

# The Bridge

## President's Message



Dear Members & Friends,

HAPPY NEW YEAR! As the winter season carries on, so does the work of SEPTA. We have been diligently working to bring our families the latest information and workshops available.

SEPTA was proud to have sent 4 board members to represent Massapequa SEPTA at the 110<sup>th</sup> Annual NYS PTA Convention that was held in Rochester, NY. The convention theme was "Connecting The Dots". We are happy to say that we practice this theme every day by providing support services, parent workshops and resources to families with children with special needs. We reach out to the Board of Education and to District Administration to explore ways in which we can better meet the needs of our children. In this, we are "connecting the dots" for our child's future and we do this together.

SEPTA is pleased to bring you a presentation on ADHD and ADD at our February general meeting. March will be very eventful. Our representatives are participating in the NYS Legislative Conference to be held in Albany, on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. This conference is very informative and well-attended. In recent years, special education issues/topics have played a big role at this conference. We are looking forward to bringing back the information we gather and learn. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, we will send representatives to the Nassau County Legislative Brunch and, that evening, we will have our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Adult Bowling Party. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, we will be hosting the District's panel discussion on "Career & College Planning for Students with Disabilities". Finally, on March 24, SEPTA will host "Survival Saturday", a day long conference by the Long Island Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

This winter, SEPTA is preparing for election of its officers for 2007-2008. Our nominating committee attended Nassau Region PTA Nominations & Elections Workshop and they are ready to put what they learned to use. We are confident that our elections will go smoothly.

SEPTA did something different this year with our fundraising. We ran our Joe Corbi Pizza & Cookie Dough fundraiser throughout all 6 elementary schools as well as Berner and Ames. It is with our deepest appreciation to all families, volunteers and especially Cathy James, Vice President Fundraising, who supported this project with all their hard work and time and for making this fundraiser a HUGE success for us. It is with this money that we are able to better educate the parents and the community on special education issues as well as bring in programs for the children. THANK YOU!

It is, once again, that time of year when we must **register to vote** and keep informed on the district budget. We cannot express the importance of this issue.

As always, thank you for your enthusiasm and support. We could not do what we do, without you.

*Allison Prystupa and Terry Yard-Healy*

### HOLD THAT DATE!

- **February 15th SEPTA**  
General Meeting  
McKenna Senior Center
- **March 1st**  
BOE Public Session  
8PM Board Room
- **March 10th SEPTA**  
Adult Bowling Fundraiser
- **March 14th SEPTA**  
Executive Board Meeting  
McKenna Senior Center
- **March 15th**  
BOE Public Session  
8PM Board Room
- **March 24th**  
Survival Saturday
- **April 18th SEPTA**  
General Meeting  
McKenna Senior Center
- **April 19th**  
BOE Public Session  
8PM Board Room

### **SEPTA Nominations Welcome!**

**The nominating committee will meet and determine nominees to be presented at our April 18th general meeting. Please mail your nominations for yourself or someone else, anonymously, to Chairperson Bonnie Goess  
146 Nassau Road  
Massapequa, NY 11758  
All nominations must remain sealed until the committee meets.**

## *Please join us as SEPTA presents....*

**Dr. Daniel Lieberman, MD.**, private practice Board Certified Child/Adolescent & Adult Psychiatrist will be sharing the medical perspective: appropriate diagnosis, medication options and treatment. **Dr. Samuel Fleisher Ed.D.**, private practice Educational Diagnostician & Therapist will discuss appropriate educational supports (in & out of the classroom), possible modifications and accommodations for the ADHD /ADD student.



***On Thursday, February 15, 2007  
McKenna Senior Center at 7:45 PM***

Everyone is welcome to join us and benefit from the information we have available at all our meetings.

## **Membership: It's not too late!**

Massapequa SEPTA is still accepting new members. Your membership also includes:

- Online member services, including select articles from *Our Children* magazine.
- E-newsletters on parenting and legislative issues.
- Exclusive National PTA member benefits and sponsor offers from companies such as Office Depot and Barnes & Noble.
- Leadership training opportunities in-person and online.
- The Member to Member Network, connecting you to Congress when help is needed on issues important to children, schools, and families.

