

Parents the Driving Force of Outcomes

I OFTEN TELL PEOPLE that what I have learned most from my son, who has special needs, is how many disabilities I have. I happen to be a “triple A” personality and he is a “triple Z.” It takes Jacob five times longer than the average person to tell me what he needs or how he feels. Sometimes I need to use every ounce of patience I have to figure out what he needs when he can’t tell me. My son perseverates on car washes and mail slots. I persevere on getting all the things done on my “to do list.” All in all, Jacob and I have taught each other many things about life. He has helped me to become an expert in things I never dreamt I would. I have become an expert in the fine art of negotiation with a child who sees the world very differently, knows every car wash this side of the Mississippi, and has an assortment of mail slots that would rival any collection in a museum. Raising a child with special needs is a life-long learning curve with few chances for rest and no opportunity for dull moments.

I am coming up on my sixth year as President of Pathways for Exceptional Children and spend much of my time talking to parents of children with special needs that are trying to



find answers to difficult questions, are exhausted, and sometimes beaten down by the pressures of always having to advocate for even the smallest things for their children. Like them, I certainly am not exempt from many times just giving up and throwing in the towel. The road to reaching equality and better outcomes for the disabled is not an easy one and is seldom filled with much support. However, it is a necessary road that every parent must get involved in and continuously advocate for. Parents hold many of the keys to their children’s success, and without you, their future holds little promise. Parents must be more proactive and get involved in their children’s education and planning for

their life after graduation. Do not wait until your child is in high school to begin to think about his or her future. Think and plan now.

There is nobody who will do it for you, and there is no one who knows more about your child, or the value of what he or she can become, than you do. You are the expert when it comes to your child, and no matter what the disability, your child can achieve whatever their potential holds for them. Much of that potential will be realized because you as the parent believe in it and must continuously advocate for it. Most people see my son Jacob as disabled and see him for what he cannot do. I see him for his potential. Nobody will see your child as you do, and your child will not see it or believe in it unless you do.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) plays an integral part in helping your child to reach his or her potential,

and is more than a document you sign once a year. It is a plan, similar to a road map, that is vital in leading your child toward success. Take the time to understand it, and not just from a legal rights perspective. The IEP exists to work for your child and bring about measurable outcomes and accountability. It should not be a computer-generated template that looks like every other child’s. Careful thought and planning must go into it, and the services provided should be looked at as an investment that must produce returns through the progress your child makes. The IEP should also be looked at not as just what *my* child needs. The IEP is what *every* parent in special education needs to come together and advocate for. There is no question that the final outcomes of employment remain dismal for the disabled. These figures will not change until parents begin to come together, demand more, and become an integral positive force in improving them.

Special education is not a subcategory of education, nor should it have any less expectation of leading toward the same goals of excellence as general education. Many parents ask me why the outcomes for special education remain so much lower than general education. My answer is because *we allow* them to be, and until we become a part of the change to improve them, they will remain that way. Get involved and become an educated consumer and advocate. Your child’s future depends on it.

—Melinda Jennis,
President, Pathways

Making Sense of the IEP Process

A Pathways Workshop



Nov. 15, 2008
9:00am – 2:30pm

Morris County
Cultural Center,
Morristown, NJ

Registration
information is
on our website



Project Win-Win: Building Up Dreams

Project Win-Win is building on the kids' success in the field of masonry. They are now leaning how to mix cement and stack bricks around the beautiful landscaping they have already done. A special thanks to

Eric LeFevre, owner of Tried Stone Masonry in Wayne, NJ, for donating three weeks of his time working with the kids and showing them the tools and tricks of the masonry trade.

In preparation for their chosen careers, the kids are gaining a strong computer background. They are developing design skills by coming up with their own business names and logos. They are learning to advertise and market their companies by making flyers and business cards in Adobe Publisher that look not only amazing, but very professional. They are setting

up Excel databases to store customer information and creating invoices for billing. The kids will continue to build on these technology skills by creating small business plans in each six-week session of the program. Our next session beginning November 11 will focus on careers relating to "Pet Care and Grooming."



The students also worked as DJs on October 3 at a Casino Night fundraiser in Summit, NJ. They gave an outstanding performance and got great reviews by all who attended. On December 3 they will be returning to Montville for the annual Montville Township Recreation Department Holiday Party. They will be the DJs for these festivities. We hope to see everyone there!
—Jimmy Lee, Program Director / Project Win-Win

Get details and registration flyer on our website

Recreation Programs:

MONTVILLE TOWNSHIP RECREATION HOLIDAY PARTY

The Montville Township Recreation Department and Montville Kiwanis Club are hosting our annual holiday party on December 3, 2008 from 6:30-8:30pm at Lazar Middle School cafeteria, 123 Changebridge Rd. in Montville, NJ. Our DJ team will feature students in our Project Win-Win program spinning tunes, and Santa will make a special visit. Dinner is provided free of charge. Please bring a secret gift for each of your children for Santa to give out as part of the festivities.

TREATS FOR TOTS

For children ages 5 and up. Join the residents of The Chelsea to create holiday treats for the children of Newton Street School in Newark, NJ. This project will provide wrapped goodies for approximately 500 less fortunate kids. We need your help!!! Certificates for community service will be given to all children that participate. Parents are welcome to join us. The event takes place on Saturday, December 6, 2008 from 2:30-3:30pm at The Chelsea at Montville, 165 Changebridge Rd., Montville, NJ. No cost.

PATHWAYS BASKETBALL

Kids will have fun learning the rules and skills of basketball from Doug Koban, adaptive phys ed coach and certified teacher of the handicapped. Wednesdays, January 14, 21, 28 & February 11, 2009; Ages 3-7 at 4:15-5:00pm; Ages 8 and above at 5:00-6:00pm. Located at Valley View Elementary School gymnasium, 30 Montgomery Ave., Montville, NJ. \$25 for four weeks.

Details and registration flyers for the above classes will be posted on www.montvillepec.org or www.montvillenj.org. These programs are run under the authority of the Montville Township Recreation Dept.



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MBSA & PATHWAYS for Exceptional Children Baseball Clinic

On October 11, 2008, Montville Baseball & Softball Association joined Pathways for Exceptional Children to sponsor a baseball

clinic for children with special needs. The clinic worked on batting, running, catching, and throwing skills. The kids practiced their skills, then split into teams and played a game filled with excitement as they ran the bases and fielded the ball like true professionals!

The kids had lunch and ventured off to the playground with the MBSA team players, who graciously donated their time and expertise as mentors at the event. Thank you to the MBSA coaches and team for your time and a day filled with fun!



PATHWAYS for Exceptional Children

What a child needs to be exceptional.