

THE SOUTH RIVER ADVOCATE

Vol.5 Issue 1

The Newsletter of SEPTA of South River

September 2003

www.specialeducationpta.org

info@specialeducationpta.org

Information Line (732) 651-7157

Coming Events:

Sept 3-19: SEPTA KidStuff Fundraiser

Sept 12-13: Family Support Center Garden State Exhibition Center - Somerset NJ

Sept 20: ARC's Education Advocacy Conference Ramada Inn North Brunswick.

Sept 20: Kool Kids Bowling Registration- Mid State Bowling East Brunswick 2- 4 pm.

Sept 22: South River Board of Education Pre-Meeting – Board Conf Room 7 pm.

Sept 25: South River Board of Education Meeting – High School Library 7 pm.

Oct 1: SEPTA Board Meeting SR Public Library 7-9 pm

New Year - Improved Communication

Welcome to the South River Advocate the newsletter of the Special Education PTA (SEPTA) of South River. We previously sent this monthly newsletter home to parents through their school children via the Backpack express. Upon the urging of teachers and fellow parents the Officer's of SEPTA made the decision to mail the newsletter directly to families starting this fall. We hope you find the information contained in our newsletters useful as you navigate the sometimes, confusing world of Special Education. If you have an article, you would like to submit or questions that we can help answer please feel to contact us via email at info@specialeducationpta.org or phone at 732-651-7157.

KidStuff Fundraiser

The Special Education PTA of South River will run it's **only** fundraiser,

Kidstuff Discount Coupon books,
from Sept. 16th-30th.

These books contain discount coupons from many useful places:

Proceeds from this fundraiser will go to help us fund our:

****SEPTA Scholarship***

****Guest Speakers / Programs***

****Introduction to Music Appreciation
for the Self-Contained Pre-School Classes***

****Special Education Resource Library***

Our Thoughts and Prayers
are with our troops in the Gulf and around the
world. May they all come home safe and sound.



Hello, my name is Bill England and I am the President of SEPTA. Children in Special Education have unique education needs and it is because of these unique needs that a group of parents created the Special Education PTA of South River. The Mission is to help educate, assist, inform and support parents and teachers in the process of effectively educating our children in Special Education and preparing them for a productive life after school.

New Year-New Opportunities

The beginning of a new school year gives our children a chance to build on the many successes of previous years while reaching for even further growth and accomplishment. The same is true for SEPTA of South River. Since our founding over five years ago SEPTA has accomplished a great deal. In addition to this newsletter, we operate a web-site www.specialeducationpta.org. Both vehicles offer information on a wide range of topics from issues pertaining to Special Education to topics of interest for anyone.

SEPTA also sponsors 4-5 workshops per year for parents and teachers. Topics have included Parents Rights and Roles in Special Education, Transition Planning, Recreation Opportunities for Special Needs Children, ADHD, Sensory Integration Therapy and Behavior modification.

Last years SEPTA started a Special Needs collection at the South River Public Library and we will be adding to the collection this year. The collection includes books, videotapes, computer software and a magazine subscription on subjects, such as, Special Education Law, effectively advocating for your child, Writing an effective I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) and Behavior Modification.

For students, SEPTA awarded a scholarship to a graduating Special Education student in May. We judge a creative work and we are very proud of the effort our students display for this award. In addition, this past year we sponsored a music program for students in both of the pre-school handicapped classes.

Partnership with The Office of Special Services

We believe it is absolutely critical to work collaboratively with the Director of Special Services and their staff. We invite the Director of Special Education to all of the SEPTA Board meetings. In previous years, this partnership resulted in a number of firsts including the reporting of Parent participation at I.E.P. meetings at monthly Board of Education statistical reviews. This past year Dr. Marciante reacted to suggestions made by the SEPTA Board and contracted to create a Job Exploration program with a leading Job Coach agency in Middlesex County. We look forward to working with Lisa Michallis as the new Director of Special Services and her staff in the coming year.

