

The Surrogate Source

Newsletter of the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program

Fall 2010

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Program Update:

Greetings!

I am looking forward to another school year, and another exciting year with the SESP Program. We are well prepared to tackle the challenges awaiting us, and as always, we're making plans to be a little bit better every year!

We are in the process of rolling out an updated website, with the generous help from an SESP Program volunteer and a community volunteer.

We are also updating our logo and look with the volunteer assistance of the smith&jones marketing and advertising agency (www.smithnjones.com), which selected the program as one of the recipients of their 2010 CreateAthon, as a pro bono service for non-profit organizations.

You can also look forward to receiving our updated and revised SESP Program Volunteer Handbook. Again, put together and edited by program staff and the generous volunteer efforts of Catherine Marchiano, Cynthia Trainque, and Ellen Ronzio.

Finally, it is your turn to add to our improvements by sending in a suggestion for a new name for our newsletter. *The Surrogate Source* has been on our banner for the past 10 years, and it is time for a change! Submit your idea by sending in the Volunteer Update insert in the newsletter. If your idea is chosen, you will receive a thank you gift and acknowledgement in our next newsletter!

As we get a better understanding of the skills, talents, interests, and abilities of our volunteers (a big thank you to those who completed our survey!), we are awed with your generosity, your dedication, and the extent of what you are willing to offer to improve the lives our students.

Only two words to say it: THANK YOU!!

~ Michelle Poulin, Program Director

"It is not only one person's work, it's really a partnership and collaboration during all these years." - Christo, Artist

The following articles address the topics of PTSD and Trauma, two common issues that our students and SESP's face on a daily basis. The articles are provided as a resource, two of many written on the subjects, and are not endorsements for methods or agencies.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Children and Teens

Many of the children we advocate for have been diagnosed with PTSD or show symptoms of having PTSD. What events cause PTSD? The following information derived from the National Center for PTSD will answer these questions.

PTSD or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder that occurs after a traumatic event. Children and teens can have PTSD if they have been in a situation that has caused them or someone else to be badly hurt or killed, or where they believe their life or the lives of others are in imminent danger. Such events include being a victim of, or witness to: violent crimes, physical or sexual abuse, disaster survival, suicide.

Younger school-age children (ages 5-12) may have problems remembering parts of the trauma,

and probably won't have flashbacks the way adults with PTSD often do. Children may put the events of the trauma in the wrong order. They might show signs of PTSD in their play. They may keep reenacting a part of the trauma. For instance, a child may want to play shooting games after he sees a school shooting.

Teens' (ages 12-18) symptoms may resemble more those of adults, e.g., flashbacks. One difference, however, is that teens are more likely to show impulsive and aggressive behaviors.

For many children, PTSD symptoms go away on their own after a few months. However, some children show symptoms for years if they don't get treatment.

There are many treatment options, such as:

1. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) - this therapy involves learning to change thoughts or beliefs about the trauma that are not correct. For example, after a trauma a child may start thinking, "the world is totally unsafe."

2. Psychological First Aid (PFA)- PFA teaches calming and problem solving skills. It involves providing comfort and support, as well as letting children know their reactions are normal.

3. Play Therapy- used to treat young children with PTSD. The therapist uses games and drawings to help process their traumatic memories.

There are other treatment options associated with helping children who suffer from PTSD and trauma. We encourage you to seek out more information from the source of this article: The National Center for PTSD at www.ptsd.va.gov.

Optimum Learning Environments for Traumatized Children – How Abused Children Learn Best in School

Condensed and adapted from an article by Dave Ziegler, Ph.D.

One area that has received little or no attention has been the ability of our educational system to meet the needs of children who are living with the effects of trauma in their lives. Some might say that the attention given to special needs children through special education services should address these children. However, special education attempts to cover a host of causes related to learning difficulties, and most of the time services focus only on the symptoms rather than on the problems themselves. But this separation of the emotional and the academic challenges faced by traumatized children is not getting the job done. A child cannot compartmentalize emotions, thoughts, and behaviors as some adults can. The whole child comes into the classroom and either succeeds or fails based upon whether all aspects are engaged in the learning process rather than impeding it. What is needed in education, when it comes to traumatized children, is to bring together the substantial new information on trauma, brain development and the causes and solutions to emotional disturbance that exists in psychology and psychiatry and

to weave this information into learning theory and progressive academic strategies. We need conceptual and practical applications of learning approaches and environments where traumatized children succeed rather than fail. This article will attempt to provide a conceptual framework leading to practical implementation in our experimental learning settings.

