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Let's Talk About the Walkabout Abilities!

Walkabout Abilities celebrated 5 years on Sunday, September 18th at Goucher College in Towson, MD. Over 250 walkers came out to support Abilities Network. Through corporate sponsorships and individual donations, the 5th Annual Walkabout Abilities raised over \$38,000!

Participants enjoyed refreshments, a dance performance and Zumba lesson, a DJ, moon bounce, face painting, art activities, a special appearance by the Ravens' and Morgan State University's mascots, giveaways, and other activities.

Special thanks to our co-chairs, Paul Trinkoff and Tracy Pruitt, as well as our Walkabout Abilities Planning Committee: Sam Coleman, Andrew Hahn, Trish Kane, Chris McBride, Susan McDonough, Mike Ready, Maxine Seidman, and Trent Stroup.

Walkabout Abilities will be back in 2012! For more information on how you can get involved with the Walkabout Abilities event, please contact **Lauren Dunn** at ldunn@abilitiesnetwork.org, or 410-828-7700 x1229.

See the inside page for pictures from Walkabout Abilities.



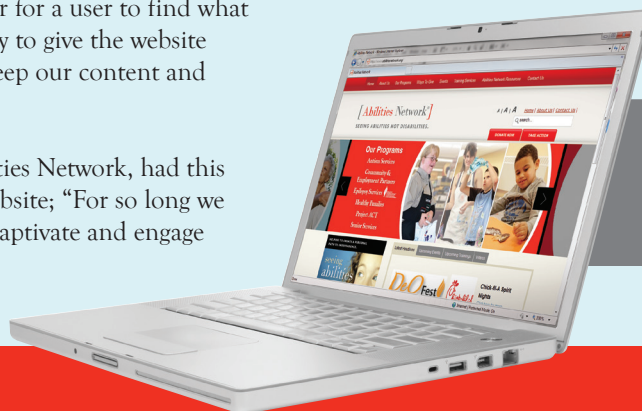
Abilities Network Launches a New Website!

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new website for Abilities Network! We are hoping the new website will provide easier access to Abilities Network's programs, current events, recent news, and many resources provided through Abilities Network.

In addition to the website's informative content, the new design was developed in a way that makes it easier for a user to find what they are looking for. Our goal was not only to give the website a more updated appearance, but also to keep our content and articles more current.

Lee Kingham, Executive Director of Abilities Network, had this to say about the new Abilities Network website; "For so long we have needed a more dynamic website, to captivate and engage

our audience. We invite you to view the site, and see all the exciting new changes we have made. You will find up to date information about our programs, and upcoming events around the state. We hope you will find the new website helpful as you navigate through all of the resources and information Abilities Network has to offer."



The new Abilities Network website can be viewed at www.abilitiesnetwork.org.

2011 Walkabout Abilities Corporate Sponsors

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TOP TEAMS

The following are the teams who raised the most money through their fundraising efforts. Thank you for all of your hard work!

First Place – My Buddy
Team Captains: Trish Kane & Angela Myers

Second Place- Team Trinkoff
Team Captain: Paul Trinkoff

Third Place – Shake Rattle & Roll
Team Captain: Susan McDonough

Fourth Place: RSM McGladrey
Team Captain: Tracy Pruitt



Students from Towson University's Student Chapter of the National Art Education Association coordinated a tent filled with fun art activities for the walkers.



Walkers enjoyed sponsor bags donated by IWIF.

Thank you to the individuals, businesses, and organizations who volunteered and donated their time, product, or service to help make Walkabout Abilities a success:

Sysco Foods • Einstein Bros. Bagels • Starbucks
Maxine Seidman • Pepsi Beverages Company
The Coleman Family • DJ Joe Hughes • Towson University's Student Chapter of the National Art Education Association • Towson University's Phi Mu Sorority • B'More Abilities Special Arts Center
Morgan State University • Vanessa Yanson
Thomas Messenger • IWIF • Mars Super Markets
Paul Friedlander • Brick Bodies • Magooby's Joke House
Clyde's of Columbia • The Greene Turtle • Hightopps
Backstage Grille • Michael's Café • Donna's Café
Coffee Bar • Geppi's Entertainment Museum
Baltimore Ravens • Looney's Pub • Ice World
Toby's Dinner Theatre • Tidewater Grille
Sunflower Bakery



Ravens' mascot, Poe, was there to cheer on the walkers as they crossed the finish line.



