

Newsletter 100  
Provider Edition  
March 2007

*This Month's Theme:  
"We're All Special"*

*We're all different.  
Children with special  
needs and their friends  
need to learn to respect  
individual differences.  
Help them understand  
each other through play  
and great books.*

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#### Next Month

*Let's Celebrate Earth Day*

## Caring for Special Needs Children

### Should you consider being a special needs provider?

All parents have the same basic needs when looking for child care. They want someone to care for their child with the sensitivity that they would if they were at home with them. Parents of children with special needs have the same wish. In addition they need to find someone who has the facility and the professionalism to learn how to take care of their child.

Children with special needs are as diverse as the rest of the population. Even though your heart is in the right place, you cannot make a blanket statement that you can and will take care of special needs children in your home. There are many factors you need to take into consideration when making this decision. You need first to understand who these children are and while categorizing children is useless to you personally, states and school systems will use these categories in order to provide the best services possible for special needs children. For the sake of this discussion, we will use these categories, but I would urge any provider to never make assumptions about a child because they fall under one of these headings.

#### Physical Disabilities

Children who have physical disabilities need assistance from

either an adult or other rehabilitative apparatus to go about their lives. These children may be in wheel chairs or they may have difficulty controlling their muscles due to weakness or nerve



damage. They may have lost limbs or been born without them. Their physical disability does not affect their intellectual or social ability.

#### Considerations:

- Are you physically fit enough to help this child get around? You may have to lift the child, help the child in the bathroom or help the child at mealtime.
- Can your home accommodate the child? If the child is in a wheelchair, is your house accessible?
- Are the doors wide enough?
- Can you get this child out of the house by yourself in case of fire?

### **Visual or Auditory Disabilities**

Children with these disabilities have significant problems seeing or hearing. With early diagnosis and support such as glasses, hearing aides or other medical interventions some of these children will overcome any delays brought on by the impairment and developmentally catch up to their peers in their early years. You may be able to take part in this.

#### **Considerations:**

- In the case of a completely blind child, you'll need to put in extra time child proofing the house.
- Can you take the time to become familiar with Braille, so he or she can begin reading with the other children?
- Do you know or can you take the time to learn sign language to communicate with a deaf child?

### **Intellectual Disabilities**

Children with intellectual disabilities or delays may have delayed educational, social and emotional development or just delays in one of these areas. They may not learn as fast as their peers.

#### **Considerations:**

- Can you be sensitive to a child who doesn't pick up things as quickly as others?
- Can you be patient enough to help him learn to the best of his ability?

### **Communication Disorders and Autism**

Children with these challenges can have problems learning language, learning to articulate sounds or be autistic. These challenges can range from the child who has a simple lisp to the severely autistic child who cannot relate to others and appears to live in his own protected world.

#### **Considerations:**

- Do you have the time and patience to build a relationship with a child who has a difficult time bonding?
- Do you have the time to learn how a child communicates so you can communicate with him?

- Will the children in your group be sensitive to an autistic child?
- Will the child be comfortable in your home?

### **Learning Disabilities**

Learning disabilities are behavior patterns or learning styles that keep children from learning in the traditional ways that are available to them. There continues to be a great deal of controversy whether these are true disabilities or simply differences in learning style. They can range from an inability to pay attention or sit still, an inability to understand and decipher symbols or an inability to process incoming or outgoing information.

#### **Considerations:**

- Do you have room to take in children who need a lot of space and time to run around and be active?
- Are you flexible and creative enough to teach children in non-traditional ways?
- Are you open to children who may perceive the world differently than you do?

### **Gifted Children**

Gifted children are children who have the ability to learn very quickly. They may be gifted in many areas or especially gifted in one area. While they seem to be intellectually blessed, they may sometimes have trouble fitting in with other children and may need a great deal intellectual activity to satisfy their constantly growing minds.

#### **Considerations:**

- Can you keep the children stimulated with activities and field trips that they find interesting?
- Can you provide a peer for the child, even if they are older, so the child has someone to share with?

### **Social or Emotional Disabilities**

These children may have difficulties dealing with others in social situations and have trouble dealing appropriately with their own emotions. This may be caused by past abuse,

trauma, brain injury or lead poisoning.

#### **Considerations:**

- Can you love these children and be able to commit to a long-term stable relationship with them?
- Is the child a danger to the other children in your group?
- Is the custodial caregiver open to sharing the source of the problem, if known, to help give you some insight into the child?

### **Chronic Illness**

These children have chronic diseases or health problems ranging from cancer to allergies.

#### **Considerations:**

- Are you capable of understanding the child's medical condition?
- Are you comfortable administering medicine and willing to be trained to do so properly?
- Are you cool headed in an emergency?
- Do you have previous medical training in nursing or emergency medical care?
- Can you keep a very clean house and/or pet free house?

