

PARENT NETWORK

Idaho Parents Unlimited, Inc. Serving Idaho Families for 20 years

Understanding Your Child's School Report Card

Receiving a report card is a common occurrence for parents of school age children. However, what many parents don't know is that each school gets a report card as well. And under the No Child Left Behind Act every school must distribute one to each parent. The school's report card tells how each school and the district are doing. In addition, it provides specific information on how various groups of students are performing.

A school's report card explains how a child's school is doing by comparing it to previous years and to other schools. By reading these report cards parents are able to see whether their child's school is steadily improving, declining or remaining stagnant. Parents are able to see where the school struggles and where it excels.

An article by Parent Partners gives 8 tips for parents regarding school report cards:

- **MAKE SURE YOU RECEIVE A REPORT.** Districts are supposed to publish and disseminate the report cards as close to the opening of school as possible. Because of delays in getting data, some districts might not publish their reports until late fall, but wherever you live, you should expect to see something before the winter holidays. If you don't receive a report by then, talk to your principal.
- **MAKE SURE THE REPORT HAS THE REQUIRED INFORMATION.** The No Child Left Behind Act requires that school reports include reading and math test scores for different groups of students: whites, African Americans, Hispanics and other nationalities; low-income students; students with disabilities; and students with limited English language skills. The report cards also must include information on the qualifications of the school's teachers. High schools must report on graduation rates. Elementary and Middle schools must include at least one other indicator, usually attendance.
- **IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.** Which groups of students are doing well? Which groups are not doing so well? What are the trends from year to year? Do all students make gains, or do some groups of students stay about the same? How



does the school compare to the district or state average? In some states, you also can find out how your school compares to similar schools (urban schools, suburban schools, low-income schools, etc.). With information like this, the school can make plans for improvement.

- **ASK WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ADDRESS THE WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED BY THE DATA.** For example, if reading scores are low, what is the school doing to improve reading instruction? If students with limited English are not making progress, how will the school modify its program for English language learners? If the school has a remedial program, how will those students catch up to the others, and when? If the percentage of teachers who are not qualified is high, what is the plan to upgrade their skills or bring in certified teachers?
- **HAVE THE PRINCIPAL SCHEDULE A MEETING TO EXPLAIN THE RESULTS.** School leaders should be willing to help parents understand the numbers... to discuss how the school plans to improve... why they think the plan will work... and to ask for parents' help. This meeting also would be a good time for the principal to show parents how to interpret their children's individual reports on test results.

Continued next page...

Report Card continued..

• **DISCUSS WHAT OTHER INDICATORS SHOULD BE MEASURED AND REPORTED.** The No Child Left Behind Act requirements are just a starting point. You and other parents will want to know more about how the school is doing—extracurricular activities, parent and family involvement, awards or special programs, and so on. There is no reason why your school's report card shouldn't also cover these areas of interest.

• **KEEP ASKING QUESTIONS.** What is being done to improve things? Which schools are doing better than yours and what can you learn from them? How can parents be most helpful—at home and in the school? What supports do teachers need to reach all students more effectively? How well are local after-school programs linked to what students are learning in class? School leaders might not have all the answers, but they should be willing to find out and to keep you informed about progress.

• **GET INVOLVED.** Use the information in the school report to get more involved. Schools can't or shouldn't work on improving student achievement alone: they need dedicated parents like you to help them drive change. Again and again, the research shows that when parents are involved, student achievement improves.

Whatever your child's needs, knowing what is in their school's report card will benefit you and them. Whether your child's school is excelling in most areas or struggling, it is important to stay informed to better meet your child's needs.

--Source: "Tips On Using Your School's Report Card" *Parent Partners Empower*, Summer 2005.

RESOURCES:

www.ncreportcard.org
info@plassociates.org
www.greatschools.net
www.schoolwisepress.com
www.pta.org

Letter from the Executive Director

Hello,

This is the time of year when Idaho Parents Unlimited has typically held its annual conference. This year we have decided to do something new.

This decision was made to meet the priorities under a strategic plan created in 2003 by a group of over 30 members of the Board of Directors and agency staff. That priority was to build a bigger grass roots group of folks that would work to lead Idaho on disability issues in the future. In order to do that something had to change - and so the difficult decision was made to hold the IPUL conference every other year.

In its place IPUL will be holding intensive leadership training retreats for 24 parents new to leadership. For the next three months, these parents will spend time away from the demands of family and work pressures to explore who they are, their styles of interacting with others and how to become strong leaders. This training will teach them new skills as they begin the work of making Idaho a better place for children with disabilities and their families. We look forward to working with these new parent leaders and assisting them in making the important contributions they will make over the next few years. The new Parent Leadership Development (PLD) Program will take place every other year, alternating with the IPUL Conference.

Our next statewide parent conference will be in the spring of 2007. We are in the early stages of planning conference activities for next year. If you have ideas for speakers or for session topics, please contact us.

Moving the IPUL conference means a change in how the IPUL award Ceremony will be carried out. We are beginning a new tradition - an annual awards banquet. The banquet will honor award winners, review program successes and invite parents and professionals that work with IPUL to share stories. This will be a great way to celebrate all the wonderful people who support our work and use our services. I am really looking forward to it. If you are in Boise on May 4th plan to join us!

