2014 Yearbook

Celebrating a collection of stories honoring those who make a difference for children and their families.

nvpep.org

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NEVADA PEP ii
Strengthening Families with Education • Empowerment • Encouragement
# Governing Board

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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Trish Leavitt</td>
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<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>Terri Peltier</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Nilza Shellhamer</td>
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<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>Juanita Matz</td>
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<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Doug Whitener</td>
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WHAT IS NEVADA PEP?

PEP is Nevada’s statewide Parent Training and Information Center for families who have children with disabilities and the professionals who support them. Nevada PEP is also the Statewide Family Network for families who have children with emotional and behavioral health needs. Nevada PEP believes that the family is the fundamental unit in society. Our philosophy is that children with disabilities, without regard for the nature and severity of the disability, have an inherent value, that all life has a purpose, that communities benefit from providing appropriate interventions and that individuals with disabilities make valuable contributions to society.

WHAT SERVICES DOES PEP OFFER?

- Information and Referral
- Statewide Lending Library
- Annual Newsletters
- Monthly E-Newsletters
- Conflict Resolution Support
- Individual Assistance
- Training Workshops
- Volunteer Opportunities

WHO SHOULD CALL?

- Parents of children with special needs, illness, and disabilities
- Parents of children with mental health needs
- Parents needing encouragement and support from other parents
- Family members, friends and persons with disabilities
- Professionals in the medical, educational, and human service fields
- Community Leaders who make decisions about programs of support for children with disabilities and their families

OUR MISSION

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.

“If it was not for PEP’s service, we would have no support and education in knowing what to do to get help for our son. We feel that Nevada PEP is extremely valuable for our family and many others.” ~Parent
FUNDAMENTAL GOALS

ONE
Nevada PEP will be a long-term reliable statewide resource to families and the individuals who support them by providing information, support, and training programs to empower them to better advocate for the needs of their children, adolescents, and young adults.

TWO
Nevada PEP will assist families and the individuals who support them to better understand the nature and needs of disabilities. Adolescents and young adults will understand their strengths and weakness and how to advocate themselves.

THREE
Nevada PEP will conduct community outreach and public awareness activities to families, professionals, organizations, and traditionally underserved populations that directly or indirectly work with children with disabilities and their families to raise awareness of available support, link families with other families in similar circumstance, encourage community acceptance and enhance the family centered community-based service delivery.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

• We believe that children, adolescents, and young adults have a right to access appropriate intervention as well as participate in all opportunities accompanied with membership in their own community.

• We believe that children, adolescents, and young adults reach their full potential when families and professionals build a partnership based on trust and respect.

• We believe that children, adolescents, and young adults and their families deserve the opportunity to live, learn, and participate fully in their communities.

• We believe that the family is the child’s first and best teacher, that professionals must be sought after as experts in their fields to enhance the family.

• We believe that the family’s strengths, weakness, and cultures must be respected to meet the true needs of the family.

• We believe that information, support, and training enrich and empower families and professionals.

• We believe that every person has an unrealized potential for growth and that services should be designed to maximize that potential.

• We believe that a diverse culture is essential in an interdependent world, and we believe in acknowledging, embracing, and respecting diversity.

• We believe that it is crucial that families participate in policy-making decisions at the local, state, and national levels to guide the development of meaningful services that are family-driven.
Volunteer Connection

The gift of time is priceless and Nevada PEP sincerely appreciates every one of our VIP volunteers. PEP volunteers are simply the BEST and their continued loyalty to PEP’s mission is admirable. Likewise, our volunteers consistently let us know that they value the rewarding feeling they gain from contributing time and effort to an organization that truly cares about others. Nevada PEP provides opportunities for families, youth, school groups, and other community members to give back by volunteering. Volunteers are always needed statewide at Nevada PEP! Apply online or visit one of our offices for details.

CRS Volunteers Make A Difference!

Our Community Resource Specialist Volunteers are parents and professionals who represent Nevada PEP by providing information about PEP services and resources at community events, assisting in parent training and providing public awareness in their own communities throughout the State of Nevada.

VIP Program Very Important Partners!

Nevada PEP has provided our Very Important Partners with volunteer experiences in our Central and Satellite PEP offices. Parents, students and community partners, including our school groups, have volunteered their time in business related activities, community-based activities and back to school fairs. Not only does Nevada PEP benefit from their assistance, the VIP volunteer learns new skills and experiences that will contribute to their success in future opportunities.

My name is Chris Stroum, and at twenty-three years old, I am one of Nevada PEPs many volunteers. I have been volunteering with the non-profit group for close to three years now and I have much to thank them for. When I first came to Nevada PEP, I was a college student who didn’t really like the idea of having a “job”, though my parents insisted that it was time for me to start thinking about work. After much convincing, they convinced me to begin the volunteering program at Nevada PEP, where I had already been volunteering in the “Include Me” puppet program.

Since then, I have learned many things with the help of Nevada PEP, who have helped me to realize that my parents were right: work can be a beneficial, enriching experience all around. Thanks to Nevada PEP, my parents no longer have to convince me that I need to work, I want to work. Now as I prepare to graduate from community college in less than a week, I feel great confidence in my work-related skills going into the adult world of job hunting, thanks to this great group of people.

Thank you Nevada PEP for all you have done for me and my family.
“Nevada PEP invites us to trainings, webinars, support groups and community activities which are valuable in helping us help our son. These services have helped our family to support our son in being more successful.” ~Parent
As the Chairperson of the Nevada PEP Governing Board, I am proud to share with you the 2014 Hand in Hand Together We Can yearbook. The Hand in Hand program began in 2002, Nevada PEP wanted to find a way to recognize and honor special people who have made a positive difference in the lives of children with disabilities. I invite you to take a few moments and enjoy reading these uplifting stories, and see how one person can change a families’ life.

Nevada PEP has had a busy and productive year; one of Nevada PEP’s accomplishments was collaborating with the Nevada Department of Education and the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED) on the 2nd Annual Nevada Transition Conference, Youth In Transition...Preparing for Tomorrow. Nevada PEP had the opportunity to educate over 300 professionals, parents, and young adults on best practices in the transition planning process. Another milestone was participating in the NevAEYC State Early Childhood Conference; with the theme “Investigative Play; The Key to Early Childhood Success”, Nevada PEP offered trainings to parents & professionals on ways for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behaviors.

