



SPRING NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011

Welcome to the new Bernards PEC (Parents for Exceptional Children) newsletter. We've redesigned our logo, created a new website and scheduled lots of new programs for the coming months.

Inside, you'll see how busy we've been with recreation programs, sensitivity and mentor trainings, and our Second Annual Precious Pearl Gala. We want to personally thank everyone who has made our first half of the year such a success.

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." - Immanuel Kant

The parents of PEC continue to "invent the future" for our children, ourselves and our community. We have a new board of dedicated parents who are actively working for the benefit of our community.

We invite ALL families to get involved. Check the Friday Folders for an upcoming member survey. We are looking to create new programs and activities to meet the needs of our membership, and we need your input.

Help us to create our future...

Lisa McNey & Monique McHenry, Co-Presidents, Bernards PEC

PRECIOUS PEARL GALA

Special Fun for a Special Cause



PEC held our Second Annual Precious Pearl Gala at the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster on November 13, 2010. With more than 240 guests in attendance, the Gala raised over \$60,000.

The elegant Trump grand ballroom became a bustling casino for "A Night in Monte Carlo." The Laura Hull Jazz Quartet provided musical entertainment, while guests tried their luck at blackjack, roulette, craps and poker. Over 100 silent and live

auction items included vacation and golf packages, stunning jewelry, Z100 Jingle Ball tickets, and sports memorabilia.

PEC thanks Gala chair Kathleen Cancro and the entire gala committee, along with Trump's Special Events Coordinator Colette Rochat and auctioneer, Thomas "Tippa" Golden. Volunteers from the community also graciously gave of their time and talents. The generous donations made by families,

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PEC Purchases LEXIA Reading Program for Bernards Schools



(L to R:) PEC Co-President Lisa McNey, Director of Special Services Jean O'Connell, Board of Education President Susan Cauldwell Carlsson, PEC Co-President Monique McHenry, School Superintendent Valerie Goger, and Mount Prospect 5th grader Quinn McHenry.

On February 14, PEC presented a check for \$25,660 to the Board of Education to purchase the Lexia Reading program. Lexia is a proven, computer-based interactive phonics program that will be used next year in the district's four elementary schools to benefit both special and general education students.

The donation also will fund training in the program for elementary and middle school teachers. Although the William Annin Middle School PTO raised funds to purchase Lexia for their school last year, PEC's donation will provide the middle school teachers with the training needed to begin implementing the program next year.

Hope Autism Foundation To Benefit Students Turning 21

PEC donated a portion of our Gala proceeds to Hope Autism Foundation (HAF). A newly formed not-for-profit, HAF was founded by six Bernards Township families, all with teenagers currently in the ABA program at Ridge HS, with the goal of providing recreational and vocational programs for adults on the autism spectrum.

According to HAF President Danielle Lumby, there is a vital need to support our children once they reach age 21, since they will "age out" of the school system and no longer be eligible to receive services.

HAF's ultimate goal is to establish a training and mentoring program that will

lead to part-time employment and also provide opportunities for social interaction and support.

By actively fundraising, raising community awareness and seeking community involvement, HAF hopes to minimize dependency on public support. Using several successful enterprises that employ disabled and disadvantaged adults as a model, HAF is confident that the program will succeed. The end result will help adults on the autism spectrum to use their capabilities to fulfill sustainable, valuable roles in their community.



Katie Cancro of PEC presented a check to HAF members (L to R): Denise Reiser, Lily Yip, Grace Ann Murphy, Vera Burkardt, Jennifer Kim, Susan Gately and Danielle Lumby.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT
HAF, PLEASE VISIT
THEIR WEBSITE:

WWW.HOPEAUTISMFOUNDATION.ORG

3rd Graders Learn How to Include Friends with Special Needs

For the last two years, PEC volunteers have visited every 3rd grade classroom in each of our District's four elementary schools to educate the students about disabilities. This "Sensitivity Training," led by Melinda Jennis, a physical therapist from Montville Pathways, encourages the students to befriend children with special needs and to include them in sports and other activities.

During the workshop, students learn how to appropriately interact with a child that may have poor eye contact, inappropriate behaviors, developmental delays, physical disabilities, or all of the above. Students then participate in five stations that simulate different disabilities and are specially designed to give the children a taste of how it feels to have a disability.

At one station, students try to read books while wearing special glasses that make everything look blurry. At another station, they experience dyslexia by attempting to complete a backwards worksheet while looking in a mirror. Kids put sacks over their legs before kicking a soccer ball and put socks on their hands before cutting out shapes.

As a whole, the training teaches students to be more sensitive to the struggles some children face every day. Moreover, the training shows that even individuals with disabilities have ABILITIES if you know how to look for them, and that ALL children, regardless of their abilities and disabilities, like to have fun and make friends.