*Sincerely,
Evelyn Mason
Executive Director*



Tutoring Program Offered by No Child Left Behind is Going Unused

Four years after President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act many students are not getting the tutoring that the law offers.

According to a New York Times article on February 12, 2006, on which this article is based, across the country roughly two million public school students were eligible for free tutoring in the school year that ended in 2004. According to the most recent data from the Department of Education only nearly 12 percent received help.

The No Child Left Behind law requires consistently failing schools that serve mostly poor children to offer their students a choice if they want it: the opportunity to attend a new school or tutoring paid for with federal money.

City and state education officials and tutoring company executives disagree on the reasons for the low participation and cast blame on each other. But they agree that the numbers show that states and school districts have not smoothed out the difficulties that have plagued the tutoring — known as the supplemental educational services program — from its start. It is a novel experiment in educational entrepreneurship: largely private tutoring paid for with federal money.

There are a variety of possible reasons for the problems: the program is allotted too little federal money, is poorly advertised to parents, or has too much complicated paperwork for signing up.

And for those students who are getting tutored, there has been no national scientific study judging whether students in failing schools are receiving any academic benefit. And there is no agreement on how that progress should be judged.

"To some extent, when you offer something new to low-income parents or to any parent group, initially you're not going to have a surge signing up because they don't know what it is and the procedure to sign kids up is somewhat complicated," said Nina Rees, an assistant deputy secretary at the Department of Education.

To address that, the department has been advising states and school districts to use everything they can to reach parents, including letters, fliers and the Internet, and to make the description of programs as simple as possible. Still, Ms. Rees noted that "this can be time consuming, and a lot of districts don't have the capacity to administer a program like this while administering all of the other grants they are charged with administering."

While tutoring is only one of the choices given to students under the law, switching to new schools is more difficult, so school districts have put the emphasis on tutoring. In failing districts, the law required the tutoring to come from outside groups on the theory that they could do a better job than the schools that were failing in the first place. But to address the tens of thousands of students who are not getting tutors, federal education officials are now allowing some failing districts to tutor their own students.

Some educational groups believe that some tutoring companies shun students with learning and language difficulties because the companies, like the schools, are judged, in part, on the progress their students make.

Some of the latest available data gives a clear picture that some of the country's vulnerable students are among those not being served: in New York City, for instance, only about 9,000 of approximately 22,000 children with disabilities who were eligible for tutoring enrolled for help last year. Among students with limited English, only about half the 40,000 eligible were being tutored.

Beth Swanson, the director of after-school and community school programs for the Chicago public schools, said of tutoring companies, "Typically, we do see that providers opt not to serve those populations, and likely because they don't have the materials, expertise or resources to do so."

Many in the tutoring industry deny such charges and say that schools do not notify them in advance about which students might require special services, citing privacy concerns.

In May, in another relaxation of the law that recognized that some children with disabilities might be contributing to a district's failure rate, the Education Department announced that states could apply for flexibility to allow greater numbers of students to take alternate tests to assess whether they were comprehending material at their own learning grade level.

But the important thing to keep in mind if your school has gotten a poor report card for the last year or two, and if your school qualifies for Title I funds, and if your child is not scoring well on state-wide testing, is to ask about the supplemental educational services program.

FAMILY TO FAMILY HEALTH INFORMATION CENTER

The Family to Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC) at Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL) is a federally-funded parent-run center which is here to provide information and support to families of children and youth with special health care needs and the professionals who serve them. The F2F HIC at IPUL believes in and practices family-centered care to assure the health and well-being of children and their families through a respectful family-professional partnership. It honors the strengths, cultures, traditions and expertise that everyone brings to this relationship. Family-Centered Care is the standard of practice which results in high quality services.



Many families need assistance finding community-based care and services for their children and youth with special health care needs. Professionals may also seek assistance from this center in order to work more effectively with families, children, youth and other family organizations. Assistance is most often provided by phone, but can also occur by scheduling an appointment.

EXAMPLES OF REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM FAMILIES MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Learning about Early Intervention Services;
- Learning about development of health care plans in schools;
- Seeking out other parents or support groups that focus on similar circumstances related to special health care needs and/or disability;
- Seeking help in navigating public health insurance programs such as Medicaid, EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment), SSI (Social Security Insurance), CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program, CSHP (Children's Special Health Program), and the "Katie Beckett" Medicaid program;
- Seeking help in researching community-based developmental disability and related services;
- Seeking emotional support to help understand a child's disability;
- Transition to adult services

KIDS AS SELF-ADVOCATES

When disabilities and people are being discussed, it is often the way people are referred to that may set the tone for the conversation. Historically, people with disabilities have been defined BY their disability and considered "sick" or "needing to be fixed". As the disability movement progresses, we have tried to move into a more "social" model of thinking - it's about the person, not their "condition". Read more about the comparison below.

MEDICAL MODEL VS. SOCIAL MODEL

Adapted from Carol J. Gill, Chicago Institute of Disability Research

What is the medical model vs. social model of disability? This idea was created by Carol Gill at the Chicago Institute of Disability Research to explain how people with disabilities are seen by society and how people in the disability community see themselves. Disability studies scholars believe that an overemphasis on the medical model has detracted from full citizenship for people with disabilities.

