



The Link

"Linking Exceptional Families in Contra Costa County"

Volume XV Issue 2 Published quarterly

Winter 2009

What is CARE Parent Network?

We are a Family Resource Center for families of children with special needs in Contra Costa County. We provide information, referral, resources, training opportunities and family support.

CONTENTS

Melanie by Isala Benavides	1
Advocacy- 2nd Tuesday	2
Dr. Robert Field on "Positive Parenting"	2
The Link Via E-Mail	2
Feedback On Mentor/Facilitator Training	3
The Gift of Mentoring	3
Calendar	4
Transition Workshops	4
Resources	5
Developmental Disabilities Council of Contra Costa County	5
Positive Discipline	6
Equipment Available	7
Special Thanks	7
Support Groups	8

MELANIE BY ISELA BENAVIDES

I would like to tell you about my daughter Melanie, whose birth changed my life! My daughter was born two months early. Since the moment she was born weighing 5 Lbs 3oz, I knew God had changed my life. I was an inexperienced mother, without extended family and with a premature daughter. At that point, I knew our life would be a challenge.

My daughter had typical development until the age of 18 months. At that time my husband and I started to notice that she did not talk, did not interact, and did not like to be touched. This is when we said "something is happening here". We started to look for help and eventually received an evaluation that unleashed the terrible news "Your daughter has Autism." My first reaction was sadness and concern. It did not matter to me her condition, what distressed me was the reactions of other people toward her. The challenges she would have to face for the rest of her life, the intolerance, ignorance and misinformation of many people that wrongly label children with autism as "sick individuals."

When my husband and I made the decision to support our daughter, the first step we took was to get all the information we could find about her condition. We also attended support groups where we met many parents who

had similar experiences. We supported Melanie without overprotecting her, and never forgot the most important thing: she is a girl! She has her own feelings, needs, virtues and defects. Melanie was always very skillful with computers. She quickly learned to use them, and at the age of 6 years we discovered she had a new way to express herself, through computer drawings. Initially the drawings were very simple. She captured her moods, needs and the things she liked. As the years went by, this has become her way of communication and it also became easier for us to understand her. Without words we can know her soul. Melanie's drawings show the world how special she is.

I understand the great blessing and the big compromise God had put in my hands. This allows me to know the most pure love that has no boundaries. My daughter has taught me to enjoy the simple things and experience the most sincere love. It is very hard to have a special child, but I believe God sends them to a family where he knows everybody is special.



Opinions expressed in **The Link** do not necessarily reflect the endorsement of CARE Parent Network or any of its associations. We do not recommend any treatment, therapy, institution or professional system, etc.



ADVOCACY—2nd TUESDAY OF THE MONTH



On September 8th, the 2nd Tuesday advocacy group hosted a training by Marty Omoto, Director of the California Disability Community Action Network (CDCAN) on "Advocacy: Accountability with Action". This was a dynamic, inspiring presentation. Marty explained that the first steps we need to take towards accountability are "... register to vote, find out who your legislators are, vote, hold your legislators accountable for information, their votes, and implementation of changes in policy, budget cuts, etc." Marty went on to say that the measures of accountability for legislators are "How they actually voted" and "How they actually helped you in solving a problem." If you would like a copy of Marty's Presentation, email Joan at jcrookcare@aol.com.

Coming up in early 2010, we will be visiting Tom Torlakson's office and doing a workshop on "How a Bill Becomes a Law". Please join us!

If you would like to join this advocacy work or receive updates, send your email address to Joan Crook at jcrookcare@aol.com.

DR. ROBERT FIELD ON "POSITIVE PARENTING"

In November, CARE Parent Network had the honor of hosting Dr. Robert Field who spoke on the subject of "Positive Parenting."

Dr. Field began the workshop by talking about psychiatrist Erik Erikson's eight stages of social-emotional development in children, teens, and adults. These eight stages consist of (1) learning basic trust v. basic mistrust; (2) learning autonomy v. shame; (3) learning initiative v. guilt; (4) industry v. inferiority; (5) learning identity v. identity diffusion; (6) learning intimacy v. isolation; (7) learning generativity v. self-absorption; and (8) integrity v. despair. It is during each of these stages that our children and teens learn hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom. Missing any of the lessons taught during these stages can likely lead to significant problems down the road.

Dr. Field also discussed his "Basic Principles of Parenting." These 27 principles included such concepts as "Parenting is teaching. Be direct and assertive." "Life is not fair. The sooner they learn it, the better off they will be." "Failure is part of life. It teaches us how to be successful."

The workshop conversation veered in a variety of ways, including a discussion of how to reconcile separate parenting styles, as well as dealing with drugs and alcohol in the high school years.

Dr. Field runs Quest Family Guidance Center in San Ramon and operates Quest Therapeutic Camps in Alamo and Oakland. Dr. Field is also the author of a website which provides parents with individual on-line therapy, www.directiveparenting.com.

