CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

You’re Invited to our Anniversary Banquet in Casper!

Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. (PHP) the statewide non-profit parent organization, was incorporated in October of 1990. We opened our doors in August of 1991, and have loved spending the last 25 years attending special education meetings with families, helping to plan wonderful and creative family nights with Parent-Teacher groups, providing workshops and trainings in every community in the state, and visiting over the phone with thousands of families struggling to understand the maze of educational services and systems.

The Parent Information Center and the Parent Education Network, the main projects of PHP, want to say thank you to the families who have honored us with their trust in supporting the ups and downs of their journey. We want to invite families, educators, health care providers and others to come help us celebrate those educational milestones that have been achieved. The 25th Anniversary Banquet will be held in Casper at the Parkway Plaza on Sat, February 27, 2016. The evening will begin at 6 pm with a no host /cash bar with dinner served at 7 pm. We will have a silent auction of terrific and exciting items and a host of speakers from the past. Tickets are $35 each or $60/couple and may be purchased online at www.wpic.org or you can call us at 307-684-2277, or email info@wpic.org.
PIC Parent Conference on disAbilities Feb 26 - 28, 2016

EXPECTATIONS OPEN DOORS!

PIC’s 4th Annual Parent Conference on disAbilities will be held in Casper at the Parkway Plaza. This year we are expanding the conference another day, making it a total of 2 1/2 days from Friday morning until noon on Sunday. Sponsored by PIC and the WY Department of Education, there will be a variety of topics presented covering students from kindergarten through graduation and beyond.

Don’t We Already Do Inclusion?: 100 Ways to Improve Inclusive Schools

On Friday, we will be featuring Paula Kluth all day from 9-3 speaking on “Don’t We Already Do Inclusion?: 100 Ways to Improve Inclusive Schools.” Based on the book by the same title, this presentation will be from 9-3 pm Friday Feb 26, 2016. It is not only filled with ideas for teaching diverse learners, but is also focused on change itself. More specifically, it is focused on how those concerned about inclusion can create change even when they are not in positions of power. The activities, examples, and illustrations in this workshop are designed to help participants refine their vision and their skills when it comes to inclusion. The ideas are no or low cost, and many can be achieved by any number of stakeholders—including students and families. Learn tried-and-true techniques, as well as some out-of-the box solutions such as involving traditional and social media, “shrinking” the change, phoning for help, advertising, and writing your way to progress.

Dr. Paula Kluth is a consultant, teacher, author, advocate, and independent scholar who works with teachers and families to provide inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities, and to create more responsive and engaging schooling experiences for all learners. Paula is a former special educator who has served as a classroom teacher and inclusion facilitator. She is the author or co-author of more than 15 books and products including “From Text Maps to Memory Caps”: and “You’re Going to Love This Kid!”. Paula is also the director of a documentary film titled “We Thought You’d Never Ask”: Voices of People with Autism.

On Saturday morning, Feb 27, we welcome Wendy Borders Gauntner, from Gillette. Wendy is an adoptive mother, educator, writer, and certified life coach who works with clients on parenting and navigating life transitions. She holds a B.A. in Education and an M.S. in Adult Learning and Technology, and is a trained community educator for Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. Wendy is also a past National Teacher Policy Institute fellow. She is the founder of the Monday Lunch Trio Blog, where she uses recipes to illustrate life lessons and share life coaching tools.

For her keynote, Wendy will share her journey and life experiences as the adoptive mom of Lee, also highlighted in her recently published book “Lee and Me.”

“I have chosen to share this with you because I know how it feels. I know what it’s like to experience the juxtaposition of deep and abiding love for a child and not have that love reciprocated through easy, peaceful obedience.
I have endured long, exhausting days of arguing, meltdowns and volatility. I have struggled to keep my composure and have wept with my son as he purged the deepest wounds that have broken the family chain of a thousand generations". ~ Lee & Me

Saturday afternoon keynotes feature a couple of dynamic presenters. First is Dr. Therese Willkomm, who is the Director of New Hampshire’s State Assistive Technology Program with the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and is an associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Dr. Willkomm is known nationally and internationally as “The MacGyver” of Assistive Technology and has designed and fabricated thousands of solutions for individuals with disabilities including her patented A.T. Pad Stand, a multiuse assistive technology mounting device. Dr. Willkomm keynote its titled Assistive Technology Solutions in Minutes - Ordinary Items Extraordinary Solutions where she will present an amazing, “hands-on” keynote, followed later in the afternoon with an interactive workshop, and explore over 50 everyday items, tools, and materials for creating hundreds of AT solutions in five minutes or less and for $5 or less.

Also on Saturday afternoon, Fran Fletcher, an associate policy scientist, working in the Conflict Resolution Program at the University of Delaware will present on Unraveling the Conflict Mystery to Enhance Advocacy Strategies and also do a breakout session on helping families understanding conflict resolution and Digging Deeper for Understanding – What We All Want More Of. Fran manages Delaware’s statewide special education mediation system and is the coordinator of the longest running IEP meeting-facilitation system in the country and has training IEP facilitators in 17 states.

On Sunday’s morning keynote and breakout session will highlight Treva Maitland, Gibson County, TN, Parent Leadership and Advocacy Group/ The ARC of Tennessee. Treva is the proud mother of adult twins who happen to have disabilities. She has been advocating for them since 1993 and has worked for the Arc Tennessee since 2000. Treva is the Chairperson of her local school district in Gibson County, TN and is also the secretary on Jackson Center for Independent Living’s Board of Directors.

