Empowering Families

By: Karen Taycher

If we only had a roadmap, an instruction book, or a guide that would tell us exactly what we need to do to help our children become all that they can be... Wouldn’t it be nice to have all the right answers? Well we know that there is no guide, however we do have each other and a host of professionals trained to help our children succeed.

Recently, I heard a parent interviewed regarding the teacher strike in Chicago, the mother said, “I am so glad the teachers are doing this for our kids, because as parents we are powerless.” I was taken aback and saddened to hear her dismay. Parents should never feel powerless in the education and care of their children. They should be empowered by schools and other systems to be their children’s first teachers and best advocates. Nevada PEP was built on this foundation and works statewide to encourage, educate, and empower families to be key members of the team of individuals who work to support their child with special needs.

We know that, working together, a good team can do amazing things. Imagine all the people in your child’s life coming together as a team to lend their expertise, their resources, and their enthusiasm working together with you to resolve an issue or develop a strategy to teach a new skill. We may not have the guidebook to life, but if we develop an effective team to support our child’s development, we can determine goals and then plan how to get there. Families know their children best and must feel empowered to voice their dreams and concerns.

Nevada PEP is a family of families of children with special needs who support other families to use their voices as their children’s best advocates and be empowered team members. Join Nevada PEP and learn with other families about building a supportive team who can help to develop and implement a plan of success for your child’s future.

Thank You
MGM Resorts Foundation
By: Stephanie Vrnsik

Nevada PEP would like to recognize the generosity of the MGM Resorts employees. Nevada PEP is the proud recipient of funding by MGM Resorts Foundation. This grant will help Nevada PEP meet the needs of families who have children with disabilities.

Additionally, MGM Resorts employees went above and beyond and voted to award Nevada PEP with a second grant. This grant is in support of the Include Me program. The Include Me puppets entertain and educate pre-school children about inclusion and bullying prevention in libraries and pre-schools.

We would also like to applaud the MGM Resorts employees that volunteer at Nevada PEP, taking time out of their busy schedules to give Nevada PEP some of their precious time; helping with putting together training packets, answering phones, or helping out at community events. We truly appreciate their dedication to helping kids with disabilities.

Thank you, MGM Resorts Foundation staff and employees for showing such a deep commitment to your community and helping Nevada PEP provide much needed assistance to families.
Positive Behavior Interventions
By: Stephanie Houle

Children’s challenging behaviors leave many parents feeling frustrated and ineffective. Positive Behavior Interventions (PBI) is an approach designed to help children develop new skills and positive behaviors. Parents can decide which strategies are likely to work best for their families.

• Catch your child being good. Praising your child and offering meaningful incentives can reinforce positive behavior. Try to give specific attention to the behavior that you want to see. “Johnny, good job listening and putting your toys on the shelf.”

• Offer limited, reasonable choices to avoid power struggles. Give your child a sense of control by offering basic choices. For example, if your child does not want to get into her car seat, you may ask her, “Do you want to climb in there yourself or do you want Daddy to pick you up and put you in?”

• Clearly state your expectations in advance. Be sure to give your child clear instructions so that he knows what you want him to do. Instead of saying, “It’s time to get ready to go,” you might clarify what you mean by saying, “Get your shoes on so we can go see Grandma.”

• Prepare and plan ahead for difficult situations. Sharing and practicing a plan with a child before entering a potential problem setting greatly reduces the odds that an inappropriate behavior will occur. Try to anticipate your child’s needs in various situations. You may incorporate a “waiting item” (electronic or favorite toy) to keep your child entertained during lengthy activities or keep some snacks on hand for unexpected delays.

• Provide structure and consistency. Predictable environments help children to learn appropriate behaviors over time. Using schedules and routines can help a child feel less anxious.

• To learn more about PBI, attend an Positive Behavior Interventions training at Nevada PEP! Call 1-800-216-5188 for more information or to register for a training.

Adapted from “Positive Solutions for Families: Eight Practical Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior,” Center for Evidence-Based Practice, University of South Florida and Positive Behavior Interventions Training Curriculum, PACER Center, Copyright © 2006.

Do You Know Someone Who Has Impairments in Both Vision and Hearing?

Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project
University of Nevada, Reno
http://www.unr.edu/educ/ndsip/

The Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project is a federally funded, statewide technical assistance project. The purpose of the project is to enhance the educational services provided to children, birth through 21 years of age, who have impairments in both vision and hearing. The services provided by the project include:

• Assistance in identification of individuals, ages birth through 21 years, who have dual sensory impairments.

