

# The Parents' Newsletter March 2012

## Voorhees School Social Workers' Newsletter for Parents of Students with Special Needs

This newsletter is to provide parents with helpful information to support their children's learning and achievement in school

### \*\*\*\*\**SPECIAL NOTICE*\*\*\*\*\*

Please mark your calendars now to attend the next Parent Meeting on Wednesday, April 18, 2012 in the Voorhees Middle School Library from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM. This will be a Transition Open House, geared to parents of current 5<sup>th</sup> graders with special needs who are concerned about what to expect in the way of educational and special services at the Voorhees Middle School. It will be an opportunity to meet some of the staff involved with 6<sup>th</sup> graders, tour the 6<sup>th</sup> grade wing and hear about tentative plans for the 2012-13 school year. We hope to see many of you there.

### Annual Review Meetings

We have begun planning for annual reviews. You are encouraged to review your child's current status and discuss with his/her teacher any concerns that you may have. This will enable all of us to problem solve collaboratively and create a plan for 2012-13 that addresses all identified areas of need.

### Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Meetings

Our next meeting will be held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> in the VMS Lecture Hall at 7:00 pm. All parents are welcome to attend.

### Middle School Transition Survey Results (2012/2013 school year)

A survey was sent to the parents of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who currently receive Special Education Services. This three page survey was designed to help provide information that would be most useful during the transition from Elementary School to Voorhees Middle School. We received nineteen completed surveys. The following information is the result of the parent surveys:

#### 1. The first question asked "Is this your first child attending VMS?"

For eleven parents, this is their first child to attend VMS.

#### 2. The second question asked "If no, was your other child's experience positive or negative?"

Eight parents stated that the experience was positive for their child, and only one parent reported a negative experience. The remaining ten parents reported it was not applicable.

**3. The third question asked parents “What is the most important information parents needed to know to help their child make a smooth transition into VMS (from most to least reported) were as follows:**

*Extremely:* sixth grade academic programs, adolescent challenges, self expectations of student, responsibility of student, contact information/communication with staff, progress reporting information/parent portal, code of conduct, scheduling, guidance role, homework, technology

*Very:* grading, club/activities, supplies for students

*Somewhat:* lunch room procedure, lockers

**4. The fourth question asked parents “What other information that could be useful in helping your child make a smooth transition into VMS?”**

- 1) Transition from private school to VMS (public school)
- 2) Layout of the school and transition from class to class
- 3) What special education programs are available and offered
- 4) Socialization of middle school students

**5. The fifth question asked parents, “How does my child feel about attending VMS?” The following responses were provided:**

- 1) Happy and Excited (11 parents)
- 2) Nervous (8 parents)
- 3) Relaxed and nonchalant (2 parents)

**6. In response to the sixth question, “My child is most concerned about?” The following concerns were reported:**

Socialization, bullying, changing clothes for gym, overall school experience, amount of homework, difficulty of classes, activities and grading, having new teachers and meeting new peers, getting lost, making new friends, adjusting to new teachers and lockers

**7. In response to the seventh question, “As a parent of a middle school student, I am most concerned about?” The following concerns were noted :**

Students being challenged academically and adapting to new classes; staying organized and getting work done; how the four elementary schools will integrate socially; academics and homework; child being overwhelmed and concerns with self-confidence; bullying; bus transportation; transitioning to VMS (larger school)

**8. In response to question eight, “Will you be attending the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade transition meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012?”**

Every parent who responded to the survey will be attending the transition meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-11:00am

**9. In response to question nine, “What questions would you like answered during the transition meeting?” The following responses were included:**

- 1) What are the available special education programs, classes and accommodations?
- 2) What is the role of the guidance counselor?
- 3) How do most students adapt to VMS?
- 4) What are tools to ease the transition for your child into VMS?
- 5) How are health concerns addressed at VMS?

We hope these results have provided useful information to you. We will certainly do our best to address the concerns both you and your child have shared about transition into VMS. We are looking forward to a successful school year for your child!

There is a free orientation at the end of August that mirrors the school day sponsored by the Guidance Department. An additional program entitled “Mastering the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade” is also available in the summer. Please visit <http://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/middle> to obtain more information on this program. Go to the “information” tab and click “6<sup>th</sup> grade.”

