

Down Syndrome *Information Network* of the Twin Tiers

Volume 7, Issue 8

August 2007

Free Advocacy Training

The Advocacy Center is offering free educational advocacy training in Bath for eight sessions. The training will provide you with knowledge about the special education process, government regulations, and teach you the skills necessary to effectively advocate for your child or other children's special education needs. The training is Thursdays, September 27—November 15, 2007 from 10:15 a.m. — 2:15 p.m. Classes will be held at Dormann Library, 101 West Morris Street, Bath, NY 14810. Light lunch will be provided each week. You must pre-register for the classes with Jean Tydings at 585-546-1700 or 1-800-650-4967 ext 264.



SAVE THE DATE DSINTT HOLIDAY PARTY

We know it's early, but please save December 15th, 2007 for our annual party. This year it's at the Elmira Elks club. Let us know if you'd like to help plan and we hope to see you there. More details to come.

Topics to be covered include:

- Fostering positive interaction between schools and families
- Successful methods to approach CSE/CPSE meetings
- Improving communication skills
- Developing effective IEP or 504 plans
- Accessing and interpreting school records
- Learning about classification, evaluation, and placement options
- Proven techniques to help parents having difficulty with the special education process
- Supporting other parents by attending meetings and conducting phone consultations

Next Monthly Meeting:

August 15, 2007 6pm Chemung ARC

Sponsored by:



Meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. The next meeting dates are:

August 15th from 6 to 8 p.m.
September 19th from 6 to 8 p.m.

First part of the meeting is for information & sharing, followed by Buddy Walk planning.

Meetings are held at Chemung ARC located at 711 Sullivan Street in Elmira, and pizza/wings and child care are provided.

Buddy Walk Update

September 29, 2007

Chemung Canal Trust, Elmira, NY

Planning for the BW is in full swing now. We have over \$2100 in donations from sponsors and at least 3 confirmed teams. If you'd like to form your own team, please contact Michelle to get a team captain packet. We have collected a Steuben vase, Adirondack blanket, ServU gift basket and tickets to the Elmira Jackal's for the raffle this year. We'll be calling to ask you to help sell raffle



tickets, so please be ready. Deputy Lathrop and her therapy dogs will be at the BW. Kramer, Jr. will be there along with some new pawtners from the Kramer Foundation dogs, so come on out and see the pooches!



**ASSEMBLY 5396-A by Nolan
Burden Of Proof Bill
Delivered to Governor Spitzer
and
REQUIRES YOUR SUPPORT**

Bill A.5396-A returning the burden of proof to school districts was delivered to Governor Spitzer. His decision will be due by midnight, **Wednesday the 15th**. He will very likely take the full 10 days. Obtaining the Governor's approval of this measure will not be easy. All of the school district associations are vehemently opposing it, including the New York City Department of Education, the Big Five School Districts, the School Superintendents and the School Boards Association. Call, FAX and email the following:

Governor's FAX is: 518-474-1513
Call: 518-474-8390 or 518-474-1041
Governor's contact info/address (including email link) is at:
<http://www.state.ny.us/governor/contact/index.html>

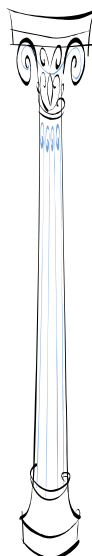
START WITH THIS MESSAGE OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN...

I am a parent (family member, friend, advocate for) of a student with disabilities. Assembly bill 5396-A by Nolan would require that school districts, not parents, bear the burden of proof in special education hearings. This bill is essential to enable parents to protect their child's right to a decent public education by relieving them of the necessity of hiring an attorney, which many cannot afford. Even impartial hearing officers say that placing the burden of proof on parents has led to far more costly, adversarial, legalistic hearings, driving parents and districts further apart rather than bringing them closer together. Governor, do the right thing for our children. Please sign Assembly bill 5396-A by Nolan.

