



## TREES NETWORK March 2026 Newsletter

### Parent and Family Meeting Monday, March 2, 2026 7 PM - 8 PM Understanding Behavior Parent and Family Meeting



Join us virtually on **Monday, March 2, 2026**  
from **7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly

parent and family support meeting. We are pleased to welcome Brittany Maurizi, Founder of Balanced Behaviors, LLC and a Behavior Consultant and Licensed Behavior Specialist in Pennsylvania. Brittany will discuss understanding behavior, how to effectively communicate what you are observing at home and school, and how to interpret data presented through Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs). To register, 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 \(https://forms.gle/o8ekXGh6ZokMr9ut7\)](https://forms.gle/o8ekXGh6ZokMr9ut7) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.



### Save the Date! Monday, April 6, 2026 7 PM - 8 PM Summer Camps and Programs for Students with Disabilities Meeting

Join us virtually on **Monday, April 7, 2025**, from  
**7:00–8:00 PM** for our monthly Parent and Family Support  
Meeting. This month, we have invited several local

organizations and camps to share information about their summer programs for students with disabilities, including what participants will learn, how they will benefit, and the lasting impact these experiences can provide. Some of these programs may also qualify as your child's Extended School Year (ESY) programming. Representatives from The Woodlands (Wexford), Always B Smiling (Washington), Camp HERO (Millvale), AAC Camp (South Hills), and Hilltop Horizons (Beaver) will present and be available to answer your questions. Anyone interested in attending can register by contacting Vicki Donne at [donne@rmu.edu](mailto:donne@rmu.edu), Deanna Hiltz at [hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto:hiltzd@rmu.edu), or by completing the Google Registration form (<https://forms.gle/961qekrNjXsdew9A9>) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

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## Individual IEP Collaborations and/or Conferences

Feeling overwhelmed by your child's IEP? You're not alone, and you don't have to navigate it by yourself. The RMU Trees Network is offering virtual office hours for parents and guardians who have questions about their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Whether you're brand new to special education or have attended multiple IEP meetings, we're here to help you make sense of the language, understand your child's supports and services, and feel more confident in the process. These one-on-one conversations are guided by your questions. No question is too big or too small. We provide a safe, supportive space to gain clarity and peace of mind. Email Vicki at [donne@rmu.edu](mailto:donne@rmu.edu) or Deanna at [hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto:hiltzd@rmu.edu) to set up a time.

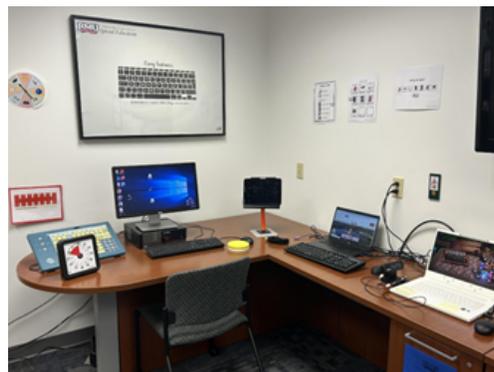
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## Trees Assistive Technology Device Center Open Lab Days

The Trees Network maintains 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).

The AT Device Center hosts 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 AT, 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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## Featured IEP Resources Measurable Goals

Each month, we will highlight one key component of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and share resources to support understanding and implementation. These monthly spotlights are designed to break the IEP into manageable parts, clarify roles and responsibilities, and provide tools that can be immediately applied in classrooms and meetings. By focusing on one detail at a time, we aim to strengthen collaboration, improve consistency, and ensure IEPs are meaningful support for students.

**Strong, measurable goals** are the foundation of a meaningful IEP. Clear goals help ensure your child's progress can be tracked, supported, and celebrated throughout the year.

Well-written measurable goals answer key questions: *What skill will be improved? How will progress be measured? How often? and To what level of mastery?*

Effective IEP goals typically include:

- **Specific skill or behavior** being targeted
- **Condition** under which the skill will occur
- **Observable measurement criteria** (percentage, frequency, duration, etc.)
- **Timeline** for achieving the goal

When goals are measurable, families and educators can clearly see growth and make informed decisions about supports and services.

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## Upcoming Events Around the Area

The RMU Trees Network is a member of the Special Needs Consortium, a group of amazing 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. 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 some of these highlighted events of interest to you.

### **Variety's My Bike®, My Stroller®, and My Voice® Programs**

They are actively accepting new applications for all three programs for Southwestern PA. Variety offers three adaptive equipment programs for eligible kids and families to apply for one, two, or all three pieces of equipment, including adaptive bikes, adaptive strollers, and communication devices. These programs open possibilities for kids and their families to live healthier, safer, and more fulfilling lives at home, school, and throughout the community. Learn more about each program and/or start an application at [www.varietypittsburgh.org](http://www.varietypittsburgh.org).

