

KIDSTEPS News

SARAH, Inc. KIDSTEPS

Self Reflection

by Elisabeth

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Not many people know that my son, who is now fourteen years old, also went through the Birth to Three program. Granted, it was some years ago, but a many of the key principles have remained. Services were provided by a qualified person. They were directed primarily to me and my family, and the therapists came to my home.

About a year ago, I was attending training where I was doing some self-reflection on my son's services and that period in my life. During that time, I came to a realization that I believe applies to our theme, "In the Community", in this quarter's KIDSTEPS Newsletter.

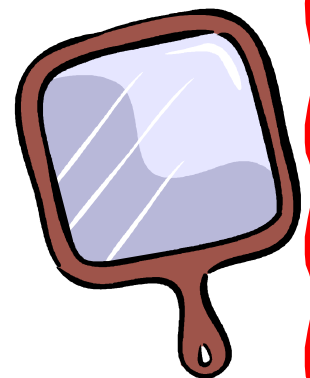
My son received services for expressive speech and eating difficulties. I had a talented therapist that worked with us for about eighteen months. We sat at the table working on drinking and eating. We sat on the family room floor playing and building on sounds/words. Sometimes we even ran around the house chasing after my son. (Come talk with me and I would be happy to share some pretty interesting stories about that.) I felt we were doing all we can and, most importantly, my son was making progress.

So, you might be asking yourself, "If she's saying everything went well, then where is the lesson from the self-reflection come in?" During my training, we were asked to think of a child that we were working with and what the parents would say are their worst or most difficult time of their day. I naturally went to my own experiences, all these years later, and pictured myself driving in the car with my son. How quickly I reflected back to that gut-wrenching experience. He would often try to tell me something and, without being able to look at him while driving or gain contextual clues, I couldn't decipher what he was saying...and both of us would equally get frustrated. Writing this, I still can conjure up that helpless feeling I had.

What I now realize was that my Birth to Three therapist never asked about my most difficult times of the day and I never thought to ask her. Fortunately, Birth to Three therapists now are out and about in the community, and focus on family daily routines. I often wonder how trips in our car would be different if my family and I received support in this area. I encourage all of you to talk with your therapists about how they can help support you and your family during all parts/times of your day - no matter where they take place. It could truly make a difference!

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Family & Children's Center Update

by Kathy

The KIDSTEPS Family & Children's Center (FCC) brochures are sent out to families on a quarterly basis. Here is a sampling of our Summer Brochure 2011 classes:

- ◆ CPR & First Aid Training
- ◆ Learning to Play & Communicate
- ◆ Creative Art
- ◆ Artistic Expressions II (for girls)
- ◆ Practical Parenting Workshops
 - * *What do you mean we are not communicating? I'm yelling as loud as I can!*
 - * *Help! My child has ADHD.*
 - * *Help! My child has an Anxiety Disorder*
- ◆ Parent Chat Groups—facilitated by Deb Pagano from CT Family Support Network
 - * *Tuesdays from 6:30pm–7:30pm at the Women & Family Life Center, Guilford*
 - * *Thursdays from 9:30am–10:30am at the KIDSTEPS Office, Madison (Free childcare at this session only)*



For more information, or if you are interested in being on the mailing list, please contact Kathy Fadel at: (203) 318-3692, ext. 2 OR via email: Kidsteps-FCC@sarah-inc.org. We also have the brochure and registration forms posted on the SARAH, Inc. website (www.sarah-inc.org) every quarter. Look for the FCC's Autumn 2011 edition of the brochure to be available sometime at the end of the summer.

Playgroup for the Summer

by Crystal



One of the best parts of the summer months is that we are able to get outside and play in the sun! Going to a park with your child builds on all the motor and social skills that you might be working on inside the home. Your child can practice walking up and downstairs, get some sensory input by walking in the sand or on the grass, practice tolerating time on a swing, and develop social skills with other peers.

At KIDSTEPS, it is very important to us to imbed intervention within a child's natural environment and routine. What better place to work on some of these goals than at a park? We are very excited to invite all of our families and "graduates" to our community playgroup!

We are meeting on **Thursday mornings** (during the summer months) from **9:30-10:30** at **Hannah's Dream** on **Woodward Avenue** in **New Haven**. This park is a perfect location and is handicap ac-

cessible. Very often parents with special needs children worry about safety and how their child will play with other children while at the park. Laura, an Early Intervention Teacher, and, myself, an Early Intervention Associate, will be at the park every morning to help families feel safe and welcome! Other therapists are invited, as well, to come and coach families on strategies to use to meet their goals. So our graduates will see many familiar faces! The best part of this playgroup is the bonds that families make and the friendships that children form!

In the event of rain and/or thunderstorms, we will not be meeting at the park that day.

