



Parent to Parent of Whatcom County

Issue No. 5-07
September/
October 2007
Newsletter

Supporting Families of Children with Special Needs

2001 H Street, Bellingham, WA 98225 (360) 255-2056 www.arcwhatcom.org/p2p p2pwhatcom@nas.com

Welcome, New Super Sitters

Our annual Super Sitter training took place July 19-21, 2007. Fourteen sitters completed the training and received their CPR and Super Sitter certification.

All in attendance were motivated to learn, asked many questions, and were a great group to work with. Throughout the three days of training, I had the privilege to get to know them and their families.

Many sincere thanks go out to our presenters and volunteers: Duane Korthuis at Safety First, Missy Bartel with Connections SLP, Courtney Carlson, Kim Thiessen, and Elizabeth Olson. Also special thanks to Maureen Godwin, Susan Jewell, and the supportive staff of The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center.

Submitted by Christine Griffin



Our happy group of newly trained Super Sitters poses for the camera on the last day of training.

All About Super Sitters

Super Sitters are young men and women, ages 12+, trained to care for children who have physical and/or developmental disabilities.

Parent to Parent's training topics include: communicating with parents, responsive play, alternative communication systems, adaptive equipment, special needs specifics, emergency procedures, First Aid & Child/Infant CPR Certification, and inclusion of children of all abilities. Please call us at (360)255-2056 to request a copy of our Super Sitter list if you could use their help.

Our Summer 2007 Family Picnic

Despite the threat of summer showers there was fun had by those who came to our annual family picnic.

In attendance were 50 smiling faces, all enjoying a family style pot luck and barbecue. The kids played with the new Super Sitters, got their face painted, blew bubbles, or had fun swinging and climbing on the playground. Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities had a chance to connect with one another.

We would like to thank our great volunteers in making this event a success; Steve and Julee Johnson, Becky Boutwell, Kathy Adams, Elizabeth and Joe Olson, and the 2007 Super sitter team. We'd also like to express our thanks again to Amanda Grove with Bellingham Parks and Recreation for co-sponsoring the event.

Submitted by Christine Griffin



Happy Memories from our 2007 P2P Picnic!

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Mission Statement: The Parent to Parent Support Program provides emotional support and information to families of a newborn or a newly diagnosed child with a disability or special health care need. "Helping Parents" are parents who provide one-on-one support to other parents who have a child with similar needs.



You can help.



You are invited to the

Parent to Parent HELPING PARENT TRAINING

**Saturday, November 3, 2007
9:00 am - 2:00 pm**

**The Arc's Dan Godwin Community
Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham**

Join other parents of children with special needs in a relaxed training environment and learn how to provide emotional support and resources to families who have just found out their child has a disability and/or chronic illness.

Your experience can help others cope and grow!

Morning snack and lunch will be provided, and a parent stipend will be available to assist with child care costs.

Please RSVP by October 29, 2007 to Jennifer or Christine at (360)255-2056.

Local Leadership Development Program

We want YOU to have the training, information and experience needed to make a difference for yourself or your family member.

Benefits to participants will include:

- Develop leadership skills and help advance the disability movement
- Become informed about government and education programs
- Understand the history of the developmental disabilities movement and current legislative efforts
- Launch a community project with the group

The program will consist of seven 1½ day workshops (held on Friday evenings and Saturdays) from September 2007 - November 2008.

All sessions will be held in Bellingham at the Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center.

A legislative weekend in December will be held in Olympia.

For an application or more information, please contact Amy McKinley, Leadership Grant Coordinator, at (360) 715-0170 ext. 309 or amym@arcwhatcom.org.



Sibshops: A program just for brothers and sisters (ages 8-13 years) of children with special needs.

Please join us for an evening of swimming, pizza, and fun!

**Friday, October 26, 2007
7:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Meet at Arne Hanna Aquatic Center,
1114 Potter St, Bellingham,
Just off of Lakeway**

For questions or to RSVP by October 22, please call Parent to Parent at 255-2056 ext. 1 and leave a message for Jennifer.



Happily Announcing Parent to Parent Additions!

Ava Julianna, born to Parent to Parent Coordinator Jennifer Schouten, husband Craig, and big brother Dominic on August 8, 2007!

&

Finn Hollis, born to Hispanic Outreach Coordinator Alina Zollfrank, Papa James, and big sister Lilo on April 21, 2007!

We thank all of you for your kind support, good wishes, and happy thoughts.

a parent's perspective



It seems like a decade ago, but I can still remember. We found out that our unborn baby had a serious heart defect that would require open-heart surgery during the first year of life. We headed to Seattle the next week to meet with our new doctors at Swedish Medical Center, as that was where our baby would be born. A few days later we were in Bellingham meeting with our regular doctor to go over some test results. I recall his words; "It's a little boy, and he has Down syndrome." A little while later, after the tears slowed a little, he said, "You've only got a couple of weeks to make a decision."

