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# Kids Korner Connection

A newsletter from the Children's Division of ARC

## Children's Division Constantly Striving to Be the Best We Can Be...Our Path Toward Greatness!

By Shawn Preston, Director of Children's Division

At ARC Broward, we are extremely invested in providing excellence in the quality of our services and supports. But who determines what "excellence" means and if we are achieving or how close we are to it? While we do a tremendous amount of our own evaluation and measurement through our own monitoring and quality improvement activities, that is only one of many much more significant ways we determine our performance. The real test is how we measure up in the eyes of those who matter most! Without any doubt, we care the most about how our children and parents feel about all that we do and how well we do it! As I have shared before, please provide us with your feedback so we can keep doing the things that we do great, and we can improve in any areas that you feel we need to!

Did you know that our programs are also frequently monitored by our funding and licensing agents? They come to ARC to observe the quality of our service delivery and physical environment and to review our records and compliance with our contractual and regulatory requirements. We value this feedback as tremendous help in knowing how well we are doing and in our efforts to always continue to better our performance. We are so proud to consistently receive excellent findings from these monitors. The reports of these monitoring visits are available for anyone who would like to see them. Just ask me or your program coordinator!

ARC Broward is outcome driven and its Employment and Community Services, Psychosocial and Rehabilitation programs have received the highly coveted 3-year national accreditation since 1992 by CARF, the Rehabilitation Commission. This is the highest level of accreditation CARF awards. Our Mental Health Program received its first 3-year CARF accreditation in 2001, just one year after its opening in 2000. This year, along with Mental Health Services and the Adult Programs, our Children's division will seek CARF Accreditation for the very first time for the ABLE, PAT (with Behavior Analysis) Services, Preschool (with OT, PT, and Speech Therapy), Respite Care, and Youth Links Programs. This is a tremendous endeavor which we are all so proud to be able to participate in!

"The mission of CARF is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served." CARF evaluates how well programs conform to "current, field-driven standards that improve the value and responsiveness of the programs and services delivered to people in need of rehabilitation and other life enhancement services." In other words, experts in the field, whose programs have demonstrated excellence, conduct on-site surveys of other programs to determine if they meet such standards of the highest quality of business practices and service/support provision.

The Children's Division is eagerly looking forward to the opportunity to receive feedback from such esteemed professionals regarding how we measure up as we move along our path toward achieving Greatness!

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### Upcoming Special Events

- ◀ Preschool Halloween Parade and Party: October 31 at 10 am (parents welcome)
- ◀ Preschool Picture Day: November 3rd at 9 am
- ◀ ABLE Monster Bash: October 27 at 3:30 pm (parents welcome)

## Proactive Parenting: Rewarding Children's Positive Behavior Can Lead to Less Negative Behavior!

Consider this:

You are in the kitchen. Your toddler is in the next room playing quietly with her blocks. You are free for the moment to continue preparing dinner. Suddenly, you hear the dog yelp and your toddler giggle. Still in the kitchen? Probably not!

Unfortunately, the indications of challenging behavior **demand** our immediate attention while appropriate behavior does not necessarily demand our attention. The trouble is that, in general, parents get *more* of the behaviors that they attend to—whether they want more of those behaviors or not! It can happen just like this:

A volunteering dad moves between the tables in a classroom. He pauses next to child that is coloring beautifully and states, "Wow, what pretty colors you are using!" What comes next? Three more students eagerly raise their hands for a chance to show this dad that they **ALSO** color beautifully.

In that same classroom, this dad spies a child sitting idle and not coloring. He approaches the child and engages in a long conversation with the child about why the child isn't coloring. What comes next? Three more students stop coloring for a chance to spend lots of time talking with the dad.

In each scenario, the first student, and the students in the surrounding area, are more likely to behave in a manner that seems to bring adult attention.

Proactive parenting increases the likelihood that kids will behave the way we want them to by placing a deliberate focus on the behaviors we want to see. Here are some tips for making it work in your house:

- ☺ Catch kids being good and **let them know you like it!**
- ☺ Set kids up for success.
  - ★ Make tasks age-appropriate.
  - ★ Make rules simple and clear.
  - ★ Let kids know what they can expect to earn if they complete tasks within the parameters of the rules.
- ☺ Reward little steps towards behaviors you want to see.
  - ★ We all learn a little at a time. Don't wait for perfection, or even for something significant! Let your child know that you see improvement.
  - ★ Remember, the absence of challenging behavior is positive!

Focusing on positive behaviors results in an increase in positive behaviors, which, in turn, leaves less time for challenging behaviors to occur. Because the focus is positive, both the caregiver and the child tend to feel more positive about their interactions...another factor that increases the likelihood that your child will have appropriate behavior. Lastly, with a focus on positive behaviors, a child learns that he or she can get a caregiver's attention by doing the **right thing**.

