

# PARENTS AS PARTNERS

## St. Johns County School District

Volume 9, Issue 3, Spring 2020

### Talking to Children About COVID-19

**Remain Calm and reassuring**– Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. Remind them that you at home and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy. Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

**Make yourself available**– Some children may need extra attention. It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them. Tell them that you love them and give them plenty affection.

**Avoid excessive blaming**– It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus. Be aware of any comments that other adults are having around your family.

**Discuss new rules or practices at school**– Be sure to discuss any illness prevention habits, including frequent handwashing or use of alcohol-based hand cleansers.

**Communicate with your child's school**– Let your school know if your child is sick and keep him or her home.

**Monitor television viewing and social media**– Limit television viewing or access to information on the internet and through social media. Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Be aware that developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children.

**Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible**– Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.

**Be honest and accurate**– In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality. Children can be told how the disease can be caught and how to protect themselves.

#### Additional Resources

Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/SMA14-4886>

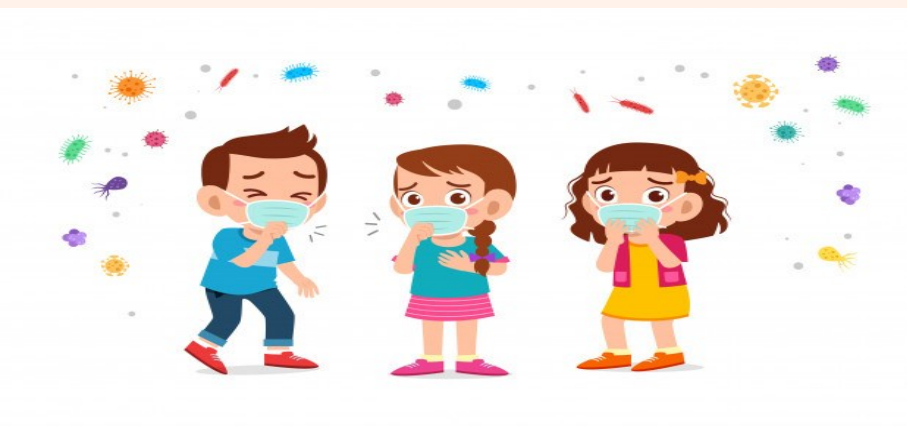
Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About, <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>

For more information related to schools and physical and mental health, visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org) and [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)

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**PLEASE NOTE:**  
Activities highlighted in this issue may be rescheduled given health conditions present at the time of the event. Please contact organizers prior to making plans to attend.

## ESE Program Specialist Spotlight

Leigh Ann Hale is an ESE Program Specialist for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and the District's Transition Program. Leigh Ann Loves living in St. Augustine. When she is not working, she loves creating memories with her family, spending time on the water, traveling and enjoying amazing food.

Leigh Ann graduated from Flagler College with degrees in Exceptional Student Education and Elementary Education. She then went on to attend the University of Central Florida, where she earned a master's degree in Exceptional Student Education with a focus on Severe and Profound Disabilities. Later she gained another master's degree in educational leadership from The University of North Florida.

Leigh Ann's job is a huge part of who she is and what she is passionate about. In the past few years she has led the district's transition program. It has grown from 6 to 60 students, gaining vocational and real-life skills out in our amazing community.

She has been able to witness how the opportunities provided by our local business owners have contributed to the success of our program and the students. When asked what she loves about the program, she thinks that "it is remarkable to see students start the program and the phenomenal gains they make by being contributing members to society." She also stated "she is lucky to say that the staff of the programs, Life Work and Project Search, are equally as passionate as she is about their students' post-secondary goals, which she believes leads to the high success rate of their students.

Leigh Ann is driven to provide rich instructional opportunities and resources for students in our district through inclusive practices. The collaboration with her fellow program specialists, the curriculum department, ESE teachers and our amazing general education teachers has led to a tremendous increase in the instructional resources and inclusionary opportunities for students with disabilities in our district. She is proud to be a part of a district that sees every student as a learner, worthy of the best education and resources we can provide.

On behalf of the ESE Department, we would like to shine a light on the great work that Leigh Ann does to advance our students in St Johns County. We appreciate everything that she does, and we are blessed have her as a part of our team!





# Hearing Aids in Hastings

In December, the SJCS D Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing had the opportunity to provide free hearing aids to community members in Hastings. Lend an Ear, a local non-profit dedicated to giving the gift of hearing to those in need, sponsored the event. Funding was provided by the Ponte Vedra Beach and District Rotary Clubs. By the end of the day, 38 people had been fitted with free personal hearing aids and a year's worth of batteries and maintenance supplies. Hearing aids can range from \$4000-\$8000 a pair and are often not covered by insurance. For many recipients this event enabled them to reconnect with their families, activities and communities through the gift of hearing. During the event, statements such as "I can't wait to hear my grandchildren for the first time" and "My family will be so excited to talk to me again" were accompanied by tears of joy. Lend an Ear has begun the process of repeating the event in communities within St. Johns County and surrounding counties.





