

**APRIL 2009**

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How to Donate to Matrix Parent Network
 Matrix depends on donations to allow us to continue providing no-cost services to families in need. If you would like to make a donation to Matrix you can send a check to Matrix Parent Network, 94 Galli Dr., Ste. C, Novato, CA 94949. You also can visit the [Giving section](#) of our website to learn other ways to donate and help Matrix.

Summer will be here before you know it...start planning for some fun!

"Summer is like childhood. It passes too fast. But if you're lucky, it gives you warm memories from which you take strength in the cold days ahead. Summer is also like childhood, in that you may not think what you are doing matters very much while you are doing it, but later on you realize it mattered far more than you knew."

~ Ed Hallowell, MD (author of *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*)

Believe it or not, school is almost out and summertime is right around the corner! For children and teens with special needs, the school year can be very demanding, prompting students (and their parents!) to long for the lazy days of summer. As we contemplate a more relaxed schedule, no homework and long, sunny days many of us are also thinking about what our kids will do. Some children with special needs struggle with new schedules and unstructured days, thus they need familiar routines and structure for their summer break. Other children need a break from school year routines in order to use the time to recharge before another demanding school year. Regardless of your child's individual needs, summer should be a time for all children to play, relax, dream, explore and grow. Having time to "put aside" special needs can be as important as working on any areas that need support or remediation. Though the chill may still be in the air, whether you are thinking of camps or programs, family vacations, summer school, or relaxing at home, now is the time to start planning. Read on for some helpful resources, suggestions, and tips to help you and your child make warm memories in the summer ahead.

Summer Camps and Recreation Programs

Some camps are specifically for children or youth with disabilities, and others might be appropriate for a child with special needs even though designed for the general population. Knowing your child and their ability and areas of interest are important in choosing which camp might be a good fit.

Two helpful articles are:

- [Selecting a Summer Camp for a Child with Learning or Attention Problems](#)
- [When the Child with Special Needs Goes Off to Summer Camp.](#)

Though these articles are written about children with learning and/or attention challenges, the information is useful for most anyone.

Things to keep in mind when choosing a camp:

- The size of the camp, camper/counselor ratio, supervision provided
- The camp philosophy, goals
- The structure of each day and the expectations of independent and life skills
- The understanding of special needs and particularly, your child's unique needs.
- Proximity to home (whether residential or day camp), ability to bring your child home if needed.
- Their philosophy about parent/child communication.
- Routine and contingent plans for behavior, discipline or emotional difficulties.
- Communication methods with parents.
- Child's interest and willingness to attend
- Peer group at camp – opportunity to go with a friend.
- Beyond fun and recreational opportunities - does the

camp offer enrichment, skill building, therapeutic/behavior support and other features that you feel your child needs in order to have a positive experience?

Financial Considerations:

Camps can be expensive so consider your own ability to cover costs (or to get financial aid – available with some camps), including transportation to and from camp; sometimes camp buses are available or you may be able to find a carpool. Parks and Recreation and non-profit agency camps may be more affordable than private camps and are sometimes more flexible in terms of their ability to accommodate special needs. Some non-profit agencies that provide camps are: YMCA, Jewish Community Centers, CYO, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc. Most of these offer tuition based on a sliding scale or scholarships. Some offer only day camps, while others offer both residential and day camps. A specialty camp that focuses on a certain area of interest may also work well for your child.

Resources:

Matrix has compiled a list of recreation programs and camps by county to help you in your search -- see links below. *(Please note: In providing resources, Matrix does not recommend or endorse any particular program, treatment or approaches. Some programs on our list have criteria for who they accept, such as those that are only available to Regional Center or other agency clients. Keep checking [our website](#) as we post new information as it comes to us.)*

[Marin Recreation Programs and Camps](#)

[Napa Recreation Programs and Camps](#)

[Solano Recreation Programs and Camps](#)

[Sonoma Recreation Programs and Camps](#)

The following links also offer lists of special needs camps:

<http://www.veryspecialcamps.com/>

www.campresource.com/summer-camps/special-needs-camps.cfm

www.mysummecamps.com/camps/special_needs_camps/

[Marin Autism Collaboration Summer Resource Guide](#)

Summer School:

If your child has an IEP they may qualify for **Extended School Year** services (ESY). This would be indicated in your IEP papers. Most often, students in Special Day Classes (SDC) are eligible for ESY, but there are instances where a child who is not in an SDC class would need summer school as a part of their Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The IEP team needs to discuss your child's eligibility for summer school. An extended school year can be particularly critical for some children who may lose skills over the summer that take time to regain once school starts. For the child who's reluctant to attend summer school, try to balance their summer vacation with some fun activities. Thinking of positive incentives may be an idea to consider! To learn more about Extended School Year services visit:

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/esy.index.htm>

Family Vacations:

Vacationing together as a family can be fabulous and can have moments of "what were we thinking?". Families of children with special needs often have additional considerations:

- Remember, traveling right may be more important than traveling light. For a road trip, allow for rest time/lots of stops, plus bring activities and snacks for the car.
- Look into dietary considerations and availability in advance.
- If relevant to your child's special needs, be familiar with the access and mobility at your destination.
- Consider bringing along a responsible teenage friend

to help.