The highlight of the year was Nevada PEP’s Statewide Annual Run Walk Roll Against Bullying kicking off October as National Bullying Awareness month. The event was a success spreading the message throughout the state about bullying prevention. We are looking forward to the 5th Annual Run Walk Roll on September 26th and we invite everyone to come out and take a stand against bullying. The month of October Nevada PEP collaborated with schools statewide and offered information on Bullying Prevention and delivered Bullying Prevention Banners generously sponsored by Bank of America, schools displayed the banners for the month of October demonstrating that their school is a Bully Free School.

Nevada PEP is looking forward to another busy and productive year. Nevada PEP will continue to educate, encourage, and empower our families and keep true to our mission. Information and guidance is a critical component in keeping families together. Our services are about empowering families to be life-long advocates for their children through education and skill building. Nevada PEP recognizes that parents are experts on their children; but must learn about disabilities, intervention needs, and how to develop a support system to meet those needs. Nevada PEP continues to grow with each family we support.

On behalf of Nevada PEP, we are grateful to our community partners, our dedicated volunteers and generous donors who continue to support and believe in our mission. Helping families and working together we are building a successful community for all.

Sam Lieberman, Nevada PEP Governing Board Chair
COMMUNITY TRAININGS

Nevada PEP offers training opportunities for parents, students, and professionals throughout Nevada. Core training topics include Understanding ADHD, IEP Clinics, Positive Behavioral Interventions, Bullying Prevention, and Literacy workshops. In collaboration with our community partners, we provide trainings to educate the community and to reach more families who have children with disabilities. The information offered in the trainings helps families learn about best practices and how to advocate for services for their children. Trainings are presented in both English and Spanish.

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<th>Statewide Training Certificates</th>
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<td>Nevada Preschool Registry - 783</td>
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3,156 Individuals participated in the training workshops

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The materials you received at the workshop were of high quality. ....Yes, 96%

The information you received from the workshop was very useful. ....Yes, 96%

Because of the information you received at the workshop, were you able to make the decisions needed about your child’s education? ....Yes, 96%

Because of the information you received at the workshop, do you feel you are more knowledgeable about how to work with schools? ....Yes, 92%

To what extent have you shared the information you received from the Parent Center with other families? ....Yes, 76%
“I am very grateful to Nevada PEP. Thanks to them, I am informed and I feel supported, I can help my son more, to motivate him and seek new goals and ways to take him forward.” ~Parent

Nevada PEP encourages volunteers, board members, and family members to be involved in their communities. Students, parents, professionals, and the general public have donated 5,401 hours of valuable service to Nevada PEP. Volunteers provide office assistance by helping with general office tasks: answering telephones, copying, faxing, assisting with bulk mail, filing office forms, and assembling training packets. Volunteers assist with community fairs, special events, outreach, public awareness, trainings, and support groups. Nevada PEP encourages family and student involvement on task forces, focus groups, and at committee meetings. Thank you to all of the valuable volunteers who contributed to Nevada PEP!
SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS

Nevada PEP provides support services by first providing Information & Referral Services and helping parents find their way through the maze of services.

Another important support service is Individual Assistance, which targets the specific needs of the individual or family. If a family requires additional support, Nevada PEP attends Education, Wraparound, or Child & Family Team meetings.

68% Responded that the information received from PEP they shared with other families.

71% Responded that the information they received helped address a critical need related to their child’s education.

92% Responded that because of the information they received from Nevada PEP, they are more knowledgeable about how to work with schools.

96% Responded that the information and support from their PEP contact was very useful.

100% Responded that the information they received from PEP helped them make decisions about their child’s education.

Home Visits 27
Child Family Team 317
Education Meetings 637
New "Intakes" Families 1,159
New Individual Assistance Contacts 10,170
Individual Assistance Contacts 18,123
New Individuals Contacting PEP 3,208
COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PUBLIC AWARENESS

Nevada PEP provides outreach presentations for service providers, professional organizations and parent groups throughout Nevada. By educating community members, Nevada PEP continually enhances understanding of the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Top 10 Reasons People Contact Nevada PEP

- Family Support: 32%
- Advocacy: 20%
- Behavior Issues: 16%
- Special Education/IEPs: 12%
- Disability: 8%
- Assessments: 5%
- Transition: 3%
- Best Practice: 2%
- Related Services: 2%
- Family Involvement: 1%

140 Number of public forums, information fairs, & community outreach events
95,097 Number of yearly Website hits at nvpep.org
77 Number of committees to which Nevada PEP representatives provided the parent perspective
348 Number of meetings attended to enhance the support systems for children with special needs and their families
216,899 Number of E-Newsletters sent
259 Number of schools visited across Nevada
Gender of Children Helped
Male - 68%
Female - 32%

Ages of Children Helped
- 0 through 2: 37%
- 3 through 5: 7%
- 6 through 11: 21%
- 12 through 14: 24%
- 15 through 18: 7%
- 19 through 21: 3%
- 22 through 26: 1%

Ethnicities of Consumers
- Caucasian: 48%
- Hispanic: 25%
- African American: 10%
- Asian: 2%
- Not Determined: 14%
- Native American: 1%

Consumer Relationships
- Parents: 72%
- Service Providers: 6%
- General Public: 7%
- Advocates: 4%
- Special Educators: 3%
- Foster Parents: 3%
- Other Educators: 3%
- Students: 1%
- Surrogate Parents: 1%
- Other Relatives: <1%
- Other: <1%
Nevada PEP has formed strong relationships throughout the community with corporations, professional organizations, and individuals. It is only through the ongoing support of our community partners that we continue to grow. Our greatest need is for corporate sponsors. In giving to Nevada PEP, you will be rewarded with a lifetime of achievement and partnership.

