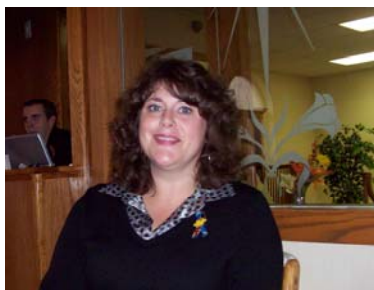




## Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership

### Parent Leadership Can Change Policies and Practices

One of the biggest challenges parents face in raising a child with disabilities is finding the right information they need in a timely manner. Sometimes it can feel like finding a needle in a haystack. Parents report that they feel so lucky when they “bump into” a resource or agency that can help them and their child. Research shows that often their best source of information is other parents. In sharing with other parents they meet along the way they discover a common bond and a desire to address changes needed to smooth the way for other families. They often find themselves on roads they never thought they would travel, meeting people who encourage them to grow and stretch in ways they never thought possible. The love of a child can transform a parent into an information seeker, advocate,



Stacy Gerber. PEACE Graduate, June 2009

supporter, or community organizer. The love of a child can indeed transform systems, change laws, and alter the perceptions of society. The

united voices of Pennsylvania’s parents resulted in landmark class action litigation. The PARC Consent Decree in PA established the right of students with mental retardation to attend school and created the Right to Education Task Forces in every IU. The ensuing federal legislation in 1975, P.L. 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) ensured that for the first time **all** students in America had a right to attend school. *Parents of children with disabilities had forever changed the policies and practices of the American educational system.*

The Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI) are funded by this legislation which today is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.) The PEAL Center, as one of Pennsylvania’s 2 PTIs, fully embraces the mandate to support parents to become informed decision-makers. We have developed an array of opportunities for parents to gain the knowledge they need to actively participate in planning and supporting their child’s educational program.

As a result of PEAL’s leadership development opportunities, parent participants have continued the legacy of the parents before them. They have become leaders in their communities and joined with others to be the

*(Leadership Continued on page 2)*

### Liderazgo de Padres Puede Cambiar Políticas y Prácticas (traducido por Astrid Camille Arroya)

Uno de los mayores retos que enfrentan los padres en la crianza de niños con incapacidades es encontrar la información necesaria en el momento oportuno. A veces se siente como si estuvieras buscando una aguja en un pajar. Padres reportan que se sienten afortunados cuando “tropiezan” con un recurso o agencia que les puede ayudar a ellos y a su hijo/a. Investigación muestra que a menudo la mejor fuente de información para padres es otros padres. Al compartir con otros padres que conocen en el camino ellos descubren un enlace común y un deseo de tratar de hacer los cambios necesarios para así allanar el camino para otras familias. A menudo se encuentran en caminos que nunca pensaron en viajar, conociendo gente que los anima a crecer y a ampliar en maneras que ellos nunca pensaron ser posible. El amor hacia un niño puede transformar un padre en un buscador de información, abogado, partidario, u organizador de comunidad.

El amor de un niño puede realmente transformar los sistemas, cambiar leyes, y alterar la percepción de la sociedad. Las voces unidas de padres en Pensilvania resultaron en una clase de acción monumental de litigación.

El Decreto de Consentimiento PARC en PA establece el derecho de los estudiantes con retraso mental a asistir a la escuela y creó la Fuerza de Tarea al Derecho a la Educación en cada Unidad Intermedia. La legislación federal que siguió en 1975, P.L. 94-142 (Acto de Educación para Todos los Niños con Incapacidades) aseguró por primera vez que **todos** los estudiantes en América tienen el derecho de asistir a la escuela. *Padres de niños con incapacidades han, para siempre, cambiado las políticas y prácticas del sistema educacional Americano.*

La Formación de Padres y Centros de Información (siglas en inglés PTI) son financiados por ésta legislación que hoy se conoce como el Acta Educacional para Individuos con Incapacidades (siglas en inglés IDEA.) El Centro de PEAL, como una de las dos PTI en Pensilvania, adopta completamente el mandato para apoyar a padres a convertirse en personas informadas para hacer decisiones. Hemos desarrollado una gama de oportunidades para padres adquirir el conocimiento que necesitan para participar

