



# CRS Parent Connection

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services



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## CRS staff member becomes ADRS autism liaison

With one in 110 children being diagnosed with autism, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) wants to stay current on the issue.

To stay abreast of autism-related issues, Commissioner Cary Boswell has given a single staff member the responsibility of monitoring and coordinating the entire department's involvement in autism activities.

David Savage, state office administrator for Children's Rehabilitation Service, has been named as the department's autism liaison.

Commissioner Boswell said Savage was the logical choice.

"David already serves on a number of autism boards, panels, and advisory groups, and I believe that experience will be invaluable in this assignment," Boswell said.

In the position, Savage has to be familiar with autism activities in each of the department's four major programs.

These days, Savage's office is filled with stacks of reading materials about autism that he is looking through to enhance the department's services for individuals with the developmental disorder.

"There is a lot to learn," he said. "I'll be helping the department develop a transition plan as related to autism."

Savage also represents ADRS on several autism organizations and committees. He participates on the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council, serving on



*David Savage, ADRS new autism liaison, and Susan Colburn, state parent consultant, speak with CRS parent Lynn Barlow at Autism Awareness Day*

the Strategic Planning Subcommittee, which is creating a plan for developing an interagency system of care for people with autism. He is also a part of the Alabama Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Persons (AL-NATTAP), which includes groups such as special education teachers, the University of Alabama at

Birmingham, the Autism Society of Alabama, and local school systems.

He said his main goal is to improve the department's autism services.

"We want to ensure our consumers who have autism get exactly what they need," he said.



*David Savage poses for a picture with other autism advocates at the Autism Awareness Day at the Alabama State House*

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*Parent Connection* is a complimentary newsletter published by Children's Rehabilitation Service for families of children with special health care needs. The goal of this newsletter is to increase communication and share information about children with special health care needs and their families. The newsletter reflects a family-centered theme throughout and serves as a forum for family members to share information, thoughts, feelings, concerns, etc. Nothing printed or implied in this publication constitutes an endorsement by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

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# From the Director's Chair



Hello, Parents and Caregivers,

As you prepare for the summer months, Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) is preparing to welcome several new workers to our staff. As you may know, CRS – along with the entire department – has been operating under a hiring freeze over the past two years. Recently, our commissioner, Dr. Cary Boswell, sought and was granted permission to fill some critical vacancies within our agency, including in CRS.

As CRS consumers, you receive care coordination services from our nurses and social workers and receive specialized services from other discipline staff such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and nutritionists. You also communicate with our support staff members, including rehab assistants and administrative support assistants (ASAs), who are so valuable to us. All of these wonderful staff members work together as a team to provide services for you each day. I commend them for their commitment and dedication to you, our children and families. We are certain that you appreciate them as much as we do at state office for their patience and endurance in the face of budget cuts and vacancies that have required them to assume larger workloads.

By the time you receive this edition of the newsletter you will be seeing and/or talking to additional employees in the following offices:

- Montgomery** – administrative support assistant
- Andalusia** – administrative support assistant and social worker
- Selma** – two social workers
- Birmingham TCH** – two social workers
- Huntsville** – nurse
- Dothan** – speech-language pathologist
- Mobile** – audiologist

In addition, the CRS state office in Montgomery has a new speech-language pathology program specialist and will have a new patient accounts manager. We are very proud to welcome our new staff in order to provide better services to you! Thank you for participating in our program.

**Melinda M. Davis**  
*Assistant Commissioner, CRS*

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# CRS lands best doctors for new clinics

Aggressive recruiting paid off for Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS).

CRS staff in the Montgomery office and the Tuscaloosa office needed a doctor to work their new Pediatric Orthopedic Specialty Clinic.

Both offices were able to find doctors who are considered the "best of the best."

In the Tuscaloosa office, Dr. John Killian of St. Vincent's Hospital and The Children's Hospital in Birmingham, agreed to staff the clinic. In Montgomery, Dr. J. Scott Doyle and Dr. Joseph G. Khoury, who are a part of University of Alabama Health Services Foundation, agreed to take turns serving in that clinic.