“If it was not for PEP’s service, we would have no support and education in knowing what to do to get help for our son. We feel that Nevada PEP is extremely valuable for our family and many others.”
~Parent

To Donate securely on the Internet
Visit our website @ [www.nvpep.org](http://www.nvpep.org)
**MAJOR FUNDERS**

- MGM Resorts Foundation
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Nevada Department of Education
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
- Nevada Division of Child and Family Services
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration
- Wells Fargo Foundation

**INDIVIDUAL FUNDERS**

- A & J Ledstrom
- Amy & James Leavitt
- Assemblyman Richard Carrillo
- Barbara Ryan
- Chonie & Robert Marshall
- Erik & Bryce Loveland
- Francine Mannix
- Helen Jo & Seaynoah Mayfield
- Judge Cheryl Moss
- Judge Michelle Leavitt
- Julie Beasley, Ph.D.
- Lavetta & Stephen Schneider
- Mikey Beals
- Robert Marshall
- Robin & Dean Bryan
- Sandy & John Linton
- Trish & Andy Leavitt

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

- Abbott’s Custom Printing
- AdVenturedome
- AMC Theatre
- Andre Agassi College
- Preparatory Academy
- Atlantis Hotel & Casino
- Bank of America
- Barnes & Noble
- Big Dogs
- Big Five Sporting Goods
- BJ’s Restaurant
- Blue Ribbon Trophies
- Bob’s Autodynamics
- Bonnie Springs Ranch
- Broken Bonez MC
- Brownstein/Hyatt/Farber/Schreck
- Burger King
- Capriotti’s Sandwich Shop
- Catholic Diocese of Las Vegas
- Caughlin Athletic Club
- Century 21 Theater
- Cheesecake Factory
- Children’s Advocacy Alliance
- Chili’s Restaurant
- Chuck E. Cheese
- Cici’s Pizza
- Claim Jumper
- Coffee Bean & Tea
- COLOR Salon by Michael Boychuck
- Creative Kids Preschool
- Critter Gitters Pest Control
- CVS Caremark
- Cycle Gear
- Dahm Yoga
- David Barton Gym
- Denny’s Restaurant
- Disneyland Resorts
- Domino’s Pizza
- Eldorado Hotel & Casino
- Famous Dave’s Bar-B-Que
- Findlay Toyota
- Flamingo East Barber Shop
- Flip-n-Out
- Food 4 Less
- Freestyle Fitness
- Frontier Financial Credit Union
- Gold Dust West
- Gordon Biersch Brewery
- Grimaldi’s Pizzeria
- Grocery Outlet
- HELP of Southern Nevada
- Henderson Library
- Hollywood Nails
- Home Depot
- IG&T
- IHOP Restaurant
- Imperial Wine
- In-n-Out Burgers
- JBE Systems
- John Mulls Road Kill Grill
- Judge Frank Sullivan
- Kabuki Japanese Restaurant
- Kids Quest
- Kinder Care
- King Putt Indoor Mini Golf
- Knights of Columbus
- Kona Grill
- KRVN News 4
- Lake Mead Cruises
- Las Vegas 51’s
- Las Vegas Mini Grand Prix
- Leather Headquarters
- Lee’s Discount Liquor
- Levy Restaurant Group
- Lied Discovery Children’s Museum
- Lotus Broadcasting
- LUSH Cosmetics
- Macayo’s Mexican Restaurant
- Magic 95.5
- Magic Carpet Golf
- Marie Callender’s
- Mojave Mental Health
- Mojave Mental Health
- Montevista Hospital
- Mountain Circle Family Services
- My Left Foot
- Natures Bakery
- Nevada Health Co-op
- Nevada State Bank
- Nothing Bundt Cakes
- NV Energy
- O School Choppers
- Olive Garden Restaurant
- Outback Steakhouse
- Parent Teacher Aids
- Peppermill Resort Hotel
- Pump it Up
- Rachel’s Kitchen
- Red Lobster Restaurant
- Red Rock Harley
- Red Rock Running
- Reed High School
- REI Sporting Goods
- Reno Aces
- Reno Bighorns
- Richard Harris Law Firm
- Rollin Bonz RC
- Roy’s Restaurant
- RSG Consulting
- Sam’s Club
- Sands Regency/ Fuzio
- Scheels
- Scolari’s Food & Drug
- Scooters Pub
- Seaworld San Diego
- Serenity Mental Health
- Siena Spa/Hotel Casino
- Sky Top Vending
- Skyzone
- Smith’s Food & Drug
- Southwest Airlines
- Southwest Gas
- SPI Entertainment
- Sport’s Authority
- Spring Mountain Treatment Center
- Springs Preserve
- Squeeze In
- Starlite Bowl
- Steam Maxx Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning
- Summerlin Las Vegas Baseball Club LLC
- Sunrise Casablanca
- Target
- TC’s Rib Crib
- Terry Fator Productions
- The Hills Preschool
- The Liquor Outlet
- The Lovas Center
- The Note-Ables
- The Quad Resort and Casino
- Trader’s Joe’s
- Uniform Sports
- United Site Services
- Vegas Indoor Skydiving
- Voo Doo Zip Line
- Walmart #2593
- Walmart #3254
- Western Village
- Wild Creek Golf Corse
- Wild Island Family Adventure Park
- Willow Springs
- Yogurt Beach

Thank you to our anonymous donors. We are truly grateful for your continued support.
I would like to congratulate the 2014 Hand in Hand Together We Can honorees. This appreciation program celebrates the generous giving of extraordinary Nevadans who go above and beyond to make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families. Nevada PEP has provided this program as a way to voice appreciation and highlight the outstanding individuals who make a difference. As I review each nomination that grateful families submit, I am reminded of how one act of kindness, no matter how big or how small, can make a remarkable difference for children and families.

This year we have begun to see a Federal and State focus on the integration of individuals with disabilities in their home, work and community life. This dream of full community integration cannot happen without community acceptance and engagement. I know that the nominees and the families who recognized them are one of the first waves in this important disability movement. The nominations give hope as neighbors, friends, educators and service providers positively impact the lives of our children.

This appreciation program is made possible because of the wonderful donors who give the resources needed to support the Hand in Hand Together We Can activities throughout the year. Nevada PEP celebrates the selfless sponsors as they make it possible to publically recognize the acts of kindness of the nominated individuals.

On behalf of the Nevada PEP volunteers and staff, congratulations to the deserving individuals who are included in this yearbook. This collection of stories shows us that we can all make a difference for children and families which strengthens our communities and our State.