# ADAPTIVE DANCE CLASS



For children ages 4-12 with special needs to enjoy dance on their own terms

**Located at:**  
**St. Augustine Dance Conservatory**  
**3670 US-1 St. Augustine 32086**  
**•Saturdays 9-10am (10 week session)**

Join us for a fun time learning basic ballet and jazz technique adapted to each child's unique needs. At the end of the session we will celebrate all that your child has learned as they perform in the recital. We hope you will join the fun! Email [brittanyleehelwig@gmail.com](mailto:brittanyleehelwig@gmail.com) for more info or to register.

# Spring Fling

for individuals with special needs

You and your family are invited to the  
UF Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Center  
For an evening of fun and games at our  
annual Spring Fling event!

**When: Thursday, April 2nd, 2020**  
**5:30 pm to 8:00 pm**

**Where: 6271 St. Augustine Rd, Suite 1**  
**Jacksonville, Florida 32217**

For more information  
email [autumn.mauch@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:autumn.mauch@jax.ufl.edu)  
or call (904) 633-0801

- Hunt for eggs
- Game Rooms & Prizes
- Dance
- Crafts & Activities
- Face Painting

Register online at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-fling-2020-tickets-95474076533>

**Bring your camera for a special photo  
with the Easter Bunny**

SPRING  
FLING







# PHINS

**P**arents/care  
givers

**H**elp

**I**nformation

**N**eeds

**S**ocial skills

PHINS is facilitated by licensed speech-language pathologists, a special education teacher, and graduate students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department at Jacksonville



**WHAT:** PHINS is a cost-free monthly support group for caregivers and users of **AAC- Augmentative and Alternative Communication**

**WHO:** Caregiver and user groups run simultaneously

- Caregivers will get support for the inclusion of AAC into their daily lives
- AAC users engage in communication and social skills opportunities with other AAC users and graduate speech-language pathology clinicians
- Users of all levels and systems of AAC are welcome
- All ages

**WHERE:** Jacksonville University Campus

**WHEN:** 6:30-7:30 p.m.

- February 7<sup>th</sup>
- March 6
- April 3

**HOW:** Interested in joining? Contact:

Dawn Lechwar, M.S. CCC-SLP (904) 256-8935 [dlechwa@ju.edu](mailto:dlechwa@ju.edu)

or

Wyndi L. Capeci M.S. CCC-SLP (904) 256-8952 [wcapeci@ju.edu](mailto:wcapeci@ju.edu)



School of Applied Health Sciences  
BROOKS REHABILITATION  
COLLEGE OF HEALTHCARE SCIENCES

# CARD Parent Support Group & Parent Craft Group



- **March 25, 5:00-6:30 P.M.: Parent Support Group**
- **April 29, 5:00-6:30 P.M.: Parent Craft Group**
- **May 27, 5:00-6:30 P.M.: Parent Support Group**
- **June 24, 5:00-6:30 P.M.: Parent Craft Group**

Please join us for two new parent support group options hosted by the UF-Jax CARD and FDLRS-MDC, geared to meet the needs voiced by many in our area.

## **Parent Support Group:**

- \* Conversation-based group, co-facilitated by our licensed psychologist & lead clinician.
- \* Please contact [Marlena.Jenkins@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:Marlena.Jenkins@jax.ufl.edu) for more information regarding the parent support group.

## **Parent Craft Group:**

- \* Activity-based craft group for parents, led by CARD clinicians.
- \* Please contact [Elise.Summa@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:Elise.Summa@jax.ufl.edu) for more information regarding the parent craft group.

## **Requirements for joining these groups:**

- \* You must be an active constituent who is using either CARD or FDLRS-MDC services.
- \* Please come willing to learn, share and grow.







### **Jacksonville Icemen – Inclusion Awareness Day**

The Icemen and UF Health Center for Autism and Related Disabilities have teamed for the first ever Inclusion Awareness Day. This day is all about inspiring inclusion for all people in everyday activities regardless if you have a physical, mental or learning disability.

The Inclusion Awareness Day ticket package for the Icemen’s March 22<sup>nd</sup> game at Veterans Memorial Arena. For \$20 per person the package includes a complimentary Icemen gift and access to Post-Game Player Meet & Greet behind section 100 on the main concourse and post-game shots on the ice.

CARD will be providing a calming room (Location TBD) at this game for those that may get overstimulated and need to take a break.

Click [here](#) for more information about purchasing this ticket package.

INSPIRE is also inviting sponsors for the event. Sponsor levels are \$250, \$500, and \$1000 donation levels and include tickets to the game, concourse booths during game time, public display of name/logo and event an autographed puck at the highest level. For more information about being a sponsor (and an application form) click [here](#).

