



## Film cleverly portrays child's brain

by Betsy Prince, director of Early Intervention

My husband and I love to get away on a date to see a movie about once a month! We like to arrive a little early, get a Diet Coke and some buttered popcorn and settle back to watch the "previews" for the coming attractions.

A few months back, we saw the previews for the new Disney Pixar movie *Inside Out*. Though it's an animated film for kids, parents will definitely get something out of it as well, as it offers a great depiction of what our emotions are really doing inside of our bodies. The five main characters – Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear and Anger – are all cleverly portrayed as trying to drive the brain's dashboard of an 11-year-old girl named Riley. Each of the five emotions travel on a long journey as Riley experiences the challenges and changes in her life.

As amazing as this may sound in the fictional world of the movie screen, using today's technology, we are actually able to view the inner workings of a child's brain and understand what best affects its remarkable growth and development. The emotions that live inside each child are being created and characterized by their everyday experiences and relationships.



Though based in fiction, the five main characters in Disney Pixar's *Inside Out* – Disgust, Joy, Anger, Sadness, and Fear – represent sound child psychology.

We know that positive social emotional development can determine how children interact, get along, and play with other children; how they relate to adults and authority; how they express their feelings; how they follow rules; and how they interact in group settings.

Knowing and believing in these marvels leaves the early childhood community with a responsibility to share, teach, and model this powerful information and life-changing

practice! I want Joy and Strength to be in the driver's seat – leading the brain of every child with the resilience to overcome any obstacle along life's difficult journey.

I am thankful that Alabama's Early Intervention System is in the business of changing lives from the "Inside Out" and I look forward to viewing the movie sequel that will illustrate the results of our important, dedicated work in the years to come!

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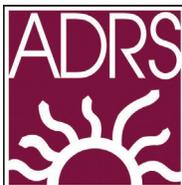
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# From the Director's Chair



Hello, Parents,

It's hard to believe that ADRS has begun the second quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016!

CRS is pleased to report that the majority of our clinic programs are running well and that we are working continually to improve our care coordination services.

Some of you may recall that in the Fall 2014 Parent Connection newsletter, I talked about a big change for Medicaid recipients: the shift to the regional care organization (RCO) concept. Medicaid is on schedule to implement this new system on Oct. 1, 2016.

Below, you'll find a list of questions and answers that were previously included in that newsletter. Many of the answers have been updated to include additional, more current information.

Some of you will be reading about RCOs for the first time, and others will be reviewing information that you've seen or heard about before. Whatever the case may be, if you have more questions, please ask your local parent consultant, CRS care coordinator, or other CRS worker, and we will be more than happy to try to find an answer for you.

It's now more important than ever that you become familiar with this new system of care.

— Melinda Davis, CRS director

### ***Q. What is a regional care organization (RCO)?***

A. The cost of health care in Alabama has increased significantly due to complex health problems and chronic conditions. To help Medicaid solve the problem of increased costs, in 2013 and 2014 the Alabama Legislature passed a law to divide the state into geographic regions. The legislation requires that the regions be community-led, regional organizations. These RCOs will coordinate the health care of Medicaid patients in each region and will bear the risk of contracting with the state of Alabama to provide that care. The Alabama Medicaid Agency met the first milestone by establishing districts effective Oct. 1, 2013, and then established probationary RCOs called "Health Homes" in spring 2015.

### ***Q. Will my child have to receive Medicaid services through an RCO?***

A. Yes. Your child will likely receive services directly through an RCO rather than through Medicaid. The target date for this change is Oct. 1, 2016, as mentioned above. Some of you may have a child who has already been enrolled in a Health Home. At this time, a limited number of children are enrolled in the Health Homes because only certain diagnoses are being covered.

### ***Q. How will I know about this change?***

A. Medicaid will notify you of changes at least 90 days in advance, so expect notification some time during the summer months. Medicaid also plans to educate you about the changes.

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*Please see Director, Page 4*

# On your mark, ready, set – Let’s go camping!

by Vivian Spears, parent consultant

After much planning and anticipation, families of children and youth with special health care needs recently traveled to Lake Martin in Alexander City for a three-day weekend getaway. Jackson’s CRS Parent Advisory Committee, along with spouses, children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN), siblings and other family members travelled to take part in The Full Life Ahead Foundation (FLAF) Family Weekend Camp on Transition.