"People were surprised that we were able to get them," said Lolita McLean, supervisor in the Montgomery CRS office. "Many doctors in the area refer their clients to them."

Having the two doctors staff the clinic keeps consumers from having to travel to Birmingham to see those doctors to meet their orthopedic needs, McLean said.

The goal of the Pediatric Orthopedic Specialty Clinic is to prevent the loss of function or to increase functional ability of children with complex orthopedic problems, she said.

In Montgomery, the clinic was once known



*Dr. Scott Doyle checks the brace of Dallas Henderson during a visit to the new Pediatric Orthopedic Specialty Clinic in Montgomery while the youngster's mother, Sharon, watches*

as Scoliosis Clinic. When the doctor serving the clinic retired, CRS staff decided to expand the clinic to include more clients with orthopedic conditions. The clinic is held once a month.

In Tuscaloosa, the clinic is held every other month. It began because a number of consumers with complicated orthopedic problems were also being sent to Birmingham,

said Fran Wheeling, clinic nurse coordinator.

Mandy Maguire, the physical therapist for the clinic, knew Dr. John Killian and was able to persuade him to work it.

"We're all very excited about it," Maguire said. "We are really appreciative of him for coming to serve the children in this area and the families appreciate him for coming too."

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## NET program switches to electronic benefit transfer cards

Alabama Medicaid recipients recently traded paper vouchers for plastic cards as the agency switched to new technology to provide recipients with a safe and convenient way to receive and use their non-emergency transportation benefits.

The electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, issued in March 2010 to recipients who had requested a ride payment since September 2009, are similar to those used by the Department of Human Resources for recipients of state Family Assistance and to replace food stamps for federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. New cards will be issued to Medicaid recipients requesting ride payments who do not yet have one.

When a ride payment is approved, Medicaid will electronically put the payment on the recipient's plastic EBT card instead of issuing a paper voucher. Once Medicaid has credited the recipient's account, the funds are available within a day and remain available for 90 days.

Once the EBT card is activated, the recipient can use the money on the card to make purchases or get cash back at businesses such as discount stores, grocery stores or other locations displaying the Quest system sign. They may also get cash without making a purchase. All banks will take the EBT card, although the cards do not work in ATMs. In addition, recipients will be able to use the Speech Interactive Voice Response System (SIVR) at 1-877-391-4757 and the Internet

([www.ebtedge.com](http://www.ebtedge.com)) to check the balance of funds available and activate PINs.

In some cases, recipients may authorize their benefits to be paid directly to registered transporters. Transportation benefits authorized by eligible recipients to be redirected to transporters will be processed through the eFunds Corporation, Automated Clearing House (ACH) and directly deposited into transporters' business bank accounts.

Direct deposit will be the only option available to transporters effective April 15, 2010. To receive direct deposit payments, all transporters must register for direct deposit by completing an authorization form and returning it to Medicaid.

# UAB to conduct respite survey of caregivers

Respite is temporary relief for caregivers of individuals of all ages with disabilities or chronic illnesses who live at home.

The Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) recently received a federal award to work with Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network to increase access to respite services for family caregivers of individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

The Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition was established to address issues related to respite throughout our state. Now the coalition is in the process of gathering information about available resources and unmet needs. ADSS contracted with UAB to conduct a statewide survey of caregivers.

This is **not** an experimental or clinical study. We need your help!

Your participation is important to help plan for respite services for family caregivers. A decision whether to participate in the survey will not affect eligibility to receive agency assistance. Your responses are private. Group data will be reported in a summary document.

The following is information on how you can participate in this survey:

I. Caregivers may go directly to [www.surveymonkey.com/s/S7Q9FTG](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S7Q9FTG) to access the survey.

II. Service providers may copy the link [www.surveymonkey.com/s/S7Q9FTG](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S7Q9FTG) into emails and send to their caregiver lists.

III. Agencies may copy the entire code to link the survey to their websites, and then let caregivers know how to access the survey from their own website.