ISSUE DETAILS

Remember: this bill would remedy Schaffer v. Weast, the US Supreme Court decision from a year ago which turned the clock back decades for children with disabilities. In the absence of a state law to the contrary, Schaffer forces parents to bear the burden of proof in special education hearings over their child's IEP. Parents therefore are charged with presenting their case, making legal arguments, examining and cross examining witnesses, including hostile witnesses, and adhering to the procedural requirements of a hearing.

1. For those parents unable to afford legal representation, this burden is absurd and impossible.
2. Unless the Supreme Court decision is remedied by the State Legislature, the federal right to a free and appropriate public education will belong only to those who can afford the legal help to exercise it.
3. For everyone else - including many middle income, most low income and all poor families and their children - the federal right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education is becoming a "right" on paper only, with no meaningful due process to enforce it.
4. The impartial hearing officers and their State Association, the New York State Administrative Law Judges Association, have said that Schaffer has resulted in a procedural mess, making the hearing process excessively legalistic and adversarial, driving parents and schools further apart rather than bringing them together. The hearing officers and their Association support this legislation. That is critical because as judges, not advocates or school districts, they are neutrals whose only objective is to reach a fair and impartial decision. They believe that approval of A5396-A is critical if hearings are to focus on the needs of the child, not the legal maneuvering of the parties.



Straight off the press....

National Down Syndrome Congress convention in KC shows how times have changed

By Melodee Hall Blobaum,
The Kansas City Star



When Richard Robison's daughter, Amy, was born in 1982 with Down syndrome, positive role models were in short supply. Professionals suggested that he might not want to take her home. And the idea that she might graduate from high school or go on to community college was unthinkable. "I remember searching wildly for positive images that would tell me what my future might be," said Robison, now the president of the National Down Syndrome Congress board.

Times have changed. Just ask the 1,700 people from around the world who gathered for the 35th annual National Down Syndrome Congress convention at the Westin Crown Center hotel. Keynote speaker Karen Gaffney didn't let Down syndrome keep her from swimming the English Channel as part of a relay team. She now wants to swim across Lake Tahoe. She was one of several young adults with Down syndrome sharing the stage with parents and researchers, offering a vision of possibilities that no one would have imagined a few decades ago.

Robison, of Boston, said Gaffney and his daughter are part of the first generation of students who made their way through federally mandated special-education programs. They're going to college, finding jobs and buying homes. "We never had role models in Down syndrome until recently," Robison said.

As an example, he points to the number of community colleges who accept students with Down syndrome. Five years ago, there were eight such schools around the nation. Now there are 130, he said, and his daughter is among the community college students.

Ann Turnbull, co-director of the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas and a keynote speaker who shared the stage with Gaffney, recalled the prevailing philosophy on Down syndrome when she was training as a teacher in the 1960s. The focus then was on what students couldn't do, like read or communicate. But today's students defy those stereotypes with help from research identifying ways to individualize instruction, leading to higher expectations.

Greg Nelson of Edmond, Okla., attended a session on including special-education children in general-education classrooms. His daughter Emily is 6 and enters first grade this year. "We haven't fought any battles yet," he said. "But we want to make sure we know." His family is part of a network of Oklahoma families that have children with Down syndrome. "There's a group of parents whose kids are just a little older, and they're role models for us," he said. "And there are parents who have kids just a little younger, and I guess we're role models for them."

This is the first National Down Syndrome Congress convention that Nelson and his wife, Joni, have attended. "I have new heroes," she said. "I see the possibilities for my daughter to go on and do amazing things."



Clip and Use
at the Miracle Mile

Pizza Hut

2493 Corning Road,
Elmira Heights, NY

**Down syndrome Information
Network of the Twin Tiers
Fundraiser Night**

20% profit goes towards the 2007 Buddy Walk
just for eating!

Redeem on
Tuesday, August 21st, 2007
From 4-8pm

Good for on-site dining or take out.



SHARE A COUPON WITH A FRIEND



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