



One Voice Brevard

1 August 2026



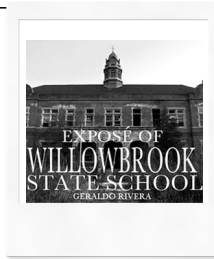
Building Bridges, not Barriers

by: Nicole Grabner, Director

Twenty-seven years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court delivered a monumental civil rights ruling for Americans with disabilities. In *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999), brought by two women with intellectual disabilities, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, the Court ruled that unjustified institutional segregation of people with disabilities is a form of illegal discrimination under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



The core of this ruling is the Integration Mandate: the legal requirement that state and local governments must provide services in the "most integrated setting appropriate." To understand why this mandate is so essential, one must look back at institutions like the Willowbrook State School.



Exposed in the 1970s for its deplorable, overcrowded, and abusive conditions, Willowbrook highlighted the inherent cruelty of warehousing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities away from society. It served as a painful, national wake-up call that institutional segregation strips individuals of basic human dignity, autonomy, and safety. *Olmstead* was born out of the determination to ensure that no person would ever be forced into an institution simply to receive the care they need.

For families and self-advocates, *Olmstead* represents hope, dignity, and unity. Institutional placement isolates individuals from their loved ones. Beyond isolating individuals from their families, institutions routinely strip people of basic self-determination, forcing regimented daily schedules, communal living with strangers, and an elevated risk of abuse and neglect in environments hidden from public oversight.

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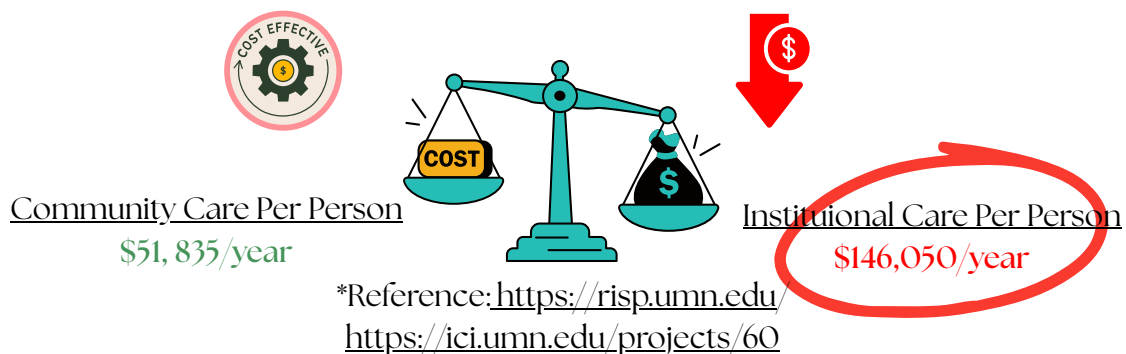


Building Bridges, not Barriers

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The integration mandate guarantees that with adequate Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) such as personal care assistance, supported employment, and respite care, individuals can thrive in their own family homes and local neighborhoods alongside neurotypical peers. It reinforces that care should empower families, not force painful separations.

Beyond fulfilling constitutional obligations, community-based care models consistently prove more cost-effective and yield vastly superior health and quality-of-life outcomes compared to institutional care.



Achieving true compliance requires proactive policy:

- Investing in HCBS: Fully funding community waiver programs eliminates waitlists and keeps families intact.
- Protecting Medicaid Access: Streamlining administrative processes prevents procedural disenrollments that disrupt home care.
- Supporting Care Workers: Ensuring competitive wages for direct support professionals stabilizes the community care workforce.

The Olmstead decision reinforces a powerful truth: true equality requires autonomy and inclusion. Prioritizing full community integration in policy and funding ensures that every person, regardless of ability, retains the freedom to live, learn, and contribute as an active member of their home community.

“When I was in an institution, I didn't like myself. I was trapped. I had no hope.” -
Elaine Wilson

Connection and Community: Our Family's NDSC Convention Reflection

by: Ranae Martinez, Disability Advocate

I attended the National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) in Orlando July 24–26, and it was such a meaningful weekend. Founded in 1973, the National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) was created as the first national organization specifically dedicated to advocating for and supporting individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Its annual convention has grown into the world's largest gathering of its kind, uniting thousands of self-advocates, family members, medical professionals, and educators from around the globe. The event is essential because it bridges cutting-edge research, policy advocacy, and community support, empowering families with lifelong resources while celebrating the self-determination and achievements of individuals with Down syndrome.

It had been about 10 years since my last NDSC conference, when we met the cast of *Born This Way* — a memory that still holds a special place in my heart, especially after learning of Christina Sanz's passing this year.

This year brought new highlights: meeting actor Madison Tevlin and her mom between sessions, and meeting Jillian Benfield before attending her workshop on advocacy through social media. Both moments were gracious, inspiring, and just a little bit starstruck.



The workshops offered something for every stage of life, from pre-k through adulthood. I especially appreciated sessions focused on education, advocacy, and even the physiology of feet and shoe choices for loved ones with Down syndrome. Informative, practical, and made even better by inclusive presenters.

For anyone interested in advocacy, there were options for every comfort level — from beginner-friendly guidance to action steps for those already involved. Beyond the sessions, the conference was full of games, dances, youth programs, hallway conversations, and friendships that clearly last far beyond one weekend. Seeing that sense of community made me even more excited for what our son may experience in the future.

Next year's conference will be in Denver, Colorado — and I'm already planning to attend.

For more information, visit NDSCCenter.org.



Resources and Community: Helping Hands Conference Agenda

by: Nicole Grabner

Mark your calendars and get ready to connect! We are thrilled to invite our entire community to the upcoming Helping Hands Conference—a completely FREE event created specifically to support, inform, and empower individuals with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. Navigating the world of services, accommodations, and life transitions can often feel overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone. Whether you are looking for practical guidance, local resources, or simply a supportive space to share experiences with fellow families, this conference is designed to give you the tools and confidence you need to thrive.

This year's conference is packed with valuable opportunities to learn and connect. Families will have the chance to explore over 50 local vendors offering specialized services, programs, and products tailored to our community's needs. Throughout the day, a diverse lineup of professional speakers will host interactive panel discussions covering every stage of life. Topics include navigating early childhood intervention, supporting students through K-12 and adult services, understanding legislative updates, estate planning for your family's financial future, accessing specialized dental care, and improving first-responder interactions with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Adding to this incredible lineup, we are honored to announce our keynote speaker: Bob Asztalos, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). Hearing directly from state leadership will offer our families unique insight into state-level advocacy, resources, and policy directions. Because space is limited and we want to ensure every family gets the most out of this event, we strongly encourage everyone to reserve their spot early—RSVP today to secure your free registration and join us for a day of learning, connection, and empowerment!



Empowering Disability Communities

- ✓ **Disability information.**
- ✓ **Disability resources.**
- ✓ **Disability community.**
- ✓ **Disability advocacy.**



PARTICIPANT & VENDOR
REGISTRATION LINK:

Keynote Speaker
Robert "Bob" Asztalos

Sat August 29th, 2026
Melbourne Auditorium
625 E. Hibiscus Blvd,
Melbourne, FL

EVENT TIME
10am-4pm



HELPING HANDS

29 AUG 2026
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

*Vendor Setup 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM
Vendor Free Time 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM

10:00 - 11:00	Main Room	Open door Vendor time
11:00 - 11:45	A & B	Opening Remarks Keynote Address
11:45 - 12:20 PM	A & B	Legislative Updates
12:30 - 1:15 PM	Room A Room B	O - 5 (Early Childhood) Adults
1:20 - 2:00 PM	Room A Room B	K-12 Financial Planning/Attorney
2:05 - 2:45 PM	Room A Room B	Health (Doctors) Mental Health
2:55 - 3:45 PM	Room A Room B	First Responders FOHA (Dental)



Vision and Learning Month: Seeing the World Differently— Understanding Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI)

by Melissa Amarnath, Founder & President, Community Pathway for Kids

(Edited and Reprinted with Permission from the Author)

When we think about vision, we often picture an eye chart at the doctor's office. We assume that if someone can read the letters on the chart, their vision is "normal." But vision is far more complex than eyesight alone. It is a process that begins with the eyes but depends on the brain to interpret and give meaning to everything we see.