How traumatized children perform in educational settings and why

Expecting a child who has experienced trauma to give their full attention in the classroom is like asking someone who just received a very disturbing phone call to go on with their day unaffected. Trauma and learning in school do not mix well together. This is not to say that trauma does not result in significant learning for the child. The child learns not to trust, learns to be anxious around adults, and learns to be vigilant of the motivations of others. What a child learns from trauma negatively impacts learning in an academic setting.

Optimum Learning Environments for Traumatized Children - How Abused Children Learn Best in School *cont. from p. 2*

Many traumatized children fail in school because they externalize their difficulties in emotions/behaviors and find themselves in constant trouble and the subject of behavioral restrictions. Trauma produces many responses that interfere in the learning environment such as hypervigilance (which is often viewed as distractibility), serious self-regulation deficiencies (often observed as intense emotional expression), difficulty putting what they learn into context, the inability to trust others, which often results in a child misreading the motivations of others, making it very difficult to find social success.

Each of the above issues is the result of trauma, and develops and persists in the brain. Since the primary function of the brain is to maintain and protect the survival of the person, the brain is seriously altered by trauma. Because trauma by definition is a situation that is beyond the ability of the individual to cope, the brain views traumatic events as a threat to its primary function of survival. The brain has mechanisms to address threat, and these parts of the brain will directly affect the traumatized child in the educational environment. *(Read more about the fascinating effects on the brain in the whole article.)*

Elements to avoid in school settings

Understanding the impacts of trauma on a student coming to school more concerned about safety and survival than learning math facts, can help us redesign the optimal learning environment for these children. The first place to start is with what to avoid in the learning environment for these special children. Dr. Ziegler suggests avoiding: stress and anxiety, teaching to the bell shaped curve, serious atmosphere where laughter and enjoyment are rare or discouraged, unsupervised communication among peers, learning through criticism, uneven competition, a constricting environment, rigidity, and an environment that can be easily disrupted. *(In-depth information is given to each of these in the full article.)*

Elements to enhance in school settings

What can help a child that has experienced trauma to be successful? He suggests: expressive learning, predictable structure, more successes than failures, adult mediated

peer interaction, external cognitive structure, the 'unschool' environment, encouragement through relationship, teaching to the child's individual learning style, even competition, internalized goal setting, enjoyment and fun, variety of activities, help with transitions, choices in areas of the child's interests, and group/cooperative efforts promoting teamwork.



School as the doorway to social and personal success in life

For the traumatized child, success in school carries more weight than for other students. For these children school will either confirm that the world is filled with unresponsive, threatening adults and peers, or they can learn that there are places that are safe, stimulating and even fun. With the vast numbers of traumatized children in our society, it is time that we take a very close look at how to facilitate learning for these children. One size does not fit all in education, particularly for traumatized children. The time and effort put into developing an optimal learning environment has the potential to reap huge rewards for children who deserve the very best education we can provide them.

This article in its entirety can be found at:
<http://scarjaspermountain.wordpress.com/2007/08/31/optimum-learning-environments-for-traumatized-children%E2%80%94how-abused-children-learn-best-in-school/>

For additional information and supports on this topic another resource is www.massadvocates.org/helping-traumatized-children-learn.

You may have noticed a name change amongst us. We at the SESP Program extend our congratulations to case coordinator Coleen Phillips (formerly Coleen Friend), on her recent marriage. Coleen and Brian were married April 24th at the Publick House in Sturbridge, and then basked on their honeymoon in St. Lucia. Coleen and Brian live in Uxbridge with their golden retriever, Hunter.



Why Volunteer?

(Adapted from an article by Susan J. Ellis, President, Energize, Inc.)

