

Family Connections Center

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i(Need to) Customize

This seminar presented by Judi Sweeney will be held
Thursday, January 24, 2013, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
At the Holiday Inn
700 Myles Standish Boulevard, Taunton, MA

Cost of the seminar is \$75
(Continental Breakfast & Boxed Lunch provided).



The iPad has taken the world of Autism by storm. So many choices are available in iPad apps to help individuals with autism and other disabilities improve all areas of their lives. It is hard to argue the fact that the iPad is an exciting educational tool for so many students with special needs.

However, finding the right app and then customizing it to fit a particular individual isn't as easy as it should be. What if you had the ability to customize an app for an individual so that it was tailored to his or her specific needs and preferences? What if you could better utilize their strengths by incorporating your own photos, video clips and recorded speech to make a one of kind app created specifically for them? Sound exciting?!?!? Let us show you how to take your iPad app use to the next level.

This workshop will look at over 50 apps (like Explain Everything by Morris Cooke, AutisMate by Special Needs Ware and See Touch Learn Pro by Brain Parade – just to name a few) that can be customized for an individual through the addition of photos, clip art, sounds, recorded speech, video clips and more. (This goes beyond changing the settings in an app. In essence, it is creating an app that no one else would have because the added content fits a certain student, location or time.)

In addition, we'll look at external websites that allow you to create content for apps and upload that content to your iPad. You will leave with an extensive database handout to help you find the app that can best be customized for your student's needs. Note, participants are welcome to bring their own iPads, but bringing one is not necessary to still learn and gain much from participating.

Please register via our website www.community-autism-resources.com under the "Events" Section. If you have any questions, please contact Lori DeCrescenzo, Event Coordinator at 508-379-0371 or 1-800-588-9239 x10.

Louis Nisenbaum Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Louis Nisenbaum Memorial Scholarship Fund is available to family members of children or adults with disabilities. The goal of the Scholarship Fund is to grant family members the opportunity to attend conferences in which the central theme is inclusion/living in community. Applicants can submit a request to attend either national or international conferences.

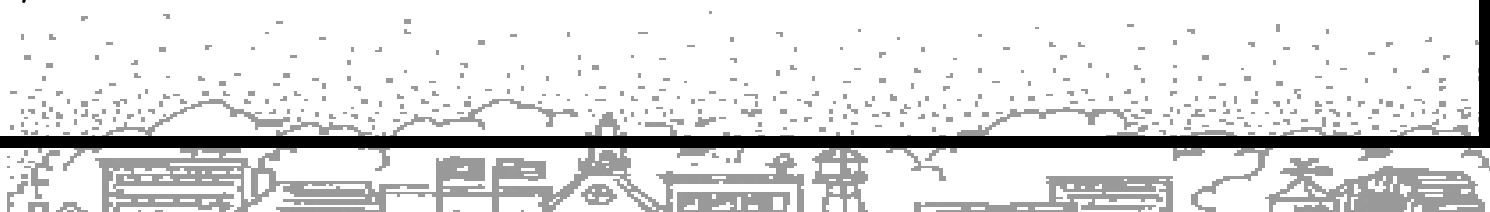
Interested individuals and families should visit www.nemasketgroup.org for an application and directions on the application process. (Please note there is a limit of two family members who will receive funding to go to a requested conference.) A sample list of 2013 Conferences is at the Nemasket Group website.



Lou's passion and commitment for people with disabilities were woven into the fabric of his being. He was fascinated by people and he truly believed we are our brother's keeper. He absolutely loved connecting people, looking for resources and sharing ideas. He also enjoyed challenging all of us to imagine better! The world he wanted to live in, and worked to create, was really all about community. It was about being there for each other. He often said, "Everyone needs someone in their lives to be unreasonable on their behalf." Lou willingly took on that role for so many people as do so many other family members.

