



Families Helping Families
Region 7 programs and this
newsletter is supported
by the Louisiana
Developmental Disabilities
Council.

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's Mission

To ensure all individuals with disabilities benefit from supports and opportunities in their communities so they achieve quality of life in conformance with their wishes.

Through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Congress funds and authorizes the Developmental Disabilities Council to conduct advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities. The Council's efforts are designed to promote the increased self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their communities.

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) is made up of people from every region of the state who are appointed by the governor to develop and implement a five year plan to address the needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Membership includes persons with developmental disabilities, parents and representatives from public and private agencies. Several members rotate off the Council each year in October and nominations for new members are always welcomed.

You may contact the DDC by calling 1.800.450.8101 or visit their website: www.laddc.org

Families Helping Families
Region 7
2620 Centenary Boulevard
Building 2, Suite 250
Shreveport, LA 71101



Families Helping Families Region 7

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this issue

Introduction P.1

Parent Stipend P.2

Questions and Answers P.3

LA Developmental Disabilities Council P.4

Who:

A family directed resource center for all individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

What:

Providing information, referral and support through a network of services and assistance throughout Region 7.

When:

8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Monday – Friday
Drop-ins welcome

Where:

2620 Centenary Boulevard
Building 2, Suite 250
Shreveport, LA 71104
318.226.4541
877.226.4541
fhfregion7@bellsouth.net

Chanel Jackson,
Assistant Director

Families Helping Families Region 7 A New Center

Families Helping Families Region 7 is the name of the new Family Resource Center serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in this nine (9) parish northwest area of Louisiana (Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, Claiborne, Sabine and Webster).

As you may know, Families Helping Families is a state-wide, non-profit organization.

Our services include providing information about disabilities, referral to other important agencies, a connection to resources in our community and support from a parent who understands and lives a similar experience.

If you are looking for a parent who shares the experience of parenting and educating a child with disabilities or if you are a person with a disability and would like to connect with others, help and support are available for Families Helping Families Region 7.

Our organization has just opened the doors but we are seeking to meet those of you who may need services or information. We also hope to connect with agencies, business and professionals who will give us an opportunity to speak to your groups. We want everyone to know about Families Helping Families Region 7 and we want to know about all of you.

If you would like to be a part of this organization and receive our mail-outs, please call or email to get on our mailing list.

Stipend Money Available

Do you want to learn more about your child's disability? Have you heard of a new technique that might help him learn? Families Helping Families Region 7 might be able to help you get this knowledge.

There are stipend dollars available for individuals with disabilities and their families who live in the parishes of Region 7. Please apply for these funds if you would like to attend a conference, convention or other activity that will increase your knowledge.

For the next three months, these funds will be managed by Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, Inc. in Monroe. To apply, you may call 1.888.300.1320 or email: info@fhfnela.org.

Please have the following information handy when calling to ask for funding or include these details in any email:

- 1) When
- 2) Where
- 3) Registration Cost
- 4) How much you are able to contribute

This is a great opportunity to attend a state, regional or national event that otherwise might not be possible!

The strongest and sweetest song remains to be sung

Walt Whitman

What They Forgot to Mention

I remember the day of my son's diagnosis of autism as if it were yesterday. The tone of the doctor's voice, the silence in the room, the words "lifelong disability, no sure, I'm sorry" still sting when I allow myself to reflect on that day.

But I have paused on some occasions too numerous to count and thought, *Someone should've mentioned that this would be part of the package* when my child was diagnosed with autism.

Someone forgot to mention that I would listen to my child's simple utterances or attempted approximations as if he were a world leader giving the speech of a lifetime. I could never have imagined the worth of a single word despite the fact that I may never hear it again.

Someone forgot to mention that when my son was finally potty-trained at age nine, there would be few people who could understand the significance of such an accomplishment, and even fewer with whom I could actually share it. Accomplishments of any size, their true worth known only to me, would bring quiet

celebrations between my son and me.

