

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- How can you get involved?
- Demystifying the unpredictable nature of autism
- Building self esteem and social skills
- Indoor retreats
- Save your "Box Tops for Education"

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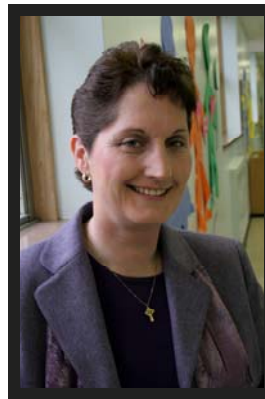
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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Summer is over, and as the new school year began, the Clare Woods Academy staff hit the ground running. Before students returned to school the staff was busy re-reading their lessons and classrooms. In addition, faculty meetings are a necessary start to each school year in order to keep staff current on educational, policy, programming changes, and the mandatory recertifications required by the State of Illinois.

This year the staff attended a seminar on Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is an assessment and intervention process for identifying students at risk in a systematic fashion. It is based on a three-tier model whereby monitoring and intervention increases as the students progress decreases. The purpose of RTI is to establish whether a child is merely in need of more intensive instruction or truly requires a very specialized program only available through identification and an IEP.

At Clare Woods Academy, we are developing tracking and a data collection system across all curricular areas as well to show districts/parents how students have responded to our intervention. As time progresses and the RTI model is used, it will increasingly compel school districts to utilize more



Anne Craig
Principal

of their own in-district resources for the most challenging students before they are able to make an out-of-district referral. As those referrals begin to emerge, Clare Woods Academy will need to be adequately prepared with suitable programs.

To gear up for more complicated student referrals, we have changed our behavior program. We now have five behavior specialists on site. Our behavior specialists will respond to all behavior crisis situations as well as provide counseling services. They will also be responsible for data collection of behaviors for the functional behavior analysis and writing the behavior intervention plan. The behavior specialists will be working closely with our Life Skills team and

with Justin Catt and Marcia Reavley, our P.E. teacher and our school nurse to carry out the health education curriculum. For more information on our behavior specialists, please see page 6.

Our Life Skills curriculum has also been revamped. For the past several years, our Life Skills teacher was part-time and focused primarily on our Vocational Department. In discussing this matter with the teachers, it was decided that students in all of the departments would benefit from focused attention to life skills. Life skills involve personal hygiene, grocery shopping, bed making, etc.--skills that pave the way for independent living. Although it is virtually unheard of in life skills training to begin instruction with younger children, we have decided to move ahead so as these students move into the Intermediate, High School, and Vocational departments, Life Skills will be ingrained. With respect to the older students, our new Life Skills Program will address transition-planning based on the domains of self/individual, family, school, and community. We welcome Carol Boeck and Kristen Owens to their new positions as Life Skills teachers.

I look forward to watching your children learn and grow.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

I have always been a fan of the four seasons. I believe each season change brings something special and I am most fascinated with how Mother Nature works. Just the other day as I was driving through town, the foliage change, such an awesome display of colors, reminded me that the fall season is upon us.

The Capital Campaign Program is all about change. Change to take Clare Wood Academy into a new season - a season of promise. Clearly, the vision at CWA is not to address only what we see today, but to address the future. What do we need to do today to meet the needs of tomorrow?

I am continuously honored to

be in the company of parents like you who want to make a difference. I look forward to our gatherings at school events and other chance opportunities to greet, meet and share. This summer several gatherings were hosted at the homes of Parent Capital Campaign Committee members. This was seen as a great opportunity for parents to relax, satisfy the palate with some really good food, and share experiences as parents of children who attend CWA. What was interesting was that everyone was on the same page – **“what do we need to do and how can we help?”** On October 6th, 13th and 20th parents of the Primary, Intermediate, High School and Vocational departments are invited to the homes

of three Parent Committee members. Much like the summer gatherings, you are invited to attend one of these gatherings to unwind, share, enjoy time with one another and hear about the plans for Clare Wood Academy. Please contact the school office to find out the location of your meeting.

I thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing you soon.



Rich Francis

Capital Campaign Chair

EDITORS' COMMENTS

“Because their dreams matter...”

We look forward to keeping you informed of any newsworthy items that may be of interest to the parents of our students. This is a publication for you. We will make it our priority to include any legislative changes, helpful suggestions, classes, activities, and other information that we feel will benefit you and your child.

At the same time, we welcome all suggestions, information, or anecdotes you are willing to provide to this newsletter. Together we can help make the future a brighter one for the children we care so much about.

Comments or questions? Please email us at mmcnerney@blcinc.org.

