

The South River Advocate

Vol.2 Issue 4 The Newsletter of SEPTA of South River Jan. 2001

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Oaks/2601>

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News for the New Year:

The Special Education PTA of South River would like to wish everyone best wishes for the new year ahead.

There are many new things ahead for SEPTA, parents and for our children as well. We would like to give you an oversight of what is coming in the months to come.

** The New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) is starting an aggressive campaign to make certain that the New Jersey Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSEP) system of monitoring compliance of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is being enforced. The Feb. 1999 report issued by the US Office of Special Education Programs (USOSEP) issued to the NJOSEP detailing a continued pattern of non-compliance with IDEA noted by federal monitors since 1987. Specific areas noted in the Feb. 1999 report included deficiencies in transitioning, extended school year instruction, and related services. Other areas sighted were ensuring least restrictive environment (LRE) including commitment to placement options, securing placements annually and providing opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in nonacademic activities with typical peers. Also sighted was the NJ OSEP lack of means for monitoring local districts to enforce compliance with IDEA. To find out more on this topic, please fill out and mail the form on page 4 of this newsletter or contact the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council in Trenton, N.J.*

** This year SEPTA is required by the N.J. State PTA to revise its procedure and bi-laws. Any person(s) interested in serving on the committee to accomplish this requirement, please contact us immediately.*

**At the end of this business year (May / June 2001) there will be an open seat on our executive board that must be filled. Please contact any current board member or come to our MAY 2, 2001 meeting for more information on the position and the minimal time requirements you will need to invest in helping out.*

Thank You!

Reminder:

The Office of Special Education Parent Survey should be returned to the Office of Special Education by January 15, 2001.

***** General Public Meeting *****

**The General Public Meeting will be held on
Wednesday, February 7 from 7-9 p.m. at
the South River H.S. Library.**

Please come to voice your concerns, comments or experiences concerning the Special Education Department.

Thank You!

South River Department of Special Education to Start Self-Assessment Process:

I hope you have all enjoyed a happy holiday season, and that this New Year will bring you, "good tidings". I want to take this opportunity to explain to you the details of the Self-Assessment Process including your involvement in that process. As you might be aware, the State Department of Education is responsible for overseeing special education programs throughout the state. The South River Department of Special Education is currently in the midst of the first step of the process, which involves a directed self-monitoring procedure designed to help districts identify areas of strength and weakness. The second step, which will take place next year for us, entails an on site visit by the State Department of Education.

Your input is considered essential in this process. The first vehicle for that input was the Survey that you received in the mail last month. I encourage you to complete it and return it as soon as possible. If you lost it and would like another copy, please call the Office of Special Education at 613-4073 ext.7104. The second vehicle for your input will be a general public meeting that is tentatively scheduled for the end of January/beginning of February 2001. Additional information regarding the focus of this meeting as well as the specific date and time will be forthcoming.

The professional staff has been assessing whether we have been successful in implementing New Jersey Special Education Code. they will continue this process throughout the year. It is their job to identify areas of strength and weakness in our department. When this process has been completed the district will take all the pertinent information and develop an Improvement Plan, which will be reviewed, and monitored by the State Department of Education.

At the end of this academic year I will, through the "Advocate" or in a direct mailing, inform you of essential components of that improvement plan and of their impact on the education of your child. I want to thank you in advance for your help in this matter. I strongly believe that when we work together we can build a better future for the children of South River.

Sincerely,

*John J. Marciante, Jr., PhD
Director of Special Education
South River Public Schools*

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Scholarship Program

Available to New Jersey Residents:

The Louise C. Nacca Memorial Scholarship Fund, offered through the Cerebral Palsy of Essex and Hudson County has a scholarship program available to New Jersey residents with physical disabilities who are planning to attend college, graduate, professional, business or technical school.

For more information, please contact Susan Drexler at (973) 751-0200 ext. 209

New Jersey Bar Foundation

Free Seminar on Special Needs, Trusts, and Guardianships:

The New Jersey Bar Foundation is hosting a free seminar on Special Needs, Trusts and Guardianships for People with Serious Disabilities and Mental Illness on Wednesday, January 10, 2001 7-9 p.n. at the Law Center off Ryders Lane. To register or for information on upcoming seminars please contact, Florence Nathan at 1 800- Free Law .