The newsletter you are reading is available via email!
Contact us to start receiving The Link via email.
Call: 925-313-099 or 800-281-3023
or email Sheri: sproctor@careparentnetwork.org



FEEDBACK ON MENTOR/FACILITATOR TRAINING

By Anna Tague

I recently completed a four part mentor facilitator training through CARE and feel truly enriched by the experience. While I was both flattered to be asked by Louise to participate, and daunted by the need to find a total of 11 hours over four mornings to dedicate myself – I am SO glad that I was able to experience the process. I was not sure what to expect, or how much emotion I would have to commit to the discussions, but I was interested. I am usually up for new events and always up for meeting new people whose lives are touched by special needs.

A small group of us met with Louise to share our personal history as well as our current experiences as mothers balancing all the details of life – many of which are changed by having a special child. I found it particularly helpful to hear the other participants share – it allowed me to access some feelings that have been tucked away for a long, long time – perhaps even since my daughter received her diagnosis of Phelan – McDermid Syndrome in 2005. Eventually we began to discuss how we might be able to support other people who are new to “the world of special education”. Louise shared academic and scientific angles on emotional states of coping and grieving and allowed us to remember what feels good about being heard. A key learning point for me was the acknowledgement that each person is in a different place on their emotional journey and a mentor should be tuned in to another person’s state. A relationship can be most successful when people are aware of the needs of one another and respect those needs.

As I move forward with a new foundation of understanding and awareness of how to support others, I am inspired to have a positive impact in my community. Last year a few parents in my town organized a group to connect families of special needs children. The group is called POISE, Parents of Orinda Individuals in Special Education. I feel more capable to move ahead as a member and supporter of the special needs community due to an enhanced knowledge base that will help me for years to come. Thank you CARE for providing that opportunity!

THE GIFT OF MENTORING

By Denise Guilliams

When I was asked to participate in the mentoring program my first thought and experience were those of honor and privilege. Being considered for this program highlighted and raised both of those feelings within me. As the class was scheduled and confirmed, fear began to plague my mind with questions. How am I going to do this? Am I qualified? Can I be of value to another parent of a child with special needs? My son is only 9; do I have enough experience? As the class began I soon realized that I was presented with an extraordinary gift....the gift of mentoring.

As the class proceeded my fears began to disappear, we (parents of children with special needs) are on similar journeys. We began to share our stories that brought us to this similar place, a place of understanding and empathy. As we learned together, those two qualities are very important to become a mentor. We also learned that listening in a non-judgmental way is crucial to lending a helping hand. I soon realized that, to be able to help another, is an important part of my healing process. I thought I can do this. I do have enough experience. Most of all, I understand because my 9 year old has taught me many things and has given me many experiences.

When the mentoring class was coming to a close I envisioned my 9 year old son reaching out to me with a box. I saw his amazing smile and his little hands pass this beautiful gold box with a huge red satin bow on top. I opened it up and it was filled with 9 years of experience including joy, sorrow, pain, grief, enthusiasm, empathy and the gift of mentoring. So I say to those who need someone to listen to you, seek out a mentor. To those who are ready to listen, consider becoming a mentor, it’s the best gift you can give yourself.



CALENDAR 2009



February 2, 9, 16, 23rd: Helping Your Young Child with Autism Communicate and Interact: Sponsored by Kaiser Permanente for Kaiser members with children birth to 5 with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Class is located at Kaiser Permanente Pleasanton North: 7601 Stoneridge Dr., Pleasanton. Pre-registration is required. Call to register: 866-248-0721. (Fee~ \$50 per family)

February 5, 2010: Easter Seals Bay Area's Autism Community Forum: Sponsored by: East Seals, Levy Conference Center, 2121 Harrison St, Oakland, CA. This forum is for families living with autism, government leaders, autism organizations and advocates, professional colleagues, volunteers, and corporate partners. This day will highlight evidence-based, best practice treatment strategies for children with autism spectrum disorders. Free event, RSVP to thogan@esba.org or 510-835-2131, x103.

February 10, 2010: Psychosocial and biological markers of stress in the lives of mothers of adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder Speaker: Marsha Mallick Seltzer, Ph.D. Sponsored by UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute, 2825 50th Street, Sacramento, CA. For more information: www.mindinstitute.org or call (916)703-0280.

April 17, 2010: STAR Conference on Autism (for parents with children birth to eight). Sponsored in part by CARE Parent Network. Conference located at: Programs for Exceptional Children at Marcus Foster School, 2850 West St., Oakland, CA. For more information call Care Parent Network at: 925-313-0999. (Fee, \$25)

April 28, 2010: Social skills training in high-functioning adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: Important issues and future directions. Speaker: Marjorie Solomon, Ph.D. Sponsored by UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute. M.I.N.D. Institute Auditorium, 2825 50th St, Sacramento, CA. For more information: contact Terri Contenti, (916)703-0289 (Free).