Editors

Terri Mertz
Moisette McNerney

See How We've Grown...

As we draw closer to our 40th anniversary celebration next year, this is a great opportunity to reflect back upon our accomplishments and see just how far we have come.

- Impressive Curriculum
- Expanded Programming
- Nurtured Students
- Talented and Caring Staff



Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew

by Ellen Notbohm

Some days it seems the only predictable thing about it is the unpredictability. The only consistent attribute -- the inconsistency. No question: autism can be baffling. And though once thought "incurable," that notion is crumbling in the face of ever-increasing knowledge. Every day, individuals with autism show us that they can overcome, compensate for and manage many of its most challenging aspects. Understanding their needs can have a tremendous impact on a child's journey towards productive, independent adulthood. Autism is a "spectrum" disorder, but core elements exist. Here are ten things the every child with autism wishes you knew:

1. I am first and foremost a child. I have autism. I am not primarily "autistic." My autism is but one aspect of my total character. Like you, I am a person with thoughts, feelings, and talents. I am still unfolding; we don't yet know what I may be capable of. Defining me by one characteristic runs the danger of setting up an expectation that may be too low. If I get a sense that you don't think I "can do it," my natural response may be: Why try?

2. My sensory perceptions are disordered. The ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches of everyday life that you may not even notice can be hyperacute and downright painful for me. I may appear withdrawn or belligerent, but I am really just trying to defend myself from a world that is intrusively loud, blindingly bright, offensively smelly, difficult to navigate. My brain cannot filter the multiple inputs and I frequently feel overloaded, disoriented and unsettled in my own skin.

3. Please distinguish between won't and can't. It isn't that I don't listen to instructions. It's that I can't understand you. When you call to me from across the room, I hear: *"*^#@, Billy. #\$\$&*"* Instead, come speak directly to me in plain words:

"Please put your book in your desk, Billy. It's time to go to lunch." This tells me what you want me to do and what is going to happen next. Now it's much easier for me to comply.

4. I am a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally. When you say, "Hold your horses, cowboy!" what you really mean is "Please stop running." Don't tell me something is a "piece of cake" when there is no desert in sight and what you really mean is, "This will be easy for you to do." Idioms, puns, nuances and sarcasm are lost on me.

5. Be patient with my limited vocabulary. It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't know the words to describe my feelings. I may be hungry, frustrated, frightened, or confused, but those words are beyond my ability to express. Be alert for body language, withdrawal, agitation or other signs that something is wrong.

6. Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually oriented. Show, rather than tell me how to do something. And show me many times; patient repetition helps me learn. A visual schedule is extremely helpful. Like your day planner, it relieves me of the stress of having to remember what comes next. It helps me manage my time -- and meet your expectations.

7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do. Like you, I can't learn in an environment where I'm constantly made to feel that I'm not good enough or that I need fixing. Trying anything new when I am almost sure to be met with criticism, however "constructive," becomes something to be avoided. Look for my strengths and you'll find them. There's more than one right way to do most things.

8. Help me with social interactions. It may look like I don't want to interact with other kids, but I simply don't know how to start a conversation or enter a play situation. Encourage other children to invite me to join them at kickball or hoops; I may be delighted to be included.

9. Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns. Meltdowns and blow-ups are even more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload. If you can figure out why my meltdowns occur, they can be prevented. Keep a log noting times, settings, activities, people. A pattern may emerge.

10. Love me unconditionally. Banish thoughts like, "If he would just..." Let go of self-fulfilling prophecies like "She'll never...." I didn't choose to have autism. Remember that it's happening to me, not you. Without your support, my chances of successful, self-reliant adulthood are slim. With your support and guidance, the possibilities are broader than you might think.

I promise you—I'm worth it.

This article has been condensed from its original version. It can be viewed in its entirety at:
http://www.ellennotbohm.com/ten_things_article.html

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Two-time ForeWord Book of the Year finalist Ellen Notbohm is author of **Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew** and **Ten Things Your Student with Autism Wishes You Knew**. She is also co-author of the award-winning **1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**, a columnist for *Autism Asperger's Digest* and *Children's Voice*, and a contributor to numerous publications and websites around the world. Her new book, **The Autism Trail Guide: Postcards from the Road Less Traveled**, is a September 2007 release. To contact Ellen or explore her work, please visit www.ellennotbohm.com.

RESOURCE CORNER

TIME TO MOVE INDOORS

By Terri Mertz

As summer drifts into fall, families tend to look for increased indoor pursuits that they can enjoy together. What better combination can an outing provide than an opportunity to learn new things in unique and imaginative ways? Such are the venues that are listed here—all of them promising fun and entertainment as well. Most locales listed are in the near northwest and western suburbs.