These labels are little help in understanding a child but will be useful in helping talk to the parents or therapists during initial interviews. You will never meet a child who fits nicely into one of these categories. Saying all children with intellectual disabilities are the same is like saying all children with brown hair are the same. One physically disabled child may zip around your house gleefully without any usable muscle function in his legs, while another sits frozen in fear. One emotionally challenged child may lash out at you violently while another instantly curls up in your arms.

Children who have been labeled to get them the help they need are as diverse as other children. Being open to taking care of these children means getting to know them and having them get to know you and your

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## **Why Does That Man Have Such a Big Nose?**

by **Mary Beth Quinsey**

The title seems insensitive, but the book is honest.

Toddlers very often ask questions like these not

because they lack manners, but because they're honestly curious.

This book answers their questions without judgement for the toddler or the subject matter. Each facing page has a question that concerns an individual characteristic. From noses to skin color to body size each question is answered factually helping children to understand that we are all different. Sepia photographs picture people from all walks of life going about their daily business. This is a perfect introduction to a discussion on individual differences. (ages 3 - 6)



## **Susan Laughs** by **Jeanne Willis**

Susan does all the things that other little girls do. "Susan dances, Susan rides, Susan swims, Susan hides." Softly colored pencil drawings illustrate Susan happily going

about her life, playing and sharing good and bad days with people she loves. The uncomplicated text supports the pastel pencil illustrations of a typical, but happy, carefree life of a child. You won't know until the very last page that Susan spends part of her day in a wheel chair. It's simply illustrated on the last page. "That is Susan through and through - just like me, just like you." A sensitive story that places emphasis on similarities instead of differences. (ages 2 - 6)



## **Andy and His Yellow Frisbee** by **Mary Thompson**

Andy is autistic. He has no interest in playing with other children or even speaking to them. His only interest is spinning his yellow frisbee. When Sarah, a new girl,

comes to school, she tries to get to know Andy by introducing her pink frisbee, but he shows no interest. However, Sarah catches the interest of Andy's sister and they form a new relationship. There's a very gentle, non-judgmental message to the reader about the differences in Andy and his sister's social behavior and subtleties that connect Andy's behavior to common behaviors, like his sister's insistence that she must always have her bear. This is an honest look at autism through the eyes of a child. (ages 4 - 8)



## **Little Smudge** by **Lionel Le Néouanic**

Little Smudge is lonely. There he sits on the blank white page all by himself. In his quest to find others to share his life, he comes upon some brilliantly colored shapes.

But they won't accept him. All they see is an undefined smudge.

However, Smudge has something they don't. While they can parade around in their perfectly formed shapes, Smudge has the ability to change into any shape at all. The illustrations show all the emotion of Smudge's dilemma and the resolution through one black smudge and five other shapes on a bright white background. This is a great introduction to "being different" for your youngest toddlers. (ages 1 - 5)

## **Myself and Others**

### **A Feltboard Activity**

*You can help your children begin to develop a sense of themselves and respect for others by allowing them to play with individual characteristics. You'll need the following:*

- 1 Feltboard
- Felt in assorted colors
- 1 Mirror

Sit down when you have some quiet time and begin to cut out simple shapes that represent human characteristics. This is not difficult if you remember to use simple shapes. Preschoolers will recognize a blue circle used to represent a blue eye and a rounded triangle to represent a nose. You'll need to use different colors of felt to represent different skin, eye and hair colors. Cut different shapes and sizes to represent noses and lips. Make different body shapes to represent short, tall, slender and heavier body shapes. Let this be a long term project, adding items as you talk about all the different characteristics. You may want to add these items to your collection:

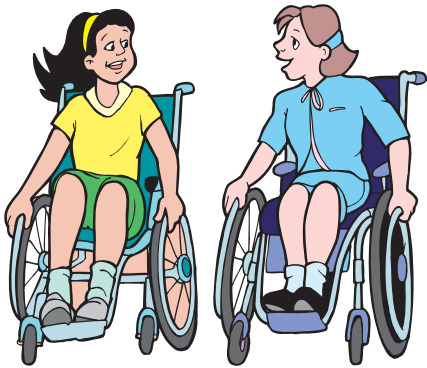
- glasses
- hearing aids
- crutches
- leg braces
- a simple wheel chair

continued

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This is an ever expanding activity. At some point you may focus on skin color, at other times eyes. You can spend a week making funny hair-dos for your people. The pieces of felt you cut over the month can be used for countless activities.

Place the felt board in a place where the children have access. Place the mirror nearby, so children can look at themselves as well as others. They can make themselves one day and a friend the next. Use baggies to sort your pieces and remember to have the children help sort when cleaning up. That in itself is a wonderful activity that supports the meaning of *same* and *different*.



## The Guessing Game

This is a very simple game that toddlers love to play over and over. You can play in a circle, at naptime or at the table. The provider simply says, "I'm thinking of someone." She (or he) then gives out clues containing the characteristics of a child in the group. All the children desperately want the answer to be themselves, so make sure everyone gets a turn.

