONG: CAVANAUGH'S STORY

My son Cavanaugh has a developmental disability. While he is behind in all areas, he is mostly challenged by his delayed motor skills and poor balance. Initially, when we learned something was wrong with our son's development, we were devastated. Along with anxiously seeking a diagnosis and attending therapies, I found I also was seeking something else; a place where my son could belong. It always felt like we were on the outside, looking in, trying to find a place for him to fit into a world where children were playful, physical and free. Eventually, I learned that inclusion would offer him that place.

When we were first told my son was not developing normally, we didn't know his prognosis and if he would ever walk. I have heard the statement made that learning your child has a disability means coming to terms with the loss of a dream; the loss of the "perfect" child you were supposed to have and the loss of the fantasy that you had expected that child to become. For me, it felt as if my son's future had been tossed into the air like leaves. Suddenly, baby books meant nothing. My son going to college someday was no longer a foregone conclusion and gone was the assumption that he would get married and have children of his own. I had to surrender to a profound sense of the unknown. I felt like I was lost in a dark, endless tunnel without a light to navigate by. To this day, I look back on that time of my son's life as a difficult and despairing one, filled with grief and fear.

With therapy and time, my son progressed. I watched him achieve his milestones slowly, against a clock that showed no mercy. He did make great gains in all areas, but his physical disability always remained a huge concern. The hope that he would walk by his

second birthday dissipated, and I was simply grateful that he started crawling at twenty-one months. This was definitely a small miracle. My son finally had mobility and could get a toy without my help. Of course this didn't prevent him on insisting "Mommy do it."

He would continue to crawl for the next two years. Walking remained elusive and timetables kept getting pushed back. Eventually, he received a diagnosis of Ataxia, meaning the balance center of his brain was impaired. He was able to pull to stand but could only stay upright for a few seconds before falling, so he got a walker. As he practiced with his little walker, he gained coordination and momentum. He was fast! Suddenly, my son experienced his first taste of leaving his mom behind! He became so quick that I couldn't catch him without getting a bit winded. I still remember the first time I chased him in a parking lot, simultaneously feeling fear and exhilarating joy at my son's new found independence.

Because of Cavanaugh's instability, the world was a dangerous place. He was like a nine-month-old in a three-year-old body. Every time we left our house, he needed help to safely navigate the world. He was a very social child but it was difficult finding safe places he could interact with other children. It was terribly sad and disappointing for me to continually take him to the park or music or gym class, knowing that he could not participate and would have to sit on the sidelines watching.

Never was balancing Cavanaugh's physical safety with his social needs more challenging than when the time came for him to go to preschool. The typical school settings were too large and the ratios too high for a child that couldn't walk and needed constant supervision and we couldn't afford the additional cost of hiring an aide to shadow him. The school district also could not accommodate his physical needs



CAVANAUGH'S STORY (cont.)

without a long drawn-out assessment period to determine if an aide was appropriate. They offered my son a special day class, made up of exclusively special needs children with no access to typical children.

Thankfully, I had the good fortune to hear about a local preschool program which was funded by the Regional Center. The program was called Happy Talkers and was a small group speech and language program, led by specialists. Even better, it was on the site of a typical preschool. The Director, Charlene Sigman, had placed her program there in order for the special needs children to have access to typical peers. When I met with Charlene, I explained that my son didn't walk. The answer was "No problem." They would make sure he was supervised.

At Happy Talkers, I had found a place where my son could be safe and interact with other children. They had the flexibility to accommodate his physical needs, which allowed him the exposure to the social interaction he required. I had found a place where he could belong and he thrived.

In one year Cavanaugh went from saying a handful of words to talking in short phrases. Today he speaks in sentences and converses with me about his favorite subject - fish. He loves stingrays, sharks, and Nemo and Dory from the movie "Finding Nemo". Currently, my son is in Happy Talkers' inclusion pre-K program and is on track to attend a mainstream kindergarten class next year. He is learning that he grows up big like flowers when you give them water and has many friends and even a girlfriend.