*(Liderazgo Continued on page 2)*

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*The Mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth and adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals, families and all people who support them.*

*La MISIÓN del Centro de PEAL es proveer entrenamiento, información, y asistencia técnica basada en las mejores prácticas a individuos, familias y todas las personas que los apoyan para así garantizar que los niños, jóvenes y adultos con impedimentos y necesidades de cuidado de salud especial tengan vidas ricas, sanas, activas y participen como miembros de pleno derecho en sus escuelas y sus comunidades.*

#### Inside this issue:

IDEA and Section 504	3
Leadership Projects	4
Words of Wisdom	5
New Board Members	5
Harry Book Review	6
Youth Leadership	6
PEAL Web Watch	7
Notecards	7
Events/Resources	7

**(Leadership** *Continued from page 1*)

collective voice for the needs of children with disabilities.

After completing the PEAL Center's parent training project last June, known as the Project for Parents Engaged in Advocating for Change in Education (PEACE), Stacy Gerber of Atlantic, PA wanted to have an impact in her community's understanding of disability. As part of her class project she began thinking about hosting a special needs awareness program in her local church as a way to reach out to families and provide education for those that were not intimately aware of what it means to raise a child with a disability.

Gerber was able to enlist the help of a committee at her church and received great support from her pastor to turn her wish into a reality. "It took countless hours of planning and coordination and the support of many people to bring this program together," says Gerber. "It was my desire to give something back to our community and have an impact that will help other families find support when they are raising a child that does not fit the mold of a typical child. We all have something to learn from each other."

And learn they did. On Oct. 24, more than one hundred men, women and teens attended the first *Building Supportive Communities* workshop at Fallowfield United Methodist Church. Speakers included Miss Crawford County 2010, Brittany Samler who spoke of her personal

experiences as a sibling of a brother with autism; New Wilmington High School's autistic support teacher Shelley Bailey spoke about their Ambassador's Club; and professionals from the therapeutic, behavioral, occupational and speech therapy arenas contributed ideas and insights. Most profoundly, parents raising children with disabilities shared their personal stories. Three of the parents that spoke were graduates of PEAL's Project for PEACE – David Giles, Heather Kebert and Lenore Collupy.

Professionals from five school districts and the local Intermediate Unit were in attendance and feedback was so positive that Gerber is looking forward to the creation of an Ambassador's Club in her area and making plans to continue to build awareness within her rural community next year.

"This experience has taught me so much and I am grateful for all those that helped me turn my idea into reality, working tirelessly to make sure the event was a success," says Gerber. "My goal was to put a positive light on what families go through and how a community can make an impact by providing support when a child has a disability."

She did that and more by pulling together a program that brought people many miles to a rural country church on a rainy Saturday to hear a message of inspiration and hope woven through the technical basics of what a family experiences when disability touches their lives.

**A community  
is like a ship;  
everyone  
ought to be  
prepared to  
take the helm.**

Henrik Ibsen



**Una  
comunidad es  
como un  
barco; todos  
deben de  
estar  
preparados  
para tomar el  
timón.**

Henrik Ibsen

**(Liderazgo** *Continued from page 1*)

activamente en la planificación y apoyo del programa educacional de su niño.

Como resultado de las oportunidades para desarrollo de liderazgo de PEAL, padres participantes han continuado el legado de padres antes de ellos. Ellos se han convertido en líderes en sus comunidades y se han unido con otros para formar una voz colectiva para las necesidades de niños con incapacidades.

Después de completar el proyecto de entrenamiento para padres del Centro de PEAL, conocido como Proyecto de Padres Comprometidos a Abogar por Cambios (sigla en inglés PEACE), Stacey Gerber de Atlantic, PA quiso hacer un impacto en la comprensión de incapacidades en su comunidad. Como parte de su proyecto de clase ella comenzó a pensar cómo auspiciar un programa de conciencia para necesidades especiales en su Iglesia local de manera de así alcanzar familias y proveer educación a esas personas que no son íntimamente conciente de lo que significa criar un niño con incapacidades.

Gerber enlistó la ayuda de un comité en su Iglesia y recibió gran apoyo de su pastor para así convertir su deseo en realidad. "Tomó innumerables horas de planeo y coordinación y el apoyo de muchas personas para poder realizar este programa," dice Gerber. "Es mi deseo de devolverle a nuestra comunidad y tener un impacto que pueda ayudar a otras familias encontrar apoyo cuando están criando un niño que no cabe en el molde de un niño típico. Todos tenemos algo que aprender unos de otros."