DuPage Children's Museum offers kids the chance to build with real tools, travel through an "Air Works" wind tunnel, make healthy munchies and learn good eating choices. There are numerous ongoing exhibits and events such as "Animals in Artland."

301 N. Washington St., Naperville (630) 637-8000.
www.dupagechildrensmuseum.org

SciTech Hands-On Museum enables children to find the fun in science and math at this interactive science center. The museum house more than 200 hands-on exhibits.

18 W. Benton, Aurora (630) 859-3434.
www.scitech.museum

Discovery Center Museum is rated among the top four children's museums in the U.S. by *Child* magazine. The center is located in Rockford, but considering what it offers, a trip there might be worthwhile. Among features included are over 250 hands-on exhibits, a planetarium, outdoor park, and a special area for children under six.

711 N. Main St., Rockford (815) 963-6769.
www.DiscoveryCenterMuseum.org

Arlington Heights Historical Museum has several historic 1900's-era buildings, including a soda factory, log cabin, and a veteran's home. There is a large collection of dolls from the past, carpentry and locksmith shops, a coach house and beautiful dioramas. Tours are available by appointment.

110 W. Fremont St., Arlington Heights (847) 255-1225.
www.amuseum.org

Elgin Public Museum features touchable exhibits such as dino skulls, a puppet theater, tornado tubes and microscopes. Many special workshops and activities are available; contact the museum for

further information and to register.

225 Grand Blvd., Elgin (847) 741-6655.
www.elginpublicmuseum.org

*Museums offer
an absolutely unique
learning
experience for
families. For
children, it's a
context in which they can
learn alongside parents
and siblings—
at their
own pace.*

There are many other fine facilities throughout the Chicago area. To find out more check the website
www.ChicagoParent.com.

HINTS FOR BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS IN YOUR CHILD

By Moissette McNerney

Research shows that special needs children are more likely to suffer from lack of self-esteem than their peers and they benefit from the ongoing teaching of social skills in the classroom and at home. Storybooks, role-playing, and enrolling your child in outside activities are useful ways to help build and maintain social skills. Storybooks often focus on friendships and social interaction and can lead to a discussion of the components of successful interactions with others. Compare the storybook to situations that occur in everyday life and use role-playing to help your child to see social interactions at work. The themes to look for in a book are cooperation, sharing, taking turns, being respectful, and listening, to name a few.

Below is a list of hints parents can use to develop positive feelings of self-worth in their children:

Help your child feel special and appreciated.

Research shows that one of the main factors that contribute to a child developing optimism and strength is the presence of at least one adult who helps the child to feel special and appreciated.

Avoid comments that are judgmental and instead, frame them in more positive terms.

For example, a remark that often sounds critical is, "Try harder and put forth more effort." Many children do try hard and still have trouble. Instead say, "We have to figure out a better plan to help you learn." This approach reinforces problem-solving skills.

Be a compassionate parent. Many well-intended parents, out of their own frustration, have been heard to say something such as "Why won't you listen to me?" If your child is having learning difficulties, it is best to be compassionate and say to your child that you know she is struggling; then you can cast the struggle into a problem to be solved and involve her in thinking about possible answers.

Provide choices for your child. This will also alleviate power struggles. For example, ask your child if he would like to be reminded five or ten minutes before bedtime to get ready for bed. These beginning choices help establish a feeling of control over one's life.

Do not compare siblings. Siblings should not be compared to one another. It is important to highlight the strengths of all children in your family.

Provide opportunities for children to help.

Youngsters seem to have an instinctual need to help others. Offering opportunities for children to help is a very real way of displaying their strengths and improves your child's self-esteem.

Have practical expectations and goals for your child.

Realistic expectations and goals provide your child with a sense of control. The growth of self control goes hand-in-hand with self-esteem.

Our children are sensitive and thrive in a positive environment. These are a few ways parents can foster that.



G2 student Donte plays with a furry companion at the Light Center.

MEET THE BEHAVIOR TEAM

BY TERRI MERTZ

The CWA Behavior Program includes a charting and tracking system to reinforce student behavior. While a similar system has been implemented in recent years, the current format places more emphasis on appropriate behavior and recognition of positive performance. Student conduct and character traits are assessed across the curriculum so that evaluation is based on a common criteria throughout the school day. Opportunities for more frequent reinforcement include daily rewards, as well as weekly visits to the school store and special parties/events on a monthly basis.