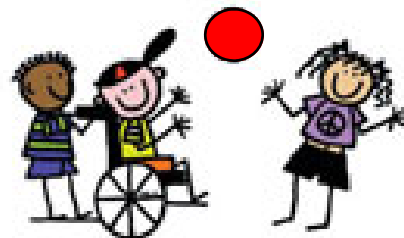
Last year, over the summer, my son learned to walk. This was an exhilarating time for our family as he stretched his wings for the first time. He is now jumping and playing baseball, golf and tackle football with his Dad. For the first time, we get to watch our

son stand up with excitement and chase his typical friends at school and play "Hide and Seek" or "Tag".

I would like to share an additional brief perspective about what inclusion means, not just for my son, but for children without special needs. I recently asked Charlene how Happy Talkers affected her own children, who have both attended the preschool and are typically developing. She said her son, who has always played and learned alongside special needs children, is now an extremely empathetic kindergartner who wants to help others. Through misty eyes, she said he wants to work at her school when he grows up, and then, she paused for moment and told me: "It's the way the world should be."

I feel incredibly lucky that the Happy Talkers program was available to my son. The experience has taught me that a child can have a disability, but given the right environment, it doesn't matter. I believe that all children should have the opportunity to find a place where they can feel safe and welcomed and included. Having Cavanaugh in this program restored what once was lost. I can now envision a future for my son which holds the promise of infinite possibilities. I am so grateful that I was privileged to meet a group of people who did not see my child's limits but saw his limitless potential. He received more than just early intervention services at Happy Talkers; he learned a life lesson, to have compassion for himself and others, and found a place to belong, in a world the way it should be.

Cheryl Cliff





*Would you like to understand
the special education process,
focusing on how you can be the most
effective participant in developing the
Individualized Education Program (IEP)
for your child?*

Come Join us for the Fall IEP Workshop

The Details:

- ☆ **Saturday, October 20, 2007**
- ☆ **CARE Conference room**, (when you register the building code will be given)
- ☆ **Space is limited and priority is given to parents who have not previously attended an IEP Training**
- ☆ **Registration & Coffee—9:00 AM**
- ☆ **Special Education & the IEP Process Presentation—9:30-noon**
- ☆ **Presenter: Parent Advocate, Disability Rights Education Defense Fund (DREDF)**

Register giving information below. Mail to CARE Parent Network,
1340 Arnold Dr., # 115, Martinez, CA 94553
Fax to 925-370-8651; email to CAREofARC@aol.com.
Questions? Call 800-281-3023.

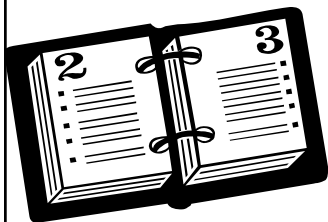


✂

Name: _____	
Street Address: _____	City/Zip: _____
Daytime Phone #: _____	
Yes, I will attend October 20 (✓ check <input type="checkbox"/> box), register by 10/12.	



CALENDAR 2007



September 12, 2007: Autism Education for Child Care Providers: Recognizing Autism Spectrum Disorders in Young Children. Presented by Larissa Terry, Psy.D., BCBA. Clinical Psychologist. 6:30-9:00 pm, Contra Costa Child Care Council, Antioch. To register, call: 925-676-5442, Ext. 3105. (Free, reservations required).

September 19, 2007: AAC Parent Group. Exploratory meeting for parents with children using AAC who are interested in forming a support group. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 101 for more information. Supported by CARE Parent Network.

September 19, 2007: Resources and Support for Providers Caring for Children with Special Needs. 7:00-9:00 pm, Contra Costa Child Care Council, Suite 100 A, 1035 Detroit AVE, Concord, CA. For more information, call: 925-676-5442 x3113. (Free, for providers only)

September 22, 2007: Congreso Familiar. Annual conference for Spanish-speaking families. Chabot College, Hayward. Call CARE for more information. (fee, scholarships available).