Y aprender hicieron. El 24 de Octubre, más de cien hombres, mujeres y jóvenes asistieron el primer taller

*Construir Comunidades de Apoyo* en la Iglesia Metodista Unida de Fallowfield. Oradores incluyeron Miss Crawford County del 2010, Brittany Samler, quien habló de su experiencia personal como hermana de un hermano con Autismo; Shelley Bailey, maestra de Apoyo de Autismo en al Escuela Secundaria New Wilmington, habló acerca de su Club Embajador; y profesionales en las arenas de terapias del habla, desarrollo, comportamiento y ocupacional contribuyeron sus ideas y puntos de vista. Más profundo, padres con hijos con incapacidades compartieron sus historias personales. Tres de los padres que hablaron son graduados del Proyecto PEACE de PEAL – David Giles, Heather Kebert y Lenore Collupy.

Profesionales locales de cinco distritos escolares y de la Unidad Intermedia Local asistieron y la reacción fue tan positiva que Gerber está ansiosa en crear un Club Embajador en su área y hacer planes para continuar en construir conciencia en su comunidad rural en el próximo año.

"Esta experiencia me ha enseñado tanto y estoy agradecida a todos aquellos que me ayudaron a convertir mi idea en una realidad, trabajando duro para asegurar que el evento fuera un suceso," dice Gerber. "Mi objetivo es poner una luz positiva en lo que las familias atraviesan y como la comunidad puede tener un impacto al proveer apoyo cuando un niño tiene una incapacidad."

Gerber logró eso y más al crear un programa que atrajo gente de muchas millas a una Iglesia en un área rural en un sábado de lluvia para escuchar un mensaje de inspiración y esperanza tejidas a través de bases técnicas de lo que la familia siente cuando incapacidades tocan sus vidas.

## IDEA and Section 504 — Which is Appropriate?

If your child has a disability or special health care needs (s)he may be eligible to have an individual plan to help her/him in school.

Children who need accommodations because of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities are eligible to have a **504 Plan** outlining the needed accommodations. The right to receive accommodations to ensure equal access to participate in education and prevent discrimination because of disability or special health care needs is established by both **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** and **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. [These accommodation plans are often referred to as a **504 Plan**.]

Children who have a disability AND need specially designed instruction to ensure that they can benefit from education are eligible for an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** under the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. Specially designed instruction includes both accommodations and modifications to the general education program. A student cannot have both a 504 Plan and an IEP. The school and parents must make a determination whether the student needs only accommodations to participate in the general curriculum, or whether they also need modifications to the general education program.

The protections under each of these laws each have strengths and benefits. Parents need to be aware of the provisions under both IDEA and Section 504 and ADA to get the appropriate services for their child.

Here are some of the differences between IDEA and Section 504 and ADA.

### Funding

**IDEA**: All states accept federal funding through IDEA and all school districts in the state are required to follow IDEA requirements.

**Section 504 and ADA** provide no funding, although school districts must comply with these laws because they receive federal funds.

### Eligibility

**IDEA** defines 13 disabilities. The student must have one of those disabilities and because of that disability must also require specially designed instruction. Under **IDEA**, all categories other than speech and language impairment require that the child's disability adversely affect educational performance, this could be in an area other than academics such as behavior.

Under **IDEA** a student must need some form of specially designed instruction that

is provided in his/her least restrictive environment (LRE), or as **IDEA** states, "be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate". So a student covered under IDEA can get both the kinds of *accommodations* available under Section 504 and ADA plus additional *modifications* that are needed to participate in and benefit from the general education program.

**Section 504 and ADA** does not define specific types of disabilities. Students can qualify if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning, walking or caring for oneself. Some examples include asthma, diabetes, food allergies, and cancer - even when it is in remission.

Under a **Section 504 and ADA Plan**, a student may receive accommodations to participate in the general education setting. For example a student may need accommodations such as assistance from a nurse to take medication, or a behavior plan.

