MAKE A PROJECT FOR YOURSELF TO BE KIND

Other Kind things you can do.

You can...ask the kid who sits alone to join your group.
You can...be the volunteer partner to a kid who never has one.
You can...thank your teachers.
You can...be the volunteer partner to join your group.
You can...ask the kid who sits alone what other things can you do to be kind? Write them below:

What other things can you do to make a project for yourself to be kind?

CONTACT US
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 425 North Craig Street, Suite 500
 Pittsburgh, PA 15213
 Phone: 412-246-2030
 Chatline: 1-888-273-2361
 Website: www.alleghenyfamilynetwork.org

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF THE RUTH FOX, CEO

As the CEO of a “Family Organization,” we advocate daily for the needs of the families who are raising children with mental health or behavioral challenges. Families also work hard and have made some strides in the Child Caring System but yet the “Family Voice” has not been heard in all levels of the government--local, state, and federal.

It has been 39 years since I nurtured my child who has mental health concerns and now I am raising two grandchildren, one who has mental health challenges. As I reminisce about the past and during my present time of caring for my loved one, I’ve come to realize some progress has been made but some services are still missing. During my daughter’s growing years, I did not get involved with CYF personally, but for my grandchildren, it is essential to work with CYF and for this reason, I am back in the mental health system with my old advocacy skills, which are getting sharpened and refined. I am managing well with my grandson’s IEP and the school district is improving too. However, in other school districts, IEP conditions may not be the same. My grandson had a great mobile Therapist for three years but when he left, there were no offers for another substitute until I called and began to advocate. A new Therapist is in place now through outpatient services and my grandson receives treatment once a week in the CYF program. We had five Case Workers for a two-year period and many protocols were not followed until the last Case Worker. I will continue to champion for my grandson as well as for the families we serve!

There is still advocacy work to carry on for families and youth. We need to encourage and assist parents, so they can raise healthy, thriving youth. Some parents who are raising youth with mental or behavioral challenges, work as physicians, attorneys, accountants and in many prominent careers but they do not mention their children’s MH conditions. This is truly a family concern and many times, this issue is concealed due to STIGMA, which is still alive and well! It is a lonely place to be in not knowing who is a friend or foe, who is a natural support or if one exists. Parents often ask, “Can someone teach me what I need to know or help me stop crying?” How do I get the doctors to hear my voice? How can I get professionals not to look at me as if something is wrong with me? Is it my fault? Can someone please help me so I can effectively help my child or youth?

Do not feel that you are alone! Allegheny Family Network supports parents raising youth with mental health and behavioral health needs. We have someone who can help you!! We are peers going through or have gone through similar situations as you are, so please call: 412-246-2030. Additionally, Please Attend AFN’s Mental Health Conference on Friday, May 11, 2018. Look for the details of this Conference in the Newsletter!

Ruth Fox, Allegheny Family Network, CEO
AGENTs OF TRANSFORMATION, a LETTER

From: Justin L. Eberhart, AFN Parent

The Agents of Transformation training I have been exposed to at AFN has been nothing short of phenomenal. It has taken me from a man who struggled with not having the basic tools or at the very least having them, but not having a clue on how to use them. Now I am a man with confidence and a clear understanding on how to not only use, but with discernment, properly use them in the appropriate way.

It took me from being a “Passive Dad” to being a “Engaged Father” who is a leader in his home and community. There truly is value in getting involved, being creative and expanding my local Family Support Network.

As parents, we naturally think we have conflict resolution, but after the AOT course, I have a profound and fresh appreciation and understanding for it. One I can now pass on to my youngest two sons and grandchildren.

My Instructor, Ms. Alda Walker, was excellent going through the material with me and my classmates leaving no questions unanswered.

Finally in today’s world, all of us are looking for value in everything we do and or convey to one another, right?