Lou considered himself fortunate to work throughout the state, nationally and internationally. He humbly sought ideas and shared ideas always believing that he had so much to learn. He was besotted by the idea of family support and the potential of families to create change. He was instrumental in the development of our system of family support here in Massachusetts. Lou would be delighted to know that through this scholarship fund he will provide other family members the opportunity to "partake of learning" which might enhance the lives of their family members, others living with disability and our fellow community members.

"We all know that community must be the center of our lives because it is only in community that we can be citizens. It is only in community that we can find care. It is only in community that we can hear people singing. And if you listen carefully, you can hear the words: "I care for you."



Food for *Thought*

Start with Strengths!

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow

Quick now! Think of three wonderful things about a person with a disability in your life! Most people – parents, teachers, service providers, therapists – can’t do it. I know; I ask when meeting participants at conferences. Most *can*, however reel off a person’s diagnosis (one or many), along with a laundry list of the person’s “problems/deficits.”

Hmmm – it doesn’t take a genius IQ to figure out why so many children and adults with disabilities aren’t as successful as they could be. If *you* were known primarily by your perceived problems and your medical diagnoses, you wouldn’t be very successful either. Really, this is not rocket science, is it?

For those who may still be skeptical, perform your own “research” for a couple of days. When a coworker, friend, or family member asks, “How are you,” respond by sharing your medical diagnoses, as well as a list of everything you don’t do well – your “problems.” What impact does this have on the person you’re speaking to, and on yourself? Does the other person want to run away from you as quickly as possible? Or maybe he feels sorry for you and treats you as a poor, pitiful creature. On the other hand, the person might decide to help you “solve your problems,” *whether you’ve asked for help or not*. And how do you see yourself? Are any of these good outcomes? Here’s one more example: in a job interview, share all the negative things about yourself. Yea, that’s the ticket to success!

In reality, during a job interview or other situation, you keep your medical diagnoses and/or your “problems” private (lie by omission), and you

share only positive information. You may also embellish to make yourself look better (exaggerate just a bit). Maximizing the positives, and minimizing

the negatives is the norm, and it works to ensure our success in employment, at school, in relationships, and more. Why should it be any different for individuals who happen to have conditions we call disabilities?

Ahhhh, but it’s even more important for them. Because of societal ignorance about disabilities, focusing on the strengths of a person can help minimize or eliminate the knee jerk prejudice

normally associated with disability. A focus on a person’s strengths can also help others recognize that people with disabilities are more *like* people with disabilities than difference.

Perhaps the scenario described in the first paragraph shouldn’t be surprising for service providers, teachers, therapists, or others who can’t immediately bring to mind one particular person because they work with many people with disabilities. In addition, professionals usually are

focused on a person’s “problems/deficits” – not on their strengths – as part of their jobs. (More about changing this in a moment.)

The scenario, however, is alarming when a *parent* is unable to immediately share three wonderful things about her child with a disability. If a *parent* is not able to tout her child’s strengths, *who will?* What does this do to how a parent sees her child, and how the child sees himself?

As the parent of a child with a disability, I know how this happens. Sadly, the majority of what we hear from professionals is a laundry list of

If human beings are perceived as potentials rather than problems, as possessing strengths instead of weaknesses, as unlimited rather than dull and unresponsive, then they thrive and grown to their capabilities.

Robert Conklin

Those who believe in our ability do more than stimulate us. They create for us an atmosphere in which it becomes easier to succeed.

John Lancaster Spalding

our child's "problems/deficits." Seldom are our children's strengths identified, much less discussed. But things don't have to be this way. We can all make the choice to focus on a person's strengths.

First, let's think about how we "define" strengths. They're not limited to functional or "normal" abilities. If I list my strengths, I don't include things like "I can walk and talk." A strength can be (1) what a person does well (has great people-skills, is organized, is good at math); (2) what a person enjoys doing (loves to read, enjoys scrap-booking, is a rabid football fan, loves his pirate toys); and (3) what a person wants to do and/or learn to do (go to a baseball game, fly on a plane, learn to read, visit Presidential museums).

Many strengths may not be "observable," nor will they be found in traditional assessments. The only way to discover them is by talking to the person and his family and friends, and by observation – how does the person choose to spend his free time?