Even though people who have disabilities are very different - different ages, races, and kinds of disabilities - they still have a lot of things in common, such as a common history and common experiences of being discriminated against (being treated differently because of their disability).

MEDICAL MODEL

1. Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.
2. Being disabled is negative.
3. Disability resides in the individual.

4. The remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalization of the individual.
5. The agent of remedy is the professional.

SOCIAL MODEL

1. Disability is a difference.
2. Being disabled, in itself, is neutral.
3. Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society.
4. The remedy for disability-related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society.
5. The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the relationship between the individual and society.

YOUTH FRIENDLY VERSION - MEDICAL MODEL

(How society views people with disabilities)

1. Disability is seen as something that could hold a person back. It is seen as something that a person should not want, or that makes people different in a bad way.
2. Disability is bad.
3. Disability is a personal problem - the disability is in the person, and it's their problem.
4. What will make problem better is curing the person or making them seem the least disabled possible.
5. Only professionals can help the disabled person fit in and be accepted in society.

YOUTH FRIENDLY VERSION - SOCIAL MODEL

(How the disability community sees themselves)

1. Disability is only a difference, like gender or race.
2. Being disabled is neither good nor bad; it's just part of who you are.
3. Problems come from the disabled person trying to function in an inaccessible society.
4. What will improve the problems and issues of people with disabilities is a change in society, such as making things accessible for everyone.
5. That change can come from the person with a disability, an advocate, or anyone who wants people with disabilities to be included equally in society.

LINKS TO MEDICAL RESOURCES

- Alphabetical List of Specific Diseases/Disorders: <http://www.mic.ki.se/Diseases/alphalist.html>
- American Medical Association - <http://www.ama-assn.org/>
- Drug Infonet - <http://www.druginfonet.com/>
- Kids' Health - <http://www.kidshealth.org/>
- Medline (National Library of Medicine) National databases - <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi>

- MedlinePlus - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>
- National Medical Society's Multimedia Reference Library - <http://www.medical-library.org/library.htm>

INFO AND LINKS TO MEDICAL JOURNALS, TEXTBOOKS, RESOURCE BOOKS, AND ONLINE DATABASES.

- National Organization for Rare Diseases (NORD) - <http://www.rarediseases.org/>
- Neonatology on the Web - <http://www.neonatology.org/>
- National Institutes of Health - <http://health.nih.gov/>
- RxList - The Internet Drug Index - <http://www.rxlist.com/>

LINKS TO RESOURCES ABOUT PARENTING

- Sibling Support Project Information and listserves - <http://www.thearc.org/siblingsupport/>
- TASH - <http://www.tash.org/>
- Zero to Three <http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Sources: National Center for Family-Centered Care. Family-Centered Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs. (1989). Bethesda, MD: Association for the Care of Children's Health.

Bishop, Woll and Arango (1993). *Family/Professional Collaboration for Children with Special Health Care Needs and their Families*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Department of Social Work.

Family-Centered Care Projects 1 and 2 (2002-2004). Bishop, Woll, Arango. Algodones, NM; Algodones Associates

Family Voices, Inc. www.familyvoices.org
KASA (Kids as Self Advocates) is a Family Voices project funded by the U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities



Greetings from the IPUL Board of Directors!

With a new year comes the promise of change, new opportunities for partnerships, and advocacy for parents and individuals with disabilities.

I would like to take a few moments and introduce myself as your new IPUL Board President, Jerry Todd Miller. I am a Technical Services Resource Manager and 20 year veteran of a major Boise-based retail chain and the step-father of a 15 year old son who has autism. My wife Jo Ann and I are so proud of our son Estevan and all that he has been able to overcome and accomplish in his life. He truly amazes us on a daily basis and definitely fills our hearts with love.

In our continued partnership with IPUL, we have been able to continue our advocacy efforts not only for our son, but for others as well.

Idaho Parents Unlimited is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families, and I am excited about this great opportunity to serve as President of the Board.

My goal is to increase people's awareness of our organization and continue to grow our membership to include a diverse group of parents, teachers, family members and others who will embrace our overall philosophy of 'enhancement of quality of life'.

We have quite a few new incoming Board members, so there will be a great infusion of excitement and new ideas.

I look forward to my continued service on the Board and appreciate the opportunity to make a difference.

Thank you for all of your dedication and support. It is greatly appreciated.

IPUL Board President, Jerry Todd Miller

WITH THE HELP OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

by Nora Jehn



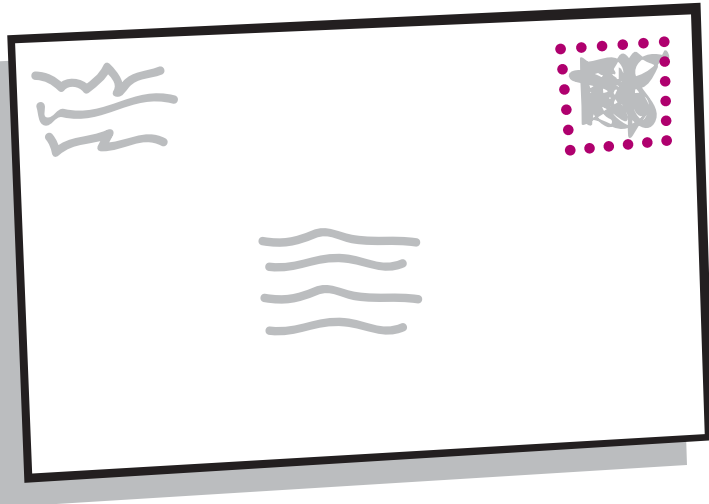
Hannah makes her way easily down the school hallway crowded with students headed for home. Hannah wields her metallic blue walker with practiced precision in striped tights and swinging pony tails. She is at times swallowed up by the crush of bodies, but the kids deftly avoid bumping Hannah's walker, with many good-byes exchanged on the way out.