• On-site technical assistance (e.g., child-specific consultations, training workshops) to families, educational and agency providers, and care providers of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with dual sensory impairments. Topics vary as requested.

• Assistance in finding resources (e.g., Internet, print, video) on various topics

• Biannual project newsletter

• TA documents (e.g., Usher syndrome screening booklet, transition manual, tip sheets, screening brochures, screening posters).

• Parent access to a project parent-to-parent network

• Annual parent conference

• Annual summer institute for service providers

Who can refer children to the project?
Referrals can be made by parents as well as educational, medical and social service professionals by completing a referral packet available on the website or requested from:

MaryAnn Demchak, Project Director
College of Education / Mail Stop 278
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV 89557 - 775-784-6471
Toll-free in Nevada: 1-877-621-5042
Email: mad@unr.edu

University of Nevada, Reno
Upcoming Events
NEVADA PEP TRAININGS

5 Part IDEA Training Series
Learn about starting the process to obtain help for a child, writing Individualized Education Programs, rights and procedural safeguards, behavior and discipline in school and getting ready for change.

Families Are Important
An early childhood workshop for families of infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.

How is My Child Reading?
A workshop of valuable information on how students learn to read.

Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy
Learn six important skills you can use to become a more effective advocate for your child with a disability.

IEP Clinic
Clinics include a brief overview of the IEP process and a Q & A session.

Is Your Child a Target for Bullying?
Strategies to help families cope with and prevent bullying.

Positive Behavioral Interventions
Helps you to focus on the "Why's" of behavior and provides an overview of functional assessment and positive interventions.

Journey to Adulthood
Parents will receive valuable information to help a child with a disability understand the physical, emotional, and social changes of puberty and adolescence.

Solving the Employment Puzzle
Encourages youth and families to consider what can be done to help prepare youth with disabilities for employment.

Understanding ADHD
Learn strategies that can help a child become successful in home, school, and community environments.

You Can Do It
Helps families and high school students with disabilities prepare for a successful transition into college.

Getting and Keeping the 1st Job
This workshop is full of ideas and strategies to teach self-awareness and career planning to help youth develop the confidence to pursue employment.

Nevada PEP Support Groups
Parent Support Groups in English. Learn about various topics of interest, such as insurance coverage, behavioral health services, respite, discipline, disability, school, summer time activities, and transition, among other topics.

Grupos de apoyo para los padres en Español
Aprenda cerca de varios temas de interés tales como la cobertura del seguro de salud, servicios de salud del comportamiento, respiro, disciplina, discapacidades y la escuela, actividades de tiempo de verano y transición.

Entrenamientos del IEP
Este entrenamiento incluye una breve descripción del proceso del IEP y una sesión de preguntas y respuestas.

Entendiendo ADHD
Aprenda estrategias que pueden ayudarle a su niño a ser exitoso en el hogar, la escuela y en la comunidad.

Es su hijo un blanco de Bullying?
Aprenda estrategias que pueden ayudarle a su familia a hacer frente y prevenir la intimidación.

For dates, times and locations of Nevada PEP Workshops and Trainings, or to request a workshop in your community, please contact our office at:

Southern Nevada – (702) 388-8899
Northern Nevada – (775) 448-9950
Rural Nevada – (800) 216-5188.

You may also view dates, times, locations, and register for trainings online at www.nvpep.org/training-calendar.

Resource Library Review:
Interviewing Skills for Job Candidates with Learning or Other Hidden Disabilities
By: d’Arcy Bostic

Interviewing Skills for Job Candidates with Learning or Other Hidden Disabilities is a DVD to help individuals prepare for future employment and job interviews. There is valuable information about researching the potential employer and explanations on why preparation through the complete process of finding employment is important. The following are some of the highlights of this DVD.

• Determining the specific job with duties and expectations along with their possible employers departments will inform and reassure the potential employee that support may be available if needed.

• Finding out if the potential employer contributes to the local community financially is another indicator of a possible good employment fit.

• At the end of the DVD, there is a job interview practice drill for an individual to sharpen interview skills.

• The DVD explains that disclosing your disability to the potential employer is up to the individual and explains the pros and cons of disclosure.