THANK YOU for helping the Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition with this statewide needs assessment of family caregivers. Please contact Dr. Brian F. Geiger [bgeiger@uab.edu](mailto:bgeiger@uab.edu) or Dr. Marcia O'Neal [moneal@uab.edu](mailto:moneal@uab.edu) if you have questions about the survey. Printed survey forms can be sent to those who requested these via U.S. mail.



## Stuffed Animal Giveaway

*Ragan Robertson holds the new stuffed animal she recently received from the Gadsden CRS office. The office has been giving out Build-A-Bear stuffed animals at orthopedic and neurology clinics. Anna Grace Reddish, a local second-grader, donated more than 20 stuffed animals in perfect condition to be given away to children receiving services from CRS.*

## Ad campaign focuses on disabilities

“Think Beyond the Label” has officially launched! This national marketing campaign targets the C-Suite leaders in business (CEO, CFO, COO, etc.)

Past campaigns promoting disabilities and employment have often been pro bono public service announcements, but this campaign is different. “Think Beyond the Label” is supported by 42 federally funded state partners whose sole purpose is to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

This five-month campaign can be found in all media: television, radio, print and digital. All advertising directs interested parties to one digital website. This is what business says it wants: one place to go for information and support! It's also very convenient for businesses that may operate in multiple states. From this digital hub, the business can also seek out the state of choice to find the single point of contact for that state.

The campaign challenges everyone to consider the labels placed on co-workers

or colleagues in the workplace. We quickly recognize that the individual we label still has the skills and qualifications to be an excellent employee and contribute to the overall success of the company.

For more information, visit [www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com). There you can register and begin spreading the word by posting success stories or sending e-postcards to your coworkers and friends.

Thirty-second and 15-second commercials have been produced and are now appearing on channels such as CNN, HLN, MSNBC, ESPN, and the CBS, NBC and ABC networks. The commercial can be viewed on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/thinkbeyondthelabel](http://www.youtube.com/thinkbeyondthelabel)

Print ads include *Fortune Magazine*, *Business Week*, *Time*, *HR Magazine* and *Fast Company*. Digital ads are appearing on search engines Google, Yahoo and Bing as well as the websites of CNN, CNN/Money, BBC America, ESPN and more.

# Trainees at UAB Pediatric Pulmonary Center conduct system of care project with families

The UAB Pediatric Pulmonary Center (PPC) is a Maternal and Child Health Bureau-funded training project. There are currently seven such centers. The mission of the PPC is to develop leaders who will improve the health of children with respiratory conditions through the provision of family-centered care. This is accomplished by providing continuing education, technical assistance, and, most importantly, interdisciplinary leadership training. Every year, a group of graduate students from the fields of nursing, nutrition, respiratory care, social work, and pediatric pulmonary medicine come together for didactic classes as well as clinical and leadership experiences.

Early in their training, each trainee completes a case study and system-of-care project. Each trainee chooses a child with special health care needs who is served by the Pulmonary

Division for an in-depth case study. The child/family must be from a culture different from the trainee's own. The supervisor approaches the family regarding the project, and once consent is obtained, the trainee examines the child's medical record in depth, and then has a chance to learn from the real experts – the family. During a home visit, the trainee interviews the family regarding all aspects of the child's condition and the family's daily life. Topics covered include medications, therapies, services utilized (like therapy and school), health beliefs, satisfaction with services, challenges faced, and emergency preparedness. Trainees also accompany the child and family to an appointment at a clinic visit or community provider and perform a similar interview with the service provider.

All this information is then put together, and each trainee gives a one-hour presentation to

their fellow trainees and faculty, where they are evaluated on both their presentation skills as well as the content of the presentation. The trainees and faculty evaluate each presentation, and the family also completes an evaluation of the student's performance. At the end of the year when the trainees reflect on their experiences, this assignment is always mentioned as a "peak" or "capstone" of training. The words "life-changing," and "humbling" are usually heard.

This project is just one of the many examples of how families are involved as full partners with the PPC. For more details about the PPC, call us at 205-939-9583 or visit our web site at [www.health.uab/ppc](http://www.health.uab/ppc).