Someone should have mentioned that autism is messy! Wallpaper's meant to be shredded, bathrooms are designed to be flooded, walls are bare in order to smear stuff on them, washable paint really isn't, and more food will actually be crushed and dropped than eaten.

I wish someone would've mentioned that autism is extremely expensive! Doctors, therapists, medications, supplements, conferences, and sensory equipment are only the tip of the iceberg. I could not have guessed my child's disability would allow people to cross our path in live who otherwise would not have, and that such people would willingly respond to a child in need.

Someone should have mentioned that each time a child with autism initiates or engages in a reciprocal hug, that feeling you had when you held him for the first time comes back time and time again.

And they forgot to mention the day my son was diagnosed with autism that the triumphs

over this disability would far outweigh the tears, that laughter would eventually ease the sense of loss, and that sheer faith would allow me and millions of other parents to fall in bed exhausted each night, only to get up the next day eager to discover what else they forgot to mention.

Sandy Sotzen

Editor's Note: Sandy Sotzen holds a master's degree in education and has been a special education teacher for 21 years. Sandy is the proud mom of two boys, ages 15 and 12, the youngest of which is identified with autism. She can be reached at sandysotzen@comcast.net. This story was reprinted from *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Children with Special Needs*.

It is our hope that you enjoy this inspirational story. Each of our future newsletter will feature an article or story that is designed to make you smile, reminisce or just chuckle.

"The seemingly unattainable is realized through the resolve of many." – Henry Ford



Louisiana Citizens for Action Now (LaCAN)

Welcome to the Louisiana Citizens for Action Now (LaCAN) column. In this issue, I'd like to first introduce myself and then give you a few details about what LaCAN is and how you can become involved.

First things first – my name is Duane Ebarb and I am the leader for Region 7. All that means is that I try to let the membership know how the laws and votes that are taking place in Baton Rouge will affect our lives as persons with developmental disabilities and as family members. As a part of this, I also let you know when an

Action Alert has been issued and how you can participate. Action Alerts are emails that ask us to write, email, call or fax our senators and representatives to let them know how we feel about the issue they are considering.

Through this grassroots advocacy effort, many things have been accomplished. This year, for the first time ever, 2,025 waiver slots were included in the Executive Budget. This was possible from Act 481 of 2007 that provided for a funding stream to enable waiver slots to be included every year. This act is a direct result of LaCAN

members and their advocacy efforts.

If you would like more information about LaCAN and its initiatives and/or become a member just call Duane at Families Helping Families Region 7 318.226.4541. You can also check out LaCAN on the web:

www.lacanadvocates.org

Questions and Answers

Q: What is a developmental disability?

Answer: A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability that begins any time from birth through age 21 and is expected to last for a lifetime. Developmental disabilities may be cognitive, physical, or a combination of both. This disability is not attributed solely to a mental illness. While not always visible, these disabilities can result in serious limitations in every day activities of life, including self-care, communication, learning, mobility, or being able to work or live independently. Such disabilities are almost sure to result in a lifetime of dependence on

publically funded services, unless families receive sufficient support, children receive appropriate education, and adults receive appropriate services that enable them to live and work in their local communities.

Have a question you would like answered? Submit it to our newsletter by calling 318.226.4541 or sending it via email: fhfregion7@bellsouth.net



Hello, my name is Chanel Jackson and I am serving as the Assistant Director of our new office, Families Helping Families Region 7. I am thrilled to be in this organization and will strive to do my best to establish this resource center for all individuals with disabilities.

Though we have essentially just moved my desk in, I am anxious to hear from the families and individuals of Region 7.

As the mother of Darius, a wonderful seven year old with special needs, I can assure you that I will do my best to provide the information, referral and support to those individuals seeking our services.

If you are a parent, an individual with a disability or a professional working with someone who has a disability and you think we can help, please call: 318.226.4541.