



Newsletter

January – March 2018



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Please like and share our Facebook, twitter and Pinterest page! We are looking forward to sharing important information, upcoming event, and future trainings.



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Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, Inc. is a family directed resource center whose *mission* is to provide information, referral and peer to peer support to individuals with disabilities and their families.

5 Resolutions Moms of Kids With Disabilities Should Make

By: Ellen Stumbo

the
MIGHTY

Everyone is talking about resolutions, but it can be hard to think about resolutions when your child is facing extra challenges.

As the waves of life come and go, there are a few things I need to make a priority to keep it together — things that important for all parents, but I believe they are especially important for those of us who parent children with disabilities. So I've come up with five New Year's resolutions moms of kids with disabilities might appreciate:

1. Make time for yourself, and do something that gives you life.

You can only give so much. At some point you need to “recharge.” Take a Zumba class, practice yoga, go to a coffee shop and wear headphones so nobody will talk to you so you can read a book without interruptions. Take a photography class. Go out with friends at night when the kids are in bed. Walk the dog, and if you don't have one, go for a walk on your own so you get some fresh air and time to think by yourself. Take a YouTube exercise class. Just do something for yourself, whatever it is that gives you life and provides an escape from the day-to-day. Do it. *You need it.*

2. If you are married, date your spouse.

Marriage is hard. Period. Add children, and it gets harder, add [disabilities in the mix, and it can get tricky](#). You might even be one of those parents whose marriage fell apart. It's hard... really, really hard. I've slammed doors and bawled over discussions with my husband regarding parenting. It breaks me to know this can happen so easily in my marriage. Spending time with my husband outside from being parents is so important.

Make it a priority to spend time with your spouse. Your spouse is your partner; [you need to be on the same team](#). Go out on dates. If you cannot afford to go out, then make a picnic lunch and go to the park. If it's too cold, go walk around the mall and play a game. Get creative; my husband and I sometimes watch people and we make up their conversations based on their facial expressions and mannerisms. We get a good laugh out of it (which reminds me we should do this more often). When the kids are in bed, light some candles and dance. Talk to each other about your hopes, your dreams. Dream together. Do something with your spouse that will help keep you connected; don't allow distance to come between the two of you. Date your spouse.

3. Get respite.

Respite is one of the biggest needs for many families. Look for something in your area. There are churches that offer respite programs. There are agencies that have qualified respite providers. If you need to, go to a local college and put in an advertisement for the need. You never know. But try to find respite. I know it is easier said than done. I know from personal experience how hard it is to find respite, but it is so important! Connect with another family who is in a similar situation as yours,

and swap weekends for childcare — you watch their kids one Friday night, they watch your kids the next week. Could you approach a school staff or aide and ask if you could hire them for respite? Think outside the box, make the need known; you never know who will step up. But make this your resolution: *find someone to do respite for you!*

4. Embrace your limits.

It is OK to say no. It's OK to cancel a therapy appointment on a day when you are so overwhelmed you need a break. It is OK not to participate in every single activity at school or sporting event. It is OK to limit time spent with people who hurt you or drag you down. It is OK to make your world a little smaller for a while until you feel ready to take on more. *Don't be afraid to embrace your limits.*

5. Cultivate thankfulness.

I have discovered it can be easy to focus on the hard and messy in life, so instead, try to focus on the good. Determine to end each day counting your blessings, the good moments, the laughs, the unexpected surprises: the stranger who opened the door for you, the Facebook meme that made you laugh so hard you almost peed your pants. Make the good in your life be what you focus on each day. Make this the challenge you take on this year in full force.

All Kids Learn Differently: Is Your Child's Learning Style Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic?

By: Lisa Pennington

At the beginning of my homeschooling journey, I noticed that my children didn't learn the same way. Our oldest daughter took to reading like a fish in water and was devouring novels by the time she was four years old. "I'm so good at homeschooling," I thought to myself. But then I tried to teach the next child, our son, and my ego got knocked down a few pegs. He couldn't get the reading thing figured out. He didn't understand the same math lessons that had been so easy for his big sister. This kid couldn't even figure out which door on the house was the front door and which was the back door. EVERY time I told him to go to the front door, he ran to the back and vice versa.

Then I had more kids and it got more complicated. Just when I would figure out how to teach the second child to read, child number three didn't connect with that curriculum and I had to start again. My confidence was shot and I often thought to myself, "I am terrible at homeschooling!"