**Claire Lenker, LCSW**

*Social Work Faculty, UAB Pulmonary Center Children's Hospital*

Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD)  
100 North Union Street, Suite 498  
Montgomery, AL 36130-1410

## ACDD 2010 PUBLIC FORUMS

### WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

The ACDD is seeking community input for its new Five-Year State Plan (2012-2017) at our upcoming public forums.

For questions or special accommodations, please respond by calling

**1-800-232-2158**

30 days prior to the public forum in your area.

### SAVE THE DATE:

- May 5, 2010—Selma, Alabama  
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.—St. James Hotel
- June 30, 2010—Prattville, Alabama  
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.—Montgomery Marriott  
Prattville Hotel and Conference Center at Capitol Hill
- July 28, 2010—Huntsville, Alabama  
Session 1—12:00-2:00 p.m.—Embassy Suites  
Session 2—5:00-6:30 p.m.—Embassy Suites
- July 29, 2010—Birmingham  
12:00-2:00 p.m.—ALABAMA DEPT. OF REHABILITATION SERVICES  
236 Goodwin Crest Dr., Homewood, (5th Floor)
- August 25, 2010—Mobile, Alabama  
Session 1—12:00-2:00 p.m.—Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel  
Session 2— 5:00-6:30 p.m.—Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel
- September 10, 2010—Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.—Bryant Conference Center



### Easter Bunny Visit

*The Easter Bunny hugs a CRS child during a recent visit to the Seizure Clinic at the CRS office in Opelika. More than 30 CRS consumers enjoyed the visit from their furry friend, who arrived with gifts from the Emblem Club of Lee County, the Elks Lodge, and CRS staff.*

# UAB clinic hosts family mentoring program

UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinics is home to Alabama's MCH Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Program. Our program provides graduate-level interdisciplinary leadership training aimed at improving the health and lives of infants, children, and adolescents with or at risk for neurodevelopmental and related disabilities. One of the four federally mandated key elements of the LEND program is family-centered care. To fully be able to appreciate the concept of family-centered care, LEND trainees are required to participate in our family mentoring program, "A Day in the Life."

A Day in the Life provides our trainees an opportunity to learn first-hand how a family with a child with special needs functions both at home and in the community. The trainees spend a total of eight hours, in one or two visits, with their designated family, both at home and in a community setting. During the visits, the LEND trainees are there as observers, not to evaluate or assess. The families, as the experts, become the teachers, participating in the training and education of our trainees.

The goals of this activity are to help our trainees learn from a family about the impact of having a child with a disability, their experiences working with professionals from various disciplines, and the responsiveness of service systems to the family's needs and desires, as well as deepening their appreciation



*Valisia Davis, a nurse with the UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinic, works with a client in the clinic*

of the families. We want our trainees to realize children live in the context of a family, family situations and dynamics constantly change, children with disabilities and their families live most of their lives in their home and community, and that family-professional collaboration is essential for family-centered care.

Upon completion of this experience, the LEND trainees prepare a short presentation to be shared with their fellow trainees.

The presentation includes a brief personal reflection on their time with the family, and the impact the family mentoring program made on them. The families are also asked to fill out an evaluation survey to help us in educating our LEND trainees about family-centered care.

Those interested in becoming a family mentor for our LEND trainees should contact Cindy Sweeney, family faculty advisor, UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinics, 205-934-1059, or [csweeney@uab.edu](mailto:csweeney@uab.edu).

## Susie shines at Special Olympics

Susie McEntyre, along with more than 350 other athletes, recently participated in the Etowah County Special Olympics Spring Games at Gadsden City High School's football and soccer fields.

Susie placed first in the 100-meter walk, second in the 100-meter dash, and third in the softball throw. Her mother, Frenchie McEntyre, said Susie kept her ribbons on all day and proudly showed them everywhere they went.

Several CRS staff members from the Gadsden office, where Susie receives services, volunteered their time and also participated in

the Special Olympics.

"Our staff had such a wonderful time watching all of the athletes compete in the events," said Emma Hereford, social worker in the Gadsden CRS office. "Everybody is a winner at Special Olympics."

Special Olympic metals were also given to local families in remembrance of their children who died in the past year.