We encourage families of youth and youth themselves to view the DVD. For more information on transition to employment contact Nevada PEP. The Jobs Accommodations Network, www.askjan.org, and the Learning Disabilities Associations of America Jobs Accommodations Network www.ldanatl.org are also great national resources.
Include Me Puppet Program Summer 2012

By: d’Arcy Bostic

Nevada PEP has successfully partnered with the Clark County Library District to perform the Include Me Program in local libraries. Nevada PEP’s Include Me Puppets had an amazing summer performing for preschoolers, their families and staff at several locations throughout the valley. A team of multitalented volunteers performed the with our darling multicultural, child size hand and rod puppets to the delight of our community’s young children. Nevada PEP wants to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated Include Me Puppeteers. The Include Me Program is a wonderful opportunity for individuals to have fun volunteering while at the same time educating the community about Inclusion and Bullying Prevention. Come join the Include Me team.

Our goal is positive Inclusion for all children with and without disabilities.

Please contact d’Arcy Bostic at dbostic@nvpep.org for information on volunteering or scheduling a show.

U.S. Department of Education Update

By: Whitney Sadow

For many high school seniors back to school is bitter sweet. This is their last year of high school and many are looking forward to college. For families looking at college, the U.S. Department of Education has created a new tool to help you better choose a college that fits your budget. The new website compares the financial aspects of college, http://collegecost.ed.gov/. You will find enrollment information and be able to compare things like tuition at public & private institutions, how many students receive financial aid, how much books cost, and compare room and board costs.

“We want to arm students and parents with the information they need to make smart educational choices,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “Students need to know up front how much college will actually cost them instead of waiting to find out when the first student loan bill arrives. These lists are a major step forward in unraveling the mystery of higher education pricing.” Recently State Treasurer Kate Marshall announced an expansion matching college grant program to help Nevada military parents plan their children’s futures. For more information about this program, go to www.usaa.com/matchinggrant.
During this new school year, many parents will hear the term, **Common Core Standards** in conversations held at their child’s school. Learning about the Common Core State Standards helps parents to understand what specific grade level skills their children are expected to learn. These standards were developed by a group of teachers, school administrators, and parents. Parents now can be assured that their children have access to the same shared goals and expectations other students receive across the country. Nevada has joined with 45 other states in June 2010 to adopt these standards.

Common Core State Standards have been developed for Mathematics and English Language Arts. Nevada is fully implementing the English Language Standards for grades K-12 in the 2012-2013 school year. Mathematics is already implemented in grades K-2 and is partially implemented in grades 3-12.

The common core standards are developed using evidenced based practices and are the first standards that focus on how students learn, not just on what they learn. Parents and educators can use the standards to guide conversations about how to help their children reach educational goals. Some of these conversations could occur in a parent teacher conference or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. Writing IEP goals and benchmarks that are aligned with the common core standards will improve the access to Mathematics and English language curriculum for students with disabilities. Ask your school about this important step that Nevada school districts have taken to improve access to a stronger academic content standard for all students including those with disabilities.

For more information, please visit [https://bighorn.doe.nv.gov/sites/CommonCore/ccss/default.aspx](https://bighorn.doe.nv.gov/sites/CommonCore/ccss/default.aspx)

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**Volunteer Corner**

**Volunteering at its Finest!!!**

By: Rosalee Price

You don’t need a special talent to volunteer. You just need a willingness to give of yourself for a few hours a week. For these few hours you receive a feeling of satisfaction that you won’t receive watching TV. And more families then you will ever know will be affected by the giving of a small amount of your time.

I volunteer for a very special personal reason. I have a wonderful grandson who is challenged. PEP has helped in every way from baseball to IEP’s and so many other ways I will never be able to count.

So volunteer whether you are “young or old” like me just get up, get out and help.
My Family Story - An Amazing Brother
By: Jorge Padilla

It was the middle of April as they handed him to me. I started tearing up, for his name was Ozzy. He was perfect in every detail and looked like any other boy. However, as the years past on I noticed he was different and wondered what was wrong.

He had barley turned four and I was just 12, when my dad informed me that my brother was diagnosed with autism. I, unaware of the situation, asked why they didn’t give him a shot or medicine, but my parents told me there wasn’t a cure yet. I just wanted my brother to like me but I didn’t know how to help.

My brother was constantly screaming and hitting everyone and I was always embarrassed to go out in public with him. Then it hit me that he is family and people will learn to accept the way he is. I still did not understand his condition fully, but I realized I overreacted. No one looked at him funny or gave him the evil eye so I just sat back and sighed in relief.