My son is 17 years old. He was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome at 6 years of age. But even before that, I knew something wasn’t right. So I had to trust myself and begin what has been a long journey with my son, the most important one for his life so far, and for my life as his mother.

Even as a little kid, he was academically smart, artistically talented but together with those great assets was his struggle with social situations. What did that mean? I had to find out what I could do for him.

My son attended daycare while I, as a single mom, worked and went to school full-time. The Day Care told me about Early Intervention, and that is where I began this journey. Our Early Intervention team made it clear I had options. Not every school district will do this.

He started speech while in Day Care and I researched, and read blogs and other parents’ personal stories which were very beneficial. I talked to other parents and teachers. And when he was diagnosed, I made it a priority to understand what his diagnosis meant. Did it hold limitations? How will he handle school? What did this diagnosis mean for his self-esteem, self-confidence? Apart from that I explored more of his strengths, what he liked, what he was good at. His natural abilities that would serve him throughout his life.

My son’s first IEP was a Transitional IEP from preschool to kindergarten. For this first meeting, I wanted to know what to expect. I had to be prepared with questions. I wrote down the answers I was given. I questioned things for my own understanding and clarity. And I wrote down the explanations and did my own research. So before my son started kindergarten, I created a Brayan 101 folder for the kindergarden teacher. The packet of information included his diagnosis with tips of what will help him succeed and tips for the teacher to help her to succeed in teaching him.

Every IEP meeting since then has been a learning experience for me on how to advocate for my son. I learned to really trust my “Inner Parental Advocate” for my son’s schooling needs. I discovered it wasn’t my son that needed to change to adapt to the world. It was the world around him that needed to change to adapt to him.

In every parent there lies an advocate. You are the expert on your children. Don’t be afraid. Information is out there, go and find it. You have the right to use your Inner Parental Advocate for your child. Don’t allow yourself to be bullied in this experience. You have the right to say, “No, this will not work for my child’s educational needs.” You have the right to say, “Wait a minute.”

You aren’t alone as your child’s advocate. That’s where you reach out to other parents. Talk to parents at your child’s school. Talk to the teachers. Gather family and friends as cheerleaders to support you and participate in IEP meetings as your child’s team.

Approach meetings with kindness. Always be polite in your interactions and walking in with a little confidence will do wonders for you and the whole team. Shake hands with the members of the IEP team. Thanking them at the end of the meeting for working on your child’s behavior whether the meeting was positive or not. Knowing your rights, doing your homework, building your confidence, you will find that you are not just your child’s advocate, you are your child’s BEST ADVOCATE.

Shadenia Higgins, HFW Supervisor and Parent
TRAININGS AS ADVOCACY

Advocacy and being an advocate for our families are words we hear all the time as parents, providers, family support partners and support organizations. But it doesn’t just happen. There are steps to being an effective advocate for our families and for ourselves. One of those steps is becoming knowledgeable. Knowledge is power and we want our families to be strong!

Allegheny Family Network has put together a wide range of topics for parents and caregivers this year. Below is a brief description of the trainings available to you.

Advocacy vs. Advocacy – Advocacy involves speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others. Attack attempts to detract from the worth of another person’s idea. How you advance advocacy or attack determines if you are effective.

Nurturing Parenting – This parenting course promotes the positive overall growth of children. The course uses lesson guides, DVDs, parent handbook along with games and group work.

Surviving the Holidays – Discover your triggers and how to manage them so you cannot only survive but enjoy each holiday with your family.

Clarion University Distinguished Alumni Award

Mr. George Fleming, AFN Fathers Involved Now Supervisor, was recognized by Clarion University with the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award on April 21st. Mr. Fleming indicated that receiving the award is a testimony to dedication, commitment and the continuation of a life well-lived. “As a family member the award acknowledges all of us. We can and do recover,” Mr. Fleming said.