Three of those recognized, Donald Brasher, Trey Burns, and Xzanthia "Birdie" Jackson, were served by the Gadsden CRS office for many years.



*Susie McEntyre, a CRS consumer, poses with her ribbons after winning several events at the Special Olympics in Gadsden*



# Family Voices Statement on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Family Voices is an organization of families whose children have special health care needs. Its mission is to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities.

Family Voices is very pleased that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has become the law of the land. We also support the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act now pending in the Senate.

The new law makes a number of improvements in our nation's health care system for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and disabilities. These include several benefits that would take effect within the next six months, including:

- Elimination of lifetime benefit caps and a prohibition against rescinding coverage when someone gets sick.

*Example 1: A premature baby is in hospital for many months and has been diagnosed with multiple health issues. Due to the length of stay in the hospital, the family is near reaching its lifetime maximum for the child. With the elimination of lifetime caps, the family will not have to worry whether their child will be able to continue to receive medical treatment.*

*Example 2: A family has had coverage for several years. Their teenage child is injured and needs expensive rehabilitation. The insurance company suddenly rescinds the policy, claiming that the family had failed to disclose that the child had the pre-existing condition of acne, and therefore the policy is invalid. The new law prohibits such*

*cancellation of policies, absent intentional fraud on the part of the insured.*

- A prohibition against denying children coverage for treatment of pre-existing conditions. (By 2014, no one can be denied access to insurance or coverage for treatment related to a pre-existing condition; HHS intends to clarify by regulation that, six months from the bill's passage, children will have access to insurance regardless of pre-existing conditions.)

*Example 1: Sally, age 7, has cerebral palsy and is in need of a baclofen pump to assist with spasticity. Prior to the law's passage, the insurance company could have denied this due to her pre-existing condition of cerebral palsy. With passage of the law, this should no longer happen.*

*Example 2: A 6-month-old is discovered to have a congenital heart defect. The insurance company refuses to cover necessary surgery because the defect is considered a pre-existing condition. This would be prohibited under the new law.*

*Example 3: Laurie has Down syndrome. Once the regulations are issued to clarify that children cannot be denied insurance policies due to pre-existing conditions, Laurie's family will be able to add her to their plan.*

- The establishment of a national high-risk pool for those who have been uninsured due to pre-existing conditions (until 2014 when insurance can be purchased on "Exchanges").

*Example: Christina, a self-employed young adult, age 28, has been unable to get*

*insurance due to her Type 1 diabetes. If she has been uninsured for at least six months, she can get coverage through a high-risk pool that will be established within the 90 days from the signing of the bill.*

- A requirement that young adults be permitted to stay on their parents' insurance policies until age 26, unless they have an offer of employer coverage.

*Example: Sam is a 19-year-old with spina bifida. He has a job working at a computer center which he loves, but the job offers no insurance benefits. Under the new law, Sam can stay on his parents' insurance until he is 26 years old.*

- No-cost preventive care for children in new insurance plans (excluding ERISA plans), based on the "Bright Futures" recommendations of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

*Example: Children will be able to receive comprehensive preventive care, including developmental screenings, at no-cost.*

- Extension of funding for Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (see below).

Other important provisions, to take effect in 2014, include:

- Expansion of the Medicaid program to all individuals with incomes up to 133 percent of federal poverty level. (Currently, states cannot receive federal Medicaid funds for covering childless adults.)

- Elimination of all pre-existing condition

*(continued on Page 9)*

For information about Family Voices, please contact the Alabama state coordinators, Susan Colburn, 334-293-7041, [susan.colburn@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:susan.colburn@rehab.alabama.gov), or Jerry Oveson, 251-438-1609, [oveson@bellsouth.net](mailto:oveson@bellsouth.net).



Members of the University of Alabama wheelchair basketball team visit with a consumer at the Orthopedic Clinic in Tuscaloosa

## Wheelchair team visits CRS clinic

A handful of members from the University of Alabama wheelchair basketball team recently visited the Orthopedic Clinic in the Tuscaloosa Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) office.