## **SPEAK**

Special Needs Parents, Educators & Kids is a non-profit parent-faculty organization. The group formed in March, 2009 to address issues impacting children with special needs living in Voorhees. Please check the Voorhees District website for more info about the group and planned activities and events.

## **Upcoming Community Activities**

### **Garden State Discovery Museum – *Open Arms Family Evening* – May 20<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00pm**

A special evening for Families with Children on the Autism Spectrum at the Garden State Discovery Museum. Your entire family is invited for a FREE after hours activity featuring open play and discovery. Meet other children on the spectrum, their caregivers, and siblings. <http://discoverymuseum.com/> To register for this event, email your name, contact information, and number of guests to [onthego@discoverymuseum.com](mailto:onthego@discoverymuseum.com)

### **BounceU – *Bounce Therapy Night* – 6:00-7:30pm**

This event is held in both the Cherry Hill and Blackwood (228-2834) BounceU locations on the first Tuesday of each month. It is a night of discounted admission and special needs-friendly accommodations.

### **Pump It Up – *Sensory Jump Night* - 6:15- 7:45pm**

This event is held the first Tuesday of every month. All Children with Special Needs Welcome!  
Located at 8 E. Stow Road, Marlton NJ 08053

**AMC Cherry Hill 24 Movie Theater**, 2121 Route 38 – *Sensory Friendly Films*: Mirror Mirror – April 7<sup>th</sup>  
Pirates! Band of Misfits – May 5<sup>th</sup> Madagascar 3; Europe’s Most Wanted – June 2<sup>nd</sup> (please note, all dates and films are subject to change)

Approximately one time each month, select area AMC theaters host a Sensory Friendly Film viewing for children with special needs. The theater lights remain brighter, the sound is kept at a lower volume, and outside food and drinks are permitted. Easy access to local event information can be found at [www.autism-society.org/get-involved/events/sensory-friendly-films/](http://www.autism-society.org/get-involved/events/sensory-friendly-films/)

**Walk Now for Autism Speaks** – South Jersey Walk being held on May 19<sup>th</sup> in Mt. Laurel NJ. Visit the website at [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) for additional information.

### **Community Programs**

#### **Voorhees CER**

The Voorhees CER offers a variety of courses and programs. For information, go to the website at [www.voorheescer.com](http://www.voorheescer.com) or call (856)795-2025 x5232.

#### **Voorhees Middle School – S.P.O.R.T.**

VMS offers this after-school program once a week. It provides an opportunity for students with special needs to experience physical and non-physical activities that will help improve physical skills such as balance, agility, body awareness, and hand-eye coordination. Students work with typical peers to promote socialization and interaction in a cooperative, supportive setting.

#### **Evesham Township Recreation Department**

A sports program, including karate and seasonal sports of soccer, basketball and baseball, for children with special needs is available. Visit [www.twp.evesham.nj.us](http://www.twp.evesham.nj.us) for quarterly offerings and locations. (856) 985-9792.

#### **Katz Jewish Community Center – Bowling Event on May 6<sup>th</sup> from 2-5pm**

Come out for the Fundraiser Bowling Event at Laurel Lanes, Mt. Laurel NJ on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Minimum donation of 25\$/per person.

#### **Jubilation Creations – Arts and Crafts for the Special Needs Community (on-going)**

Located at 713 Haddon Ave, Collingswood, NJ 08108 (856-240-1558) Beaded jewelry, needle arts and mixed media arts and crafts for all ages.

#### **Sahara Sam's – Evening Out for Special Needs Children – May 4<sup>th</sup> (6-9pm)**

Safe, judgment free event for individuals with special needs and their families. Located at 535 N. Route 73, West Berlin, NJ 08091.

#### **BounceU - Create and Bounce Program**

Available to all children ages 2-5, this program combines active play with creative play. It is available in both the Cherry Hill and Blackwood locations. Call (856)228-2834 for information.

#### **Beyond Balance**

This therapeutic riding program is run by volunteers out of a stable in Mount Holly. It teaches children with special needs how to ride a horse, which can have physical, psychological, educational, and social benefits. Rider information packets and forms can be found at [beyondbalance.org/index.html](http://beyondbalance.org/index.html) (609) 969-8899.