During Vision and Learning Month, it is important to bring awareness to a condition that affects thousands of children and adults but is still widely misunderstood: Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI).

Today, CVI is recognized as one of the leading causes of childhood visual impairment in developed countries. Yet many individuals go years without a diagnosis because their eyes often appear healthy, and their behaviors are frequently mistaken for attention problems, autism characteristics, sensory differences, or behavioral challenges. The reality is that many individuals with CVI are working incredibly hard just to understand the visual world around them.

What Is Cerebral Visual Impairment?

Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) is a neurological visual disorder caused by damage to or differences in the visual pathways and processing centers of the brain. Unlike conditions that affect the eyes themselves, CVI affects how the brain receives, organizes, and interprets visual information. Imagine looking at a thousand-piece puzzle that someone dumped onto the floor. The pieces are all there, but they are scattered, overlapping, and difficult to organize. That is similar to how the brain of someone with CVI may process visual information. The eyes collect the image, but the brain struggles to sort out what is important, what can be ignored, and what everything means. For many individuals, vision is not absent—it is inconsistent.

Why Vision Changes Throughout the Day

One of the characteristics that makes CVI unique is that vision can fluctuate. A child may recognize a favorite toy in the morning but not later in the afternoon. They may easily find their shoes at home but become completely overwhelmed trying to locate them in a busy classroom. Fatigue, illness, stress, lighting, background noise, visual clutter, movement, and unfamiliar environments all increase the brain's workload. Parents often describe these fluctuations by saying: "Yesterday she found it right away, but today she acts like she can't see it." This inconsistency can be confusing unless we understand that the brain's ability to process visual information changes depending on the demands being placed on it.



Understanding CVI

(Continued)

What Does the World Look Like to Someone with CVI?

One of the hardest questions parents ask is: “What does my child actually see?” The truth is that no two people with CVI experience vision exactly the same way. However, researchers and individuals living with CVI have helped us better understand some common experiences. Imagine trying to find your friend in a crowded stadium filled with thousands of people wearing similar clothing. Now imagine trying to do that while the lights are constantly changing, people are moving in every direction, and someone keeps adding more objects into your field of vision. That is similar to what a classroom, grocery store, playground, or busy family gathering may feel like for someone with CVI. Instead of immediately recognizing what is important, the brain has to work much harder to separate relevant information from background “visual noise.” Some individuals describe it as trying to look through fog. Others describe it as looking through a camera that never fully focuses. For some, objects disappear when surrounded by clutter, while others notice movement more easily than stationary objects. A child may see a bright yellow ball sitting alone on a dark floor but completely lose it when placed inside a colorful toy box.

Common Visual Behaviors

Every individual with CVI presents differently, but many share similar visual behaviors. These behaviors are not signs of poor effort or lack of attention—they are clues about how the brain processes visual information. Children with CVI may:

- Look away before reaching for an object.
 - Reach beside an object rather than directly toward it.
 - Notice movement before recognizing stationary items.
 - Become overwhelmed in busy classrooms or stores.
 - Lose objects on patterned carpets or colorful backgrounds.
 - Have difficulty recognizing familiar faces, especially in groups.
 - Need extra time before responding to visual information.
 - Recognize an object one day but not the next.
 - Use touch to identify objects before trusting what they see.
 - Prefer simple environments with fewer visual distractions.
 - Become anxious in unfamiliar spaces because navigation is difficult.
 - Focus on one item at a time while ignoring everything else around them.
 - Have trouble locating food on a patterned plate but eat well from a solid-colored dish.
 - Miss steps, curbs, or changes in flooring because they are difficult to interpret visually.
 - Become tired after visually demanding activities such as reading or searching for objects.
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Understanding CVI

(Continued)

Because these behaviors overlap with other developmental conditions, they are often misunderstood. A child who appears inattentive may actually be unable to locate the teacher's face. A child who refuses to enter a crowded cafeteria may not be displaying challenging behavior—they may be experiencing overwhelming visual complexity. Understanding the “why” behind these behaviors changes how we respond.

How CVI Affects Learning

Nearly every learning experience relies on vision. Children learn by watching facial expressions, observing peers, finding classroom materials, copying from a board, recognizing letters, navigating playgrounds, and interpreting social cues. When visual processing is difficult, learning becomes much more exhausting. Many students with CVI expend so much energy simply locating information that they have fewer cognitive resources available for learning new concepts. Without appropriate supports, these students may appear distracted, slower to respond, or academically behind when, in reality, they are working significantly harder than their peers.

Can CVI Be Treated?

One of the most encouraging aspects of CVI is that the brain has the ability to adapt. Through a process called neuroplasticity, the brain can develop new pathways and become more efficient at processing visual information. While there is currently no medication or surgery that “cures” CVI, many individuals make meaningful progress when they receive individualized supports. Treatment is not about fixing the eyes—it is about improving access to visual information and helping the brain use vision more effectively. Support may include:

- Functional vision assessments
- CVI-specific evaluations
- Orientation and mobility services
- Vision therapy or vision intervention when appropriate
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Early intervention services
- Teacher consultation
- Environmental modifications
- Family coaching

Equally important is collaboration among ophthalmologists, optometrists, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs), Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS), herapists, educators, and families. Each professional brings a unique perspective that helps build a complete understanding of how the individual uses vision in daily life.



Understanding CVI

(Continued)

Small Changes Can Have a Big Impact

Many accommodations are surprisingly simple but can dramatically improve participation. These may include:

- Reducing visual clutter on classroom walls.
- Presenting one object or one worksheet section at a time.
- Using solid-colored backgrounds to increase contrast.
- Positioning materials consistently.
- Allowing extra processing time before expecting a response.
- Pairing visual information with touch or verbal descriptions.
- Simplifying busy environments whenever possible.
- Using predictable routines to reduce visual demands.

These supports do not lower expectations. Instead, they remove unnecessary barriers so individuals can demonstrate what they know.

Looking Toward the Future

Perhaps the most important message families need to hear is this: **A diagnosis of CVI does not define a person's future.** With early identification, appropriate supports, and consistent accommodations, many individuals with CVI continue to make progress throughout childhood and adulthood. Some children who initially struggled to recognize objects learn to navigate their schools independently. Others develop successful reading skills using adapted materials. Many participate in sports, attend college, pursue careers, and live fulfilling, independent lives. Progress often looks different for every individual, but improvement is possible. As research continues to expand, our understanding of CVI is growing rapidly. Schools are becoming more aware of neurological vision disorders, healthcare professionals are improving identification, and families are finding stronger networks of support than ever before. The future is increasingly hopeful because awareness is growing.

Seeing Potential Instead of Limitations

For individuals with CVI, the goal is not simply to help them see better—it is to help them access their world. When families, educators, therapists, healthcare providers, and community members recognize that vision happens in the brain, we begin asking different questions. Instead of asking, “Why isn’t this child paying attention?” we ask, “How can we make this information more visually accessible?” That shift in perspective changes everything. During Vision and Learning Month, let’s continue to increase awareness of Cerebral Visual Impairment so that fewer children are misunderstood and more individuals receive the support they need to learn, communicate, and thrive. Because every child deserves the opportunity not only to be seen—but to be understood.



A Summer of Acceptance: Celebrating the Heart of Camp 2 Can 2026

By: Ryleigh Morway, Co-Leader Camp 2 Can

Another unforgettable summer of Camp 2 Can is officially in the books.

For six weeks, campers, volunteers, leaders, and staff came together to create something far greater than a traditional summer camp. Camp 2 Can 2026 became a community built on acceptance, understanding, patience, friendship, and the freedom to belong.

At the Brevard Autism Coalition, our mission is not simply to create programs for individuals with autism. It is to create spaces in which every individual is recognized for who they are, supported in the ways they need, and given opportunities to form meaningful connections. Camp 2 Can is the heart of that mission in action. Here, campers are met exactly where they are. They are not expected to hide the parts of themselves that others may not understand. They are not asked to conform in order to be included. They are welcomed into a safe environment where they can be themselves, fully and unapologetically, while compassionate leaders, staff, and volunteers offer encouragement, guidance, and support.

