



of Northeast Louisiana, Inc.
5200 Northeast Road
Monroe, LA 71203

info@fhfnela.org www.fhfnela.org

Newsletter

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Hidden Logo Contest

For those of you who are receiving your first newsletter or for those who have forgotten about the contest, here are the rules. Hidden somewhere within the pages is the Families Helping Families house logo. All you have to do is find the little house and call or send an email telling us where you found the logo. The one in the masthead at the top of this page is NOT IT!! Two (2) weeks after we mail the newsletter, we'll draw from all the entries. The winner will receive a WalMart gift card and will be acknowledged in the next quarter's publication. So good luck and good reading!

7 Things You Don't Know About A Parent of a Child with Special Needs

By Maria Lin

About 6 million kids in America receive special education, according to the U.S. Department of Education. One out of every 10 children under the age of 14 has some type of special need, which includes any physical, cognitive, or medical disability, or chronic or life-threatening illness.

My 3-year-old son Jacob is one of them.

He has a disorder of the 18th Chromosome. The 18th Chromosome has various named disorders, including Ring 18 and the more well-known Trisomy 18 (which affects Rick Santorum's daughter, Bella). My son has the more rare 18q-. Only 1 in 40,000 Americans have Chromosome 18q-, which means that less than 7,800 Americans are affected by this disorder.

Because of this disorder, Jacob has had serious medical and developmental issues. He has had heart surgery, kidney tract surgery, bronchoscopies and endoscopies, slept with an oxygen tube, and has had dozens of medical tests and sees numerous specialists. We've been in and out of hospitals and doctors' offices since he was three months old. He also has severe developmental delays and receives speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and behavioral therapy.

Raising a child with any disorder, condition or special need, is both a blessing and a challenge. A challenge for the obvious reasons, and a blessing because you don't know the depths of victory and joy until you see your child overcoming some of those challenges (sometimes while smiling like a goofy bear).

Chances are that you know a parent who has a child with special needs, or you may be one yourself. As a parent, I often don't share my feelings on this aspect of my life, even with my closest friends, so I decided to compile a list here with the goal of building understanding. I don't claim to speak for every special needs parent out there, but from the ones I know, some of these are pretty universal. If I've missed any, please leave a comment below.

1. I am tired. Parenting is already an exhausting endeavor. But parenting a child with special needs takes things to another level of fatigue. Even if I've gotten a good night's sleep, or have had some time off, there is a level of emotional and physical tiredness that is always there, that simply comes from the weight of tending to those needs. Hospital and doctors' visits are not just a few times a year, they may be a few times a month. Therapies may be daily. Paperwork and bills stack up, spare time is spent researching new treatments, positioning him to sit a certain way, advocating for him in the medical and educational system. This is not to mention the emotional toll of raising a child with special needs, since the peaks and valleys seem so much more extreme for us. I am always appreciative of any amount of grace or help from friends to make my life easier, no matter how small, from arranging plans around my schedule and location, to watching my son while I am eating.

2. I am jealous. It's a hard one for me to come out and say, but it's true. When I see a 1-year-old baby do what my son can't at 4 years-old (like walk), I feel a pang of jealousy. It hurts when I see my son struggling so hard to learn to do something that comes naturally to a typical kid, like chewing or pointing. It can be hard to hear about the accomplishments of my friend's kids. Sometimes, I just mourn inside for Jacob, "It's not fair." Weirdly enough, I can even feel jealous of other kids with special needs who seem to have an easier time than Jacob, or who have certain disorders like Downs, or autism, which are more mainstream and understood by the public, and seem to offer more support and resources than Jacob's rare condition. It sounds petty, and it doesn't diminish all my joy and pride in my son's accomplishments. But often it's very hard for me to be around typical kids with him. Which leads me to the next point...