"Mary" was a professor at a university who was unable to see any strengths in her 19-year-old son, "Dan." She said Dan was "totally blind and functioned at the level of a six-year-old." When I asked about the possibility of Dan taking a class at the university where she worked (he could audit the class), she said that was ridiculous. I asked her how Dan liked to spend his time at home – what was his favorite thing to do? "Take a bath," she said. "He'd spend all day in the tub if he could." Then why not get him involved in a swimming activity at the university where he could do what he enjoys *and* be with other young adults in an inclusive setting? That was an "ah-ha" moment for her – until that instant, Mary had never seen that Dan's love of being in the water was a strength that could be build on and that could lead to positive outcomes.

When my son, Benjamin, was in kindergarten, he couldn't keep up during counting lessons as the teacher recited, "One bean, two beans, three beans..." The other children could pick up the small beans in time to the teacher's chant, but by the time Benjamin got two fingers around his first bean, the teacher was on five! So I sent his set of 12 toy pirates to school. He could

easily pick them up with his whole hand, and other boys wanted to be his math partner. His love of those two-inch pirates was a strength that led to many good outcomes.

A list of strengths can include a person's abilities, interests, desires, hopes and dreams, similarities to others without disabilities, and more.

Many people – the person with a disability, parents/family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, and others who know the person well – should contribute their ideas.

Once those strengths have been identified, they need to be at the forefront of our thinking. At Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings in schools, or planning meetings for adults,

let's *start* the meeting with the person's strengths, instead of spending so much time on problems, deficits, weaknesses, etc. If we start with strengths, we might begin seeing a new person, as well as new strategies and new opportunities. Imagine the possibilities when the person is defined by strengths, instead of perceived deficits and the impact on goals, activities, friendships, employment, and more. How might this make a difference in how we see the person, how others see the person, and most importantly, how the person sees herself? Make your list of strengths long and add to it on a regular basis (individuals grow and change).

Professionals: spend as much time on sharing a person's strengths with the person, family, and others, as you spend on delays, problems, etc. (Note: as parents, we know that "deficiencies/delays" represent the eligibility criteria for services, but most of us already know what our children cannot do; we really don't need professionals to tell us these things!)

Parents/family members: memorize at least three wonderful, affirmative characteristics that you'll now use to describe your loved one. And when a mother is bombarded with all the

"negatives" about her precious child, those three positive things can provide a powerful shield of armor as protection from those barbed arrows.

Let's start with strengths. Doing so makes sense, it creates a more accurate picture of the whole person, it opens the door to new perceptions and possibilities, and it's the right thing to do!

Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

Albert Einstein

It requires building on strengths to make weaknesses irrelevant.

Peter F. Drucker

Available *Resources*

The 2013 Annual Parent's Retreat

**REQUEST YOUR
APPLICATION NOW!!**



**Saturday & Sunday, February 16th & 17th 2013
At the Whispering Pines Conference Center
in West Greenwich, RI**

Designed to provide a relaxing and supportive environment for parents or caregivers to reflect on, explore, and share the rewards and challenges of raising a son or daughter with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. There will be opportunities for relaxation, discussion, networking, making new friends and learning from other parents, in a beautiful country setting with terrific food. Although there will be opportunities to learn, the format is that of a retreat, different from a conference. The atmosphere is relaxed and casual.

The retreat is scheduled from Saturday AM, until Sunday after lunch. Participants must commit to the full time of the retreat (attendance for one day is not permitted), but how you choose to use the time is very flexible.

A nominal fee is requested for the weekend. Funds raised from the annual ASD symposium subsidize the retreat, so scholarships are available if finances are a factor.

Applications will be sent out the first week of January but CALL NOW to have your name added to the application list, or if you have any questions.

Contact Jan Randall at Community Autism Resources at 508-379-0371 ext 16.

Planning for Life After Special Education in Massachusetts: A Transition Services Online Manual

To obtain this manual, please visit www.dlc-ma.org



What Is This Manual?