It was a difficult ride home from the doctor's office that day. Can we raise this child? What if we have to spend a month in the hospital in Seattle? What about our two-year old daughter, Christen? How will this affect her? How can we afford all this?

Well, we made the right decision. Back and forth to Seattle we went until it seemed like a trip to the corner store. Jason was delivered four and half weeks early by emergency C-section and spent the first seven and a half weeks of his life at Swedish. He was born six years ago on Father's Day. Jason came home with a feeding tube in his nose and went back a couple of months later to get his first G-tube, as oral feeding was all but non-existent. When Jason was five and a half months old, we took him back to Swedish for open-heart surgery. It was a short stay that time, the surgery was a great success, and Jason was on his way.

So it's been over six years now, and we're still here. Jason's the most adorable and loving little boy and has been one of the biggest blessings in our family's life. I never imagined that eating could be such a struggle. I've prayed often that God would give me the patience and wisdom to work with Jason daily on his feeding issues. After several years of struggling and trying everything imaginable, we've finally reached a point where he is eating a majority of his food orally and we are working on foods other than yogurt, baby food, and pudding. Just the other day, he ate some broccoli, and today he ate potato salad. I can see the light at the end of this tunnel, and the last feeding tube will go in the garbage soon. Next we will start on potty training. Hopefully, that won't take six years. If it does, I've got more patience and love than ever.

So what does Jason do? Well, he loves to laugh and smile a lot and tear around the yard when it's not raining. He enjoys riding horses, jumping on the trampoline, playing in the swimming pool, and riding on Grampa's tractor. Jason goes to school and does most of the same things that all little kids do. He's just a little bit behind, and I'm okay with that.

What's it like being the father of a child with Down syndrome? It's definitely emotional. There are more tears and frustration at times when dealing with medical issues and struggles with speech and learning. When my son has success, however, there's a big celebration. Let your kids be successful and celebrate constantly-it helps them grow. Raising a child with special needs is a lot like raising any other child, and you have to let them be a child first. Despite the few struggles and issues with raising Jason, the whole thing has really been an absolute blast.

Submitted by Dave Moors (Jason's Dad)



Jason and his dad discovering the world together --- one step or bike ride at a time!

September

Tuesday, September 11

WHATCOM INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL (WICC) AT-LARGE MEETING

12 - 1:30 pm

Garden Street Family Center

1231 N. Garden Street, Bellingham

Open to all community members, professionals, and parents. The WICC is a group of service providers that provide early intervention services for children ages 0-6. Free child care provided. Please call Beverly Porter at (360) 715-0170, ext. 306 to RSVP for child care at least 7 days in advance.

Monday, September 17

PARENT TO PARENT SUPPORT MEETING *

7 - 8:30 pm

WCEL, 2001 H Street, Bellingham

Topic: School Issues

Guest Speaker: Parent Advocate, The Arc of Whatcom County

Saturday, September 22

ALL-DAY PARENT TO PARENT SIBSHOP

10 am - 2 pm

Bloedel Donovan Beach Pavilion, Bellingham

Please register by September 17. An event for brothers and sisters ages 8-13 years who have a sibling with a disability. For more information, call (360)255-2056.

Announcements from Whatcom Center for Early Learning (WCEL):

WCEL closed for Summer Break: August 18 through September 4.

Playgroup field trips (former families, please join us!):

Sept. 10, 11, 12 at Elizabeth Park; regular Playgroup times

Sept. 24, 25, 26 at Lynden City Park (new playground); at 10:00 am.

Please call (360)671-3660 for more information about WCEL's programs.

Celebrating Children...Creating Futures
Fundraiser for WCEL will be held February 9, 2008. If you are interested in helping us prepare for our celebration, please contact Kathy Adams (360) 223-1064.

October

Monday, October 15

PARENT TO PARENT SUPPORT MEETING *

7 - 8:30 pm

WCEL, 2001 H Street, Bellingham

Please join other families to discuss the challenges and joys of parenting children with special needs and to receive emotional support.

Friday, October 26

PARENT TO PARENT SWIMMING & PIZZA SIBSHOP

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Arne Hanna Aquatic Center

Please register by October 22. An event for brothers and sisters ages 8-13 years who have a sibling with a disability. For more information, please call (360)255-2056. See page 2 for details.

November



Mark your calendars!

Saturday, November 3

PARENT TO PARENT HELPING PARENT TRAINING

9 am - 2 pm

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center, Bellingham

Please see page 2 for more information.

Monday, November 19

PARENT TO PARENT SUPPORT MEETING *

7-8:30 pm

WCEL, 2001 H Street, Bellingham

Topic: Educational Toys

Event, Date, and Time to be Announced!

