

The Bridge

President's Message



Dear Members & Friends,

As we sit here trying to write our last letter to all of you as SEPTA Co-Presidents, the one phrase that keeps coming to mind is THANK YOU!

We would like to thank our husbands and families for all their love and support in helping us do a job that we are so passionate about, for without them, we could not have done it. We would like to thank our Executive Committee for all their hard work and dedication. You all are such wonderful people and a pleasure to work with. To our Executive Board, thanks for seeing through all your duties and making SEPTA look good all the time. To the Massapequa Council of PTA's, building PTAs and their principals, administration, teachers and staff, thank you for all the support you have given to us and SEPTA for the past two years, and we are sure; will continue to give. As they say, it takes a village..... well we certainly did it! It means more than you could ever know.

This has been a wonderful journey for both of us. We learned that every child can learn, but in a different way; and it is in advocating for the children and their families that fulfills us the most. We hope we made a difference and we promise that we will continue to do so in the future.

Please join us in welcoming your new Co-Presidents for the 2007-2008 school year, Dan Batik and Lydia Magaddino! Please give them your continued support. It is with your help and dedication that makes SEPTA so successful. Congratulations Dan and Lydia!

Well it is time to say goodbye (although you will still see plenty of us, we are not going too far) and again, thank you all for everything!

Have a wonderful summer!

Allison Prystupa and Terry Yard-Healy

Co-Presidents

At our general meeting on April 18th, 2007, the slate of officers nominated for the 2007/2008 Massapequa Septa Executive Board was presented and hereby elected

Co-Presidents – **Dan Batik and Lydia Magaddino**

VP of Fundraising – **Cathy James**

VP of Membership – **Marta Kiernan**

VP of Programming – **Mary Jean Logan**

Treasurer – **Bonnie Goess**

Recording Secretary – **Lori Bonetti**

Corresponding Secretary – **Lori Ann Buffolino**

Congratulations and *thank you* to those accepting these positions.

HOLD THAT DATE!

- **June 13th SEPTA Awards Ceremony**
McKenna Senior Center
- **June 21st BOE Public Session**
8PM Board Room
- **June 22nd**
Last day of school
- **July 2nd Summer Recreation Begins**
- **July 5th**
BOE Public Session
8PM Board Room
- **July 27th-29th NYS PTA Summer Experience**
- **August 9th**
BOE Public Session
8PM Board Room
- **August 10th**
Summer Recreation
Ends 11AM

On June 14th, 2007 McKenna Elementary School will honor Debbie Jewell with the "Friend of Education Award" Debbie is an active member and long time contributor to SEPTA. Congratulations for recognition that is well deserved!

SEPTA invites you to join us....



Massapequa Special Education Parent Teacher Association will be hosting its
Annual Awards Ceremony.

SEPTA will be presenting awards to recognize individuals for their commitment and devotion to the children and youth of Massapequa.

All parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community are welcome to join us for this celebratory evening

***On Wednesday, June 13, 2007
McKenna Senior Center at 7:45 PM***

Refreshments will be served. Massapequa SEPTA is a support organization serving every family who receives special education services in our district.

2007-2008 MASSAPEQUA SEPTA COMMITTEE INTEREST SHEET

Please complete this form and return it to your home school marked SEPTA, or bring it with you to our next meeting and join us for a cup of coffee!

Member's Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ Cell Number _____

E-Mail _____

Grade (s) your children will be in as of September 2007 _____

School your child/children will be in as of September 2007 _____

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	MEMBER	COMMITTEE	CHAIR	MEMBER
AIDS			Honorary Life		
Harvest Dance			Hospitality		
Budget			Legislation		
Bulletin Board			Membership		
PTA Council Rep.			Nominating Committee		
Curriculum			Newsletter		
Enrichment			Plant Sale (Chocolate roses)		
Environmental			Pre-School/Kindergarten Registration		
Family Life			Reflections		
Gifted			School Board Rep.		
School Liaison			Ways and Means		
			Website		
Health, Wellness and Safety			Public Relations		

Thank you for volunteering to chair or assist on an SEPTA Committee.

It is the talent and dedication of all our members that makes this PTA work so well!