Becoming a member is easy, just fill out the form and return it at our next meeting or through school:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Town/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Building \_\_\_\_\_

In District/Out of District Placement \_\_\_\_\_

OT \_\_\_\_\_ PT \_\_\_\_\_ SLP \_\_\_\_\_ Psychologist \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Return with your check payable to Massapequa SEPTA. Membership is \$8.00 and only \$7.00 for each additional family member and membership cards will be returned through the school.

Additional Member(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Webkinz: A social network for the little ones**

Webkinz, in case you didn't know, are little stuffed animals that come with a life of their own. Each one comes with a unique computer code that when combined with an internet connection (broadband preferred) opens a little world all their own. The price of the Webkinz includes one year of playtime on their web site. Play games and earn money to buy things and food for your little friend. You can play games against anonymous players or if you have a friend with a Webkinz you can challenge them to games from rock, paper, scissors to fashion shows where you dress bunnies, cows and unicorns. Some of the games do get more challenging and I have found myself logging in to play them after the kids have gone to sleep! Messages back and forth are picked from a list provided by the company and are age appropriate for grade school children. Kids send gifts and letters back and forth, and even invite each other over to their room if they are online at the same time through a limited built in messaging system. It seems to be a safe place for children to interact with each other with minimal adult oversight and fosters learning and responsibility.

Dan Batik, Vice President of Membership



## *From the desk of..... Cathy Pantelides, Director Special Education*

As we all know, federal laws and state regulations guide school district policies and practices for students with disabilities. The fulfillment of each student's individual potential is our universal goal. The attainment of this goal occurs most readily when parents and/or guardians work collaboratively as partners with school district personnel. In this context, effective home and school communication is an essential element in promoting student success. It has been my experience that many times when a parent calls the district special education office, they often begin by saying something like "I'm not sure if you're the right person to speak to about this, but..."

In an effort to clarify how to initiate and maintain open lines of communication, it is paramount that parents, faculty and staff understand that being a classified student with an IEP does not define your child. Many students in district participate in general education with some supports and services through special education. Of course, this varies from student to student, from building to building and for students who are in placements outside of the district. In all cases, the CSE recommends supports and services for your child, however, the implementation of the IEP developed at the meeting occurs in the building your child attends. A CSE meeting is only necessary when it appears a change in the IEP may be necessary. Further, district-wide administrators do not have the same degree of direct contact with or knowledge of your child as building level personnel do.

In almost all cases, the first person to reach out to is your child's teacher. Your child's teacher is the faculty member who spends the most time with your child. Teachers as first contact affords greater opportunity to answer questions, clarify issues, share concerns, and build a collaborative home-school relationship. If after you have spoken with your child's teacher you still don't have a satisfactory response to your concern, identify who is the next person most closely associated with the area in question, such as related service personnel who work with your child. The school psychologist is often someone who is very familiar with your child's educational program.

Your child is an integral part of his or her school. The building principal is the instructional leader regardless of which school your child attends, in or out of district. For parents of students who attend programs within the district, Mrs. Cohen and Ms. Saland are the direct supervisors for the elementary and secondary levels respectively. It goes without saying, that if after you have attempted to share information or resolve a particular issue, that Dr. Murray and I are always happy to speak with you.

As part of our partnership with home and school, I would like to remind you of the important role parents have in the support of homework. Family interest in schoolwork makes it clear to your child that school is a priority. Doing so helps promote positive attitudes and successful study habits. Parents should provide the support and supervision necessary to see that their child organizes and completes homework and that assignments are returned. After all, we are striving to create the most independent learners and thinkers possible to prepare our students for life outside of school.

In closing, there are any number of reasons why you may contact or be contacted by a faculty or staff member. Regardless of who initiates the communication, it is important that all parties approach each interaction with mutual respect, consideration and an open mind. Everyone involved has the student's best interest at the heart of what we all seek to achieve. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of your children!

### ***Legislative Update: Timothy's Law***



NYS PTA proudly informs us that on December 22nd, Governor George E. Pataki signed legislation to enact Timothy's Law (A12080/S8482), which will require insurance companies to provide coverage for individuals with mental illnesses. Timothy's Law will take effect January 1, 2007; there will likely be a "chapter amendment" to give the insurance plans a bit longer than 8 days to implement the law, and to possibly use HCRA in place of the General Fund to pay for the small employer "hold harmless." You can read the press release at [www.ny.gov/](http://www.ny.gov/) Click on the press releases tab next to the picture of the Governor.

