

A Small Start for Big Story: NEEC's Success

The Northland Early Education Center's (NEEC) mission is to provide early education and therapy services for children who have special needs, as well as early education for children who have typical needs, in a fully inclusive classroom environment in order for them to reach their full potential.

NEEC was founded in 1981 to nurture the physical, emotional and educational development of young children birth to five. NEEC began when a forward-thinking group of concerned parents, who had children with special needs but were unable to find a suitable environment that could provide the special services and education their children required.

These parents envisioned an early education center that would serve all children, regardless of their developmental level or socioeconomic status. Since its inception,



NEEC provides early education and therapy services for children with special needs, early education for children with typical needs and usually earns smiles from both.

NEEC has grown from an early education center/preschool serving only six children to a nationally accredited, fully inclusive agency providing early education and therapy services for nearly 200 children annually.

NEEC's program provides early education and therapy services for children with special needs and early education for children with typical needs age's birth to five. NEEC also provides a before and after school/summer program for children ages

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six to 14 with special needs.

The early education/preschool classrooms at NEEC are fully inclusive, grouping children with their like-aged peers regardless of their developmental level. This environment provides children with special needs the opportunity to learn by watching and imitating their peers, as well as teaching children who are typically developing the important life lessons of diversity, compassion and acceptance. In this environment, children with special needs are often able to reach developmental milestones ahead of schedule, while providing children who are typically developing the self-confidence they need to be successful in public school and beyond.

Pathways

Pathways is published quarterly for Clay and Platte County residents with developmental disabilities, their families and other interested persons. Funding is provided by participating agencies which include the Arc of Clay and Platte counties, CEADD, Center for Human Services, Concerned Care, Inc., Easter Seals Midwest, Immacolata Manor, Northland Early Education Center, Platte County Board of Services, People First and Vocational Services, Inc. Contributing occasional articles will be Down Syndrome Guild, EFECT, Tri-County Mental Health Services, the Maple Valley State School and MCDD.

Editorial contributions are welcome. Content is intended to be positive and informational. Material may be edited and will be printed as space allows.

If you wish to receive Pathways and do not, contact Betsy Keleher at 604-3043. We also appreciate help eliminating duplicate issues at a single address or unwanted issues.

With teacher ratios that are lower than state mandates, NEEC follows the Project Construct Curriculum model; an approach to learning founded on the idea that children develop knowledge through interaction with their physical and social environments. Through hands-on, minds-on experiences, students in NEEC classrooms attain deep understandings in core content areas, while also learning to work collaboratively with adults and peers, while becoming lifelong problem solvers.

NEEC also provides physical and occupational therapies, speech and language pathology and special instruction through its Early Intervention Services (EIS) for children with special needs ages birth to five. Through EIS, they provide direct intervention services and education for children who have special needs regardless of their socioeconomic status. NEEC's four highly qualified therapists provide these vital therapy services on-site for children enrolled in the program or in-home for children in the Northland who are unable to attend the program.

These therapy services ensure that all children with special needs reach their Individualized Family Service Plan and Individualized Education Program goals. It is NEEC's primary objective to ensure that all children, whether typically developing or with special needs, reach their full potential and transition into their least restrictive environment.

The organization serves children with a wide variety of special needs. NEEC is currently providing early education and/or therapy services for 140 children in the Northland community; 55 percent are children with special needs.

For more information about the Northland Early Education Center, please visit the website at www.nееckids.org or contact NEEC to schedule a tour at 816-420-9005.

Northland Job Olympics Achieve Success

May 8 was a busy and exciting day for special education students from across the Northland. This was the day they had been preparing for over the past year. This was the day of Job Olympics where students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have a venue to compete with other schools but, more importantly, have the opportunity to showcase their talents to potential employers.

This year's participating high schools were Liberty, North Kansas City, Liberty North, Winnetonka, Golden Oaks, Staley and Oak Park. Some 70-plus students took part in this year's event.