From the desk of..... Terry Yard Healy, Co-President SEPTA

Nassau Region PTA and SEPTA

SEPTAs are similar to PTA s, yet we are very different, because SEPTAs were founded for a unique purpose. I know that in my two years as co-president of Massapequa SEPTA, there have been times when I wished for a forum where I could learn more and exchange ideas with presidents of other SEPTA Units.

I am excited to report that this year Nassau Region PTA's SEPTA Chairperson, **Suzanne Langwell**, has taken steps to address this need by producing a monthly **e-newsletter "Connecting the Dots in Special Education"** and by Initiating a series of meetings called the SEPTA President's Round Table. Our most recent meeting, held at Nassau BOCES in Garden City on May 21, 2007, addressed the topic "What I Wish I Knew Before I Became a SEPTA President....." Attendees included the presidents and incoming presidents of more than nine SEPTA Units and one special education parent association. I am pleased to report that our own in-coming co-presidents, Dan Batik and Lydia Magaddino, participated in this lively discussion from which we all came away with new ideas and prospective on how to successfully promote the mission of our SEPTA Unit.

Respectfully Submitted,
Terry Yard-Healy



Welcome, The Revised Parent To Parent Brochure

Following many updates and changes, Massapequa SEPTA is proud to announce that the new Parent To Parent brochure is now available. This brochure is a wonderful resource for all involved with the education of our children. It is particularly valuable for parents seeking to learn about the Special Education System, specific disabilities, resources, and more. The highlight of the brochure is a listing of parent volunteers under specific disability categories. These parents offer counsel and advice to those who contact them. Parents of classified children should be receiving their own copy in the mailing that comes home following Annual Reviews.

Massapequa SEPTA would like to thank the following parent volunteers for their help in getting the new brochure to print: Roseann Dougherty, Arlene Griemsmann, Lydia Magaddino, Marianne Martinez, Christine McCauley, and Kelly McPhee. Another big thanks goes to Massapequa District Administration and the Special Education Department for their assistance in getting the brochures published and distributed.

Anyone needing additional copies may call Chris (799-0517) or Arlene (795-1022).

FAQ: What are Extended School Year Services (ESY)?

When developing a student's IEP, the committee on Special Education should consider whether a student will be eligible for special education related services provided during the months of July and August. This is commonly referred to as "extended school year services." School districts are required to provide these services to prevent substantial regression- that is the inability to maintain developmental levels due to a loss of skill, set of skill competencies or knowledge during the summer months. The IEP must indicate the specific special education programs and services to be provided to the student. The parent must provide written consent for their child to receive these programs and services during July and August for the first time.

The Special Education Resource Center & Library....

...is a lending library maintained by **East Meadow SEPTA**. The goal of the library is to lend books and provide resources about Special Education to parents, educators and community members. The library is located at 718 The Plain Road Westbury, New York.

For further information, directions and hours of operation please contact:

Marcee Rubinstein (516) 486-8540 or email MRubins737@hotmail.com



Timothy's Law Expansion to Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus



In 2006, the Legislature enacted Timothy's Law with landmark legislation requiring health insurance plans to cover mental health services on the same terms as other care. At the time, Child Health Plus (CHP) and Family Health Plus (FHP) were left out of the legislation. Now, a bill is being introduced in Albany to extend "mental health and substance abuse parity" to those programs.

Assembly Member Tonko – sponsor of Timothy's Law – and Assembly Member Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Health, stood with colleagues, Tom O'Clair and other advocates to announce legislation that would provide full mental health and substance abuse parity to these two public health insurance programs. The legislation was introduced with 83 sponsors.

There are now approximately 390,000 children in CHP and 510,000 people in FHP. Due to improved access changes in the programs, another 400,000 individuals would be covered over the next few years, bringing the total to over 1.3 million children and families.

Often, when CHP eligible children lose coverage under the program, their family will soon become eligible for Medicaid, which has always had full parity for mental health and substance abuse. The federal government currently pays 65% of the costs associated with CHP, as opposed to 50% with Medicaid. Therefore, in many instances, the state's policy not only makes it harder for people to get the services they need, it ends up costing taxpayers more money.