## Planning for Kindergarten

From the desk of ESE Specialist, Jane Moreno

Believe it or not, we are already beginning the process to enable our matriculating to kindergarten students (five years of age by September 1, 2007) to seamlessly begin their kindergarten year. Here are some of the steps we will be taking.

Some of the children will be re-evaluated in order to provide us with the most up-to-date information that is needed to consider appropriate placement options.

ARC staff will meet with Broward School Board staff to find out "what is out there" in each area for each child.

Parents will be sent a letter listing placement options to go out and visit. Since the parent is an important part of the team that will meet to consider which placement is the most appropriate for each child, it is strongly suggested that the parent visit the school (s) listed, meet school personnel, and ask questions.

Each parent will be invited to a meeting, probably in the spring, to discuss the placement options and help decide which one is best for their child. It is important for parents to remember that these meetings are scheduled well in advance with very busy Broward School Board staff who travel all around the county. It is usually difficult or impossible to reschedule these meetings once they are set up so we ask our parents to be very flexible when these meeting dates are sent home.

Transition activities will be done with the children to help them transition to their new school.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's matriculation to kindergarten, please feel free to stop in to see me any time or to call me at extension 1681.

## Preschool Happenings by Wendy Trottier

Welcome to our many new students and families! A special thank you to teachers, assistants and the therapy department for going above and beyond to get our new *Play and Learn* curriculum off to a great start. Some of the special happenings in September included a visit from Oopsy the Clown, the addition of many new toys, wagons, and Assistive Technology equipment, writing and play dough activities with therapists (providing nearly one adult for every child!) and an obstacle course on the playground (what a workout!). We celebrated National Waffle Day (yes, there is such a day!) by decorating our own waffles with cool whip and M & M faces. The children express their appreciation with smiles, squeals, and laughter. Their faces tell it all! Of course, *Play and Learn* is all about working towards goals and increasing skills. The theme for the month of October is Fall Colors. Keep an eye out for details on the Fall Costume Parade. The kids love to dress up and collect their candy!

Congratulations to our **Students of the Month** who are among our many many students who are making notable gains:

- Room 134 - **Rory C.**
- Room 135 - **Nate F.**
- Room 136 - **Carmella J.**
- Room 137 - **Anthony G.**
- Room 138 - **Kyle L.**
- Room 139 - **Angelina S.**

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

by Lee Brown, Coordinator of Mental Health Services

Stress is an everyday part of life - it is impossible to avoid all stress. In fact, a certain amount of stress is a good thing. It motivates us to get things done or to make changes in our lives for the better. However, too much stress is bad for our health, both physical and mental. Prolonged stress can wear the body down and lead to stress related illnesses and can also lead to the mental problems of anxiety and depression.

Some signs of having too much stress include:

- ⊗ eating too much, especially junk food
- ⊗ sleeping too much or having difficulty sleeping
- ⊗ being extra irritable - having a "short fuse"
- ⊗ having tense muscles
- ⊗ feeling overwhelmed
- ⊗ having an increased number of headaches or stomach aches
- ⊗ crying more easily
- ⊗ being forgetful
- ⊗ smoking or drinking alcohol more than usual

There is no magic cure for too much stress, but it can be handled and reduced so you don't end up with a stress related illness. Some of the things you can do handle stress include:

- ⊗ talking to someone about what is bothering you
- ⊗ taking time out from a stressful situation
- ⊗ doing some physical activity to burn off some "steam"
- ⊗ exercising regularly
- ⊗ stretching to help get rid of tight muscles
- ⊗ changing your attitude about things that are unchangeable
- ⊗ breaking big tasks into smaller manageable tasks
- ⊗ making time for relaxing - even for just a few minutes
- ⊗ planning time to have fun with people you like
- ⊗ planning some alone time
- ⊗ eating meals at regular times and foods that are healthy for you
- ⊗ getting enough sleep - resting even if you can't sleep
- ⊗ keeping your sense of humor

If stress is interfering with your functioning or health, please call our Mental Health Center at (954)577-4113 We are here to help!

