



Newsletter

August 2025

Celebrating Summer Gains

For many families, summer is a time for a break from routine. But for families of students with exceptionalities, it's a very different kind of work. The day-to-day effort to keep a child's progress moving forward doesn't stop just because the classroom doors close. This is why it's so important for both families and educators to recognize and celebrate the incredible growth that happens during these months. As the sun sets on summer, we're celebrating a season of incredible gains for our students, all built on the dedicated work of their families.

Social Growth

Summer is the ultimate classroom for social skills. Whether at a day camp, visiting family, or simply playing at the park, students have the freedom to practice making new friends and navigating social situations in a low-pressure environment. These interactions—from sharing a toy to collaborating on a group project—are invaluable. By acknowledging these new friendships and social wins, we can help students carry that confidence and those skills back to school.

Routines and Engagement

The transition from summer to the school year can be challenging. However, maintaining a loose routine throughout the summer, even with fun activities, can make the shift smoother. Engagement in summer hobbies, whether it's building with LEGOs or caring for a pet, keeps the mind active and a sense of purpose alive. This sustained engagement helps students readjust to the structure of a school day and re-engage in learning activities with less stress and more enthusiasm.

Enhancing Independence

Summer provides a great opportunity to enhance independent living skills. For older students, this might mean taking on new responsibilities like doing chores or managing a summer job. For younger students, it could be as simple as choosing their own outfits or helping prepare a meal. These structured and unstructured activities encourage a sense of self-reliance and self-worth. They are crucial for building the confidence students need to be active participants in their own lives, both at home and at school.

Learning Anywhere

Learning doesn't stop when the school year ends. A summer spent at home, on a family vacation, or at a camp or job is a chance to learn through new experiences. From exploring a new city to working a first job, these opportunities build resilience and practical knowledge. Summer learning—often guided by family, friends, or job coaches—reinforces the idea that support and education come from all corners of our community, not just a classroom.

As we prepare for the school year, let's recognize and celebrate these invaluable summer gains. By working together, families and educators can create a seamless transition and provide a welcoming and supporting atmosphere, ensuring every student with exceptionalities feels confident, cared for and ready to thrive.

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Always Here For You



Early Warning Signs of ODD

- ✗ Frequent temper tantrums
- ✗ Being unusually angry and irritable
- ✗ Arguing with authority figures
- ✗ Refusing to do what adults ask or follow rules
- ✗ Being easily annoyed or offended often
- ✗ Deliberately annoying people
- ✗ Blaming others for mistakes
- ✗ Speaking harshly or unkind
- ✗ Being vindictive
- ✗ Being hostile or aggressive towards others, including peers and siblings
- ✗ Purposely procrastinating on tasks or chores



image from PX DOCS

Exceptionality of the Month: Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a behavioral disorder typically diagnosed in childhood. It's characterized by a pattern of defiant, insubordinate, and sometimes aggressive behavior toward authority figures like parents and teachers. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, individuals with ODD are more likely to harm others than themselves.

This disorder is more common in boys than in girls, and children with ODD are often diagnosed with co-occurring conditions like ADHD, mood and anxiety disorders, or conduct disorder. While there is no known cause, experts have proposed two theories: a developmental theory and a learning theory. The developmental theory suggests that ODD may stem from difficulties a child has in becoming independent from a primary caregiver. The learning theory proposes that the behavior is learned, often by imitating the effects of negative reinforcement used by parents or other authority figures.

How It Affects Lives

Individuals with ODD often experience uncontrollable negative emotions and impulses. This can manifest as frequent tantrums, being deliberately disobedient, annoying others, and being easily annoyed in return. They may also consistently question rules, refuse to follow them, and display anger, vindictiveness, and a desire to retaliate. Children and teenagers with ODD often struggle to accept responsibility for their actions. In severe cases, this behavior can significantly interfere with their learning and damage relationships with family, peers, and teachers.

What Support Looks Like

Early treatment is key to preventing future problems for a child with ODD. Effective support often includes:

- Family Therapy: To improve communication and interactions among family members.
- Peer Group Therapy: To teach social skills in a group setting, which can be more effective for some children.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): To provide individuals with better ways to communicate their frustrations and learn how to control their anger and impulses.