From modest beginnings three years ago, this has become an important event in the I/DD calendar. Jessica King, a special education teacher from Liberty High School, continues to be the driving force behind this success. As she builds a team of enthusiasts around her, she hopes to enlarge the scope of this event to embrace all schools in the Northland in the future.

The Arc is an enthusiastic supporter of this event that seeks to promote community participation and employment within the community.

Summer Camp

The 2015 Arc Summer Camp was held this June at the Rotary Youth Camp at Lake Jacomo in Lee's Summit. June normally heralds the arrival of more settled



The third annual Northland Job Olympics was a huge success at area high schools.

Arc



Wings of Love was one of the more popular attractions where campers were treated to a "birds eye view" of some large birds. Other activities (below) include everything from stage presentations to "just having a good time."

weather, but not this year. Despite the rain and cooler than usual weather, the campers had a great time and there were no complaints about it being too hot to sleep!

Only the bold availed themselves of the swimming pool this year. Although the pool is one of the camp's highlights, campers were able to participate in many other activities and enjoy a host of entertainment.

Students Experience Wide Range of Events

Students in the College Experience for Adults with Developmental Disabilities had many exciting experiences and learning lessons this spring and early summer.

Students were able to participate in an Urban Bucket Brigade Boot Camp visiting the campus. They also enjoyed a trip to the Kansas City Zoo, fishing at Immacolata Manor and the play A Year with "Frog and Toad" at the Coterie Theatre in Crown Center.

CEADD organizers are now looking forward to the fall. Brochures should arrive in the mail in early September, and classes will start Oct. 10.

CEADD

Once again, CEADD will conclude classes with a storyteller on Nov. 14. All are welcome to this event to be held in our student center building at 11:00 a.m. This is a culminating event that the college promotes throughout Kansas City, and CEADD is privileged to enjoy one of the storytellers each fall. The storyteller is funded by the Arc of Clay and Platte Counties.



Van Conversion Gift Helps Meet Needs

After months of effort, an individual served by Center for Human Services in Clay County was gifted a van conversion to assist with his needs.

Caden Wekamp is a seven-year-old boy diagnosed with cerebral palsy, cortical vision impairment and overall global delays. Caden has also been diagnosed with Migrating Partial Epilepsy of Infancy (MPEI) or Migrating Partial Seizures of Infancy (MPSI) as it more commonly



Caden and his wheelchair into the vehicle. This not only presented a safety concern for Caden, but his parents as well. His positioning in the van would often be quite uncomfortable and painful for him.

As he continues to grow, this situation will only become more painful and dangerous for him.

There was a distinct need for the family van to be converted to accommodate his needs. The cost of converting the family van was extremely expensive, so the family reached out to CHS and Service Coordinator Bill Eschbaugh for assistance. The process of finding and securing funding for the van conversion proved daunting. After several months and many calls, letters and requests,

Caden and his family are getting a much-needed conversion for their van.

Through a collaborative effort with CHS Clay County, Friends of Man, Denver Colorado, Variety Children's Charity of Greater Kansas City and Silent Samaritans, the family was awarded a gift of approximately \$29,000 to cover the entire cost of the van conversion. This award was presented to Caden and his family on June 22. The van was converted and back to the family by the end of July.



The family of Caden Wekamp recently received a conversion to help with transportation, thanks to a collaborative effort that included four organizations.

referred to in medical papers. It is a very rare type of epilepsy, which is believed to affect less than 100 children worldwide.

Caden requires 24-hour supervision each day. This is done by his loving parents and two siblings in their home. Due to his many medical conditions and using a wheelchair for mobility, transportation became quite a challenge, whether it was for pleasure or to get to his many medical appointments.

The family had a van but had to lift

Summer Trips and Sports for Residents

Concerned Care residents have experienced several exciting trips and outdoor sports this summer through the organization's Community Therapeutic Recreation Program. The program has also reported great feedback on the levels of satisfaction of community members who have been served so far this year by Concerned Care.