Hannah's walker is the most obvious piece of assistive technology (AT) that Hannah uses, but as I started thinking about how assistive technology helps Hannah, I quickly brainstormed a list and in two minutes I came up with 20 items of assistive technology that Hannah uses on a daily basis. Hannah has cerebral palsy and autism, and assistive technology has allowed her to participate fully in her school, family, and community.

At twelve years old, Hannah's AT needs have been gradual and have taken lots of brainstorming, a team approach, and common sense to identify. Many times, the simple AT solution has been the best. Utensils with bigger handles, toilet seat reducer, grab bars for the toilet and shower, levered door handles, and an adaptive chair, help Hannah around the house with self-care that the rest of us take for granted. At school, Hannah uses the computer for fine motor tasks such as writing, art, spelling and educational/language games. A simple karaoke machine is used in the classroom to amplify Hannah's soft voice so that all can hear her. Over time, Hannah's voice has become so reinforcing to her that her volume has gradually increased! Digital pictures, visual schedules, and flashcards help Hannah learn vocabulary, and bring order and stability to her day. Electronic toys, float belt, and even her border collie that pulls Hannah up the hill on her sled all give Hannah access to activities that would be otherwise impossible or take much more assistance. The oversized jogger stroller and battery operated scooter let Hannah enjoy hiking in the mountains and traversing through the thick sand of the beach with her family.

Hannah's AT helps keep her happy, productive, and included. She will be giving a Power Point presentation today in the People Fair at school. Hannah's needs will continue to change as she enters junior high school next year where she is looking forward to the elevator and school dances and where the hallways will be filled with old and new friends rushing for the doors at the end of the day!

About the author: Nora is Hannah's mom, part-time special education teacher, and has recently begun working on the Idaho Assistive Technology Project.



Workshops by MAIL!

Staff members and volunteers of Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL) understand what busy lives parents lead - especially those parenting a child with a disability. They also understand the lack of resources in rural areas. Because of these issues IPUL is redefining “workshops”. In the past, workshops have been discussed as a “place” people go to get information. Now “workshops” are the “information” itself.

Workshops by Mail are available through your regional Parent Education Coordinator. Currently IPUL has ten curricula which are taught at various times and locations throughout the state. It is often difficult for parents to attend workshops in the evenings and on weekends. There are also times when families need the information quickly and can not wait for the next workshop to be offered. That is why the IPUL workshops are now available by request. When a parent requests a specific workshop, the Parent Education Coordinator in the parent’s area will send out a packet which will include a hard copy of the power point presentation, notes, and related materials. The parent will receive a follow-up call within two weeks to answer any questions and discuss any concerns. The parent will be asked to complete an evaluation form which will be included in the packet.

As in the past, workshops will continue to be held at various sites around the state. Parents should contact their regional Parent Education Coordinator for topics, sites and times. **Workshops by Mail** give families another way to gain information and support without the commitment of travel.

AVAILABLE WORKSHOPS:

1. IDEA and Special Education: A Parent’s Toolbox Learn the steps in the Special Education process along with the six guiding principles of IDEA.

2. Success with IEP (Individualized Education Program) Learn how to put this communication vehicle to work for your student. You’ll also learn how to write meaningful goals.

3. No Child Left Behind and Students with Disabilities This workshop discusses assessments, adequate yearly progress, and teacher qualifications.

4. Understanding ADHD Learn about the three types of ADHD as well as ideas for parents and teachers to help the student be more successful.

5. Is Your Child the Target of Bullying? Intervention Strategies for Parents of Children with Disabilities – Gain knowledge and strategies for the four types of bullying behavior.

6. From IFSP to IEP: Early Childhood Transition Prepare for transitioning from an Individualized Family Service Plan to an Individualized Education Plan at age three and learned the differences between the two.

7. Parent and Professional Collaboration: A Cultural Perspective Learn about cultural differences and values and what parents from different cultures want from professionals.

8. Positive Behavior Interventions Understand more about children’s behaviors, functional behavior assessments, and behavioral interventions.

9. Preparing for Life After High School This workshop is designed to prepare youth for transitioning into jobs. It includes helpful information to be considered in the IEP as part of the transition plan, which should occur by age 16.

10. Legal Life Planning After 18 This is an informative workshop for caregivers who have young adults who lack the ability to make informed decisions in one or more of the life areas.

RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, (NAMI) shares information through www.nami.org and is a partner with other leading mental health organizations in sponsoring a new Web site for the **latest information on Medicare's new prescription drug benefit**, especially for consumers without coverage or who currently receive prescriptions through Medicaid. Visit www.mentalhealthpartd.org. The new benefit started January 1, 2006 and means changes for many people receiving treatment for mental illnesses.