### Evaluation

**IDEA** describes in detail the multi-disciplinary evaluations procedures required to determine if a child is eligible for special education. Testing must be non-discriminatory and requires schools to consider the findings of outside evaluators.

**Section 504 and ADA** requires school districts to establish evaluation procedures which are non-discriminatory, use tests which are validated for their stated purpose, accurately reflect the child's ability and incorporate information from more than one test and from a variety of sources.



*Susan Bolig, CMSU Parent to Parent Coordinator, a recent co-sponsor of our Fall Mini-Series in Lewisburg, reviews IEP documents with Cindy Duch, PEAL's Director of Parent Advising.*

PEAL Parent Advisors are available to answer your questions about IEPs and 504 plans. Call 1-866-950-1040, Ext. 12 or 15

### Right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

**IDEA** requires that all eligible students receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), including special education and related services which are necessary for a child to benefit from education. That means that parents cannot be asked to pay for any of the services their school age child receives. If the child is eligible for Medical Assistance (Medicaid) the school district may ask parents for permission to bill Medicaid for some of the services included in the IEP. **IDEA** services must be provided as described in their Individual Education Plan (IEP), developed with parent participation and based on the child's unique needs. **IDEA** regulations lay out very detailed provisions for the process for developing and implementing IEPs. **Section 504 and ADA** also requires a FAPE designed to meet the child's individual needs so that they may participate in public school. For example, if a child needs an aide to attend a field trip, a school can't require a parent to attend if parents of other students aren't required to attend. **Section 504 and ADA** plans can include specialized instruction, a behavior plan, related services and/or accommodations within the regular education classroom.

### Legal Strengths

**IDEA** has a more developed service delivery system, and provides direct state and federal financial support for services included in the IEP. **IDEA** has far more detailed rules giving parents more clarity and ability to hold the school accountable. **Section 504 and ADA** has more flexibility in eligibility criteria and a less cumbersome process for decision-making. **Section 504 and ADA** eligibility may be less stigmatizing. **Section 504** requires districts to provide notice to parents explaining any evaluation and placement decisions affecting their children and explaining the parents' right to review educational records and appeal any decision regarding evaluation and placement through an impartial hearing.

To read more on *Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities* visit: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html#safeguards>

### IDEA y Sección 504 - ¿Cuál es Apropiado?

La traducción en español de este artículo puede ser obtenido llamando a Astrid Arroyo, 1-866-950-1040, Ext. 19 o enviar un correo electrónico a [aarroyo@pealcenter.org](mailto:aarroyo@pealcenter.org)

### Parent Leadership Institute III in Central Pennsylvania

PEAL is excited to announce the third Parent Leadership Institute (PLI), a project of our statewide Family to Family Health Care Information Center (F2FHIC). The institute this fall is in central Pennsylvania. The yearly Institutes are designed to equip parent leaders with the knowledge and skills to successfully advocate for their children and assist other families, boards, and committees on which they serve.

These workshops are being held monthly at the Matternville Preschool in Port Matilda from October through April. Seventeen parents who have a child with a disability or chronic health care problems were selected to participate through an application process. The workshops include information about the history of disability, the laws in education and health care, and numerous other topics. During March, the parent leaders will have the opportunity to attend the annual PEAL Conference where they will attend various sessions on leadership and disability related issues and have the chance to network with professionals and other parents from across the state.

#### Reflections from a PLI Graduate

*One of the best classes I ever participated in was the Parent Leadership Institute (PLI). I learned at my child's Due Process Hearing that I was expected to know the education laws as well as the lawyers and school district. The PLI meetings and the PEAL conference equipped me with knowledge to be able to effectively advocate for my child. At the Institute I learned the importance of sharing your successes and the value of developing a network of support from other parent leaders. I graduated from PLI with the knowledge that one parent can teach another parent and together we can make a difference. I am now Co-Chair of the Bucks County Right to Education Task Force. Knowledge is power. We have exciting speakers and meetings lined up to empower parents so they can effectively advocate for their children. Thank you PLI for empowering me so I walked away with confidence to be a parent leader!*

Jeannette Hallak



### The Project for PEACE

(Parents Engaged in Advocating for Change in Education)

With funding from the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), PEAL offers a leadership institute for parents organized around the six SPDG priorities:

