



TREES NETWORK

September 2026 Newsletter

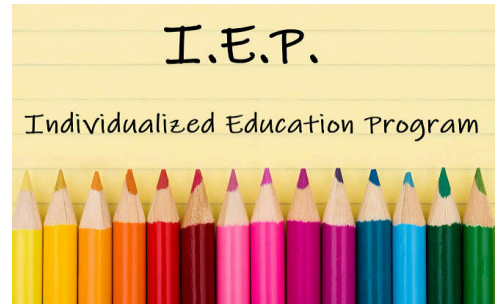
Parent/Family Meeting

Monday, September 14, 2026 7PM - 8PM

Navigating the IEP:

A Family Support Session

Join us virtually on **Monday, September 14, 2026 from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** for our first monthly family support meeting of the new school year. Catherine Hughes, Director of Family Support and Community Engagement from Achieving True Self will be joining us and discussing how parents and guardians can establish a collaborative relationship with their child's school. To support this goal, she will discuss what an Individualized Education Program (IEP) means in everyday practice, including progress monitoring, accommodations and modifications, and what parents can expect on a daily basis. She will also discuss communication between home and school, parent rights and procedural safeguards, community and school resources, and provide time for questions. Anyone interested in learning more can register for the meeting by contacting Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu or registering at [Google Registration \(https://forms.gle/Apwwfi41WiTh5Zr86\)](https://forms.gle/Apwwfi41WiTh5Zr86) Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.



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.

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



Explore 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



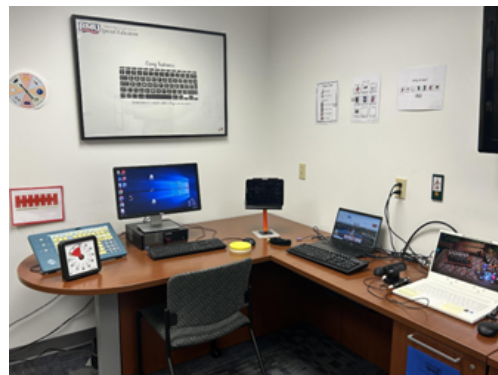
Sponsored by:





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 25, 2026 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm**
Halloween Party with Band Together Pittsburgh
Robert Morris University, The Basement
- **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.

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

Every Body Moves is a sensory-friendly adaptive dance class. Children of all abilities can explore movement, build confidence, and have fun in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Link for more information or to register: <https://oxfordathleticclub.com/youth-programming/>

September 4th 3:00pm - 7:00pm - Next Play Job Readiness Program

Four Fridays this summer/fall The Michael Mackie Project will roll out our newest program, Next Play. Next Play is a workforce readiness and job placement program designed for transition-aged teens and young adults with disabilities in the North Hills of Pittsburgh. We are proud to partner with Shenot's Farm for our Summer 2026 pilot program. We are currently accepting applications for the Town Square Market in Cranberry Township for the listed dates. Interested candidates, apply below!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezJs5pxmMHCUwxVf5axCGeKfxp8htNDDqzSr-Ov9o9EqN8pw/viewform>

September 13th - October 18th 11:00am - 12:00pm - Adaptive Flag Football MVP Michael's Victory Players

Brought to you by the Michael Mackie Project, the Baierl Family YMCA and Fitness 4 Focus, this 6-week inclusive and adaptive flag football program is designed for athletes with special needs ages 10–16 who enjoy sports and are motivated to participate in group activities. Participating athletes should be able to follow basic verbal instructions, work independently within a structured setting, and engage in football-based drills and games. The program focuses on independence, teamwork, and skill building while having fun! This program will be held at the Baierl Family YMCA, 2565 Nicholson Road, Sewickley PA in Franklin Park. For more information contact Matthew Seip at mseip@ymcapgh.org

September 19th 11:00am - 1:00pm Autism Caring Center Apple Extravaganza

Get ready for a fun-filled apple adventure! Young explorers will discover how apples grow from seed to tree, learn about the apple life cycle, and participate in exciting hands-on STEM activities. We'll also put our taste buds to the test by sampling different apple varieties and comparing their flavors, colors, and crunch! Join us as we explore, create, discover, and have fun with all things apples! 7051 Steubenville Pike Oakdale Pa 15071 Register here:

www.autismcaringcenter.com

August 22, August 29, September 12, September 26, and October 3 10:00am - 11:00am - Bridges Adaptive Field Hockey

Registration is now open for the 2026 Fall Season. Bridges Adaptive Field Hockey is an inclusive program serving athletes with disabilities of all genders, ages 5–99, and all disability types in the greater Pittsburgh area. The 5-week season provides a welcoming environment where athletes can learn and enjoy field hockey with adaptive equipment, individualized instruction, and 1:1 support from local high school field hockey players and adult volunteers. No prior field hockey experience is required. Location: Brookline Recreation Center (1400 Brookline Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15226) Cost: \$75 for the 5-week season (*scholarships are available on an as-needed financial aid basis*)

For athletes with disabilities interested in participating:

https://glrfieldhockey.playbookapi.com/programs/more_info/class_package/71410

Band Together upcoming events:

- **September 10, 2026 6:00pm - 7:00pm**
Music Therapy at Moon Dogs
Register: [Music Therapy @ Moondog's - Band Together Pittsburgh](#)
- **September 13, 2026 2:00pm - 5:00pm**
Autism Friendly Open Mic at Moon Dogs
[Live Autism Friendly Open Mic @ Band Together Clubhouse - Band Together Pittsburgh](#)

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. As soon as we know the first date for the new school year, it will be posted on our Facebook page and included in the next monthly newsletter. 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) (<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 helping your child/student with homework.**



- **IXL**- IXL is an online, standards-aligned learning program that provides personalized practice in math, language arts, science, and other subjects. Students work through short skill-based questions, receive immediate feedback, and can practice skills repeatedly until they demonstrate understanding. [IXL Math | Learn math online](#) and [IXL Language Arts | Learn language arts online](#)
- **Khan Academy** - Khan Academy is a free online learning platform that provides lessons, videos, practice activities, and quizzes across subjects such as math, science, reading, grammar, and history. It allows students to learn at their own pace, practice skills, and receive immediate feedback. [Khan Academy | Free Online Courses, Lessons & Practice](#)
- **Quizlet** - Quizlet is an online study tool that helps students learn and review information using digital flashcards, practice questions, matching activities, and quizzes. Teachers and students can create sets based on specific vocabulary,

concepts, or course material. [Quizlet: Study Tools & Learning Resources for Students and Teachers | Quizlet](#)

- **Google Gemini** - Google Gemini is an AI-powered tool that can support students with homework by explaining concepts, answering questions, brainstorming ideas, and providing step-by-step guidance. It can be useful for breaking down difficult assignments and helping students understand material rather than simply providing answers. [Gemini for Students — your AI study buddy from Google](#)

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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/>)