The purpose of the FLAF camp is to obtain information on topics pertaining to transition, giving individuals and families the connections and knowledge for a successful transition to adulthood. Families were given the opportunity to network with other families and have one-on-one consultations with providers regarding personal transition needs. Families also participated in training



*Children and youth with special health care needs enjoy the FLAF camp at Lake Martin*

sessions that empowered them by building parent leadership skills and giving youth 13 and older with disabilities the opportunity to gain self-advocacy and independent living skills to build self-determination.

FLAF’s Family Weekend is about helping

people with disabilities live the most independent and productive life possible, and finding HOPE (Helping Other People Envision) of a full life ahead!

A total of 37 family members – including 19 youth – from Choctaw, Clarke, Monroe, and Washington counties travelled to the event located at the Children’s Harbor campus.

To learn more about Full Life Ahead Family Weekend Camp, visit their website at [www.fulllifeahead.org/camp](http://www.fulllifeahead.org/camp) or contact Tammy Moore at 205-261-1235.



*Campers spend time outdoors at Lake Martin*

## New parent consultant joins Tuscaloosa CRS staff

by Vera Spinks, parent consultant

Hello! I’m Vera Spinks.

As the newly appointed parent consultant in the Tuscaloosa Children’s Rehabilitation Service office, I wanted to personally take a moment to introduce myself and let you know that I am here to work closely with the care coordinators and local team to provide our families with support and information.

My job is to serve families of children with special health care needs by sharing my personal experiences as the mother of a child with multiple health care needs.

I support you with information, resources, and encouragement. I am honored to share my life with you individually, in clinics, and through presentations and training and to offer guidance through my experiences. My office is always open, and I am available any time you need support from a parent who understands.

I am a wife and a mom to twin girls and a baby boy. Our twin girls were born premature



*Vera Spinks runs with her daughter, Kylie*

at 26 weeks and our daughter Kylie has been receiving services from CRS for 13 years.

What an asset CRS has been to us as a family! Kylie has multiple health care needs,

including cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, a feeding tube, and a seizure disorder. She drives a power wheelchair and has had more than 30 major surgeries. Over the years, I have gone through many emotions as Kylie’s mom, but have learned to find joy even on the really tough days.

Over the last 14 years, I’ve grown to be an advocate for Kylie and to be her voice to provide her the best life possible. Kylie and I love to race together in 5Ks, 10Ks, and half marathons.

I also have served as the central Alabama ambassador of Ainsley’s Angels of America.

Ainsley’s Angels advocates for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life. One way we do that is by advocating for inclusion of individuals in road races and endurance events by providing race chairs and the Angel Team to complete something an individual might have once thought impossible.

*Please see Spinks, Page 5*

# APSE honors Taziki's for hiring people with special needs

Keith Richards, founder and chief development officer of Taziki's Mediterranean Café, was recently presented with the large employer award at the National Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) National Awards Luncheon in Philadelphia.

APSE's large employer award is presented to employers of 250 or more employees who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to hiring and fully integrating individuals with disabilities into their workforce.

APSE National Membership and Chapter Relations Manager Peter Burnes said that Taziki's was more than deserving of the organization's large employer award.

"Mr. Richards has not only made a tremendous commitment, but also served as an advocate for the Employment First philosophy, encouraging other employers across the country to do as he has done, and give individuals with disabilities opportunities to pursue real jobs at competitive wages," Burnes said.

The National Association of People Supporting Employment First believes that employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age



*Keith Richards, founder and chief developmental officer for Taziki's Mediterranean Café, is recognized nationally for hiring persons with disabilities*

citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

"We hire special needs students in many of our restaurants and work with organizations such as The Arc of Shelby County and Down Syndrome of Alabama, as well as support

Special Olympics chapters around the country," said Richards. "Parents of the special needs students that are employed by Taziki's can find personal time while their children work in the restaurant. It is joy to have them as our employees."

Richards and Taziki's were also recognized for their creation of the Herbs Offering Personal Enrichment (HOPE) program which grows fresh herbs – including basil, parsley, rosemary, cilantro and oregano – used in Taziki's locations across the country.

"HOPE is a program for special needs children in Alabama," said Richards. "We buy from the HOPE garden as our vendor and the children are paid to come out and tend to the land."

Due in part to the innovative HOPE program, the United States Healthful Food Council (USHFC) announced earlier this year that Taziki's Mediterranean Café has become the first national franchise to achieve REAL Certification, the emerging national standard for food service nutrition and sustainability.

With 46 locations across 13 states, Taziki's is the largest chain restaurant to receive this certification.

## DIRECTOR

*Continued from Page 2*

**Q. Which region will my child receive services in?**

A. Your child will be assigned to a region by Medicaid according to where you live in the state (your geographic location).