To help keep track of online information on **family involvement** the Harvard Family Research Project has compiled and categorized this body of information to make it easier to access and use. This resource guide contains web links to research, information, programs, and tools from over 100 national organizations. It provides information about parenting practices to support children's learning and development, home-school relationships, parent leadership development, and collective engagement for school improvement and reform.

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/guide/guide.html>

Idaho communities impacted by **serious emotional disturbances** (SED) have many questions:

- Families want to know how they can receive help for their children;
 - Community agencies and organizations want to know how to help
 - Concerned community members want to learn more
- SED includes behavioral and emotional disorders that are severe enough to interfere with a child's ability to function at home, school, or community. The new **Idaho System of Care** web site, www.idahosystemofcare.org seeks to answer some of these questions. It includes pages for:
- Families — Find a glossary of mental health terms, frequently asked questions, statewide contact information, and links to other sites;
 - Community Partners — Find an agency success story, contact information for the Idaho System of Care; and much more.
 - Spanish language information

Family Guide to Systems of Care for Children with Mental Health Needs, a guidebook from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is intended to help parents and caregivers seek help for children with mental health needs. Information is provided on what parents and caregivers need to know, ask, expect, and do to get the most out of their experience with systems of care.

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma%2D4054/>

School Mental Health Services in the United States, 2002–2003 is a report from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration that describes the first national **survey of mental health services** in the American public elementary, middle, and high schools. Topics examined include types of mental health problems common in school settings, services available, numbers and qualifications of school mental health services staff, provision for mental health services delivery (including partnerships with community-based providers), and funding sources.

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma05-4068/>

Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground: How Some High Schools Accelerate Learning for Struggling Students is a report from The Education Trust, that describes the findings of a study of the practices of public high schools that serve high concentrations of either low-income or minority children and have a strong track record of accelerating learning for students who enter high school below grade level.

<http://tinyurl.com/bx6yr>

The Power to Change: High Schools that Help All Students Achieve is a report from The Education Trust that chronicles the stories of three very different high schools that are getting strong results for minority students and students from low-income families.

<http://tinyurl.com/97ocf>

RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

Taking the Next Step: Helping Students with Disabilities Transition from High School to College

is a video with separate clips focusing on the roles of students, parents, and educators in the transition process. A text transcript of the video is also available. Developed by the North Dakota Rehabilitation and Consulting Services. <http://www.nd.gov/humanservices/business/rehabconsult/>

NICHCY, the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, has compiled **state resource sheets** to provide information about organizations and agencies within each state that address disability-related issues. These include state agencies serving children and youth with disabilities, state chapters of disability organizations and parent groups, parent training and information projects, and more. The sheets also list the official State Web site, contact information for Governors and U.S. Senators, and other useful associations and organizations.

<http://www.nichcy.org/states.htm>

Understanding Learning Disabilities, an article from District Administration magazine, provides an overview of learning disabilities, the IDEA definition of learning disabilities, information on useful classroom interventions for students with learning disabilities, and information on how districts can put research findings on effectively teaching students with learning disabilities into practice.

<http://www.districtadministration.com/page.cfm?p=1205>

The Inclusion Series is a series of programs to educate and inspire inclusive schools and communities. It is about individual children, families, and educators, and also about teamwork and support systems. These programs are designed to enable viewers to observe the challenges and rewards of inclusion in action, and provide ideas, solutions and inspiration. The programs were initially created in conjunction with the Illinois State Board of Education's Project CHOICES. To view excerpts, or to order go to www.inclusionseries.com

The Realities of Hiring People with Disabilities, a

document from Worksupport.com aims to dispel some common myths about employees with disabilities, describes some problems posed by individuals with disabilities' presence in the workplace and their solutions, and gives helpful hints for integrating employees with disabilities into the workplace.

<http://www.worksupport.com/research/viewContent.cfm/589>

Providing Employment Supports for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

is a webcast available 2:00-2:45 p.m. (EST) on April 11, 2006. This Webcast from Worksupport.com will focus on individualized job supports and ways to develop the employer relationship. Registration is required and a registration fee does apply.

<http://www.worksupport.com/training/webcastDetails.cfm/52>

The Evidence-Based Education Help Desk, established by the What Works Clearinghouse of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, provides practical, easy-to-use tools to 1) advance rigorous evaluations of educational interventions (i.e., programs, products, practices, and policies), and to 2) identify and implement evidence-based interventions. <http://whatworkshelpdesk.ed.gov/>

The Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas has moderated Web logs (or blogs) available for public reading and comment, one on **autism** written by Donna and Paul Smith and one on **head injury** written by Mark and Ben Ogle.

http://discuss.beachcenter.org/wb/default.asp?board_id=blogs



Born learners. Studies show babies are motivated to make sense of their world.

Pointers For Parents

Smart Ways To Help Children Learn

Research shows that children are born ready to learn and are naturally curious beings motivated to make sense of the world around them. In fact, the brain is the only organ that is not fully formed at birth.

(NAPS)—Few parents might imagine that when their baby first opens his eyes, he is actually preparing for his first day of school.

Research shows that children are born ready to learn and are naturally curious beings motivated to make sense of the world around them. In fact, the brain is the only organ that is not fully formed at birth.