For additional information please contact Carli Faust at [carli@jacksonvilleicemen.com](mailto:carli@jacksonvilleicemen.com) or call/text (904)661-7242.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## **CARD 101 – St. Johns County**

**April 7, 2:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.,** An introductory training for families just beginning their journey with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD). The training informs families about the services provided at the UF-Jax CARD. It also gives parents a chance to ask questions and complete the necessary consent forms for receiving services. Parents need to provide a copy of the child's ASD diagnosis and/or IEP with them before starting CARD services. Location: Cunningham Creek Elementary. For more information or to register for this event contact [chanel.baldwin@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:chanel.baldwin@jax.ufl.edu).

## **Parent Advisory Committee**

**April 7, 2020 6:00-7:30 p.m. Fullerwood Training Center—10 Hildreth Drive St. Augustine, FL 32084**

**Topic:** GUARDIANSHIP: How to best protect your child when he or she turns 18

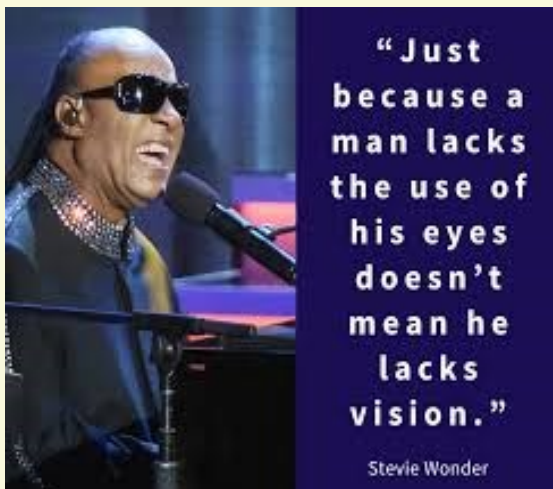
**Presenter:** Stephen Furnari, Florida Attorney, Founder of GuardianProject.US

## **St Johns County School District Gifted Advisory Meeting**

**April 21, 2020 Murray Middle School Auditorium 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

## **CARD/FDLRS Sibshops**

**May 2, 1:00 P.M.-4:00 P.M.,** When a child is diagnosed with a developmental disability, the entire family is affected. Sibshops are engaging and interactive workshops that offer support and guidance, while allowing siblings to share the challenges and celebrate the joys of having a brother or sister with a developmental disability. For kids ages 8-13 who have a sibling with a developmental disability. Registration is required. Location: Williams Family YMCA, 10415 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32257. These events are at no cost to the individual or family. For more information contact [audrey.bringman@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:audrey.bringman@jax.ufl.edu).



Due to being born six weeks premature, Stevie Wonder was born with a condition called retinopathy of prematurity, which made him blind. Stevie Wonder, even with this disability, has been a pioneer and innovator in the music industry.

Source: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0005567/bio>



# Landrum Middle School



Ms. Seaman and Ms. Alvarez from our ESE department hosted a lunch bunch for almost 70 gifted students at Landrum Middle School.





# WELLNESS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

## A COMPREHENSIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP FOR ASD PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- Offered at no cost to participants
- Workshop includes a brief before and after survey to assess your wellbeing and the effectiveness of the workshop content

Body, Mind,  
& Spirit



Do you have a Child/Teen/Young Adult diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder?



Are you burned out? Do you want to reduce your & your family's stress and improve overall wellness?



Then join other ASD caregivers for this workshop series to improve your Body, Mind, & Spirit!



### When?

Starting Thursday, March 26, 2020  
6:30-8:30pm for 8 Weeks



### Where?

First Florida Credit Union  
1950 CR 210 West, St. Johns 32259

**-SEATS ARE LIMITED-  
REGISTRATION IS  
REQUIRED**

Contact –  
Sandra Rebeor, PSY.D  
Email -  
S.Rebeor@Hotmail.com  
Call/Text -  
813-716-6446





Jill Sumner, Executive Secretary  
(904) 547-7672  
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### Program Specialists

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### St. Johns County School District Exceptional Student Education Department

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**Tina Powell, Assistant Director**  
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OT/PT, Assistive Tech, 504, McKay Scholarships

## CHARACTER COUNTS!



Carlyn Whitty, Confidential Staff Secretary  
(904) 547-7712 Carlyn.Whitty@stjohns.k12.fl.us

### Mission Statement: To identify and meet the unique educational needs of exceptional students and to provide support and resources to enhance educational opportunities so they become productive citizens.

ESE programs and services address the unique needs of students who are gifted in kindergarten through 12th grade and those with mild, moderate and severe disabilities from age three until they graduate with a regular diploma or until their 22nd birthday. ESE programs and services are designed to assist students in reaching their educational goals through the use of instructional and behavioral approaches which are research-based and exemplify best practices. Technology is used in many creative ways to meet student needs as well.

ESE services are available at all district schools for gifted students and students who have mild to moderate disabilities. PreK students with disabilities and students with more significant disabilities are served in cluster programs at selected sites. Program support is provided to students, parents and school personnel by program specialists based at the district office. Students with disabilities who are not eligible for services through the ESE program may be eligible for an accommodations plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

We hope that you find this newsletter informative and useful. *Parents As Partners Newsletters* are posted to the St. Johns County School District web site at:

<http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/ese/>