



## RMU Trees Network May 2025 Newsletter

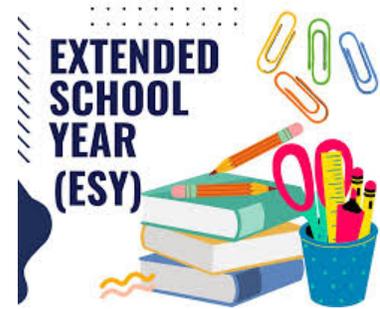
---

### Parent and Family Meeting Extended School Year (ESY)

**Monday, May 5, 2025 7 PM - 8 PM**

Join us virtually on **Monday, May 5, 2025 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly parent and family support meeting.

Dr. Chris McCabe, TACT2 Master Trainer and Educational Consultant on the Training and Consulting (TaC) Team from the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit, will be presenting on Extended School Year (ESY). Dr. McCabe will be sharing information on students who qualify for ESY, the benefits of ESY, and various options and availability of ESY programs. 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/fP7vq1i2uGBkwqNC9) (<https://forms.gle/fP7vq1i2uGBkwqNC9>). Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.



---

### Special Needs Consortium Networking Meeting

The RMU Trees Network is excited to welcome the Special Needs Consortium to campus on **Tuesday, May 13th at 8:30AM**. The Special Needs Consortium works together to bring awareness of available resources for individuals and families with special needs through networking, promotion, and advocacy. If you would like to attend this networking meeting or would like to become a member, please contact [snc@specialneedsconsortium.org](mailto:snc@specialneedsconsortium.org).

---

### SAVE THE DATE!

### Upcoming Special Education Conference

On Monday, October 13, 2025, the RMU Trees Network will be holding its annual Special Education Conference, Leading the Way: Innovation and Inclusion. It is being held virtually to allow for more participation from special educators, administrators, paraprofessionals, and related service staff looking for professional development on important topics in special education. We hope to see you there!

---



## Parent and Family Meeting Employment Options & Opportunities Monday, June 2, 2025 7 PM - 8 PM

Join us virtually on **Monday, June 2, 2025 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for an exciting workshop on employment options. George Edwards, Program Manager - Employment Services, and April Klein, Program Coordinator of Workforce Development Center, at Goodwill of Southwestern PA, will be discussing various employment opportunities and options for individuals with disabilities. These may include, but are not limited to, community-based instruction and work-based experiences, employment activities within transition services, and employment resources. To register, please complete the form at [Google Registration \(https://forms.gle/kj7qgU73FDXgk66T9\)](https://forms.gle/kj7qgU73FDXgk66T9). Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.



---

## Individual IEP Conferences

During April and May, the RMU Trees Network staff set aside hours from 9 AM - 3 PM on Wednesdays to virtually meet with individual parents who have Individualized Education Plan (IEP) related questions. We are not attorneys, but we do speak the language of special educators and are available to listen and help you navigate the language and process of special education. If you want to know more about what should be included in the IEP specific to your child, special education timelines, how to read assessment data, goals, etc., we are here to help you. Please email Vicki Donne at [donne@rmu.edu](mailto:donne@rmu.edu) or Deanna Hiltz at [hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto:hiltzd@rmu.edu) to set up a conference time.

---

## 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, through May 19th, the AT Device Center hosts Open Lab Days on Mondays from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and is open to the public without an appointment. Visitors are able to explore a variety of assistive technology, including adapted computer equipment, communication devices, and switch-friendly apps and toys. Staff and scholars are available to answer questions. As we head into the end of the semester and summer break, the lab will be closed over the summer but will reopen in Fall 2025. Stay tuned for more information on days and times!

---

---

## Attention Special Education Paraprofessionals in PA! Get your voice heard - Survey closes May 5th

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).

---

## Featured Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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. This month we are highlighting AI for math. While the AI tools are meant to help and supplement math, they are not considered to be a replacement for learning math. Please consider its use and function appropriately.

- **Photomath (<https://photomath.com>)** Photomath supports students with difficulties in math. You can scan math problems and see the AI worked out solutions. The program can assist with math concepts at the elementary through calculus level.