A Summer That Changed Our Volunteers

Some of the most powerful transformations this summer occurred among our volunteers. Many arrived with an awareness of autism but were uncertain about what to expect. They may have understood that autism is a spectrum, but they had not yet experienced how differently that spectrum can present from one individual to another. They quickly learned that there is no single way to communicate, connect, participate, express emotion, or experience the world. Over the course of six weeks, awareness grew into understanding, and understanding grew into genuine acceptance. Each volunteer connected with different campers in a unique and personal way. Some bonds formed through conversation and laughter. Others developed during games, activities, field trips, or quiet moments of simply sitting beside one another. Some connections required words; many did not. The volunteers learned to notice the meaning behind a gesture, to celebrate progress that others might overlook, and to understand that connection does not always happen in conventional ways. They discovered that when we take the time to enter another person's world without judgment or expectation, we often receive far more than we ever imagined. They may have arrived hoping to make a difference in the lives of our campers, but many left realizing that the campers had changed their lives, too. They left Camp 2 Can with lasting memories, greater compassion, a deeper understanding of autism, and hearts made fuller by the individuals they had come to know. These were not brief volunteer encounters. Six weeks gave them the opportunity to build trust, recognize individual personalities and strengths, and understand why programs such as Camp 2 Can are so important to our community. The lessons learned this summer will extend far beyond



A Summer of Acceptance (Continued)

camp. They will be carried into schools, workplaces, families, friendships, and future careers. That is how acceptance grows, not only through information, but through relationships.

Connections Without Barriers

Some of the most beautiful moments of Camp 2 Can 2026 unfolded during our morning walks and community outings, particularly in the relationships between our younger and older campers. A younger camper might approach an older camper and simply take their hand, quietly choosing that person as their walking companion. There were no formal introductions and no need for an explanation. There was only trust, offered freely and received with care. In those moments, our older campers demonstrated remarkable patience, gentleness, and responsibility. They slowed their pace, stayed close, and made sure the younger camper felt secure. The younger campers, in turn, offered their older peers something equally meaningful: unconditional trust, companionship, and the opportunity to feel capable, valued, and needed. To an outside observer, it may have looked like two campers simply walking hand in hand. But those who understand the social and emotional importance of these moments know they represented something much greater. There were moments of belonging. For a younger camper who may find social interaction difficult or overwhelming, reaching for another person's hand can be a profound expression of trust and connection. For an older camper, being chosen in that moment can strengthen confidence, empathy, leadership, and a sense of purpose. Both individuals are positively affected, not because the interaction was forced or rehearsed, but because it was genuine. These connections cannot be measured only by completed activities or traditional milestones. Their impact lives in the safety a camper feels beside another person, the pride in being trusted, the comfort of being understood, and the quiet realization that connection does not have to look a certain way to be meaningful.

The Freedom to Be Fully Yourself

Camp 2 Can is special because it allows relationships to develop naturally, without the social pressures many individuals with autism experience in other environments. There is no requirement to communicate in a particular way, participate at the same pace, or fit into a narrow definition of what social interaction should look like. Campers are given the space to engage, regulate, explore, and connect in ways that feel authentic to them. A camper may need movement before joining an activity. Another may communicate most clearly through actions rather than words. One camper may eagerly seek friendship, while another may prefer to connect quietly and gradually. At Camp 2 Can



A Summer of Acceptance (Continued)



these differences are not viewed as barriers. They are recognized as part of the individuality each camper brings to our community. True inclusion is not merely allowing someone to enter a space. It is creating a space where that person feels safe enough to be fully themselves. That is what Camp 2 Can strives to provide. Our campers were surrounded by people who took the time to learn who they were, not only what support they needed, but what made them laugh, what brought them comfort, what sparked their interest, and what helped them feel successful. Within that environment, campers were able to develop friendships, practice independence, strengthen social-emotional skills, and experience the simple joy of being accepted.

More Than a Summer Camp

The success of Camp 2 Can 2026 cannot be captured by a calendar, a list of activities, or the number of outings completed. Its true success is found in the relationships that were formed and the lives that were touched.

- It is found in the volunteer who arrived uncertain and left with a new understanding of autism. It is found in the younger camper who confidently reached for an older camper's hand.
- It is found in the older camper who responded with patience, kindness, and care.
- It is found in every camper who was given the freedom to participate without apology, every family who knew their loved one was safe and valued, and every staff member, leader, and volunteer who helped create a place of belonging.

This summer reminded us that acceptance is not passive. It is a choice to listen, to learn, to remain open, and to recognize the worth of every individual. When people are given the opportunity to truly know one another, uncertainty gives way to understanding, differences become opportunities for connection, and communities become stronger.

Camp 2 Can 2026 was a summer of acceptance. It was a summer of growth, friendship, compassion, and memories that will remain in the hearts of our campers and volunteers for years to come.

Another summer may be in the books, but its story does not end here. Every connection made, every lesson learned, and every heart changed will continue to carry the mission of the Brevard Autism Coalition into our community. With full hearts and tremendous gratitude, we celebrate the extraordinary campers, families, volunteers, leaders, staff, supporters, and community partners who made Camp 2 Can 2026 possible. We are already looking forward to the friendships, growth, and unforgettable moments awaiting us at Camp 2 Can 2027.





The Autism Health and Abilities Conference

A Parent's Perspective

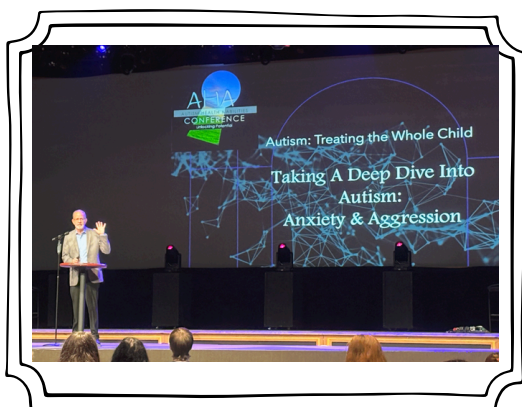
By Brittany Klenotich, Guest Author

Attending the Autism Health and Abilities (AHA) Conference with my husband and our 27-year-old daughter, Brittany, was one of the most educational experiences we've had as longtime special needs parents. Although Brittany has not been formally diagnosed with autism, she displays many autistic characteristics, while her primary diagnosis is spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy with behavioral challenges.

We carefully selected sessions that we felt would be most relevant to our family's journey, and the knowledge we gained exceeded our expectations. Compared to other conferences I have attended this summer, the speakers at AHA presented practical, evidence-based information that was both insightful and immediately applicable. What impressed us most was the genuine compassion of the presenters.

The doctors and specialists not only shared their expertise during the sessions, but also took the time to speak with us personally about both Brittany's unique needs and my husband's health condition. Although the conference focuses on autism, the information and resources extend far beyond a single diagnosis.

We left feeling informed, encouraged, and better equipped to advocate for our family. I truly believe the AHA Conference is a valuable resource that should be shared throughout the entire special needs community. The conference felt very personable not overwhelming in a very relaxed setting. We can't wait for the AHA conference in 2027!



Picture of Dr Kartzinel and Brittany

The Gut-Brain Connection: Why Gut Health Matters in Autism and Developmental Disabilities



by Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard

For many years, discussions around autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other neurodevelopmental conditions focused almost exclusively on brain biology, genetics, and behavioral therapy. Recent ground-breaking research into the system between gut and brain (the “gut-brain axis”) is transforming how clinicians and families approach developmental health.

The Microbiome as a "Second Brain"

The human digestive tract hosts trillions of microorganisms, collectively known as the gut microbiome. These microbes do far more than digest food; they help regulate the immune system, produce critical neurotransmitters and send signals directly to the brain via the vagus nerve.

When the microbiome becomes imbalanced it can lead to localized inflammation, digestive issues and chronic illnesses. This imbalance can trigger immune responses that directly influence brain function and sensory processing.

Gastrointestinal Challenges in Autistic Children

Studies show that children with autism are up to 3 times more likely to experience chronic gastrointestinal issues such as severe constipation, chronic diarrhea, bloating, and abdominal pain when compared to their neurotypical peers.