*Developing school psychologists so that their skills can be better utilized in supporting students with disabilities within the larger school context.*

*Developing system-wide induction curriculum for paraeducators*

*Mentoring and educating special education leaders so that they can provide the critical leadership needed in schools for students with disabilities.*

*Addressing secondary educators need for research-based instructional strategies to improve secondary students' proficiency rates*

*Reforming the certification process for special education to insure that teachers are better equipped and educated in the specific needs of different age ranges.*

The Project for Parents Engaged in Advocating for Change in Education (PEACE) prepares parents to partner as informed participants and decision makers in these reform strategies at the school district, IU and state level. The curriculum is offered over several months and each year the program moves to a different region of the state so that in a five year period, PEACE will be offered across western and central Pennsylvania. Participants also learn the basics of special education law, history of IDEA and get training on how to change their personal story to an advocacy policy.

Through the Project for PEACE, PEAL tries to foster the participation of parents as knowledgeable and effective collaborators and full partners in the reform strategies across Pennsylvania. The Class of 2008 was from southwestern PA and the Class of 2009 was from northwest PA. In 2010 the Project for PEACE will be seeking parent participants in the north central area of Pennsylvania.

For more information call Melissa Allen, PEAL's SPDG coordinator at 412-281-4404 ext. 13.

#### Reflections from a PEACE Graduate

*My son, Jackson, was delivered to me on the steps of the Guatemalan Embassy when he was 5-1/2 months old. As a mother does, I knew right away that there was something different about Jackson. We spent the next three years completing evaluations, testing, and early intervening services. I never realized how unfair the world could be until Jackson started school and I found myself sitting in an IEP meeting – alone, unprepared, and soul-sick.*

*For the next meeting, I brought a parent advocate with me. As I listened to her and watched the school personnel listen to her, I thought, "I want to be that person. I want to help other parents effectively advocate for their children. I want children with disabilities to have the FAPE that is their right."*

*I found the PEAL Center and saw a notice for the Project for PEACE. It has deepened my commitment, broadened my knowledge, and increased my passion for advocacy at all levels. Since my time with PEACE, I have served on the special education and district-wide strategic planning committees, founded a parent support group (HEART – Highlands Educational Advocacy Resource Team), and have begun providing resources to other parents. This fall, I will deliver my first training to special education personnel in the district – "The IEP-From a Parent's Perspective."*

Michelle Bond

## Words of Wisdom from Parents on Leadership

### QUESTION 1

*As a parent, what makes you take your personal story/experience and drive to improve systems and services for others?*

### QUESTION 2

*Through my efforts as a parent leader, I have .....*

#### Words of Wisdom

from *Christine Buffington*

The reasons that I make time to share my journey is:

1. To help make the road easier for those who come after me.
2. To make things right.
3. To pay back or pay it forward for all that I have received for my boys.
4. Most importantly I do it for Devin and every child, parent and family member of the 1 in 150.

Through my efforts as a parent leader I have effected change!

#### Words of Wisdom

from *Laurie Filitske*

As the parent of an adult daughter who has a severe to profound hearing loss, learning disabilities, and mental health issues, the thing that drives me to share my experience is the knowledge that everything that we have gone through to secure an appropriate education and services has not been in vain....that our knowledge can be used to better someone else's life, and make the road a little easier to travel.

As a leader, I serve as an advocate and a resource person for families who have children with special needs. I did this as part of the services of the Parent Information Project, ...at IUP. I have also participated in (and served as co-director for) the Teacher Preparation Grant that was part of the coursework for students at IUP. I also

co-taught a class in the Special Education department at IUP that provided students with strategies to include children with special needs, as well as strategies to work with parents of children with special needs.

Through my current work with the Early Intervention system, and as Director of Family Support programs through a non-profit social service agency, I am able to educate parents regarding deafness and special education, and will continue to advocate for children with special needs. I am now the grandparent of a grandson who has cerebral palsy, and as he transitions through the educational process, it has been necessary to help my daughter and son-in-law to advocate for him.