With Appreciation,

Karen Taycher
Executive Director
Dear Nevada PEP Members,

I am pleased to join you in congratulating the dedicated men and women being honored with this year’s "Hand in Hand Together We Can" awards. They have selflessly given their time and talents to help children with disabilities grow, learn, and lead more rewarding lives. They have also provided support, education, and advocacy for families of these children so all involved could meet and overcome the challenges that we can only imagine.

I was introduced to PEP by my friend Regent Sam Lieberman and have stayed connected to this wonderful organization through the Taycher family. I am humbled whenever I visit their facility, meet their clients, or hear their testimony on policy issues affecting children with disabilities.

That's why as a lawmaker, chairing the Disability Committee in the Nevada Senate or voting for early intervention funding in Congress. I have always tried to do my part to support programs and resources to help PEP meet its noble goals. Such government efforts are important but the work done by this year’s award recipients is critical. Without your help on the front lines and your heartfelt commitment every day. Nevada’s children with disabilities would early be left behind. And all our lives would be worse for it.

Please consider me your ally and call on me anytime in Las Vegas or Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

Member of Congress
Natalie Filipic is the mother of two and grandmother of six. As the Director of Operations, Natalie is generally responsible for the business and information management of Nevada PEP, ensuring the smooth operation of the organization’s infrastructure. Natalie enjoys the day to day routine of office management, knowing that what she does makes a difference in the lives of others.

Charlene Frost is the Statewide Family Network Director for Nevada PEP and is a Certified Parent Support Provider (CPSP). The Statewide Family Network focuses on systems change and helping families who are involved with more than one child service system, specializing in children with serious emotional disturbance and behavior disorders. As the parent of two children with emotional and behavioral disorders, Charlene has had personal experience advocating for children with special needs. Charlene has called Nevada home for over 18 years and has been an active part of the Las Vegas community working on behalf of children.

Robin Kincaid is the Director of Educational Services. Robin has over nineteen years of experience educating parents and professionals on special education law, advocacy, best practice, parent/professional collaboration, and positive behavior supports. Other responsibilities include outreach activities and individual assistance to families. Robin has served on the Interagency Coordinating Council for the past ten years, representing the parent perspective in early intervention services. As co-chair for the Families First Statewide Conference in 2007, Robin provided leadership and coordination for the conference program.

Stephanie Vrsnik is the Community Development Director. Stephanie is the mother of two and a very proud grandmother. Having a son with disability brought her to Nevada PEP. Her passion and expertise is focused on bringing public awareness and community support to Nevada PEP. “It is vital that the community supports our children to be successful contributing members of our community,” Stephanie is a member of the American Fundraising Professionals and the Alliance of Nevada Non-profits. She oversees the Annual Statewide Run Walk Roll Against Bullying event, raising awareness in the community about bullying prevention. Building a stronger community for all children is her primary goal.

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**PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

Dorithia Coleman is a Family Specialist at Nevada PEP and is a Certified Parent Support Provider (CPSP). She is a wife and mother of an incredible teenage son with special needs. Dorithia serves as a member of the State of Nevada Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Program Advisory Group. She believes that the parents are the first and best teachers of their children. Her goal is to empower families with useful strategies and provide resources that address their child’s needs through PEP.

Havander Davis is the Communications Specialist at Nevada PEP. As the Communication Specialist, he enjoys talking to families who call or come into PEP looking for help, support, and resources. “I am proud to serve an organization that enhances opportunities for those with disabilities. I am honored to be a member of the PEP family and look forward to continue to help families who have children with disabilities.”

Cheri Day is a Family Specialist working in the Satellite Office. After her own personal experience, she discovered that there is wonderful help if you know where to find it. She joined Nevada PEP after a year of working with the staff on her own IEPs to assist her children with disabilities. Her goal is to help empower others as she has been empowered through PEP.

Kelly Figueroa is a Family Specialist at Nevada PEP. She is the proud mother of five children who received information and support from Nevada PEP. She now feels empowered as an effective advocate for her children. Kelly’s goal at Nevada PEP is to support and empower families to do the same for their own children.
Bob Humphreys is one of our Transition Specialists in the Central Office. He is the father of a 21 year-old daughter with a learning disability and has a desire to assist families in the transition process from high school to post secondary education and competitive employment. He works closely with Challenger Little League and Traditional Little League by bringing the two together for all kids to enjoy, teamwork, friendship, and companionship.

Stephanie Houle is the Educational Services Manager at Nevada PEP. Stephanie is the mother of a feisty little red-head with a developmental delay. She enjoys sharing information and resources with families who also have young children with disabilities. Stephanie is grateful for the opportunity to support children and their families through education, encouragement, and empowerment activities at PEP.

Jennifer Jones is a Family Specialist working in the Satellite Office. She is a single mom of a 16 year-old son who has unique emotional needs and a learning disability. Her work at NV PEP has increased her empathy for parents and families of children with special needs in ways she could never have imagined. Jennifer shares, “I find my work at Nevada PEP extremely satisfying because I am constantly learning more as I help families with situations similar to my own.”

Belen Herrera is the Program Accountability Specialist at Nevada PEP. She makes sure the administration department stays running correctly. Her tasks include inputting memberships, donations, and many more fun things. She is always up for something new and adventurous. She enjoys helping others and PEP is a perfect fit for her. PEP does so much for families and she is proud to say she is a PEPper.
Professional Staff

Teri Kirby is the Statewide Family Network Coordinator and is a Certified Parent Support Provider (CPSP). Teri was introduced to PEP over ten years ago while seeking help for her own family. She values the opportunities to give unparalleled support back to families who face challenges in the community and schools. Helping to educate, empower, and encourage families is not only an honor, but a drive for her.

Samantha King is the Transition Specialist in the Satellite Office. She has two children with learning disabilities. She works with middle and high school students getting ready to transition into postsecondary education, employment, and independent living. She believes that life after graduation can be overwhelming and wants to do the best she can to provide families and young adults with the self-advocacy skills they need.