Above: 3rd Graders at Mount Prospect School practice threading beads while wearing socks on their hands to experience the challenge of having difficulties with fine motor skills.

Below: The students play soccer. Melinda Jennis leads a role play about children who have wheelchairs.



Mentoring Program

Four years ago, PEC started our Mentoring Program, which matches teen and preteen volunteers with children who have special needs. Each mentor attends a training to learn about different disabilities and how to interact with children who have them. The trainings are led by Melinda Jennis, of Montville Pathways, who has trained over 200 volunteers in our District so far.

Mentors help in a variety of ways. They may go to the homes of the children for play dates or to help with homework. They may help the children play baseball, go bowling, or do arts and crafts.

The goal of the program is to provide role models for the many children who

struggle with anything from physical activities to social skills. Mentors also allow the children to participate in activities or community events from which they might otherwise be excluded.

In addition to providing community service opportunities for our volunteers, the program raises the mentors' awareness of the challenges children with disabilities and their families face. As they work with our children, our volunteers learn to be more accepting, tolerant and accommodating to individual differences and needs.

But perhaps the greatest benefit is that both the children and their mentors feel better about themselves and often make lasting friendships.

In each issue, we will highlight a successful mentor and child team. We hope you will enjoy the touching story of Jayne and Alex....

Interested in
becoming a mentor?
Contact Amy Grotland:
amygrotland@gmail.com

Mentor Spotlight

My name's Jayne, I'm a sophomore at RHS and I've been mentoring since I was in 6th grade. When I was 12, I made the decision to spend a couple of hours one afternoon at the library being trained by PEC in mentoring kids with disabilities. That one day was the birth of the years of progress in the children I've mentored and of my own internal development.

I have learned so many lessons by being a mentor. I've learned that compassion is necessary in every moment of life and one person can impact the lives

of others in a huge way. The family of the child I mentor reminds me every time I see them what a blessing I have been to their family – but what they don't know is how much of a blessing they and their child have been to me.

I've grown so much as a person by mentoring - it has reminded me not only of how fortunate I am, but how life (especially with a disabled child) must be handled one day at a time. I hope to accomplish even more with mentoring, such as creating a cheerleading squad for girls with disabilities and maybe even going to college to get a



Jayne with her buddy Alex.

degree in teaching special education.

Mentoring has been one of the best experiences of my life and I can't wait to see what the future holds with it.



PEC's 3rd Annual Bowling League met Sunday mornings at the Plaza Lanes in Madison. Peer Mentors helped make it a fun time for all!



Kangaroo Kidz in Bernardsville, in conjunction with PEC, designed a 6-week program for our children with special needs. Throughout January and February, the children gained self-confidence and learned basic gymnastics skills by using the balance beam, parallel bars, rings and jumbo track. The children also learned new dances and games and completed an obstacle course each week.

Please Join Us for these Upcoming Events!

March 9	8:00 PM	Parent Social at Café Rustica
March 23	10:00 AM	Parent Training Workshop, "Reading Defined," led by Lisa Vitale-Stanzione
March 25	10:00 AM	Parent Coffee at Lotus Café
March 26	1:00 PM	PEC Craft Day at the Basking Ridge Community Center
April 2		World Autism Awareness Day
April 3	2:00 PM	Harlem Wizards vs. Ridge HS Co-sponsored by PEC &
April 5	1:00 PM	PEC Business Meeting at Red Oak Grille
April 21	10:00 AM	PEC Breakfast with the Administration (Please email your School's Representative
April 28	10:00 AM	Parent Coffee at Panera Bread
May 7	TBA	PEC Bowling
May 12	10:00 AM	PEC Business Meeting at 90 Blackburn Road
May 21		Bernards Township Charter Day
May 24	10:00 AM	Parent Coffee at Dunkin Donuts in The Hills
June 9	8:00 PM	Parent Social at Café Rustica
TBA	TBA	Member and Mentor Appreciation Picnic
TBA	TBA	Safe Kids Day at YMCA

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friends and local businesses were overwhelming. "The net result greatly benefits so many special education children," says PEC Co-President Lisa McNey.

Proceeds from the event will support Hope Autism Foundation, Bernards Township Schools, and a variety of PEC programs for children with special needs.



Bill McNey, Dara Robb, Meg Pernaselli & Karen White enjoy cocktails at the PEC Gala.

PEC EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Monique McHenry
Lisa McNey

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Katie Cancro
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PALS: Sherry Nelson
PEACH: Amber Green
Out of District: Chris Walsh
Melissa Martin

With special thanks to Newsletter Committee: Katie Cancro, Grace Ann Murphy and Stacey Irvine.

Contact Us:

For more information about PEC, please see our website:

www.bernardspec.com

or email us at:
bernardspec@gmail.com