Because many children with developmental disabilities face communication barriers or interoception challenges like difficulty recognizing internal bodily sensations, physical discomfort from gut distress often manifests as behavioral distress. Issues like sleep disruption, increased anxiety, sensory overload, self-injurious behavior, or heightened irritability are frequently linked to unaddressed GI pain.

Supporting the Gut for Overall Well-Being

Duke University, in partnership with UNC Health, recently began a \$12.9M new clinical trial to hopefully look at current standards of care. Addressing gut health offers a promising, holistic path to improving quality of life for autistic children. Targeted dietary adjustments, identifying food sensitivities, supplementing with evidence-based probiotics, and addressing nutrient absorption issues can alleviate underlying physical discomfort. By stabilizing gut health, families and practitioners often observe improvements not only in digestive comfort, but also in sleep quality, emotional regulation, and daily engagement.



A Novel Idea Our Virtual Book Club Reading

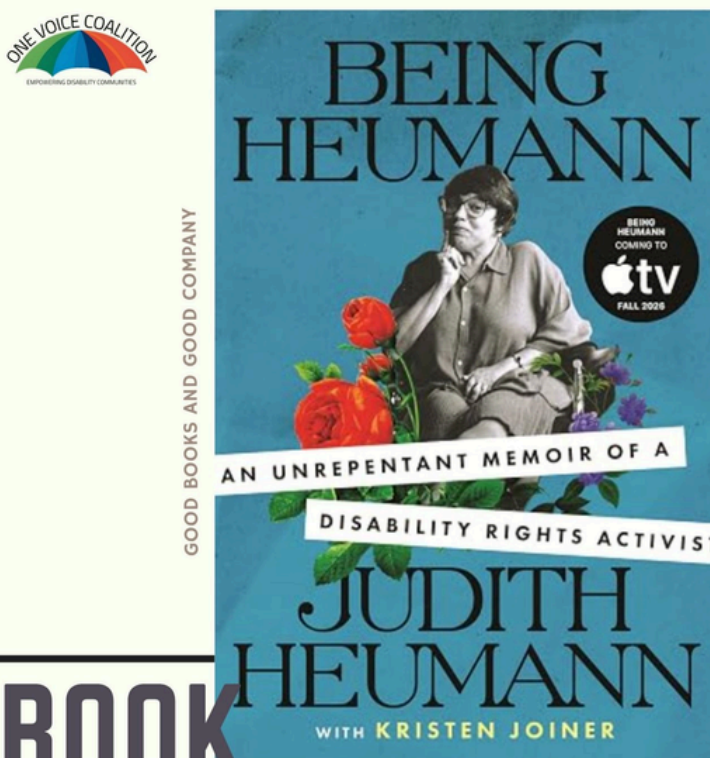
by Nicole Grabner, President One Voice Brevard

With over five decades in activism and known as the "Mother of the Disability Rights Movement", Judith Heumann was a tireless advocate for the disability community.

From leading the historic 1977 "504 Sit-in", which forced the implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to serving as a key advisor in shaping the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Heumann's pioneering work established a fundamental principle in federal civil rights law that segregated care is unequal, and community-based inclusion is a right, not a privilege.

Today, as federal discussions spark debate over the Department of Justice's recent legal opinions regarding the scope and enforcement of the Olmstead integration mandate, Judy Heumann's legacy serves as a vital anchor. Her lifetime of organizing reminds self-advocates, families, and policy-makers alike that the fight for independent living, home and community-based services, and full civil integration is a hard-won promise that must be continuously defended.

During the month of August, we will be hosting a virtual book club reading of her wonderful memoir, "Being Heumann" on Zoom. Come join us as we discuss the work of this amazing advocate!



BOOK TALK

MONDAYS | 7 PM
Starting 10 August to 31 August

Zoom Registration Link:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81111111111>
<https://onevoicecoalitionflorida.org/>



August Voting Information

by Nicole Grabner



While August is officially called a primary election, it's so much more than a prep step for November. For local families, it's often the most powerful election of the entire year!

A common myth is that primary voting is only for people registered with major political parties. The truth is, every single registered voter, including those with No Party Affiliation (NPA) or minor parties, has a seat at the table. Important nonpartisan races, like school board members, local judges, and city council seats, appear on everyone's ballot, alongside key community referendums that impact our neighborhoods.



PRIMARY ELECTION DATE
AUGUST 18, 2026

What makes this August election so special is that many of these key positions are decided outright before November ever arrives. When a nonpartisan candidate wins a simple majority in August, they take office—making this election our primary opportunity to choose the leaders who shape our children's daily lives. School board members guide our classrooms, educational programs, and district resources, while local judges make decisions that touch our community's safety and well-being. Because turnout in August is typically much lower than in November, your single family's vote holds incredible power. Let's make sure our collective voice is heard this August!

Accessible Voting in Florida: Quick Guide:

1. Your Rights Are Protected

- Private & Independent: You have the legal right to vote privately and independently.
- No Medical Explanations Needed: You never have to explain or prove your disability to poll workers to receive support or accommodations.

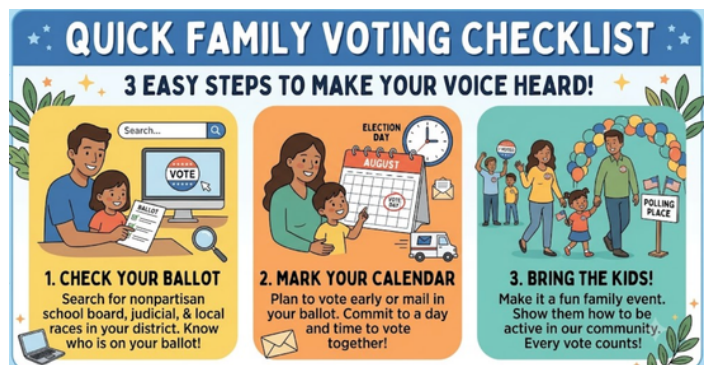
2. Choose How You Want to Vote

- In-Person (Early Voting or Election Day): Every polling site must be physically accessible and feature at least one accessible ballot-marking device (like an ExpressVote) with screen readers, audio prompts, large text, and adaptive inputs.
- From Home (Accessible Vote-by-Mail): You can request a mail-in ballot ([deadline August 6, 2026](#)).

3. You Can Bring Help

- You are allowed to bring anyone you trust (a family member, friend, or caregiver) into the voting booth to assist you.
- Only exception: Your helper cannot be your boss or a union representative.
- You can also ask two poll workers for assistance if you go alone.

Need Help or Have Questions? Contact your local Supervisor of Elections or call the [Disability Rights Florida Voter Hotline at 1-877-352-7337](#).



- For more information about voting in Brevard County, please see: <https://www.votebrevard.gov/>

Family Care Council Updates

by Nicole Grabner



At the most recent Statewide Family Care Council (FCC) meeting, a formal presentation given by APD's acting General Counsel, Erin Dunca, discussed recent concerns surrounding the Texas vs. Kennedy case, U.S. v. Florida court case, and the recent Department of Justice (DOJ) Olmstead memo.



Federal laws at issue

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794), Nondiscrimination under Federal grants and programs:
 - **No otherwise qualified individual with a disability** in the United States, as defined in [section 705\(20\)](#) of this title, shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, **be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance** or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service. The head of each such agency **shall promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the amendments** to this section made by the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Act of 1978.

A full recording and slides presented at this meeting will be uploaded to the FCC website. Also, APD hopes to have the FCC Guide ready to publish sometime in early August.