Goals For The Coming Year

While we are proud of our accomplishments but we want to accomplish a great deal in the year ahead. This includes:

1. **Increase SEPTA's membership.** While we have added more members to our group, we continue to look for parents who want to become members of SEPTA. If you are interested in supporting SEPTA, please complete the membership card in this newsletter along with the \$4 membership fee and return it in the Self-addressed envelope. More importantly, we want your ideas and input in our organization and hope you can come to our monthly meetings or communicate with us via phone or email.
2. **Increase Parent Participation at I.E.P. meetings** - According to Lisa Michallis, 77% of the parents of children in Special Education attend their child's I.E.P. meeting. This is a significant improvement over the last two years where attendance hovered around 50%. It reflects Dr. Marciante's and his team's efforts in trying to include parents in the Special Education process. While 77% is an excellent improvement, we must strive for 100% participation and we stand committed to assisting Lisa Michallis and her team in whatever way that we can to improve parent turnout at I.E.P. meetings.

THE SOUTH RIVER ADVOCATE

Vol.5 Issue 1

The Newsletter of SEPTA of South River

September 2003

www.specialeducationpta.org

info@specialeducationpta.org

Information Line (732) 651-7157

Letter from the President cont

3. **Expand Scholarship Offerings and Look For Corporate Sponsors** - We currently award one scholarship to a graduating senior involved in Special Education. We would like to expand the number of Scholarships and increase the financial support. To do this we are looking for a Corporate Sponsor. If you know of a company that would be interested in providing this support please have them call me at 732-238-6133.
4. **Coordinate the Beaumont Foundation Computer Grant Application Process** The Beaumont Foundation will be giving out almost \$400 million in computer equipment starting in 2003. Persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply for these individual grants. People from New Jersey can begin applying in early 2004. We intend to work with Special Services to identify people and families that may be eligible for these grants and assist them in applying for the equipment.
5. **Advocacy Training For Parents** - We will continue to hold seminars and publish information to educate parents on how to be effective advocates for their child. One upcoming session will focus on how to write effective I.E.P.'s. Another topic will be how to stay organized to advocate effectively for your child in Special Education. This session will also include an overview of standardized testing to determine whether your child is progressing normally or regressing.

As you can see, we have an ambitious schedule. We look forward to hearing from you or working with you in the months ahead. May the new school year bring you and your family much happiness and success.

Bill England

Kool Kids Bowling League

(A league for special needs children and their siblings)
will once again start in October 2003
at Mid State Bowling on Route 18 East Brunswick.

*Registration will be on
Saturday, September 20th from 2 - 4 pm
At Mid State Bowling.

***League bowling is on Saturdays from 2-4pm.
Kool Kids bowling league runs 13 weeks- weekly bowling fees includes shoe rental.***

A bowling party, trophy and gift certificate will be awarded to each participant at the end of the season.

Get a Great Deal Online and Help SEPTA

SEPTA is participating in **SchoolCash**, a great (and free!) fundraising program that helps schools and PTA's earn generous cash rebates when supporters shop online. At **SchoolCash** you'll find all kinds of great merchants like JCPenney.com, OfficeMax.com, Lands' End, L.L.Bean and more. SchoolCash is offered by Family Education Network, home of familyeducation.com, the #1 website for parents. As a SchoolCash.com shopper, you can contribute to SEPTA's fundraising efforts and ultimately our programs, and it won't cost you anything to participate!

It's very easy to use:

1. Go to <http://www.specialeducation.org>
2. Click on the **SchoolCash.com** logo to go to their site.
3. Select Special Education PTA of South River as the group you wish to support and fill-in the brief registration
3. Then, whenever you want to shop, visit **SchoolCash** and click on the merchant of your choice to start shopping!

There is no cost to you – no enrollment fee and no membership dues – but SEPTA will automatically get a percentage (up to 40%!) of every purchase you make in the form of cash rebate. We hope to put our **SchoolCash.com** earnings to the things our school needs but the budget doesn't cover – things like computers, art supplies, playground equipment, and lots more.

And the best part of the program is you don't have to buy anything extra or pay any higher prices than you normally would! When you shop at **SchoolCash.com**, you'll find the same merchandise and prices (or better) that you'd find if you went directly to the merchant's website or store. Just by purchasing the things you'd regularly purchase – clothing, CDs, books, groceries, and many other items – you'll be supporting SEPTA.

Please help our school and use **SchoolCash** whenever you shop online.

Thank you for your continued support of SEPTA.