Through the support of the recreation program members of the Concerned Care community went on an adventure to Branson, Missouri on July 11. The trip was a great day getaway for the members. Thirty-seven members of the Concerned Care community participated in the trip. The sites visited included the Legends in Concert, which included performances by talents representing some of the biggest names in pop music from today and yesterday.

Everyone had a great time during the trip and enjoyed the sites of Branson. The recreation program is also supporting an outdoor summer softball league that has been well attended—nothing says summer quite like softball!

The focus in residential services is to support and encourage the people they serve to be involved and productive community members. Concerned Care community members participated in a variety of learning activities, such as menu planning and grocery shopping; budgeting and bill paying; planning and going to the movies or a restaurant and other events in the community. Each task or activity provides an opportunity for learning skills. A survey clearly showed that involvement in the community is very important. Concerned Care community members indicated a 98 percent level of satisfaction regarding their level of fulfillment with the residential program.

Concerned Care will be hosting the Annual Auction and Awards on Thursday, Nov. 5 at the Argosy Casino. The Annual

Concerned Care

Auction is a wonderful opportunity for the community to learn more about Concerned Care and offer support.

The Residential and Community Therapeutic Recreation Program benefit directly from the proceeds of this event. For more information, please visit www.concernedcarekc.org, follow them on Facebook, or contact Suzie Schuckman, Director of Development, at (816) 474-3026 or Suzie@concerned-carekc.org.

Pathways Calendar

Tuesday Sept. 1—Arc Picnic. For more information, email

Arcofclayplatte@gmail.com or call 816.699.0813.

Several events are in this issue's articles.

See the articles for more details:

Saturday, Sept. 12—Easter Seals

Midwest Walk With Me Kansas City event.

Monday Sept. 14—First Downs for Down Syndrome Golf Classic and annual Huddle Time Auction.

Saturday, Sept. 19—Northland Early Education Center's 14th annual Diamond K Ranch Party & Auction.

Wednesday Oct. 28—"Employment – The Changing Landscape" Conference Columbia. For more information, email Arcofclayplatte@gmail.com or call 816.699.0813.

Thursday, Nov. 5—Concerned Care Auction and Awards.

MACDDS Conference October 22nd & 23rd, 2015 Location: Tan-Tar-A Resort Osage Beach. For further details, download the Attendee Brochure:

<http://macdds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2015-MACDDS-Attendee-Brochure.pdf>.

First Downs Plans Golf, Auction and More

The First Downs for Down Syndrome Golf Classic will be held Monday, Sept. 14 at the beautiful and prestigious Shadow Glen Golf Club. The organization is grateful to have Mike Maddox, President of CrossFirst Bank, as the Golf Chairman and Will Shields, Former KC Chief and Pro Football Hall of Fame Inductee 2015, as the Honorary Chairman this year.

The four-man shotgun start will tee off at noon with registration, browsing the gift salon and many fun activities beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Players will also enjoy bag service upon arrival and car detailing while golfing, as well as an opportunity to win a car and hole contests with great prizes. In addition, participants will meet and play against celebrity golfers. Food and drinks will be served throughout the day, and an awards cocktail ceremony with Huddle Time will follow.

For golf entry and sponsorship details, please visit www.fdfds.org or contact Amy Stoll at stoll@fdfds.org or 913-722-2499.

Huddle Time

The 19th Annual Huddle Time Auction will be held Monday, September 14 at Shadow Glen Golf Club from 6-9 p.m.

Members of the Kansas City Chiefs offensive line will be in attendance, along with former Chiefs players. The famous Steven St. John with 810 WHB will be the master of ceremonies, along with the Nigro Brothers. Huddle Time guests will enjoy fabulous food and drinks and the opportunity to bid on unique sports memorabilia as well as “unique experiences.”