**Thank you to all those who shared your**

**Words of Wisdom  
with our readers**

#### Words of Wisdom on BULLYING

Go to our website [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org) and respond to our questions on bullying

**Has your child ever been bullied?**

**If yes, what has been a successful response or prevention?**

## NEW PEAL Board Members Elected

### Pina Rahill, Chalfont, PA



Pina Rahill is the mother of five children, two of whom have special needs. Before staying home full time to care for her children, Pina worked as a Director in the Information Technology department of a pharmaceutical company, where she oversaw systems development efforts for Marketing-related functions. She holds a degree in Computer Science and French from LaSalle University and a Masters in Business Administration

from Drexel University, both in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Over the last five years, Pina has become involved in advocating for her children with special needs. She served as a member on the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Bureau Director's Advisory Panel for Least Restrictive Environment Practices, which was formed as part of the Department of Education's implementation of the Gaskin v. Commonwealth Settlement Agreement. She continues to be amazed and humbled by the dedicated people who have worked as volunteers to help children with special needs live productive and meaningful lives. Pina lives in Chalfont, Pennsylvania with her husband, Jerry, of twenty years and her five children. In her spare time, she is trying to make it as a writer, having completed her first novel last year.

### Gerald Tracy, Philadelphia, PA

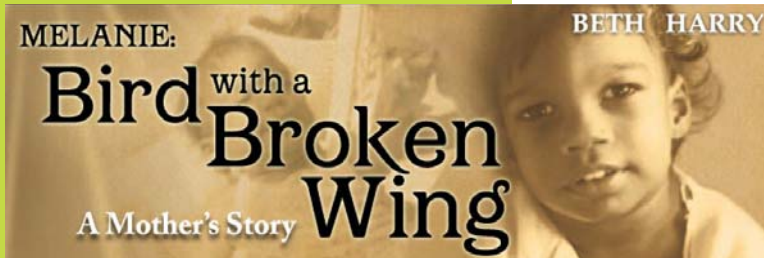


Gerald Tracy is the Business Development Manager for [phillyBurbs.com](http://phillyBurbs.com). Based in Levittown, PA in Bucks County, [phillyBurbs.com](http://phillyBurbs.com) is the online newspaper for the three largest Philadelphia suburban newspapers: the Bucks County Courier Times, the Burlington County Times and the Doylestown Intelligencer. He has been

with the online edition since its infancy coming over from the print side as ad director for the Philadelphia Metro. Specialties include SEO, SEM, database management, vertical content, and analytics. Before newspapers nearly 10 years ago, Gerald worked with several dot.com start up ventures and was the regional manager for one of the nation's largest niche publishing house. Gerald lives with his wife Lynne and their twins: Charlie and Irina. The twins are four years old, a delight, and are adopted from Kazakhstan. They all met when the twins were eleven months old and have been in the United States since shortly after they were thirteen months old. Lynne is an Architect and Senior Project Manager for Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.



The PEAL Center sends a big **THANK YOU** to Jo Snider, AllState-The Snider Agency and Art-Tech for sponsoring the **Crop For the Cause, Day of Scrapbooking** event on September 20, 2009 at the Lamplighter in Delmont, PA. Because of their efforts and generosity, the PEAL Center received a \$1,200 donation. Participants enjoyed the Make and Take Projects sponsored by Art-Tech and Kathy Stewart of Creative Memories. **MANY THANKS** to all sponsors and participants.



Parents of children with disabilities often find themselves on an unexpected journey where the directional signposts are nonexistent and the paths are not yet defined. Every parent who has experienced the birth of a child with a disability will find a message they can relate to in *Melanie: Bird with a Broken Wing* by Beth Harry. This 182 page memoir details the life of her daughter, Melanie, and the challenges Beth faced discovering both her daughter's strengths and her own. Each chapter conveys a deeply personal and honest view of their daily lives as they come to know and trust one another.

With the birth of Melanie, Beth Harry found herself questioning her own abilities as a mother. She begins her journey of seeking answers to her most compelling questions, only to discover that some of the answers must come from within her own strength and resilience. Within the pages of this book is a beautiful message of hope, empowerment and the possibilities that grow from the boundless depths of a mother's love.



**Beth Harry**  
Mother  
Author  
Professor

Beth Harry will be a Keynote Speaker at the PEAL Conference 2010, March 16-17

### *Melanie, Bird with a Broken Wing* A Resource from the PEAL Lending Library

The PEAL Center maintains a lending library for families and educators. Materials can be borrowed from our library at no charge. Email [info@pealcenter.org](mailto:info@pealcenter.org) to request a book.

