



RMU Trees Network August 2024 Newsletter

Advocating and Empowering Parents September 9 Parent and Family Meeting

Monday, September 9 7PM-8PM

Join us for an Advocacy Empowerment parent and family meeting hosted virtually by the RMU Trees Network. Melissa Skiffen, Arc of Greater Pittsburgh Disability and Family Support Advocate, will be presenting about her experience as a parent having the support of an advocate, who the Arc of Greater Pittsburgh/Achieva is and what they offer, and discussing tips to empower families to be advocates. Melissa will also be leaving ample time to answer questions from the group, so have those coveted questions ready! The family/parent meeting is scheduled for **Monday, September 9, 2024 from 7:00 - 8:00 pm**. Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invite. Parents can register for the meeting by contacting Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu, or by registering at [Advocacy Google Registration](#)



Upcoming Special Education Conference



On Monday, October 14, 2024, the RMU Trees Network will be holding its annual Special Education Conference. This year the theme is Nurturing Potential in Every Learner. 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. FREE registration here: <https://forms.gle/QccBaxSBr5FeYXq76>

Disability Pride Month

Disability Pride is celebrated in July to recognize the achievements, struggles, and identities of people with disabilities. We wanted to share some resources and events in our area to continue to foster a sense of pride and community.

August 24th Disability Pride Pittsburgh 11AM - 4PM

Schenley Plaza, 4100 Forbes Ave. Pittsburgh

Disability Pride Pennsylvania hosts the 3rd annual Disability Pride Pittsburgh celebration, a day filled with live entertainment, great resources, free swag, fun accessible games by the Ryan Shazier Fund, a sensory-friendly room at Carnegie Library, guest speakers, and community. The event will have ASL interpretation for stage performances, ADA accessible toilets, shaded areas, and water stations to stay hydrated. Masks are encouraged. <https://www.disabilitypridepa.org/dp-pgh>

Carnegie Library - Book Recommendations

Our area has great libraries and the librarians work hard to research good books. They pulled together a list of recommendations on memoirs, first-person stories and essays about the modern disability experience, and fiction with disability representation. Check it out online (<https://www.carnegielibrary.org/disabilitypridemonth/>) or visit your local library.

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 Special Needs Consortium exists to provide a place where all services and opportunities can be networked, shared, promoted, and advocated for to increase awareness of resources available to the special needs community. The following is a list of events found through our contacts and/or were shared by members of the consortium. We hope you will find something of interest to you.

August 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22 - Open Up Summer Camp 9AM-12PM

In this FREE inclusive camp, students will participate in an engaging yoga class, play imaginative games intended to promote community building, and make crafts they can use to help support a mindfulness practice at home. Space is limited with no more than 12 students and is located in the yoga studio in Lawrenceville. Open Up staff is trained at making this program accessible for students and we welcome anyone who is interested. [Inclusive Summer Camp — Open Up \(open-up.org\)](https://open-up.org)

August 15th and October 25th - Carnegie Science Center Sensory Friendly “Behind the Scenes” tour.

The Carnegie Science Center will be hosting a sensory friendly “behind-the-scenes” tours of the Miniature Railroad and Village. This relaxed-format program has a limited number of spots available at each tour date, to create a calm and welcoming environment for attendees. *The tours take place outside of regular museum hours; they*

are all-ages appropriate and family-friendly, and are open to anyone who would enjoy touring one of our most popular exhibits in a more private, small-group environment where visitors can feel comfortable being themselves. Tours will be led by our expert Miniature Railroad staff, who are happy to share little-known facts and point out their favorite parts of the Miniature Railroad & Village exhibit.

As always, Carnegie Science Center has Sensory Backpacks available upon request, as well as accessibility tools such as noise-canceling headphones and weighted vests. During any museum visit, Accessibility items are available to borrow free of charge from the Admissions/Info desk, and in most Theater spaces.

Tickets for the Sensory Friendly Miniature Railroad and Village tours are a flat \$10/person, regardless of age and/or museum Membership status. For all members of your party, *tickets must be purchased and your spot reserved ahead of time.*

Reservations can be made via the Call Center at (412) 237-3400, or by visiting <https://carnegiesciencecenter.org/events/mrrv-sensory-friendly-tours/>.

September 9th - October 28th The PEAL Center Family Leadership Institute 4:30PM - 7:30PM

The PEAL Center Family Leadership Institute invites the public to participate in the Family Leadership Institute (FLI), offered at no cost to families, at the UPMC Neighborhood Center in Pittsburgh. Sessions for the Family Leadership Institute will take place on Mondays beginning September 9th (excluding October 14) and ending on October 28th from 4:30-7:30 PM. Dinner is included. By attending you will increase knowledge and understanding of educational systems and services, learn new communication, leadership, and advocacy skills for working with your child's school team, and become part of a network of families and professionals that share a common focus. To apply: [2024 Family Leadership Institute \(FLI\) Registration for Families in Southwestern PA \(tfaforms.com\)](https://tfaforms.com)

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 RMU Trees is also posted on the RMU website and the previous newsletters can be read and viewed at <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/provost/trees>. In each

newsletter we provide links to resources of 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 in preparation for school.

ABA Educational Resources - Social Stories can be used to exchange information that is personalized and illustrated. Social Stories are usually short, simple and have defined criteria. This site offers free Social Stories from various resources on the internet. <https://www.abaresources.com/social-stories/>



Achieva/The ARC of Greater Pittsburgh - Achieva envisions a community where all people with disabilities lead lives of personal significance. Achieva advocates with, empowers, and supports people with disabilities and their families throughout their lives. They offer a number of services, advocacy, outreach and resources. [Achieva | Home](#)

Back to School - Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) organization also has a great list of [back to school resources](#).
<https://chadd.org/adhd-back-to-school-resources/>

Do2Learn - Provides free pages with social skills and behavioral regulation activities, learning songs and games, communication cards, and transition guides for life skills.
<https://do2learn.com/>

Family's Quick Start Guide to Special Education - This resource includes several different publications that provide essential, comprehensible information to families who are new to special education.
<https://www.pattan.net/Publications/Familys-Quick-Start-Guide-to-Special-Education>

School Transportation - As children and their parents prepare to return to school, many families have questions about transportation to and from school. The Education Law Center has a great [Fact Sheet on School Transportation](#). <https://www.elc-pa.org/>

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
412-397-5465

Deanna Hiltz, RMU Trees Network Outreach Specialist, Part-Time Faculty
hiltzd@rmu.edu
412-397-6058
[RMU Trees Website](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/RMUtrees/>

