# TREES NETWORK

# November 2026 Newsletter

## Parent/Family Meeting

**Monday, November 2, 2026 7PM - 8PM**

## Unlocking Possibilities: Assistive Technology & Family Resources

Join us virtually on **Monday, November 2, 2026 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly family support meeting. We are excited to welcome Wendy Davis from the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) as our guest speaker. Wendy will introduce us to PATF, share more about the work they do, and highlight the many resources they offer to individuals of all ages with disabilities. Assistive technology encompasses much more than what we typically think of as “technology.” It can include high-tech devices as well as low-tech solutions such as a fence to help prevent elopement for a child with autism or a paper communication board. These resources are designed to help individuals access the technology, services, and supports they need to increase their independence and enhance their quality of life. If you are interested in learning more about PATF and the resources available to individuals and families, we encourage you to join us by contacting Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu or registering at Google Registration (https://forms.gle/qm11GKm6WQjcGqKY9) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

## Parent/Family Meeting

**Monday, December 7, 2026 7PM - 8PM**

## Making Sense of IEP Data: Understanding Your Child’s Progress




At our Monday, December 7, 2026 family support meeting, we’ll focus on understanding your child’s IEP data and progress. By this time, families will have received a progress report or report card and may have questions about whether their child is making progress toward their IEP goals, how to understand the information provided, what to do if their child is not making the expected progress, and what questions they should ask the school or IEP team. Dr. Melissa Holler, Director of Pupil Services from Allegheny Valley School district will break down this information in a simple, relatable, and practical way without

getting overly technical. The goal is to help families feel more confident in understanding their child's progress and knowing what steps they can take to support their child. If you are interested in learning more, we encourage you to join us by contacting Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu or registering at Google Registration (https://forms.gle/tnq5ZZkUoHm2uTRQ8) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

## Special Education Conference SUCCESS

On Monday, October 12, 2026, the RMU Trees Network proudly held its annual Special Education Conference, themed **Unstoppable Potential: Elevating Every Learner**. This year's conference brought together a dynamic community of current and future educators, parents, and professionals who share a passion for advancing special education and supporting the success of every learner. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from an outstanding lineup of presenters who shared valuable insights, research, and practical strategies across a wide range of important topics, including artificial intelligence and its evolving role in education, early intervention, math and literacy instruction, executive functioning, IEPs and specially designed instruction. The day was filled with meaningful learning, collaboration, and engaging conversations that inspired new ideas, strengthened professional knowledge, and highlighted innovative approaches to meeting the diverse needs of students. From exploring emerging technologies to deepening our understanding of effective instructional practices, participants gained valuable tools and resources to help elevate every learner. A heartfelt thank you to all who attended, participated, and presented. Your dedication, expertise, and commitment to making a difference in the lives of students made this event a tremendous success! Together, we are Elevating Every Learner!

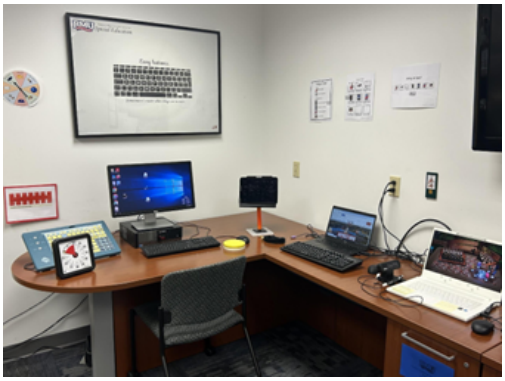
## Individual IEP Collaborations and/or Conferences




Navigating your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) can sometimes feel overwhelming, but you don't have to figure it all out alone! The RMU Trees Network is offering virtual, one-on-one meetings for parents and guardians who have questions about their child's IEP. These personalized conversations are designed to help you better understand the IEP process, gain clarity, and feel more confident advocating for your child's needs. Your questions set the agenda. Whether you're new to special education or have

years of IEP experience, no question is too big or too small. We provide a welcoming, supportive space to talk through your concerns, explore your options, and connect with people who are here to help. Let's navigate the IEP journey together! Email Vicki at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna at hiltzd@rmu.edu to schedule your virtual meeting.

## 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 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm** and on **Wednesdays from 9:00 am - 12:00 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.