The online Transition Services Manual is written for parents and students who are advocating for better transition services, including social, vocational and independent living skills. It is written in an easy-to-understand format but also contains “Endnotes” and an Appendix at the end of the Manual with legal information for attorneys and experienced advocates.

The first edition of the Manual was edited by the Disability Law Center (DLC), in partnership with the Federation for Children with Special Needs, the Institute for Community Inclusion, and Mass. Advocates for Children. It was written by the Northeastern University School of Law Legal Skills in Social Context program. The second edition was revised and edited by the Disability Law Center.

What is New in the Second Edition?

Since the provision of transition services is a rapidly developing area of educational law and policy, we have added several substantial changes to our first edition of this [Planning for Life After Special Education Manual](#) first published online in the Fall of 2011. Along with revisions made to content in the 2011 edition, we have added new information on the following topics:

- Managing public benefits for transition age youth and young adults seeking employment.
- Developing appropriate transition services for students with severe developmental disabilities.
- Preparing for your student’s college admission and success.
- Helping your student transition successfully into the adult work force.
- Personalizing transition services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
- Knowing various diploma options are available for special education students, and evaluating which option may be best suited for your student.
- Challenging your student’s high school graduation.

In addition, the Second Edition of the Manual also includes:

- A substantially revised Table of Cases and Case Summaries to provide a more up-to-date and comprehensive picture of important developments in special education law.
- Thirteen new informational videos on topics including transition tips, managing public benefits for students seeking employment and resolving legal problems associated with your student’s individualized educational plan. (These videos are in English, ASL and Spanish).
- Additional, specific suggestions on how to develop comprehensive post-secondary vision statements, IEPs and transition plans.

Finally, sources cited by the manual have been updated and verified, additional links for further information have been added on specific topics, and broken links directing readers to additional outside information topics have been located and repaired.



~ FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM ~

LEADERSHIP IN MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

**Beginning September 2013
currently accepting applications through May 1, 2013**

\$12,000 stipend available for qualified applicants

The **Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental & Related Disabilities (LEND) Program** at the **UMMS - Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center in Waltham, MA** is a 9-month leadership program in the field of developmental disabilities that prepares professionals, persons with disabilities, and family members to influence policy and clinical practice on behalf of children with developmental disabilities and their families.

- ❖ Fellowship stipends are available to qualified applicants who possess leadership potential and have degrees in the following disciplines:

Audiology, Family Medicine, Genetics, Health Administration, Nursing, Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, Pediatrics, Pediatric Dentistry, Physical Therapy, Psychiatry, Psychology, Public Health, Social Work, Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology

- ❖ Fellowship stipends are also available for qualified individuals with disabilities or family members of people with disabilities who are interested in pursuing careers focusing on disability policy/systems change, leadership and management.
- ❖ Applicants should have experience working with children and youth with developmental disabilities/chronic illness and should have demonstrated leadership potential.
- ❖ Qualified applicants may have their LEND coursework credited towards a Master in Public Administration (MPA) from Suffolk University at reduced tuition.
- ❖ The LEND program involves a minimum commitment of 1 to 1½ days per week (Thursday afternoons and Fridays) on-site from September-June.

For more information and application forms, visit our website at:

<http://www.umassmed.edu/shriver/Education>

For additional information contact:

Carol Curtin, MSW, Associate Director

Email: Carol.Curtin@umassmed.edu or Carol.Imposimato@umassmed.edu

~ or ~

Carol Imposimato, Administrative Coordinator

Tel: (781) 642-0045

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Share

Information to



Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC), in partnership with **Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress (MDSC)**, will host a series of monthly workshops for parents and guardians of young adults with a disability. The series will focus on transition, employment, housing and other topics that will help to give them interdependent full lives in their community.