Mark your calendars for Huddle Time—Monday Sept. 14 at Shadow Glen from 5:00-8:00 p.m. Please email Amy Stoll at stoll@fdfds.org or call 913-722-2499 with any questions.

Step Up Walk

The Kansas City Step Up for Down

Downs Syndrome Guild

Syndrome Walk will be Saturday Oct. 17. This one-mile walk around Arrowhead Stadium has turned into a day of fun for the entire family. This very special day will be from 12-4 p.m. at Arrowhead Stadium, Lot C.

Food, family games, pony rides, hayrides, rock climbing walls, inflatables, photo booths and music from Happy Face Entertainment will be provided at the walk this year. Registration for the Step Up Walk is \$25 per person ages 12 and up and \$15 for guests 3-11. Children aged two and younger are free. The registration price includes a Step Up Walk t-shirt, food and entertainment.

Learn more at www.stepupfordownsyndromekc.org or by calling 913-722-2499. Everyone is welcome! Walking or riding in a stroller, the entire family should come out for a day of fun. Come and celebrate someone with Down syndrome!

Missouri's New ABLE Act Authorizes Savings Accounts

Gov. Jay Nixon in June signed Senate Bill 174, creating the Missouri Achieving a Better Life Experience (Missouri ABLE) program. The program allows a person with disabilities, or his or her family, to open a tax-exempt savings account for the purpose of paying expenses related to the disability.

Missourians with disabilities are eligible to open a Missouri ABLE account if they are also entitled to benefits based on disability or blindness under the Social Security Act, if such blindness or disability occurred prior to turning 26.

Walk With Me Event Set for Sept. 12

Easter Seals Midwest, formerly Triality, Inc., will hold its first Walk With Me Kansas City event on Saturday, Sept. 12. The event, which will be held at Macken Park in North Kansas City (800 Clark Ferguson Drive), will feature one and three-mile recreational, accessible walks through the park, live music, fun for the whole family and snacks and refreshments. Registration begins at 9 a.m.

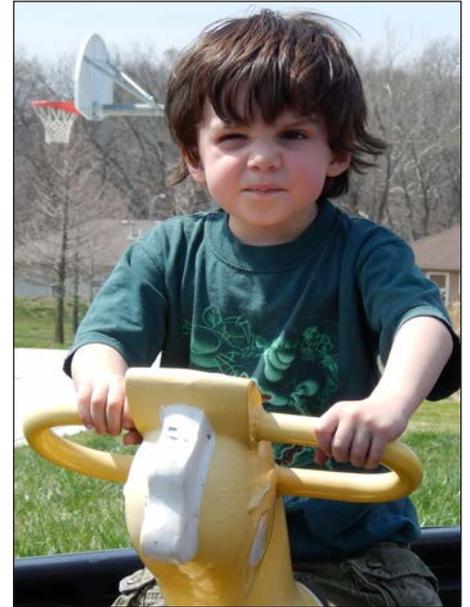
“We are very pleased with the success we’ve had with our Walk With Me events in the other Missouri communities we serve, and we’re receiving a lot of enthusiastic support for this upcoming event in Kansas City,” says Wendy Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer of Easter Seals Midwest. “There are so many families impacted by developmental disabilities, including autism, and they depend on us to provide life-changing services. The money raised during this event will go a long way toward helping us continue to provide top-quality community living, employment and early childhood services for the individuals and families we serve.”

Four-year-old Will Reynolds of Kansas City, Missouri, is serving as the honorary ambassador of Walk With Me Kansas City. Diagnosed with autism at age two, Will has changed dramatically since receiving services at Easter Seals Midwest’s early education center in Pleasant Valley, Missouri. Once withdrawn and unable to communicate, Will now makes eye contact often, follows directions and sings complete songs. He thrives in a classroom with children his own age, who may or may not have disabilities, while getting the specialized attention he needs.