Ron Kopicko is the Outreach Specialist for the Satellite Office. Ron knows that families can have a difficult time looking for support. He finds it rewarding to assist families in navigating the process. Ron has been actively involved for PEP in the Washoe County Juvenile Justice system. He is a member of the Washoe County Juvenile Services “Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative”. Ron also provides training through the Reno Police Department Regional Crisis Intervention Program for Northern Nevada law enforcement agencies, focusing on children and adolescents who have severe emotional disorders. Ron is glad to be a part of PEP.

Diane Lombardo is fulfilling her lifelong dream of helping families through Nevada PEP. She moved to Las Vegas in 1986 for a better opportunity for herself and family. After seeking help for her own two boys, she began volunteering to give something back. She has been helping families at PEP for over eight years. She has a dream of one day staging a huge fundraiser and ultimately helping children with disabilities through her musical talent and PEP.
Amanda Miller is the Administrative Specialist at Nevada PEP. She loves that she is able to give back to the organization that helped her family. She has a BA in English and is looking into graduate programs that would allow her to work with children with special needs. As an individual with Asperger’s Syndrome, she made use of the accommodations provided to her while in college and she hopes to share her school and work experiences with other children and young adults with disabilities.

Erica Lozoya is the Information & Referral Specialist at Nevada PEP. Erica is the mom of a beautiful child with autism. She is really passionate about providing information and guidance to families at Nevada PEP. Erica helps families by teaching them about their rights as parents of children with special needs and how to assert their rights so their children can reach their full potential. Like Erica always says, “With patience, dedication and effort, of course you can!”

Dr. Christa Peterson is a licensed psychologist with over 28 years of experience developing, administering, and delivering services to youths who have developmental disabilities and behavioral health disorders. In the last twelve years, Christa has served as principal investigator for several grant initiatives, such as the Neighborhood Care Center Project. Christa has co-authored many research and other publications in professional psychology, including studies of the wraparound process. She is also the parent of a child with behavior health problems. Christa enjoys being a part of the Nevada PEP Family.

Robin Renshaw is a native of Las Vegas. “I’ve been with Nevada PEP for sixteen years as a Transition Specialist and I’m looking forward to sixteen more! There is nothing I would rather do, not only for youth with disabilities, but for myself. In the coming year, I want to show young adults how to advocate for others in our community.” Robin found that advocating for yourself is powerful, but it’s even more exciting to help others advocate for themselves!
Magdalena Ruiz is a bilingual Family Specialist. She is a proud mother of three boys; her oldest and her youngest son has a disability. Before she became part of the Nevada PEP family, she was lost and overwhelmed with stress. Thanks to the help she received from PEP, she was able to keep going. “I now feel confident and capable to do the same for all my families. My goal is to make a difference in a child’s life and to help families become better advocates for their loved ones.”

Michele Santee is the Intake Specialist here at Nevada PEP. She is a proud mom of two children, one who has special needs. Nevada PEP was such a great help to her family and to her son! She knew this was where she belonged. Being a part of the PEP family has given her the opportunity to help others with the same support she received when she first contacted PEP. Nevada PEP has taught her to be a better advocate for her son and helping families do the same for their children is definitely one of the most rewarding feelings!

Nancy Santillanes is Family Specialist at Nevada PEP. She is a wife and a proud mother of three kids; two of them have special needs. She is currently pursuing her dream to graduate from college with a business degree. Through Nevada PEP, she has gained the knowledge and courage to fight for her kids’ rights and to empower families to do the same.
Chad Uhl is the proud father of an tenacious ten-year-old girl and the Web & Graphic Designer for Nevada PEP. Chad maintains PEP’s website and online social media networks. He also designs PEP’s e-newsletters and publications for families. Chad is passionate about spreading awareness of the effects of bullying in our schools. “Bullying prevention is important because it allows us to build stronger relationships with one other in our community.”

Kelli Walker is the Information and Training Specialist for the Satellite Office. She has four children. Her youngest is 16 years old and has Autism. Since she has had many struggles getting what her daughter needs at school, she has wanted to help others learn how to advocate for their children. Working for PEP has given her the opportunity to help parents get the tools they need, let them know that they are not alone, and there is help. She is so thankful for the opportunity and privilege to work with families and make a difference.
Nevada PEP’s Include Me Puppet Program enjoyed a successful year performing for over 560 preschool children and over 100 parents and professionals in local preschools and Las Vegas Clark County Libraries in Southern Nevada. Nevada PEP has developed a great partnership with the Las Vegas Clark County Library District educating preschoolers, their families and staff on inclusion and bullying prevention.

Our dedicated puppeteers have volunteered many hours to perfecting the scripts and bringing the puppets to life. The children are excited as they interact with the puppets by asking questions about different disabilities and bullying prevention. Educating younger generations with parents and professionals is an encouraging step towards building friendships and positive outcomes. The response we have received in our community has been extremely positive. Professionals, educators and parents all commented and said the program is very educational for children and they would like to see it expand to all children throughout the community. Our multicultural, child-size, hand-and-rod puppets represent Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Learning Disability, Spina Bifida, Visual Impairment, and Hearing Impairment.

Our goal is positive inclusion for all children, with and without disabilities. By educating our community on disabilities, we are building a brighter future for all children.

For more information contact Nevada PEP:
702-388-8899

Our goal is positive inclusion for all children, with and without disabilities.
Karen Taycher  
7211 W. Charleston Blvd.  
Las Vegas, NV 89117

Dear Karen,

As I get ready to retire from UNLV, I must give thanks to the many people from Nevada PEP who have made such a positive difference in my life. For more than 20 years, Nevada PEP was both a voice and an ear of reason. In particular, Karen Taycher, Robin Kincaid, and Robin Renshaw have made such a difference in the lives of families and people with disabilities.

I remember the days before Nevada PEP and watched the lack of coordination and cannibalization across disability advocacy groups. Nevada PEP was responsible for making sure the disability community spoke with one voice. This allowed us to make significant progress and attitudes surrounding the disability community.

I relied on Nevada PEP to bring important issues to a variety of constituencies. We simply are a better state because of your hard work, dedication, and presence at the proverbial table. I cannot think of any meeting that I have been to where Nevada PEP was not present. You always spoke on behalf of families and people with disabilities. Too many times I have observed special interest groups speak for their group rather than to speak on behalf of the disability community. Nevada PEP always leveled the playing field.