People volunteer for a wide variety of reasons, especially wanting to help others. But it's also OK to want some personal benefits from volunteering. Some of these could include setting a good example to friends, colleagues, or your own children, boosting your career options, learning or developing a new skill, meeting diverse groups of people, and being a part of a greater community.

Some people are uncomfortable with the notion that a volunteer "benefits" from doing volunteer work. There is a long tradition of seeing volunteering as a form of charity, based on altruism and selflessness. The best volunteering does involve the desire to serve others, but this does not exclude other motivations, as well.

Instead of considering volunteering as something you do for people who are not as fortunate as yourself, begin to think of it as an exchange.

Consider that most people find themselves in need at some point in their lives. So today you may be the person with the ability to help, but tomorrow you may be the recipient of someone else's volunteer effort. Adding your effort to the work of others makes everyone's lives better.

As long as you are truly serving through your volunteer work, isn't it wonderful that such an exchange occurs? In fact, it tends to strengthen your commitment to volunteering when you can see the benefits to both the recipient of your efforts and to yourself. And it is much more comfortable than "charity" because it upholds the self-esteem of those with whom and for whom you volunteer.

What are your Motivations?

Think about how much you receive when you give and consider why you want to volunteer. You may have several different reasons. Here are just a few of the many possible motivations identified by other volunteers:

- | | |
|---|--|
| * to share a skill | * to make new friends |
| * to demonstrate commitment to a cause/belief | * to do something different from your job |
| * to do your civic duty | * for fun! |
| * satisfaction from accomplishment | * for religious reasons |
| * to keep busy | * to feel good |
| * to donate your professional skills | * to be part of a team |
| * to have an impact | * to test yourself |
| * to learn something new | * to build your resume |
| * for freedom of schedule | * to be an agent of change |
| * to feel proud | * because of personal experience with the problem, illness, or cause |



You will probably have some special reasons of your own. Remember that the motivations you have to select the place you volunteer may not be the reasons why you stay. Once you're on the volunteer job, you will continue to serve as long as you feel that your efforts are accomplishing something, that your talents are appreciated, and that you make a difference.

We want to assure you how important it is to us that you feel like your efforts are accomplishing something, that you are appreciated, and that you are making a difference. As credited to our consultant Janet Duncan in a *Bay State Parent* article about us, written by a program supporter, Sue Lovejoy, "Although always thrilled if a student makes it to graduation, Duncan emphasizes that success for a surrogate parent '...is not based on how the student performs in school. Success is really measured in small increments.' For example: transitioning a child through one of many moves with minimal educational disruptions, identifying an overlooked problem or need, or maintaining a beneficial educational program or situation."

Without you we couldn't serve the children we do. Without you the children we serve would not have the potential for the success that they do.



We are so thankful for you!

SESPP Annual Conference

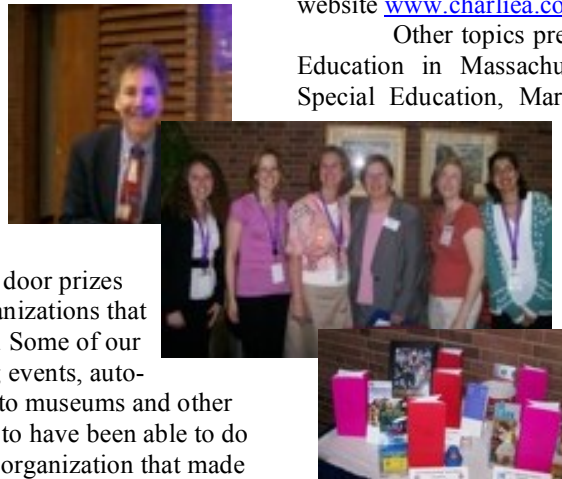
Every year the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program plans a day for our volunteers to come, network and gain helpful, relevant knowledge to help them advocate for the students they serve. This year was no exception. Even the rain and cloudy skies didn't stop our volunteers from all around the state of Massachusetts from attending our 5th Annual Day Conference at the Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center in Shrewsbury, MA. This year we were able to offer door prizes thanks to the generosity of many organizations that graciously donated a variety of items. Some of our lucky winners won tickets to sporting events, autographed photos, or admission tickets to museums and other area attractions. We were so pleased to have been able to do this and many thanks go out to every organization that made it possible.

