



RMU Trees Network September 2024 Newsletter

Advocating and Empowering Parents September 9 Parent and Family Meeting

Monday, September 9 7 PM - 8 PM

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 invitation. 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](#)



Office for Dispute Resolution October Parent and Family Meeting Monday, October 7, 2024 7 PM - 8 PM

We are pleased to announce that Ms. Ashley Smith, Program Manager for the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) will be presenting virtually at our Monday, October 7 parent and family meeting. She will provide an overview of the services from ODR, including information on the Special Education ConsultLine, Individualized Education Program/Individualized Family Service Plan facilitation, mediation, and due process hearings. She will also be available to answer questions immediately following her presentation. To register for this family/parent meeting scheduled for **Monday, October 7, 2024 from 7:00 - 8:00 pm**, please contact contact Vicki Donne at donne@rmu.edu or Deanna Hiltz at hiltzd@rmu.edu, or by registering at [ODR Google Registration](#). Upon registration, registrants will be sent a Google Meets calendar invitation.

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:

[Registration](#)

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.

October 27th 1PM-4PM - RMU Trees Network and Band Together Pittsburgh Game Day and Halloween Bash

Play games. Enjoy snacks. Make a craft. Socialize. Costumes welcome, but are not required. Located in "The Basement" of Nicholson Center, 610 Massey Way. Register here by scanning the QR code. <https://givebutter.com/kpbjyC>



September 8th 2pm-5pm - Live Autism Friendly Open Mic @ Band Together Clubhouse

Band Together Clubhouse (in Moondog's) 378 Freeport Rd, Blawnox, PA

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/live-autism-friendly-open-mic-band-together-clubhouse-20/>

September 11th and 12th - The History of Human Services: Tracing the Development of Contemporary Services Patterns & Some Universal Lessons that can be Learned from this History (Free, 2-day, in-person workshop)

This FREE, 2-day, in-person immersive workshop features around six hundred images, documents the evolution of human service concepts and practices from ancient informal, voluntary, unpaid personal helping forms to the modern, largely commercialized patterns seen today. Through detailed illustrations of service settings, practices, and artworks, the presentation offers a deep dive into the historical context of human services, uncovering the underlying assumptions and transformations over time. Accessibility: ASL interpretation will be provided for this workshop upon request. If you require other accommodations, please email info@wpdhac.org

<https://www.wpdhac.org/the-history-of-human-services-workshop/>

September 12TH 11am – 12:30pm - Free Interactive Art Workshop

Creative Citizen Studios will present a free, interactive arts workshop designed for adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities at LAMP/Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians. Workshop participants are invited to explore their artistic talents through art history and various art techniques with an art instructor from Creative Citizen Studios. Experience not necessary. Caregivers are welcome. Registration required. Visit <https://mylamp.org/creative-citizen-studios-presents-art-workshops/>.

September 17th 10:00am - 12:00pm - Achieva Family Trust Webinar - Mental Health Advanced Directives and 988 Crisis Hotline

Presenters: Jenny Vaporetti, Adult Mental Health Advocate, National Alliance Mental Illness (NAMI) and Nikki Weigand, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, National Alliance Mental Illness (NAMI)

For more information www.achievafamilytrust.org

September 29th 2pm-5pm - Live Autism Friendly Open Mic

The Lindsay Theater and Cultural Center 418 Walnut St., Sewickley, PA

<https://bandtogetherpgh.org/event/autism-friendly-open-mic-the-lindsay-theater/>
Alliance Mental Illness (NAMI) For more information www.achievafamilytrust.org

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/>.

October 27th 1:00 - 4:00 pm Band Together Halloween Party & Game Night at The Basement of Robert Morris University

Join us for a night of games, music, and fun. See The Band Together website for details <https://bandtogetherpgh.org/events/>

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 our September 9 meeting on advocacy.



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](#)

Education Law Center - The mission of ELC is to ensure access to a quality public education for all children in Pennsylvania. They advocate on behalf of students with disabilities. Their support might include direct legal representation; impact litigation; educating parents, students, and advocates about students' legal rights; training and support for community groups and child-serving professionals; publications that build understanding of education issues; and policy advocacy. <https://www.elc-pa.org/>

Special Education in PA Consult Line - This organization provides help for parents regarding special education laws and PA regulations. <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Special%20Education/Complaints/Pages/ConsultLine.aspx>

The PEAL Center - The PEAL Center works with families, youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs to help them understand their rights and advocate for themselves. PEAL's services are provided at no charge to families as they are funded by private donations and federal, state, and private grants. This resource includes several different publications that provide essential, comprehensible information to families who are new to special education. <https://www.pealcenter.org/>

Self Advocates United as 1 - Self Advocates United as 1 is a group of people who envision a world where people with developmental disabilities and their families are united to share knowledge, empower others, and use their voices to transform their communities and people's lives. They hold letter-writing, e-mail, and phone workshops to help others learn how to advocate for change. SAU1 teaches people at many levels about full inclusion and rights for all people. <https://sau1.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/>