3. I feel alone. It's lonely parenting a child with special needs. I can feel like an outsider around moms of typical kids. While I want to be happy for them, I feel terrible hearing them brag about how their 2-year-old has 100 words, or already knows their ABCs (or hey, even poops in the potty). Good for them, but it's so not what my world looks like (check out Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid). It's been a sanity saver to connect with other special needs moms, with whom it's not uncomfortable or shocking to swap stories about medications, feeding tubes, communication devices and therapies. Even within this community, though, there is such variation in how every child is affected. Only I understand Jacob's unique makeup and challenges. With this honor of caring for him comes the solitude of the role. I often feel really lonely in raising him.

4. I am scared. I worry that I'm not doing enough. What if I missed a treatment or a diagnosis and that window of optimal time to treat it has passed? I worry about Jacob's future, whether he will ever drive a car, or get married, or live independently. I am scared thinking of the hurts he will experience being "different" in what's often a harsh world (not to mention that I fear for the physical safety of the person who inflicts any hurt upon my son). I am scared about finances. Finally, I fear what will happen to Jacob if anything were to happen to me. In spite of this, my fears have subsided greatly over the years because of my faith, and because of exposure to other kids, teenagers, and adults affected with Jacob's disorder. When I met some of these amazing people at a conference last year, the sadness and despair that I was projecting onto Jacob's future life (because it was so unknown) melted away when I saw the love and thriving that was a reality in their lives. The fear of emotional pain (for both me and Jacob) is probably the one that remains the most.

5. I wish you would stop saying, "retarded," "short bus," "as long as it's healthy..." I know people usually don't mean to be rude by these comments, and I probably made them myself before Jacob. But now whenever I hear them, I feel a pang of hurt. Please stop saying these things. It's disrespectful and hurtful to those who love and raise the kids you're mocking (not to mention the kids themselves). As for the last comment, "as long as it's healthy," I hear a lot of pregnant women say this. Don't get me wrong, I understand and share their wishes for healthy babies in every birth, but it's become such a thoughtless mantra during pregnancy that it can feel like a wish against what my son is. "And what if it's not healthy?" I want to ask. (My response: you will be OK. You and your child will still have a great, great life.)

6. I am human. I have been challenged and pushed beyond my limits in raising my son. I've grown tremendously as a person, and developed a soft heart and empathy for others in a way I never would have without him. But I'm just like the next mom in some ways. Sometimes I get cranky, my son irritates me, and sometimes I just want to flee to the spa or go shopping (and, um, I often do). I still have dreams and aspirations of my own. I travel, dance, am working on a novel, love good food, talk about dating. I watch *Mad Men*, and like a good cashmere sweater. Sometimes it's nice to escape and talk

about all these other things. And if it seems that the rest of my life is all I talk about sometimes, it's because it can be hard to talk about my son. Which leads me to the final point...

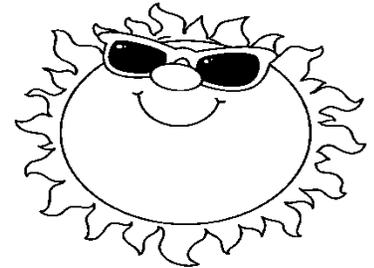
7. I want to talk about my son/It's hard to talk about my son. My son is the most awe-inspiring thing to happen to my life. Some days I want to shout from the top of the Empire State Building how funny and cute he is, or how he accomplished something in school (he was recently voted class president!). Sometimes, when I'm having a rough day, or have been made aware of yet another health or developmental issue, I might not say much. I don't often share with others, even close friends and family, the depths of what I go through when it comes to Jacob. But it doesn't mean that I don't want to learn how to share our life with others. One thing I always appreciate is whenever people ask me a more specific question about my son, like "How did Jacob like the zoo?" or "How's Jacob's sign language coming along?" rather than a more generalized "How's Jacob?" which can make me feel so overwhelmed that I usually just respond, "Good." Starting with the small things gives me a chance to start sharing. And if I'm not sharing, don't think that there isn't a lot going on underneath, or that I don't want to.