The Margolis Family, members of Team Paz, approach the finish line.



Members of the Play Keepers Team with Team Captain, Maxine Seidman, a member of Abilities Network's Board of Directors. Play Keepers is also a Friend Sponsor of the event.



Walkers warmed up to get ready to walk!

Photography by: Paul Friedlander

November is Epilepsy Awareness Month

Epilepsy in the Workplace Trainings

The Epilepsy Foundation of the Chesapeake Region (EFCR) provided five Epilepsy in the Workplace trainings throughout the state of Maryland in August and September. Participants learned how to initiate a conversation about requesting accommodations in the workplace for people with epilepsy. The trainings were held in Baltimore County, St. Mary's County, Anne Arundel County, Harford County, and Frederick County. The participants of the trainings included epilepsy patients, family members of people with epilepsy, and job coaches for people with epilepsy.

Here are some tips that participants took away from the trainings:

- The law requires that an employer provide reasonable accommodation to an employee or job applicant with a disability, unless doing so would cause significant difficulty or expense for the employer.

- A reasonable accommodation is any change in the workplace (or in the ways things are usually done) to help a person with a disability apply for a job, perform the duties of a job, or enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment.
- People with epilepsy may have driving restrictions, so a reasonable accommodation might include adjusting a person's work schedule so that they can access public transportation.

For more information about accommodations for people with epilepsy in the workplace, visit www.askjan.org.



Morgan State University

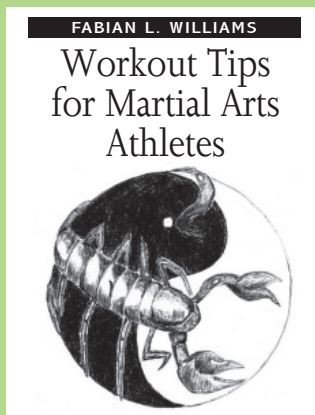
The Epilepsy Foundation of the Chesapeake Region (EFCR) collaborated with Morgan State University to provide many epilepsy awareness and educational activities throughout the past year. A strong partnership developed between EFCR and Morgan in the very beginning stages of planning events that could be developed through a grant opportunity.

EFCR and Morgan State University have collaborated by displaying tables at community fairs, developing a Student Focus Group, brainstorming ways to implement epilepsy education, and hosting several awareness events in the community. Two of their bigger events were the *Bowling Championship Tournament* and the *Swing Red Event*.

The Bowling Championship Tournament was hosted by Morgan State University's bowling team, and highlighted EFCR as the cause. Epilepsy awareness was evident during the whole event from the program book, to the special red uniforms the bowlers wore. Participating teams came from all over the country, therefore epilepsy awareness was spread much farther than the Morgan community.

The Swing Red Event was adopted by Morgan's women's softball team for the 2011 season. Throughout the season, the players sold raffle tickets to raise money for epilepsy programs in Baltimore. The Swing Red Event was a double header softball game, and the softball field was decorated with a banner and epilepsy fact signs. The softball team also wore red uniform shirts, and red backpack bags filled with epilepsy information, which were distributed to spectators and visiting team members. A special program book was created which included epilepsy information and highlighted a Morgan student, Kevin Lewis, who wears the school's mascot costume, and also has epilepsy.

Morgan State University has been a strong partner with creating awareness in the community about epilepsy. We know they will continue to spread information about how important it is to educate yourself on this cause.