Then I started reading about learning styles. It rocked my world. What if I could figure out the specific learning style of each of my children and stop being so frustrated?! This simple concept would change our world. It altered their ability to understand the lessons and helped me find ways to communicate with them. As it turned out, each of my three oldest kids had a different style of learning. Well, *of course*. God likes to keep me on my toes.

My research focused on three main styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The first type of person, visual, is the most common. They learn by seeing. This is a person who sees how words are spelled in their head and love diagrams and charts for understanding concepts. They like to see the teacher writing things out for them.

Next is the auditory learner. Obviously, they learn best from hearing. They are likely to talk a lot in class because hearing themselves say it helps them remember. Reading or teaching out loud is a great tool for these types of learners.

Last is the kinesthetic learner. This person learns by doing. They act out a story in their mind when reading and remember the actions. Using your hands, letting them trace while listening, giving them something to physically connect to while learning helps a lot. They are often fidgeters because it's how their brains take in information.

Now, everyone has a little of all three styles in them. Most people are stronger in one area, but that doesn't mean they can't learn the other two ways. In fact, it is healthy to try to use all three when teaching. That way if they miss a concept from the first presentation they can get it the next go 'round. For example, when teaching a child a Bible verse, we can offer them three ways to learn it. First show it to them (in the Bible or written down) and let them read it. Next read it aloud or have them read it aloud. Lastly, have them act it out or describe what is happening in that verse. Put a physical action to the verse. Now that child has three ways to connect with the verse!

After I identified each of my children's learning style (there are simple tests online if you Google search) I was more equipped to help them. I stopped wanting to run away and started enjoying the challenge of figuring out what we needed to get the information to stick in each child's mind. If they weren't understanding a lesson I could step back and adjust how I was teaching. Many times, a slight change would make all the difference and they would get it.

There's nothing like being right there when a child makes a new discovery to give you strength to do it another day.

It also helps to figure out our own learning styles. As parents, we will tend to teach (whether homeschooling or not, we are always teaching!) with our own style, so knowing will help us to remember to give the other two styles some extra effort. I am a kinesthetic learner, so I tend to tell a lot of stories and make everything an action. It's fun, but my little auditory learner found it hard to follow. So, with her I just read the lessons and let her put her own spin on it. She did much better that way!

Books are the easiest thing to use for all three styles. Let the child read them, read them aloud to the child or retell the stories in small pieces to make sure they fully understand. A book basically does it for you! For the youngest learners, try *Big Look Bible Book*. It is touchable and fun shaped for the kinesthetic learner, bright and creative for the visual kids and has cute, simple stories for the audible child. It hits each area so beautifully you don't have to figure out how to work it all in.

Today my oldest three kids are all grown up and finding their own way in the world. My son did learn to read (in fact he graduated from law school last summer) and our little auditory learner has a job that she loves. Even now as adults it helps me to know how to connect with them through their unique learning styles. It's a tremendous blessing!

Partnership to Provide Employment Opportunities to People with Developmental Disabilities



[Northeast Delta Human Services Authority](#) has launched a workforce initiative in partnership with [Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana](#). Partners in Employment (PIE), is an employment-based program aimed at addressing the lack of employment opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities during and after graduating from high school. PIE seeks to combat this structural inequity so that everyone who is willing to work can.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for people with developmental disabilities is twice that of those with no disability, despite there being a desire and willingness to work.

"I have listened to what many well-meaning people said can't happen due to any number of real structural challenges associated with improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities," said Dr. Monteic A. Sizer, Executive Director of NE Delta HSA. "I believe in what is possible! Our employment initiative is in keeping with our agency's problem-solving disposition and my word to make developmental disabilities a regional and state priority."

PIE will support individuals with developmental disabilities with job training, counseling and placement. Further, it will utilize a person-centered approach to meet individual participant needs, wants, desires and goals to ensure positive programmatic outcomes and increased participation levels.

PIE is a huge step in the right direction and it couldn't have come at a better time for the hundreds living in northeast Louisiana with nothing to do post high school. Director of Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, Stacey Guidry, whose son has been diagnosed with a developmental disability, will soon graduate from high school. She will get to witness and assist those just like her son who had limited work opportunities not so long ago. "Individuals who have developmental disabilities are no different than you and I, they want to be self-sufficient," said Guidry. "Every year after graduation, we get calls from parents whose children have graduated and are sitting at home gaining weight and now have health issues. My son is not going to fall through those cracks, sit home and not have opportunities; we are kicking those doors in and proclaiming these individuals matter."

