



RMU Trees Network February 2025 Newsletter



Parent and Family Meeting Related Services: Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) Monday, February 3, 2025 7PM - 8PM

Join us virtually on **Monday, February 3, 2025 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly parent and family support meeting. Melody Ovitsky, Manager and Occupational Therapist at AOT Inc., will be presenting on the differences between home and school based Occupational and Physical therapies. She will discuss how students get released from services and how to build and establish a good school to home therapy relationship. Please contact Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu to register by email or register at [Google Registration \(https://forms.gle/QmiFyWV/zF3WPaUUQ6\)](https://forms.gle/QmiFyWV/zF3WPaUUQ6). Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

Save the Date! Monday, March 3, 2025 7 PM - 8 PM Parent and Family Meeting Related Service: Speech and Language

Join us virtually on **Monday, March 3, 2025 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly parent and family support meeting. Linda Fiejdasz, Speech Language Pathologist from DePaul School for Hearing and Speech, will be presenting on the different options for early intervention and school-based speech therapy. She will discuss carryover into general education classes, home, and during the extended school year. Please contact Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu to register by email or register at [Google Registration \(https://forms.gle/EMQn7rDtjjzLpye7\)](https://forms.gle/EMQn7rDtjjzLpye7) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.



Evaluations and Independent Education Evaluations Meeting Summary

Dr. Eric Lauver, Fort Cherry School District's Director of Pupil Services/Technology, met with our Trees Network parents, families, and educators about special education evaluations. He explained the differences of school evaluations and independent education evaluations (IEE) and how the assessment results are used to develop the appropriate accommodations and modifications to determine a student's least restrictive environment. We had a meaningful conversation with questions and answers ranging from where and who does the evaluations to obtaining assistive technology and curriculum to align to a student's evaluation.

Trees AT Device Center - Open Lab Days



We maintain an Assistive Technology (AT) Device Center for use by students and families. AT is any item, piece of equipment, software or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). AT can range from low technology (such as a pencil grip) to high technology (speech recognition software). Beginning this month, the AT Device Center will host Open Lab Days on Mondays from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. The Device Center will be open to the public without an appointment. Visitors can explore a variety of assistive technology, including adapted computer equipment, communication devices, and switch-friendly apps and toys. Staff will be available to answer questions; however, individualized support is dependent on the number of participants. Appointments are also available. Come to RMU, Patrick Henry 333 and check out the various devices.

Upcoming Events Around the Area

The RMU Trees Network is a member of the Special Needs Consortium, a group of service providers in the Pittsburgh area. The consortium exists to provide a place where all service providers can network and opportunities can be shared, promoted, and advocated for to increase awareness of resources available to the community. The following is a list of events found through our contacts and/or were shared by members of the consortium. For a full listing of member events, visit their [website](https://www.specialneedsconsortium.org/upcoming-events) (<https://www.specialneedsconsortium.org/upcoming-events>). We hope you will find something of interest to you.

February 4th - March 11th (Tuesdays) 12:30-2:00 PM via Zoom

Powerful Tools for Caregivers of Children with Special Needs

Join Hope Grows for this virtual 6-week educational series designed to provide you with the tools you need to take care of yourself! This program helps family caregivers reduce stress, improve self-confidence, communicate feelings better, balance their lives, increase their ability to make tough decisions, and locate helpful resources. Limited to 15 participants. Register at <https://hopegrows.org/event/ptcsn2025/>

February 6th 1:00-3:00 PM

Valentine's Day Party

Games, Music, Dancing, Crafts, Open sensory room. Friends can RSVP for the party and view/register for regularly scheduled free and low-cost monthly activities at the following link: <https://www.3riverscommunitycare.com/book-online> or by phone/email: info@3rcc.net (412) 206-9118

Three Rivers Community Care - 1 Veterans Way Carnegie, PA 15106

February 7th 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Night to Shine at North Way Christian Community – Sewickley Valley

Night to Shine is an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love for people with disabilities. It is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, and open to anyone 14 or older. There will be dinner, dancing, activities, and more for guests. They will have the chance to walk down the red carpet and be crowned king or queen!

Registration is open and will close mid-January. More information on how to register, serve, or support the event can be found at www.northway.org/night-to-shine. Contact nighttoshine@northway.org with any questions.