Two years past and my brother started receiving therapy. He was more mellow and happy from what I could see and I had learned a lot more about autism. I learned my brother needed help with social skills, and I know for a fact I was determined to help him! However, it was my eighth grade year everything was going great but having a brother with autism wasn’t easy. I wasn’t able to stay after school sometimes or go out with friends because of Ozzy. Aside from that, I learned to live my life with him...not without him. Taking him to the park or holding his hand while he brushed his teeth let me know I was fulfilling my goal.

Involving my brother in my everyday life is important. Seeing his smile lights up my day even, if we are going through rough times. Falling on the floor or getting hurt on purpose just makes him laugh hysterically, that has become a part of my daily routine. Going to sleep proud because I know I make my brother happy...that’s when I feel accomplished!

Even though, there is no date as to when my brother will talk, it would be nice to wake up and find him talking! Hope...that’s what goes through not just my brain, but all family members of a child with autism. If therapy goes well and my brother finally starts expressing himself in any form that’s when life would be complete. Until then, my brother is still the amazing brother I started out with! I Love you, Ozzy!

System of Care Update
National Survey Confirms That Youths are Disproportionately Affected by Mental Disorders
By: Christa Peterson

A national survey has confirmed that about 20% of U.S. teenagers are affected by a mental disorder severe enough to disrupt their daily functioning. This prevalence rate for youths is significantly higher than that found for adults. The study also supports observations from surveys of adults that mental disorders most commonly start in early life.

Published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (October 2010), the survey collected face-to-face data on a representative sample of more than 10,000 teens across the nation. As well as confirming results from earlier regional studies, the survey also found that nearly half of U.S. teens exhibited signs of some diagnosable mental health problem(from mild to severe).

Underscoring the notion that mental disorders begin early in life, the research found that symptoms of anxiety disorders began by age 6, behavior disorders (such as ADHD or conduct disorder) by age 11, mood disorders by age 13, and substance use disorders by age 15. The percentage of youth suffering from mental disorders is even higher than the most frequent major physical conditions in adolescence. These results highlight the importance of developing prevention strategies and promoting early intervention for at-risk children and adolescents. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry provides more information for families on preventing and treating mental disorders in children and adolescents at http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families.
Changing Lives
By: Stephanie Vrsnik

Nevada PEP is excited to partner with the Changing Lives community fund. The Changing Lives community fund is making a difference in Southern Nevada by supporting our new Sibshop program. For more information on our Sibshop program, contact Nevada PEP or go to www.nvpep.org. We are so proud to be bringing this valuable program to our community. Thank you Changing Lives community fund for your dedication to our community.

Congratulations PEP Staff Anniversaries

Nevada PEP has a wonderful team. Their dedication and longevity to Nevada PEP is truly admired and recognized. The following staff members have made their anniversaries in the past months at the Central Office: Natalie Filipic 8 years, Dorena Ash 7 years, Havander Davis 1 year, Dorrhita Coleman 2 years, Teri Kirby 3 years, Kathy Treants 6 years. (left to right)

Reno Satellite Office:
Samantha King 3 years, Judy Martin 2 years, Ron Kopicko 5 years, Retta Dermody 14 years, Cheri Day 4 years. (left to right)

Central Office:
Chad Uhl 1 year, Robin Renshaw 13 years (bottom), Santiago De La Torre 2 years, Lupe Alveraz 1 year & Robin Kincaid 13 years. (left to right)

I spoke with my son’s middle school math teacher and he said that he did not know my son had an IEP. Are all of my son’s teachers supposed to read his IEP?

According to IDEA 300.342(b)(2), it is required that the IEP of each child with a disability is available to each regular education teacher (as well as each special education teacher, related service provider, and other service provider) who is responsible for implementing the IEP. Each teacher and provider are informed of their specific responsibilities related to implementing the IEP and the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child.

To learn more about the IEP process, visit our website to sign up for trainings at www.nvpep.org.
¿Qué es la Intervención temprana?
Revisado por Guadalupe Henríquez

Cuando los niños, de edades 0-2 necesitan ayuda adicional en diferentes áreas, tales como caminar o hablar, los servicios de intervención temprana puede hacer una gran diferencia. Una vez que un niño es elegible, los padres y los profesionales pueden trabajar juntos como miembros del equipo para crear un plan que ayudará al niño. Este plan individualizado identifica los servicios que un niño y su familia van a recibir. La siguiente información puede ser útil para identificar los pasos necesarios para comenzar a recibir servicios de intervención temprana:

• El Plan de Servicio Familiar Individualizado (IFSP) debe desarrollarse dentro de los 45 días siguientes a la remisión o la primera llamada a un programa de intervención temprana.