AFN’S FATHERS INVOLVED NOW MEN’S HEALTH FORUM

Thirty men attended AFN’s Men’s Health Forum and Round Table with guest speakers Dr. Tim VanFleet, MD, UPMC, Mary Beth VanFleet, R.N. and Dr. Curtis Upsher, CCBH, on Thursday, April 19, 2019 which was held at the AFN Training Center. The men were invited to have a health screening that included blood pressure readings and blood sugar tests which helped them understand the importance of having a healthy lifestyle.

Also during the meeting, Dr. Upsher discussed with the men the importance of having up to date medical insurance. He strongly encouraged the attendees to visit a Primary Care Physician or medical clinic at least once a year. He reinforced healthy living to reduce the traumatic stress that could result from living an unhealthy lifestyle.

As a result participants began to share their experiences with their own health challenges.
May

10 Dual Diagnosis and Diva Discussions Group Combined—With the combining of these two support groups, the participants will play BINGO—Health and Wellness. There will be time to get to know each other through sharing their stories while playing bingo.

11 AFN MH Conference Conference—Mental Health: A Family Affair. 9am to 4 pm. Free Event, call 412-438-6101 to register.

14 Fathers Involved Now, McKees Rocks—24/7 Dad: A curriculum for dads to become better fathers. Topics will include Involvement, Nurturing and Discipline vs. Punishment.

17 Moms United — BINGO! Heart Health and You. Staying on a healthier path out there. Let’s see what they are and how to do it. Topics will include Venting, Wellness, Meditation, Exercise.

17 Men’s Zone—Let’s relax! Fishing trip and cookout at the local Dam while discussing on how to relax.

17 Dual Diagnosis and Diva Discussions Groups Combined—Summer is here! Let’s look at some ways to enjoy the summer and stay active and healthy.

20 Highland’s Area Community Cabinet—Caring for the Caregiver: Training with the Father’s group, Alda Walker, AFN Training Coordinator will join us in presenting the training.

20 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group—Natural Body and Face Scrub: Duprene Johnson will engage you in conversation on how using natural products can beautify your face and body.

20 Turn It Up Network—Discussion: Rose Hammonds, Facilitator will lead a discussion on the ground rules and holding to verbal commitments. There will be guest speakers joining the meeting as well.

21 Men Connecting—Father’s Celebration: A time for fathers and their children to celebrate Fathers Day. There will be dinner, activities and surprises.

21 Foster Parents Support Group—No group in June. Group meets every other month. Next group meeting is July 26, 2018. See you then.

24 Foster Family Support Group—Come and enjoy a relaxing fun filled evening with other foster parents. Learn about taking care of yourself.

June

9 Moms United—Health and Wellness: Understanding the difference. Speaker to be announced.

9 Fathers Involved Now, McKees Rocks—Celebrating Fatherhood: This session Dealing with Change. We constantly find ourselves having to change to adapt to life. Topics will include the Benefits, Adaptation, and Preparing for Change.

12 Men’s Zone—Summer time: Summer Safety and having fun with our kids. The fathers will learn about activities that they can do with their children for low cost or no cost.

15 Dual Diagnosis and Diva Discussions—Health and Wellness: Understanding the Difference: Speaker to be announced.

18 Highland’s Area Community Cabinet—Growing our own vegetables and flowers: Guest Speakers Christa Jones and Jason Jackson will lead a discussion on the group on how to plant. Each participant will leave with their own plant to care for.

18 Tri Boro Networking Support Group—Discussion on future support group meetings: Open discussion on what you want to see happening for the next four months in the group.

18 Turn It Up Network—Bingo! Come and enjoy a fun filled morning with games, gifts and laughter! Bring a friend.

21 Men Connecting—Single Father’s Video: Staff and fathers will watch a video on how many single dads are getting custody of their children. We will then follow up with discussion about the video.