### Interested in Parent Leadership?

✎ Each Intermediate Unit (IU) must have a Local Task Force for the Right to Education (LTF) and a Local Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention (LICC). To find the LTF in your area, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/ye4dj36> For the LICC in your area go to: <http://tinyurl.com/yj26u6s>

✎ In addition, many school districts have a special education advisory council. These

committees may have parent representation and will value the active involvement of parents.

✎ The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) works to improve Special Education at the state level. Panel Members are appointed by the Governor. Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/ygva3la>

✎ The Education Policy and Leadership Center is beginning a new project to create a Pennsylvania Education Advocacy Network in each legislative district. See: <http://www.eplc.org/advocacy/signup.html>

✎ There is a State Action Team initiative in each state through the Family Support Center on Disabilities: Knowledge and Involvement Network to get parents involved in a statewide project. Find an application at: <http://tinyurl.com/yccmzj8>

✎ Attending your school board meetings and getting involved in the parent teacher organization at your school will provide you with a better understanding of how your district works.

✎ To support parent involvement, the PA Department of Education has developed and printed a publication titled *Enhancing Parent Involvement: A Practical Guide for Pennsylvania's Schools Supporting Students with Disabilities*. This guide was developed through a collaborative effort between the Parent Training and Information Centers (PEAL and PEN), the CPRCs, HUNE and the Parent Mentor Project and the Parent Consultants from PaTTAN. Each district received copies of this publication. You can request a copy from PEAL.

### YOUTH Leadership Initiative Through the PEAL Center

Although great strides have been made in the area of youth leadership, an emphasis is still needed in the area of disability leadership development. With the various changes in services and inclusion for people with disabilities, there has been a major loss in the sense of identity, culture, and community for youth with disabilities. With the inclusion movement, many youth are unaware of the widespread issues that face people with disabilities. Additionally, this group of youth are provided with little if any advocacy or leadership training. Young adults often leave the safety and supports of public education and realize the harsh reality of "the real world." Without advocacy and leadership skills youth with disabilities often struggle to maintain a job and independence. This need has fueled the creation of various youth leadership development programs across the state and nation.

The PEAL Center is working with the Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Association of Pediatrics on an exciting project. The State Implementation Grant (SIG) is working to improve services that improve care for youth with disabilities across the state. In these efforts the grant sponsored a western Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Institute with 25 participants in Cranberry Township, PA. This was the first of hopefully many youth leadership development events. Attendees learned about advocacy, leadership, disability history, and how to tell their stories.

If you are interested in future leadership events please contact Josie Badger at [josiabadger@pealcenter.org](mailto:josiabadger@pealcenter.org). Watch the PEAL Website [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org) for future dates and locations for the Youth Leadership Institute.

## PEAL Center WEB Watch

### Watch for our PARENT SURVEY

In an effort to be responsive to the needs of the families we support we will post a Parent Survey to gather your input. The survey will be offered electronically on our website and mailed by US Mail (to those without an email address) on January 7.

### Watch for our new WORDS of WISDOM Questions on BULLYING

Offer your **Words of Wisdom** on Bullying. 1) Has your child ever been bullied? 2) If yes, what has been a successful response or prevention? Your experiences and responses can help others.

### Watch for the SCHOOL LEADERS SYMPOSIUM on Inclusive Practices to be held March 15, 2010.

Registration information will be available January 1, 2010 for this day long event specially designed for school administrators.

### Watch for the PEAL Fourth Annual CONFERENCE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, March 16-17, 2010.

Conference book and registration information will be posted January 1, 2010.

### Watch for the PowerPoint and Handouts from our recent workshop on BEHAVIOR with Kiki McGough

offered through funding from the PA Developmental Disabilities Council. Click on RESOURCES and go to Behavior Workshop.

### Watch for the Project for PEACE (Parents Engaged in Advocating for Change in Education) Application, to be posted on our web. Sessions will be held in the north central region of PA.

### Watch for information on what our PARENT LEADERSHIP GRADUATES are doing to create system change. Click on PEAL Projects then click on F2F and go to Parent Leadership Graduates.