### **Various Saturdays (January - April; 10AM-2PM) - Camp Woodlands Jr. Day Camps**

Camp Woodlands Jr. (CWJ) is designed for campers, ages 6-12. Each Saturday session features a wide range of activities including arts and crafts, nature exploration, music, sports, "snack-tivities," and more. The Saturday session costs \$75 (lunch included). They accept out of pocket or private pay, ESY, and waiver funding. They 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](mailto:lpatsilevas@woodlandsfoundation.org) [www.mywoodlands.org](http://www.mywoodlands.org)

### **March 3rd 12PM–1PM - A Youth Transition Webinar with the Brill Family**

Join Kathy & Alexa Brill, fierce self-advocates and professionals, as they share their experiences of transitioning into adulthood. Youth, families, and caregivers are invited to attend to learn more and to ask questions that may provide helpful resources. Register here: [https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.tfaforms.com/5209597\\_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQiKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1EXCtEey\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.tfaforms.com/5209597_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQiKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1EXCtEey$)

### **March 6th 6PM to March 8th 10AM - FireFly Weekend Retreat for Youth & Teen**

A chance for adults with spina bifida and related disabilities to have a camp experience. Located at Camp Guyasuta in Sharpsburg, hang out, watch movies, play games, explore nature, make crafts, and just have a fun weekend away in the woods! To register: [https://urldefense.com/v3/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfCgyfroFCf0fNpIGXocp0V10Wi9wpm9YwLIAT5YcvrfQ7Ag/viewform?usp=dialog\\_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQiKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1P1o80SU\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfCgyfroFCf0fNpIGXocp0V10Wi9wpm9YwLIAT5YcvrfQ7Ag/viewform?usp=dialog_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQiKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1P1o80SU$)

### **March 7th 9AM-4PM - Navigating Life After Brain Injury: A Toolkit for Empowerment and Advocacy**

Survivors, caregivers, and advocates will discover practical tools, expert insights, and connect with a supportive community. This is a day of learning, connection, and empowerment focused on improving life after brain injury. Register:

[2026BrainInjury.eventbrite.com](https://2026BrainInjury.eventbrite.com) For questions, you can email Rebecca MacTaggart - [rmactaggart@classcommunity.org](mailto:rmactaggart@classcommunity.org)

### **March 7th 4PM-6PM - Growing Together: The Friendship Factory's All-Abilities Resource Expo: Summer Safety & Wellness**

This expo, hosted at Rose E. Schneider YMCA (2001 Ehrman Road, Cranberry Township, PA 16066), is designed to bring families, caregivers, and community partners together focused on summer safety, wellness, and resources for individuals of all abilities. This event aims to highlight tools, programs, and community connections that help families feel prepared, confident, and empowered going into the warmer months.

[https://urldefense.com/v3/ https://operations.daxko.com/programs/redirector.aspx?cid=2204&pid=120213&sid=2409112 ;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1KAICKNe\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://operations.daxko.com/programs/redirector.aspx?cid=2204&pid=120213&sid=2409112;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1KAICKNe$)

### **March 8th 2PM-5PM - Live Autism Friendly Open Mic @ Band Together Clubhouse**

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

### **March 11th 1PM-2PM - Yoga Storytime with Ivy Rehab for Kids**

Come join Ivy Rehab for Kids at Beaver Library for a storytime followed by a yoga class with a physical therapist. Ages 2-10 welcome. Please bring a yoga mat or towel with you. No registration needed. Location: Beaver Area Memorial Library; 100 College Ave Beaver, PA 15009

### **March 11th 6PM - Moon Area School District Education & Support Series – Virtual Presentation**

The Fiffik Law Group is LegalShield's Pennsylvania law firm. They will be providing frequently requested legal guidance to help individuals better understand and plan for important matters such as powers of attorney, guardianship, letters of intent, Social Security, and other key planning considerations. For more information visit:

[https://urldefense.com/v3/ https://www.fiffiklaw.com ;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1Fqagpvo\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.fiffiklaw.com;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1Fqagpvo$)  
[https://urldefense.com/v3/ https://kimberlyberger.legalshieldassociate.com ;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1G47KfB0\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://kimberlyberger.legalshieldassociate.com;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1G47KfB0$)

### **March 12th 6PM-7PM - Music Therapy @ Moondog's**

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

### **March 15th 2PM-3PM - Autism Pittsburgh presents Azure Enchanted Melodies**

Join musicians Emily Gallagher and Caleb Glickman for an enchanted afternoon of musical storytelling. See what happens when a princess finds her own storybook and discovers the importance of finding her own path. The audience is encouraged to sing, dance, and play along to bring the story to life. FREE event.