*Thank you* to everyone who signed letters last year and for the cooperation to see this bill passed into law, but there is more work to be done! This year we will be working on Civil Confinement, but more about that later on. We will again be asking you to sign letters, one from each adult in your household. If you have any questions please call me.

Marie Festa 516 798-7521

## *Bridging the Gap*: Counselor Assignments for Out of District Placed Students



Starting with the spring semester of the 2006-07 school year, each out-of-district placed student has been assigned to a counselor in the Massapequa School District. The counselor will serve as a liaison between the parent, out-of-district placement and the school district. With out-of-district placements that already provide transition services, the counselor will play a supportive role. In the few cases that the ODP does not provide transition services, the counselor will assist in the transition planning for the student.

For students who are getting a Massapequa diploma, the counselor will also monitor the student's graduation requirements

The students were assigned primarily by age and diploma type. Elementary and middle school aged students were assigned to a middle school counselor. While high school aged students and older were assigned to a high school counselor. Students will remain with the same counselor until they complete their high school diploma or reach the age of 21.

Parents will be receiving a letter in early February from Mr. Keenan, Director of Academic and Career/ College Planning, which will include the counselor assignment and further information on this new arrangement.

Submitted by Lou Sabatini, Coordinating Chairperson of Guidance

## ***“Survival Saturday”* Conference**

*Hosted by Massapequa SEPTA at*

9:30AM-4:00PM

McKenna School

Saturday, March 24th, 2007

With Keynote Speaker **Jonathan Mooney**



Jonathan Mooney is an inspiring speaker and author who will take you on his own journey from growing up as a struggling learner to a Brown University graduate. Grounded in his personal experiences, Jonathan fully explores four principles that parents, teachers, students and educators can follow to empower all learners. For a preview of his passage through the educational system, please visit [www.jonathanmooney.com](http://www.jonathanmooney.com)

**Survival Saturday encompasses more than a motivating keynote speaker.**

It is an informative day of interactive workshops in the areas of reading, math, study skills, Autism, Dyslexia, nonverbal learning disabilities, ADHD, assistive technology, social/emotional training, kinesiology, neuropsychology, advocacy, transition planning, IDEA 2004 as well as additional resources.

The fees are : Pre-registration deadline March 9th - \$60.00 IDA Members; \$65.00 Non-members. After March 9th, Members will be \$60.00, and Non-members, \$75.00. Massapequa residents and school personnel will be \$50.00. Each STUDENT with a paying adult will be FREE!!



**We strongly encourage teens to attend!**

Sponsored by: The Long Island Branch of The International Dyslexia Foundation

For more information on attending this annual conference, please visit [www.LIDYSLEXIA.org](http://www.LIDYSLEXIA.org)

## Career and College Planning for Students with Disabilities



On Wednesday, March 14 at 7:45 PM in the Senior Citizen Center at McKenna, several members of the Pupil Personnel Team and administration will participate in a panel discussion on the topic of post-high school planning for students with disabilities. Some of the topics to be covered include transition planning for both college bound students and students pursuing vocational/career training; the role of special educators in preparing students for life after high school; the application process to college including test requirements; and services available to students on the college campus and in vocational training programs.

The panel presentation will be followed by a question and answer period where specific parent concerns will be addressed. The participants on the panel will be Susan Woodbury, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction; John Keenan, Director of Academic and college/Career Planning; Cathy Pantelides, Director of Special Education, Lou Sabatini, Guidance Coordinating Chair; Lori Saland, Special Education supervisor; and Ellen Pierce, Special Education Counselor at the high school.

While these topics may seem timelier to parents of high school students, parents of special education students at all levels can benefit from these important discussions and are encouraged to attend.

Submitted by Lou Sabatini, Coordinating Chairperson of Guidance

### ***SEPTA's 3rd ANNUAL ADULT ONLY EVENING OF BOWLING!***



**Saturday March 10, 2007**

**The fun begins at 8:45PM  
at Massapequa Bowl**

4235 Merrick Road Massapequa, NY



Come join us for an exciting Evening of Bowling  
and Silent Auction

We will be serving a delicious hot buffet dinner, including dessert,  
coffee, and soda.

**All for \$35.00 per person**

Includes rentals

All tickets must be pre purchased so please watch for order forms!