In addition, it may be helpful for students who are struggling with math to get assistance through some step-by-step videos or try some fun math problems. The following are some good sources for such activities:

- [Math Before Bed](#)
  - [Math Playground](#)
  - [Math Warehouse](#)
  - [PBS Mathematics for Kids](#)
-

---

## 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. 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.

### **May 3rd 10:30AM - 12:30PM Highland Park Tennis Club**

Join Dana Mathewson, 3 time Paralympian, Wimbledon Champion, former professional tennis player and motivational speaker. Dana will take to the courts at Highland Park to lead a wheelchair tennis clinic. To register:

<https://playtennis.usta.com/ustaamddistrictservetennis/EventsV2/Summary/76ad8f11-38ea-4162-bd6b-084b2d11d512>

### **May 8th Rep. Dan Miller's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Disability & Mental Health Summit**

Rep. Dan Miller's Disability & Mental Health Summit is a free, one-of-a-kind event in Western PA that brings hundreds of people and participating organizations together to share information on a wide range of topics in the disability and mental health arena. The Summit was designed to bring resources and experts out of their offices and into an easy-to-access environment, where people can meet face-to-face to better solve problems. Located at the Community College of Allegheny County's Allegheny Campus on the North Side. <https://disabilitysummit.com/>

### **May 22nd Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit (I.U. #27), in coordination with the University of Pittsburgh, will be hosting a workshop on Communication Disorders.**

**What:** Speech and Hearing Workshop

- Pitt professors will be presenting on:
  - *Advanced and Holistic Therapy Approaches for Children Who Stutter*
- Variety will also be in attendance and will be doing a short presentation to kick off the day.
- **ASHA Credits:** Five (5) ASHA hours (.5 credits) will be awarded for attending this event.
- **Act 48 Hours:** Five (5) Act 48 Hours will be awarded for attending this event (for non-ASHA members).

**Who:** All SLP's/Audiologists/ToD's; Open to college students as well.

**Cost:** \$25 (includes a light breakfast, a boxed lunch, and coffee/water throughout the day).

**To Register:** Click on this link to register: <https://forms.gle/iSvhBd4Kfy8aEeXTA>

### **May 23rd 9 AM - 11 AM and 1 PM - 2 PM McGuire Memorial EOC Annual Art Show**

Enjoy light refreshments and browse unique art. Some artwork is available for purchase. McGuire Memorial EOC, 543 Moon Clinton Road, Moon Township, PA 15108

---

## **June 30 - July 29 Summer Program for the Education of Autistic Kids (S.P.E.A.K.) Saint Therese of Lisieux School, Munhall, PA**

S.P.E.A.K. provides Extended School Year (ESY) services to autistic children as determined by their IEPs, thus preventing summer regression and ensuring their smooth transition into the upcoming school year. Curriculum places emphasis on strengthening social skills through Community Based Instruction. The goal of S.P.E.A.K is:

- Develop and maintain community awareness and interaction through structured community based experiences.
- Develop and maintain recreation and leisure skills.
- Develop appropriate social and behavioral skills and interactions.
- Provide art and music enrichment activities.
- Provide CBI language experiences that correlate with classroom CBI.
- Provide classroom instruction based on individual ESY and transition goals.

S.P.E.A.K. applications can be found here: <https://www.autismpittsburgh.org/speak>  
If you have any questions, please contact [SPEAK@autismpittsburgh.org](mailto:SPEAK@autismpittsburgh.org)

## **The Woodlands 2025 Summer Camps**

The mission of The Woodlands is to enrich the lives of children and adults with disabilities and chronic illness. They provide year-round recreational, social, and wellness opportunities in a barrier-free environment which encourages everyone to safely explore what's possible and discover new levels of independence. To find out more contact Kristen Link, Sr. Director of Operations at [klink@woodlandsfoundation.org](mailto:klink@woodlandsfoundation.org) or by calling 724-935-5470 ext. 225

**June 1-6 Sports Camp (Adult 25+)**

**June 9-12 Camp Woodlands Jr. Day Camp (6-12)**

**June 8-13 Camp Woodlands (13-24)**

**June 15-20 Music Camp (Adult 25+)**

**June 22-27 Music Camp (13-24)**

**July 6-11 Camp Woodlands (Adult 25+)**

**July 13-19 Sports Camp (13-24)**

**July 27 - August 1 Adult Camp Time Travel (Adult 25+)**

**August 3-8 Camp BLOOM (13-22)**

**August 4-7 Camp Woodlands Jr. Day Camp (6-12)**

## **July 29 - August 1 ICAN Talk AAC Summer Camp**

ICAN Talk AAC Summer Camp is a 3.5 day program of interactive, fun-filled activities designed specifically for children and adults who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems to communicate. Their program gives these individuals opportunities to communicate with other AAC users, develop their language skills, and use their AAC devices in new and exciting ways. The camp includes an AAC training seminar for parents, excursions to local attraction, and optional one-on-one consultations with clinical experts in AAC. For questions please contact Chistine at [clepore@aacinstitute.org](mailto:clepore@aacinstitute.org). Camper applications are also posted online at [www.aacinstitute.org](http://www.aacinstitute.org)

---

**July 28th – August 8th 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM Monday-Friday**

### **Evolve Coaching - Future Camp**

A two week, creative and performing arts summer camp for autistic and neurodivergent individuals, ages 12+.