## Mirror, Mirror

I look in the mirror and who do I see?  
A very wonderful, special me!  
*(Point to yourself)*  
With sparkling eyes all shiny and bright,  
*(Point to your eyes)*  
My smile shows my teeth all pearly and white.  
*(Point to your teeth.)*  
It certainly is great to be,  
This very wonderful, special me!  
*(Hug yourself!)*

Ann M. OConnell

## Grandma's Glasses

Here are Grandma's glasses  
*(Make circles with your fingers around your eyes.)*  
And here is Grandma's hat.  
*(Make a triangular shape with hands on your head.)*  
And this is how she folds her hands  
*(Fold your hands in your lap.)*  
And puts them in her lap.



Traditional

Purchase some plastic glasses at the Dollar Store and have children wear them to see what they feel like.





## Let's Go Fly a Kite

The March Winds doth blow, which means it's the perfect time to fly a kite. The children can make very simple kites that will blow behind them as they run in the wind. You need the following:

12 x 18 inch heavy construction paper or poster board  
Elmer's Glue  
Tissue paper in assorted colors, cut into 1 inch squares.  
Ribbon to use as a tail  
String  
Hole punch and reinforcements  
Paint brushes

Cut the corners off your construction paper to form a diamond. Place the Elmer's Glue in a small bowl and thin with an equal amount of water. Have the children paint a thin layer of glue all

over their diamonds and then cover them with the tissue paper. Allow the kites to dry.

When completely dry, use your hole punch to punch a hole at the string and tail ends of the kite. Use the paper reinforcements to strengthen the holes. Pull a ribbon through the tail end and tie it so you have two equal lengths of tail flying behind the kite. Pull the string through its hole and tie it off near the kite leaving a single three foot length of string. Go run wild through the park on a windy day with your kites.

**Provider Hint:** Drop a stapler into your bag. Toddlers will likely pull the string out by the end of the day. This way you can repair any damage at the park.

## Shaving Cream Art Work

Toddlers have little respect for the outcome of their artwork. It's the process that gives them pleasure. As a matter of fact, most projects will be taken apart before anyone sees them. However, it makes shaving cream a perfect medium for toddler artwork. It's as soft as bubbles in the bathtub, but will hold its shape long enough for a young artist to realize his sculpture, just before he delightfully flattens it out on the table again. Use shaving cream formulated for sensitive skin and watch for those who want to experiment orally. If you want to share the children's artwork with others, snap some pictures while they're working.

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home to see if you're a good match. Each situation will be different.

Families of children with special needs often carry a heavy burden. They have children who need them and yet they need to work to pay for the needs of their children. You can play a very special role in a child's family by being open to helping these families get through a difficult time. It's important to be honest with yourself and with the potential family. There is no shame in feeling you cannot take on the task, but if you feel you want to, make sure you do so thoughtfully, so you can provide the child and family with stable child care.

### Specialized Child Care

You may find you want to specialize in caring for one group of these children. This can be very powerful, allowing you to become familiar with the particular needs of one group. A caregiver who learns sign lan-

guage or someone who can set up a program specifically for children who are blind or have severe asthma can provide a very special service to families. This allows you to focus your training, learning everything you can about your specific children. Perhaps you're a creative cook and you can set up a "gluten free" or "peanut free" home. Perhaps you live in a ranch home and can set up a wheel-chair accessible program. Do you have an extra room in your home for children's physical or occupational therapy?

These specialty homes can lift a great burden off the shoulders of parents who must work and need specialty child care. If you have an interest in a specialty home, call Programs for Parents to see where the need is. You may be able to match your skills and program to the particular needs of some special families.

# Childcare Matters 100th Anniversary Makeover

We've made some changes to *Childcare Matters*. We've moved your theme activities to pages three and four. We recommend saving all six pages of the newsletter in a three ring binder. However, if you choose you can now pull out page three and four to take to the library, bookstore or craft store and then make yourself a theme notebook.

The biggest change will be **YOU**. We need to hear your questions and concerns. Your needs will help determine the content of the newsletter. Please e-mail us with your child care questions on any of the following topics.

*Physical Development*  
*Emotional Development*  
*Educational Development*  
*Family Child Care*  
*Regulations*  
*Provider/Parent*  
*Relationships*  
*Healthy Meal Planning*  
*Child Care Activities*  
*Afterschool Care*  
*Special Needs Care*  
*Child Care Training and*  
*Education*  
*Effective Discipline*

We'll use your questions to write newsletter stories that address your concerns and we'll choose a few questions to be answered on Page six of your newsletter every month. The address is below. Let us know what you need.

[FCCservices@programsforparents.org](mailto:FCCservices@programsforparents.org)



Please continue to use the WARMLINE when you have questions about a child's health or well-being that need to be answered in a timely manner. We will not be able to address medical issues or issues that need immediate attention in *Childcare Matters*. The Warmline has a trained staff that can address these issues.



Providing you with practical, accurate information on health and behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

**1-800-713-9006**



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## Childcare Matters

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