### Watch for information on new locations and dates for the YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE.

## POSITION OPEN for PARENT MENTOR for Early Intervention

The PEAL Center is seeking a Parent Mentor in the area of Early Intervention. This part-time position of 5-7 hours a week would require the Mentor to represent the PEAL Center at state and local advisory meetings and to assist families and professionals who call the PEAL Center with information related to Early Intervention.

Consideration will be given to applicants who are parents or family members of children with disabilities. Applicants must have a strong knowledge of both federal and state Early Intervention laws. *Interested candidates may send their resume By January 1, 2010 to Cindy Duch, Director of Parent Advising at the PEAL Center, 1119 Penn Avenue, Suite 400, Pittsburgh PA 15222 or email a resume to [cduch@pealcenter.org](mailto:cduch@pealcenter.org)*

## EVENTS

### Electronic Medical Healthcare Notebook Workshops

The Family to Family Healthcare Information Center at the PEAL Center is offering workshops for parents of Children with Special Health Care Needs to learn how to build an electronic healthcare notebook. The workshop is free to all participants and PEAL will provide a 1 GIG Flash Drive to electronically store your notebook work. The Healthcare Notebook is an organizing tool for families and will help you keep track of important information.

**January 20, 6-8 p.m. at Fox Chapel High School**  
For questions or to register contact Joan Badger, 412-281-4404, Ext. 18 or [jbadger@pealcenter.org](mailto:jbadger@pealcenter.org). Space is limited.

### Inclusive Schools Week 2009 December 7-11, 2009

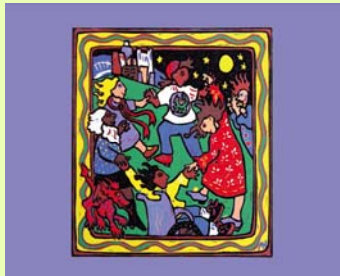
Visit: <http://www.inclusiveschools.org/week2009>

## RESOURCE

### Disability and Social Security Website

[Disability.gov](http://Disability.gov) is a comprehensive website offering people with disabilities access to important information. [Disability.gov](http://Disability.gov) also is a useful information and referral tool for responding to the questions and concerns of Social Security's 52 million beneficiaries. The [Disability.gov](http://Disability.gov) website has general information about how Social Security can help people with disabilities, and much more. For specific, detailed information about benefits available through Social Security for people with disabilities, you can visit: [www.socialsecurity.gov/disability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability). To learn more about Social Security, visit: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

## GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA



Notecards from the PEAL Center, featuring our conference graphic, *PEACE and HARMONY* by local artist Mary Hamilton make a great holiday gift for teachers, friends and family. *Cards are blank inside.* \$10 for 8 cards with envelopes + \$1.00 shipping and handling. Order online at:

[www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org) or call the PEAL Center at 1-866-950-1040. Sales benefit PEAL.

Credit Cards accepted or Checks to "PEAL Center" Cards will be shipped when payment is received.



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The PEAL Center serves families of children with disabilities and special health care needs. We provide information and training on education in Central and Western Pennsylvania, and on healthcare needs and support services state-wide through the Family to Family Health Information Center.

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

To receive our email BLAST and NEWSLETTER electronically, click on mailing list at www.pealcenter.org or call us toll-free at 1-866-950-1040 to receive information in the mail.

Join The PEAL Center on FACEBOOK.com

Follow the PEAL Center on Twitter at:

http://twitter.com/PEALCenter

CONSTRUYENDO COMUNIDADES de PAZ ARMONÍA y RESPETO

BUILDING COMMUNITIES of PEACE HARMONY and RESPECT



March 16 & 17, 2010

Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North, Cranberry Township north of Pittsburgh @ PA Turnpike & I-79

Parent Scholarships Available

Sponsored by: PEAL Center & PDE/BSE



Featured Keynote Presentation Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary

16 y 17 de Marzo del 2010

Four Points by Sheraton Pittsburgh North, Cranberry Township Al Norte de Pittsburgh @ PA Turnpike & I-79

Becas para Padres Disponibles

Patrocinado por el Centro de PEAL & PDE/BSE



Destacado Orador Principal Peter Yarrow de Peter, Paul and Mary

Evening Concert with Peter Yarrow on March 16th

Noche de Concierto con Peter Yarrow el 16 de Marzo