Raising a child with special needs has changed my life. I was raised in a family that valued performance and perfection above all else, and unconsciously I'd come to judge myself and others through this lens. Nothing breaks this lens more than having a sweet, innocent child who is born with impairments that make ordinary living and ordinary "performance" difficult or even impossible.

It has helped me understand that true love is meeting someone (child or adult, special needs or not) exactly where he or she is -- no matter how they stack up against what "should be." Raising a child with special needs shatters all the "should bes" that we idolize and build our lives around, and puts something else at the core: love and understanding. So maybe that leads me to the last thing you don't know about a parent of a child with special needs... I may have it tough, but in many ways I feel really blessed.

Summertime Fun

*Julie Folse, Program Supervisor
Louisiana Family to Family Health Information Center*



With the summer months almost upon us we are all looking for ways to keep our children active and from hearing the dreaded words "I'm bored". But parents of children with disabilities have to put forth extra effort to find things for their children to do. Children with disabilities require activities that will meet their specific needs or limitations but will also stimulate them while being fun. There are several fun activities you can do that can help build motor skills and learning skills but also include siblings or friends.

Bunny Catch (A twist on the classic Hot Potato game)

Gather children into a circle for this game, which involves balls in two different sizes, one larger and one smaller. The bunny is the small ball, and the children should pass it from one child to the next in the circle. When the bunny gets halfway around the circle, introduce the larger ball, or the farmer. The farmer should start in the same direction, but can change directions as needed. The bunny ball only travels in the same direction. The goal of the game is for the farmer to try to catch the bunny, and for the bunny to try to get away.

Read more: http://www.ehow.com/list_6329522_games-kids-disabilities.html#ixzz2yxnc1oR

What Is It?

Put different items with various textures into individual bags, such as soap, a stick of gum, a candle, tissue, a leaf or a sock. Sit all of the children down in a circle and pass out the bags. Each child should reach into a bag and guess what they are holding. If they guess incorrectly, they are out of the game. Pass the bags around from player to player until only one child remains, and this is the winner of the game.

Read more: http://www.ehow.com/list_6329522_games-kids-disabilities.html#ixzz2yxoc4qqK

Sticker Story

Layout several sheets of stickers that include various themes and shapes and a blank sheet of paper with two to three lines drawn on it. Then have your child tell a story using only the stickers on the paper provided. Then have you try to figure out what the story is about based on the stickers they used.

Rock painting

Have your child pick several rocks from around your home. Then have your child paint and decorate the rocks. What a fun idea!!

Scavenger Hunt

Make a list of random things in or outside your home and see how many your child or group can find. This is a fun game that uses things already in your home and can involve hours of play!

Depending on your child's abilities and personality, different activities may or may not be the best for them. Sometimes the simplest and easiest ideas work the best. These were just a few ideas of simple and easy things you can do. Remember be creative and have fun!!

Julie Folse is the mother to 6 year old Alivia and 4 year old James. James is diagnosed with Tetralogy of Fallot, Hypospadias, Imperforated Anus, and Speech Delay. For more information on Family to Family Health Information Center, Family Voices, and health information for children with disabilities please contact Julie at f2fhic@gmail.com or 985-447-4461.



Early Intervention Services

EarlySteps provides services to families with infants and toddlers aged birth to three years (36 months) who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. Children with delays in cognitive, motor, vision, hearing, communication, social-emotional or adaptive development may be eligible for services. EarlySteps services are designed to improve the family's capacity to enhance their child's development. These services are provided in the child's natural environment, such as the child's home, child care or any other community setting typical for children aged birth to 3 years (36 months).

