



Newsletter for Fall 2015

Advocating Daily

DIRECTOR'S CORNER BY AISHA JOHNSON

Believe it or not, school is here once again, and for students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that means more than putting fresh pencils in a backpack and getting new clothes. Starting off on the right foot is all about a smooth transition from summertime relaxation to school time structure. This can not only be difficult for children but for parents as well. As a parent I know how hard of a transition back to school can be, but FHF SELA has the support you need.

If you're new to the IEP process or simply needing a refresher, our education advocate Vanessa Herrera can help you through every twist and turn. But as any experienced IEP participant knows, the devil is certainly in the details, which is where our Good Idea Manual comes into play.

No matter what the IEP says, however, the classroom can be a different story. Our behavior workshops break down the secrets to keeping a student with a disability focused and out of trouble.

Lastly, our transition expert helps you keep your eyes on the prize. Eventually everyone will become an adult, so now is the time to plan for what will come next. Consider your student's strengths and weaknesses and build on them both at home and at school.

FHF is your one stop shop for all of your support and advocacy needs. Contact our Education Advocate with your needs also make sure you are signed up to receive news on all our GREAT workshops. You can do this by calling our office or signing up on our website at www.fhfsela.org. As always we look forward to supporting you on this journey.

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**Families Helping Families
SELA**

7240 Crowder Blvd Ste 202

New Orleans LA 70127

fhfsela.org

504-943-0343



BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: CLAUDIA SMITH

It would probably be easier to discuss when I was *NOT* somehow involved in a community service event designed to serve others. I have been employed by Xerox Corporation for the past 37 years and I am a lifelong resident of New Orleans. It has been of utmost importance to me that I make positive and lasting contributions to society, in general, and to special needs projects, in particular. I especially enjoy participating in causes that will improve the lives of children. Additionally, as I serve in my local community, I have been instrumental in organizing Anti-Litter Clean Street campaigns, Neighborhood Watch campaigns, a member of a team that erected a Kaboom

Playground, and various other church and civic activities. For the past 14 years, I have served as the Xerox Community Involvement Coordinator orchestrating volunteers and projects to support the causes of various non-profit agencies. As Coordinator, I have been instrumental in developing partnerships with several local agencies: ARC; Project SKIP – A camp for at risk youth, youth with long-term or terminal illnesses, or youth with a disability; Special Olympics; Orleans Parish School System; Habitat for Humanity; Remote Area Medical campaign - a mobile medical unit that provided week-long free medical, dental and vision services to the citizens of New Orleans and the surround-

“It has been of the utmost importance to me that I make positive and lasting contributions to society”

Board Members

Donnica Conway

Willie Martin

Molly Sullivan

Claudia Smith

Robert Fischer

Jim Durbin

FHF SELA Staff

Aisha Johnson

Shay Hunter

Vanessa Herrera

Shannon Rushing

Cynthia Smith

Rickii Ainey

Sharla Green

Janice Alexander

Fay Daspit

ing area; and Bridge House/Grace House.

In 2007 I became a Board Member with FHFSELA and it has been my distinct honor to have consistently served in various capacities and assisted in the success of several fundraisers and educational programs. I fully believe and support the vision statement of FHFSELA that speaks to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. The goal is to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live and be fully included “*in school, work, and recreational activities.*” I have learned so much serving as a board member, but I soon desired to expand my knowledge base and work closer with the staff in order to better serve the agency. As such, in 2012 when the opportunity became available through my employer, I was approved to utilize the Social Service Leave Program that allowed me to dedicate myself to FHFSELA – as a full-time staff member – for 7 months. The experience was truly rewarding and informative and as a result, I am a much more productive board member.

Another reason I have sustained my association with FHFSELA is the staff's unwavering commitment to improving the lives of our clients. Their enthusiasm and creativity is without bounds and has resulted in the development and execution of quality educational programs, enlightening advocacy training events and community awareness campaigns. Compassion and empathy comes naturally to the staff – as they “talk-the-talk and walk-the-walk”. This special connection with our clients sets this organization apart from many other service agencies.

If you are seeking to invest your time, expertise and goodwill into a worthy non-profit agency--- **look no further!** We welcome your visit or your phone call. Our staff and Board Members are eager to meet you.

