

## Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center

September 14, 2009 Issue 1

### Top Story:

#### **Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center Opens at WIHD!**

Westchester Institute for Human Development proudly announces the opening of the Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center this September in Cedarwood Hall. The center is one of 13 Special Education Parent Centers established across the state, funded by the NYS Education Department, and will serve the seven counties in the lower Hudson Valley region including Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess, and Ulster. "Our organizational infrastructure of programs and resources for individuals with disabilities and their families and extensive network of regional partners offers a natural home for the Special Education Parent Center that complements and is enriched by WIHD's existing institutional operations" noted WIHD President and CEO, Dr. Ansley Bacon.

The Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center is a fully accessible community-based parent information resource center providing parents of children with disabilities with information and resources regarding the special education process and will seek to engage parents, including those who face language, literacy or economic barriers, in meaningful involvement in their children's education programs. The process is intended to enhance their skills and confidence to communicate and work collaboratively with school districts and service providers and advocate and participate effectively in their children's education.

The Center will provide online and in-person education, training, workshops and individual consultation to parents and families of students with disabilities, as well as PTAs and SEPTAs, community organizations and school districts, on all aspects of the special education process including:

- Preparing parents to meaningfully participate in the CSE/CPSE process
- Disability specific information
- Information about Federal and State mandates
- Developing effective transition plans
- Building effective communication systems to increase parents' effective participation in their child's education
- Providing information about due process rights and non-adversarial problem-solving strategies

**Any individual or organization interested in learning more about issues regarding the education of students with disabilities is encouraged to contact the center for more information.**

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**Introducing: Naomi Brickel, Project Coordinator**

**Naomi Brickel** joins Westchester Institute for Human Development as a trained special education parent advocate who previously maintained a private educational consulting practice through which she assisted parents in understanding special education, their child's individual educational needs, and navigating the complexities of the IEP process. She was a member of the first cohort of the SEAT Program (Special Education Advocacy Training), a demonstration project of the US Office of Special Education Programs, conducted by the University of Southern California and the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, to develop a uniform training curriculum providing graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to competently and ethically assist students with disabilities and their families to access appropriate educational services under federal and state law.

Naomi has served a parent transition advocate for the Model Transition Program in New Rochelle where she provided intensive outreach and support to students 18-21 and their families to assist in the difficult transition from school services to adult services. She has successfully participated in developing several grants to support innovative programs in the New Rochelle School District for students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers who may be at risk for school failure. She is the Co-President of New Rochelle SEPTA and Special Education Co-Chair for the Westchester East Putnam Region PTA. She continues to assist parents and students through the CSE process as a parent member, and has participated in hundreds of CSE meetings over years.

Naomi is excited about the opportunity to share her experience as the Project Coordinator for the Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center, "The complexity of the CSE process, and its governing state and federal mandates, makes it intimidating and difficult to navigate for many families. When you add the stress and anxiety associated with raising a child with a disability, it can all become overwhelming. I look forward to working with families and sharing my expertise as well as my successful CSE experience as a parent, so that more parents can engage in the process meaningfully and come to the CSE table as collaborative team members."

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**Did you know?** The **Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD)**, located on the campus of the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY, is the leading regional organization dedicated to serving children and adults with disabilities including autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, neurological, metabolic and cognitive disabilities, hearing problems, and speech/language delays. WIHD also works with children in family foster care as well as the foster and birth parents, and provides related child welfare services. WIHD serves over 6,000 individuals and their families annually throughout the lower Hudson Valley region and beyond.

Founded more than 50 years ago, WIHD is one of only 67 programs nationwide known as University Centers for Excellence in Disability Education, Research and Service (UCEDD). UCEDDs work with individuals with disabilities, their families, state and local government, and community agencies on projects that provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing, with a focus on building the capacity of communities to sustain all their citizens. Centers are in a unique position to facilitate the flow of disability-related information and research between community and university and have played key roles in every major disability initiative over the past four decades. Independence, productivity, and community inclusion are key components of the UCEDD vision. This includes a longstanding leadership training role in the field of neurodevelopmental and related disabilities. The LEND Program at WIHD is one of 36 intensive leadership training programs for advanced graduate students and post-doctoral fellows pursuing health careers serving children with special healthcare needs and their families.

WIHD offers services which will often follow a child throughout his or her lifespan. Services include comprehensive medical and dental care programs for children and adults. The Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center is just one of the many programs housed at WIHD.

**Other Events Happening in the Region:**

Check out Fall 2009 The Parent and Educator Workshop Catalog: <http://www.hvsepc.org/Documents/Catalog.pdf>

Additional events/announcements [click here](#)