

Joshua Center Newsletter

July 2010

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Social Skills – Let's Get Organized

Several years ago I started offering families the **Let's Get Organized** class (1 class only) to help the kids prepare for school. This can often be a traumatic experience for the kids, and the parents, so we try to help get the kids ready. Returning home after school the kids are usually worn out so by having all of their homework supplies organized and easily accessible makes it just a little bit easier for everyone. Register now for this annual event on our website at http://www.joshuacenter.com/skills_organized.htm or email Becky at becky@joshuacenter.com if you have any questions. I need to order the supplies by July 28th to have in time for the 1st class on August 7th. We usually have this class convene during your regular class time. Even if you choose not to purchase the Homework Tool Caddy your child can attend his regular class time and take advantage of all the preparation information. The supplies include a tool caddy with all the supplies they need for homework. We review with the kids what it takes for them to have a successful school year. We also play the Let's Get Organized Board Game we designed. The kids love the class and lots of parents have shared that it really made a difference when it's time to do homework. The one-time fee for this special class is \$65 to cover expenses. Children who do not usually attend social skills classes are welcome to come, but must register. Thanks.

Joshua Center Walk/Run September 18th

Please join us for our first Walk/Run at the Waterfall Park Trails behind Bass Pro Shops in Independence, Missouri (off of I-70 & 291 Hwy). The registration fee is \$25 registration. The schedule: 8:00 am registration, 8:30 run start, 9:30 walk start. Participants may also park in the Bass Pro Shops parking lot. You can register on the Joshua Center website: https://joshuacenter.com/walk_run.htm.

Volunteers Needed for "Pork Out"

Please help us get ready for our annual fundraiser. Our **"Pork Out"** is October 2nd at the Airline History Museum. We really need a lot of help. I have mailed about 50 letters to local businesses and restaurants requesting donations. I could use some help following up. We are collecting items for the silent and live auctions so if you are able to get items donated just let us know. We need sponsors for tables too. The Joshua Center is a **non-profit organization** and we depend on special events to help with expenses. So, if we have made an impact in your life I hope you will help us with this incredible event. We need help setting up the day before and help running the event on Saturday. There are lots of exciting plans for the event this year. Individual tickets are \$30 and are available at the Center. Please take a look at the website for more information <http://www.joshuacenter.com/pork.htm>.

Volunteers Needed for Project Outreach

Our goal is to mail brochures and letters to every pediatrician and school counselor in the metro Kansas City area. Anyone who would like to help with this project call or email Becky at 816-763-7605 or becky@joshuacenter.com.

A Letter to Parents – Preparing for the School Year

Each year at this time I reflect on what we as parents have to do to prepare for the upcoming school year. Looking back, I probably shed a lot of tears because I did not have the knowledge I do now. I think it is one of the most challenging tasks we face as a parent of a child with a neurological disorder. Of all the things I have learned, the most important thing is that it takes a village to get through so many of the challenges we face. So I want to offer my “wisdom” from living it for so many years. Take from it what you need.

Start now and think about what you need to do to prepare yourself and your child for school; you might want to make a list. What about bedtime? Are there bedtime issues? Snacks? Clothes? Breakfast is critical, but it’s not so much as what it is, as it is just eating something. Start early planning your routines. Where is the backpack going daily? Does he/she having trouble getting started? Especially in the morning? Does your child have trouble getting to school? Make a list of problem areas from last year and discuss strategies with others.

Don’t leave it up to your child to be responsible for everything. He will fail at everything, if you do. Decide the one responsibility you will work on this year (and add a new one after he succeeds for a while at this one) to get him off to a good start.

I’ll never forget the mom who called one morning in tears, saying she had sent her child off to school in tears. After telling me how she was upset with her son for not making his bed, not getting dressed or brushing his teeth I told her he could not do all of that on his own. It was too much to remember. I told her to stay in the same room with him and break all of the tasks into smaller ones (You put on your clothes; I’ll start making your bed.).