February 7th – 9th starting at 5:30 PM

Weekend Retreat at The Woodlands – Love Around the World – Celebrate Love with Global Traditions and Activities

From 5:30 PM on Friday to 11:00 AM on Sunday, these inclusive getaways for youth with disability and chronic illness are created for individuals ages 13-24. Each retreat offers a variety of activities that encourage social connections, health, and leadership skills. Activities encourage new experiences that spark creativity and self-discovery. Each retreat costs \$550. The Woodlands accepts out of pocket or private pay, ESY, and waiver funding. We also have a scholarship program called the "Wonderfund" to assist with cost, available upon request. To apply or for more information, contact Leia Patsilevas, 724-935-5470 or

lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org www.mywoodlands.org

February 11th 7:00 P - 8:00pm

Learn about the PA ABLE Savings Program

A PA ABLE Savings Program account gives individuals with qualified disabilities and their families and friends a tax-free way to save for a wide range of disability-related expenses, while maintaining important benefits. Discover the many ways you can use a PA ABLE Savings Program account to save private funds to support health, increased financial freedom, independence, and quality of life. Some of the topics will be discussed include: eligibility requirements for opening a PA ABLE account, the tax benefits of PA ABLE, and how PA ABLE account interacts with current benefits.

If you require accommodations to participate in this webinar, please contact us at info@paable.gov.

February 14th 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Valentine's Dance – Recreation Alliance of North Pittsburgh

Activities include a free lunch, variety of games, crafts and more. Ohio Township Community Park Nature Center – 325 Nicholson Road. Email arubino@ohiotwp.org for more info. Register here: RANP.RECDESK.COM

Caregivers' Yoga Tuesdays 10:30 - 11:30 AM at Open Up

Caregivers' Yoga class is an experience curated for those who dedicate their time and energy to caring for others. This class emphasizes mindfulness and rest, and provides a supportive space for caregivers to take care of themselves. In this class there are optional opportunities to share experiences and find support among fellow caregivers. More than movement and mindfulness this class is a chance to pause, reflect, recharge, and nurture yourself. Register here <https://www.open-up.org/schedule>

Fridays 1:00PM Art Class by Not Forgotten Home and Community Services in partnership with the Baierl Family YMCA

C-Art with Kristen –Join us each Friday for fresh, fun, art that will inspire you to keep creating! Free but you must sign up!

Located at the Baierl Family YMCA, 2565 Nicholson Road, Sewickley, PA 15143 All classes are free, but donations are happily accepted. **Please Register at** www.nfhcs.org

Resources for Parents and Educators

The Network provides resources for parents and teachers and these resources can be found at the [RMU Trees Network Website](https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network) (<https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network>).

Information on the RMU Trees Network and the previous newsletters are also posted on the RMU website

<https://www.rmu.edu/academics/provost/trees>. In each

newsletter we provide links to resources of topics discussed in

our parent meetings and workshops as well as other information that may be helpful to families, schools, and the community. **Below are some links to resources on Special Education Evaluations and Independent Evaluations.**



Evaluation is an essential beginning step in the special education process for a child with a disability. Before a child can receive special education and related services for the first time, a full and individual initial evaluation of the child must be conducted to see if the child has a disability that adversely affects their education. Informed parent consent must be obtained before this evaluation may be conducted. The evaluation process is guided by requirements in Part B of our nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This page will help you learn more about what these requirements are.

- **Center for Parent Information and Resources** - Their website provides information on evaluation requirements.
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/evaluation/>
- **Education Law Center** - provides information on requesting an evaluation.
<https://www.elc-pa.org/resource/guide-on-special-education-evaluations/>

- **National Education Association** - Outlines what happens after a student is referred for an evaluation.
<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/evaluation-process-special-education>
- **Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education** - PaTTAN created a resource explaining the step-by-step process of receiving special education in Pennsylvania.
<https://www.pattan.net/Publications/Pennsylvania-Family-Guide-to-Special-Education>

RMU Trees Network Contact

6001 University Boulevard
335 Patrick Henry Trees Network Office Suite
Moon Township, PA 15108

Vicki Donne, RMU Trees Network Director
University Professor, Education Department,
College of Health and Human Science
donne@rmu.edu
412-397-5465

Deanna Hiltz, RMU Trees Network Outreach Specialist
Part-Time Faculty
hiltzd@rmu.edu
412-397-6058

[RMU Trees Website \(https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network\)](https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network)
[RMU Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/RMUtrees/\)](https://www.facebook.com/RMUtrees/)