Services the EarlySteps program provides include:

- Assistive technology
- Audiology
- Health Services (family education, assistance with other EarlySteps services only)
- Medical Services (evaluation only)
- Nutrition Services
- Occupational Therapy Services
- Physical Therapy Services
- Psychological Services
- Service Coordination
- Social Work Services
- Special Instruction
- Speech Language Pathology
- Translation Interpreter Services (foreign language and sign language)
- Transportation (to and from an EarlySteps service only)
- Vision Services

If you or someone you know could use more information about Louisiana's Early Intervention program, please call our Region 8 Community Outreach Coordinator, **Lorri S. Chipman** at 318.361.0487 or call **Patrina Weems** at 318.322.4788. We would love to help you get connected with EarlySteps and help change a child's future.



WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards are fundamental descriptions of reading, writing, and math skills that focus on the ability to think independently. Here are two examples of these descriptions:

- **3rd grade math:** Tell and write time to the nearest minute and measure time intervals in minutes. Solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of time intervals in minutes.
- **5th grade reading:** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text

Why do we need standards?

Louisiana has had standards for years. Standards ensure that at each grade level students learn the minimum skills necessary to be ready for the next grade and ultimately for college or a professional career. Because more than forty states have adopted these standards, the Common Core State Standards allow Louisiana families to see how students perform compared to students across the U.S.

Why did Louisiana adopt these standards?

Louisiana students are just as capable as any other group of students across our country or in the world, but they are lagging behind their peers. Louisiana students rank 44th and 46th amongst states in English language arts and math, respectively. We must level the playing field for our kids so they can compete in our ever changing global economy. The Common Core State Standards hold students across the country to the same high bar and allow Louisiana students to see how they perform compared to students across America. Instead of teaching students shortcuts and measuring their learning with bubble tests, these standards require independent thinking to solve problems- much like the demands of the American workforce..

Who created these standards?

States, not the federal government, led the creation of these standards. Governors and local leaders asked educators, content experts, university professors, and business leaders from across the nation, including many individuals from Louisiana, to help develop the Common Core State Standards.

Are these standards research based?

Yes, *the* Common Core State Standards were developed based on a large and growing body of evidence. The writers of the standards used scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college-and career-ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

In English language arts, the standards build on the foundation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks in reading and writing, which also draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence. In mathematics, the standards draw on conclusions from studies of high-performing countries such as Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Are these standards more rigorous than previous Louisiana standards?

Yes, these standards are more rigorous than those previously used in Louisiana. Before adopting these standards, Louisiana students were learning material that was sometimes even a full year behind several high-performing states. The table below illustrates one reading concept as it was represented in the old standards compared to how it is represented in the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standard asks students to engage in independent thinking skills such as comparing and contrasting and analyzing characters.

GRADE 4 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Louisiana Grade Level Expectations Reading & Responding, Standard 1

5. Identify a variety of story elements, including:

- the impact of setting on character
- multiple conflicts
- first- and third-person points of view
- development of theme (ELA-1-E4)

Common Core State Standards *Literature: Key Ideas & Details*

2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

3. Describe the depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Literature: Craft & Structure

6. Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

When did Louisiana adopt these standards and who was a part of the process?

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted to adopt the Common Core State Standards in 2010. The Board sought input from local education groups, and the 10 groups listed below all endorsed the adoption of the standards. Each of these groups called on its membership to provide input on the content and adoption of the standards. BESE also received public comment from families and community members across our state.

Louisiana School Boards Association
Louisiana Association of Educators
Louisiana Federation of Teachers

Louisiana Superintendents
Louisiana Council of Teachers of English
Louisiana Association of Teachers of Mathematics

Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana
Louisiana Association of Principals

English Standards Review Committee
Math Standards Review Committee

When will Louisiana teachers start teaching the Common Core State Standards?

Louisiana educators are already instructing students based on the new standards, and teachers have been preparing for the new standards for several years. This year's [LEAP and iLEAP assessments](#) are fully aligned to the new expectations and are not aligned to the old LEAP standards. As a result, Louisiana teachers are already teaching to this new level of rigor and are making choices to adjust their instruction in ways that fit their students' needs.