Fabian Williams

By Kelly Boring, Community and Employment Partners Case Manager

Fabian Williams was diagnosed with dyslexia, as well as epilepsy, at the age of ten. Fabian receives services through the Abilities Network Community and Employment Partners program. He is now in his forties, and has come across many road blocks in his life, but he has not allowed his disabilities to stop him from accomplishing his goals. Fabian was able to overcome his dyslexia, as well as low self esteem, and write a book that has been published. His book entitled, *Workout Tips for Martial Arts Athletes*, is a huge success for Fabian and he works very hard to promote his book. All of his hard work has paid off; his book is now available for purchase at www.amazon.com, as well as a few local book stores, including Ukazoo in Towson, MD.

Besides promoting his book, Fabian also works full-time for Baltimore City Schools. He also teaches private kickboxing classes and creates workout plans for his own clients. Fabian is also looking to take other aerobic and martial arts courses, so he can expand his knowledge and expertise. It is easy to admire Fabian's drive and compassion for the things he loves, and watch as he sets high goals for himself.



Conference Wrap-Up

By Alexandria Ryce, Project ACT Resource and Training Developer

On Saturday, September 24, 2011, Project ACT hosted "Feeling Puzzled? Sorting out the Pieces of Autism," which was a full-day conference for early childhood professionals and families of young children. Our goal was to create a high-quality conference with many opportunities for participants to engage in active learning, and to interact with each other.

Dr. Annemeik Wilms-Floet, M.D. of Kennedy Krieger Institute's Center for Development and Learning, provided the keynote address entitled, "Putting it Together: The Past, The Current, and The Future View on Autism Spectrum Disorders". Her presentation provided a historical perspective, and a look towards what the future of Autism Spectrum Disorders holds. Breakout sessions were held in the morning and the afternoon, to further participants understanding of young children on the autism spectrum, and to learn strategies to fully include them in their care.

Special thanks are extended to the following people and organizations for their support:

- All participating presenters for their exceptionally enlightening, and well received presentations.
- The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council for their financial support of the conference.
- The Maryland School for the Deaf, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Michelle Landrum, and representatives from Johns Hopkins Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Epidemiology (CADDE) for their support to Project ACT by offering wonderful program information, presenting the breakout sessions, and information that received outstanding feedback from the participants.
- Project ACT Advisory Board members, especially Maxine Seidman and Mimi Wang, for their support and willingness to pitch in wherever needed to help make our event run smoothly for the participants!
- Sam's Club and Einstein's Bagels for providing all of the food for breakfast and lunch.
- Last but not least, Kelli Donaghue, the Zumba Instructor, for volunteering to present a 20 minute Zumba energizer that so many participants mentioned on their evaluation as being so enjoyable!



Participants listened attentively during Dr. Annemeik Wilms-Floet, M.D. keynote address entitled, *Putting it Together: The Past, The Current and the Future View on Autism Spectrum Disorders*.



During our morning break, participants enjoyed a brief interactive Zumba session with instructor Kelli Donaghue.

A Relationship Grows

By Cheryl Johnson, Autism Services Adult Life Planner

When providing Adult Life Planning services, it is essential to develop a relationship that increases communication between an Adult Life Planner and the individuals and families.

When first meeting Nicholas, an individual who receives Adult Life Planning Services, he would enter the room and communicate non-verbally, usually with brief eye contact and a short hello with prompting from his parents. He would be present while his parents and I discussed the services he needed, including the possibility of buying an iPad.

Through our time spent together, communication has become more comfortable for Nicholas. One evening, Nicholas came to me and touched my shoulder and said, "green like me"; both of us were wearing clothing that was green. Then when getting together one evening, Nicholas said, "azul, blue", then, "verde, green." He continued with several other colors, and then pieces of clothing. Nicholas' father was teaching him Spanish! Nicholas found yet another way to communicate with me and the family.

As we begin to spend more time together, we will be able to communicate and interact in a different way. Funding was found to purchase an iPad, which has become an extremely useful tool for people with autism. Not only will the iPad be used for social stories, but it will be useful for spelling out words by using symbols. For example, Nicholas could spell out, "I want", then use the symbol "cookie", to let his mother know he wants a cookie. The use of the program on the iPad will help him reach a higher level of communication. His family even plans on purchasing an iPad application for Spanish! Who knows the level of communication that can be reached through the use of technology!