Mandy Maguire, a physical therapist with the clinic, arranged the visit, thinking the players would serve as good mentors to consumers who attended the clinic.

Coach Miles Thompson agreed, saying the visit would teach his team about community service and being mentors.

When the team members arrived at the clinic, they bought posters and signed pictures. They also talked to the consumers.

Maguire hopes CRS has an ongoing partnership with the wheelchair basketball team.

## Caregivers receive support for respite care

Anniston, Ala. - The Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama has awarded a grant to the Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network (Alabama Respite). The Alabama Respite Caregiver Support Project is made possible by a grant from the foundation's Stringfellow Health Fund. A joint effort with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), the project will provide training, support and respite funding to persons caring for individuals with disabilities or chronic illness living in Calhoun County.

"Caregivers need a break in order to recharge and refresh themselves. Respite is that short break that can make a world of difference and decrease the chance of caregiver

stress or burnout," said Linda Lamberth, Program Manager.

"The Community Foundation's grant-making program provides funds to support area programs throughout Calhoun County," said Eula Tatman, vice president. "Partnering with the Respite Resource Network meets the foundation's mission, which is to encourage and expand permanent charitable resources dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Northeast Alabama."

A 2009 study by AARP shows 31 percent of U.S. households are now involved in care giving. An estimated 570,000 caregivers in Alabama are providing more than 600 million

unpaid hours of care for loved ones living at home. The 2000 U.S. Census reported more than 25,000 individuals in Calhoun County with a recognized disability and 15,433 older than 65 – those who now or may soon need or be a caregiver.

Alabama Respite is a statewide project of United Cerebral Palsy of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley Inc., with the Central and South Alabama office located in Calhoun County.

To receive an application for a respite voucher or for information on the caregiver support group or respite night out, contact Ms. Lamberth at 256 237 3683.

Please add me to your newsletter mailing list.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail to  
**Susan Colburn**  
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## Let's YAC About It

# Kids As Self Advocates creates new tip-sheets

National Kids As Self Advocates is pleased to announce four new tip-sheets and one new article written for youth with disabilities by youth with disabilities.

Check out all of National KASA's resources at [fvkasa.org/resources/index.php](http://fvkasa.org/resources/index.php)

### Tip-sheets:

#### How to Work with Personal Care Assistants

When a young person with a disability turns 18, legally, he or she becomes an adult. He or she wants to be independent, but may need help with dressing, feeding, going to the bathroom, exercising, and so on. That is where personal care assistants (PCAs) or personal assistants come in. PCAs are hired and supervised by the person with the disability. This article offers tips about supervising and managing relationships with PCAs.

#### Dancing Through Life

Are you interested in getting involved



in dance or other physically integrated recreational activities? Check out one KASA member's experience with dance and what it has meant to her.

#### How to Ride the Bus

Using the bus can be one of the keys to your independence. In this tip sheet you will learn what you need to know to find a bus route to where you want to go, figure out the accommodations you may need, and basically everything you need to know to make sure the wheels of the bus go "round and round" with you on board.

#### Funding Higher Education

Whether you are in grammar school and the

word "college" isn't even in your vocabulary or in high school preparing for college, it is never too late (or too early) to start looking for funds. "Where do I start?" you may wonder. There are many resources available. Check out this tip sheet for ideas and resources.

### Article:

#### My Story About Surviving A Hospital Stay, By Sunjay Smith, March 2010

This article is about Sunjay's experience in the hospital, what he wished doctors understood, and about transitioning back to the community.

Share feedback with the youth who wrote these tip sheets on KASA's Facebook group page at: [www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=52342247092](http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=52342247092)

#### Naomi Ortiz

Project Director, National Kids As Self Advocates (KASA)

### (Family Voices, continued from Page 7)

exclusions (i.e., guaranteed issue of insurance), and a prohibition on premium will eliminate discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions.

- Elimination of annual benefit caps.

*Example: Jack has required extensive hospitalization for multiple heart surgeries in his first year of life, exceeding the annual limit his family's insurance company will pay on his behalf. Under the new law, there will be no arbitrary annual limits, so Jack's family will not have to pay the balance of his expenses out-of-pocket that year.*

- A loan repayment program aimed at reducing shortages of pediatric subspecialists, including non-physician providers of mental and behavioral health care, and substance abuse prevention and treatment services.