"IEP 101"

AUGUST 27, 2015
11:00 AM-1:00PM
5641 Read Blvd
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70127

"THE IEP TEAM MEETING: DEVELOPING THE IEP"
ADDITIONAL
TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS
PARENTS HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE SPECIAL EDUCATION WORK!
WHAT THE CHILD CAN DO- HIS OR HER STRENGTHS
THE PARENTS CONCERN (MUST BE ADDRESSED BY THE SCHOOL)
EVALUATION RESULTS
ACADEMIC NEEDS
FUNCTIONAL NEEDS
ROUTINE ACTIVITIES



REGISTER TODAY!
srushing@fhfsela.org
504-943-0343
FOOD WILL BE SERVED



BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

1. Begin the regular school year routine before returning to the classroom. August is the time to start early bedtimes, regular meal hours, routine morning tasks like getting dressed promptly and brushing teeth and maybe even homework assignments. Over the summer, some or all of these things may have fallen by the wayside. Now is the time to gradually integrate them back into your schedule and routine. **2. Inform teachers and staff of any major changes that have happened over the summer, good or bad.** A lot can change for your child over the summer, like mastering potty training or learning to dress on his or her own. Those are good things. But, negative changes can happen too, like the appearance of self-injury, more frequent outbursts, or a newly discovered food allergy. Then, of course, there is the straightforward march-of-life: the onset of puberty or a new baby in the house. Your child's teachers and aides need to know of any major changes as it can affect how they work with your child. Tell them about the "new normal" in your child's life, and also be sure to warn them of any stressors that can cause difficulties for a child who cannot communicate fully. **3. Ask the school's administration if any major changes have taken place on its end.** Find out if there are changes to your school's special ed department or in any policies. If there is new staff, I strongly suggest you meet with them and call an IEP. **4. Now is the time to organize and plan for improved school-day nutrition and eating.** Many parents say, 'I'd like my kid to eat better but I don't have time to plan for that!' Now is the time to tackle that excuse. Finding healthy food, free of GMOs, preservatives, and sugar (think anything that comes in a package) is challenging, but studies have shown that preservatives and food dyes may heighten issues like ADHD, aggression, and a lack of focus. Ask your doctor about natural, healthy supplements that support brain development to see if they are a good option for your child.

MEET OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER:

SHANNON RUSHING

Shannon Rushing, is our newest team member @FHfsela, as our Transition and Training Coordinator for students 16yo-21yo. She has an associate in business administration; certification in paralegal litigation and has successfully completed training on IDEA and related laws. Shannon has advocated her entire life for her baby sister born with a disability and her 16yo son trapped in the RTI cycle. Shannon's transition planning is focused on self-determination, family support, community participation and partnerships. She believes there is a pathway to prosperity for every student!!!

"EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD"-NELSON MANDELA

Join Shannon as she puts on monthly workshops for families and professionals. See the flyer on the left for the August workshop.

October Workshop:
Functional Behavior Assessments
October 29th 11-1pm
New Orleans East Library
Register by emailing
srushing@fhfsela.org

Turkey Bowl

Save the Date for FHFSELA's fourth annual Turkey Bowl. It will be held on November 22nd from 1-4 pm at Rock n Bowl, New Orleans.

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year, so come out and support us and have some fun, food and bowling!!



Community News

On August 8th 2015, Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana held it's first ever Back to School Resource Fair and School Supply Giveaway. It was an extremely successful event where we were able to serve over a hundred families.

We would like to thank our dedicated volunteers and donors for making an event like this one possible.

Thank YOU!!!!

Jardin Gonzales
Reliable Community Alternatives
Agape Care Providers
Trish Hawley
Claudia Smith
Byron Ross
Martina Ratliff
Letha Ratliff
Colby Johnson
Dianne Stewart
Tomeika Lee



Mark Smith
Anthony and Amanda Fusco
Jill Egle
Warren Avist
Tim Daspit
Adren Chalona

If you would like to be added to our list of possible volunteers for future events please call our office at 504-943-0343.



SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, November 19th

Marriott Hotel
Baton Rouge, LA

Featuring National Speakers

Al Condeluci & Deborah Whitfield

Hosted by

La Developmental Disabilities Council

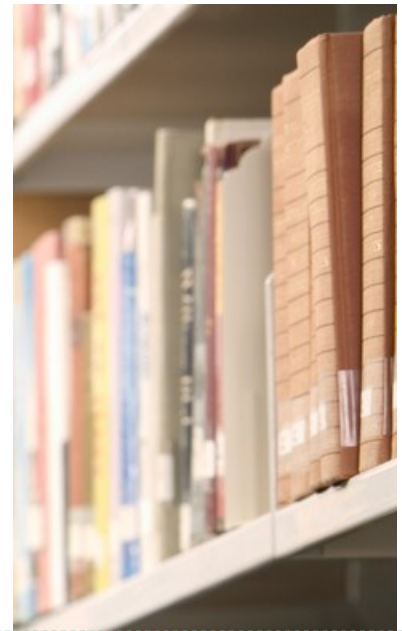
Registration will open September 1st @ www.laddc.org/conference

THE PRISM PROJECT 2016 BY KELLY FISCHER

I remember the first time my son participated in the Prism Project. I was equal parts excited and anxious as I dropped him off. I was excited because for the first time, he was able to go to a recreational program like any other kid, and it was a program I knew he would enjoy. I was anxious because he has significant disabilities, and those with the best of intentions had found it difficult to fit him into already existing programs, even with my offer to stay with him for the entire session. Now, here I was, just dropping him off like a “typical” parent!

That was 6 years ago. When I moved to New Orleans, I embraced all the city had to offer, but I also thought about the programs I was leaving behind and how they could become available here – the top of that list was the Prism Project. Lucky for me, it was not hard to put together a team of people who also saw the potential for having an inclusive performing arts program for children in a city where the arts play such a big role in all of our lives.

As Families Helping Families prepares for the 2016 season of the



“Here I was, just dropping him off like a ‘typical’ parent!”

Prism Project, I am honored to have been chosen to direct the program. Being a parent, a mental health professional, a college faculty member, and a community volunteer, I feel up to the challenge. We are already fine-tuning as we go into our 4th season. Some big changes we are working on include:

A name change! We have sent out a challenge to those in our community seeking suggestions for a new name for the program!

New rehearsal format! Now that we have the basic structure of the program set, we are beginning to work on focusing rehearsals on the individual skills of each performing – helping every child to develop a moment in the spotlight on stage!

Expansion of staff! We are always looking for dedicated staff and each year seek more and more buddies (our college-student helpers and partners) to help us accom-

modate more performers. We are also working to develop not only music, dance, and theater directors, but assistants for those directors. People who might want to groom for future director positions or who just want to dedicate their artistic talent to a great program! We are also working on expanding our Junior Director program. This program was established to allow students who had aged out of the program to return in a more leadership role. We hope this allows them to develop job skills and explore personal interests within the creative arts.

If you have questions, comments, suggestions, or are interested in donating time, talents, or materials, feel free to contact me at Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana. Better yet, stop by and speak to me on Fridays from 9 am to 10:30 am!

YOUNG STARZ OF NOLA

AGES 6-18

10N1 VOICE CLASS FOR NOLA YOUTH

RAION RAMSEY, VOICE INSTRUCTOR
MIC ETIQUETTE • FORMAL VOCAL TRAINING • RECITALS
SPECIALIZING IN TEACHING KIDS WITH DISABILITIES

**726 JACKSON AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS, LA**

**\$30/HOUR
\$110/MONTHLY**

**START NOW CALL
504.570.8283
YOUNGSTARSOFNOLA@GMAIL.COM**

dem.hesey

MORE EVENTS
FOR YOUR CALENDAR!



ACHIEVING THE RIGHT OF ADULT STATUS



Adults with intellectual disabilities are NOT children in adult bodies. An adult is determined by virtue of age not Intellect. This workshop will help Staff and Family members understand why we treat persons' with disabilities as children and why and how to get to normative interactions with adults with disabilities.



When: August 25, 2015
Where: Norman Mayer Library
3001 Gentilly Blvd.
New Orleans, La 70122
Time: 11:00-2:00 P.M.

Registration Begins at 10:30

To register click on the link:

<http://achievingtherightofadultstatus@eventbrite.com>

Thank you for your support of
Families Helping Families SELA

Please visit our webpage at
fhfsela.org
And follow us on facebook!

Contact

FHFSELA
7240 Crowder Blvd Suite 202
New Orleans LA 70127
504-943-0343



Serving Families in
Orleans, Plaquemine
and St. Bernard Parishes