Our kids require more (I’m sure you know that by now), but it’s the little things we do that make a difference. If you plan ahead of time you will be ready. Talk to the teachers before school (not in October so they can “get to know your child”). You want them to know your child day 1. Communicate often; email is best.

You know a good breakfast is important. What is their favorite? Always have something stashed away to grab for those mornings everyone over-sleeps. Above all, have a snack ready after school; something they absolutely love. Now, the important part; they are going to be exhausted and very hungry, but may not know it. The meds can cause this. KEEP QUIET until they have eaten and let **them** talk all they want. JUST LISTEN – AND - DO NOT OVERREACT to everything they say. (I know you have heard me tell parents to pretend they have a roll of duct tape on their arms at all times. When you start to overreact just pretend you take a strip and place it over **your** (not theirs – they will use it against you!) mouth. Remember, I said pretend. Sometimes the kids just need to vent.

Now, you have made it through the day and are reflecting, but anticipating the year ahead. Parents, please do not try to do it alone. I want you to visualize yourself in a room with 100 doors. Behind each door is a little piece of information that you may not need now, but will later. Do not ever leave a door unopened. You will be the one to decide in your gut what you need and do not need. You may not need the information today, but may in a few weeks, or months. It is amazing how much I have learned from others and the kids. I have always said the kids are the best teachers.

Watching hundreds of kids grow up the ones who are most successful are those whose parents took advantage of all the services available. Not one of us has all the answers, but together we are here for you. There is nothing we have not experienced so please call us for help. The consistency with the counselor and doctor will be your “saving grace”. When you do reach a crisis (and you know you will) having this support to turn to will make a big difference for you and your child because the professionals have developed a relationship with your child. When your child is in crisis he/she will open up much more easily because they trust the professionals who have been working with them.

I do know these disorders put a strain on family life. Start planning today to give yourself some time away. Even if just for a couple hours it will help. Surely Grandma, Grandpa, Aunt Jane, or a trusting neighbor can watch them for a few hours. They love McDonalds or at least Blockbuster! And plan for time with their siblings. Just a few minutes a day will have an impact.

I am always here for you. You can call or email me anytime. Sometimes, just a few minutes with someone who has “been there” helps you get through the rough moments. There is nothing I have not heard or experienced. My wish for all of you is to have a really great year. I will always believe God gives us these children for a reason (sometimes I think He has a warped sense of humor), but none-the-less, I never would have made it without my faith. I know you will make it too.

Have a great year!

Becky Ottinger

Support Group Meetings

The Tourette Support Group will NOT meet in July but will meet in August on Thursday, August 6, 6:30-8:00pm at Johnson County Library - Carmack Room. The **Guest Speaker is Mike Sumler, Joshua Center therapist**. The topic is "Starting School Successfully".

Announcing a New Parent Support Group

Parents of children, adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders are cordially invited to a new support group. The focus of each group will be decided by the parents present at the meeting. This group hopes to discuss and provide advice from both a professional perspective and parent-to-parent perspective on topics pertinent to your lives.

When: Third Saturday of each month from 10:30AM-12PM. *Note: This group will meet on June 20th from 9-11AM.*

Where: Responsive Centers for Psychology and Learning, 7501 College Boulevard, Suite 250, Overland Park, Kansas 66210

At this time, childcare will not be provided.

Moderator: Jeanne Holverstott, MS is the autism spectrum specialist with Responsive Centers for Psychology and Learning, where she has practiced for three years. She graduated from the University of Kansas with a Master's Degree in the autism and Asperger Syndrome program. She has worked with children on the spectrum for eight years in a variety of settings and capacities, including a paraeducator, a home therapist, a teacher, a home provider, and a community-based specialist. She is currently working on certification for Relationship Development Intervention™. Jeanne teaches classes on the autism spectrum at Johnson County Community College, has authored texts with Brenda Smith Myles, and currently writes a column for the spectrumconnection.net.

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