To register for the next Area 7 meeting, please click here:

<https://meet.goto.com/FCCFlorida/area-7-family-care-council-meeting>

To apply for services, please click the following link (the application is online):

<https://applynow.apd.myflorida.com/>

To see the newly launched "Roadmap to Family Resources," click here:

<https://apd.myflorida.com/resources.htm>

To see APD's newly launched Crisis Review Guide, click here:

<https://apd.myflorida.com/services/crisisguide.htm>

Current pre-enrollment numbers:

Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Pre-Enrollment Numbers by Priority Category and County
As of 07/28/2026

County	Category 1: Crisis	Category 2: Transitions from Child Welfare	Category 3: Intensive Needs	Category 4: Caregiver Over Age 60	Category 5: Transition from School	Category 6: Age 21 and Older	Category 7: Under Age 21	Total
ALACHUA	0	0	2	2	0	46	77	127
BAKER	0	0	0	0	0	6	8	14
BAY	0	0	0	3	0	72	44	119
BRADFORD	0	0	0	0	0	12	9	21
BREVARD	0	0	2	16	0	296	202	516

To see the full report published on 28 July:

<https://apd.myflorida.com/publications/reports/docs/Preenrollment%20Website%20Reporting%2020260728.pdf>



Family Corner

With Florida public schools kicking off the new academic year on August 10, families across the state are shifting into high gear to prepare for the return to the classroom. For parents of children with special needs, this transition often brings a complex mix of hope and anxiety as they navigate IEP adjustments, sensory accommodations, and familiarizing staff with their child's unique strengths. With the ESE population of Brevard County schools at over 14,000 (or roughly 20%), how prepared are families feeling for this coming school year?

"We like our school and our daughter has done well there for the past three years, but we just got told that her previous accommodations might not be available this year. We aren't sure who to speak with to figure out how to make sure she keeps receiving the accommodations she needs." - Kim

"Last year we had a horrible experience with our son, and now the school is trying to put him in a self-contained classroom with no notice. We aren't sure what to do."
- Sue

"We are very nervous where to put our son. He's only 5, nonverbal, and we had a bad experience in Pre-K, so we are looking at private school options this year." - Francis

"We had a great teacher and para last year, but I'm not sure now that we have transitioned schools to middle school. I know that there will be all-new routines and schedules, but I wish there had been some kind of example class over the summer so we could get an idea of what to expect. I had a friend who told me I need to make sure to double-check our IEP when school starts, so we'll be looking at that." - Ron





Monthly Art Submission



This month's submission is from Olivia, who is 14. She painted this at the most recent "Speak Through The Arts" class with The Parker Foundation.

Bill Buzz

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice
Brevard



While the Florida Capitol may seem quiet outside of legislative session, grassroots advocacy never takes a summer holiday. Between state agencies quietly drafting new rules, budget allocations taking effect, and public comment windows opening for federal and state policy shifts, decisions impacting our families are being made year-round. Staying engaged during these summer and fall months is often where we have the greatest opportunity to shape how laws are actually implemented in our everyday lives.

To help keep our community informed and empowered, we've put together a new advocacy tracker.

Over the past few months, there have been several critical alerts, from proposed policy changes to key opportunities for public input, and this tracker will serve as our attempt to keep up to date with all the alerts out there.

Whether it's celebrating a win, raising awareness on a concern, or highlighting an urgent call to action, this tool will hopefully help us navigate policy updates together, step by step.

*Note: The Public Comment window for the new Interim Medicaid work requirements Rule will have closed at the time of this publication (window closed on 31 July).

ADVOCACY ALERT TASK LOG



TASK	PRIORITY	DEAD LINE	OP/SP
Texas vs. Kennedy Case Emails/Calls/Letters/Change.org	HIGH	N/A	OP
HLR 876 - HCBill Emails/Calls/Letters	LOW	N/A	OP
* (2) DOJ - HCBS Opinion Letter Emails/Calls/Letters	HIGH	N/A	OP
HR 8540 - HCBS Access Act * Awt information	LOW	N/A	UNK
Public Comment - Medicaid Work Requirements	HIGH	31 July 2026	OP
HR 8705 - Charlie Act Emails/letters/calls	MEDIUM	N/A	OP
* AHCA Investigations (ABA) * Emails/Calls/Letters	MEDIUM	N/A	INFO
HR 3491 - DeOndra Dixon Act Passes House - to Senate (Calls/Emails/Support)	MEDIUM	N/A	SP
(Federal) SWE Act Emails/Calls/Against	MEDIUM	N/A	OP
HR 9401 - Latonya Reeves Act Emails/Calls/Support	MEDIUM	N/A	SP
(Federal) Medicaid Act Emails/Calls/Support	LOW	N/A	UNK
* HHS Halts HCBS Funding (CA&MN) WATCH	MEDIUM	N/A	INFO
SB 5046 - Prohibit DOE Transfer Call/Emails/Letter	LOW	N/A	SP

• As of 28 July 2026

*To find who your State Legislators are, please see the Florida House and Florida Senate websites.

Bill Buzz, Part 2

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice
Brevard

We still need help making phone calls, sending emails and sending letters to ask that the State of Florida, withdraw from it's lawsuit, Texas vs. Kennedy.

Governor Ron DeSantis Office of the Governor The Capitol 400 S. Monroe St. Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001	Attorney General James Uthmeier Office of the Attorney General PL-01, The Capitol Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050	
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I am writing to you today as a disability advocate to respectfully urge you to withdraw the State of Florida from participation in **Florida vs. Kennedy, Case No. 5:24-CV-00225**, particularly with regard to the claim seeking to set aside the Final Rule that protects the rights of people with disabilities to live and receive services in the least restrictive environment.

As Floridians, many of us rely on policies and protections that support the health, safety, and well-being of our communities, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable populations. Continued involvement in this litigation raises significant concerns about potential impacts on critical services, supports, and protections that families across Florida depend on. Withdrawing from this lawsuit would reflect a commitment to protecting access to essential supports and ensuring that Floridians can continue to receive the care and services they need to live, work, and participate fully in their communities.

Thank you for your time and service to the people of Florida, and I urge you to stand with Florida families by withdrawing from this lawsuit.

Respectfully,

[Full Name]
[City, Zip]
[Phone Number]



*To sign our Change.org petition, please click here:

<https://www.change.org/p/ask-the-state-of-florida-to-withdraw-from-504-lawsuit>

Bill Buzz, Part 3

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice
Brevard

We could use some help sending calls and emails to your Congressional Representative as well as our two State Senators, Rick Scott and Ashley Moody, in opposition to H.R. 8736.

Dear **Congressman/woman/Senator [Name]**,

I am writing as a constituent and family member of an individual with a disability to express my opposition to the Restoration of Employment Choice for Adults with Disabilities Act (H.R. 8736).

While the bill is presented as expanding employment choice, I am concerned that it would weaken important protections designed to help young adults with disabilities pursue competitive, integrated employment. Specifically, the legislation would lower the age at which individuals can enter subminimum wage employment from 24 to 18, reducing opportunities for transition services, vocational rehabilitation, career counseling, and other supports intended to help individuals achieve meaningful employment in their communities.

For decades, disability advocates, self-advocates, families, employers, and policymakers have worked to increase access to competitive integrated employment and move away from outdated systems that segregate individuals with disabilities and pay wages below the federal minimum wage. Young adults with disabilities deserve the same opportunities to explore careers, develop skills, and earn fair wages as their peers.

As a family member, I want my loved one and all individuals with disabilities to be valued for their abilities and provided opportunities to reach their full potential.

We should invest in employment supports, job coaching, transportation, and workforce development programs that help individuals succeed in integrated settings, rather than expanding pathways to subminimum-wage employment. Florida has made significant investments in employment initiatives through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation, and I believe federal policy should reinforce these efforts rather than undermine them.

I respectfully urge you to **oppose H.R. 8736** and support policies that promote fair wages, community inclusion, and competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[City, State]

Bill Buzz, Part 4

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice
Brevard

In response to the recent opinion letter published by the Department of Justice regarding home and community-based services, we could use your help making calls (and emails) to your Congressman/woman.

The Honorable [Representative's Name]
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman/Congresswoman [Last Name],

I am writing as the parent, family member, caregiver, or self-advocate of a person with a disability to express my concern regarding the recent U.S. Department of Justice opinion addressing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Olmstead decision, and home- and community-based services (HCBS).

Like many families, our goal is simple: we want our loved one to have the opportunity to live safely, with dignity, and as independently as possible in their community. Home- and community-based services make that possible by providing supports such as personal care, employment services, transportation, respite, therapies, and other assistance that help individuals remain in their homes rather than unnecessary institutional settings. For more than 25 years, the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision has affirmed that people with disabilities should receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. While the recent DOJ opinion does not change the law, it raises concerns about how these important civil rights protections may be interpreted and enforced in the future.