Are standards and curriculum the same thing?

No, standards are the basic descriptors of what students are expected to learn at each grade level. A curriculum is how the standards are taught. A curriculum includes the set of textbooks, worksheets, workbooks and other materials a teacher uses to teach the standards. In Louisiana, while the state provides guidance, districts choose curriculum. The state does not mandate any specific curriculum.

Does the state dictate what textbooks teachers use and what they teach every day?

No. School districts decide what textbooks to use and what is taught every day. Local authorities have the ability to choose the curriculum which is what guides teachers on their daily instruction. As part of choosing their curricula, districts choose which textbooks to use in their schools.

What does math teaching look like when teachers use the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards require students to find real and exact answers to problems. In addition to finding the exact answer, students are expected to be able to explain why that answer is correct. Often students learn

shortcuts to math problems. They often are then not able to apply these same shortcuts to more complex, real world problems. The new standards develop the ability to think independently rather than relying on shortcuts.

What does English language arts instruction look like?

The Common Core State Standards require students to:

- a. Read increasingly difficult books and articles, including fiction and non-fiction
- b. Research, analyze, and present ideas
- c. Develop arguments grounded in evidence and communicate them in writing

This means students don't just memorize facts and answer multiple choice questions on bubble tests; instead, they are asked to read and write starting in elementary school all the way through high school.

Does my child's personal information, like test scores or social security numbers, go into a national database because of Louisiana's participation in Common Core?

No, there is not and will not be a national database created to store personal student information. Louisiana is committed to protecting the privacy of students, and all personal student information is protected by Louisiana and federal law. School districts, for many years, have kept basic data —home address, academic transcript information, historical test performance, and special education needs – on each of their students in order to ensure they are best serving students. Districts will continue to collect and store these basic pieces of information just as they always have.

Will standardized tests in Louisiana be more expensive because of the Common Core?

No, any changes in the tests students will take will cost the state approximately the **same amount** as the current set of tests. The state currently spends approximately \$30 per student for standardized testing, and this amount will not increase.

Will fewer students "pass" the new standardized tests?

No. Currently, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides the standard for how we score the LEAP. The NAEP also provides the standard for how the new assessment, PARCC, will be scored. Thus, the percentage of students scoring at Louisiana's "passing" level should be similar to the percentage of students "passing" PARCC.

Which Louisiana groups support the Common Core State Standards today?

Groups across Louisiana support the shift to more rigorous standards including the Council for A Better Louisiana (CABL), Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI), ExxonMobil, Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance and many more. Visit the Department's website for a more comprehensive list.

Family Overcomes an Emotional Struggle with Dyslexia

Debbie Salazar has had both struggles and success with the educational system over the past few years in seeking academic support for her 8-year-old son, **Josh**, who has dyslexia. Now in the second grade, Josh is doing much better, but their journey began with a rocky start. Debbie and her husband caught the signs early, noticing in kindergarten that they had to repeat instructions to Josh and that he would often seem confused.



"I approached the school but they discounted my concerns," Debbie explains. They told me, 'He's just being a boy, he'll catch up.' When he entered first grade I was really worried, so we started him with regular tutoring. It helped, but just enough to keep him from failing."

While many schools across the country are accommodating to students who learn differently, too many still fail to recognize dyslexia as a learning issue that is legally required to be supported.

“I requested that Josh be tested for dyslexia, but they replied, ‘We don’t test for dyslexia.’” Debbie, aware of her parental rights, persisted and eventually the school agreed to administer the test. At the same time, the demands of school were increasing for Josh, particularly when it came to reading.

“One day I was helping in the classroom and there was a test that went horribly wrong. Up until that point, the kids could be read to, but for this test they couldn’t get any help and it was timed. Josh was looking up at me with panic and despair in his eyes. Finally, I approached the teacher and said, ‘I’m not going to subject him to this. We’re not going to do it.’”

