



One Voice Brevard

1 November 2024

Election 2024

Your Vote is Your Voice

by Nicole Grabner, Editor-In-Chief

It is November and the Election is finally here. In just a few days, the landscape of legislators locally and nationally will change. And while the election will be over, the work of legislation will just be beginning. Florida state legislators typically assign members to committees (appropriations, education, health care, and commerce, etc.) based on their experience, expertise, and party affiliation after elections. This process ensures that each committee is built with diverse perspectives and skills to address specific legislative issues. Delegation meetings are scheduled and usually begin with a review of the agenda, setting priorities, and establishing collaborative goals for the upcoming session.

The reason that this is so important to understand is because for any advocacy to be effective, you need to know when legislators are meeting and setting priorities for the upcoming session. Legislative session in the state of Florida will begin on 4 March 2025, and last

for a total of sixty days ending on 2 May 2025. There is a lot of legislation that gets packed into those days, with regular committee meetings and hearings, at the end of which is a package of bills and appropriations that is handed to the governor for signature. The time to begin discussions about which priorities will be addressed during the legislative session begins now.

What does this mean for us? If you have any issue that you are specifically passionate about, something that you want changed, now is the time to have that conversation with your representatives. Are you mad about the long waitlist at APD (Agency for Person's with Disabilities)? Please call or visit your legislator and let them know. Maybe you would like to find a better way to provide information to parents of special needs children? There are so many different issues and topics... let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!

We will be beginning a new section of the newsletter that will be called "Bill Buzz" where we will

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Bill Buzz

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discuss ideas and bills that are coming up or currently working its way through the legislative process. If you have any input for this section, please reach out.

And lastly, if you haven't voted yet – please do! Voting is essential because it allows

individuals to influence decisions that directly impact their lives and communities. Each election is an opportunity to express your values and priorities, shaping the future for generations to come. Be the voice – One Voice Brevard!

Mental Health and Resiliency

Article by Dr. Joseph A Werner, Director, Brevard Autism Coalition,
previously posted in [Florida Today](#)

Former Surgeon General David Satcher once said: “There is no health without mental health”. November is National Mental Health Awareness Month, and in this issue we'd like to focus on how every child's mental health influences their development, their future relationships and their physical health. In turn, a child's mental health is linked to parent and caregiver's mental health.

The Center For Disease Control (CDC/2022) estimated that 19% of children aged 2-8 years have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. Also, according to the CDC:

- 11.4% of children aged 2-17 years (app. 6.1 million children) in the US have received a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- 10% of children aged 3-17 years have a diagnosed anxiety disorder
- 4% of children aged 3-17 years have been diagnosed with depression

The CDC has also estimated that these rates are increasing. The mental health of children affects all families. Beyond diagnoses, schools deal with a rising number of homeless students and children living in poverty, and parents

regularly address issues of eating problems, aggressiveness, sensory sensitivities, learning disorders, tantrums, sibling rivalry, fears, and sleep disturbances. Now more than ever we need to appreciate childhood stresses, caregiver burnout, and find ways to support families to help nurture their resilience and to find accessible treatment when necessary

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress, adversity, and failure. Facilitating and strengthening resilience in children is critical to help a child deal with life's inevitable challenges. At the same time children are often more resilient than we give them credit. All children are capable of learning to cope and problem-solve. To respond with looking, listening and investigating options rather than just reacting with impulse. Resilience is a quality that can be nurtured and taught by parents and promoted by medical professionals when necessary.

Building resilience in children starts with parents and caregivers being present with their children. Play allows children to

Mental Health and Resiliency (cont.)

explore and understand their world as well as recognize their limits and listen to their internal signals. Nothing worries a health care provider or teacher more than a child who doesn't play and it's critical to understand that "play" is a broad term and can mean many things for neurodiverse children. Parents playing music and dancing with their children, getting down on the floor creating imaginary scenes and stories, reading to them day or night, participating in card games and board games, movie nights and outdoor exercise build trust and attachment. Dr. Stanley Greenspan's "Floor time" provides a framework where a parent not only follows a child's lead, but plays his games, and lets the child know that you are his or hers. Children also need the right challenges to stretch their skills and knowing that adults will have their backs when and if they fall. Humor is a terrific gift to bestow to children. Humor more than anything can shift emotions and provide time to reassess situations. Nothing brings children to join with their parents like hearing them laugh.

Confidence comes from children taking risks and seeing that they can be successful. Understanding the delicate balance between pushing your children to do more and respecting their needs where they are at is often a struggle for families with neurodiverse children. Always presume competence and remember that competence derives from children building on their risks and learning that they can problem-solve. Children are natural scientists and explorers. They need to have the sensory experiences of touching, feeling, and engaging in their physical world as well as moving their bodies through obstacles and identifying their emotions.

Parents must sometimes hold back on their

instincts to "save" their children from stress and instead give their children the gift that they have the internal strength to cope and manage their emotions and difficult situations. Problem-solving is a skill that can only be taught by experience. Explaining how to solve a problem is not nearly as helpful as a child being in a position where they must actively operate their physical world and or work the problem. Understanding and labelling emotions (interoception) and telling people how you feel is perhaps one the bravest and most critical abilities a child can learn. Putting feelings into words allows a child to understand what they feel and gives their cognitive abilities time to override strictly emotional reactions which can empower children that their feelings are valuable and important.