You can see the RCO regions by going to the Medicaid website as instructed below.

**Q. What will happen if I move to a different region after being assigned?**

A. If you move to a different region, you must notify your assigned RCO. Your RCO will tell you the steps to take to continue to receive services.

**Q. Will any of my services – such as those currently provided by CRS – change?**

A. Medicaid wants recipients to continue to receive the same or similar services. CRS meets with Medicaid regularly to talk about the services we provide to assure that the quality of services received by children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) remains the same throughout the state. In addition, other agencies serving CYSHCN will be meeting with Medicaid (along with CRS) to talk about the RCOs and to assure that there are no gaps in services that are already being provided.

**Q. How can I learn more about RCOs?**

A. Go to the Medicaid website at [www.medicaid.alabama.gov](http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov), click on "Newsroom," then scroll down and click on "Regional Care Organizations."

You will be able to read about many of the steps that have already been taken and can even sign up to join the Medicaid email list for updates and/or email questions to Medicaid.

Also, please plan to attend any meetings announced in your community to learn more about RCOs.

# Even more cool stuff!

## Handy gadgets and the latest tech to help parents of children with special needs

by Melissa Watson, parent consultant

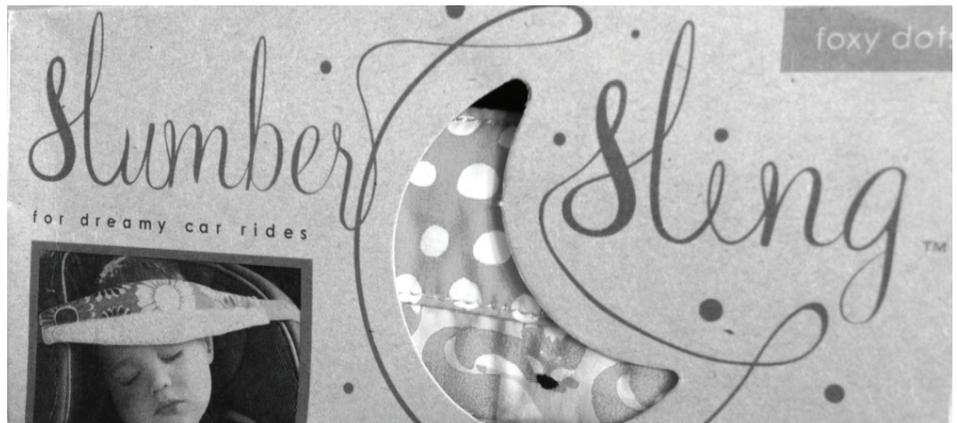
Is your child safe if he or she falls asleep in the car? Are traditional neck pillows helping or hurting your child?

The SlumberSling (\$25) is a strap for sleepy toddlers riding along for nap time car rides and lengthy road trips. Designed to provide comfort and support without restricting movement, the SlumberSling can be used with any convertible or toddler car seat, and it eases the tired arms of parents trying to cradle heavy heads.

The SlumberSling strap is designed and made by hand in the USA with organic cotton and attaches to child safety seats with elastic and velcro bands. The strap works by keeping your child's head upright while sleeping in the car, alleviating neck strain. The product has passed safety requirements in a professional crash test.

If something like this had been available when my daughters were little, I definitely would have owned a few for the many long car rides we made. I remember constantly turning around to raise my daughters' heads up and stuff a pillow or blanket beside them in hopes of keeping their heads elevated.

One of the benefits of the SlumberSling is that traditional car pillows for children are



*The SlumberSling is a modern alternative to a child's travel pillow for families on the go*

bulky and put extra weight on the head and neck while potentially causing strain or injury, while this does not.

This is a product that I envisioned years ago, because it seems like such a simple solution to a common problem. I'm so glad to see that it exists now. It truly is an awesome find and is worthy of our "cool stuff" label!

To learn more or to purchase, visit [www.ashandalysbabes.com/collections/slumbersling](http://www.ashandalysbabes.com/collections/slumbersling) or Amazon.



*The SlumberSling works by strapping to a child's safety seat to keep a child's head upright while in the car*

## SPINKS

*Continued from Page 3*

You can learn more about Ainsley's Angels at [www.AinsleysAngels.org](http://www.AinsleysAngels.org).

My motto is "Smile At Every Mile."

No one receives an instruction manual for being a parent to a child with special health care needs. Through my adventures in raising Kylie, I've learned that every one of us has a different path in life to follow, but I am thankful we have each other to learn and share our journeys with.

