

June/July 2009

Dates to Note:

- **Labor Day Monday**, Sept. 7th Abilities Center closed for the holiday
- **Walk 4 Friendship** Sunday, Sept. 13th Starts at JCC
- **Henry Ford II Memorial Golf Classic** Monday, Sept 14 Detroit Golf Club
- **Walk Now for Autism** Sunday, Oct. 11th Palace of Auburn Hills
- **Bowling for Ability Bowl-A-Thon** November 14th

Don't forget your SOCKS!

(Socks are required in Central Park and in all treatment areas - even in the summer months!)



Congrats to the Andresen Family!!

Abilities Center will sponsor their **Walk Now for Autism Team** on October 11!

The Detroit Institute
for Children
Care For All Children With
Special Needs in Southeast Michigan

Abilities Center



Abilities Center News

Social Work services now available at

Abilities Center—support for individuals and families

Abbi Mankiewicz, LLMSW, is now working with clients at our Walled Lake facility. After earning her Masters of Social Work from Wayne State University, Abbi is licensed by the state of Michigan and is a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

Abbi is currently offering

therapy in group sessions for the Social Butterflies social skills groups, and is meeting one-on-one with both children and parents.

Social Work services include **Individual Cognitive Behavior Therapy** with children, adolescents and adults, **Small Group Therapy**, **Psychosocial Assess-**

ments, **Connections to Community Resources** and **Coordination of Services** with Educators and Health Professionals.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment for Social Work Services, please call 248.926.0909, Ext. 225.

Plan a sensory smart vacation

Taking your sensory-sensitive child on a summer vacation? Consider these tips . . .

Pack favorite clothes - Balance your desire for kids to look nice with their need for clothes that make them comfortable rather than irritated. Also, consider tactile defensive kids and avoid crowds with people in close proximity, and keep in mind that hugs, sunscreen and sand may all present challenges to the tactile system

Pack sunglasses and hats—The kaleidoscope of lights and colors at amusement parks may over stimulate, and bright sun can be glaring. Explaining new surroundings may help processing and understanding.

Think about noise and how it affects you. Will there be lots of noise, such as fireworks, city streets or farm machinery? Watching fireworks from a distance or using earplugs can help manage noise. Discuss the different noises. Find a quiet place to eat or play for awhile to give a

break. Giving a sensitive child (or adult!) time to regroup can help them manage themselves.

Look for a place to take a break from smells — Street vendors, food, hotel rooms and city/country air all may jangle olfactory nerves. The fresh fish market may be fun, but fish smells may overpower some. Eliminating smells is difficult, but awareness can lessen the surprise.

Challenges to the vestibular and proprioceptive senses may be more subtle. These senses relate to one's comfort in moving their body through space and around the physical environment. Fast moving metro trains may present an unexpected challenge and amusement park rides can be thrilling or terrifying, depending on one's security with losing control of your body in space. Cars, buses, trains subways, and airplanes all affect our vestibular sense.

So, sensory integration refers to the ability of one's nervous system to process

and adjust to information coming in from the senses. Some can regulate themselves while being bombarded by sensory input while others cannot function with extra stimulation. Adults generally find ways to cope with situations that push their sensory threshold, but some children find this more challenging. Awareness and planning can help a child learn to regulate their sensory systems. As they learn to regulate themselves, everyone is happier!

Think about recent meltdowns. What caused them? Could there be a sensory component? Some preparation may avert negative situations that could thwart a fun vacation for the whole family.

Traveling can be overwhelming for anyone. Vacationing with sensory-sensitive kids requires some planning, but the result will be a fond and lasting memory for everyone.



Visit us on the web !

www.detroitchildren.org

www.abilitiescenter.com



"... For years one sensory child could not stand the sound of the vacuum"

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NK@AC (New Kids @ Abilities Center)!

Please help us welcome two new faces at Abilities Center!

Physical Therapist Stephanie Paraventi now works in the Walled Lake facility on Mondays, and spends the remainder of the week at the Downtown facility. Stephanie is a graduate of CMU, and earned her Doctorate of Physical Therapy from Oakland University. She first became interested in Physical Therapy after suffering a knee injury in high school. Stephanie loves to play soccer and has played year round for as long as she can remember.

Kerry Draper, Speech Therapist has also joined us in Walled Lake, and also shares time between the two facilities. She is in Walled Lake Mondays/Wednesdays, and works downtown on Tuesdays/Thursdays. Kerry decided to help others overcome speech difficulties after receiving speech therapy in elementary school for an articulation problem. She is married (Sorry Wings fans, husband is Matt, not Kris!) and has a new baby boy named Drew. When she is not at work, Kerry enjoys baking, painting and playing sports and playing with Drew.

If you see these two new and friendly faces around the clinic, introduce yourself! Welcome Stephanie and Kerry!!

Moms will love this—kids, not so much!

Chores as therapy

Theories on the role of chores can be divided into two categories: chores to teach responsibility and chores to teach obedience! But they can serve a different purpose, **chores can also serve as a form of sensory integration therapy**. Consider some thoughts from adults who now understand that Mother knew best!

For years one sensory child could not stand the sound of the vacuum. He would hide his head under a pillow rather than listen to the vacuum. But once mom had him vacuum, (first with headphones with music, then headphones with silence, then no headphones), he adjusted to the noise, and was in control of the noise.

If he needed a break, he could turn the vacuum off; if he was tolerating it he could continue, and avoid doing it later. The noise of the vacuum was now only played on his terms, which helped him adjust.

Another example is meatloaf preparation, which involves touching sauce-covered cold ground beef. One tactile defensive child discovered that slowly but surely moving from ingredient fetcher to meatloaf preparer gradually but substantially decreased his aversion, and he is now quite fond of preparing meatloaf!

Chores may also improve fine motor skills.

Another example of chores as a sensory tool

comes from the official mozzarella cheese cutter for chicken parmesan and lasagna. He flunked cutting skills in kindergarten, but after 15 years of 3X a week cheese cutting, slices (and fine motor skills) were vastly improved!

Finally, in a house with two boys who roughhouse, buttons never clung to clothes very long. One smart mom declared an official button-sewer. Those little needles with the tiny thread made this task an intense challenge. But with plenty of practice, those buttons were back where they belonged!

Thank your mom, and put those kids to work this summer!