Children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and when the learning is fun, according to Zero to Three.

Zero to Three offers suggestions for helping children develop skills to become eager learners:

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS

Language provides the foundation for the development of literacy skills.

- Talk together. Copy your baby's sounds and encourage her to imitate you. Point out and name the things you see together.
- Read books. It's never too early to start sharing books. Let him explore in

whatever way he likes—even if it's chewing on them or holding them upside down! Let your child hold the book and point to the pictures as you read.

THINKING SKILLS

Children are born eager to understand how the world works.

- Encourage your child to explore objects and toys in different ways. Touching, banging and shaking help children learn about how things work.
- Incorporate math games into your everyday routines. Count stairs as you climb them. Ask if there are enough crackers for everyone.

SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is the ability to express and manage emotions in appropriate ways. It is essential for school success and healthy development overall.

- Teach acceptable behaviors. Tell and show your child what he can do, not just what he cannot do. For example, tell him balls can be thrown outside but not inside.

- Give choices. Present him with acceptable options and let him choose. If a decision is really yours, don't offer a choice. Say, "It's bed time," not "Are you ready to go to bed?"

SELF-CONFIDENCE

When children feel competent and believe in themselves, they are more willing to take on new challenges.

- Establish routines with your child. Most children feel safe and in control of their world when events are predictable.
- Let your child be the problem-solver. Give her the support she needs to solve a problem but don't solve it for her.

MORE INFORMATION

Zero to Three is a nonprofit organization that promotes the healthy development of babies and toddlers. With funding from MetLife Foundation, the group has developed a booklet for parents called *Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth*. To download a copy or for additional information, visit www.zero-tothree.org.

Tax Benefits and Assistance

A recent article on the Schwab Learning website (www.schwablearning.org) explains that some families of children with various disabilities may qualify for tax deductions and tax credits.

First of all, tax deductions are amounts that are deducted from the taxable income. The value of a deduction is based on the marginal tax rate of the taxpayer. Tax credits are dollar-for-dollar deductions in tax liability. This means that the actual amount of taxes is reduced by the amount of the tax credit. Please see the Schwab Learning website or consult your tax preparer for additional information on this difference.

According to the Schwab Learning article, deductions are available for expenses in several areas:

- Medical Expenses including tuition costs for special school programs and tutoring by a specially-trained teacher. To qualify the child's doctor must recommend the special school, therapy, or tutoring and there must be a medical diagnosis of a neurological disorder made by a medical professional. This can include a severe learning disability.
- Transportation to the special school or tutor also qualifies for a medical expense deduction.
- Diagnostic evaluations also qualify for a medical expense deduction.
- Parents who attend conferences to obtain medical information concerning treatment for and care of their child may deduct some of the costs of attending a medical conference relating to a dependent's chronic health condition.
- The Child and Dependent Care Credit is allowed for work-related expenses incurred for dependents of the taxpayer. Generally the dependent must be under the age of 13, unless the child has a disability and requires supervision, in which case the age limit is waived.

For more detailed information please see the Schwab Learning website at:

www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r+1065

or on the website click Financial Issues and Taxes. There are also free IRS booklets by calling the IRS toll-free number (800) 829-3676.

Tax Preparation Help: The United Way Volunteer Center has recently announced that in two areas of the state the Coalition for Economic Improvement has opened free tax preparation sites as part of C.A.S.H. (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) project. The two Treasure Valley sites are in Ada County at 2717 Vista in Boise and in Canyon County at Karcher Mall, 1509 Caldwell Blvd., in Nampa. They are open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 2-9 p.m. and Saturdays 10-5 p.m. The sites will close Thursday, April 13.

ADAPTIVE RECREATION IN IDAHO

CWHOG can mean a world of things to anyone, but south-east Idaho, particularly Idaho State University, knows very well what CWHOG represents. Conceived in 1979 by Tom Whitaker, an outdoorsman and amputee, the "Cooperative Wilderness Handicapped Outdoor Group" (CWHOG), became official in 1981, and is presently comprised of 5 staff and hundreds of volunteers who will go anywhere to provide outdoor adventure activities for people with disabilities. They also offer physical education classes at ISU, and they indulge in all-important social events (mostly for fund-raising).

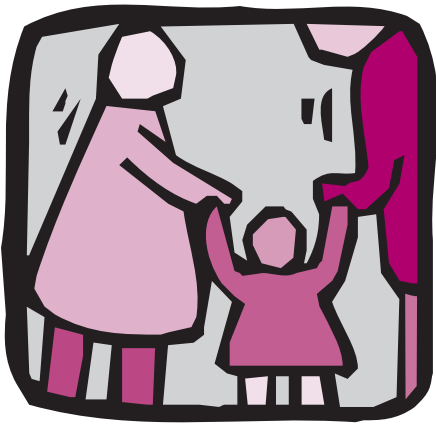
They will literally go anywhere to make sure a person with a disability enjoys an activity he/she is interested in. Anywhere you say! How about Mt. Everest? CWHOG helped the first wheel chairs to base camp, and put the first person with a disability on the summit! Yes, anywhere. Other activities, with a participation of over 800 people, include hang gliding, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, water skiing, sea kayaking, white water rafting, and on and on and on

Another amazing fact about this group is their budget. Thirty percent of the approximately \$150,000.00 per year comes from student fees and the other 70 percent from grants and fund raisers. CWHOG gets a lot done for almost nothing. What a well kept secret!