- Incentives for more community-based long-term care in Medicaid, and establishment of a public long-term care insurance program (the CLASS Act).

- Support for establishment of medical home models.

- Significant increases in funding for prevention and wellness efforts, and the development of the public health infrastructure.

- Authorization of a new program to support school-based health centers and provision of \$200 million for immediate construction of such centers.

- Provisions to improve the oral health of children. (Inclusion of oral health care among the benefits required of insurance plans offered through state "Exchanges," with no charge for preventive pediatric oral health services.)

### Family-to-Family Health Information Centers

Family Voices is also very pleased with the provision to extend funding for Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2F HICs). These statewide, family-run centers were slated to lose all funding in May.

With enactment of this law, F2F HICs will be able to continue their invaluable help to families whose children have special health care needs and disabilities. The 51 centers throughout the country provide information and assistance in securing health care and health care financing for the complex health needs of CYSHCN. The new law provides the current level of funding for F2F HICs (\$5 million nationally, divided among the 51 centers) through FY 2012.

# Funderful Times – *Planting gardens*

Oh, the joy of springtime and all the fragrances that are in the air. It inspires me to get my hands in the dirt outside and plant something.

This year, I started with various flowers from my mother's home that she divided with me. Since she now lives with me, I wanted her to have these special treasures to enjoy day to day and a garden to nurture and care for. Then we tilled the ground in two locations of our yard to plant a vegetable garden and cleaned a raised bed to prepare it for herbs.

Now, I live on three acres of land and have plenty of space for a ground garden. You may or may not have that much space, but the information in this article can help you have wonderful fresh vegetables to enjoy while helping your child work a garden to develop a variety of skills.

First, I want to share the secret of having a bundle of tomatoes. Take a five-gallon bucket with a handle and use a drill or sharp knife to cut about a 2-inch hole in the bottom. Take a tomato plant and turn it upside down, placing it through the hole. Pour potting soil (which costs about \$3) inside the bucket, covering the tomato plant roots completely. Hang the plant on your porch or patio and water generously. Continue to water daily, and watch it grow. My favorite tomato plant is a Roma, which grows in an egg shape and is low acid. Make a couple of these to have wonderful fruit during the summer.

Once, we took our sons' sandbox, which they never played in, emptied it and poured several bags of potting soil inside and planted grass seed. A beautiful mound of green grass popped up inside that sand turtle, giving it the look of a shell. The boys loved the experience



*Rita's son Ethan works in the garden with his grandmother, Thelma Hutcheson, also known as 'Mamaw Hutty'*

and the element in the backyard.

A window garden is another fun activity for children and adults. To create one, add some potting soil to a paper bathroom cup. Use a wooden spoon handle to poke a hole in the middle of the soil. Place your seeds, such as radishes or spearmint, in the middle. Water and cover with plastic wrap until the seeds turn to plants. Uncover, water, and let the plant grow. When it gets large enough, move it to a plastic container, like a flower pot or coffee container. You can also cut off the bottom of a milk jug, using the top as a funnel for watering the plants.

The tools for growing any garden are simple. You simply need a container, package of seeds, and potting soil. To get you started, I would like

to give you a garden kit that contains a small bag of potting soil, a packet of seeds, a container, and a journaling notepad.

I have a limited supply of these kits and will mail one per household to a client of Children's Rehabilitation Service. How can you get one? Help or have your child write a note or letter, or send the request on a postcard to **P.O. Box 222, Somerville, AL 35670**.

If your child cannot write, but can draw a picture, then that would be great, too! Take a digital photo of it or scan it and email it to me at [ritahutchesoncobbs@gmail.com](mailto:ritahutchesoncobbs@gmail.com). Or, if you prefer, send it by U.S. mail to the address above.