Figures released this month from the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics indicated that the graduation rates for students with developmental disabilities have seen rapid increases in the past five years. With this growing reality, NE Delta HSA's PIE program intends to create opportunities for those seeking to grab a piece of the proverbial pie.

"People with developmental disabilities can make a significant societal contribution if afforded an opportunity to do so," said Dr. Sizer. "I believe our PIE initiative will unleash a wave of newfound hope and opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families."



What is Children's Special Health Services?

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS) is a program for children in Louisiana with special health care needs. A child with special needs is:

- (1) a child with a health problem that affects how the child grows, moves, and acts, **AND**
- (2) a child who needs more health services than most other children.

CSHS gives a child with special needs health care that is sensitive to his or her family and culture. This will help the child live a happy and more independent life.

What help does CSHS offer?

- **Doctors and other health care workers** who provide services for children with special needs
- **Care coordination** to make sure a child gets all the services he or she needs
- **Hospital care**
- **Tests:** X-ray, lab, EKG (to look at heart movement), and more
- **Therapy** that helps a child (1) move better, (2) speak better, and (3) build
- **Medicine** that is ordered by CSHS doctors
- **Nutrition** and special diets
- **Equipment:** wheelchairs, braces, and more
- **Parent and family** support
- Help finding **home care** services
- Help working with **schools and community** groups and offices
- Help **shifting to adult life and care**

Who can get help from CSHS?

- A child can get help from CSHS if he or she:
- lives in Louisiana
- is less than 21 years old
- has a health problem that CSHS covers
- has Medicaid **OR** meets CSHS income rules

How do I apply?

To get help from CSHS, a parent can apply at a local parish health unit or one of the nine CSHS offices. A referral from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or audiologist is needed.

Region 8

Children Special Health Services

Evelyn Jackson, Parent Liason

1650 Desiard St. Monroe, LA. 71201

318.361.7282

Parishes: Caldwell, E. Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, W. Carroll

EarlySteps
Regional Interagency Coordinating Council Meeting



2018 RICC Meeting DATES:

Wednesday, 2/28/18, at 1:00 pm - Health
Unit - 1650 DeSiard, Monroe - Community
Room

Wednesday, 5/30/18, at 1:00 pm - Health
Unit - 1650 Desiard, Monroe - Community
Room

Wednesday, 8/29/18, at 1:00 pm - Health
Unit - 1650 DeSiard, Monroe - Community
Room

Wednesday, 11/14/18, at 1:00 pm - Health
Unit - 1650 DeSiard, Monroe - Community
Room

The RICC meeting is open to the public. Membership is open to family members of children with disabilities as well as service providers, community leader and agency representatives. The RICC is an essential "local" component of EarlySteps.

For any questions regarding Region 8 RICC activities, Please Contact:
Tracy Crump, EarlySteps Regional Coordinator at
[Tracy.Crump@LA.GOV\(email\)](mailto:Tracy.Crump@LA.GOV(email)) or by telephone at 318.361.7237

Louisiana School Finder is a new tool released by the Louisiana Department of Education to help parents make informed decisions about the school their child attends. All publicly funded schools and early learning centers are listed. The site offers basic school information like grades served, district, type, contact information and more. Additionally, it offers Academic performance information.



Greetings,

Get ready for Legislative Roundtable!

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council has released the official advocacy agenda for FY18 Legislative Sessions.

Our advocacy initiatives are VITAL to the protection of programs and services supporting the developmental disability population. In times of economic hardship in the state of LA—such as the current \$1B shortfall reported by Gov. John Bel Edwards—our officials face tough decisions on how to balance the budget to support the state. While we do not know exactly what battles we will face until the official executive budget recommendations become clear, what has become evident is that each year, services affecting our most vulnerable population of individuals with developmental disabilities continuously end up on the “chopping block” to receive cuts that prove detrimental to the quality of services supporting our families. WE NEED YOUR HELP in advocating to protect these services.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Please register to attend our Annual Legislative Roundtable on February 8th! This event will bring together the LaDDC, LaCAN members, and our state officials to discuss important issues necessary to improve services for the developmental disability community. Having our families there demonstrates the need of developmental disability services in our communities, and their importance to the health and overall wellbeing of the developmental disability community (Details to follow).

Also, as Regional Advocacy leader, I will continue to work to connect our families with our legislators via local meetings, or through participation at our Public Testimony/Yellow Shirt Days at the State Capitol. We face yet another tough road and there will likely be many upcoming Action Alerts with calls for LaCAN members, and those supporting the DD community to take action speaking with our legislators on important issues affecting DD services.