- Prepare your child – show photos and read to him/her about where you'll be going; this creates familiarity. Check out these Articles to help with planning:
[Vacation Guide Book Tips for Families with Special Needs](#)
[Theme Parks and Disabled Children](#)
[Vacation with an Autistic Child](#)

Options for Staying Home during the Summer:

For many children, summer break is a much deserved break. Things to consider as you plan your child's restful summer:

- Try to balance your child's needs for a casual summer schedule with more structured activities for fun or enrichment.
- Research supports what we know - being outdoors is good. It can help release energy and be calming. Explore local parks, hiking trails, and outdoor recreational opportunities when possible.
- Remember book time -- either reading to your child, family reading time or alone time. Your local public library is an excellent resource for books, reading clubs, and more.

[Click here](#) for helpful ideas for local summer activities with your child.

MATRIX NEW & EVENTS

Thank You Auction Participants: Many thanks to all of the donors and bidders who participated in our Fall and Spring Online Auctions -- your generosity allows Matrix to continue providing valuable services to families. For a full listing of our wonderful donors [click here](#).

Accessing Services through Regional Centers for Developmental Disabilities. *Saturday April 25, 2009, 10 am to Noon, Matrix in Novato, 94 Galli Drive, Suite C.* Do you have questions about your child's regional center Individual Program Plan (IPP)? Do you wonder about how decisions should be made? Do you know how to request services? Do you know the legal obligations of the regional center? Learn all this and more at this special presentation. Registration required by April 23, 2009. Please call 415.884.3535 to register. See [Flyer](#) for more details.

2nd Annual Author's Luncheon featuring Joan Ryan. April 30, 2009

This year's luncheon speaker will be the wonderfully gifted author, Joan Ryan, reading from her book, *The Water Giver: The Story of a Mother, a Son, and Their Second Chance* (available September 2009, Simon & Shuster). If you have not received your invitation in the mail or if you are interested in purchasing tickets call Brenda at 415.475.2118 or <mailto:brendagm@matrixparents.org>

Marin Human Race, May 9, 2009

Matrix is still seeking participants (walk, run or roll), supporters, and sponsors for the 2009 Marin Human Race. You do not need to be a Marin resident or worker to participate—and our earnings support our work in all the counties we serve. Our goal this year is to raise a minimum of \$15,000! Visit [our website](#) for more details and to learn how to donate or sponsor a participant.

Transición a la Pres-escuela de su niño, Jueves 14 de mayo 2009

(Transition to Preschool Workshop in Spanish – see [Flyer](#) for more details.)

Solano Sibshop – Saturday, June 27, 2009

For Solano and Napa County siblings of children with special needs. See [Flyer](#) for more details and call 415.884.3535 to request a registration form. This event fills up quickly so register soon!

MORE USEFUL INFORMATION

VSA Arts Workshop: Using The Arts To Stimulate Developmental Growth, sponsored by Youth In Arts -- an arts workshop for parents of children between the ages of 2 and 5 who are on the autism spectrum, or have similar learning differences. *Sunday, April 26, 1-4PM, The Osher Marin JCC 200 N. San Pedro Rd., San Rafael, CA 94903.* See [Flyer](#) for more details.

Leadership Opportunity - Notice for parents in Marin County Tamalpais Union School District : The parent group, P2P, is planning for 2009-10 and they are seeking parents who can become more involved in the leadership of this group. They are currently seeking parent representatives for Drake, Tam High and Redwood. The time commitment is less than 1-2 hours a month. You will be asked to help distribute information about the group at various parent meetings at the beginning of the year. They also meet 5 times a year with Karen Mates, Director of Special Education to plan the various speakers and exchange ideas on programs. This is a valuable leadership opportunity and a wonderful chance to help other parents. To learn more, contact Janet Miller at <mailto:janetm@ri-net.com>

New Support Group: Matrix is grateful that a parent has volunteered to facilitate a sub-group of our Asperger's support group for Marin/Sonoma parents of Teens/Young Adults with Asperger's Syndrome. Contact Stephanie if interested in being a part of this group 415.475.2121 or <mailto:stephanies@matrixparents.org>

Thank You: To Janet Lawson MFT and Dan Swearingen who recently shared their experiences with Asperger's Syndrome to over 35 parents.

Matrix Survey: We want to hear from you! Be on the look out for our upcoming online survey about our agency services – what works for you and what you might wish for in the future from us. Watch [our website](#) for more details.

Matrix serves families in 4 counties: Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma, with offices in Novato and Fairfield.

NOVATO
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