As the new Tuscaloosa CRS parent consultant, I am making it my mission to

empower other families and share with them the many resources that have empowered me. The important thing to remember is that you are not alone, as there are many other families in your area to live life with and with whom to share the joys and struggles of raising children with disabilities. We can comfort and support one another, and together, we will accomplish so much more!

Feel free to swing by the office for a chat, or you can reach me at 205-759-1279 or [vera.spinks@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:vera.spinks@rehab.alabama.gov).

I look forward to getting to know you!



*Spinks's office at Tuscaloosa CRS is decorated with various medals she has received for running for Ainsley's Angels*

# Christmas celebrations help make Huntsville CRS merry

by Melissa Watson, parent consultant  
and Suki Nielson, TBI specialist

The Huntsville CRS office staff had a wonderful time at the annual Christmas celebration for families held last December.

Santa took time out during his busiest time of the year for photos with the kids and parents. The Huntsville Police Department donated teddy bears for Santa to give out to the children.

Chick-fil-A provided catering for the party and Domino's Pizza generously donated a dozen large pizzas for the kids to eat. Kroger proudly provided drinks to wash down all of the food and Publix gave CRS a \$50 gift card for party supplies, including plates, cups, and napkins.

CRS staff pooled their resources to purchase craft supplies so that the children would have several fun activities. With the supplies, the children made several ornaments to place on the Christmas tree.



*Suki Nielson and members of the Huntsville TBI Support Group pose for a photo with Santa at the group's Christmas party*

The event proved to be a lot of fun and left many with memories to hold on to.

In addition to all of the fun at the clinic, several CRS families were provided with

tickets to Santa's Village, which were donated to Huntsville CRS by the Earlyworks Children's Museum.

Santa's Village provides children with a unique opportunity to see real reindeer, take photos with Santa, make cookies with Mrs. Claus, and write letters for elves to deliver directly to Santa.

Huntsville's Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Support Group had its own Christmas gathering, and it, too, was a great success.

The group, started by CRS TBI Specialist Suki Nielson, brings children and young adults with a TBI together several times a year for support and friendship.

This year's TBI Support Group Christmas party was attended by 40 children with TBIs and their families. The group made snowflakes to hang around the tree in the clinic's lobby.

The children also had photos made with Santa, with some printing them to use for Christmas ornaments.



*The annual Huntsville CRS Christmas party was a huge success with plenty of food and fun for the family*

**For more information about Children's Rehabilitation Service and to stay in touch with Parent Connection, please visit us on the web at [rehab.alabama.gov/CRS](http://rehab.alabama.gov/CRS) and [www.facebook.com/CRS.ParentConnection](http://www.facebook.com/CRS.ParentConnection)**

# Learn about assistive technology at your own pace

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Families have the opportunity to experience how assistive technology can benefit their child with disabilities in their own home and on their own schedule through the Center on Technology and Disability (CTD), a collaboration of FHI 360, the American Institutes for Research, and PACER Center. The center, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), helps make learning about assistive technology online more readily available for educators and parents of children with disabilities.

The CTD website ([ctdinstitute.org](http://ctdinstitute.org)) has a variety of helpful resources including the CTD Café. It features free webinars every month on different assistive technology topics of interest to parents and professionals. You can sign up for an upcoming webinar, or view archived webinars, at [ctdinstitute.org/cafe](http://ctdinstitute.org/cafe). The CTD Library ([ctdinstitute.org/library](http://ctdinstitute.org/library)) is an easy-to-browse collection of assistive technology information grouped into important topics such as Family and Student Support, Early Childhood, and Transition.

PACER Center also offers many of its assistive technology workshops via Livestream. Participants can either attend the workshop in

*The Center on Technology and Disability website offer free and helpful information on assistive technology devices for children and adults with special health care needs*

person at PACER or attend via Livestream over the Internet using their computer or tablet. Both opportunities are free and allow for interaction with the presenters. For information on upcoming workshops, visit [pacer.org/](http://pacer.org/)

**workshops** and look for the blue “Live: Web Streaming Available” box next to the description title. Archived presentation can be viewed via PACER’s Livestream page at <http://tinyurl.com/STCLivestream>.

## What I wished I knew growing up

by Mallory Cyr, consumer and young adult leader

As a person who grew up with a life threatening illness and “special health care needs,” I tend to live in the moment, not spend time focusing on regret. However, when given the time to reflect it can always be interesting to think what I might have done differently if given the opportunity. Here are some lessons learned from my “If I knew then, what I now know” archives!