Call me directly with questions regarding the playgroup any-time at (203) 953-6018.



We hope that you will be able to join us for some fun in the sun!

We all belong to a community. Some of us belong to more than one, maybe even many. Webster's Dictionary defines "community" as a group of people living in a particular local area; interacting with each other; a body of people having common rights, privileges, or interests, or living in the same place under the same laws and regulations. Community is one of the main objectives when discussing a program for a person with delays or disabilities. We are only successful in our mission if the person is participating in his/her communities to a full level of satisfaction for themselves and their families.

What does this mean for a child less than three years old? Let's think about the most important community a person can have, family. Research tells us that we come into this world with certain strengths, weaknesses, and our own individual temperaments. It also tells us that life experiences can nudge our potential toward the better or the worse. As a parent/caregiver, you can make a huge difference in your child's life. It's for this reason that it is a law that services for infants and toddlers takes place in their own natural environments with caregivers present and actively participating.

Early intervention has responded to this by moving toward a coaching model for caregivers. By talking about daily routines and things already happening in a child's life, and making strategies part of the day, the child is provided numerous opportunities to participate in intervention with the people they love and trust most in the world.

Anyone with a young child knows that you just have to get out of that house sometimes. Where do you go? Extended family, the library, childcare, parent/child programs, the playground, Wal-mart? This brings us to the larger communities that your child belongs to. Maybe you feel as though you can't bring your child to those places. Perhaps you feel like you're stuck at home because you just can't imagine how you and your child could navigate those places that other families seem to take for

granted. I have good news for you! Your Birth to Three therapist(s) would love to help you by brainstorming, or by going with you to those places.

Some of you may think that this is exactly what you've been hoping for. If so, mention it to your provider and set a date! I'm guessing that there are some of you now facing a number of other questions such as, "Will other people know my child needs help?", "How will I answer questions from other caregivers if we do?", and/or "What about my child's confidentiality?"

I, too, was the mom with all the "What ifs?" When my own child began to receive Birth to Three services, I didn't want a lot of people to know.

The interesting thing was, I felt like I couldn't take him out of the house and my husband felt like he couldn't stay home with him. When his therapists began, they started out with visits to our home. That was great! Then, I realized that he went to preschool twice a week, so they went there. I only had to say to the preschool, "My child is getting Birth to Three. Would it be 'ok' if they came out to do sessions here?" They didn't ask specific questions about his delays. The sessions were limited to how they could enhance his participation in their program.

After a while, it seemed like home and school were going pretty well. The grown-ups all felt empowered and supported. We had strategies and plans and were fairly consistent in our approaches. The beach was another story. I could write an entire article about the fears I had of things that would happen there. The water, the cars, other kids...all presented safety concerns that were enough to keep me home. Finally, I got to the point where I wanted to enjoy the outdoors with my son and we started doing...

(Continued on Page 4)





Just what does a typical Early Intervention (E.I.) visit involve? You may be wondering or thinking to yourself, “These therapists are coming to my house every day!” The answer is “yes”, we could be coming to your house for every E.I. visit, but that does not mean that every session has to be held in your toy room, living room floor, or even in your home. The joys of the goals and objectives that a family writes with therapists, allows the qualified team members and family to venture out into the community. Here are some examples of the places that I have travelled with families!

- * **Church** - assisted family and child at service during a sibling’s baptism
- * **Playgrounds** - assisted family and child with using playground appropriately
- * **Big Y** - assisted family and child with grocery shopping, allowing the child to have his own shopping list
- * **Stay n Play (Old Saybrook)** - assisted family and child in a social setting with other children
- * **Campbell’s Gym (Clinton)** - assisted family and

child with improving gross motor skills on gymnastic equipment

- * **Chatfield Hollow (Killingworth)** - assisted family and child in staying close to family and walking with them (learning about safety)
- * **Community swimming pool** - assisted family and child with improving muscle tone and techniques in how to do so in the water
- * **Library** - assisted family and child in finding age appropriate books and isolating index finger to point at pictures and objects
- * **Water park (Old Saybrook)** - assisted family and child in running through water and helping to overcome fear of water
- * **Beach** - assisted family and child in problematic sensory issues; sand, seaweed, etc.
- * **Dentist** - assisted family and child in appropriate techniques with oral motor stimulation
- * **Pediatrician** - assisted family and child while waiting at doctor’s office for an appointment
- * **Play groups** - assisted family and child in a social setting and child interacting appropriately with others

Lesson: You name the place, we will be there!

We All Belong... *(continued from page 3)*

by Connie

visits at the beach. We worked on a number of things there, but most important to me was the moral support that I received from my therapist, reminding me that I am a good parent and can handle an hour at the beach with my child. In fact, I could even enjoy it. It gave us a chance to practice some of the things we’d been working on at home and school, as well.