**Rita Hutcheson-Cobbs**  
*Parent, Somerville*

## The Green Way...

With the garden season in full bloom, here are a few tips to save cash and make your garden more eco-friendly:

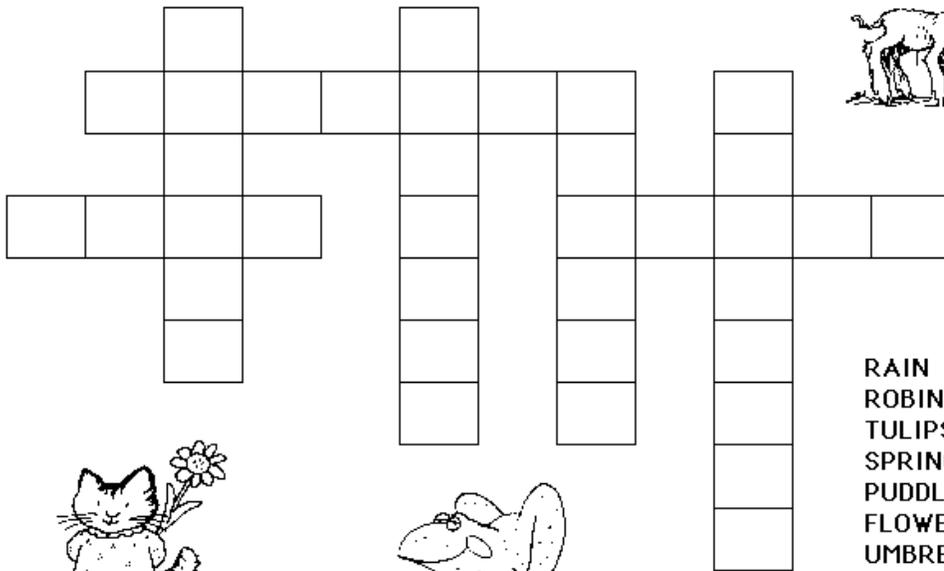
- Have the pH of your soil professionally tested. Add lime if it is below 6.0 and gardener's sulfur if it is above 7.0.
- Set your mower height at 3-4 inches. Cutting it short does not mean you mow less. It actually hurts the quality of your lawn.
- Water only when your grass begins to curl. This is to the point where it can absorb the most moisture before it begins to dry.
- For more tips, visit [richsoil.com](http://richsoil.com).



## Holy Cow!

*The Chick-fil-A cow waves at Stephanie and Samantha Dison during a stop at a recent clinic at the CRS office in Montgomery. The twins and other CRS consumers received plenty of goodies from the Chick-fil-A staff member who escorted the fast food franchise's mascot.*

## Spring Crossword





## CRS Parent Connection

Children's Rehabilitation Service  
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services  
602 S. Lawrence St.  
Montgomery, AL 36104

**PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Montgomery, AL  
Permit No. 109**



## What's Ahead

**June 23-25, 2010**

*Alabama Association for Persons in Supported Employment (AL-APSE) Conference*, sponsored by AL-APSE and the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities (ACDD), Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa. For more information, call AL-APSE at (334) 353-7713.

**June 30, 2010**

*Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) 2010 Public Forum*, Prattville, Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel and Conference Center at Capitol Hill, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. ACDD is seeking community input for its new Five-Year State Plan (2012-2017) at public forums. For questions or accommodations, call 1-800-232-2158 30 days before the public forum in your area.

**July 26, 2010**

*Americans with Disability Act (ADA) 20th Anniversary and Disability Summit*, Birmingham. For more information, contact Graham Sisson, director of the Governor's Office on Disability, at 334-293-7189.

**July 28, 2010**

*Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) 2010 Public Forum*, Huntsville, Embassy Suites. Session 1: 12 to 2 p.m. Session 2: 5 to 6:30 p.m.

**July 29, 2010**

*Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) 2010 Public Forum*, Birmingham. Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, 236 Goodwin Crest Drive, Homewood, fifth floor, 12 to 2 p.m.

**August 25, 2010**

*Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) 2010 Public Forum*, Mobile, Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel. Session 1: 12 to 2 p.m. Session 2: 5 to 6:30 p.m.

**Local PAC meetings:** Check your local CRS office for dates and times of meetings in your area.