



Summer 2011

NEW DIRECTIONS



Early Childhood Direction Center

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ECDC is a regional clearinghouse that provides free information, referral, technical assistance and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with children birth to five with suspected or diagnosed delays or disabilities.

We provide ongoing community training programs for both parents and professionals.

ECDC is funded by the New York State Education Department, hosted by Women and Children's Hospital and provided in-kind support from People Inc.

If you would like to be included on our list serve to receive the latest federal, state and local updates, please send an email to ecdc@kaleidahealth.org and indicate whether you are a parent or a professional.

Keep it Simple for Summer

By Tracey Banks

Think about your favorite childhood summer time memories. Chances are many of your favorite memories are of simple activities: riding bikes, playing hide and seek in the dark, catching bugs, and running through the sprinkler. Summer doesn't have to be packed with morning to night adventures to keep young children busy and learning. Simple activities and neighborhood trips are just as good. Try some of these simple summer activities for all children:

Plant a Garden – Growing flowers or vegetables is a great learning activity and lots of fun. Try planting easy things like beans and sunflowers. If you don't have room in your yard, start some seeds in pots and see your child's enthusiasm as the plants sprout and get bigger each day.

Blow Bubbles – Bubbles are always fun. If you have older children they will love blowing them, and younger children will love watching or chasing and popping the bubbles. [Here are some recipes](#) for bubbles you can make at home. And don't forget about the wands. Experiment with different household items like straws, strawberry baskets, slotted spoons, and floral wire. <http://babyparenting.about.com/cs/activities/a/bubbles.htm>

Make Mud Pies – When the sun comes out after a day or two of rain it's the perfect time to make mud pies. Grab some old plates or pie tins, some spoons, spatulas or sticks and head to the nearest puddle. Decorate your creations with leaves, sticks, stones and flowers.

Start a Collection – There are many things you can collect right around your house – bugs, leaves, flowers, and rocks. This can be a summer long activity and wherever you go you can add to your collection. Garage sales are also great places to look for inexpensive items to collect like matchbox cars, books and dress up clothes.

Make Music – Music is an important part of a child's learning and a great way for them to express their creativity and emotions. You can make your own musical instruments from common household materials like coffee cans and shoeboxes. [These instructions](#) will help you make instruments like bean shakers and kazoos for younger children.

<http://babyparenting.about.com/od/activitiesandplay/a/instruments.htm>

Pitch a Tent – Invest in a small "pup" tent or for even more fun make one yourself using your clothesline and some old blankets and sheets. Put some books and blocks and dolls in the tent and see what fun evolves.

Read – Indoors or outdoors. Take books with you wherever you go. Try starting a chapter book with your preschoolers and older children. They will look forward to story time to hear what happens next.

Finally, don't forget to let children make up their own activities and give them lots of time to just play!



Safety and Children with Autism: What Every Parent Must Know

By: Kathy Ralabate Doody, M.S. Ed

Summer is right around the corner, or so we hope in Western New York! With warmer weather and leisurely days away from school or established routines come increased risks of injury or incident for all of our kids, but more so for our children with autism or special needs.



As a parent of a teenager with autism, and a special education teacher working with preschoolers with autism, safety is first and foremost on my mind at all times. Here are some helpful resources and suggestions to keep our children happy and safe this summer:

- ✓ Take a mental or digital photograph of your child before he/she leaves the house in the event you would be asked to provide a description of what your child is wearing. A few years ago I started taking a picture of my son every morning as he was waiting for the bus, so that I did not have to rely solely on my already-cluttered memory. As I take a daily photograph on my cell phone, I delete yesterday's photo.
- ✓ Stop by your local police station and fill out a "Wanderer's Report" (the actual name of the report may vary slightly but the basic premise is the same). This is generally a one or two page form, asking for basic information describing your child (hair color, identifying birth marks), their interests (playgrounds, fast food restaurants, Chuck E. Cheese), and hand preference. Did you know that individuals wander first in the direction of hand dominance? Also include a recent photo of your child to affix to the application and update yearly (when you receive school pictures, for example).
- ✓ Call 911 to alert emergency responders that a child with autism resides in the house. Let them know if your child will respond to his/her name in a crisis situation; would the first responders need to locate your child to physically guide

him out of the house? Is the child non-verbal? Identify the location of the child's room or preferred location in the house so the responders know where to initiate and focus their search.