• Los puntos Fuertes del niño y sus necesidades son escritas y los resultados/objetivos se desarrollan para el niño. El plan se basa en la evaluación y las evaluaciones del niño y incluye las preocupaciones de las familias para sus hijos. Los servicios pueden ser de instrucción o de enseñanza al niño como jugar con los juguetes o la terapia como el habla o terapia física.

• El IFSP enumera la frecuencia con que se presentan los servicios, así como donde los servicios van a ser localizados.

• Si los padres no están de acuerdo con el IFSP, pueden solicitar otra reunión para discutir el tema o aprender más sobre los derechos de los padres bajo los Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA).

• Dentro de los 30 días siguientes a la terminación y el acuerdo de los padres, todos los servicios mencionados deben ser proporcionados. Como mínimo, el IFSP debe ser revisado cada seis meses. Los padres pueden solicitar una revisión y añadir o hacer cambios cada vez que piensen que sea necesario. El IFSP debe ser actualizado una vez al año para determinar el progreso del niño en los resultados y establecer nuevas metas.

Servicios de intervención temprana pueden ayudar a los niños que han mostrado las demoras para avanzar y estar listo para el preescolar. Para obtener más información visítenos en nypep.org!
What Do You Want to Do After High School?

By: Kathy Treants

During the high school years for many students with disabilities, this question often comes up in the conversation...What do you want to do after high school? Transition assessments can help answer that question.

Parents may want to ask some questions to understand how transition assessments will be used in the planning process and how the results are included in the IEP:

- Which transition assessments are appropriate for my child and their type of disability?
- When does the transition process begin and how often are the transition assessments given?
- Are assessments provided in different environments?
- Who is responsible for administering and interpreting the transition assessments?
- Have assistive technology or accommodations been considered and used in the assessments?
- When are assessments results reviewed?

Although the student is the focus of the transition assessment process, family members should also play a key role in transition assessments. Family members are often the foundation of transition planning for all children and are encouraged to actively participate in this process. Sharing unique information about their child’s strengths, needs and interests is a way to become involved. Investing time in learning more about transition will produce valuable information and help in future decision making for families.

Visit nvpep.org to register for Nevada PEP’s transition classes or webinars.

Federal and State regulations support the requirement for transition assessments. The Nevada Administrative Code, 388.284, states, Beginning not later than the first individualized educational program which is in effect when the pupil is 16 years of age and in annual updates thereafter: 1. Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills.

Information acquired in the transition assessments help the IEP team (including the student and the parents) to make course of study decisions. Transition assessment data is also used to develop IEP goals and objectives or coordinated set of activities for the transition sections of the IEP. In addition, transition assessments are an excellent way to learn about individual students including their strengths outside of academics and their career goals.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit. -Aristotle
Requirement: A Transition Plan
By: Robin Renshaw

The transition from high school to young adulthood is a significant change for all students. For students with disabilities, a written transition plan is required that includes extra planning and goal setting. All students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will begin talking with their IEP team at age 14 about their ideas for the future. Transition Plans must contain transition goals and services for the student based on a high school student’s individual needs, strengths, skills, and interests. It is also used to identify and develop goals which need to be accomplished during the current school year to assist the student in meeting their post-high school goals.

At Nevada PEP, we offer a webinar regarding transition called, “Navigating through Transition.” This training provides parents and students information by using the guide “Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?” In reviewing the rules and regulations, participants will learn to develop a transition plan which can involve other agencies.

Both students and parents will find this training helpful as students move towards college, employment, and living independently.

To register for this training and others, please visit our website. Our Nevada PEP brochure, To Catch a Dream is also great resource for students to learn how the transition process will help identify their goals and dreams for the future.

You can find the brochure at http://www.nvpep.org/publications/category/9-transition-publications.html

Practicing good study skills and time management can also be very useful once school starts. The workload in college may be larger than in high school, and students can easily get behind. Don’t forget to have fun! Do a little research and find a club, activity, sport or organization to be a part of. Meeting new people and making new friends is all a part of the experience!
Welcome to our newest edition of the Hand in Hand Together We Can Appreciation Program! This program honors and recognizes the extraordinary people who have made a difference in our lives and in the lives of our children with special needs. We have wonderful and truly devoted people throughout the state of Nevada who have given that extra hand to help our children. So sit back and enjoy these heartfelt stories!

cassipelfrey
Coach

Coach Cassi is coaching the Shining Stars special needs team, at 5 Star Athletics Cheerleading in Reno. It is the first special needs team in Northern Nevada. Although she is a very busy college student, working more than job to pay for classes and coaching another team, she volunteers her time to coach our kids. Every Sunday afternoon finds her gently encouraging our stars to “just give it a try.” She practically throws a party when a new skill is learned, “I knew you could do it! Great job!” I am using this nomination to throw her the same praise, “Great job, Cassi!”