I treasure our relationship and as I bid farewell to Nevada, I congratulate you on your relentless pursuit of fairness. I know how difficult and lonely this has been and I appreciate the uncompromising efforts you have made on behalf of so many people.

With great respect, admiration, and friendship,

[Signature]

Tom Pierce, Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair
Dear Nevada PEP,

It is with great pleasure that I express my support for Nevada PEP. As a Las Vegas native and professional BMX athlete, community involvement is extremely important to me. I love working with children and the time I spent with Nevada PEP kids was an unforgettable experience. The work and support provided by Nevada PEP for individuals with disabilities and their families is paramount to the local fabric of our society. I feel privileged to be apart of it in any capacity possible.

Congratulations to all parties involved in making Nevada PEP the success that it is. Thank you for all that you do. I look forward to engaging in many more events in the future.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Laguna
Laguna Entertainment LLC
Nevada PEP’s 4th annual Run Walk Roll Against Bullying was held at the end of September. The statewide “Bullying-Free” weekend kicked-off October as National Bullying Prevention Month. With the generosity of Findlay Chevrolet in Las Vegas and IGT in Reno, the event helped to raise awareness and take positive action against bullying prevention across Nevada. Bullying is a serious issue that faces many children in our state. Nevada PEP is part of a national movement that is putting a STOP to bullying.

The event began with moving words from Magic 95.5 FM & Ryan Nutter as he kicked off the festivities in Reno and PEP’s Board Chair Sam Lieberman, offered his motivational words to start the event in Las Vegas. After an uplifting presentation from the Las Vegas High School Color Guard, Heather McAlister sung the Star Spangled Banner in Southern Nevada and the very popular musical group, the Notables, treated the Northern crowd with their rendition of the National Anthem. Both locations enjoyed expert emcees. KOMP 92.3 FM’s Carlota and 97.1 FM The Point’s Steph McKenzie tag-teamed in Vegas, while Magic 95.5 FM provided a live broadcast and kept everyone excited.

It’s amazing how Nevadan’s pull together to take a stand to STOP bullying in our state. We truly have incredibly dedicated supporters statewide from Mrs. Nevada-America, Lavetta Schneider, to Professional BMX Champion, Ricardo Laguna, who both very passionately shared some motivational words about bullying prevention. Nevada PEP’s board member, Trish Leavitt, kept the crowd’s attention by announcing raffle prize winners.

The state came together in support of Nevada PEP, taking STEPS to end bullying, raising awareness, and taking positive action. Nevada PEP saw more teams of walkers and a diverse group of competitive runners; everyone had the same passion to put an end to the tragic effects of bullying. It was incredible to see so many schools participating statewide. Several area mascots, including Chuck E. Cheese, McGruff the Crime Dog, Cosmo of the Las Vegas 51s, even Findlay Chevrolet’s very own “Frank” and UNR’s mascot Alphie Jr. were on hand to take photos with participants. Terri Peltier, Nevada PEP’s board member in the North, offered some motivational closing remarks. Sam Lieberman also provided some inspiration to the crowd and invited everyone back for the 5th Annual Run Walk Roll Against Bullying.

Take a STEP with PEP to STOP Bullying!
Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers for their time, dedication and support. We couldn’t have done it without you!
Bullying is a serious issue that faces many children in Nevada. While bullying doesn’t always leave bruises or broken bones, it can leave deep emotional scars that last a lifetime. October is National Bullying Prevention month. Nevada PEP is part of a nationwide movement to raise awareness about bullying prevention. This year Bank of America partnered with Nevada PEP and generously sponsored bully prevention banners to schools statewide. Nevada PEP was proud to partner with the following schools, Doris Reed Elementary, O.K. Adcock Elementary, Fitzgerald Elementary, 100 Academy Charter, Ruben Diaz Elementary, Gibson Middle, O’Roarke Elementary, Lemelson Stem Academy, Alice Maxwell Elementary, Robert Mitchell Elementary, and Trainer Middle School. Nevada PEP also provided bullying prevention bookmarks and other materials to the schools. These materials helped teach children about bullying prevention and create a school-culture that values diversity and respect. In the month of October Nevada PEP provided twenty “Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?” training and webinar workshops to parents and professionals throughout Nevada. Nevada PEP is dedicated to educating; empowering and encouraging families so all children can be successful in their own communities. To sign up for any of our workshops go to www.nvpep.org.
Two area riding clubs, The Rollin Bonz and the Broken Bonez took to their bikes to compete in Nevada PEP’s first ever poker run on May 18th 2014. The motorcyclists rode to five different destinations, picking up one card at each place. A capacity crowd enjoyed the event. Both of these generous clubs contributed enormously, providing food items and donating time and energy not to mention, great sportsmanship. A barbeque was shared at the finish line held in the parking lot of Harley Davidson on Rainbow Blvd. Prizes was raffled by Carlota of KOMP 92.3. A big thank-you to our community partners for their continued support in helping to make this such a huge success. Special thank-you to The Rolling Bonz and the Broken Bonez for supporting Nevada PEP and showing a tremendous commitment to the community and to families who have children with disabilities.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month!
Join the Movement with Nevada PEP & Unite Against Bullying!
Hand in Hand Appreciation Program

Sponsors

Julie Beasley, Ph.D.
Patricia & Andrew Leavitt

Gold Sponsors

Helen Jo & Seaynoah Mayfield
Julie Beasley, Ph.D.

Silver Sponsors

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The “Hand In Hand, Together We Can” appreciation program was designed to proudly recognize and honor special people who have made a positive difference in the lives of children with special needs. The program began in October 2002, when Hand In Hand forms were mailed to thousands of interested parents and professionals across the state. With each special story sent to us, Nevada PEP delivered the Hand in Hand award recipient a beautiful certificate and lapel pin to display as a proud supporter of Nevada’s community of people with disabilities.

The stories are also recognized in our PEP Post newsletter. The inspiring stories you are about to read are celebrations of wonderful teachers, doctors, therapists, family members, and many others who have worked with children with disabilities and have gone above and beyond to make a positive difference in a child’s life. Touching and original, the stories in our 2014 Yearbook span over a one year period. We, at Nevada PEP, are excited to honor these very special Hand In Hand recipients and will continue to do so throughout the years to come.
Karen Avela  
**Daughter**

Ella as mi hija mayor y desde que nos dimos cuenta del problema de mi niño siempre a estado preocupado y apollando en todo y es una de nuestras mejores alliadas.