For more information about Oppositional Defiant Disorder, please research the following websites:

[John Hopkins Medicine](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/oppositional-defiant-disorder)

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/oppositional-defiant-disorder>

[Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/oppositional-defiant-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20375831)

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/oppositional-defiant-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20375831>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: PEOPLE THAT INSPIRE

This month, we are honored to shine our spotlight on Stephen Simpson, a licensed behavioral counselor whose work exemplifies compassion and dedication. As a co-founder of Luv On The Move, a counseling service he shares with his wife, Britney, Stephen is committed to providing collaborative and effective therapy. He specializes in working with males, teens and individuals on the autism spectrum.

Stephen’s approach is centered on teamwork, creating a nonjudgmental and caring atmosphere where his clients can feel empowered to learn, grow, and navigate life's challenges. He understands that each individual is unique and tailors his treatment to support diverse needs and exceptionalities. His clear-cut approach helps clients address difficult life transitions, social pressures, and the complex process of understanding their own thoughts and emotions. What truly sets Stephen apart is his personal journey and the breadth of his professional experience. He began his career as a special education teacher and an ABA therapist. Having navigated his own struggles with a speech disability and personal insecurities as a child, he can deeply identify with many of his clients. This unique blend of personal empathy and professional knowledge allows him to guide individuals through obstacles, helping them not just cope, but thrive.

Stephen believes that counseling should be accessible and simple for everyone, ensuring his clients walk away feeling heard, helped, and equipped to continue their individual journeys. His desire to impact a community he was once a part of is a testament to the powerful and meaningful work he does every day.



Stephen Simpson



Be A Beacon of Hope: Ways You Can Help

There are many ways you can help, whether you have time, resources, or simply the desire to make a difference. Every act of kindness, no matter how small, matters to the families and individuals we serve.

Volunteer: Your time and energy are a gift.

Spread the Word: Share this newsletter and help raise awareness in your community.

No matter how you choose to get involved, know that you are making a direct impact on the lives of families who have often felt forgotten. You are helping us affirm the individuals and their families that they are not on this road by themselves, and their presence and their voices truly make a difference.

Summer Highlights



Building Connections at Our Town Hall Mixer

As summer got into full swing, The Not Forgotten 1st team was thrilled to host a special mixer in June, building anticipation for our upcoming Community Town Hall. This wonderful evening provided a fantastic opportunity to connect our esteemed panelists, honored guests, and the passionate individuals who are the heart and soul of our organization.

It was a joy to share a sneak peek of the important conversations and resources planned for the Town Hall, all while fostering a warm and engaging atmosphere for everyone to connect and build relationships.

Our Inaugural Community Town Hall

The heart of our summer was our inaugural Community Town Hall, an evening of meaningful dialogue, shared stories, and collective action. This event was dedicated to amplifying the voices of individuals with exceptionalities and their families, and the response was more powerful than we could have imagined. The insights from our dynamic panel of speakers, who shared both lived experience and expertise, were truly invaluable.

One of the highlights of the night was the engaging and educational Q&A session. We were moved by the conversation of respect and acceptance for our individuals with exceptionalities; inspired by the real-world understanding that was in the room; and the empowering of families and the community with vital knowledge.

The second highlight of the night was seeing our community's commitment in action. As the evening concluded, attendees shared their pledges on our "I Will Be The Change" board, a powerful sign of a community coming together to support individuals and families with exceptionalities and their needs.

The sense of community continued in our vendor area, where families were able to ask questions and connect directly with local resources and support.

It was an incredible testament to what we can achieve when we come together. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make this event a success.