Registration: <https://www.evolve-coaching.org/arts-programming>

### **FREE August Summer Camp - Open Up**

**Mondays-Thursdays 8:30-11:30AM**

**Session 1: August 4-7**

**Session 2: August 11-14**

**Session 3: August 18-21**

Students in grades K-5 will participate in an inclusive and engaging yoga class, play imaginative games intended to promote mindful social interactions, and make crafts they can use to help support a mindfulness practice at home. Visit their website to learn more and apply: [www.open-up.org/club-camp](http://www.open-up.org/club-camp)

### **Studio Forget-Me-Not!**

Studio Forget-Me-Not! is to actively cultivate perspectives, both within ourselves and within our community, by fostering artistic expression and growth. They provide an inclusive art space where individuals with diverse abilities can engage in boundless artistic exploration through a wide array of classes. At Studio Forget-Me-Not!, they prioritize celebrating abilities over limitations, offering the necessary support for everyone to thrive. Dedicated to surpassing traditional artistic norms, we embark on vibrant and joyful explorations across various mediums, ensuring a dynamic and enriching experience for all. [studioforgetmenot.org](http://studioforgetmenot.org)

### **OPEN UP Mindfulness Classes (free)**

Open Up's mission is to teach mindfulness tools through movement practices and interactive arts while centering people living with disabilities. They want all people to be able to have ease of access in finding avenues for increasing their sense of overall well being. They believe that all people should be able to experience joy in community with others. They have inclusive movement classes at our studio and can be found in schools and community spaces around the city and beyond.

<https://www.open-up.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 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. **Above are the links to the camps that presented and gave information for our April meeting. Below are those links and a few additional resources about Summer Camps for individuals with disabilities.**



- **Camp HERO** - Camp for children ages 8 through 17 who are deaf and hard of hearing. All forms of communication are supported at Camp HERO. The camp promotes social growth, creativity, self-expression and self-confidence. The campers enjoy activities such as swimming, paddle boating, fishing, rock wall climbing, bonfires, scavenger hunts, crafts, activities. Camp HERO is located at the Camp Victory facility in Millville, PA. <https://hopefortomorrowinc.org/>

- **Evolve Coaching - Future Camp** - A two week, creative and performing arts summer camp for autistic and neurodivergent people ages 12+ <https://www.evolve-coaching.org/arts-programming>

- **Firefly Camps and Retreats** - Spina Bifida Association of Western PA The mission of the FireFly Camps and Weekend Retreats Program is to provide opportunities throughout the year for personal development, skills building, and family respite. <https://sbawp.org/firefly-camps-retreats/>

- **ICAN Talk AAC Summer Camp** - ICAN Talk AAC Summer Camp is a 3.5 day program of interactive, fun-filled activities designed specifically for children and adults who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems to communicate. Their program gives these individuals opportunities to communicate with other AAC users, develop their language skills, and use their AAC devices in new and exciting ways. The camp includes an AAC training seminar for parents, excursions to local attraction, and optional one-on-one consultations with clinical experts in AAC. [www.aacoinstitute.org](http://www.aacoinstitute.org)

- **PALS Programs** - PALS mission is to create inclusive camp experiences for young people with Down Syndrome and their peers. Their volunteer-led programs change attitudes, transform lives, and inspire a world of belonging. PALS programs are weeklong summer camp programs hosted on college campuses. They pair similarly-aged individuals with and without Down Syndrome together for a week of new adventure, while learning more about themselves and others as they build transformative friendships. <https://www.palsprograms.org/>

- **Stages II Summer Camp** - Develop skills to act, communicate and improve both self-esteem and confidence. Applications will be open until May 29th, 2025. Eligibility: Youth in 7th to 12th grade with a documented disability. The camp will take place on July 21-25, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. This summer camp is completely free for participants, due to a generous grant from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust. Financial assistance for transportation, such as bus passes, is available on a limited basis. Daily lunch and snacks are also provided. [Stages II Summer Camp - School of Nursing Calendar](#)

- **Summer Program for the Education of Autistic Kids (S.P.E.A.K.)** S.P.E.A.K. provides Extended School Year (ESY) services to autistic children as determined by their IEPs, thus preventing summer regression and ensuring their smooth transition into the upcoming school year. Curriculum places emphasis on strengthening social skills through Community Based Instruction. <https://www.autismpittsburgh.org/speak>

---

## 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](mailto:donne@rmu.edu)

412-397-5465

**Deanna Hiltz**, RMU Trees Network Outreach Specialist  
Part-Time Faculty

[hiltzd@rmu.edu](mailto: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/>)