Connect with us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/LaCANRegion8

Thank you,
Konstance Causey
Region 8 Advocacy Leader



Save the Date

Thursday, February 8, 2018

9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Delta Community College
7500 Millhaven Road
Monroe, LA 71203

RSVP to Konstance Causey
318-361-0487 or 318-547-9379
kcausey@lcanadvocates.org



Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council



THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF OUR ADVOCACY TEAM!

Please continue your advocacy efforts by participating in the following
2018 legislative advocacy activities:

ACTION ALERTS: YEAR-ROUND

Contact your policymakers via email or phone about issues that affect people with disabilities and their families.

LEGISLATIVE VISITS: YEAR-ROUND

Make a personal visit with your policymakers to share your story and express your concerns.

YELLOW SHIRT DAYS: YEAR-ROUND

Make your presence known by attending legislative committee and/or BESE meetings in your yellow shirt!

PUBLIC TESTIMONY: YEAR-ROUND

Share your story with policymakers by speaking before a committee on proposed policies.

Look for emails from LaCAN about these opportunities or contact your
LaCAN Leader(s) if you would like to participate.

Stay informed! Follow us on social media:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates

Twitter: www.twitter.com/laddcouncil



Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council



LaCAN
LA COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY NETWORK



Families
Helping
Families

Steps In Taking Action

1. Stay Updated on Current Alerts

Be sure you are connected with us via our mailing lists and social media pages. Want to become a LaCAN member? Need more information? Call the FHF office and I would be delighted to speak with you! LaCAN is an initiative of the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108

email: info@laddc.org

web: www.lacanadvocates.org

facebook:

www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates

twitter: www.twitter.com/LaDDCouncil

2. Contact Your Legislators

Don't know who your legislator is?

Visit

www.legis.la.gov/legis/FindMyLegislators.aspx today to find out. Enter your home address. The first person listed will be your State Representative. The second person will be your State Senator. Click on the legislator's name to view their contact information.



3. Share Your Response

Advocates are also encouraged to contact your legislator to let them know how you feel about any issues impacting services and programs for people with developmental disabilities and other vulnerable populations. There is no right way to take action. Feel free to call, email, or visit with your legislator. Mail a letter. Post a video on his/her social media. Most importantly, let your voice be heard.

4. Confirm Your Action

Don't forget to let us know you took action! Reply to this email or notify your LaCAN Leader to confirm your action. Why confirm your action? This helps us to know how effective we are in reaching you with this important information and engaging members across our state in advocacy for systems change.

2nd Annual Families Helping Families - Touch a Truck-Trick or Treat Event



Dear Friends,

Another Touch a Truck & Trick or Treat Event is behind us and what an incredible event it was! We are thrilled to report that more than 3,500 people attended this year's event and we had 111 vehicles on site for the kids to touch, climb, and explore.

The board and staff at FHF decided we need an event that would generate funding that would allow us to continue to serve the families who reach out to us for help each day. Under no circumstances do we ever want to not be here when a family of a child with a disability needs assistance.

FHF is staffed by parents of children with disabilities. We understand the challenges that arise in carrying for a child with a disability and have devoted our lives to supporting other families who are facing similar challenges. Each year, we serve more than 6,000 families- offering support, education, training, information, referral, and when necessary financial assistance. Our crisis fund pays for gas for out of town medical appointments, medical equipment and supplies, diapers, food, formula, and other expenses of our families during a time of financial crisis.

Touch a Truck offered the opportunity to bring awareness to the issues that 1 in 10 families in Northeast Louisiana face, as well as to provide funding for our programs and crisis fund. It more importantly gave children with and without disabilities the opportunity to "play together". Awareness and community inclusion are the core principals of the work we do.

The safe atmosphere and friendly volunteers are what made this event possible. We would like to that each of you gave so much of your time passing out candy, interacting with the families attending, and picking up child after child and placing them behind the wheel or allowing them to honk a horn, or sound a siren. Your willingness to participate in this event is truly what made this possible. We could not have had the success we had without YOU!

Thank you for bringing your families to touch a Truck, donating your equipment, your staff, your time, and your money to help us make this event everything it was. We are blessed to have you in our community. You have all become a cherished member of the FHF family.

