



## RMU Trees Network March 2025 Newsletter

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### Parent and Family Meeting Related Service: Speech and Language

**Monday, March 3, 2025 7PM - 8PM**

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](mailto:donne@rmu.edu) or Deanna Hiltz at [hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto: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.

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### Save the Date!

**Monday, April 7, 2025 7 PM - 8 PM**

### Summer Camps for Students with Disabilities Meeting



Join us virtually on **Monday, April 7, 2025 from 7:00**

**pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly parent and family support meeting. We have reached out to organizations and camps around the area to present on what students with disabilities will learn, benefit, and take away by attending their summer camps and programs. Some of these camps and programs can also be used as your child's Extended School Year (ESY) programming. We have representatives from The Woodlands (Wexford), Camp Spencer (Fombell), Evolve (Pittsburgh), PALS, Firefly Camp (Wexford), and S.P.E.A.K. (Munhall) presenting and answering any questions you might have. Anyone interested in learning more can register for the meeting by contacting Vicki Donne at [donne@rmu.edu](mailto:donne@rmu.edu) or Deanna Hiltz at [hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto:hiltzd@rmu.edu) or registering at [Google Registration](https://forms.gle/vischsKX98e1YsKH9) (<https://forms.gle/vischsKX98e1YsKH9>) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

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## 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). This spring, 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.

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## Attention Special Education Paraprofessionals in PA!

Your experience matters, and we'd love your input! Drs. Hansen and Donne are conducting research on how paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania support their students with disabilities in using classroom technology and assistive technology. Your input will help us to better understand current practices and find ways to better support educators and students. Please take a few minutes to participate and share this with your network: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParaProfessionalPA> or this QR Code:



This study has been approved by RMU IRB (412-397-6227 or [irb@rmu.edu](mailto:irb@rmu.edu)). If you have any questions, you can contact the researchers at [hansen@rmu.edu](mailto:hansen@rmu.edu) or [donne@rmu.edu](mailto:donne@rmu.edu).

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## Featured Artificial Intelligence (AI) App

We have seen a lot of information in the news about artificial intelligence. There are various software applications and websites that utilize artificial intelligence programming. Many of these applications have the potential to support individuals with disabilities. We thought it might be helpful if we highlighted one of these AI applications each month.

### SEEING AI

Seeing AI (2017) is an application for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices that uses the device camera and artificial intelligence. It was initially designed for individuals with a vision loss to convert visual materials into auditory information. The capabilities within the app would also be beneficial for students with intellectual disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and multi-language learners. The features include:



- **Read Aloud:** This feature is used to have printed text read aloud, including handwritten text.
- **Identify Money:** Currently the app only recognizes US paper money, it does not recognize coins or paper money from other countries.
- **Identify a Person:** This feature allows the user to identify a person or to hear an auditory visual description by taking their photo.
- **Barcode Scan/Product Identification:** The app can scan barcodes and give an audio identification or name of the product. A more detailed auditory description of the product can also be provided, if desired.
- **Describing an Image:** Provides auditory descriptions of the surroundings or photos which may already be on a device or in an environment.

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## 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 forum 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 11<sup>th</sup> (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 20<sup>th</sup> - March 27<sup>th</sup> 6:45pm – 7:30pm**

*Social Skills Adaptive Aquatics Program – Rose E. Schneider Family YMCA*

This program focuses on improving social skills in children with autism spectrum disorder, between the ages of 5-12, through aquatic interventions. This will be measured through your perceptions of these skills as the parents and caregivers through survey format. The program will be 6 weeks in length with one 30–45-minute session a week. For any additional questions or more information, please contact [sac1029@sruc.edu](mailto:sac1029@sruc.edu) or 412-303-5852. To register, use the YMCA link: <https://operations.daxko.com/programs/redirector.aspx?cid=2204&pid=94284&sid=2330465>

**March 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:30pm**

*Weekend Retreat at The Woodlands – Color Wars: A Camp Tradition coming to The Woodlands! Friendly Competition, Team Work & Fun!*

From 5:30 PM on Friday to 11:00 AM on Sundays, these inclusive getaways for youth with disability and chronic illness are created **for individuals ages 18+**. Whether you're a sports lover, singer, cook, or in touch with nature, the Woodlands covers it all! 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. To apply or for more information, contact Leia Patsilevas, 724-935-5470 or [lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org](mailto:lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org) [www.mywoodlands.org](http://www.mywoodlands.org)