You can reach this organization at www.isu.edu/cwhog, or 208-282-3912. They work with schools, private organizations, and anyone with a disability who wants to have outdoor fun. The organization will be celebrating its 25th anniversary with a rafting run the full length of the Salmon River. Its annual SNO-BALL will be held February 25th, and will include dancing and a chili feed. Call for further information.

CWHOG is not the only organization of its kind in Idaho. We will be providing more information on these other organizations in our next issues:

- Recreation Unlimited in Boise (208) 672-1500
- The Sun Valley Adapted Sports Programs (208) 726-9298
- Camp Hope summer camp in McCall (208) 319-0760
- Wood River Ability Program (208) 377-6409
- Coeur D'Alene Accessible Sailing (208) 762-7110
- The Arc of Idaho – RAVE Program (208) 343-5583
- AWeSOMe! – Adaptive Wilderness Sport of McCall (208) 630-4205



The Idaho Federation of Families is a statewide, non-profit organization offering advocacy, education, information and referral, and parent-to-parent support groups for families of children and youth with emotional, behavioral or mental disorders (termed Severe Emotional Disturbance or SED).

The Idaho Federation participates in the annual Idaho Children's Mental Health Conference, to be held this year at Boise State University on May 1 and 2. Youth who have emotional disorders and families that have children who have emotional disorders are invited to attend. There is no registration fee and free child care is provided. Travel scholarships are also available for families.

The Federation and Eli Lilly & Company will sponsor the youth track at this year's conference. The young people will have an opportunity to learn about mental illnesses, coping, stigma,

THE IDAHO FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

and other issues. Materials will be provided to return to the schools so that absences will be excused.

The Federation will also sponsor a Family Night on Monday evening of the conference. This will include dinner, entertainment and awards. All families attending the conference are invited.

Also this year the Federation will be offering Sib Shops on Saturdays around the state. They will be for siblings, ages 8 to 14, who live with a brother or sister with any type of a disability. Older participants may attend as volunteer assistants. Contact Kathryn at the Federation office (800-905-3436 or 208-433-8845) or e-mail Kathryn@idahofederation.org.

The Federation has Family Support Specialists around the state. They are all parents of children who have emotional disorders. They offer advocacy, information and a ready hand, and also facilitate support groups. Call Family Support Specialists listed below for help or for information on the support groups which meet on the days listed:

Region I (Coeur d'Alene area) – Lisa Rivera, 208-704-9425 – 1st and 3rd Wednesdays in Athol and on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays in Coeur d'Alene.

Region II (Lewiston area) – recruiting for open position.

Region III (western Treasure Valley) – Barbara Hill, (208) 249-8431 – last Monday of the month.

Region IV (eastern Treasure Valley) – Nikki Tangen, (208) 713-2424 or Cheryl Meissner, (208) 938-6044 – last Thursday of the month.

Region V (Magic Valley area) -- selection in progress, no support group established yet.

Region VI (Pocatello area) – Patricia Green, (208) 604-1309 – last Tuesday of the month in Chubbuck, and First Tuesday of the month in American Falls.

Region VII (Idaho Falls area) – Kristi Howell, (208) 522-6160 – 2nd and 4th Monday.

Tribal Family Support Specialist Nancy Wahobin, (208) 935-7942, is establishing support groups on each of the Indian reservations in the state.

The Federation is currently recruiting adult family members and youth who have SED to take part in trainings, committees, boards and a Speakers' Bureau. Other volunteer opportunities are also available. Travel and honorariums may be provided.

Anyone wishing additional information about the Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the May CMH conference, or volunteer opportunities should call the office at 800-905-3436 or 208-433-8845 or visit the website at www.idahofederation.org

It is almost time for the IPUL banquet!

The banquet will be held in Boise on May 4, 2006. Please be thinking about nominations for the IPUL awards, which are given in four areas: outstanding individual, outstanding agency, outstanding parent and outstanding professional. Contact the IPUL office or fill out a nominating form on the IPUL website if you wish to nominate someone for an award. The winner from each category will be recognized during the banquet. Come join us to hear about the awards and programs, eat and have a great time! If you have any questions or wish to attend, please contact IPUL at 342-5884. Information will also be sent out via mail fliers.

VSA ARTS

PROMOTING THE CREATIVE POWER IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

For the past two years articles have appeared in the IPUL newsletter about VSA arts of Idaho. The following article helps to define the program and explain why it is important to people with disabilities.

Part of the mission of VSA arts is to educate the public about people with disabilities by illustrating the valuable contributions they make to our communities. It is through such education that information is exchanged, curiosity is satisfied, and ignorance and fear subside. The results are true recognition, appreciation and inclusion of diverse individuals in our society. Through art exhibitions at VSA arts galleries, educational symposia, publications and public awareness tools, VSA arts provides information and resources on the arts, disability and culture.

VSA arts believes that the arts play a vital role in the lives of all people. The arts give us a universal language through which we enhance education, communicate experiences and unite diverse cultures. VSA arts serves to communicate the power of the arts as a means to develop learning skills, encourage independence, promote inclusion and positively shape the lives of people with disabilities.