September 27-28, 2007: Presentation by Dr. Victor J. Bernstein, Ph.D: "Using A Relationship-Based Approach to Strengthen Families: The Nature of Nurturing". Thursday 9/27 from 1:00-5:00 pm and Friday, 9/28 from 8:30 am – 5:00 pm at Every Child Counts, San Leandro. For registration information: (510) 428-3407.

September 29, 2007: Special Education Resource Fair. For parents of children receiving special education services in West Contra Costa. Cameron School, El Cerrito. Watch for more information. (Free)

October 6, 2007: "May I Play, Too?" Workshop in inclusion strategies for early care and education professionals. Diablo Valley College, Sponsored by the Early Education Council. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 107 for more information. (Free)

October 10, 2007: Autism Education for Child Care Providers: Recognizing Autism Spectrum Disorders in Young Children. Presented by Larissa Terry, Psy.D., BCBA, Clinical Psychologist. 6:30-9:00 pm, Contra Costa Child Care Council, 3065 Richmond Parkway, Suite 112, Richmond, CA. To register, call: 925-676-5442 x 3105. (Free, reservations required).

October 13, 2007: Parent-to-Parent Support Training. For new parent mentors. Sponsored by CARE Parent Network. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 101 for more information. (Invitational)

October 16, 2007: Resources and Support for Providers Caring for Children with Special Needs. 7:00-9:00 pm, Contra Costa Child Care Council, 3065 Richmond Parkway, Suite 112, Richmond, CA. For more information, call: 925-676-5442 x3113. (Free, for providers only)

October 20, 2007: IEP Training. Basic information for parents new to the IEP process. Conference Room, CARE Parent Network. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 102 for more information. (Free)

October 27, 2007: Los Medanos College Fall Harvest Conference 2007: Building Connections in Early Learning. Los Medanos College, Pittsburg, CA. (Save the date and watch for registration information).

November 14, 2007: Early Education Council. Conference Room, CARE Parent Network. Speakers: Melanie Kilcorse, Autism Spectrum Disorders Coordinator, and Debbara Monroe, Ph.D., Autism Spectrum Disorders Specialist, Regional Center of the East Bay. Call 925-313-0999, Ext. 107 for more information. (Free)

Opinions expressed in **The Link** do not necessarily reflect the endorsement of CARE Parent Network or any of its associations. We do not recommend any treatment, therapy, institution or professional system, etc.



Good News From George Miller Center Richmond and Concord!



Our *After-School Program* is interested in enrolling young people with special needs who would like to be involved in an active, social, recreational after-school experience—in a fun place that offers:

- Services for students aged 11 to 22 years
- 5.1 and 3.1 student-to-teacher ratios = flexibility to address individuals needs of students
- Emphasis on reinforcing goals of student and family
- Bilingual Spanish speaking at GMC Richmond
- Staff with recreational coaching experience
- Vendor of the Regional Center of the East Bay
- Open year-round, services provided on minimum days and non-school days (except holidays)

Regular school day	2:30 pm-6:00 pm
Minimum school day	1:00 pm-6:00 pm
Non-school day	9:00 am-6:00 pm

In 2005, Contra Costa ARC was asked by the County to take responsibility for the operation of the George Miller Centers, in Richmond and Concord, which provide services to over 400 children and adults each year.

Contra Costa ARC is a nonprofit, community based organization that has existed since 1965 to enhance and enrich the lives of children and adults who have developmental disabilities.

We'd like to hear from you if you know a student who would enjoy activities like:

- Art Projects
- Outdoor Games
- Nature Walks
- Bowling
- Swimming
- Ice Skating
- Foosball
- Ping Pong
- Pool
- Gardening

plus Community Outings and much more.

Contact us today at

Richmond Program Coordinator Claudia
clam@arcofcc.org, (510) 374-3981

Concord Program Coordinator Anthony
anthonycssc@aol.com, (925) 646-5710

George Miller Center Richmond and Concord

After-School Program

www.contracostaarc.org





CARE Parent Network ∞ 800-281-3023 ∞ www.careparentnetwork.org



CARE Parent Network,
A program of Contra Costa ARC
1340 Arnold Drive, #115
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