[https://urldefense.com/v3/ https://www.autismpittsburgh.org/azureevents ;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1A9EyCNn\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.autismpittsburgh.org/azureevents;!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQikqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1A9EyCNn$)

**March 17th, March 24th, March 31st, April 7th, April 14th, April 21st, April 28th, and May 5th 5:30PM – 8:00PM - The PEAL Center’s Spring 2026 VIRTUAL Family Leadership Institute**

PEAL's Family Leadership Institute (FLI) will help parents and caregivers of children and young people with disabilities and special healthcare needs to develop an understanding of healthcare, education, and disability policies. Tools will be used to increase the impact of your voice to promote change beneficial to children, young people, and families across Pennsylvania. By applying, you are committing to attending all sessions. For more information and to apply, please visit: 2026 Spring Virtual : Family Leadership Institutes : Events & Trainings : PEAL Center

**MARCH 19TH 8:30AM - Special Needs Consortium Networking Meeting**

Provident Charter School West, 200 Quigley Drive, Baden, PA 15005

RSVP: [snc@specialneedsconsortium.org](mailto:snc@specialneedsconsortium.org)

**March 21st 2PM - MVP Madness: Adaptive Basketball Day**

MVP Madness is an inclusive, high-energy event where children of all abilities come together to move, play, and have fun in a supportive environment. Led by Coach Mike of Fitness 4 Focus, this experience focuses on confidence, connection, and adaptive fitness—encouraging every child to participate at their own pace and celebrate their own victories. Hosted by The Michael Mackie Project, MVP Madness is more than an event—it’s a joyful reminder that when inclusion leads, every child can be an MVP. Event is Free, registration is required.

[https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_http://www.themichaelmackieproject.org\\_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQIKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX\\_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt\\_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1ChvXabp\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.themichaelmackieproject.org_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!z4BVQIKqRt1m1oxSEKkFXA8Zm5x00dLp-hyekSlqIBX_ayJ62NiRPyS-mZAt_sAHG5qn33AH9bHG1ChvXabp$)

**March 26th 9PM-3PM - Health Matters Northwest: The PEAL Center’s Annual Health Matters Conference**

PennWest Edinboro, Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Road, Edinboro, PA 16444

The PEAL Center’s Health Matters Conference is a conference designed to empower and connect youth with disabilities, their families, educators, healthcare providers, service professionals, and community organizations. Register Here:

[https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://www.tfaforms.com/5207268\\_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!we6DVQSLNEa8Mzg7X3D7QtWMMZ3hyCBRJMTqPI5pel2I\\_NAI135v2DMsNMqfIKoPeCrLZdmqgMsvlQE86\\_hjtQ\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.tfaforms.com/5207268_!!HE3Wh9YiWbHP!we6DVQSLNEa8Mzg7X3D7QtWMMZ3hyCBRJMTqPI5pel2I_NAI135v2DMsNMqfIKoPeCrLZdmqgMsvlQE86_hjtQ$)

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**DON'T FORGET TO THINK OF YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY FOR EVENTS**

- **Allegheny Library Association Programs & Events** (<https://aclalibraries.org/explore/library-programs-and-events/>)
- **Beaver County Library Systems** (<https://www.beaverlibraries.org/system-wide-events>)
- **Butler County Federated Library Systems** (<https://www.bcfls.org/libraries>)
- **Washington County Library Systems** (<https://www.washlibs.org/>)
- **Westmoreland County Libraries** (<https://www.wclibraries.org/>)

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## Council Events

- The Pittsburgh/Allegheny County Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) is a group of families, professionals, and community members who work to improve the delivery of Early Intervention services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities. Their next meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 9AM. To register, email [strocheck@afit.org](mailto:strocheck@afit.org).
- The Allegheny County Local Task Force will meet on Wednesday, March 4th. To join, visit <https://www.ltf3.org/meetings>

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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](https://donne94.wixsite.com/rmu-trees-network) (<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 to Augmentative and Alternative Communication, which was our topic covered by Christine Lepore at our February 2nd meeting.**



- **AAC Institute** - The AAC Institute is a not-for-profit, charitable organization dedicated to the most effective communication for people who rely on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). AAC Institute, established in 2000, is a resource for all who are interested in enhancing the communication of people who rely on AAC. AAC Institute promotes the goal of AAC, the AAC Rules of Commitment, and evidence-based AAC clinical practice. <https://aacinstitute.org/>
- **US Society for AAC** - Communication is the essence of human life. The general purpose of USSAAC is to enhance the communication effectiveness of people who can benefit from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). USSAAC is the United States Chapter of the International Society for AAC (ISAAC) and supports the purposes of ISAAC through individual, local, state, regional, and national efforts. <https://www.ussaac.org/about/what-is-aac/>
- **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association** - The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 247,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. The **AAC Practice Portal page** provides an evidence-based overview of AAC, definitions, clinical guidance, and references to research and evidence summaries, making it a reliable and practitioner-focused source. <https://www.asha.org/njc/aac/>
- **VoiceHero** - The Voice Keeper is an AAC-related app that lets users (or families) record a small number of sentences to generate a custom voice based on a real human voice. The idea is to make AAC voices feel more personal and familiar, which can improve communication dignity and identity for AAC users. <https://www.voiceheroaac.com/>

- **LifeCourse Framework** - The Charting the LifeCourse framework was created to help individuals and families of all abilities and all ages develop a vision for a good life, think about what they need to know and do, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live. It is especially important to consider the complex communication needs of individuals as they develop throughout their life span. The framework is the keystone for supporting a community of learning that champions transformational change through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and collaborative engagement.

<https://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/lifecourse-framework/>

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[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/>)