“We have gained so much,” states Will mom, Leigh. “The future holds the promise of great things to come—not what we had planned, but one we’re embracing.”

The entire Kansas City community is

Easter Seals Midwest



Will Reynolds is the honorary ambassador of Walk With Me Kansas City.

invited to come and walk with Will as we raise funds and awareness of individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. To register, for more information about sponsorships or forming a team, please visit their website at WalkWithMe.org/KansasCity or contact Lori O’Donnell at 816-326-6798.

Founded in 1964, Easter Seals Midwest is a nonprofit organization that is committed to helping individuals with developmental disabilities—including autism—learn, live, work and participate in the community. For more information, please visit EasterSealsMidwest.org.

Family Fun at Diamond K Ranch Sept. 19

Make plans to attend Northland Early Education Center's 14th annual Diamond K Ranch Party & Auction on Saturday, Sept. 19. The event is held at Mark and Lorry Kelly's beautiful Diamond K Ranch in Kearney, Mo. from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

It will be a fun-filled, family event with something for everyone including dinner and drinks, a wonderful variety of live and silent auction items, live music and hayrides, balloon artists, face painting and a moonwalk for the kids. Event tickets may be purchased online at www.nееckids.org. Tickets are \$40 for adults, \$15 for children four to 12 and children three and younger are free. Tickets include dinner and beverages.

The proceeds from this important annu-



All kinds of fun is to be found Sept. 19 at the annual Diamond K Ranch Party and Auction.

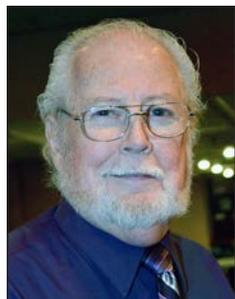


al fundraising event will assist NEEC in providing children age's birth to five who have special needs the necessary therapy services they require in order for them to reach their full potential.

It is NEEC's primary objective to ensure that all children, whether typically developing or with special needs, reach their full potential and transition into their least restrictive environment. For additional information, contact NEEC at 816-420-9005.

A Friend's Passing

We are saddened by the recent loss of our friend Jerry Tindall. Jerry served in his official capacity at Vocational Services, Inc. as the assistant executive director from 1994-2013. During his entire career of serving those with disabilities, he filled many roles as an advocate, mentor, master float builder and friend.



Jerry Tindall

Before coming to VSI, Jerry served as the workshop manager at Jewish Vocational Services and worked for the state of Missouri in several social service capacities.

Jerry took on many leadership roles including past president of the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers and as a member of Missouri Rehabilitation Association. He provided technical training to other workshop managers and to the staff at VSI.

Jerry's passion for life was evident in both his professional and personal life. He loved music, telling stories and sharing a good laugh. He will be missed, but his legacy will live on through his work.

"Unlimited" Playground Coming in October

A partnership of organizations is bringing Platte County its first Universally Accessible Playground in October.

Unlimited Play, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, Platte County Board of Services for the Developmentally Disabled, Variety Club of Kansas City and Kansas City Parks and Recreation are preparing to build the playground at Tiffany Hills Park, next to the sports complex and aquatic center.

Earning the "Unlimited Play" playground status and ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for ALL families is not easy. This playground will feature:

- A central location with oversized parking lot, accessible parking and family friendly restrooms.
- A themed area completely accessible to children of all abilities, fenced to provide safety for children who have difficulty recognizing boundaries.
- Safe, spongy surfacing.
- Ramping systems for every play element, transfer stations, specialized seating, hand-holds, and climbing systems to assist children's climb and reach.
- Adaptive swings with high backs for children with low muscle tone, toddler swings and Biggo Swings that enable multiple children to swing together.
- Stainless steel slides and roller slides to enable children with Cochlear ear implants to enjoy the experience of sliding (plastic slides interfere with the implants).
- Musical elements, cognitive stimulating panels, various sounds/textures and more.
- Numerous interactive panels promoting problem solving/motor development.
- UV protective shade structures and a misting area to help everyone stay cool.