26 Foster Parents Support Group—Family Game Night: Welcome Children and Parent to enjoy some games and activities.

Family Training

Family Road Map Workshop
May 17th and May 24th 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm RSVP by May 10th

SSI and SSDI Workshop
June, Monday 6th
10:00 am to 2:00 pm RSVP by June 3rd

Sharing Your Story for Families
June 21st
10:00 am to 2:00 pm RSVP by July 3rd

Advocacy vs. Attack July 10th
5:30 to 8:00 pm RSVP by July 3rd

Call Christa at 412-438-6118

July

9 Moms United—Health and Wellness: Understanding the difference. Speaker to be announced.

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21 Turn It Up Network—Discussion on future support group meetings: Open discussion on what you want to see happening for the next four months in the group.

25 Highland’s Area Community Cabinet—Discussion on how using natural products can beautify your face and body.

August

21 Men’s Zone—Back to School: As the children go back to school, let’s start to think about connecting with the schools and teachers. We will learn how to schedule appointments with the teachers and begin to build relationships with the schools.

Due to AFN’s Annual Families Cookout the following Support Groups will not be meeting in August:

Men Connecting

Dual Diagnosis and Diva Discussions

 Fathers Involved Now, McKees Rocks

Highland’s Area Community Cabinet

Moms United

Tri-Boro Networking

Turn It Up Network

Foster Family Support Group

We’ll see you in September!

We’ll see you in September!

We’ll see you in September!

AFN Support Group Calendar 2018

If you would like to receive this calendar electronically, please call our CHAT Line at 1-888-273-3261, and we will email it to you as a PDF file. The PDF file will open with Acrobat Reader which you can download for free from the internet. Thank You.

Volunteer & Support

AFN—Support Group Calendar 2018

AFN Family Support Groups and AFN Events Information

Your support is under construction. Check our website for updates: www.alleghenyfamilynetwork.org

MEN’S ZONE
1828 Union Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Second Tuesday of the month
7:00 pm—8:30 pm

May 15, June 12, July 10, August 21
Facilitator contact: Jason Jackson at 412-438-6140

MOMS UNITED SUPPORT GROUP
Willsburg Family Support Center
1890 W Wallingford Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Second Monday of the month
10:30 am—12:30 pm

May 14, June 11, July 9, August 20
Facilitator Contact: Sabirah Kabir Nazir at 412-438-6113

THE TRIBORO NETWORKING SUPPORT GROUP
Family Care Connection
C/o Braddock Training Center
849 Braddock Avenue
Braddock, PA 15104

Third Wednesday of the month
3:30 pm—7:30 pm

May 16, June 20, July 18, August (no meeting)
Facilitator Contact: Shirley Rucker at 412-438-6117

FAMILY TRAININGS

- Family Road Map Workshop
- SSI and SSDI Workshop
- Sharing Your Story for Families
- Advocacy vs. Attack
- Call Christa at 412-438-6118

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Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Second Tuesday of the month
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May 15, June 12, July 10, August 21
Facilitator contact: Jason Jackson at 412-438-6140

MOMS UNITED SUPPORT GROUP
Willsburg Family Support Center
1890 W Wallingford Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Second Monday of the month
10:30 am—12:30 pm

May 14, June 11, July 9, August (no meeting)
Facilitator Contact: Sabirah Kabir Nazir at 412-438-6113

THE TRIBORO NETWORKING SUPPORT GROUP
Family Care Connection
C/o Braddock Training Center
849 Braddock Avenue
Braddock, PA 15104

Third Wednesday of the month
3:30 pm—7:30 pm

May 16, June 20, July 18, August (no meeting)
Facilitator Contact: Shirley Rucker at 412-438-6117

TURN IT UP NETWORK SUPPORT GROUP
Kingsley Family Center
4345 Frankstown Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Third Wednesday of the month
10:00 am—1:30 pm

May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15
Facilitator Contact: Rose Hammond at 412-438-6114

WOMEN ROCKING WELLNESS

This support group is under construction. Check our website for updates: www.alleghenyfamilynetwork.org

Volunteer & Support

AFN—Support Group Calendar 2018

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