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD WORKSHOPS

March 3, 2010: Community Living Options by Gina Jennings, Director, Developmental Disabilities Council and Executive Director, Full Circle of Choices. Sponsored by CARE Parent Network, 1340 Arnold Dr., Suite 115, Martinez, CA, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m. Call Caroline Ortiz at: 925-313-0999, ext.109, for more information.

March 10, 2010: A Look at Adult Day Programs by Will Sanford, Executive Director, Futures Explored. Sponsored by CARE Parent Network, 1340 Arnold Dr., Suite 115, Martinez, CA , 7:00 - 9:30 p.m. Call Caroline Ortiz at: 925-313-0999, ext. 109 for more information.

March 24, 2010: A Look at Employment Opportunities by Barbara Maizie, Executive Director, Contra Costa ARC. Sponsored by CARE Parent Network, 1340 Arnold Drive, Suite 115, Martinez, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m. Call Caroline Ortiz at: 925-313-0999, ext 109 for more information.



RESOURCES

211 is a national, toll-free number you can call 24 hours a day for information about local health and human services information. Our local 211 agency is the Contra Costa Crisis Center where you can get vital resources in our community quickly and easily. The staff speak English and Spanish. They also have an online database that can be accessed at www.211contracosta.org.

Grandparent Autism Network (GAN): Grandparents of children with autism now have an online site they can share their joys and challenges they have with their grandchildren. The support network is physically located in Orange County (Southern California). GAN has over 700 members. www.gaininfo.org or gangrandma@cox.net

Ability Path: Abilitypath.org is a new online resource and community dedicated to supporting families with children of special needs. Designed to be a comprehensive resource that combines online tools, expert insight, community connection and information to help parents of children age 0-5 years old maximize their child's development.

Keeping the Lanterman Promise: This is a place where people with developmental disabilities, and their families and friends can find out what is happening to the Lanterman Act in clear, candid, no-nonsense terms. By coming together and sharing information, we can be a part of an effort to restore, defend, and preserve the Lanterman Promise.

Safety Basics: Visit their website: www.usa.safekids.org for information on how to keep your baby safe as well as product recall and other basic information about young children. For more information call: 202-662-0600.

Sibling Support Group: This group is for brothers and sisters of persons with developmental disabilities. Therapists will conduct the group. Classes begin: January 11th and 13th. (Fee \$200 for 8 week program) Contact: Amy Bona, 415-218-4157 or abona@goalsforautism.com

THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

The Developmental Disabilities Council of Contra Costa County (DDC) is the official planning, coordinating and advisory body to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. On behalf of people with developmental disabilities, the DDC:

- ☆ Works to improve and develop needed community services
- ☆ Provides information about resources
- ☆ Takes a leadership role in planning, training, and advocacy.

Due to the unprecedented budget crisis in California this last year, the DDC has been extremely active in educating the community about the impact of the 2009 cuts to programs that affect individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The DDC is committed to continuing these efforts, as it appears that the service system may take another "hit" in 2010.

In addition, the DDC has been very active in responding to the increasing incidence of autism and the importance of early detection/intervention and developing strategies to increase access to health care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The DDC Board of Directors meetings are the 4th Wednesday of every month (except in July and August) from 9:45 a.m. – Noon. All are welcome to attend. The meetings are usually held at Regional Center of the East Bay, 2151 Salvio Street, Concord. To visit the DDC website, do a "Google" search for [Developmental Disabilities Council Contra Costa County](#).



POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Talking is the main way we instruct our children. When it comes to discipline the words you use and the way you use them play an enormous role in shaping your child's behavior. If your child feels that you respect them, then they will be more likely to comply.