"After a decade of steadfast and vigilant advocacy, Timothy's Law was enacted and mental health parity became a much needed reality in New York State. Indeed, Timothy's Law addresses millions of consumers in a dignified, compassionate and cost effective approach to treatments for mental illness and health disorders," said Assemblyman Paul D. Tonko. "The agreed to outcome provided a just and critically needed foundation for continued work to provide for full mental health parity in New York. This bill is the next step toward that end. The measure would rightly ensure non-discrimination and fairness in mental health and related substance abuse treatment for over one million children and families served by the Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus programs. It is important to move forward together to undo any remaining unfairness."

Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried said "The failure to provide mental health and substance abuse parity to those who rely on Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus is a relic leftover from an era we need to end. It represents an era when society did not recognize the importance of treating mental illness."

Assembly Member Peter M. Rivera, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health, said, "Any such expansion of services is essential for the mental health consumers."

Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, said, "We made a good start last year with Timothy's Law but much more needs to be done. It is imperative that the law be expanded to include coverage for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services. Treating individuals with substance abuse problems and bringing families back together is in the best interests of all New Yorkers."

Tom O'Clair, father of Timothy O'Clair - for whom Timothy's Law was named – and Co-chair of the Timothy's Law Campaign, said, "Once again Assembly members Tonko and Gottfried, as well as every other sponsor, show they are champions of the causes that are important, not just to their constituents, but to the State of New York. I wish to thank them all for taking the necessary steps to extend the benefits of Timothy's Law to over 1 million more New Yorkers. By proposing this legislation to include Family and Child Health Care Plus, we are once again breaking down long standing barriers that have prevented those who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse, from receiving the care and treatment they need, the same care and treatment that allows them to be everyday members of society."

Paige MacDonald, Executive Director of Families Together in New York State and the other co-chair of the Timothy's Law Campaign, said, "The Timothy's Law Coalition is happy to see this important legislation and we look forward to working with you to ensure that all children and families get the mental health and substance abuse treatment they need, regardless of what type of insurance program they are in."

Becoming Bulletproof Parents By Dan Coulter, ASPERGER SYNDROME DAD



Ever been frustrated or embarrassed by something one of your kids said or did in public? The stares of strangers can feel like bullets. If your child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder, you may sometimes feel like you've been machine-gunned.

Wouldn't it be great to have a way to deal with these situations that made you bulletproof? I found something that works sort of like a protective shield -- and it's basically a matter of perspective.

Most of us were raised to care a lot about what other people think. That's generally a good thing. It helps us be aware of social rules and interact politely with other people. But when our kids do something embarrassing in public, feeling those painful stares can sometimes cause us to get our priorities mixed up.

Maybe your son throws tantrums. Maybe your daughter makes inappropriate remarks in a loud voice. When my son, who has Asperger Syndrome, was little, he had a tendency to pick up and examine anything that caught his interest. This was a problem, particularly in stores.

People react in a lot of ways to their kids "misbehaving" in public. Too often, I've seen parents act embarrassed and say things to their kids that they might regret later. Most of us don't completely lose it, but I know there were times when my son was little that I was more impatient with him in public than I should have been.

Now for the perspective part. At the moment our kids do something in public that we wish they hadn't, we're socially conditioned to react by focusing on what other people think. But how important is that compared to what our kids need at that moment? Do you have a picture of anyone in the mall crowd on your dresser at home? Have you held anyone in the supermarket line in your arms and rocked him to sleep? Is anyone in sight more important to you than your child?

When you look at things from that perspective, it's easier to dismiss what other people think and focus on your child. First off, why did he do what he did? Many kids with ASDs are impulsive. Something in their brain triggers a behavior that's hard for them to control. What if your son is not defying you? What if he's responding to a stimulus that may take a lot of practice to overcome? In my son's case, it helped to remind him before we went out that he needed to ask and get permission before he picked things up to check them out. We'd remind him again just before we went into a store. Even so, it took quite a while for him to gain control of that behavior.

Knowing that our kids are prone to certain behaviors helps us mentally prepare to stop what we're doing and deal calmly with the situation. There's a saying in the retail business, "Customers are not an interruption of our work, they are the reason for it." I think the same thing applies to parents and kids. Our job of parenting doesn't stop when we're busy and stressed and in a supermarket -- and kids aren't reduced to "interruptions." If your daughter grabs a piece of candy from a shelf and screams when you try and take it from her, the best thing for her may be for you to stop shopping for a moment, kneel down and patiently but firmly explain why she has to put it back. At that moment, being bulletproof to what others might think of her outburst protects you both.