## Reporting in...



**Serious Fun...** You and your family deserve a break. It's time to tuck away all the IEP and 504 paperwork. It will be waiting for you after vacation, trust me. As parents, with all the paperwork, appointments, tutoring and therapies we forget that our kids are just kids. With vacation time fast approaching we're going to have much more 'free time' on our hands. The question is what to do with it? I suggest take advantage of being together and have some fun, seriously.

For children their greatest and most meaningful learning experiences occur while engaging in "play". Guided purposeful play promotes as well as strengthens learning skills. On any school day in Massapequa Schools, Educational Occupational Therapists facilitate such learning by using games, puzzles and toys with our children. Each of these play activities contributes to strengthening a wide variety of skills essential to classroom learning.

Recently, I meet with Lori Wolfe, MS OTR/L Occupational Therapist, and asked her to suggest play activities that served the dual purpose of being fun and those that provided an educational benefit to the child. Ms. Wolfe reminded me that first and foremost, it is important to choose games and activities that are appropriate for your child, and to modify the activity to meet the needs of your child. This may mean, simplifying the rules, or reducing the number of game pieces used. Many of these games/activities may already be in your home. If not the games/activities are widely available at your local toy merchant, ebay or at amazon.com.

**Clay Play** ~ Purpose: to enhance fine motor skills, hand development and sensory tactical stimulation. **Younger - Play-Doh & Accessories** (contains wheat gluten), **Crayola Model Magic**. **Older - Floam** has a great texture and it will harden into a sculpture (it has an odor and can stain) and **Sculpey Polymer Clay** non-toxic

**Constructional Toys** ~ Purpose: great for fine motor skills, hand development, using two hands together, motor planning, visual motor skills and visual perceptual skills.

**Lego's** ([www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com)), **Hexabits** [www.hexabits.com](http://www.hexabits.com) and **GEOMAG** (Jonic – [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

**Puzzles** ~ Purpose: There is no better perceptual exercise than working with puzzles. They strengthen visual perceptual skills, motor planning, sequencing, and spatial relationships. To further enhance the experience, have the child either play with the puzzle while on the floor or have the child sit on a sensory/yoga ball while working at a table with the puzzle. **Younger: Inset puzzles 9-24** pieces made of wood with handles and has matching picture in inset. **Older: Interlocking puzzle** 12-24 piece many popular characters available, floor puzzles. **Puzzle Tip:** Work with the child, to identify all outside corners first, then the outside edge pieces, then 'squiggles' (the inside pieces). Make piles of each group then work together from the outside corners to the interior of the puzzle to complete. Talk about the pieces and what makes them different.

**Memory Games** ~ Purpose: practice visual memory, sequencing and discrimination skills. **Younger: Who Lives Where?** (Cadaco) **Older: Hide & Seek** (Ravensberger) and **STARE! Jr. Edition**

**Visual Discrimination / Perceptual Games** ~ Purpose: to help develop perceptual motor, deductive reasoning, spatial relations, visualization and figure ground discrimination. **Guess Who / Guess Where** (Hasbro), ([amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) and **Figurix** (Ravensberger)

**Sensory Input Toys** ~ Purpose: to help organize, calm and /or alert the sensory system. **Hippity/Hop Fun Hop** (Hedstrom corp [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)), **Moon Shoes** by Etoys ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) or Heart Toys ([www.harttoys.com](http://www.harttoys.com)), **Super Shape Changers / Body Socks** ([www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com)), **Super Mondo Inside Out Balls** (Play Visions)

**Fine Motor Board Games** ~ Purpose: to develop fine motor and visual motor skills.

**Don't Break the Ice**, and **Cootie** (Milton Bradley), **Colorforms / Silly Face Stick-Ons** Game (University Games), **Squiggle Wiggle Writer** (Heart Toys) and **Jenga** (Milton Bradley). **Jenga Tip:** write one word on each Jenga piece. Once a piece is removed from the puzzle, ask the person to use that word in a sentence.

**Tabletop Activities** – Crafts and Activity books ~ Purpose: help fine motor and visual perceptual motor skills. **Crunch Art** ([www.handsontoy.com](http://www.handsontoy.com)) **Buki books** various topics ([www.proofslinky.com](http://www.proofslinky.com)) Tip: using an **Art Easel /vertical surface** is best for developing strength in hands and wrist.