The staffing plan has also undergone restructuring. Jennifer Ziolkowski and Laura Ratini are behavior specialists. Newly hired staff includes Margaret Niedziewiecki, Debbie Walsh, and Megan Mueller.

Margaret earned her M.A. in Clinical Psychology at Argosy University in Schaumburg. Before coming to Clare Woods, she was employed at Connections Day School in Libertyville. Regarding her initial impressions of CWA, she observed, "The staff seems to be working together. It seems all the staff gives 110%."

Debbie received her Master's degree from Aurora University. Her work experience includes Ray Walker Community Head Start where she served as a Family Service Specialist. Prior to her employment at Clare Woods, she was with the McHenry County Youth Service Bureau. Through her work at CWA she hopes to provide positive therapeutic support and education to the students.

When asked what prompted her to apply to Clare Woods, Megan replied that she "...enjoyed working with students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Clare Woods is the one place I can do all of that and more." She has a Master's of School Counseling degree from National Louis University and has previously worked at the Camelot Care Center.

The staff at CWA welcomes the new Behavior Specialists and looks forward to working closely with the Behavior Team in the coming school year.

*Bartlett Learning Center, Inc.
requests the pleasure of
your company for the annual
dinner dance*

"Starlight and Magic"

*EFS Foundation
Grand Sponsor*

*Saturday, November 19th
Villa Olivia Country Club
Route 20 and Naperville Rd.,
Bartlett Illinois*

*Cash Bar 6:00 p.m.
Dinner 7:15 p.m.*

*Dancing to the Music of
Mike Gallo*

*Phone Reservations
630-289-4275*

FROM A PTO PERSPECTIVE

The PTO would like to welcome everyone back! We have had a great time the past couple of months planning exciting events and activities for the upcoming 2007-2008 school year.

By now everyone should have received their PTO Family Packet detailing our ongoing programs including Box Tops, Manna and Spirit Wear along with the announcement of our Family Fall Festival and Dance on Saturday, October 27th. But in addition to these programs, we would like to take a moment and talk about why the PTO is so important.

We are all in a very unique position; we understand what it is like to raise a special needs child. We have all sat in doctor's offices, had diagnostic testing done, tried diets, experimented with medication

and dealt with the cruelty of side effects. We understand what a "bad day" means and have felt the frustration of helplessness.

We also understand the joy we experience when our child has a perfect week or is able to sit still during an entire assembly. Our eyes brim with tears during the Christmas Program and Spring Play as we applaud the accomplishments of our sons and daughters. And our children have taught all of us patience, humility and appreciation for the little things.

The PTO is an organization that welcomes parents and gives us an opportunity to share our triumphs and concerns with our families. Once a month we discuss how we can help make the CWA experience even better for our children and how we can help

the staff. We also enjoy being with one another and have made lasting friendships with other PTO parents.

We understand that time is a precious commodity for families and our obligations are even more than most. If monthly meetings aren't a possibility, we ask that you try to participate in anyway that you can...whether that's by ordering gift certificates through Manna; collecting Box Tops; registering your Dominick's Fresh Value Card; or sending in your McDonald's receipts. All are invaluable to us.

We hope all families will join the PTO and participate in the activities we have planned for this school year. If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Medina at mc2mom@aol.com.

The Clare Woods Academy PTO Board of Directors

Patricia Medina
President

Marianne Vician
Vice President

Sarah Donnelly
Secretary

Lourdes Diamond
Treasurer

FAMILY FALL FESTIVAL & DANCE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27TH
1-4 P.M.

**YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE INVITED FOR AN
AFTERNOON OF FAMILY FALL FUN!**

- ◆Games◆Cookie Decorating
- ◆Arts & Crafts◆Face Painting
- ◆DJ◆Refreshments



CWA staff begins the new school year.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct. 15-19 Spirit Week
- Oct. 19 Homecoming Dance
- Oct. 27 Family Fall Festival & Dance
- Nov. 10 Dinner Dance
- Nov. 19 School Improvement Day
No Classes
- Nov. 20 Parent/Teacher Conferences
No Classes
- Nov. 21-25 Thanksgiving Holiday
No Classes
- Dec. 15 CWA Choir at Heartland Voices
- Dec. 21 Holiday Concert
- Dec. 21-Jan. 6 Winter Break
No Classes



Marisa and Christian from the Primary Department pose with a friend while on a field trip to the Light Center. This exceptional place provides animal-assisted activities and therapeutic programs for challenged individuals.

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**CLARE WOODS
ACADEMY**