We don't flip a switch to teach our kids and then flip it off. We're teaching them with every interaction we have. If I think of every exchange with my son as one he may remember the rest of his life, will I act differently?

The twist to this is that stopping to deal compassionately and fairly with your child will probably make people who witness his behavior appreciate your parenting skills. And if they don't understand, that's their loss.

Do we care what other people think? Sure. *But never as much as we care about our kids.*



***Happy Father's Day* to the unsung heroes, the Dads of SEPTA.**

The Mom's are usually out in front, working and visible, but it's the fathers who are at home, cleaning up the last of dinner, putting little ones to bed, finishing the homework or is dealing with a tantrum, that allows us to be at meetings, workshops and fundraisers. Dad's who support us are just as vital as the moms and receive so little credit. Having a child with special needs affects them too! So here's to all the men who help nurture, raise and set examples for the adults of tomorrow!

Reporting in...

Massapequa SEPTA Hosts International Dyslexia Association Long Island (IDALI) Branch's "Survival Saturday"



On Saturday, March 24, 2007, Massapequa SEPTA hosted the, IDALI Annual Conference. The event was held at McKenna School, with 135 people in attendance. The day provided 18 workshops covering Dyslexia and other related learning disabilities, as well as Study Skills, Assistive Technology, Sensory Integration, Transition Planning, Advocacy, Financial Planning, and more. Many exhibitors were on hand and provided product and service information. Throughout the day, refreshments were graciously served by Massapequa SEPTA. Raffles were also an exciting part of the day.

This year's conference was "teen friendly". Teens were admitted free, and many workshops were geared for them. Especially appealing to the teens (and adults), was our keynote speaker, Jonathan Mooney, renowned author and lecturer. His inspirational and empowering talk gave the listeners an insight into his life's journey, growing up with ADHD and Dyslexia, learning to meet the challenges that come with these disabilities, and become successful. Following his keynote, he offered a book signing of Learning Outside the Lines, the book he authored, and talked individually with each person who approached him.

IDALI is extremely grateful to Massapequa SEPTA, Administration, Technical Supports, the staff at McKenna School, and MHS student volunteers. The tireless efforts on the part of these individuals made for an extremely successful event.

To learn more about IDALI, please visit the website, www.lidyslexia.org or call 1-631-261-7441.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arlene Griemsmann

*A special note of thanks to
Town Bagel Shop
1230 Wantagh Avenue, Wantagh
For their generous donation of bagels for this
event. It is greatly appreciated!*

Unlocking Education Terminology: What Every Parent Should Understand

I found something that I believe would be most useful to my friends and I strongly suggest, "book marking" [this link](#) for your future reference.

It is a condensation (from a book) produced by the Texas Education Consumers Association for their web site. This glossary of terms is more global overview of educational terms rather than specific to Special Education. I frequently hear these terms used fluently at PTA and Special Ed PTA meetings and especially at School Board meetings. I hope this glossary will help you in navigating the world of education.



Here is what the summary says about the glossary:

"Teachers and administrators use jargon, which is sometimes unfamiliar to parents. When faced with strange jargon, parents are reluctant to ask questions or debate educators for fear of sounding ignorant. When parents do gather the courage to argue, educators sometimes use their jargon against us. For example, if you were to express a desire for traditional teaching methods, the teacher may use pejorative terminology to thwart your complaints. You may be told that traditional education is "just" drill and kill or rote-learning. The implication is that you are misguided, ignorant of children's' developmental processes, and perhaps even mean-spirited. Then the teacher tells you: "We are a child-centered school, so we do not use those old-fashioned methods anymore because research has shown that our child-friendly methods are better."

<http://www.nychold.com/hirsch-termin.html>

All the best & happy reading!

Suzanne Langwell



“Clinic helps parents cope with kids' eating woes” By BARBARA S. ROTHSCHILD, Courier-Post

While many young children can be described as picky eaters, the annoying problem becomes more complex when it is a symptom of an underlying disorder. Ellen Lowenberger's 3-year-old son, Andrew, diagnosed with autism and pervasive developmental disorder, will eat pasta, chips and some cheese, but he has many sensory issues with food.