- ☆ **Be calm.** Keep mellow, this allows you to think through a situation more rationally and avoid saying something rash that would undercut your authority.
- ☆ **Be confident.** Stick to your convictions.
- ☆ **Be connected.** Be sure you have your child's attention before you start speaking. Call him by name. Kneel down to a toddler's or preschooler's eye level. Make sure your words, tone and body language all send the same message.
- ☆ **Congratulate good behavior.** Your directives and comments should be as much praise as corrective. Praise is most helpful when it's specific and behavior-driven.
- ☆ **Issue gentle reminders.** These help nudge a child toward good behavior. "Please remember that wet towels get hung up before they go in the hamper." Reminders can serve as an intermediate step before advancing to consequences.
- ☆ **Present choices.** Allow your child to pick between two alternatives. Offering a choice helps them learn to think for themselves and creates a win-win situation.
- ☆ **Don't ask, tell.** "It's time for bed" is usually more effective than "Are you ready for bed?"
- ☆ **Try when/then.** Letting your child know what will happen next puts a positive spin on the matter at hand.
- ☆ **Count to ten.** Many kids can't resist a beat-the-clock challenge.
- ☆ **Invite input.** "We have a problem. How do you think we can solve it?" This shifts the dynamics from parent versus child, to the two of you together versus the problem.
- ☆ **Say "Please" and "Thank you".** Model politeness in your interactions.
- ☆ **Be specific.** Remember that brief is best. Stick to the core issues and a brief description of the consequences. "Here's the dog's dish. You forgot to feed him." "Please don't use that tone of voice, it's not polite."
- ☆ **Use "I" phrases.** Sentences that start with "I" subtly shift the emphasis of your displeasure from the child to the action.
- ☆ **Don't overload.** Make one request at a time.
- ☆ **Make it catchy.** This doesn't work for every message.
- ☆ **Be realistic.** Don't make idle or dramatic threats.
- ☆ **Respond to noncompliance.** When you let yourself be ignored, your child learns that this is an acceptable response and they are apt to try it again and again.

Printed with permission from: Mt. Diablo Adult Education



EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

- ☆ 1 Med/ Large Rifton Supine Stander
- ☆ 1 Medium Bailey Chimney Stander
- ☆ 1 Small Prone Stander
- ☆ 1 Medium Prone Stander
- ☆ 1 Small Activity Chair on Wheels
- ☆ 2 Adult Locking Elevated Toilet Seats
- ☆ 1 Small Pony Walker
- ☆ 1 Medium to Adult Invacare Forward Walker—2 Wheels
- ☆ W2R-Youth Kaye Reverse Walker—4 Wheels
- ☆ 1 Toddler Guardian Forward Walker
- ☆ 1 Large Youth Kaye Reverse Walker
- ☆ 1 Large Youth Single Quad Cane
- ☆ 2 Small Quad Canes
- ☆ 1 Large Youth to Adult Guardian Quad Cane
- ☆ 1 Set of Large Lofstrand Crutches
- ☆ 1 Medium Pink Rock n Roll Push Bike- (need upper body strength to ride and the bike needs some gear adjustments)
- ☆ 1 Large—Tumble Form Chair on Base with Wheels—No straps
- ☆ 1 Large Bucket Swing (Sling Only)



SPECIAL THANKS : *IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE SUPPORT.*

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| ☆ Lori Adkins | ☆ Dr. Robert Field | ☆ Linda Rowley Thom |
| ☆ Sue Ahmadyar | ☆ Frances Fortini | ☆ San Francisco |
| ☆ Lucy Berk | ☆ Bob Jacobsen | Foundation |
| ☆ Elizabeth Boegel | ☆ Elree Langford | ☆ Rosa Torres |
| ☆ Stephanie Chapralis | ☆ Cally Martin | ☆ Teresa Tijero |
| ☆ Cheryl Clift | ☆ NY Learning Center-San Pablo | ☆ Cathy Weddle |
| ☆ Delta First-Five/
Brentwood | ☆ Marty Omoto | ☆ Rebecca Weston |
| ☆ East Bay Services for
Developmentally
Disabled / Concord | ☆ Celeste Palmer | |
| | ☆ Alma Pineda | |
| | ☆ Hector Rivera | |



CARE PARENT NETWORK SUPPORT GROUPS

NAME OF GROUP	LOCATION	FACILITATOR(S)	SCHEDULE	PURPOSE
Just for Fathers	Walnut Creek	Bob Jacobsen (peer facilitator)	1st Wednesday evening	All disabilities
Support for Moms	Brentwood	L. Schneiders	1st Tuesday morning	All disabilities
Support for Moms	Martinez	L. Schneiders	1st Thursday evening	All disabilities
Support for Parents of Teens	Martinez	L. Schneiders	2nd Wednesday evening	All disabilities
Padres Latinos	Brentwood	A. Gattis	1st Friday morning	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities
Grupo de Autismo	Brentwood	C. Zepeda	2nd Friday morning	Spanish-speaking parents of children with autism
Caminemos Juntos	San Pablo	H. Mariscal (peer facilitator)	2nd Thursday morning	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities
Camino a la Independencia	Martinez	B. Peraza (peer facilitator)	3rd Friday morning	Spanish-speaking parents of teens transitioning to adults, all disabilities
Alas de Angel	Concord	C. Zepeda	2nd Tuesday morning	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities
Grupo Nuevo	Pinole	C. Zepeda	2nd Tuesday afternoon	Spanish-speaking parents, all disabilities

If you are interested in attending a support group, please contact CARE Parent Network at 800-281-3023 x 101 or 925-313-0999 x 101.

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #177
Concord, CA

Return service requested

CARE Parent Network,
A program of Contra Costa ARC
1340 Arnold Drive, #115
Martinez, CA 94553