She is my oldest daughter and since we realized my other child’s disability, she has always been supportive and attentive to our situation. She is one of our best allies.

Miriam Gomez  
**Mother**

Laura Barrows-Bauer  
**Sister**

She has two boys with autism and I’ve never seen a more patient, kind, and loving mother. The boys could not have a better mom! Laura has dedicated her whole time to making life the best she can for them. The time she gives to learning new things for her boys is unbelievable. She’s such a great mom!

McKenna Baker  
**Sister**

Dr. Julie Beasley  
**Professional**

Dr. Julie Beasley facilitates a social skills group for teens that I attended when I was younger. It was a life-saver for me! Dr. Beasley does such wonderful work with these groups. I put to use the social skills I learned in her group to get my first job, and then later when I attended and graduated from UNLV. It’s been six years since I was in the group and I am still utilizing what I learned. I just wanted to thank Dr. Beasley for all that she does. She has such a long-lasting, positive impact on people’s lives!

Amanda K. Miller  
**Participant**

Annelise Boge  
**Professional**

I would like to say thank you to her for all her help, information, and love for my son. Annelise is very kind and loving. She has so many ideas that help me support my child. She is truly a blessing in our life.

Shawn Hassell  
**Parent**
Ms. Brigham  
Teacher

I want to thank Ms. Brigham for keeping my son safe and protected when my son ran to her for help. I, as a mother, will forever be grateful for Ms. Brigham’s outstanding protection she gave my son. I know that she really cares for her students. Thank you.

Sharon Urrabazo  
Parent

Mrs. Heather Collins  
Special Education Teacher

Mrs. Heather Collins teachers at East Career Technical Academy where my son attends. He is thriving under Mrs. Collins’ instruction in Programmed Approach to Career Education (PACE), an awesome post-secondary transition program. Under the instruction of this most outstanding teacher, students become self-reliant, productive members of their communities. My son looks forward to going to school each day and takes great pride in his activities. Mrs. Collins goes above and beyond to engage and motivate her students. Thank you, Mrs. Collins, for truly making a difference. You are “one in a trillion!” We love and adore you!

Trish & Andy Leavitt  
Parents

Alex Cherup  
Friend

I would like to nominate my friend, Alex Cherup for the Hand in Hand Appreciation program. Alex is a friend, a buddy, a confident, a mentor, roll model, and truly special person. He gave me confidence to believe in myself.

He helped me realize my skills which gave me more self esteem, confidence, purpose, drive, and pride. Alex really went above and beyond for me. Taking me under his wing; giving me a lot in a short time and expanding my mind to new possibilities and new directions. His nurturing guidance made it possible, by someone believing in me I am able to go far.

Alex gave me great inspiration, he opened the doors to new community experiences and so much more, he opened my eyes to a world of possibilities. Alex showed me the importance of networking. He taught me a new awareness, and motivated me to use my skills to be involved and a leader. With Alex, I had such a great enriching growing experience. Alex exemplifies what the Hand in Hand Award stands for.

Kenny Taycher  
Friend

Samantha Diethrich  
Daughter

My daughter Samantha is 15 years old. Samantha is a very bright, determined, and loving girl. She began training our dog, Cleo, 2 years ago for her brother. He has ADHD and Cleo is his therapy dog. She has decided to train other dogs to help special needs children. She loves working with animals and hopes to become a professional trainer in the future.

Julie Diethrich  
Mother

Zac Dowdell  
Service Provider

Zac Dowdell was my son’s QMHA for a very long time. He was a positive influence with my son and took the time to really get to know, understand, and even appreciate my son’s differences. He is always a positive force and a pleasure to work with. Zac is considered a part of our family. My son has made many strides due to Zac’s hard work and perseverance. We hope he remains in my son’s life for a long time to come. We miss you Mr. Zac!

Luann & Joe G.  
Parent & Son
Irma Garriss

*Neighbor*

My neighbor Irma is a very kind, helpful, and hardworking individual. She always asks if she can help in any way. She and her daughter care about my son. They often ask about him and buy him toys and such. Her daughter helped my son in 2nd grade by tutoring him. Irma is such a giving person and she enjoys helping people. No matter how busy she is, she will make time for you whenever you need her. She is the most beautiful person, inside and out and she is the best neighbor a person could have.

Tamara Joseph

*Parent*

Melissa Greenfield

*Teacher*

I would like to recognize my son’s third-grade teacher, Melissa Greenfield. She helped me identify behavior problems and triggers, by consistently notifying me as soon as undesirable behaviors occurred. Miss Greenfield also allowed me to try a variety of accommodations and therapies in the classroom to see what would be most successful. Through this trial period, we were able to identify some successful accommodations. With her help, my son’s grades, behavior and attitude were greatly improved. We are blessed to have teachers like Miss Greenfield who go the extra mile to make a difference.

Lorna Weaver

*Parent*

Sarah K. Groseclose

*Mother*

Sarah is both my mother and my role model; she is such an amazing woman. Her strength, patience, and understanding seem unending. She worked so hard with the schools to get me the best education and when the schools didn’t meet her expectations, she took the leap and homeschooled me. Her knowledge and advice strengthened me while I was in college and with her help I succeeded in getting my Bachelor’s degree. Through her guidance, love, and support I have been able to accomplish so much. I don’t know what I’d do without her!

Amanda K. Miller

*Daughter*

Stephanie Houle

*Nevada PEP*

I was referred to Nevada PEP approximately 8 months ago by my son’s behavioral therapist. Stephanie became a great source of information, strength, and support for me while advocating for my son. She has taken the time to listen, advise and comfort me. She even agreed to attend my son’s IEP meeting and helped me to advocate for my special needs child. I recently attended her IEP seminar and was more fully enlightened on the process of advocating. Stephanie is a source of strength and comfort for me and my child. I am truly grateful for her and her services!