Please join us for our first workshop on

Wednesday, January 30, 2013

“Planning for Life after Special Education in Massachusetts”

7:00 – 9:00 PM

MDSC Office

20 Burlington Mall Road -- Suite 261

Burlington, MA 01803

Pamela Coveney, Senior Attorney and Co-Team Leader of the Disability Law Center (DLC) Education Team, will discuss the several substantial topics included in the latest edition of *“Planning for Life after Special Education in Massachusetts”*. Read and download this free manual at http://www.dlc-ma.org/_manual/LASE_manual.htm

This workshop will identify specific suggestions on how to develop comprehensive post-secondary vision statements, IEPs and transition plans, developing appropriate transition services for students, knowing various diploma options, best practices for family involvement and more.

Please RSVP to snadworny@riversidecc.org

**** Mark your calendars****

The next two workshop dates will be scheduled for February 20 and March 20.

www.mfofc.org

www.mdsc.org

Parents Supporting Parents

February 27, 2013

10:00-12:00

Parent/Caregiver Support Group
Join us here at The Nemasket Group.



Our goal is to create a safe & welcoming place for
parents/caregivers of individuals with special needs to:

- Provide emotional and practical support
- Offer encouragement
- Reduce stress
- Develop friendships

Light refreshments will be served.

“You alone can do it-but you can’t do it alone”

Sibshop workshops 2013

Thursday January 31st 5-7

Thursday February 28th 5-7

Thursday March 28th 5-7

Thursday April 25th 5-7

Thursday May 30th 5-7



Sibshops are for siblings age 9-13

Registration required/ space is limited

All Sibshops are located at the Nemasket Group, 56 Bridge Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719

Please call Kathleen Amaral at 508-999-4436 x133 for more information.

Sibshops are workshops that provide opportunity for brothers and sisters of children with special needs to obtain peer support and education within a highly recreational context. Organizers and families appreciate that the workshops take a wellness approach and the siblings who attend them appreciate that they are fun and engaging. Siblings are often the family member to have the longest relationship with the brother/sister with special needs and although they are not therapy, Sibshops prove to be therapeutic for some children.

The 18th Annual ASD Symposium

Thursday, March 21 and Friday, March 22, 2013

At Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, Cranston, RI

Attend 1 day or both days. Discounted rates for Parents!!

Thursday March 22 spend all day with: Paula Kluth, Ph.D.

Joyful Learning: Using Active and Collaborative Structures to Differentiate Instruction for Students with ASD & Related Disabilities

Too often a "one-size-fits-all" approach is used to design lessons leaving some learners struggling to participate and leaving teachers feeling they have not reached all of their students. In this interactive session, participants will apply principles of differentiation by exploring a number of collaborative, active, and brain-compatible learning techniques aimed at engaging students and making learning joyful. **This session is appropriate for educators in K-12 classrooms as well as parents** and others working with children with disabilities and is structured for participants to experience these active techniques through demonstrations.

On Friday, March 22

In the Morning: A Young Man with Autism's transition to Adult Life: How Talent, Perseverance, Advocacy and Training Carve the Path to Independence
With: Justin Canha, Person with Autism, Maria Teresa Canha, Parent and Autism Advocate, Nicole Turon-Diaz, M.A., Ed.?SpEd., Learning By Design, LLC

Justin Canha showed a passion for drawing early in his life. His parents were instrumental in giving him as many opportunities as possible to develop his talent and ability. He is now a renowned artist. His mother, **Maria Teresa Canha** has been advocating for him since his diagnosis at 3 1/2. Justin, now 22, is on the threshold of entering into the adult world and independence. **Nicole Turon-Diaz, M.A.**, owns Learning By Design, LLC. She is a Certified College Coach for individuals with ASD and has been working with individuals on the spectrum for last decade.

The Afternoon: Sensory Smart Strategies for Students with ASD with Lindsey Biel, M.A., OTR/L

The sensory issues experienced by most people with ASD can make everyday function difficult and even painful. Lindsey will demystify these sensory issues and provide real-life techniques you can use immediately to make school and other environments more tolerable. She will share practical strategies for challenges such as oversensitivity to sound, touch, lighting and other sensory input plus simple environmental modifications and "sensory diet" activities that can help students stay tuned in all day long.