- ✓ Consider swim lessons for your child, in addition to using floatation and safety devices. Drowning is frequently the cause of accidental death in children with autism, as pools, hot tubs, or bodies of water are enticing for children on the spectrum. Make sure all pool gates are securely locked and ask neighbors to do the same.
- ✓ Medic-Alert bracelets or engraved tags can be utilized to further ensure safety for children with autism. Include information regarding allergies, seizure activity, methods of communication, and emergency contact information. If wearing a bracelet or tag is tactilely aversive for the child, tuck the tag under the child's shoelaces or attach to a backpack.
- ✓ GPS or tracking devices can be used to locate a child. See the accompanying article entitled "**Project Lifesaver**" for additional information.
- ✓ Complete an "Emergency Information at a Glance" form, found on Autism Speaks' website (<http://www.autismsafetyproject.org>). Once the form is completed, display it prominently on your refrigerator as emergency responders will look for it there first. The Autism Safety Project contains valuable information for families, caregivers, and educators, so review the website carefully for additional tips.
- ✓ Refer to the Autism Treatment Network's safety brochure for individuals with autism, located at <http://www.awaare.org/docs/wanderingbrochure.pdf>, for suggestions, FAQs, and strategies for keeping your child with autism safe.

Make safety a priority for our children this summer. Enjoy the warm weather and sunshine, knowing that you have taken all precautions possible to keep your child safe!

Project Lifesaver



Being a personal caregiver is a difficult task. The responsibility is enormous and can be draining. This situation can be dramatically intensified when the person being cared for begins to wander, or has a propensity to escape. The caregiver is thrust into a situation where they cannot let their guard down for a minute. The risk to the individual, child or adult with special needs is extraordinarily high. Often they are unable to find their way home, safely cross streets, or understand dangers in the community.

Project Lifesaver WNY is a newly formed not-for-profit agency serving Western New York that offers support to individuals and their family. Participants in Project Lifesaver WNY receive a bracelet, similar to a watch band, armed with a small non-intrusive transmitter that is registered with local law enforcement. Information regarding the participant's unique health, medical, behavior, and other safeguards provided by the caregiver at intake are recorded in a database that is accessible to specially-trained search and rescue law enforcement officers.

The transmitter is simple, similar to LoJack technology used to find lost or stolen vehicles, and emits a signal, 24 hours each day, on a radio frequency exclusive to the individual. Should the participant wander from home, the caregiver is instructed to call Sheriff's department personnel in Erie or Niagara Counties to initiate a search. The officers have search equipment and the training needed to locate individuals that wander from their home or caregiver. The Erie County Air One unit also has copies of the transmitter codes and is prepared to support ground search and rescue crews.

Currently there are 1,200 Project Lifesaver communities located throughout 45 states and other countries. Because each of these organizations utilizes the same technology and training, a program participant travelling throughout the country that becomes lost may be assisted by simply contacting the Project Lifesaver agency in that community.

Since the program was launched in July 2009, Project Lifesaver WNY has enrolled 30 children and adults into the program. Led by a volunteer Board of Directors,

Project Lifesaver WNY serves children and adults with disabilities including autism, cognitive disability, Down Syndrome, as well as those with Alzheimer's and dementia. Officers meet with program participants each month to conduct battery changes and ensure that their equipment is functioning properly.

In November 2009, Project Lifesaver WNY was credited for assisting the Erie County Sheriff's Department in locating the first program participant reported missing in a rural WNY community. Since that time, Project Lifesaver WNY has provided support in other successful rescues throughout our community.

"We greatly appreciate the financial support many members of our community provided for this very important technology that will help keep our most vulnerable citizens safe" states David Aston, President & founder of Project Lifesaver WNY. "If we can save just one lost child, or return one wandering person to their family, it will be a huge community success," Aston said.

To learn more about Project Lifesaver WNY, please visit the website at www.projectlifesaverwny.org or call (716) 374-0090.

Websites to investigate:

The new website for ACCES formally known as VESID: www.acces.nysed.gov

Parent/child early literacy website: <http://www.walearning.com/articles/take-advantage-of-our-free-parent-child-literacy-activities/>

Save the Date

WHAT'S NEXT?

NOW IS THE TIME

Wednesday, August 10, 2011
8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Daemen College Wick Social Room
4380 Main St., Amherst, NY

For more information call
716-332-4170 or visit
www.parentnetworkwny.org/Events/TransitionsWhatsNext2011

Transitions
An Interactive Learning Experience