Community living should never be viewed as an optional benefit that states may choose to provide when convenient. It is the means by which millions of Americans with disabilities exercise the same freedoms that others often take for granted—the freedom to choose where they live, pursue employment, build relationships, and participate fully in community life.

For families like mine, these supports are not a luxury. They help prevent unnecessary institutionalization, reduce caregiver burnout, and allow people with disabilities to contribute to their communities. When families receive the right supports, individuals are more likely to work, volunteer, attend school, and live fulfilling lives. Unfortunately, many states, including Florida, continue to have long waiting lists for home- and community-based services. Families often wait years for assistance while doing everything they can to keep their loved ones safe at home. Weakening the commitment to community integration sends the wrong message at a time when many families are already struggling to access the services they need.

I respectfully ask you to continue supporting the principles established by the ADA and Olmstead by protecting federal funding for home- and community-based services, strengthening community supports, and ensuring that people with disabilities have the opportunity to live, work, and thrive in their communities. Please continue to support policies that recognize community living as a fundamental civil right and protect the dignity, independence, and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your service and for considering the concerns of families like mine. I appreciate your leadership and respectfully ask for your continued support of policies that strengthen, not weaken, the rights of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[City, State]

*For more information, please check: <https://dredf.org/we-belong-in-the-community-not-in-institutions/>

OVCFL 2026 Legislative Platform



ONE VOICE COALITION 2026 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



Health Care

- Protecting and Expanding Medicaid - Ensuring Floridians have access to quality, affordable health care.
- Standardize and update the legal definition of autism in the Florida Statutes.
- KidCare Rollout - ensure effective implementation of this benefit

Protect children with disabilities by ensuring the protection of OSEP (Office of Special Education Programs), OCR (Office of Civil Rights), and protecting IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.



Education



Collaboration

Bring collaboration and transparency to every aspect of policy affecting those with disabilities. It is imperative to ensure that our voices are heard when decisions are being made - Nothing about us without us!



info@onevoicebrevard.com



www.onevoicecoalitionflorida.org

Resources and Contact Information

- Brevard Autism Coalition; <https://brevardautismcoalition.com/>
- Angels Bridging Gaps; <https://angelsbridginggaps.org/>
- The Parker Foundation; <https://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; <https://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>
- Bright Feats magazine
- Brevard C.A.R.E.S. Mobil Response Team 24/hour line (321) 213-0315
- Feeding Florida (food bank information) <https://www.feedingflorida.org/>
- Everything Brevard (resource website)
<https://www.everythingbrevard.com/blog/guide-space-coast-food-pantries>



For more information or questions, please see our Facebook page.

Brevard County Delegation

CONTACT US
Brevard County Delegation



Senator Debbie Mayfield
District 19

📞 District Office (321) 409 - 2025
Capital Office (850) 487 - 5019

✉️ debbie.mayfield@flsenate.gov

🌐 <https://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/S19>

📍 900 East Strawbridge Avenue
Room 408
Melbourne, FL 32901



Senator Tom Wright
District 8

📞 District Office (386) 304 - 7630
Capital Office (850) 487 - 5008

✉️ tom.wright@flsenate.gov

🌐 <https://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/S8>

📍 4606 South Clyde Morris Boulevard
Suite 2-J
Port Orange, FL 32129



CONTACT US
Brevard County Delegation



Rep. Chase Tramont
District 30

📞 District Office (386) 278 - 1640
Capital Office (850) 717 - 5030

✉️ chase.tramont@flhouse.gov

🌐 <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/detail.aspx?MemberId=4867&LegislativeTermId=91>

📍 Suite 201D
5889 South Williamson Boulevard
Port Orange, FL 32128-6110



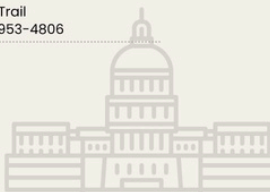
Rep. Tyler Sirois
District 31

📞 District Office (386) 304 - 7630
Capital Office (850) 487 - 5008

✉️ tyler.sirois@flhouse.gov

🌐 <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/detail.aspx?MemberId=4748&LegislativeTermId=91>

📍 Suite 206
260 North Tropical Trail
Merritt Island, FL 32953-4806



CONTACT US
Brevard County Delegation



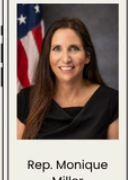
Rep. Brian Hodgers
District 32

📞 District Office (321) 497 - 8200
Capital Office (850) 717 - 5032

✉️ brian.hodgers@flhouse.gov

🌐 <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/detail.aspx?MemberId=5064&LegislativeTermId=91>

📍 Building B #202
2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way
Viera, FL 32940-6605



Rep. Monique Miller
District 33

📞 District Office (321) 497 - 8170
Capital Office (850) 717 - 5033

✉️ monique.miller@flhouse.gov

🌐 <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/custom/details.aspx?MemberId=4913&LegislativeTermId=91>

📍 Suite 5
2539 Palm Bay Road Northeast
Palm Bay, FL 32905-3534



CONTACT US
Brevard County Delegation



Rep. Robert Brackett
District 34

📞 District Office (772) 365 - 9230
Capital Office (850) 717 - 5034

✉️ robert.brackett@flhouse.gov

🌐 <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/detail.aspx?MemberId=4870&LegislativeTermId=91>

📍 Suite B2-203
1800 27th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960-0310



Sign up for my
E-Newsletter!



@RepHaridopolos

**NEED HELP WITH A
FEDERAL AGENCY?**

For assistance with:

- Social Security
- The IRS
- Veterans Affairs
- Medicare
- Immigration/Passports

Call (321)-632-1776
or scan the QR code



MIKE HARIDOPOLOS
FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES





August Events

International Assistance Dog Week

2026							AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
													1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8							
9	10	11	12	13	14	15							
16	17	18	19	20	21	22							
23	24	25	26	27	28	29							
30	31												

- Community Playdate for children 5 and under, sponsored by Early Steps. Held every 4th Thursday of the month. August's event is **Thursday, 27 August**, from 9 - 10:30 a.m. at the Children's Center, 5650 Washington Avenue, Titusville. RSVP required. See flyer for additional details.
- Early Steps Breakfast Support Group, the first and third Fridays of the month on **7 August** from 10:00 - 11:30 at Cracker Barrel, 1117 Palm Bay Road, Palm Bay and on **21 August** from 9:30 - 11:00 at My Island Smokehouse, 4885 US 1, Cocoa. See flyer.
- Down Syndrome Association of Brevard presents two Music Therapy classes. Class 1 is open to ages 11 and over on **Wednesdays, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.** (closed group). Class 2 is open to ages 0-10 (open to siblings) on **Thursdays, from 4:00 to 4:45 p.m.** For more information, go to <https://dsabrevard.org/events/>
- 2026 Family Community Listening Session, by Family Care Council Area 4, **Wednesday, August 19th**, from 12-1. Scan QR code of flyer to register.
- UCF CARD presents "Breathe and Be: A Mindfulness Skill Lab" on the 1st Monday of every month from 6:30 - 7:30 via Zoom. August's event will be on **Monday, August 3rd**. Registration required via Eventbrite. See Flyer.
- Bright Path Education offers Home Education Co-Op for ages 5-12. Opened in January. See flyer for additional information.
- Art classes and workshops provided by Arts For All Studio, weekdays and evenings. Pre-registration is required. See flyer for additional details.
- Early Steps sponsors a free Community Play Date for children under 5 every fourth Wednesday of the month from 9-10:30 at the Children's Center, 5650 S. Washington Avenue, Titusville. This month's play date will be on **August 26th**. Spaces are limited. RSVP to Mary: 321-292-1370. See flyer for more info.
- Early Steps also sponsors a free play group at various locations and times throughout the month. See flyer or contact Mary at 321-292-1370 for more information.
- From UCF CARD, "Caregiver of Adults and Soon-To Be Adults". Free monthly resources and discussion group for parents of adults and late teens on the autism spectrum. **Wednesdays from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.** via Zoom. See QR Code on flyer to register.
- UCF CARD and PALS co-sponsor the monthly Brevard Community Connect, at the Field of Dreams, 3053 Fell Rd West, Melbourne. August's event will be **Friday, August 28th**, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. RSVP is required. Scan QR code on flyer
- UCF CARD presents Adults With ASD Forum via Zoom on the first **Thursday** of every month from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. and the 3rd Thursday of every month from 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. August's events are on **August 6th and August 20th**. Registration required. See flyer.
- Join the NAMI Neurodivergent Support Group on-line meeting held every 4th Thursday of the month. August's meeting will be held on the **27th of August** at 11:00. Scan QR Code of flyer to register.
- One Voice Helping Hands Conference, **Saturday, August 29th**, Melbourne Auditorium, 625 Hibiscus Blvd, Melbourne. Watch this space for more information.
- The Arc of Florida presents a Provider Forum on **Tuesday, August 4th**, starting at 11:00 a.m. Registration required. See flyer.
- Strong Parents, Strong Voices presents Caregiver Relief and Resource Connection Event on **Saturday, August 22**, from 11:00 - 3:00, at the Boynton Beach Police Dept Community Room, 2100 High Ridge Rd, Boynton Beach.
- Veteran's Town Hall held on **Friday, August 7th**, from 1:00 - 4:00 at 13800 Veteran's Way, Orlando, FL. See flyer for additional info.
- University of Florida provides Mental Health First Aid Training on **Thursday, August 20th**, from 9:00 to 4:00. Registration is required. See flyer for additional details.
- **Save the Date:** Brevard Autism Coalition along with One Voice Coalition Florida presents the 13th Annual Brevard Uncorked Wine Gala on **Friday, November 6th**, from 6-10 p.m. at the Hotel Melby. Watch this space for more information.
- **Save the Date:** Community Partnership for Kids presents the second annual Teddy Bear Picnic in the Park on **Saturday, October the 10th**. Watch this space for more information.
- **Save the Date:** Disability Candidate Forum, **Friday, 2 October**, at Hotel Melby in Melbourne, FL. Brought to you by Once Voice Coalition, Florida. Watch this space for more information.
- **Save the Date:** Free Screening of CRIP Camp on **Friday, 18 September**, from 5-9 p.m. at the Premium Theaters, 1800 W. Hibiscus, Melbourne. For information contact info@oncevoicebrevard.com