God Bless,
Stacey Guidry
Executive Director

Vehicle Participants

The Radio People Boom Box
American Crane
American Medical Response
Barak Shrine Temple
Barnhart Crane & Rigging
Jabar Construcrion Corp
Ben Allen
Louisiana Land Solutions
Brucker Truck Sale - Monroe, LA
Tyson Construction
Cajun Tree Cutters
Delhi Fire Dept.
Donnie Plunk's Towing & Recovery
Entergy
Exco
Franklin Parish Sheriff's Dept.
Kent Skaink Trucking
Kona Ice of NELA
House of Cycles
Expectation High, Inc
Grace Covenant Baptist Church
LA State Police Troop

Mike Mayfield & Family
Monroe City Police Dept.
Monroe Fire Dept.
Monroe Transit
Ouachita Parish Fire Department
Ouachita parish Sheriff's Office
Plunk's Wrecker Service
FDJ Trucking, LLC From Rayville
Old Dominion Freight Line
Consolidated Truck Parts & Service
Redneck Swag
Southeastern Freight Lines
West Monroe Fire Dept.
West Monroe Police
Gear'D Mudd Krewe
Franklin Parish Sheriff's Department
Bastrop Parish Sheriff's office
The Choo Choo Express Train
Air Evac 100 Rayville
Air One

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Dr.KC & Hillary Sirmon in Memory of Benjamin Sirmon
Gear'd Mudd Krewe
Expectations High Inc.
Rep. Jay Morris
ABA Therapy Solutions LCC
Ole Dominion Freightline

101 Operating Co., Inc.
Southeastern Freight Lines
Fast Service
Henry Bateman
Macaroni Kid
United Automation
Redneck Swag
The Radio People



Healthy Blue



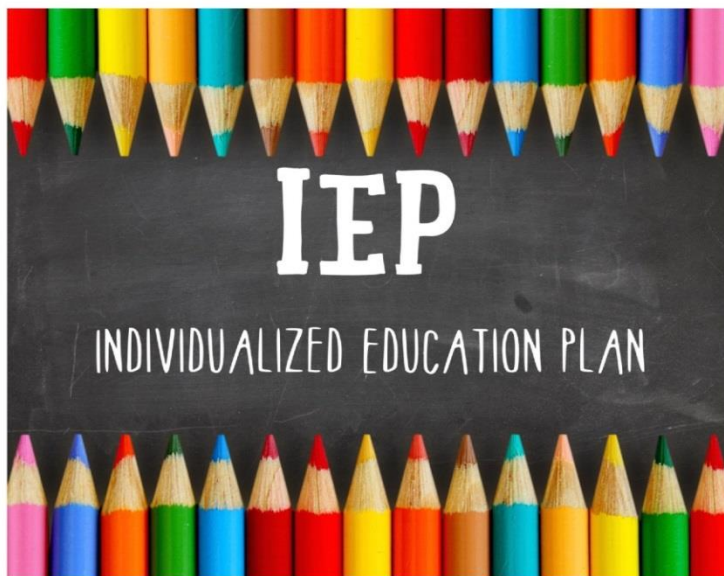
**Dr. KC & Hillary Sirmon in
Honor of Benjamin Sirmon**

101 Operating Co., Inc

Rep. Jay Morris







A study for parents or legal guardians of children with disabilities who (a) are between the ages of 5 and 21 years and (b) have a current IEP

Anonymously share your IEP meeting experiences

50 randomly selected participants will receive a \$20 gift card to the store of their choice

IEP MEETING STUDY

To participate in this survey, please click the link below (or copy and paste into your web browser)

<https://is.gd/IEPsurvey>

Para acceder a una versión en español de la encuesta, haga clic aquí:

<https://is.gd/encuentadeIEP>

*The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please allow yourself ample time to complete the survey.



**VANDERBILT
KENNEDY CENTER**
for Research on Human Development

QUESTIONS?

Email

Kelli.a.Sanderson@Vanderbilt.edu

Call

615-348-8272



Families Helping Families of NELA has just launched our official App. It is free of charge and can be downloaded at the App store on Android or iOS devices. Download it today to keep up with us! Check back daily to see upcoming events and information as it becomes available. Use this QR Code to download now!





SAVE THE DATE.... Our 4th Annual Superheroes For Autism 5K is set for April 28, 2018 at Kiroli Park!!!!!! Come out and help us celebrate and raise awareness for all of the superheroes in our community!!

ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!!!!

Don't forget to sign up under the Team Name of your favorite Superhero!! Our Autistic Superhero with the Largest team will receive this year's trophy! Also, the Company/Group with the Largest Team will receive an award!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/superheroes-for-autism-5k-runwalk-tickets-42062446911>

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