**March 8<sup>th</sup> 3:00pm - 6:00pm**

*Shamrock Shindig Ages 13+*

Autism Caring Center, 7051 Steubenville Pike, Oakdale, Pa

Join Autism Caring Center for a celebration of St. Patrick's Day, food, fun, and friendship. Register at [www.autismcaringcenter.com](http://www.autismcaringcenter.com)

**March 9<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm - 5:00pm**

*Live Autism Friendly Open Mic @ Band Together Clubhouse*

Band Together Clubhouse (in Moondog's) 378 Freeport Rd, Blawnox, PA

**March 10<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm - 8:00pm**

*Autism-Friendly Open Mic @ North Allegheny Senior High School Auditorium*

North Allegheny Senior High School 10375 Perry Hwy, Wexford, PA

**March 12<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm-7:00pm**

*Connecting the Pieces*

Autism Caring Center, 7051 Steubenville Pike, Oakdale, Pa

Join for a presentation by PA State Police for what to expect during Police interaction. ALL are welcome. Register at [www.autismcaringcenter.com](http://www.autismcaringcenter.com)

**March 13<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm - 7:00pm**

*Music Therapy @ Moondog's*

Band Together Clubhouse (in Moondog's) 378 Freeport Rd, Blawnox, PA

**March 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:30pm**

*Weekend Retreat at The Woodlands– DIVA! Dreams, Inspiration, Vision and Advocacy. A Self-Empowerment Weekend culminating in a runway presentation.*

From 5:30 PM on Friday to 11:00 AM on Sundays, these inclusive getaways

for youth with disability and chronic illness are created **for individuals ages 16-35!** Whether you're a sports lover, singer, cook, or in touch with nature, the Woodlands covers it all! 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. To apply or for more information, contact Leia Patsilevas, 724-935-5470 or [lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org](mailto:lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org) [www.mywoodlands.org](http://www.mywoodlands.org)

### **March 14th 6:00pm – 8:00pm**

*St. Patrick's Day Dance – Recreation Alliance of North Pittsburgh*

Pine Community Center – 100 Pine Park Drive. Email [pgeis@twp.pine.pa.us](mailto:pgeis@twp.pine.pa.us) for more info. Register here: [RANP.RECDESK.COM](http://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**

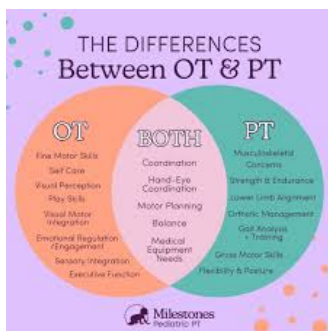
C-Art with Kristen –Join us each Friday for fresh, fun, art that will inspire you to keep creating! Free but you must sign up!

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](http://www.nfhcs.org)

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## **OT and PT Meeting Summary**

Melody Ovitsky, Manager and Occupational Therapist at AOT Inc., presented on the differences between home and school based Occupational and Physical therapies. She discussed procedures for releasing students from services and how to build and establish a good school to home therapy relationship. We received a great resource and Melody answered a lot of questions with ideas, suggestions, and recommendations.



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## **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](http://RMU Trees Network Website) (<https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network>). Information on the Network and the previous newsletters are posted on the RMU website <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/provost/trees>. In each newsletter we provide links to resources related to the 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 related to Occupational and Physical Therapy.**

- **AOT Inc. Specialized Educational Therapy Services** - AOT provides effective, evidence-based OT, PT, and ST services to support children from birth to 21 in learning and growing. Therapists work in schools, homes, preschools, and other community settings to help students successfully access their educational environment. <https://aotinc.com/>
- **Occupational Therapy in Schools** - provides basic information on occupational therapy. <https://otpotential.com/blog/occupational-therapy-in-schools>
- **Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association** - provides guidelines for the practice of occupational and physical therapy in educational settings. <https://pota.site-ym.com/page/SBGL>
- **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistant Network** - PaTTAN created a resource explaining physical therapy and the referral and evaluation process. <https://www.pattan.net/Evidence-Based-Practices/Physical-Therapy>

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**RMU Trees Website** (<https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network>)

**RMU Facebook** (<https://www.facebook.com/RMUtrees/>)