To learn more or register go to:

<http://www.community-autism-resources.com/events/symposium.php>

The Jewish Family & Children's Service (JF&CS) Yesodot Family Support Program,
in collaboration with Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP)
and the Massachusetts Sibling Support Network (MSSN), presents:

**A Two Day Sibshops Conference with Don Meyer,
Open to Interested Participants across New England**

**Building Community Support for Siblings of Children with
Developmental Disabilities, Special Medical Needs and Mental Health Needs**

Dates:

April 4/5, 2013

(Thursday-9am to 4pm/Friday-9:30am to 2:30pm)

Location:

JF&CS, 1430 Main Street, Waltham, MA 02451

Presented by:

Don Meyer, Director, Sibling Support Project

About Sibshops: Sibshops are pedal-to-the-metal celebrations of the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Sibshops acknowledge that being the brother or sister of a person with special needs is for some a good thing, others a not-so good thing, and for many, somewhere in-between. They reflect a belief that our communities need to acknowledge the difficulties faced by brothers and sisters and provide them with the opportunity to connect with each other – in the same way that many parents of children with special needs have benefited from sharing their experiences.

Open to the Public (including out of state participants)

- Adult Siblings, Parents, Grandparents and Family Members of Children/Teens
- Professionals
- Organizational staff who wish to facilitate a Sibshop in their local community.
- Social Workers who work with families who have Siblings as part of the family.

Cost Per Person:

Day 1 Only:

Early Bird Rate Ends March 15, 2013: Parents/Students- **\$75** and Professionals-**\$125**

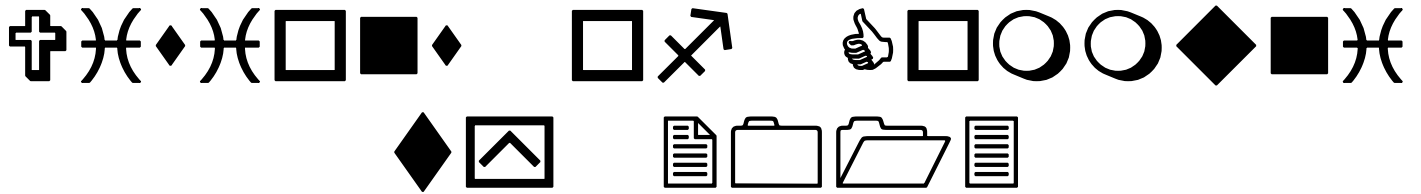
After March 15th Registration: Parents/Students- **\$100** and Professionals-**\$150**

Day 1 & 2

Early Bird Rate Ends March 15, 2013: Parents/Students- **\$130** and Professionals-**\$155**

After March 15th Registration: Parents/Students- **\$155** and Professionals-**\$185**

Contact Samantha Camacho, scamacho@jfcscboston.org, for more information



**A Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs
and the Professionals Who Serve Them**

**Saturday, March 9, 2013, 7:30am - 5:00pm
The Seaport World Trade Center - Boston, MA**

(Early Bird Registration Begins January 4, 2013)

The ***Visions of Community 2013*** conference will feature over 30 workshops in multiple languages, on a range of topics including the IEP process, advocacy, transition, & recreation, and showcasing more than 75 exhibitors. This is also a great time to network with other families and pick up free resources.

Visions of Community 2013 is sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs and its projects including: the Parent Training & Information Project, the Recruitment, Training and Support Center, Family TIES of Massachusetts, and Massachusetts Family Voices. In addition, the Federation is proud to have the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, and the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, as partners and co-sponsors for the conference.

Register at: www.fcsn.org

the
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group

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Family Connections Center

Joint Project of The Nemasket Group and
DDS (*Greater New Bedford Department of Developmental Services*)
56 Bridge Street
Fairhaven, MA 02719
Phone: 508-999-0077
Fax: 508-997-9239



United Way
of Greater New Bedford

Creating a network of family support
for individuals with developmental
disabilities and their families