Yvette Hansen
Parent

Guadalupe Henriquez
Nevada PEP

Le agradecemos a Lupita por todo su apoyo hacia nosotros. Lupita es una persona que esta luchando dia con dia para que nosotros tengamos la información necesaria y así poder continuar ayudando a nuestro hijo Alfredo. Gracias Lupita.

We want to thanks Lupita for all her support to us. Lupita is a person who is fighting day to day so we can have all the necessary information so that way we can continue helping our son, Alfredo. Thank you Lupita.

Maria B. Lucero
Parent

Erin D’Astolfo-Mesa
Coach

Coach Erin is one of the coaches for the Shining Stars special needs cheer team, at 5 Star Athletics. Erin is like a superhero with a secret identity; teacher by day, super coach at night and on weekends. She never runs out of encouragement, and won’t take the word “can’t” for an answer! My daughter was injured (not at cheerleading) at the beginning of the season, and as she has healed and started back to tumbling, Erin has never failed to encourage her to keep trying and get over her fears. Thanks to Erin, my daughter has not given up! Her first cheer meet was on January 28th, and Coach Erin is very proud!

Yvette Hansen
Parent

Mary Ellen Horan
Executive Director of VSA Arts of Nevada

It is with great pleasure that Nevada PEP honors Mary Ellen Horan as a recipient for Nevada PEP’s “Hand and Hand” appreciation award for her dedication to families, children and adults with special needs, and the community as a whole.

Mary Ellen has been the Executive Director of VSA Arts of Nevada since 1986. Mary Ellen has a small but dedicated staff, enthusiastic volunteers, and 12 committed board members. With Mary Ellen’s leadership VSAN provides 3,000 hands-on art workshops each year in hospitals, after-school facilities, nursing homes, homeless shelters and in over 100 special and general education classrooms.

In 2004, Mary Ellen was instrumental in raising the funds and coordinating the move and extensive renovation of the historical Lakes Mansion to its present location. The mansion now serves as the non-profit’s administrative office, a house museum, a rental facility for events and a program site for VSAN workshops and activities for children and adults with and without disabilities.

Mary Ellen has served at the national level on the VSA arts board of directors representing all 50 states. She was awarded the Governor’s Millennium Award in the Arts and Humanities for Distinguished Service in the Arts, a State Historic Preservation Office award for preserving Nevada’s rich heritage, a Senatorial Recognition, a Business and the Arts Award for visionary and unique support of the Arts, the City of Reno’s Historic Preservation Award, and a Preserve Nevada’s Nevada Heritage Award for the careful and thoughtful preservation of the Heritage of Nevada.

Mary Ellen is a visionary and leader in our community. She has opened the door for “all” families, children, and adults to share their talents and strengths to make our community beautiful place to live.

Mary Ellen Horan
Parent

Nevada PEP
It is with admiration that Nevada PEP honors Rorie Fitzpatrick as a recipient for Nevada PEP’s “Hand and Hand” appreciation award for all she has done to support student achievement and parent engagement throughout Nevada.

Rorie’s passion for children with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who support them developed in the mid-90s, when she was supervising environmental education camps for middle school students, and worked to support inclusion of students with special education needs. Knowing that inclusion was a critical issue for our society, Rorie has dedicated her career to embracing diversity and meeting the needs of unique learners. Rorie has been and educator for over 20 years, for much of that time Nevada PEP has worked side by side with Rorie to increase parent engagement activities at all levels of education. Rorie is a respected leader both in Nevada and nationally. Rorie knowledge and passion for excellence in education shows in all that she does.

Rorie Fitzpatrick was recently named the Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research, and Evaluation Programs at the Nevada Department of Education. We know that in her new position, she will focus on educating “all” children; and she will continue to enhance the partnership opportunities for educators and parents.

Rorie Fitzpatrick
Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research, and Evaluation Programs
Nevada Department of Education

Melinda Jensen
Teacher

Melinda Jensen, CLS Teacher, at Reed H.S. Melinda has streamlined the CLS Program and provided innovative job skills, workstations and academic workstations as well. This has increased my son’s participation and given us new goals to write in his IEP. She has advocated for my son and provided training and support to others that will benefit Kevin both in and outside of the classroom.