As an infant, he would refuse baby food. Colors and textures can upset him, as can something as seemingly innocuous as seating arrangements. "He has challenges eating with more than two people in a room. He doesn't eat in restaurants," said Lowenberger, who lives in Voorhees.

When she and her husband, Mike, wanted to increase Andrew's eating capabilities through a feeding-therapy program, they found few in the area. There was a seven-month waiting list at one children's-rehabilitation hospital. Lowenberger was trepidatious anyway; thinking the program there might be too rigid. "I wanted a natural environment where Andrew wouldn't feel pressured to eat something," she said.

Andrew was already undergoing speech therapy at Jody Schechtman's Communication Station, a Marlton clinic that specializes in treating children on the autism spectrum and offering resources and support for parents.

While the Journal of Pediatric Psychology reports that 25 percent of typically developing children refuse to eat some foods before age 4, Schechtman said that number is much higher among children with speech and sensory issues. She estimates that 80 percent of the children she sees for speech and occupational therapy also have feeding issues.

"The feeding concerns were a missing link in treatment. We were having to send children out for that, and there were these waiting lists," Schechtman said. "We decided we really wanted to take a look at the whole child and provide that missing link."

In February, Schechtman formed the area's first private outpatient multidisciplinary feeding clinic. Children are screened, evaluated and treated by a team that includes a pediatrician, a pediatric nurse and a nutritionist as well as occupational and speech pathologists. A social worker monitors treatment, and parents are actively involved with weekly "homework" as they observe their children and offer new foods in different settings.

Andrew is one of the first children registered for weekly hour long sessions in the 12-week program, but there are many children with similar issues, Communication Station speech pathologist Rizza Miro said.

"We had a 3-year-old who only eats pureed foods. Some can't have their food too hot or too cold. Some have very regimented feeding patterns and don't get the nutrition they need," Miro said.

Some autistic children could starve because eating is just not a priority for them, while others can't eat sitting at a table or out of a bag on a class trip. When feeding behavior interferes with a child's daily activities and with family dynamics, it becomes a problem, Schechtman said.

Feeding therapy at Communication Station is tailored to the individual child's needs, but includes a food hierarchy moving from preferred foods to more difficult ones.

Unlike in more traditional programs, there is no play food or toy reinforcements. "We don't say, 'Take a bite and we'll give you a toy.' We just talk food and eat food. We want food to be the reinforcement for itself," Miro said.

By Andrew's fifth session, Miro had introduced him to about a half-dozen new foods through a nonforced, primary desensitization approach. The foods included sweet potato chips, cranberries, Colby-Jack cheese sticks, mixed berry applesauce and peanut butter. With the brand new foods, applesauce and peanut butter, just getting Andrew to put the food close to his mouth signaled progress.

As Miro read him a book on opposites, she spooned some purple mixed berry applesauce into a dish. While engaging Andrew with the book, she also introduced concepts that included kissing the spoon and swirling the applesauce.

Next, Miro consulted Lowenberger about her homework. In the past week, Andrew had requested cranberries and Colby-Jack cheese, and also ate pineapple but would not touch kiwi.

"Last night, he had a waffle and cranberries. Two foods on the same plate is a big step for us," Lowenberger said.

In the week to come, she'd try introducing peanut butter and jelly on a cracker that would dissolve in Andrew's mouth without chewing.

Getting children such as Andrew to tolerate more foods will improve their quality of life and lend more freedom to family lifestyles, but the road is a long one.



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

Massapequa Special Education



everychild.onevoice.®


Massapequa SEPTA®

4925 Merrick Road
Massapequa, NY 11758

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Massapequa Park, NY
Permit # 9

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

 The Massapequa Public School website www.msd.k12.ny.us has a link to a really great reading website 
www.starfall.com
The Starfall learn-to-read website is offered as a free public service and it is lots of fun!

A special thank you to
 **Arlene Martin,**
outgoing MSD School Board President, and a good friend to SEPTA, for her years of service to our district. Best wishes in all that you do!

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)
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Massapequa SEPTA email address:
Specialed11758@hotmail.com



The NYS PTA and The NYS Teachers Union have collaborated to create "Guide To Special Education" which is available at the nysut.org website.

www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/k12_6055.htm