Finally, exercise remains the best stress reliever whether a child or adult. Walking, running, biking, and other aerobic exercises burn up the stress chemicals of adrenaline and cortisol, increase endorphins, and increase oxygen to the brain. Exercise also does not need to be scripted; outdoor play where children are making-up their own games and rules, running, climbing, and ball play can sometimes be the most motivating and enjoyable play.

Children's mental health is also linked to parent and caregiver mental health. One of the first things a medical provider learns when working with children is that in order to improve the behavior in children, you must work with the parents, and perhaps the best predictor of a child's mental health will be the relationship with their parents and or caregivers. Recognizing the mental health needs of mothers and fathers, and addressing their needs is always best practice. Helping parents understand their child's behavior and fostering the parent-

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(Cont.)

child dyad, is the best long-term treatment.

Research shows that the single best treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is parent education. Families of special needs children experience higher levels of divorce than families of typical children. Research also indicates that parents of special needs children experience more stress, depression, and a sense of isolation than parents of typical children. Identifying parent stresses and mental health needs should be a part

of every pediatric facility.

Resources to learn about children's mental health can be found on the CDC's Children's Mental Health page, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Mental Health.gov, American Psychological Association, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Bill Buzz

By: Nicole Grabner

Federal:

Charlotte Woodward Organ Transplant Discrimination Prevention Act (H.R. 2706/S. 1183).

This bill would put federal protections in place to protect people with Down Syndrome and other disabilities from discrimination in receiving an organ transplant. In Florida (2020, CS/HB 1179), put these protections in place, however, federal law does not have the same protections.

Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act (HR. 485).

This bill would prohibit utilization of QALY and similar metrics in federal health programs as they are discriminatory against people with disabilities and is a commonly used metric by programs like Medicaid, to determine treatments and interventions.

SSI Savings and Penalty Elimination Act (HR. 5408/S. 2767) is a bill which increases the allowable assets individuals with disabilities may possess while remaining eligible for government benefits and eliminate the marriage penalty.

State:

Discussions regarding legislative priorities are underway in preparation for the upcoming Florida State Legislative Session (March-April 2025). Official bills have not been announced yet, but conversations regarding the following are happening now:

- Early intervention
- ESE (public and charter school) program and parent education
- Transition tools and assistance for young adults
- Healthcare access
- FES/UA scholarship
- Supported housing
- Funding the APD pre-enrollment list

To support these efforts, please reach out to your local legislators and discuss with them your experiences and how crucial their support is.

Check back on our website/social media for more updates.

Monthly Art Submission



This month's art submission is a beautiful pumpkin submitted by Brendan Parker. It was created with pastels on canvas and is "fall perfect"!

Resources and Contact Information

- Brevard Autism Coalition; <https://brevardautismcoalition.com/>
- Angels Bridging Gaps; <https://angelsbridginggaps.org/>
- The Parker Foundation; <http://www.theparkerfoundation.com/>
- S.O.A.K.; <https://www.soakautism.com/>
- Down Syndrome Association of Brevard; <https://www.dsabrevard.org/>
- UCF CARD; <https://ucf-card.org/>
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council; <https://www.fddc.org/>
- Project 10; <http://project10.info/>
- Vocational Rehabilitation; <https://www.rehabworks.org/contact/area3.html>
- FLAPSE; <https://apse.org/chapter/florida/>
- The Arc of Space Coast; <https://www.arcofsc.org/>
- Promise in Brevard; <https://promiseinbrevard.com/>
- Brevard Resource Center for Disability Solutions; <https://rcdsfl.org/>
- The Family Cafe; <https://familycafe.net>
- Family Liason Project; <https://familyliasonproject.com>
- Early Steps Space Coast; <https://spacecoastes.org>
- Family Care Council Area 7; <https://fccflorida.org/area-7-fcc.html>

For Newsletter Questions or Submissions:
ausomeannouncements@gmail.com



November Events

November is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

November						
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

- Saturday, November 2nd, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Brevard Buddy Walk sponsored by Down Syndrome Society of Brevard, Calvary Chapel of Viera
- Saturday, November 2nd, 4:30 - 6:30, Super Skate for Super Kids Fall 2024, info @ theparkerfoundation.com
- Tuesday, November 5th - 2024, General Election Day. See votebrevard.gov for dates and locations for early voting in Brevard County
- Friday, November 15th, 5:00-8:00 PM, Brevard Autism Coalition's Uncorked event, Hotel Melby, 801 E. Strawbridge Ave, Melbourne, FL 32901 (eventbrite to register)
- Saturday, November 16th, 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM, "Giving Thanks to Our Veterans", ABG works and American Legion Post 117, 189 Veterans Drive SE, Palm Bay
- SOAK and Early Steps Space Coast will sponsor an Angel Tree, collecting toys for our special needs community ages 0-18 yrs. For information on how to host a box, which will be picked up by December 16th, contact Mary Cancel for details: Mary.cancel@spacecoasters.org or text/call 321-292-1370.
- Early Steps Play Groups:
 - Palm Bay Play Group: November 15, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Palm Bay Library, 1520 Port Malabar Boulevard NE
 - Cocoa Beach Play Group: November 6, 10:00-11:00 a.m., Catherine Schweinsberg Road Central Library, 308 Forest Ave.
 - Titusville Play Group: November 8, 9:00-10:00 a.m., The Children Center, 5650 Washington Ave.
- Thursday, November 28th, Thanksgiving!