THE VALUE OF THE ARTS IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

From the beginning of a child's education to the time when he or she becomes an adult and pursues a career, studies have shown that the arts enhance both personal and academic success. Studies published in the Journal of Research in Music Education report that elementary school students who participate in music programs score higher in reading, mathematics, language and overall achievement tests. Recent reports from The College Board indicate that students who study the arts in high school earn higher S.A.T. scores. And the National Arts Education Center reports that students who participate in studio art courses improve their writing and vocabulary skills. All of these findings underscore the value of the arts in positively shaping the lives of all people.

This value is evident when we look at one of the largest segments of our population—people with disabilities. For hundreds of years, people with disabilities have fought negative images and stereotypes, and have often been denied equal opportunity within communities worldwide. Now, through the arts, people with disabilities are breaking new ground. For people with disabilities, the arts represent a world of resources and opportunities, providing an outlet for creative expression and unlimited possibilities for personal, academic and professional success. And, because art is an infinite and unconditional field, people with disabilities are free to express themselves without physical, social or attitudinal barriers.

Marcel Proust wrote: "Only through art can we emerge from ourselves and know what another person sees." When

we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities. For a person who cannot speak, a dance performance may clearly communicate even the most complicated message. For a person with a mental disability who cannot communicate effectively through words, a painting rich with color and life may say more than verbal sentences ever could. And, for a person who has limited mobility, a song sung with emotion and spirit may elicit movement toward a state of clarity and joy. By engaging in the arts, people with disabilities are able to contribute to our workplaces and communities, help extinguish old stereotypes regarding disability, and create a global culture truly representative of all people.

NEW BOOK URGES PUBLIC TO VIEW ARTS AS WAY TO IMPROVE ACHIEVEMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR 'STRUGGLING' STUDENTS

The American education system is at a crossroads, and a new movement is emerging where parents are demanding a different kind of school for their children. *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, a new book based on a recent Arts Education Partnership, urges policy makers and educators to look to the arts as a powerful way to create vibrant learning communities that improve student achievement in all schools, particularly those struggling to improve academic performance.

Third Space is especially relevant to VSA arts and the people that we reach. In the ten schools that were the focus of the AEP study, over 20 percent of the student population, on average, were special education students. In at least two of the schools, special education students comprised over 25 percent of the student body. These numbers underscore the significance of the findings for students with disabilities, their families, and the education systems that serve them.

It is in this metaphorical "third space" created by the arts that students with disabilities, in particular, can more easily access inclusive learning environments and benefit from them. It's important that the *Third Space* message reaches parents and others who decide the future of our schools.

To learn more about *Third Space: When Learning Matters* including news articles, how to order a copy of the book, and other information, please visit the Arts Education Partnership Web site at <http://www.aep-arts.org/ThirdSpacehome.htm>.

This information was provided by the National office of VSA arts. For more information about VSA arts of Idaho programs please contact IPUL.

New Staff Member

We are happy to have Betty Maguire rejoin us as a member of our team. She holds the position of State Improvement Grant Coordinator. Idaho Parents Unlimited is collaborating with the State Department of Education on the State Improvement Grant. Activities under this grant will include the Parent Leadership Development Program, the development of a "Transition Packet" of information to assist parents and young adults in negotiating the transition from school to post school, trainings for staff, and the eventual development of a web based training system for our workshops. Betty will also continue to assemble the IPUL newsletter, the Parent Network.

Welcome "back" Betty!

Upcoming Trainings or Conferences

Bureau of Education and Research presents: **Practical Strategies for Working with Students with Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism** (Grades K-12) in Boise March 9, 8:30am-3:15pm, \$179, 1-800-735-3503 www.ber.org

Idaho State Department of Education, Princeton Autism Technology, and Idaho Department of Health and Welfare present **Idaho Autism Education Conference** – March 10 8:30am – 4:30pm will be held at BSU, Special Events Center and select Telehealth teleconference sites including Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Twin Falls, Pocatello and Moscow. cpdinfo@boisestate.edu/courses/autism.html

The Parent Project, sponsored by Drug Free Idaho and PAYADA, will be holding a parenting skills program **to help parents prevent and intervene in the most destructive of adolescent behaviors.** Starts Feb 21st and continues on Tuesday nights from 6-9pm at West Jr. High, in Boise. \$25 includes workbook. Teresa Kirkmire 373-5455 or tkirkmire@cityofboise.org (This workshop is not specifically for those with disabilities, but should be helpful for all.)

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MONOPOLY TOURNAMENT!



Presented by Qwest as a fundraiser for
Co-Ad, Inc. and supported by Wells Fargo

April 26, 2006 • 3:00 to 8:00 PM

Owyhee Plaza Hotel Boise

\$30 per player or \$150 for 6 player table

Test your real estate skills in this fun event while helping Idahoans with disabilities.

One preliminary round of the MONOPOLY game will be played to determine six finalists
A final round will decide the tournament winner

For more information, contact Co-Ad at (208) 336-5353.

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This newsletter is also available in Spanish, by calling the IPUL office.

Our Mission

*Idaho Parents Unlimited, Inc. supports, empowers,
educates and advocates to enhance the quality of life
for Idahoans with disabilities and their families.*