Melinda’s communication has been wonderful. It has made it so I am aware of what is going on in my son’s school life.

I have walked into the classroom numerous times and noticed how quiet, structured, and on task the classroom was and seeing my son working on accomplishing the goals set forth. We recently had a meeting and my son had his PSP (Playstation Portable Gaming System) with him to help at the meeting, mind you this is a preferable activity during meetings, and he decided to put away his game and go over to start work at a work station. Then before we headed out my son got on the computer, not to surf the internet, but to start one of the “AT” programs and started working through it. How AWESOME is this as Parent and Teacher to see your son/student progressing forward like this.

I give my heartfelt “THANKS” to Melinda for helping Kevin progress forward in a positive and meaningful way.

Thea Westin
Parent

Cheryl Jung
Advocate

We would like to thank a person who has become an angel and the voice of all the parents who she has helped through the IEP’s by advocating and fighting for our children’s rights. Thanks for being not only an advocate but a great human being and awesome friend.

Luis Villalobos & Olivia Espinoza
Parents

Lana Lee
Teacher

My family wishes to congratulate Lana Lee and help her celebrate 30 years of teaching at Helen J Stewart School. This year my son is fortunate enough to be in her class. The classroom theme is “Going from good to great” and that sums up the positive attitude which has served our son and many others before him. This leads to great progress and continues to raise the bar and challenge students to reach their fullest potential. Ms. Lana is a cut above the ordinary teacher. She is so dedicated to making a significant difference in the young lives she touches. She goes above and beyond, leaving an impression that will surely last a lifetime. She is a real game changer and we love having her on our team.

Diane Lombardo and Family
Parents

Nevada PEP
Patty Cake
CORNER

By: Diane Lombardo

Turn a fall chore into family fun. Rake leaves into one giant pile. Dive in. Kids will love the feel of the crisp leaves. Pets will enjoy it too. The children will love matching the endless shapes and colors. Glue leaves to poster board for an original arts and craft project for the entire family. Everyone will be happy to be included in the yard work while benefiting by great exercise and healthy fresh air.

Diane Lombardo
Nevada PEP

I have been volunteering for two years and I love volunteering at Nevada PEP every Friday. Volunteering for Diane is like getting the very best hug. She is always cheerful, helpful and nice. She understands my disability and treats me like a human being. She has me do projects I am comfortable doing. I will keep volunteering as long as I can.

Natasha Young
Volunteer

Eric Medlin
President- Digital Pros

We would like to nominate Eric Medlin for our prestigious Hand in Hand Award. Eric has been so gracious in donating his time and knowledge to Nevada PEP, he has helped us with our server and Tech support. Eric has his own business that keeps him very busy, but he always finds time to volunteer for Nevada PEP and help us out whenever we call him. Nevada PEP sends a big Thank you to Eric for his expertise and time.

Nevada PEP Family

Dr. Dennis Moore II M.D.
Pediatrician

Dr. Moore is an awesome, passionate, and loving Doctor. He is the best pediatrician to care for children, especially those who have many disabilities. Dr. Moore goes above and beyond to care for his patients unlike many other Doctors. Dr. Moore’s knowledge about Autism, ADHD, and other disabilities is super. When visiting Dr. Moore you are able to see how passionate he is about what he does. So I say to all Dr. Dennis Moore is the best.

Ola Jones
Parent
Cassi Pelfrey
Coach

Coach Cassi is coaching the Shining Stars special needs team, at 5 Star Athletics Cheerleading in Reno. It is the first special needs team in Northern Nevada. Although she is a very busy college student, working more than job to pay for classes and coaching another team, she volunteers her time to coach our kids. Every Sunday afternoon finds her gently encouraging our stars to “just give it a try.” She practically throws a party when a new skill is learned,”I knew you could do it! Great job!” I am using this nomination to throw her the same praise, “Great job, Cassi!”

Yvette Hansen
Parent

Ms. Johnson-Walker
4th Grade Teacher

The person that I truly appreciate the most this year in my son’s life is his teacher Ms. Johnson-Walker. She has been a great help to me in every way possible with my son. Ms. Johnson-Walker has given me great advice from personal experiences in her life. I just love who she is as a person and as my son’s 4th grade teacher. I truly Thank God for placing her in our life. She is an Angel from heaven that has been a great support. She has hung in there with my son when others would have given up. Thank you for being who you are Ms. Johnson-Walker.