To find out more about the use of the iPad as a communication resource for people with autism, visit these websites:

Autism Apps:

- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/autism-apps>
- http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-20124225/apps-for-autism-communicating-on-the-ipad/

Your Mental Health and Your Baby

By Fatima Frazier, Healthy Families Family Services Manager

For the past several decades, researchers have studied how the mother's exposure to infections and viruses, or her use of medications, drugs, and alcohol can affect the physical development of her fetus. Less attention, however, has been paid to how the mother's emotional well-being affects her unborn child. In the field of prenatal psychology, researchers are beginning to study the relationships between the mother's emotional experiences during pregnancy, and the child's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being later in life. It is now believed that the mother's experiences during pregnancy and delivery, as well as the health of her unborn child, can be impacted by the mother's experiences, emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. It is believed that two-thirds of premature contractions are caused by stress.

Research has shown that major stress or depression during pregnancy can have serious effects on both the mother and unborn child. Intervention can help women early in their pregnancy to find ways to manage their stress.

Here are some things to do:

- Discuss symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety with your primary care doctor and follow your doctor's recommendations.
- Build positive support systems for yourself and your baby.
- Practice relaxation methods to reduce anxiety.
- Avoid drugs, alcohol, chemicals in certain products, and medications or vitamins not prescribed by your health care provider.
- Eat a healthy diet with nutrients you and your baby need.
- Develop an exercise plan with your health care provider to improve your health, reduce the effects of stress, and support optimal blood flow to the uterus.
- Get regular rest periods and a good night's sleep.
- Avoid stressful environments, or situations, when possible.

Information obtained from:
Promoting Maternal Health During Pregnancy.

The First Fall Family Bingo Night Was A SUCCESS!

Over 100 people came out to play Bingo on Saturday, October 22nd, at Abilities Network's Fall Family Bingo Night! Participants of all ages won baskets filled with prizes including books, gift cards, board games, and much more. Thanks to those who came out to play bingo in support of Abilities Network!

Special Thanks to our Basket Sponsors:

- Mark Dyer
- Payroll Network
- The Murnane Family
- The Coleman Family
- The McBride Family
- Kim West-Clark
- Andrew Hahn
- ComForcare Senior Services
- Elizabeth Cooney Agency
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- Aberdeen Ironbirds
- Naylor Winery
- Bill's Seafood
- Tom's Tropicals
- 100 West Hair Studio
- Tiffany Hiob
- Paul Obrecht III



Abilities Network will be holding a Bowling Social in early 2012. Stay tuned for the date!



C&O Canal Bike Ride Benefitting Abilities Network

Myron Polischuk and Brian Bennett rode their bikes from June 8th- June 11th along the C&O Canal Trail. The trail is 184.5 miles long, and Myron and Brian pursued this challenge in an effort to create awareness and raise funds to support Abilities Network. Myron & Brian raised a total of \$1,545! Thanks to Myron, Brian, Diane Peters, Abilities Network Board Member, and all of the donors who contributed to their challenge.

Myron, Brian, and others will take this challenge again in 2012. They will be riding their bikes from Wednesday, May 9th through Saturday, May 12th 2012, along the C&O Canal Trail, again in support of Abilities Network.

Are you interested in riding with them? Stay tuned for more details on how you can participate in this event, or contact Lauren Dunn at 410-828-7700 x1229, or e-mail ldunn@abilitiesnetwork.org.

[Abilities Network] Who We Are

SEEING ABILITIES NOT DISABILITIES.

Our Mission

To challenge the community to acknowledge the value and equality of people of all abilities.

To promote more inclusive communities, these services are provided through six main programs:

Autism Services

The Autism Services program enables children with autism to function as meaningfully and independently as possible in their homes and community, while providing their families with the strategies and resources necessary to assist their children in reaching their maximum potential. Autism Services provides individual support, respite care, family training, and transition planning into adult services.

Community & Employment Partners

The Community and Employment Partner's program is designed to support adults with disabilities to live and work as independently as possible in their communities. Community and Employment Partners supports individuals interested in living independently to gain the life skills essential for finding and maintaining a job that fits their individual needs and skills, maintaining a home, budget, health and happiness.