## Parent Corner

### AUTISM IS MY FAMILY

By Patricia and Marie Wargin

Trisha has to live everyday with something that not all teenagers have to live with, Autism. Autism affects Trisha's brother and has disrupted her and her family's life since she was 2 years old. "I was shattered when Michael, Trisha's brother, was first diagnosed with Autism. Imagine having a son, your pride and joy, and he will never be normal," said, father, Michael Wargin. Autism is a complex developmental disability that affects an individual in the areas of social interaction and communication. Michael Wargin is 14 years old he cannot speak, go to a normal public school, or even shower alone. The personal affects it has on the family could never be defined in any words. The Wargin family has to fight for Michael's rights, ignore stares when Michael has outburst, and take care of him like a child half his real age. "I don't know how the Wargin's did it! Fighting constantly for Michael to get what he deserves at school was a full time job in itself," says friend, Robert Eagles. Yet with any situation there is a good side and this situation is no exception. "It never seems to get them down. They are always on the go with Michael," says, friend, Amanda Durden. Michael, with all the screaming and quirks is quite the social butterfly. He attends (with his family) dances, school functions, and work at a printing press folding newspapers. "We never miss a dance!" says, mother, Marie Wargin. Michael is practically the school mascot; everyone knows him and loves him. "He walks in like he owns the place," says, teacher, Stacy Wolf. Although living with an Autistic brother is a challenge for Trisha and her family, they are doing their best. The love Trisha has for her brother overpowers any problems. She couldn't imagine living without him.

Michael started at ABLE about 5 years ago. ABLE has allowed me to go back to work. He attends ABLE on the days when school is closed. Michael enjoys summers at ARC's Kamp Krayola where he goes on many field trips! These outings have helped Michael learn about waiting in line, taking turns. We are now able to enjoy eating in a restaurant, going to a movie, spending time at the beach! Michael has come a long way. Our family would like to thank the entire staff at ARC for helping Michael to be the best he can be! Life with Michael may not be easy, but it is a lot better!



Michael and Trisha Wargin

## Exciting ABLE Enhancements and Happenings...

By Gretchen Clark

We are excited to announce that some of our Able students will start to receive Rehabilitation (OT and Speech) Therapy Services while they are with us during their after school time. These services will include individual, group and consultative sessions to improve fine motor, coordination, self help skills, sensory integration, remediate swallowing and oral motor deficits impacting nutritional support, speech development and language delays affecting every day communication under the direct implementation, supervision, and monitoring by licensed therapists.

The ABLE team also integrates the Murdoch Curriculum into the daily schedules. The Murdoch curriculum utilizes Applied Behavior Analysis Principles to improve social skills and daily living skills. In order to maximize learning opportunities, teaching occurs through natural routines, activities and environments. Due to these skills being taught in the natural environment, the ABLE team has been busy planning various activities for our students. Some of the cultural arts providers that will come to visit us on extended days are Harmonic Motion, Cadenza Music Therapy and Renaissance Village. The Renaissance Village uses different drums from various cultures to get our students hands on experience. We will continue to keep you updated on various places we will visit during our extended days.

Other upcoming activities to watch for more information on include our holiday community outreach project. In the past, the ABLE students have adopted an ABLE family in need and provided food, clothing and gift certificates that children and families donate. The ABLE students also participate in theme-based activities related to helping others during this community outreach time. If you have not returned our Parent Leadership Committee survey, please do so. The date of our first Parent Leadership Committee will be posted soon. Please remember to check your son/daughter's backpack for upcoming information.

The ABLE program is made possible by the generous funding from The Children's Services Council, the United Way, and family contributions.

## Congratulations!!!

### Welcome Aboard to Our Newest Members:

**Michal Roberts-Wallace:** Respite Team Leader/  
Behavior Specialist

**Rosina Cruz :** PAT Parent Educator

**Diana Davila :** PAT Parent Educator

**Linda Barnard:** Preschool Utility Aide/Custodian

### Congratulations also to the following team members on their transfers and promotions:

**Alex Remy:** ABLE Lead Instructor

**Keya Lowe:** ABLE Social Service Specialist

**Ava Amos:** ABLE Lead Instructor

### And The Award Goes To...

Congratulations to the following team players of the month. Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication toward the children and for being on our team:

July: **Trisha Simoncelli,** Speech Therapist

August: **Kim Fox,** Coordinator, Therapy Services

Sept.: **Susanna Lamb,** Social Service Specialist

### Children's Services

Preschool  
ABLE After-School Program  
Respite Care  
Youth Links Transition Support  
Behavioral Analysis  
Summer 'Kamp Krayola'  
'PAT' Parent Training  
Rehab Therapy (OT, PT, SLP)  
Mental Health Counseling

### Adult Habilitation

Supported and Community Living  
Community and Center Day programs  
Individualized Supports  
Transportation Services

### Workforce Development

Community and Self Employment  
Skills Development  
Culinary Arts  
Calypso Grill  
Electronics Recycling  
Landscaping Services  
Vehicle Washing

### Advocacy & Social Services

### Nursing Services

### Information and Referral

### Human Services Training Solutions



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