Rito Erik Murguia
Husband

My husband has always supported me with my son. He has always been concerned about him. My husband looks for extra activities for my son to do, such as football. My son has much respect for him. My husband is the one who controls him and he listens. I am very grateful and very happy to have my husband in my life. My son has changed much because of him.

Mi esposo siempre me a apoyado con mi hijo. El siempre se preocupa mucho por el. Mi esposo le busca actividades extras como el futbol. Mi hijo le tiene mucho respeto a el. Mi esposo es el que lo controla y lo escucha. Estoy muy agradecida y muy contenta de tener a mi esposo en mi vida. Mi hijo a cambiado mucho por el.

Jacqueline Murguia
Mother
Thank you to all of our amazing Hand in Hand Sponsors for their generous support. Their contribution continues to make it possible to honor and recognize the extraordinary people who support Nevada’s children and families. For more information on becoming a Hand in Hand sponsor, contact Nevada PEP or go to www.nvpep.org

Platinum Sponsors

Glen & Ande Christenson

Gold Sponsors

William Filipic

Silver Sponsors

Andrew and Patricia Leavitt
Scott & Ariel Linker

“Encourage your kids because you have no idea what they are truly capable of.” -Unknown-

Debbie Pillman
Parent
Ms. Pillman has dedicated her life to the care and healing of children with disabilities. As a foster parent and advocate for children with special needs she has made a positive difference in the lives of others every day. I could not say enough to communicate how amazing Debbie is to our community, our county and our state. She is my hero.

Kathie Smith
VP Student Activates & Attendance
Kathy Smith, Vice Principal, has been a positive influence at Reed H.S. Kathy has kept the communication open and has answered any concerns I’ve had. She has made sure our IEP’s have gone smoothly and gives support to not only me, but to my son’s Teachers. The positive influence that she has made has enhanced the CLS Program. Thank you Kathy!

Sharon Winkelmann
Community Partner

Thea Westin
Parent

Katherine Stansberry
Nevada PEP
It’s nice to have a person who truly understands what your circumstances really are. I had been fighting so long with my children’s schools, therapists, welfare workers, family members, etc. to see that spark in their eyes when the light bulb finally switches on. However, I didn’t see that in anyone’s eyes, all I saw was doubt and disbelief. When Katherine first sat down with me at my kitchen table and listened to me explain what I needed. She looked at me and smiled and the most wonderful words came out of her mouth “I understand”. That was when my life first started to turn around. There are no words to express my gratitude and thanks.

Stacie Williams
Parents
The “Hand in Hand, Together We Can” appreciation program recognizes those individuals who have made a positive difference in the lives of children with disabilities. Nevada PEP would like to help you give recognition to a special person for their outstanding efforts. You may nominate a teacher, professional, therapist, family member or someone whose efforts have had a positive impact on a child’s life. All nominees will be honored with a uniquely designed lapel pin and a certificate of recognition. Their “story” will be featured in our quarterly newsletter, as well as appear in Nevada PEP’s Annual “Hand in Hand” Yearbook. Please limit your entries to ONE nominee per form and no more than three nominations a year per family. Please limit each story to one hundred words or less.

Your Name: _________________________________________________________
Your Address: ________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code: _________________________________________________
Your Phone, Email, Fax (optional) ______________________________________

Your permission to use your name and print your story: □ yes □ no

Name of Honoree: ____________________________________________________
Honoree’s Address: ___________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code: _________________________________________________
Honoree’s Phone Number: ____________________________________________

Please write your story about this special person here:
Annual Membership Information
Annual membership dues are $25.00 per family, organization or professional.

Please provide the following information

NAME

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE    ZIP

PHONE    email

CHILD’S NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

☐ I am a parent/caregiver.
☐ I am a professional working with children.
☐ I am a concerned member of the community.
☐ Enclosed is a tax deductible donation in the amount of $__________ to help support the efforts of Nevada PEP.
☐ I would like to be a member of Nevada PEP, please waive the annual dues.
☐ I would like to volunteer.
☐ I would like to receive the monthly E-POST.

Nevada PEP, Inc. is an independent non-profit tax exempt organization. #88-0301113

Please make checks payable to: Nevada PEP

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Nevada PEP Social Networks

VISIT US ONLINE AT www.nvpep.org

“What the mind of man can conceive and believe, the mind of man can achieve.” - Napolean Hill

Nevada PEP is a participating agency for:

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Mission Statement
To increase the opportunities for home, community, and school success for children with disabilities, including those who are at risk or who have serious emotional disturbances, their families and their service providers, through education, encouragement and empowerment activities.