Unlike the somewhat dreary weather, Charlie Appelstein delivered such an exceptional and at times humorous keynote presentation, not a person left their seat (except maybe to top off their coffee or grab another muffin). We all enjoyed "No Such Thing as a Bad Kid" so much, that every copy of the book he brought was sold and orders had to be placed online! It was definitely a great way

to start off a fun day. You can read more about Mr. Appelstein and/or order your copy of his book on his website www.charliea.com.

Other topics presented included a Q&A on Special Education in Massachusetts with the State Director of Special Education, Marcia Mittnacht; Updates on BSEA with Attorney Dan Ahearn; a Mock IEP presentation along with organization tips by Carla Binswanger; Advocating for a child with an Emotional Disability by advocate Lynne Rachlis; and Effective Transition Planning was presented by Attorney Matthew Engel. Every workshop was well attended and had great reviews. Thank you to everyone who presented and sent our volunteers off with helpful new information.

As planning for our next day conference is already underway, we'd love to hear from you regarding topics you would like to see, as well as any other ideas or suggestions you might have to make next year's conference even better than this year....if you can imagine that!



* Photos from top to bottom: 1. Charlie Appelstein 2. Program staff: Heidi Brown, Megan Ronzio, Michelle Poulin, Nancy Slater (Assoc. Ex. Dir., EDCO), Beth Farwell, and Kavita Vansant 3. Door prizes on display

Quarterly Training Opportunities

This past year the SESP Program offered three training opportunities in different parts of the state. Manifestation Determination, Functional Behavior Assessments, and 504 VS. IEP, were presented by Attorney, and Special Education Surrogate Parent, Amy DiDonna. The sessions were well attended and great feedback was received about the topics, speaker, and useful handouts. Thank you to all who attended, and thanks to Amy for all of her hard work and dedication to our program.

We plan on offering additional sessions this year and we hope you will consider taking advantage of this opportunity. It is a good way to learn about a specific topic, and get to meet other volunteers, as well as our staff and the trainer. The forums are usually held in the mornings from 10 to 12 at locations that we hope you will find easy to access.

The next Quarterly Training Opportunities are:

"Student Discipline: Addressing Problem Behaviors", presented by Attorney Amy Didonna on Wednesday, October 20, 2010 from 10 am to 12 pm at the Forbes Library, 20 West St., Northampton (metered parking behind the Library .25/hr.). Manifestation determination and functional behavior assessments will also be discussed.

A Question and Answer Forum lead by Attorney Didonna on Wednesday, December 8, 2010 from 10 am to 12 pm in Waltham at the EDCO Collaborative Seefurth Center, 281 Winter St. (free parking). This session will address questions you have, as a Special Education Surrogate Parent, about special education and the IEP process. Do you have a specific question that you would like addressed? Please send it ahead of time so we can be sure it is included.

Save the Dates!

Wed., October 20, 2010 from 10 am to 12 pm - "Student Discipline" - Forbes Library, Northampton.

Wed., December 8, 2010 from 10 am to 12 pm - "Questions and Answers" - EDCO Collaborative Seefurth Center, Waltham.

Please call or email the SESP Program to register!

Consultant On-Call Schedule

Fall/Winter 2010 - 2011

The consultant on-call program is a support that is available to you through the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program. The consultants with our program have volunteered to be available to you, to offer their support and expertise, and to answer questions you may have regarding the student(s) you have been appointed to. This program is one of several that we have available to support you in your role. Please call us if you need our support.