Sincerely Jamie L. Salo

*Parent*

Anuar Huizar

*Instructor*

I met Anuar at Heads Up Counseling Center. He was chosen to be my son’s basic skills instructor. He helped my child forget about his anxieties and connected with him in a beautifully positive way. My son’s face would light up whenever Anuar came to do his training. I consider him a friend as well as an excellent role model for my son. He has made such an impact on my child that is not only heart warming, but priceless! I hope my gesture of nominating Anuar lets him know just how special and talented he is with children.

Jamie Salo

*Parent*
Robin Kincaid  
_Nevada PEP_

I am nominating Robin Kincaid as an exemplary advocate for my child’s education. I am the mother of a Special Needs child and was experiencing many roadblocks in dealing with her High School.

Robin was more than prepared to help me understand the IEP language and attend the meetings necessary to support my daughter. Her attitude and knowledge about the IEP process was instrumental in the planning of my daughter’s curriculum for the following year.

I am grateful for the existence of Nevada PEP and for their efforts to mitigate the many difficulties parents face trying to educate their children.

Renata Luiz  
_Parent_

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Diane Lombardo  
_Nevada PEP_

With many negative things that happen in this world it’s hard to find something or someone who can have a positive influence in your life but thankfully I found Nevada PEP. At PEP I met Diane who is in charge of the VIP volunteers and the Include ME Puppet Show. She is always smiling, caring and there to listen and help whenever somebody has a difficult situation. Her positive attitude makes PEP a better place to come to. Please don’t ever leave Nevada PEP! Every time I come to volunteer you make a positive difference in my life, thanks.

Kenny Juarez-Montes  
_Volunteer_

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Diane Lombardo  
_Nevada PEP_

I’ve been a volunteer at Nevada PEP for three years and have learned a variety of tasks that range from office work to community work like the Include Me Program. As a volunteer I work for one of the most patient women I’ve ever met-Diane Lombardo. Under her guidance volunteers not only learn skills that will aid them in their future careers, but you will also find a friend, mentor, and a role model all at once. She is extremely friendly, welcoming, and kind. Diane is someone I have come to respect and hold in high esteem.

Christopher Stroum  
_Volunteer_

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Kelly McCrosky  
_Mother_

Being a single mother to a child with special needs doesn’t come without difficulty. My mother has been such an amazing support. Going to therapy with us and learning everything she can so she can help me to take the best care of her grandson. She is always doing all she can to look after my son when I have things to accomplish. She’s a beautiful person with the most caring kind of personality. Without her love and support for me and my son I’d feel quite lost and overwhelmed. She is my savior.

Tawni McCrosky  
_Daughter_
**Marla Mentaberry**  
*Principal*  

She is always thinking outside the box to make sure my daughter has everything she needs and is included in school.

**Jill Benzing**  
*Parent*

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**Kristina Mercado**  
*Home Nurse*  

Kristina has been my son’s home health RN for years. She goes out of her way, everyday, to help my son have a better quality of life. She goes above and beyond to be support for me. She is real with him and refuses to let him manipulate the situation when he is able to do a task himself. She is amazing. We are very blessed she was placed with us. We would not want her to be pulled to another case.

**Kristan Ricketts**  
*Parent*

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**Karen Taycher**  
*Mom*  

I would like to nominate Karen Taycher for the Hand in Hand award. She has always taught me how to have an open heart and to care for others. She has given me passion, dedication, and courage when I needed it the most. Karen has taught me the value of giving back and I have learned to embrace the philosophy of helping, and caring for other people in our community. I am an Advocate with a dual disability and very proud of all of my achievements because of her guidance she continues to support and encourage me. Karen has given me wings to fly she is my inspiration and my motivation. Karen Taycher is my mom and for that I am entirely grateful.

**Kenny Taycher**  
*Son*
Kaye Welch
Therapist

Ms. Kaye is a therapist at My Left Foot Children’s Therapy. She has a kind, patient, and beautiful heart. Her approach to therapy is one on one. She is the most positive person I’ve met in a very long time. There is NO “can’t do” with her. My granddaughter loves the sessions because she feels good afterwards. It warms my heart when my daughter says “Grammy I’m so smart” after a session.

Luris Jimenez
Grandmother

Mrs. Joyce Wyma
1st Grade Teacher

Mrs. Wyma has helped me and my son since he was in her 1st grade class and I started volunteering in the class to help with the students. I could not have made it this far without her help and friendship. She’s more than a friend; she has become part of our family. She has been there for us when we had no support of any kind. With tears in my eyes I thank God for such a wonderful human being. I’m still helping at school and she’s still helping with moral support. God bless Mrs. Joyce Wyma.

Margarita Gonzalez
Parent

Halie Zerblis
Interventionist

As a senior in High School, Halie has become the lead Interventionist for my daughter’s ABA program. She is a wonderfully hard working, dedicated, young lady with the patience and kindness required to work with autistic children.

Renee Knipper
Parent
Show your support for the remarkable people across the state who make the lives of children with special needs better by becoming a sponsor of the Hand in Hand Appreciation Program. Help us to recognize, honor, and publicly applaud those who partner with parents and make a difference for these special children.

**Silver Sponsorship $100 up to $1,000**
- Recognized in the Yearbook
- Receive Yearbook
- Receive the PEP Post Newsletter
- Recognized on the Website
- Receive a Lapel Pin

**Gold Sponsorship $1,000 up to $3,000**
- Recognized in the Yearbook
- Receive Yearbook
- Receive the PEP Post Newsletter
- Recognized on the Website
- Receive a Lapel Pin
- Hand in Hand Sponsorship Plaque

**Platinum Sponsorship $3,000 & UP**
- Recognized in the Yearbook
- Receive Yearbook
- Receive the PEP Post Newsletter
- Recognized on the Website
- Receive a Lapel Pin
- Hand in Hand Sponsorship Plaque
- Honorable Mention in “Hand in Hand” Literature

Every October, Nevada recognizes children with special needs. In honor of this annual recognition, Nevada PEP will produce the “Hand in Hand” yearbook. Honorees will also be highlighted in the quarterly PEP Post throughout the year.
Silver Sponsorship $100 up to $1,000
Gold Sponsorship $1,000 up to $3,000
Platinum Sponsorship $3,000 & UP