**Mental health is important.** My family has always been the epitome of a good support system. My mother has a background in child development and education, and I grew up being asked if I was ok, and being allowed



Mallory Cyr

to feel my feelings. Thinking about transition, nobody told me that when you go away to college, you feel things you never felt before. For me, those feelings were loneliness, anger, and a realization that things were harder than

they had ever been for me, and much harder than they were for my fellow students without medical complexities. It was one of many times at which I would come to terms with my medical challenges, and just how much I had taken my incredible support system for granted. I know now I would have benefitted from mental health services. I didn’t seek counseling because at a very small school it came with intense stigma and I was trying to convince myself it “wasn’t that bad.” As an adult, I have many ways to manage my stress, including getting help from a professional when appropriate, and I continue to advocate for mental health being incorporated as a part of wellness for all young adults.

*Please see Cyr, Page 9*

## The Well Visit Planner:

### *Making the most of your child's well child visits to the health care provider*

Busy families, busy health care providers! Time is of the essence for everybody, and so making the best use of the time we have is critical.

Well-child visits – those regularly scheduled trips to the doctor for your child's checkups and shots – provide an important time with your child's health care provider.

#### The Well-Child Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends 13 well-child visits during the first three years of your child's life. These are over and beyond any visits for illness or those with specialists. Well-child visits are all about prevention and promotion of healthy habits. Recommended vaccinations are given during these visits, as well as routine screenings for such things as vision or hearing problems, anemia, autism, and other issues. It is the perfect time to share what your child is doing and learning, and to share any questions or concerns you might have.

It's also a good time for your child's health care provider to learn about your family and your cultural and family traditions and anything that affects your child's health and development.

#### The Well Visit Planner

A new tool can help you make those visits as meaningful as possible: the Well Visit Planner. The Well Visit Planner is an online tool to help families prepare for their children's upcoming well-child visits to the health care provider.



- It's free to use
- It is available in English and Spanish
- It takes 10-15 minutes to fill out before each visit
- It can be printed and taken to a visit to help you and your child's doctor discuss your child.
- It helps families be better partners in their child's health care, and helps health care providers better serve the needs of the child and the family.

#### **If Your Child Has Special Health Care Needs, Does He or She Still Need These Additional Health Care Visits?**

Yes! Every child needs well child visits! Even the child with the most-severe special health care issues or disabilities still needs good information on healthy eating, oral health care, and safety precautions. The information can be tailored to fit the needs and abilities of the child, but it is still important.

#### **Using the Well Visit Planner for Children with Special Health Care Needs**

You can adapt how you use the Planner

depending on your child's special health care needs. For example, your child may have a developmental delay. If so, it may be more helpful to complete the questionnaire about your child's developmental age, not his or her actual age.

Use the Planner as a tool to help you think through the topics around promoting good health and preventing illness and accidents for your child.

To use the Well Visit Planner, go to: [www.WellVisitPlanner.org](http://www.WellVisitPlanner.org).

To learn more about the Well Visit Planner, check out two videos:

- The Well Visit Planner, Part 1 – Making the Most of your Child's Health Care Checkups: An Overview of the Well Visit Planner
- The Well Visit Planner, Part 2 – Using the Well Visit Planner: A Step-by-Step Guide: A Tour of the Planner – the steps involved and the kinds of questions it asks.

The Well Visit Planner (WVP) was developed and created by the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI) ([www.cahmi.org](http://www.cahmi.org)). National experts, families, and pediatric providers worked together in the design, development, and testing of the WVP. The information contained in the WVP is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics Bright Futures Guidelines for the Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents ([brightfutures.aap.org](http://brightfutures.aap.org))

**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 at 251-438-1609, [oveson@bellsouth.net](mailto:oveson@bellsouth.net).**

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# Book Review

## *Married with Special-Needs Children: A Couple's Guide to Keeping Connected*

written by Laura E. Marshak, PhD  
and Fran Prezant, MEd

by Ree Clark, parent consultant

Authors Dr. Laura E. Marshak and Fran Prezant recognize the increased risk for divorce among couples who have a child with special health care needs, and their book, *Married with Special-*

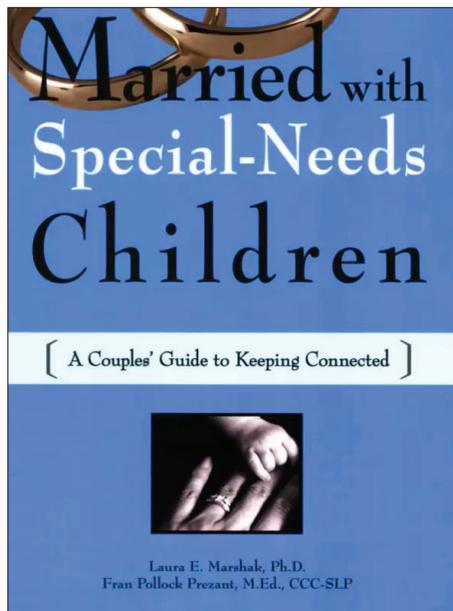
This book – and others like it – is available for loan in the parent resource centers at CRS offices around the state.