Month	Consultant	Contact Information
September 2010	Diane Fischer	Phone: 781-337-2356 Cell: 617-842-6536 Email: fischer16@comcast.net
October 2010	Victoria Lia	Phone: 508-660-1053 Cell: 508-272-4991 Email: gvlia@msn.com
November 2010	Sal Albano	Phone: 978-691-4366 Cell: 978-397-4876 Email: gas7474@comcast.net
December 2010	Janet Duncan	Phone: 508-540-2852 Cell: 508-524-4468 Email: janetduncan@comcast.net
January 2011	Carole Cleveland (West Mass.)	Phone: 413-323-6050 Cell: 413-221-0672 Email: carolecleveland@aol.com
	Heidi Haughey (East Mass.)	Phone: 617-895-9304
February 2011	Robert Barba (West Mass.)	Phone: 413-567-0430
	Lynn Powers (East Mass.)	Cell: 617-538-0736 Email: grapeadv@comcast.net

On-Call availability will be Monday through Friday, from 9am to 8pm.

If you leave a message, your call will be returned in a timely manner.

Each Consultant will be On-Call for one month.

If you contact a consultant in one month, and want to touch base or ask a follow-up question in a succeeding month, please feel free to keep in touch with that consultant instead of calling a new consultant who is not familiar with the case.

Special Education Surrogate Parent Program Orientation Training Schedule

Volunteer to work as a member of a Special Education Team that puts the pieces together for the future of a child in the custody of the Dept. of Children and Family (DCF).

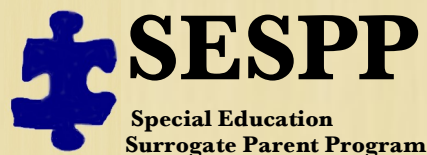


Shrewsbury Public Library	Thurs. Oct. 14th	11:00 - 3:00
Boston Central Library	Tues. Oct. 19th	4:30 - 8:30
Springfield Central Library	Thurs. Oct. 28th	12:30 - 4:30
Lexington, Cary Mem. Library	Tues. Nov. 2nd	10:00 - 2:00
Fall River, St. Vincent's Home	Fri. Nov. 5th	9:30 - 1:30
Andover, Memorial Hall Library	Tues. Nov. 16th	10:00 - 2:00
Brockton Main Library	Thurs. Nov. 18th	10:00 - 2:00



Our volunteers provide a voice for children who don't have a parent to speak for them in the special education process.

Register today!
Call 508-792-7679
Email sespp@earthlink.net
www.sespprogram.org





Special Education
Surrogate Parent
Program

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Community Corner

This is the column where we share with you information about some of the individuals and programs that we have connected with as we endeavor to strengthen our connections with the larger community, as well as some of the things they have helped us to accomplish. We would like to offer them our sincere gratitude and thanks!

Kate Devlin Joyce, Associate Director of Public Interest in the Office of Career Services at Boston College (BC) Law School. Kate has been instrumental in publicizing the SESP Program throughout the Boston College community. She has assisted us in advertising among current law students and alumni from both the Law School and the Graduate School of Education. We will be working with Kate to be part of the BC Law Pro Bono Program in the fall of 2010.

Richard Villavicencio, of the Disability Law Center (DLC). Richard coordinated two conferences on Transition for Families, Advocates, and Attorneys in Fitchburg and New Bedford. The SESP Program had an information table at both events. It was a wonderful opportunity not only to connect with folks from both of those communities, but also to recruit new volunteers.

Darlene Spencer, Executive Director of the New Bedford Community Connections Coalition. Darlene has been a long time supporter of our work. She has assisted us by publicizing the SESP

Program to her many community contacts in New Bedford. Darlene lent an extra hand by personally promoting our training at UMASS School of Law-Dartmouth in May 2010.

Heather Arrighi and David Powell, of the Caring Adults Team at *Brockton's Promise*. Heather and David welcomed us in joining their efforts in coordinating the Caring Adults Team - Mentor Rally in January 2010. Some 350 Community Members braved a cold winter night to learn about how they can become a Caring Adult/Mentor with numerous organizations, including the SESP Program!

Valerie Kapilow, Associate Director Career Services/Co-Director of Public Interest at Northeastern Law School. Valerie warmly welcomed us to present to staff from the Office of Career Services. She will assist us in advertising our volunteer opportunity with both students and alumni from Northeastern Law. Additionally, Valerie has connected us with faculty from the School of Education, to strengthen our outreach to the entire Northeastern University community.