Community is important for all of us. A wise woman once told me that our job as parents is to make ourselves a little less needed every day. It is still challenging to step back from situations to allow my child to struggle with the typical experiences of childhood, which may not be easy for him. However, I also take pride in the fact that my child is a part of our family, extended family, school, church, and our local community/town. He participates in all of these settings. As parents, our greatest dreams usually do not include keeping our children home with us for the rest of our lives. Most adults with disabilities don’t want to live with their parents either. They will tell you that they want a job and to live somewhere else besides their parent’s house. Each person can move toward a level of independence with varying levels of support. The only way to move toward self-sufficiency is to help the child become part of the world around them. I invite you to give your child the gift of a supportive community that starts with family, but includes others to expand and enrich your child’s development.

Family Activities in the Community

by Heather

Enjoy summer in Connecticut with these family fun activities. You don't have to travel far to enjoy a summer fun day. Go out and explore your community with your children. Have fun, be safe, and cherish all the wonderful memories! Here are just a few places to explore:

- ◆ *Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History* - 170 Whitney Ave. in New Haven, 203-432-5050
- ◆ *Essex Steam Train & Riverboat* - 1 Railroad Ave. in Essex, 860-767-0103
- ◆ *Infant Swimming Resource (ISR)* - Private, specialized swimming instruction, 203-795-9600
- ◆ *Middlesex YMCA* - 99 Union Street in Middletown, 860-347-69007
- ◆ *CoCo Key Water Resort* - 3580 East Main St. in Waterbury, 203-706-1000
- ◆ *The Shore Line Trolley Museum* - 17 River St. in East Haven, 203-467-6927
- ◆ *The Kids Cookery* - Cooking classes, 860-884-4094
- ◆ *The Dinosaur Place* - 1650 Htfd./New London Tpke. in Oakdale, 860-443-4367
- ◆ *Mad Science Laboratory* - 39 Wedgewood Drive in Jewett City, 860-376-9451
- ◆ *Bright Spot Children's Playplace, LLC* - 520 Hartford Tpke. in Vernon, 860-871-9334
- ◆ *Hartford Children's Theatre* - 360 Farmington Ave. in Hartford, 860-249-7970
- ◆ *Children's Museum of Southeastern CT* - 409 Main St. in Niantic, 860-691-1111
- ◆ *Connecticut Science Center* - 250 Columbus Blvd. in Hartford, 860-724-3623

The Reading Corner

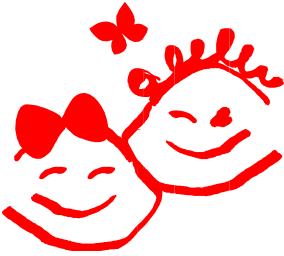
by Pat

Summertime is a good time to explore our neighborhood and community with our children. Here are some good books to help prepare your child for a neighborhood walk!

- ◇ *My Neighborhood: Places and Faces* by Lisa Ballard
This is a trip around Libbie's neighborhood as she shows off her favorite spots and the people who go with them. Then you and your child can map out for yourself the places and faces in your neighborhood that you like best!
- ◇ *Community Helpers from A to Z* by Bobbie Kalman
This is an alphabet book introducing occupations in the community. Children love their ABC's and community helpers!
- ◇ *Jobs People Do* by DK Publishing
This is the book for helping children find out all about the careers that interest them. It includes fun pictures and facts about tools, equipment and the workplace.
- ◇ *Fisher Price Welcome to Our Town Big Flap Book* by E Weiss
This book helps children fine out "what's inside all the buildings around town?" Locations include children favorites: the firehouse, the garage, the schoolhouse, the market and the farm. Children love to flip the flaps!



Have a Safe & Happy Summer!!! Happy Reading!!!



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SARAH Inc.

We're on the Web!
www.sarah-inc.org

Making strides to support, educate, and advocate for differently-abled children, their families and friends.

HAPPY SUMMER!



Please join us as we say "Congratulations" to one of our therapists, **Mackenzie**, and her husband, **Jason**, on the birth of their beautiful little girl!!! Miss Jillian Nicole was born on 06/27/11 at 5:37pm, weighing in at 8 lbs. ,8 ozs. She is 21 inches long and has chubby cheeks! Mom & baby are doing well. CONGRATS!



WE ARE ON: facebook

We have started a page for KIDSTEPS on Facebook. Do a search for our group's page (kidsteps@sarah-inc.org) and click on "Like" to be our friend so that you will be kept up-to-date on all KIDSTEPS happenings.

We will be sharing general information and helpful tips about children's overall development, links to other agencies, posting our quarterly KIDSTEPS newsletter, and informing you of opportunities for you and your children to participate in the local communities.

If you have any suggestions or feedback for our site, please let us know. We look forward to hearing from you!

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