*Needs Children*, makes many valuable points to address maintaining healthy relationships.

Marshak and Prezant offer an

honest and detailed examination of the many stressors that come with having a child with special needs. Their book goes beyond merely identifying problems. It offers several different helpful suggestions and strategies for coping and to foster stronger relationships while facing disability-related issues.

One of the book's recommendations is for families to closely examine their beliefs and struggles related to having a child with a disability. Many couples readily admit that financial pressures, time management issues, and overwhelming medical appointments



negatively impact their marriage. Despite this, some couples are hesitant to admit to the full emotional toll, including tension and feelings of isolation and disconnection.

The book's first set of suggestions builds a foundation of self-care as individuals and as a couple. The authors suggest that couples involve the community and use other resources to assist with time management, setting expectations, stress management, and finances. Many couples do not realize that churches, and state and community agencies offer various respite programs, support groups, and financial assistance programs for families in need. The important thing is you don't

need to feel like you are wading through unknown territory alone. Some couples find strength in this and grow closer while facing adversity.

Marshak and Prezant emphasize that drifting apart is preventable and that with care, marriages can grow and thrive during the tough times of caring for a child with special health care needs. *Married with Special-Needs Children* discusses that couples have to work on maintaining a foundation based on a sense of connectedness that is rooted in communication, time alone (after securing qualified respite), and support from others who have children with disabilities. At first glance, these suggestions seem improbable, but when couples do not nurture these areas they report growing levels of dissatisfaction. The bigger question continually returns to the "how" of focusing on marriage when faced with the pressing needs of a child with a disability. The book emphasizes "genuine teamwork" is at the heart of thriving as a married couple of a child with special health care needs.

At first glance, this book can be a bit off-putting because it initially seems to have over-simplified the very complex demands families can face as they transition to a "new normal" of having a child with a disability. If you are willing to dig deeper and continue reading, it emphasizes the resources and supports that will help a couple meet the challenges and blessings related to raising and loving a child with special health care needs.

## CYR

*Continued from Page 7*

### Understand your insurance

As an adolescent, I didn't know much about how my health care was paid for. This was a decision my family and I made during my transition. "You have your whole life to worry about health insurance, live your life, be a kid!" My mom's words echo in my head and I appreciate that my adolescence was not spent on the phone advocating for authorizations and writing letters of medical necessity.

However, after taking classes in health policy, and working for a managed care organization, I now realize that while it may be daunting, knowledge is POWER. Understanding your coverage, and how it may change during transition can prevent serious

financial burden as an adult. It also guides the questions to ask as you are accessing health care, such as what providers are you able to see, or what services are covered?

There are a lot of resources to help you understand your health care coverage, including: The Catalyst Center: [hdwg.org/catalyst/](http://hdwg.org/catalyst/) HealthCare.gov's page, specific to young adults: [www.healthcare.gov/young-adults/](http://www.healthcare.gov/young-adults/)

### Take care of you, or you cannot care for others

To conclude, the biggest lesson I have learned, through all of my work in public health, MCH and transition is that, MY health matters. We live in a society where success is often defined by who can work

the longest hours, run the most marathons, and go the longest without sleep. As a young professional, it was difficult for me to realize that I cannot adopt that lifestyle. Especially in helping professions, we advocate for our loved ones, and stakeholders to "remember, health is a priority!" while often forgetting it for ourselves. The truth is, at the end of the day, if you're not healthy, you cannot do your best work to improve the system for others, or care for your loved ones. I encourage you to take those small steps – get more sleep, take a wellness day, or make that doctor's appointment you've been putting off. In the end, the only way we can improve the health of children and families is to truly begin with ourselves.

# Let's YAC about it!

## Teen transition clinic important part of ADRS 'Continuum of Services'

The transition to adult life is difficult, but it can be especially complicated for teenagers with disabilities. There are a number of challenges to consider: postsecondary education, work, family life, adult health care, functional independence and mobility, independent living, and recreation.

In terms of transition, one size does not fit all. Each individual faces unique obstacles that require a customized approach. And the CRS Teen Transition Clinic (TTC) offers such an approach.