New Online Magazine for Teens with Disabilities:

Disabilities Central, Inc. has announced the new online magazine, "@ctive Teen Beyond all Barriers". This online magazine is written by and for teens with disabilities. It can be found on the Web at a link from <http://disabilitycentral.com>

every child is born with wings...
PROUD
SUPPORTER
OF
SEPTA
OF
SOUTH RIVER
it's with the support of special people they soar

Kids Care Club Launches Volunteer Network for Families:

Kids Care Clubs, a charity which promotes community service projects for children, has announced a new online program called FamilyCares; the first online network for families looking for information and meaningful projects they can do as a team to promote values in their children. To find out more visit their web site at <http://www.familycares.org>

Connecting People with Developmental Disabilities with Providers on the Net:

The ArcLink inc. has launched the first site designed to empower individuals and their families with up-to-date information on services and providers who can meet current needs, The site serves as a resource for assessing needs, understanding the application and eligibility process and searching for providers who can meet their needs. This web site is the first to provide customized, specific information on various sources of assistance available to individuals with disabilities, a provider search which locates specific service providers, allows you to contact self-advocates, family members and professionals nationwide, as well as information on state and local Arc chapters, news and links. For information visit <http://TheArcLink.org>. or call (877) 431-8532 or (812) 332- 2168.

January 2001

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Happy New Year! Winter Recess NO SCHOOL	2 School reopens	3	4 progress reports K-12	5	6 No Kool Kids Bowling
7	8	9	10 N.J. Bar Assoc. Special Needs Trust, Guardianship Seminar 7-9 p.m.	11 SEPTA Executive Board Meeting S.R. Elementary Library 7-9 p.m.	12	13 No Kool Kids Bowling
14	15 <u>PARENT SURVEY DUE</u> to the Office of Special Education Martin Luther King Day NO SCHOOL	16	17	18	19	20 Kool Kids Bowling Mid State Bowling 2-4 p.m.
21	22 Board of Education Pre-Meeting 7:30 p.m. Administration Office	23 Special Child Health Meeting East Brunswick Public Library 7:30 p.m. *please call (732) 745-3187 for more information	24	25 Board of Education Public Meeting 7:30 p.m. H.S. Library	26	27 Kool Kids Bowling Mid State Bowling 2-4 p.m. SAT* H.S. 7:30- 12 noon
28	29	30	31 End of 2nd Marking Period K-12	<p align="center"><u>General Public Meeting</u> <u>will be held on Wed., Feb. 7th 7-9pm.</u> <u>at the South River High School Library</u> <i>Please come and add your experiences, comments or concerns to the self-assessment process.</i></p>		

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January 2001

page 4

The New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council is helping to coordinate a grassroots campaign to recruit and train families and other advocates interested in ensuring that the rights of students with disabilities are protected, and that laws created to ensure services to these children and their families are enforced.

In 1975, Congress passed PL 94-142, the federal law no known as IDEA - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA guarantees all students with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education. One of the basic foundations of this civil rights legislation is the opportunity to attend a regular general education classroom with all necessary supports and services. Billions in federal funds are awarded to the States to help provide these services. In exchange, the States are required to monitor local school districts and ensure enforcement of the Act.

Since 1987, however, federal monitors have consistently found the State of New Jersey to be out of compliance with IDEA. In fact, the non-compliance in New Jersey is so widespread that the US Department of Education has identified New Jersey as one of two "high risk" states for the continued receipt of federal funds. Federal monitors have also found problems with services for infants and toddlers. Caseloads for service coordination are too large, and often, families are required to wait for services to begin.

Over the years the issues and key areas of non-compliance remain the same — Least Restrictive Setting and the failure of the state to exercise general supervision of local school districts. New Jersey has been allowed to continue to receive federal funds, year after year, in spite of its continued failure to comply with the law. School districts that repeatedly break the law continue to receive state and federal funds for special education. This means that no one is watching out for children with disabilities, and there have been no real consequences.

You can be part of the solution. The New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council and other organizations, are launching a statewide IDEA MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT CAMPAIGN. The grassroots effort will offer families and advocates training and support. Participants will be invited to write letters, speak to the press, speak to elected officials, and attend key meetings, at the state and/or local level. No previous experience is required, just interest in ensuring the rights of children with disabilities.



GET INVOLVED...in the DD Council's IDEA Monitoring and Enforcement Campaign.

Complete this form and return it to the address below.

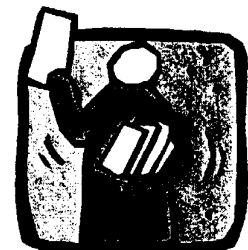
Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

E-mail address: _____ Phone: _____

- I have unique skills or a unique perspective to bring to this effort.
- I am active with a group that would like to learn more. Please call me.
- I want to get involved at the:
- Local Level (my school district)
- Statewide Level



Please send the complete form to NJDDC, P.O. Box 700, Trenton, NJ 08608