Community Events

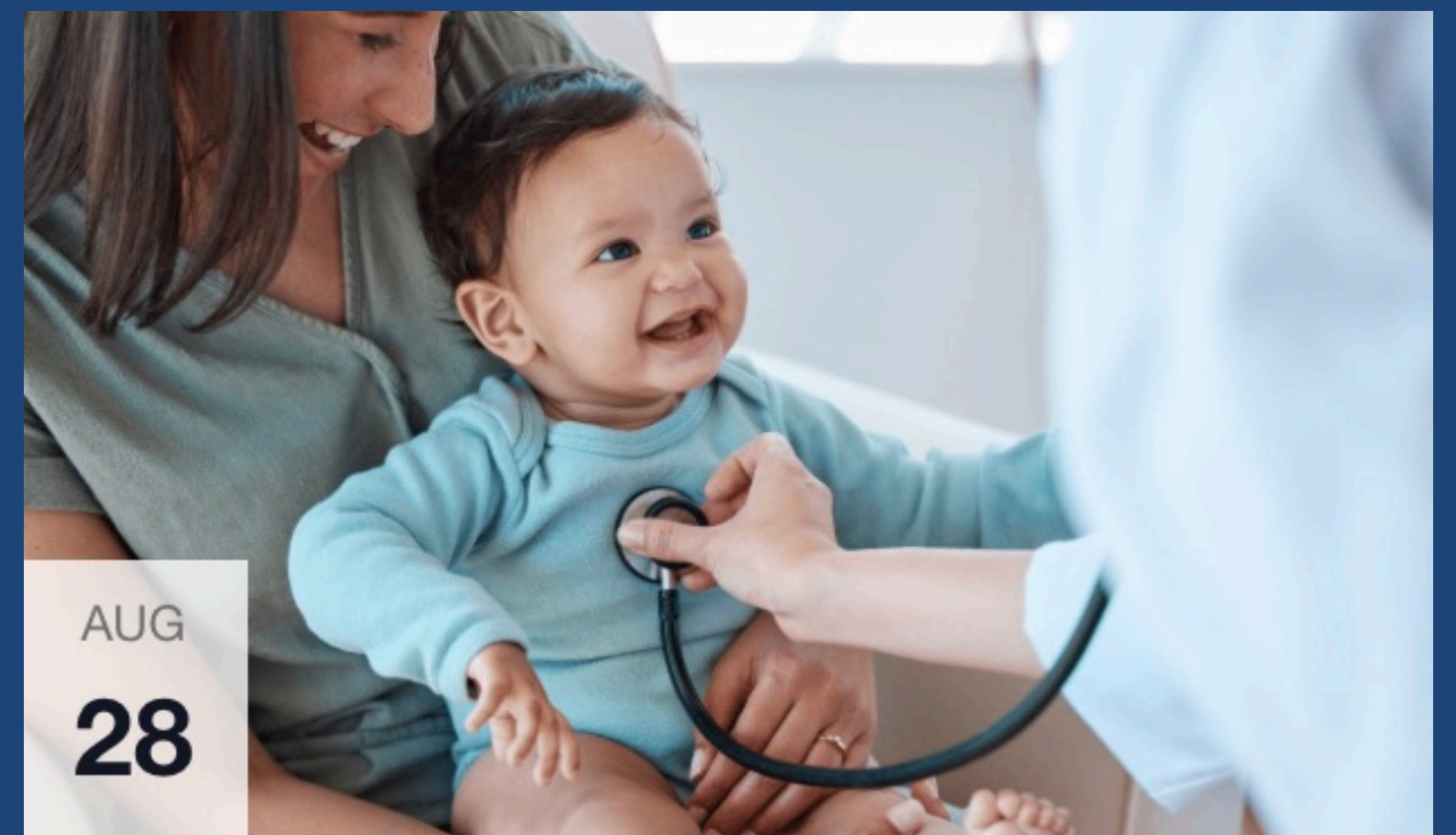


STCA Resource Fair, 2025

WHAT: STCA Resource Fair
WHEN: October 15th, 10 AM – 2 PM
WHERE: STCA main lobby
3rd floor of Prestonwood Baptist Church
6801 W. Park Blvd.
Plano, TX 75093
972-820-5460

Anyone who needs to find services for a child or young adult with learning disabilities is invited to attend free of charge! We will have around 30 vendors/resource providers onsite to share about their services for this community. The resources include:

- Job training opportunities
- Continuing education options
- Out-of-school activities
- Financial planning/life planning
- Counseling
- Many other critical resources



AUG
28

8:45 am - 3:15 pm


Medicaid & CHIP Application Assistance | Asistencia para solicitudes de Medicaid y CHIP

Metrocrest Services

Date: August 28

Time: 8:45 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.

