



TREES NETWORK

October 2026 Newsletter

Parent/Family Meeting

Monday, October 5, 2026 7PM - 8PM

Understanding Waiver Programs and Available Supports

Join us virtually on **Monday, October 5, 2026 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our monthly family support meeting. We are pleased to welcome Mary Evrard, Community and Communications Liaison Coordinator with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Supports, who will join us to discuss waiver programs and available supports for individuals and families. Anyone interested in attending and learning more is encouraged to register by contacting Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu or registering at [Google Registration](https://forms.gle/p4d7s2Ass8HqnDvE6) (<https://forms.gle/p4d7s2Ass8HqnDvE6>) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

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 assistive 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) (<https://forms.gle/qm11GKm6WQjcGqKY9>) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

Upcoming Special Education Conference



On Monday, October 12, 2026, the RMU Trees Network is holding its annual Special Education Conference. This year the theme is **Unstoppable Potential: Elevating Every Learner**. It is free and 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. Register here: <https://forms.gle/doqxinyhFfrzUBMDA>

SAVE THE DATE

Special Needs Consortium Disability Summit

Thursday, October 8, 2026 8:30am - 4:00pm

This full-day summit will feature a variety of knowledgeable presenters sharing valuable information for individuals, families, educators, and service providers. There will be a vendor fair and many other opportunities for connection and collaboration. Be sure to stop by the **RMU Trees Network** table to learn about our programs and resources, and discover ways to get involved. We look forward to seeing you!

JOIN US FOR THE SNC DISABILITY SUMMIT

A Day of Connection, Learning, and Support

From Birth Through Aging: Championing Persons with Disabilities

Connect with individuals, families, educators, caregivers, and service providers for a full day of encouragement, practical learning, shared resources, and community support.

He Wasn't Supposed to Live
17 Years of Love, Loss, Laughter, Fighting, and Figuring It Out.

Kelly Frey
Kelly Frey shares her personal story of loving and caring for Bennett, her son with special needs, and offers encouragement to families, caregivers, educators, and providers.



Francine Hogan,
Director, PA Family Network

Vision for Equality
Exploring the transitions individuals with disabilities and their families experience throughout life, along with information and resources to help navigate each stage.

Breakout Tracks	Early Childhood & School Age	Secondary Transition	Adults
Breakout Sessions Three sets of breakout sessions will address:	• Special Education Law • Behavior Supports • Executive Functioning	• Inclusive Higher Education • True Friendship Project • Supported Decision-Making	• Understanding Benefits for Adults with Disabilities • Planning for the Future • Pathways to Employment

Conference Details

October 8, 2026
North Way Christian Community
Wexford, PA

Financial Aid Available. Email snc@specialneedsconsortium.org

Full-day event
Tickets: \$59

Included With Your Ticket

- Two keynote presentations
- Three sets of breakout sessions
- Large vendor and resource fair
- Opportunities to connect with experts and peers
- Continental breakfast
- Catered deli lunch

REGISTRATION

Scan or click the QR code to learn more and purchase your ticket.
www.specialneedsconsortium.org



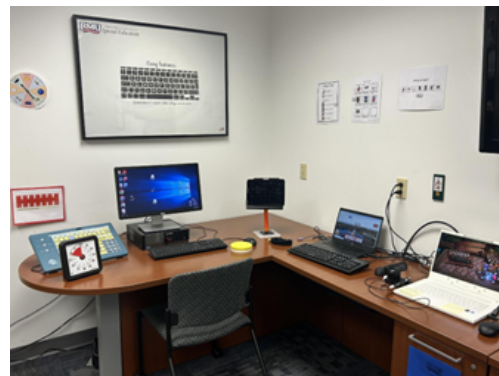
Sponsored by:



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 Events Happening at RMU

- **October 24, 2026 from 1:00pm - 4:00pm**
Halloween Party with Band Together Pittsburgh
Robert Morris University, The Basement
<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/game-day-karaoke-halloween-bash-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

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.