## Collaborative Event Happening at RMU

- **November 14, 2026 from 10:00am - 4:00pm**
  Envision Blind Sports
  Robert Morris University, Recreation Center

Details and registration on each event will be forthcoming. Anyone interested in registering can contact Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu

## Event for Families at RMU






RMU Trees Network hosted the Band Together Halloween game day and karaoke on Saturday, October 24 in the Olsen Basement. Everyone had a great time. Check out the Band TogetherPittsburgh website for future events https://bandtogetherpgh.org/events/





# 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). We hope you will find some of these highlighted events of interest to you.

**September 2026 - May 2027 - Every Body Moves Adaptive Dance Class**
**Saturdays 10:30am - 11:00am ages 2 to 5**
**Saturdays 11:00am - 12:00pm ages 6 to 10**

**November 12th 6:00pm - 7:00pm - Music Therapy @ Moondog's**
Band Together Clubhouse (in Moondog's) 378 Freeport Rd, Blawnox
https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/music-therapy-moondogs-14/

**Nov. 15th, and Dec. 13th 9:00am-noon - Sensory Sensitive Science Hours at Kamin Science Center**
Enjoy a relaxed and low-stimulus morning at Kamin Science Center. Offerings include early entry, adjusted lighting and sound effects, and flexible science shows. A Quiet Room and sensory aids are available.
https://kaminsciencecenter. org/events/sensory-sensitive-science-hours-and-events/

**November 20-22nd (starting at 5:30pm) - Teen/Young Adult Weekend Retreat at The Woodlands**: **Friendsgiving**
From 5:30 PM on Friday to 11:00 AM on Sunday, inclusive getaway for youth with disability and chronic illness ages 13-24! Whether you're a sports lover, singer, cook, or in touch with nature, the Woodlands covers it all! Activities encourage new experiences that spark creativity and self-discovery. Each retreat costs $585. 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 www.mywoodlands.org

**Various Saturdays - October-December 10:00am-2:00pm - Camp Woodlands Jr. Day Camps**
Camp Woodlands Jr. (CWJ) is designed for younger campers, ages 6-12. Each Saturday session features a wide range of activities including arts & crafts, nature exploration, music, sports, "snack-tivities," and more**!** Each CWJ session is built to encourage social connections and creativity in a safe and supportive environment. The Saturday session costs $75 (lunch included). To apply or for more information, contact Kenyon Lewis, 724-935-5470 or klewis@woodlandsfoundation.org www.mywoodlands.org

**October–December Tuesdays or Thursdays, 4:00pm–6:00pm - After School Yoga Club!**
After School Yoga Club is a fun, inclusive program for students in grades K–5 to move, breathe, build confidence, and practice mindfulness. Through accessible yoga, games, and creative activities, children develop tools for self-regulation, focus, and connection in a welcoming environment where everyone belongs. Space is limited. More information and registration: https://www.open-up.org/club-camp

## 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/)

## 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 on Tuesday, January 26, 2027 at 9AM. To register, email stroccheck@afit.org.
- The Allegheny County Local Task Force runs monthly meetings on Wednesdays. Their next meeting is November 4th via Microsoft Teams. To join, visit https://www.ltf3.org/meetings

## 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). 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 for Pennsylvania Waivers and Supports Coordination, which was our topic presented by Mary Evrard from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Supports at our October 5th parent and family support meeting.**

- **PA DHS – Intellectual Disability & Autism Services -** The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) provides information about services and supports available to individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism. Parents and teachers can use this website to learn about waiver programs, eligibility requirements, Supports Coordination, and available services. It is a helpful starting point for families who are unsure where to begin when looking for support.
  PA DHS – Intellectual Disability & Autism Services
- **PA Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) Directory -** The Pennsylvania Supports Coordination Organization Directory helps families find approved Supports Coordination organizations throughout the state. Supports Coordinators can help individuals and families identify services, develop support plans, connect with providers, and coordinate services. This is a useful resource for parents who need help navigating Pennsylvania's waiver system.
  PA Supports Coordination Organization Directory

- **PA Services & Supports Directory (HCSIS) -** The PA Services & Supports Directory allows individuals, families, and their support teams to search for service providers throughout Pennsylvania. Families can use it to find providers based on the type of service they need and their community. It includes information such as provider names, contact information, websites, and available services.
  PA Services & Supports Directory (HCSIS)
- **My ODP Gold Book -** The Office of Developmental Program's (ODP) mission is to Support Pennsylvanians with developmental disabilities to achieve greater independence, choice and opportunity in their lives. They created a Gold Book dedicated to people with disabilities and their families and the advocates, allies, and supporters who make Everyday Lives possible for ALL people in Pennsylvania.
  https://home.myodp.org/resources/odp-information/

## RMU Trees Network Contact




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