

Annual Board of Trustees Meeting: March 25, 2010

A Vision for the Future

PATHWAYS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN will be having our eighth annual public Board of Trustee meeting on March 25, 2010. Over the past year, Pathways has evaluated and experimented with several ways to keep up with the growth we are experiencing as an organization, including developing chapters and subsidiaries throughout the state. After much thought and careful planning, Pathways' Board of Trustees will be announcing its vision for the future and plans, which we are very excited about. We are looking forward to the input from our members and general public, and to entertaining ideas you may have to increase our effectiveness and service to the children in Montville Township and throughout the state of New Jersey. Some of the highlights at the meeting will be the following:

1) Six years ago, Pathways for Exceptional Children developed a *Lead Mentor Program* consisting of twelve children ages 11-18. Acceptance into the program requires going through a rigorous application process. Open to all mentors, this program isn't about academic or physical ability, but rather having a heart devoted to service in the community, making a lasting difference, and advocating for children with disabilities. The Lead Mentors have made great strides at the local and state levels and will be presenting their ideas and accomplishments, as well as their "Include ME!" events planned for May 21- 22, 2010.

2) Debra Casha, Board of Trustee Member charged with leading the Pathways'



Education Committee, will be speaking about a series of professional DVDs Pathways is producing. These videos will be both informative and inspiring, featuring real life lessons told by children with special needs, parents, and school administrators about hope, collaboration, and success. The focus will be on "high expectations" and working to achieve excellence in education for all children.

3) Board Chair Peter Kearns will be introducing the people running for office, discussing available Board Member positions, and conducting elections for Pathways. Please refer to our website for the posted positions and annual membership drive at www.pathwayskids.org.

4) Melinda Jennis, President, will be addressing ways in which the economy

will affect the disability community and education. She will be discussing the *Parent Action Centers* that began last year specifically to train parents to develop independence in advocating for their children. Melinda will also discuss program development for 2010, which will include not only new programs for children, but also a series of innovative community leadership development classes and school administration workshops. This series will focus on ways to improve inclusion, initiate positive and creative solutions, and how to network and collaborate with others to access resources for our children.

5) Finally, Pathways has invited the candidates running for the *Montville Township Board of Education* to come to our meeting to present their views on specific issues facing our children with special needs. It is critical for you to attend to meet these candidates, ask questions and get to know the people you will be voting for who will be making important decisions about your child's education. This is an important time for all of us, as the severe downturn in the economy will force critical budget cuts that will have a deep impact on all of our children.

Please make every effort to attend and get involved in the decisions being made that will very much affect your children and your community. These are critical issues that require your time and attention!

— Board of Trustees
Pathways for Exceptional Children

“Include ME!” Vision Becomes Reality

On January 20, 2010, twelve students ages 11-18 who are members of the *Pathways Lead Mentor Program* boarded a bus to Trenton, New Jersey to speak to the State Board of Education on a mission that has become very close to their hearts — promoting “authentic” inclusion of all students in their communities and schools. These students, both with and without disabilities, are living examples of what they advocate for. They designed and wore yellow “Include ME!” t-shirts that now have become their trademark everywhere they go to speak and advocate. They have decided to share these t-shirts in order to progressively get entire towns to rally behind raising awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities.

The Lead Mentors will kick off their “Include ME!” events in Montville Township by selling their yellow tees for \$10 to all schools, residents, and businesses throughout local and surrounding areas. Pathways has dedicated both our Walkathon, scheduled for May 22, 2010, and 5K



Race on June 26, 2010 to the Lead Mentors to rally people from all over the state of New Jersey to “Include ME!” Pathways has made a commitment to donate 50% of the money raised from these events toward grants that will be chosen by the Lead Mentors to help build programs that include children with disabilities in schools and communities across the state of New Jersey. Some of the proceeds have already been earmarked for the Montville Township school district and the recreation department to build more inclusive programs. Stay tuned for more information that will be coming shortly with all the details about how you can purchase your “Include ME!” t-shirt.

After-School Programs Make a Genuine Impact!



Project Win-Win is an employment program that began in June 2008 and has received funding to a large extent from the generosity of Kessler Foundation and others including the Linda Bunis Haller Foundation. It began with five children ages 12-19, and today the program has almost tripled in size to 14 children! One of our employ-

ment tracks in the program involves learning to be a disc jockey. The group has been invited to perform in many different venues, but it is truly rewarding when they begin to advocate for their own gigs! Two of our kids went to their schools independently and asked to be DJs at their Valentine’s Day dances. Each performed beautifully for all their friends and teachers! Congratulations to Greg (above) and Chris (right, in blue shirt) for a job well done and for all of your hard work that went into making your school dances memorable and successful!



Pathways for Exceptional Children Announces Available Board of Trustee and Officer Positions

The following positions will be open and voted upon on March 25, 2010:

Two Board of Trustee positions (2-year term)

President (2-year term)

Vice President (2-year term)

Secretary (1-year term)

Treasurer (1-year term)

You do not have to be a Montville resident or parent of a child with special needs to be elected. Everyone is welcome to submit a small biography or resume for the above positions. Names of applicants for elected positions will be posted on our website by March 10, 2010. You must be a member of Pathways to vote for board of trustee members or run for any position. Membership forms are posted online at www.PathwaysKids.org. If you have questions or would like a job description of any available position above, email mvtpec@aol.com.

Recreation Programs: Upcoming programs are posted on our website at the beginning of each month. You can visit www.PathwaysKids.org and click on “Children’s Programs,” or the Recreation Department’s website: www.montvillenj.org, Click on Municipal Services, then Parks & Recreation, then Forms & Flyers.



Redefining the future for people with disabilities.