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

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>

October 4th 11:30am – 6:00pm

ASCEND + ParaCliffHangers Adaptive Climbing Day

Join ASCEND and ParaCliffHangers, a national adaptive climbing organization, for a day of clinics and climbing events designed for Adaptive Ambassadors* and Adaptive Climbers! No experience necessary! 11:30a-1p: Disability Etiquette & Soft Adaptive Climbing Skills - Open To Adaptive Ambassadors* 2-4p: Sighted Guide/Calling Clinic - Open To Adaptive Ambassadors* + Blind Climbers 4-6p: Community Adaptive Climbing Event - Open To All Adaptive Ambassadors* + Adaptive Climbers FREE ADMISSION *Adaptive Ambassadors are ASCEND staff and community members who assist adaptive climbers. If you're not yet a formal Adaptive Ambassador, you are welcome to attend to get your foot in the door and learn some new skills!

<https://www.ascendclimbing.com/blog/ascend-paracliffhangers-adaptive-climbing-day>

October 4th 12:00pm-4:00pm

Autumn Spectrum Festival

1st Annual Autumn Spectrum Festival is designed to bring individuals, families, and friends together in a relaxed, supportive environment. Available activities that day will include: DJ & Dancing, Sensory Considerate Spaces, Games & Crafts, Community Connection Stations, Food & Treats and Warm Fall Vibes

More information, and to register:

<https://www.autismsocietygreaterpittsburgh.org/copy-of-lights-camera-connection>

October 18th, November 15th, and December 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/>

Band Together upcoming events:

- **October 4th 1:00pm-5:00pm**

Fall Funday Sunday at New Kensington Outdoor Music Stage

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/fall-funday-sunday/>

- **October 6th 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Drum Circle and Karaoke at Pitt Greensburg

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/drum-circle-karaoke-pitt-greensburg/>

- **October 11th 2:00pm-5:00pm**

Live Autism Friendly Open Mic at Band Together Clubhouse (in Moon Dogs)

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/live-autism-friendly-open-mic-band-together-clubhouse-43/>

- **October 12th 6:00pm – 8:00pm**

Open Mic Night at Baldwin-Whitehall High School

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/open-mic-night-baldwin-whitehall-high-school/>

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 on Tuesday, October 26, 2026 at 9AM. To register, email strocheck@afit.org.
 - The Allegheny County Local Task Force runs monthly meetings on Wednesdays. Their next meeting is October 7th 6:30–8:30pm via Microsoft Teams. 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 for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which was our topic presented by Catherine Hughes from Achieving True Self at our September 14th parent and family support meeting.**



- **Achieving True Self** - Achieving True Self provides services and support for individuals and families affected by autism, behavioral health needs, and intellectual disabilities. Their website provides information about ABA and IBHS services, occupational therapy, speech and language services, transition and adult services, school consultation, and family support. ATS serves families in Pennsylvania, Maryland, parts of Virginia, and West Virginia.
<https://www.achievingtrueself.com/what-we-do>
- **Office of Dispute Resolution** -The Office for Dispute Resolution provides a Family Resource Guide explaining everything from the eligibility determination to creating the IEP to due process.
<https://odr-pa.org/parent-resources/parent-resource-library/individualized-education-program-iep/>

- **The Short and Sweet IEP Overview** - The Center for Parent Information and Resources provides a concise roadmap of the IEP as well as additional resources for students and parents. <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-overview/>
- **Understanding IEPs in Pennsylvania** - For families of children requiring special education, navigating the special education process can feel overwhelming. One of the most important tools available to ensure your child receives the support they need is the Individualized Education Program (IEP). This legally binding document outlines the specialized services, supports, and goals designed to help your child succeed in school. This blog helps parents understand the document and the meeting with tips. <https://newstoryschools.com/blog/understanding-ieps-pennsylvania>

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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/>)