Event Flyers



ONE VOICE COALITION

FILM SCREENING

Before a movement became history, a summer camp became a movement.

CRIP CAMP
A DISABILITY REVOLUTION
(Sundance)

18 SEP 2026

5:00PM TO 9:00PM
PREMIERE THEATERS
1800 W. Hibiscus Blvd.,
Melbourne, FL

For tickets, contact:
info@onevoicebrevard.com



Together, we turn shared experiences into meaningful action.

August 19, 2026
12-1 pm

2026 FAMILY / COMMUNITY LISTENING Session

Family Care Council Area 4
— advocate and empower —

Share Your Story: Join other individuals & families for open, honest, & respectful conversations about accessing services, supports, and resources in our community.

Shape Future Decisions: Your feedback helps identify service gaps, unmet needs, and challenges families face - informing future advocacy, planning, and policy recommendations.

Register to Speak. Can't Attend? Submit Your Feedback in Advance

Visit Our Website
www.fcclorida.org

Meetings are Virtual



early steps

Breakfast Support Groups

Cracker Barrel

1st Fridays
1175 Palm Bay Road
Palm Bay, FL
10-11:30 am

My Island Smokehouse

3rd Fridays
4885 US-1
Cocoa, FL
9:30-11 am



NAMI | **Neurodivergent Support Group**
National Alliance on Mental Illness

SCAN ME!

Every **FOURTH** Thursday of the month
7-8:30 PM ET

The NAMI Neurodivergent Support Group is a **FREE**, peer-led group for any adult (18+) who identifies as neurodivergent or experiences the world in unique ways.

Event Flyers

BREVARD COMMUNITY CONNECT

Private Events for Neurodivergent Adults 18+ • The Last Friday of Every Month

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Social Connection
Engage in various fun and meaningful activities that **build connections** with like minded individuals.

Skill Building Mini-Lessons
Each month comes with a different **theme** and focus for our group. Activities support social skill development.

Groups for Various Needs
We **welcome everyone**. Groups will be thoughtfully organized based on support needs to create the best experience for participants. Separate groups will also be available for parents and caregivers.

*Show up as you are.
Be understood.
Grow & learn together.*

HUGE THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Join our community!
Scan to fill out the interest form or visit our website for more information.
MindshiftND.com/events

Community shouldn't require you to mask who you are.

Brevard Community Connect EVENT SCHEDULE

SOCIAL GROUP FOR NEURODIVERGENT ADULTS
⌚ LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH

2/27	Connection & Shared Understanding
3/27	Advocating for yourself
4/24	Autism Awareness Month—Acceptance, Identity & Belonging
5/29	Social Energy & Boundaries
6/26	Showing Up in Your Own Way
7/31	Nurturing Connections
8/28	Community Growth
9/25	Navigating Difficulties Together
10/30	Halloween Bash
11/20	Friendsgiving
12/18	ALL Holiday Celebrations

Sign up to keep updated on monthly event times and locations!

SAVE THE DATE

PROVIDER FORUM

Tuesday, August 4 at 11 am EST

Understand **Commonly Missed Seizures** in this session through computer-generate imagery. Learn what different seizures look like and how to identify them. At **Jazz Pharmaceuticals**, their purpose is to innovate and transform the lives of patients and their families. They are dedicated to developing life-changing medicines for people with rare diseases so they can live their lives more fully. **Costas Matteis, Care System Liaison and Longterm Care I/DD specialist covering the Southeast**, will present. **Register today!**

The Arc of Florida

Funded in part by a mini-grant from

STRONG PARENTS

STRONG VOICES
Advocacy and Action,
Backed by Real Strength.

Venue Support Provided by

Boynton Beach Police Department

Strong Parents Strong Voices presents

Caregiver Relief & Resource Connection Event

A day of support, resources, and connection for parents, caregivers, and advocates of children with special needs.

FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER

Stacey Hoaglund
President, Disability Advocacy & Support Specialists, Inc.

From Overwhelmed to Empowered: Becoming Your Child's Best Advocate.

Stacey Hoaglund is the President of Disability Advocacy & Support Specialists, Immediate Past President of the Autism Society of Florida, Coordinator of Partners in Policymaking, disability consultant, and parent.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- RESOURCES & SUPPORT**
Connect with local organizations offering services and support.
- COMMUNITY PARTNERS**
Meet partners and programs committed to helping families.
- FAMILY SUPPORT**
Encouragement, guidance, and a space to connect with other families.
- BACKPACKS & SCHOOL SUPPLIES**
Free backpacks and school supplies for registered families (while supplies last).

RESOURCES. CONNECTION. EMPOWERMENT.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE Saturday, August 22, 2026	COMMUNITY PARTNERS 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM Boynton Beach Police Department Community Room	FAMILY SUPPORT 2100 High Ridge Road, Boynton Beach, FL 33426
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JOIN US FOR AN EMPOWERING SESSION FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND ADVOCATES.

VENDORS / SPONSORS

TOGETHER, WE EMPOWER FAMILIES. TOGETHER, WE CREATE CHANGE.