Choose an activity and go have some fun with the kids, seriously.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Langwell

## Combating Autism Act Of 2006

"For the millions of Americans whose lives are affected by autism, today is a day of hope. The Combating Autism Act of 2006 will increase public awareness about this disorder and provide enhanced federal support for autism research and treatment. By creating a national education program for doctors and the public about autism, this legislation will help more people recognize the symptoms of autism. This will lead to early identification and intervention, which is critical for children with autism. I am proud to sign this bill into law and confident that it will serve as an important foundation for our Nation's efforts to find a cure for autism." President George W. Bush 12/19/06

**President Bush Signed The Combating Autism Act Of 2006.** This Act authorizes expanded activities related to autism research, prevention, and treatment through FY 2011. There are more than 1.5 million cases of autism in the United States.

**Since The President Took Office, National Institutes Of Health (NIH) Funding For Autism-Related Research Has Increased By Over 80 Percent – From \$56 Million In FY 2001 To An Estimated \$101 Million In The FY 2007 Budget, Including Support For Autism Centers of Excellence.** In addition, the Budget includes approximately \$15 million at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for autism surveillance and research, including five regional Centers of Excellence for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology. In October, CDC initiated a \$5.9 million study to help identify factors that may put children at risk for autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

### **The Combating Autism Act Enhances Research, Surveillance, And Education Regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder**

#### **The Act Authorizes Research Under NIH To Address The Entire Scope Of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).**

Autism, sometimes called "classical autism," is the most common condition in a group of developmental disorders known as the autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Other ASDs include Asperger syndrome, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (usually referred to as PDD-NOS).

#### **The Act Authorizes Regional Centers Of Excellence For Autism Spectrum Disorder Research And Epidemiology.**

These Centers collect and analyze information on the number, incidence, correlates, and causes of ASD and other developmental disabilities. The Act also authorizes grants to States for collection, analysis, and dissemination of data related to autism.

#### **The Act Authorizes Activities To Increase Public Awareness Of Autism, Improve The Ability Of Health Care Providers To Use Evidence-Based Interventions, And Increase Early Screening For Autism.** The Act authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to:

- Provide information and education on ASD and other developmental disabilities to increase public awareness of developmental milestones;
- Promote research into the development and validation of reliable screening tools for ASD and other developmental disabilities and disseminate information regarding those screening tools;
- Promote early screening of individuals at higher risk for ASD and other developmental disabilities as early as practicable;
- Increase the number of individuals who are able to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of ASD and other developmental disabilities;
- Increase the number of individuals able to provide evidence-based interventions for individuals diagnosed with ASD or other developmental disabilities; and
- Promote the use of evidence-based interventions for individuals at higher risk for ASD and other developmental disabilities as early as practicable.

#### **The Act Calls On The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) To Enhance Information Sharing.**

The IACC provides a forum to facilitate the efficient and effective exchange of information about autism activities, programs, policies, and research among the Federal government, several non-profit groups, and the public. The Combating Autism Act requires the IACC to provide information and recommendations on ASD-related programs, and to continue its work to develop – and update annually – a strategic plan for ASD research.



Massapequa SEPTA serves every family who receives special education services in our school district.

**Massapequa Special Education**

**PTA**

*everychild.onevoice.*

**Massapequa SEPTA®**

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Massapequa, NY 11758

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*The Bridge is paid for by Massapequa SEPTA funds and prepared by a parent volunteer.*

Our revised **Parent-to-Parent Network** brochure is done and ready for printing, so watch for it. It is a brochure that lists different disabilities and district parents that can be contacted to lend support in that area of disability to you. It is a great source of information and support to families.

***Did you know?***

After going through testing on his son, Charles Schwab learned that he had Dyslexia himself.

You can visit [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org) to see a parent's guide to helping kids with learning disabilities.

**SEPTA Executive Board 2006/2007**

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***Let Us Hear From You!***

Do you have helpful information to share in an issue of *The Bridge*?

**Please contact us!**

Editor's email:  
(SEPTA in subject line)  
DFG818@optonline.net



Massapequa SEPTA email address:  
Specialed11758@hotmail.com



**The sample NYS complaint form that can be used by parents is now available on the web. This form provides a document to submit a compliant to the NYS Education Department (NYSDE).**

**[www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/covercomplaint.htm](http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/covercomplaint.htm)**