The stress brought on by the timed reading tests and other scenarios at school began to take an emotional toll on Josh.

“He’s usually a very happy, glass-half-full child,” Debbie says.

“But one day we went to a trampoline center and Josh just seemed miserable. He literally crawled into the furthest, darkest corner of the play gym and cried the entire time. I thought, ‘This is not Josh.’ Later that evening at dinner we found out that he was distraught over his in-class reading tests.”

Josh’s school grew increasingly adversarial in its responses to Debbie’s requests for dyslexia testing and accommodations.

“At one point the school sent a police officer to our house because I had snapped a picture of Josh, as I often did, while volunteering in his classroom. It had never been an issue before. I thought, ‘This is insane. If they’ll send the police to our door, where does it end?’”

Deciding it would be best to try to de-escalate the situation, Debbie and her husband went to the principal’s office to explain that they did not want a contentious relationship with the school. Their efforts had little effect.

“Throughout the whole experience I had been consumed with fear and worry. I started to question myself: ‘Is nothing wrong? Am I doing all this to my family for no reason?’”

Soon after, Debbie discovered the parent-led advocacy group Decoding Dyslexia, which she later became highly involved with in her home state of California, and finally found hope. Unfortunately, once the results for Josh’s dyslexia test came back, the response was not what Debbie had hoped for.

“The school found significant discrepancies but wouldn’t call it dyslexia and wouldn’t qualify him for any accommodations. At that point we knew we didn’t want to return to that school.”

The Salazars decided to send Josh to a private school, which turned out to be an exceptional fit.

“They use multisensory teaching and a lot of the staff are trained in dyslexia-appropriate reading programs. Josh has completely rebounded emotionally and has a really positive attitude now. In a way, he’s proud of his dyslexia!”

Josh also started using assistive technology, including audiobooks from Learning Ally.

“A good story can take you to another world, but the books that suit Josh’s interest level, like *Percy Jackson*, are well beyond his sight-reading skill level. If he were forced to read books that were at his skill level, he would be bored. So to give him access to audiobooks is indescribable.”

Debbie’s advice to other parents who are in the process of getting their child identified or accommodated: “Consult an advocate, whether a local volunteer, private advocate, or one of Learning Ally’s parent support specialists. Be persistent, but respectful. Keep records of everything. Remember that knowledge empowers you. You just have to think of your child, pull up your sleeves and face it.”

To the Mother of the Adult Son With Down Syndrome in the Grocery Store Today

By Lara Lakes

Dear Mother,

I saw you as we were all on our way to check out. I noticed your son instantly. Big cowboy hat, American flag vest, short stature, almond-shaped eyes. Down syndrome. I almost followed you into your line, but that seemed like stalking, so I spied the lengths of the other lines first, only joining yours when it was the shortest.

I was alone, stopping for a few necessities on my way home from work. I thought about saying something to you. But I stopped myself. Your son is so much older. You've been on this road a long time. Maybe you're tired of it all. Maybe you don't want to engage with a fresh-faced newbie like me.

Worse, maybe you're resentful of this life you are forced to lead. You are of retirement age. Your friends are probably snowbirds who get to travel at will while you stay behind caring for a child who, in other circumstances, would have left the nest years ago. Maybe you wish you had more freedom at this stage of your life. Maybe if I talked to you, I'd come away discouraged. I'm feeling a little raw right now. I've heard too many naysayers tell me how cute they are now, but just wait...

So I stayed quiet. And watched.

I saw your son point to the gum and say something to your husband, who seemed genuinely interested and continued the conversation before putting a protective arm around his shoulders. I watched as he smiled when he listened to him. I saw you laugh as you added your two cents to the conversation.

I decided then that maybe you were safe to approach, but I didn't know how.

You smiled at me as I unloaded my cart, but still I didn't know what to say.

When a woman talked to your son about his hat, I pounced.

"Is he a magnet for attention?" I asked you.