Project partners are also meeting with children who have disabilities and using survey results from families.

Play is critical to the social, emotional,



Thanks to a partnership of area and national organizations, Platte County will have a Universally Accessible Playground like this by October.

cognitive, and physical development of every child. Unfortunately, the vast majority of playgrounds deny children with disabilities the opportunity for exercise and social interaction. Playgrounds such as the one being built in Platte County will address three specific needs:

- The lack of opportunities for all children to play and interact side by side on a playground.
- The need to break down social barriers and provide opportunities where children of all ages play together, learn from one another, value differences and find strength to overcome challenges.
- The health and wellbeing of this generation that is at risk.

Children with disabilities have very little recreational opportunities. These are often far away and require transportation to areas off the metro or bus line. With obesity rates increasing for all children, the types of opportunities offered by this playground are increasingly important.

Further questions should be directed to Victoria Schmitt Babb, Community Engagement Director, Unlimited Play. 636 757-3978 victoria@unlimitedplay.org www.unlimitedplay.org

Awards Go Out at Big Celebrations

Nearly 200 Vocational Services, Inc. employees will celebrate their tenure at the Length of Service Awards events in October.

These annual celebrations provide VSI an opportunity to recognize each sheltered workshop employee for his or her service with Vocational Services. This year's celebration will range from recognition of VSI's newest employees to the most distinguished employee, who has worked more than 48 years at Vocational Services!

This is truly a red carpet event. Each individual is provided an opportunity to walk down the red carpet to center stage where he or she is awarded a certificate of appreciation and a service lapel pin. Employees working 20 years or longer also receive a trophy. With that come cheers from their coworkers, friends and families, a true celebration of their successes.

The events will recognize employees working at VSI's North Kansas City workshop and at the two Liberty locations. A cake reception will provide an opportunity for friends and family to offer their congratulations to the honorees.

VSI is very appreciative of the Arc sponsorship of this event!

Area Residents, Leaders Honored

Area residents, business and community leaders were recognized May 28 at the Vocational Services, Inc. 15th annual Community Awards Night.

Held in the Marriott at Briarcliff, the event featured a silent auction and celebration of VSI's efforts since 1966 to provide employment and other opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Today, VSI employs more than 250 Northland residents with disabilities.

Suzie Maschler was honored as VSI's Consumer of the Year. Maschler started work at VSI in 1989 and has proven to be extremely reliable, earning numerous awards and recognitions.



Parents of the Year went to Dan and Dee Sharp, who have been very involved at VSI as part of their son, Jon's, employment. They have participated in the VSI Bowl-A-Thon and Awards Night activities, as well as supported the new VSI Booster Club.

Vendor of the Year went to Bukaty Companies for their extra effort with employee benefits. The Scholastic Company of Jefferson City was recognized as Customer of the Year.

The Liberty Hy-Vee was cited for its supportive environment and helping workers achieve success. Lowe's Store at Boardwalk earned the Platte County honors for efforts to improve employee skills and help people with disabilities keep jobs.

The Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board was presented the Benefactor's Award for its many years of continued and dedicated support.

Missouri Senator Ryan Silvey (R-Gladstone) was recognized as Legislator of the Year. Presiding Clay County Commissioner Jerry Nolte received the "Working for the Public Good" award for service at the state and county levels.

David Bricker of Kansas City, North received the Volunteer of the Year award while the Director's Award went to the late Jerry Tindall, former VSI assistant director and longtime workshop leader.

VSI's Virgil "Skip" Bower Board Member of the Year went to board President Paula Torkelson.

Employee of the Year was awarded to David Phillips, VSI production sales representative. Also recognized were Employees of the Quarter Kathy Osborn, Talisha Oquendo and Faith Hilton.

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