Event Flyers

**NCD Quarterly
Council Meeting**



**August 19, 2026
Zoom for Government**

**BRIGHT PATH EDUCATION
IS NOW OFFERING:
A HOME EDUCATION
CO-OP**

A small group environment for
students with disabilities &
learning differences



DETAILS:

- Academic & Social supports
- Monday- Thursday 8:00-2:00pm
- Fun Friday option available for those interested
- Accepting Scholarships & Private pay options
- 6:1 ratio
- Led by certified teachers & behavior technicians
- OT & Speech Language services can be contracted through local collaborative agencies

**OPENING
IN
JANUARY**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
(321) 307-8240
1240 Rockledge Blvd. Suite 6
Rockledge, FL
BrightPathEducation2025@gmail.com

**AGES
5-12**




MUSIC THERAPY

Class 1:
MUSIC MEET UP AGES 11+
WED. 5-6PM (CLOSED GROUP)

Class 2:
LITTLE MELODIES AGES 0-10
THURS. 4-4:45PM (OPEN TO SIBS)

Arts for All STUDIO
ART CLASSES & WORKSHOPS AT THE STUDIO
STARTING in JANUARY

Mondays
Afterschool Art 4:00-4:45pm
Mixed Media Art Class for Kids ages 5 and Up
Advanced After School Art 5:00-6:00pm
Mixed Media Art Class for Kids ages 11 and Up

Tuesdays
Meet the Masters 12:30-1:30pm
Mixed Media Art Class with projects inspired by the masters and contemporary artists.
Mixed Media Arts 1:30-2:30pm
Explore Different Mediums and increase skills to use them as an artist

Wednesdays
Express Yourself (Teen Art Class) 7:00-8:30pm
Teen art class for students to explore and improve art skills in various mediums

Fridays
Able Artists Kids 9:30-10:15
Multimedia exploratory art class for neurodivergent kids
Able Artists Teens 10:15-11:00am
Multimedia exploratory art class for neurodivergent Teens
Graphic Design 11:30am-12noon
Intro to Graphic Design taught by EFSC Professor in the Advanced Technologies Department
Intro To Adobe for Design 12:30-2pm
Software subscription required. Bring your own computer and learn intro level skills for Adobe Photoshop, Indesign and Illustrator. taught by EFSC Professor in the Advanced Technologies Department

More Details Coming Soon on our Website Calendar and Facebook Events
Pre-registration is required * Spaces are limited
If you have any questions, feel free to call or text: Barbara Finneran at Arts for All Studio at 321- 749-9808.
Or email us at atsforsallstudio@gmail.com

ART CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Come Join the Creative Fun!

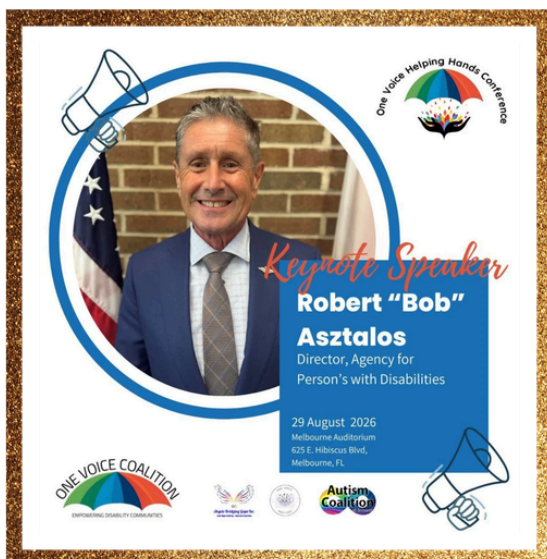


Scan the QR below to go to our Calendar, Scroll to Desired Date and Register for Workshop of Choice

Event Flyers



Event Flyers



Event Flyers

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

August 20, 2026, | 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

MHFA is skills-based training that teaches people how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge.

This Course includes 2 hours of self-paced online pre-work & an in-person session.

Registration starts at \$65



Learn how to:

- Recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Recognize common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- Understand how to interact with a person in crisis.
- Know how to connect a person with help.

Register:
<https://loom.ly/5sbZj0k>



For more info, contact:
Angelika Keene
Angelika.Keene@ufl.edu





The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all of our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters and hearing devices, please contact the UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension Office at brevard@flas.ufl.edu or (352) 633-1702 at least 2 weeks in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.
Equal Opportunity Institution.

One Voice Helping Hands Conference



Empowering Disability Communities

- ✓ Disability information.
- ✓ Disability resources.
- ✓ Disability community.
- ✓ Disability advocacy.



PARTICIPANT & VENDOR
REGISTRATION LINK:

Keynote Speaker
Robert "Bob" Asztalos

Sat August 29th, 2026
Melbourne Auditorium
625 E. Hibiscus Blvd,
Melbourne, FL

EVENT TIME
10am-4pm



20 Brevard School Board Statistics Voters Should Consider

SINCE 2022

Numbers do not have political parties. Numbers tell the story.

STUDENTS	TEACHERS & STAFFING
40% of students below grade level in reading and math	1,775 teachers departed BPS
Reading ↓ performance declined by approximately 1 grade level	60% of new teachers entered classrooms with no prior teaching experience
Math ↓ performance declined by approximately 0.4 grade levels	33% of teachers have less than 3 years of experience
1 community school closed	62% of teachers have less than 5 years of experience
18 additional schools reportedly under consideration	20% of teachers hold Temporary Certificates
	8.3% of classes taught by Out of Field teachers
	7% staffing reduction
	150 vacant instructional positions
	60 vacant ESE, SLD, and ESE Support positions
	15% teacher vacancy rate

FINANCIALS	GOVERNANCE
\$345 MILLION diverted through voucher programs	450 books removed or restricted
\$1.2 MILLION in purchasing card charges with missing accountability statements	
\$550,000 paid in First Amendment lawsuit costs	
\$69,000 in campaign contributions from developers, contractors, and insurance interests	

ARE THESE THE RESULTS YOU WANT TO CONTINUE?

AUGUST 18, 2026 • SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

Paid political advertisement paid for by Brevard Public Schools Watch Political Action Committee independently of any candidate.

Brevard Public Schools Watch
Monitoring Corruption and Excesses in Our Brevard School Board

Event Flyers



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Orlando VA Healthcare System (VONH)

VETERAN TOWN HALL

**Orlando VA Medical Center
4th Floor Auditorium**
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827

August 7, 2026
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

- ✓ **Resource Fair:** 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- ✓ **Leadership Panel Discussion:** 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Join us for our resource fair, which will be followed by a leadership panel discussion designed to address Veterans' questions, concerns, and feedback regarding VA healthcare and benefits.

407-631-4897 VHAORLPublicAffairs@va.gov

RSVP

Choose VA

Event Flyers



COCKTAILS & CANDIDATES EVENT

REGISTER TODAY!



TUESDAY, AUGUST 4TH
Space Coast Association of Realtors
 2950 Pineda Plaza Way
 Melbourne, FL 32940

4:00pm VIP (Included with Sponsorships)
 5:00pm General Admission (\$25)

\$150 Candidate Table (6ft table space)

Join us for an exclusive evening of political networking with candidates vying for office in the upcoming election.

Connection/Drinks/Hors D'oeuvres

PRESENTED BY




LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE SPACE COAST
 "Defending Democracy; Empowering Voters"

2026 Elections

CANDIDATE FORUMS

**PUBLIC IS WELCOME!
 FREE EVENTS!
 REFRESHMENTS!**

THURS. JULY 16TH

BREVARD COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 FORUM
 Unitarian Universalist Friendship Church
 3115 Friendship PL, Rockledge, FL 32955
 Doors Open- 5:30 p.m.
 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

THURS. JULY 30TH

BPS School Board - District 5 / Palm Bay City Council Forum
 DeGroodt Public Library
 6475 Minton Rd. SE, Palm Bay, FL 32908
 Doors Open-5:30 p.m.-6 p.m.- 8 pm

Mon. AUG.3rd

BREVARD JUDICIAL FORUM
 The Government Center-Bldg. C
 2725 Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, FL 32940
 Doors Open- 5:30 p.m.
 6 p.m.- 8 p.m.

LWV of the Space Coast is a 501(c)(3)non-profit, nonpartisan organization.

Visit: www.lwv-spacecoast.org
 Like Us On FB-Space Coast League of Women Voters



RESERVATIONS NOW OPEN

13TH ANNUAL

Brevard Uncorked

**WINE GALA
 A MASQUERADE EVENING**

BENEFITTING BREVARD AUTISM COALITION & ONE VOICE COALITION PARTNERS
 UNITING COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO EXPAND ADVOCACY, INCLUSION, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AUTISM FAMILIES

FINE WINES - EXQUISITE SIT-DOWN DINNER
 UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS - LASTING IMPACT

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT FEATURING:
 ALFIE SILVA

11.06.2026
 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM

**HOTEL MELBY
 MELBOURNE, FL**



LIMITED SEATING • ONLY 100 SEATS AVAILABLE
 \$75 Guest | \$140 Dinner
 Scan to Reserve Your Seat or Donate
 Website: www.brevarduncorked.com