Based on a program at the Minnesota Department of Public Health, TTC was created in 1999 to provide teens and their families guidance in transition and planning for the future.

The professionals staffing the clinic may vary, but can include a social worker; physical medicine or adolescent medicine specialist or pediatrician; nurse; physical therapist; occupational therapist; audiologist; nutritionist; speech language pathologist; and youth consultant advocate (based on diagnosis/need). Others participating may include a rehabilitation technology specialist, vocational assessment specialist, independent living specialist, and VR counselor.

Working together, this team examines a variety of transition-related issues to provide the consumer and his or her family with guidance and direction and ease the move into adulthood.

CRS Assistant Commissioner Melinda Davis sees the clinic as a vital element of the department's continuum of services.

"It's certainly an important part of what we do," she said. "We're not just thinking about the present for the children we serve. We're also thinking about their futures and helping them and their families think about their futures. If we serve a child from birth to 3 and then 3 to 21, and then do nothing to help him or her transition to adult life, we've done that



*Homewood CRS Supervisor Randy Hebson discusses the goals of the Teen Transition Clinic*

person a great disservice."

Currently, the clinic is offered at four sites around the state – Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Mobile, all functioning "at varying capacities" in their areas, said Paige Hebson, supervisor at ADRS-Lakeshore, which partners with CRS to direct and staff the clinics.

Davis, however, would like to expand the TTC's capacity as well as the number of offices offering the clinic.

To that end, she's hired a vocational evaluator – a first for CRS. That evaluator, Lauren Wright, is based in the CRS office in Homewood and her sole job is to serve TTC participants.

"In the past, we've shared a voc evaluator position with VRS, but the testing is so involved that it wasn't possible for that person to keep up with demand," Davis said. "When we looked at growing the clinic, we realized that we needed to add a full-time position if we wanted to increase capacity."

Another key component of the plans to grow the clinic is simply educating CRS and VRS staff about its benefits. To do that, Davis enlisted help from Hebson and her husband, Randy,

the CRS supervisor in Homewood, who served on the group that crafted the guidelines for the clinic in 1998. (A team that also included CRS Statewide Parent Consultant Susan Colburn and former ADRS staff members Emily Hussey and Linda Graham.)