**Venue: Metrocrest — Josey Lane
1835 Walnut Avenue
Carrollton, TX 75006
972-446-2100**








UPCOMING CONFERENCES

For more details and updates about these events, please click on the links, scan the QR codes and/or visit our website at www.prntexas.org/events.

We're pleased to offer a stipend for every in-person event!

To apply, simply register for the event first—then you'll be guided to complete the stipend application.

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|  | Sat Sept 6 Disability Parenting Survival Summit 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM Southwest Center 3222 W 7th Street Texarkana, TX 75501 https://tinyurl.com/ParentingSummit2025 |
|  | Tu/W/Th Sept 9-11 VIRTUAL EVENT Connections That Matter: Advocacy, Behavior, and Mental Wellness 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM each day https://tinyurl.com/2025CTM |
|  | Sat Sept 13 FARO: Familia-Apoyo-Recursos-Orientación Este simposio es en español en su totalidad. 8:30 AM a 3:00 PM Region 10 ESC 400 E. Spring Valley Rd. Richardson, TX 75081-5101 https://tinyurl.com/2025FAROREgistration |
|  | Sat Sept 20 Bridges to Bright Futures: Building Knowledge and Community 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM Legacy Learning Center 501 School House Rd. Haslet, TX 76052 https://tinyurl.com/2025BridgesBrightFutures |



Email: prnpactproject@gmail.com



BUDDY WALK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19

11 AM - 3 PM **RIDERS FIELD**

AWARENESS WALK 2 PM **7300 ROUGH RIDERS TRL**
FRISCO, TX 75034



BUDDYWALK
EDUCATE | ADVOCATE | CELEBRATE
DOWN SYNDROME GUILD OF DALLAS

Join us for the 2025 Dallas Buddy Walk® benefiting the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas. We can't wait to see you on Sunday, October 19, from 11 AM-3 PM (awareness walk at 2 pm) at Riders Field located at 7300 Rough Riders Trail, Frisco, TX 75034.

Always Here For You...



Hello Friend!

Back to school has already happened for many of you. And although, all of my children are out of high school, it has not escaped me of how hard it can be, especially if you have a child with an exceptionality. Transitioning back to school can be chaotic and preparing for it can be daunting. And even the best-laid plans can fall through the cracks. However, as parents, we do our best to equip our children for saying good-bye to summer and hello to a new school year.

For parents who have children with an exceptionality, I know, you're on pins & needles. I get it. And the less your child is familiar with his or her place of learning, the more uneasy you both feel.

Change is inevitable and even though planning doesn't prepare you for the unforeseen, planning accordingly can bring some ease. There are a few things that helped my son, Callie's transition be a little smoother:

Communicate with your child. Talk to them about the upcoming changes. Accentuate the positive and frame change as an adventure. Making new friends can be exciting! A great strategy that worked for us was visiting the school ahead of time, before Meet the Teacher or Open House. It helped Callie feel more settled to see the campus, meet the teachers, and say hello to the educational team.

Create a story. We created fictional books about Callie's first day of school. The main character in the story went through the entire "going back to school" process. The story included his teachers' names, classes, and even a list of his likes and dislikes. This not only prepared him but also served as a reminder of everything for everyone in his day.

Make a schedule. Schedules are lifesavers. Break down what your child can expect during the day and week, and make sure those schedules are concrete and understandable. These daily lessons can minimize meltdowns and reassure your child. Of course, a fire drill or a bad weather day can throw a wrench in the plan. Anything can happen, so make the staff aware of your child's triggers and discuss an alternate plan to help minimize or prevent a meltdown.

These are just a few suggestions that worked for our family. They aren't a fireproof plan, but the key is to try until you find what works for you. Always expect the best, and always, always keep the lines of communication open.

Remember, you are **not alone** on this journey. We got your back, and we are cheering you and your family every step of the way. You got this!

Always here for you,

Portia

"Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
(Joshua 1:9)

Thank you for reading!

THE NOT FORGOTTEN 1ST

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