HISPANIC OUTREACH GET-TOGETHER

An event exclusively for Hispanic families who have a child with a disability and/or chronic illness. For more information, please call (360)255-2056 ext. 2.

*** Parent to Parent support meetings are held at WCEL, 2001 H Street, Bellingham. Child care and treats are provided. Please RSVP to (360) 255-2056 at least 36 hours in advance for on-site child care.**

Opportunity to Share Advice

One of our new features is "a parent's perspective," and we would greatly appreciate your advice, input and wisdom! This column is an opportunity for parents to offer helpful suggestions to fellow parents along this roller coaster journey of special needs. Is there something in particular that has helped you? Do you have advice you wish to share? Please contact P2P at (360)255-2056, and let's discuss your ideas. Thank you very much!

Special Thanks to Our Volunteers and Presenters

We are deeply grateful to our volunteers and community partners who help make our programs such a success! Your time, expertise, and compassion help make a difference in our community. Thank you!

Guest Presenters for June:

Sarah Weg, DsO
Kristy Gillig, DsO

Helping Parents who answered the P2P phone:

July - Dorene Moors
August - Faith Gallatin

A special thank you to:

Sarah Weg for providing treats for the July Support Group Meeting;

Steve Johnson for playing BBQ master;

Becky Boutwell, Elizabeth Olson, and Kathy Adams for all their support with the Super Sitter Training and annual picnic;

Karlene Carlson for helping with the Super Sitter Training and making bubbles for our picnic;

Courtney Carlson for sharing her experience during Super Sitter Training;

Kim Thiessen for presenting at our Super Sitter Training;

Susan Jewell and Maureen Godwin & The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center for use of their space during the Super Sitter Training;

Amanda Grove & Bellingham Park and Recreation for co-sponsoring the picnic and use of the Small Beach Pavilion.

And finally, a fond farewell, good luck, and a million thanks to Janelle Kann, our awesome child care provider for P2P support group meetings and special events. Janelle is off to university in Oregon and, as we are sure, will grace her new community with the level of involvement and commitment we have enjoyed over the past year!

Parent to Parent Office

Whatcom Center for Early Learning*
2001 H Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 255-2056
p2pwhatcom@nas.com

Jennifer Schouten, Coordinator - Ext. 1
Christine Griffin, Asst. Coordinator - Ext. 3

September/October Office Hours:

Monday 1:00 - 3:30 pm
Tuesday 10:30 am - 1:00 pm
Wednesday 1:00 - 3:30 pm
Thursday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

and by appointment

Hispanic Outreach

Alina Zollfrank, Outreach Coordinator - Ext. 2
p2phispanic@nas.com
Saturday 12 noon - 2:00 pm

* WCEL is the host agency for the P2P office.

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The Parent to Parent of Whatcom County Newsletter is published six times a year by The Arc of Whatcom County
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 715-0170



Change of Address?

Please email our office (p2pwhatcom@nas.com) or call (360) 255-2056 with your new address and phone number to avoid returned mail. We also have P2P information available nationwide and can connect you to the program in your new area.

¿En español?

If you would like a newsletter for Padres a Padres (or know someone who could benefit from it), call Alina (360) 255-2056, ext. 2 with the recipient's full name, mailing address, and phone number.

¿Quiere recibir nuestro boletín de Padres a padres en español? Por favor, llame a Alina, la Coordinadora para la comunidad hispana, al 255-2056 y marque el 2 para dejar un mensaje. Incluya su nombre, número de teléfono y dirección.

Do we have your email address?

We are working to create a more connected Parent to Parent Community and would like to keep you updated with timely information and announcements. If interested, please email p2pwhatcom@nas.com. All email addresses remain confidential.



Upcoming Parent to Parent Support Meetings

Monday, September 17, 2007, 7 - 8:30 pm

Guest Speaker: Parent Advocate from The Arc of Whatcom County
Topic: School Issues



Monday, October 15, 7 - 8:30 pm

All Parent to Parent support meetings are held at Whatcom Center for Early Learning: 2001 H Street, Bellingham. Come join us for support, fun, and food! Free child care is provided by trained Super Sitters. Please RSVP to (360) 255-2056 at least 36 hours in advance if you need child care. We look forward to seeing you very soon!

News from DsO (Down syndrome Outreach)

The Buddy Walk is Here!

Down syndrome Outreach is proud to announce its 4th Annual Buddy Walk to be held at the Maritime Heritage Park in Bellingham. Come support your friends, family, co-workers, and buddies as we celebrate National Down syndrome Month! We'll have music, face-painting, door prizes, and more. We can't wait to see you there!

October 6, 2007

11:00 am to 3:00 pm Maritime Heritage Park in Bellingham

And ... **Smiles of Life Calendars** will be available in September!

For more information on the Buddy Walk and calendar sales, please contact

Kristy Gillig at Down syndrome Outreach at 715-0170 ext. 307