Epilepsy Services

The Epilepsy Services program serves individuals, families, and the greater community with epilepsy education, information and referral services, assistance with medical issues, advocacy, support groups, and scholarship support.

Healthy Families

Healthy Families Baltimore County offers in-home support to expectant families and new parents. Services are designed to assist families with developing supportive, enriching parenting practices that will help children grow to realize their fullest potential.

Project ACT

Project ACT means **All Children Together**. The goal of Project ACT is to make it possible for families, childcare professionals, and other education and service agencies, to collaborate in successfully including children of all abilities in community settings.

Senior Services

The Senior Services program provides a variety of supports to individuals in the community. The Senior Services program offers a Speaker Series which includes a range of educational topics related to the health and well being of seniors. In addition, our Move Management Services is a fee-based program which assists seniors as they navigate their way into and through retirement living options and choices, from identifying a community that meets their needs, to completely organizing, packing, and resettling into their new home.

Grants Update

Abilities Network would like to highlight and acknowledge several grants that have recently been awarded in support of enhancing the lives of the individuals and families we serve:

CDBG Positive Solutions for Families Grant (Project ACT) – \$23,750 – The Positive Solutions for Families Grant was awarded to Project ACT by the Baltimore County Office of Planning. The funds will be used to support teacher training, mentoring, coaching as well as a parenting class and individual supportive services to young children with special needs. The sites to receive this program are two child care centers that serve low income single parent families.

CIVITAN Grant – \$875 – The *Challenger Civitan Grant* was awarded to Abilities Network in the amount of \$875. The funds this grant provided were used to purchase office equipment and supplies needed for Abilities Network's Frederick Office.

MSDE ECMH Grant (Project ACT) – \$282,000 – This grant from the Maryland State Department of Education supports the continuation of on site early intervention

services for children birth through age 6 who are attending a child care placement and are struggling with developmental and/or behavioral challenges.

MSDE SN Grant (Project ACT) – \$75,000 – The Special Needs Training and Mentoring grant funded by the Maryland State Department of Education provides funding to disseminate training on including young children with special needs to child care providers around the state of Maryland who are providing care to infants and toddlers.

MD Developmental Disabilities Council Grant (Project ACT) – \$1,000 – The MD Developmental Disabilities Council awarded Project ACT \$1,000 to provide honorariums to speakers who presented at the Fall 2011 Early Childhood Conference held at Abilities Network and titled "Feeling Puzzled? Sorting Out the Pieces of Autism".

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Training and Events Calendar

To keep up to date on the most current trainings and events going on at Abilities Network, please visit our Training and Events Calendar at www.abilitiesnetwork.org under the "Training Services" tab on the new website.

Would you like to receive e-mail updates from Abilities Network?

You can either fill out the "Join Our Mailing List" form on the new website at www.abilitiesnetwork.org, or e-mail your contact information to **Stephanie Sweeney** at ssweeney@abilitiesnetwork.org.



Don't forget to "like" us on Facebook and "follow" us on Twitter!



We hope you and your family have a safe and wonderful holiday, and a Happy New Year!

It is that time of year again to give thanks, spend time with family and friends, and ring in the New Year. During this time we also ask that you consider making a donation to Abilities Network:

- **Your donation of \$25**
Can provide one hour of respite care for a family with a child with autism.
- **Your donation of \$50**
Can provide one hour of Project ACT consultation to a child care center in order to provide care to a child with mental health needs.
- **Your donation of \$75**
Can provide one day of job support for an individual receiving services through the Community and Employment Partners program.
- **Your donation of \$100**
Can provide a *Kids on the Block* puppet show to a local elementary school in order to educate students about epilepsy, seizures, and first-aid.
- **Your donation of \$250**
Can provide 3 hours of *Adult Life Planning* services to assist young adults on the autism spectrum by providing specific interventions and supports for the transition to adult services.

Contact **Lauren Dunn** at **410-828-7700 x1229**, or see the enclosed insert for details of how you can make a contribution to the programs Abilities Network provides.