You smiled and responded that he is and that he fancies himself Tim McGraw. I grinned and mentioned that I, too, noticed his awesome hat.

Then I plunged ahead.

"I have two boys with Down syndrome, too. Five and four. They're attention magnets, as well."

You looked surprised and murmured, "How wonderful," but then looked away like you were trying to decide if you'd really heard me. Looking up again you clarified, "You have two boys...?"

"With Down syndrome, yes," I finished for you. "One homegrown and one adopted from Serbia."

Then you smiled broadly, and said conspiratorially, "They're really a lot of fun aren't they?" Before I had a chance to respond, you turned to fill your husband and son in on all you'd learned about me.

We exchanged some other pleasantries as you finished your transaction and bid each other a good day.

I bumped into you again outside at the cart corral and I felt then, as I did inside, that our brief interlude was filled with pregnant pauses as we were each searching for what we *really* wanted to communicate in the confines of social pleasantries with a stranger.

I drove away thinking that I'd blown it.

Because if I could do it again, dear mother, I would not hesitate to thank you.

I would thank you for paving the road for my boys.

I am not the best judge of ages, but I imagine it's safe to assume that when your son was born, at least one professional told you he'd be better off in an institution. It was a suggestion you clearly did not choose to follow. Thank you for that. Because of mothers like you, I didn't have to fight that battle from my own hospital bed.

Thank you for being a warrior mom who learned to ignore the stares and whispers and who proudly shares her boy with the world. You are changing hearts and minds in your clear love and acceptance of him. He is changing hearts and minds just by *being*. Because of both of you, acceptance of my boys comes just a bit easier for others.

Thank you for letting him have his own style, for encouraging his passion, for letting him shine in his cowboy hat and rocking vest. He's making people smile. And in so doing, without realizing it, he's being an advocate for my boys, too.

Thank you for any part you played, no matter how small, in the enactment of, or amendments to [the](#) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. While we continue to fight for a quality education for our children at every IEP meeting, we don't have to fight for them to be educated at all or to attend school in the first place because of parents like you.

Thank you for walking this road when you probably felt unbelievably alone, before the support of social media, before Google, before WebMD. Thank you for standing up for the rights of your child, for challenging the status quo, for following your mother's heart.

In short, it sounds ridiculous to say, which is probably why I didn't, but thank you for loving your son. In accepting, raising, being proud of and loving him, you not only paved the way for him, you paved the way for me.

I am grateful.

And yes, they really *are* a lot of fun!

Tidbits from Children's Special Health Services

By Evelyn Jackson



During the winter and spring of 2014, things were very busy at Children's Special Health Services. Thanks to the professional staff, doctors, and community partners, the patients and families who attended clinics at Children's Special Health Services, not only received excellent medical care, but also received outstanding community services.

Happy Bears' Book Nook, an icon at Children's Special Health Services Region 8, is well established because of the generous donations of children's books by Mrs. Aliscia Banks, Mrs. Fae Moulle' and Ms. Laura Nettles of Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana (FHFNELA), Mrs. Patricia Carter of the Northeast Louisiana Cancer Society, and Mrs. Alice Profitt of the Living Well Foundation. This Book Nook is not only a recreational outlet, but also an academic tool for the young patients of Children's Special Health Services.

Mr. Wes Cavin, of Med-Camps of Louisiana, paid several visits to Children's Special Health Services. He brought brochures, applications, and camp schedules. During one of his visits, Mr. Cavin wowed the clinic attendees with his charismatic presentation and genuine concern for children who have disabilities. Med Camps is truly a "light" in our community.

The student nurses of ULM, under the leadership Mrs. Sherlyn Wiggins, and Mrs. Judy Hughes, made two visits to Children's Special Health Services. They helped to promote "Well Ahead," the healthy living theme adopted by DHH of Louisiana. The student nurses and their teachers interacted with the clinic attendees, made posters on ways to stay healthy, demonstrated correct hand washing techniques, and played games. Healthy eating information sheets and recipe books were disseminated to patients and their parents. Some of these sheets were left on the Children's Special Health Services information tables for other clinic visitors.