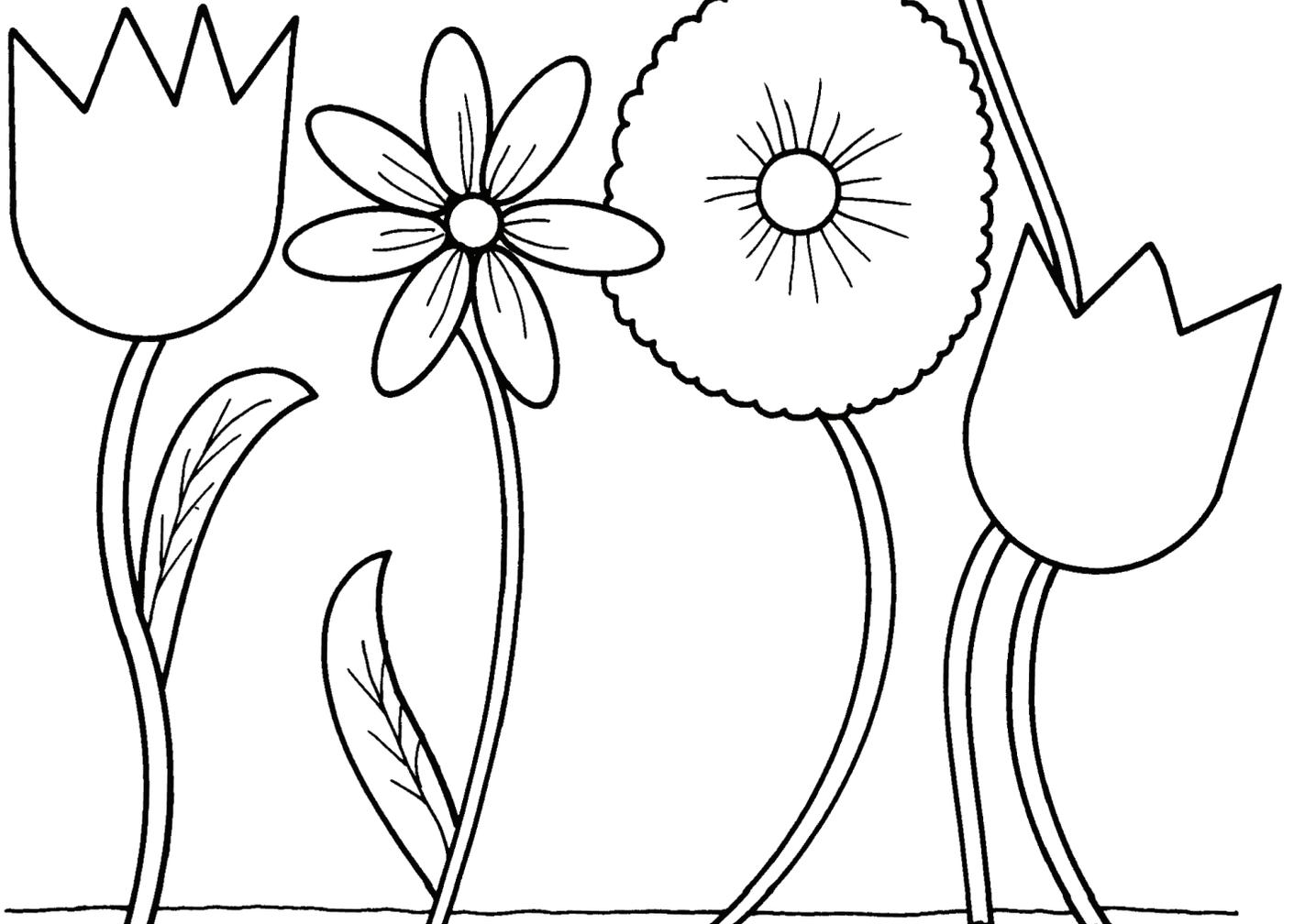
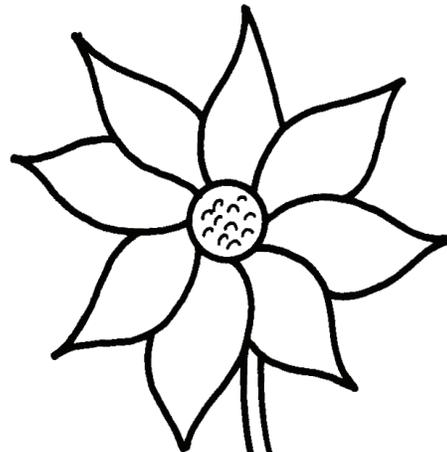
So far, the Hebsons, along with Wright and ADRS-Lakeshore staffers Michael Washington and Darcy Mitchell, have visited offices in Anniston, Dothan, Mobile, and Tuscaloosa to promote the clinic and outline its history and purpose to CRS and VRS staff in those areas.

"In addition to expanding the clinic's capacity, one of the goals for us is to further strengthen the department's continuum of services," said Davis. "We already have transition social workers and CR/VR liaisons, but by having Randy, Paige, and the Lakeshore staff go out and talk about Teen Transition Clinic, we're also hoping that VRS staff will see and understand the merits of everything that happens in this clinic. The information and recommendations that come out of this clinic are incredibly helpful to a rehab counselor who is building a VR case."

# MY FLOWER GARDEN

Follow these directions:

1. Color one flower blue.
2. Color one flower red.
3. Color one flower orange and another yellow.
4. Color the last flower any color you wish.
5. Draw a leaf on all of the flower stems that have none.
6. Color all of the leaves green.
7. Color the ground brown.
8. Draw a worm crawling on the ground.





**CRS PARENT CONNECTION**

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

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## Check Out What's Ahead ...

### Feb. 25, 2016

#### **2016 District 2 Early Intervention Conference – Color Your World**

**Description:** For the Birmingham area, this conference will connect families with information and resources to assist young children with disabilities. The conference will be at Trinity United Methodist in Homewood.

**Information:** Tania Baldwin, [tania.baldwin@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:tania.baldwin@rehab.alabama.gov) or 205-759-1279

### April 14-15, 2016

#### **Sixth Annual Partners in Care Summit**

**Description:** Family Voices of Alabama and the Family to Family Health Information Center project will host the Partners in Care Summit at the Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill, in Prattville

**Information:** Lisa McDaniel, [lisa@familyvoicesal.org](mailto:lisa@familyvoicesal.org)

### Oct. 24-26, 2016

#### **32nd Annual Early Intervention and Preschool Conference**

**Description:** The Early Intervention and Preschool Conference is a two-and-a-half-day event designed to share information and develop skills for professionals and families who work with children with disabilities (ages birth to 5). The conference will be at the Montgomery Renaissance Hotel and Spa. Registration is \$80 for families, \$165 for professionals.

**Information:** Jeri Jackson, [jbh50@aol.com](mailto:jbh50@aol.com)

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