#### **Special Population Achieving Normalcy through Education and Recreation (SPANNER)**

SPANNER is a non-profit organization that connects teens and young adults with disabilities with high school, college, or young professional mentors. The main focus is to encourage community inclusion, while working to enhance social skills and independence, in order to prepare members for the transition to adulthood. For additional information, please refer to the website. <http://www.myspanner.com/home>

### **Mt. Laurel United Soccer Association – *TOPS Soccer Program***

M.L. United is offering this program for kids with disabilities who would like to learn to play soccer and have fun. For information, visit [www.mlunited.org](http://www.mlunited.org).

### **Special Olympics New Jersey – *Activities for Special Needs Children and their Families***

For further information please visit their website at [www.SONJ.org](http://www.SONJ.org)

### **Camden County Library System- [www.camden.li.nj.us](http://www.camden.li.nj.us) (click link for events/classes)**

Various classes and on-going programs for children

## **Community Workshops**

### **Bancroft – *ongoing free workshop series***

Bancroft, a local organization serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and acquired brain injuries, is hosting a free workshop series for parents and professionals. Held monthly from September through April, the workshops cover a wide variety of topics related to developmental disabilities. For further information visit Bancroft's web site at [www.bancroft.org](http://www.bancroft.org). To register, please contact Pat Reid at (856) 524-7453 or email [pried@bnh.org](mailto:pried@bnh.org).

### **Camden County Family Support Organization –**

*Free workshop for parents and caretakers; April 17<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 PM*

Essential Components of the IEP; Being held at the Camden Co. Family Support Organization at 23 W. Park Ave, (Suite 103) Merchantville, NJ 08109. Register by April 16<sup>th</sup> at [www.iepcamden2012.eventbrite.com](http://www.iepcamden2012.eventbrite.com)

## **Parent Resources**

**Division of Developmental Disabilities** - This division of the NJ Department of Human Services offers a wide range of services for qualified residents with conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, epilepsy, spina bifida, and neurological impairment. Contact the local intake unit at **(856)770-5900** or visit [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd).

**Department of Children and Families** - This state department is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children, and provides resources and services to this end. Visit <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/>  
*Division of Child Behavioral Health Services:* serves children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral health care challenges. [www.nj.gov/dcf/behavioral](http://www.nj.gov/dcf/behavioral).

**Camden County Family Support Organization** - Assists families with children who have behavioral or mental health issues, through the Behavioral Health System. [www.camdenfso.org](http://www.camdenfso.org) or (856)662-2600.

**Kids' Health** – [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) provides up-to-date, parent-friendly information on children's health and resources.

**Autism New Jersey** - Autism NJ offers factual information, as well as referral lists for recreational activities, summer camps, and vacation and travel resources. The group also runs free, local workshops and programs, including some designed for siblings. <http://autismnj.org>

**Great Schools** - The Learning Disabilities section of this website offers many sources of information, as well as research-based suggestions for activities that parents can engage their child in at home, in order to reinforce school-based interventions. [www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org)

**LD Online** - This is a leading website on learning disabilities for parents, teachers, and other professionals. [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

There are several **hospitals/health care systems** in the area that are valuable resources for information, education, support and medical information.

### **Helpful Services and Contact Information**

*Children's Behavioral Health Services* – Crisis, support, and referral services 1-877-652-7624

*New Jersey Kid Care* – Affordable healthcare for children 1-800-701-0710  
[www.njfamilycare.org](http://www.njfamilycare.org)

*Division of Developmental Disabilities* – Services for individuals with disabilities (856)770-5900

*Community Services Referral Resource* – One easy access point for health and human services, community resources, and government assistance, for both ongoing support and crisis situations [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org) 211

*Community Crisis Response Center* – Camden County center for crisis evaluation (856)428-4357

*Temple Clinic for Anxiety* – provides services for children and teens with anxiety (215)204-7165  
[www.temple.edu/childanxiety](http://www.temple.edu/childanxiety)

*2nd Floor* - statewide confidential and anonymous helpline for ages 10-24. (888)222-2228  
Open 24/7 [www.2ndfloor.org](http://www.2ndfloor.org)