In the month of April, Children's Special Health Services participated in the Morehouse Parish School System's Transition Fair. The Children's Special Health Services staff member was accompanied by a community volunteer, Mrs. Gloria Harris of Faith Hope, and Love Fellowship Church. She was such a blessing! Recently Family Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, represented by Mrs. Thelma Scott, and Children's Special Health Services participated in the Monroe City Employees' Health Fair. A display board was set up, information was shared, and promotional items were disseminated. Both events were well attended.

Plans are in the making for other community agencies, such as Parents As Teachers (PAT), to visit Children's Special Health Services. Collaboration among community agencies makes our community a productive environment. After all, "we are all in this together!"

New Staff at Families Helping Families

My name is Erica Hales and I am the new Bookkeeper. I am 24 years old and I reside in Holly Ridge, LA with my husband, Frank and our 1 year old daughter, Braelyn. We attend Dunn Church of God in Dunn, LA. I began working in accounting while assisting the Accountant at Park Place Baptist Church in Pearl, MS for many years. Later, I became the Director of Administration and Manager of Operations for Revolution Park Racing and Entertainment Complex. I feel that these positions give me the knowledge and skills that are required to join this team. I look forward to working with the staff here at Families Helping Families because I feel that we are making a difference in the life of individuals in a real, hands on way. Thank you for taking the time to get to know a little bit about me and I hope that I can get to know all of you.



My name is Denay Hooks and I am the new LaTEACH Regional Team Leader for Region 8. My family and I moved to Monroe from Texas a few years ago where I was a First Grade teacher. I have two beautiful children – Hudson is almost 5, and Hannah is 2. Hannah was diagnosed with Rett Syndrome in December of 2013.

I am very excited for this opportunity to work with Families Helping Families.

I am looking forward to helping LaTEACH promote appropriate, inclusive education for all students.



Fae's Farewell

For the past nine (9) years, it has been my honor and privilege to work with the staff at Families Helping Families. I appreciate all the opportunities Families Helping Families has given me to meet so many wonderful people and to be challenged to try new things.

I wish all the best for the staff and the families that Families Helping Families serves. I know I will miss all of you so very much.

Fae Moulle'

Editor's Note:

After reading Fae's farewell, I felt compelled to add a few remarks. Fae and I met at a support group meeting some twenty-seven (27) years ago. Might I say that she has been a good friend, an inspiration, and a source of strength for me throughout this life changing experience of raising a child/young man with disabilities. She will be sorely missed by the entire staff who has grown to love her as I have.

*Sincerely,
Aliscia*



Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, Inc.
5200 Northeast Road
Monroe, LA 71203

A Message from LaCAN:

Monday, June 2nd, marked the end of the 2014 Legislative Session. The Louisiana Legislature passed the budget (HB1) with funding for all the items on LaCAN's advocacy agenda!!!

Current State General Funding includes:

- \$12.1 Million to fill vacant waiver slots (for people with disabilities and the elderly) and create 200 additional New Opportunities Waiver (NOW) slots
- \$1.1 Million restored to the Individual and Family Support Program in the three lowest-funded areas of the state (Capital Area, Acadiana, and Florida Parishes)
- \$170,000 restored to nine Families Helping Families Centers across the state
- \$765,000 restored to La Rehabilitation Services

HB1 will now move to the Governor for his signature. He can sign the bill as is or make line item vetoes. The Governor has 20 days from receiving the bill to make his final decisions.

LaCAN has no reason to believe these items will be vetoed but it's always important for policymakers to hear from you on the importance of these services. Advocates are encouraged to send a message to Governor Jindal if you would like to thank him for including the waiver funding in his Executive Budget and voice your support for these other vital programs. You can send your message by going to gov.louisiana.gov and clicking the link that says interact.



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