Treva’s session on Self-Advocacy and the Circle of Life: Student-Directed IEP’s will show us how true leaders empower others; advocates empower parents; parents empower students; and students empower one another to be leaders. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes all of us working together to create the best communities where we all live, love and work together. Pam Chmelik and Stan Brantley will join the conversation as Treva leads the Sunday morning session in discussing how we, as parents, can empower our children to learn to make their own life decision’s, one choice at a time.

Other sessions for PIC’s parent conference will cover topics including sensory issues, IEP’s, guardianship and more!

Sat 9AM - 4:30PM & Sun 9AM - 12PM Assistive Technology, Student Led IEPs, How to Work Through Conflict & more!

Registration costs**
▶ Parents of Children w/ Disabilities: $50 ea
▶ Educators / Other Providers $100 ea

** Each registration includes one (1) ticket to PIC’s 25th Anniversary Banquet Saturday Night! Friday-only session registration is available at www.wpic.org.

For a detailed conference schedule and more information visit www.wpic.org or call PIC at 307-684-2277. A block of rooms is being held at Parkway Plaza at 307-235-1777. Ask for the block under “PIC Parent Conference.”

Limited amount of parent stipends available. Call PIC for more details.
Did you know that communication skills are ranked FIRST among a job candidate's "must have" skills and qualities, according to a 2010 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers?

Students with disabilities need to LEARN how to DISAGREE (respectfully) as part of transition. It is a vital aspect of self-advocacy and an important safety skill. Teaching youth these 5 steps can help them keep a disagreement constructive:

5 Ways to (Respectfully) Disagree

It's easier to agree than disagree. But we can learn a lot from conversations where we don't see eye to eye — if we can listen and talk rationally, that is.

Unfortunately, many us either shy away completely from disagreements or lose it when things don't go our way. These 5 tips can help keep disagreements constructive — whether you're talking to a parent, friend, or anyone else:

1) **Don't make it personal.** If you get upset, it can help to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your parent (or friend, coach, coworker, etc.) is raising, not the person.

2) **Avoid putting down the other person's ideas and beliefs.** If you've ever been on the receiving end of someone's tirade or put-downs, you know how valuable using respectful language and behavior can be. So instead of saying what you might be thinking ("That's a stupid idea!"), try: "I don't agree, and here's why." Resist the temptation to yell, use sarcasm, or make derogatory comments and you'll have a much better chance of getting your point across.

3) **Use "I" statements to communicate how you feel, what you think, and what you want or need.** Using "you" statements can sound argumentative. For example, telling your mom or dad, "You always remind me about my chores on Wednesdays when you know I have a lot of homework" has a very different tone from "I'm feeling pressured because I have a lot of homework tonight. Can I do those chores tomorrow?"

4) **Listen to the other point of view.** Being a good listener is a way of showing that you respect and understand the other person's perspective. That makes it more likely he or she will do the same for you. When the other person is talking, try to stop yourself from thinking about why you disagree or what you'll say next. Instead, focus on what's being said. When it's your turn to talk, repeat any key points the other person made to show you listened and heard what was said. Then calmly present your case and why you disagree.

5) **Stay calm.** This is the most important thing you can do to keep a conversation on track. Of course, it's a huge challenge to stay calm and rational when you feel angry or passionate about something — especially if the person you're talking to gets heated. You may need to be the mature one who manages the conversation, even if the other person is a parent or someone who should know better.

Respect goes beyond difficult conversations, of course. Being helpful and considerate toward family members, teachers, or coaches in our everyday actions helps all of us (again, parents included!) establish a foundation for those times when we might disagree. [http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/tips_disagree.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/tips_disagree.html)

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**Soft Skills to Pay the Bills - Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success**

"Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success," is a curriculum developed by Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is focused on teaching "soft" or workforce readiness skills to youth, including youth with disabilities. Created for youth development professionals as an introduction to workplace interpersonal and professional skills, the curriculum is targeted for youth ages 14 to 21 in both in-school and out-of-school environments. The basic structure of the program is comprised of modular, hands-on, engaging activities that focus on six key skill areas: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism.
From the Archives, 1st PICs-N-Pieces Newsletter

**PIC OPENS AUGUST 1, 1991**

Wyoming's Parent Information Center (PIC) opened for business on August 1, 1991, to provide information and referral to parents of children with disabilities across the state.

PIC is a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.

The PIC office is located in Buffalo, and is staffed by Terri Dawson, Project Director, and Nancy Pedro, Administrative Assistant.

Fourteen regions are designated in this project, following the same boundaries as the state's preschool regions. A Pilot Parent will be available in each of the regions to provide individual support and information, as well as to facilitate parent support groups.

Two Parent Trainers will work with the Project Director and the Pilot Parents. To date, one Parent Trainer, Jill Stubbs, and seven Pilot Parents have been hired.

Two parent workshops will be held in each region during the year. The first will be Parent's Rights and Responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the second will be on Parent/Professional Communication within the IEP/IFSP Process. Each workshop will include information on the grieving process.

The first three months of operation have been filled with setting up the office and hiring staff, as well as developing a logo, designing brochures, and cataloging materials.

Terri, Nancy and Jill attended a two-day training session at Parents Lets Unite for Kids (PLUK-the Montana Parent Center) and staffed a booth at the recent Casper MegaConference, which was sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Terri attended a national conference on supporting children and families through integrated services sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics and Maternal and Child Health Bureau conference in Philadelphia, as the parent representative on the three member state team.

As a member, and co-chair of the Wyoming Early Intervention Council, Terri also participated in the Interagency Coordinating Council Parent Meeting in Washington, DC.

Nancy attended the national convention of the ARC in Portland, Oregon.

The first parent workshop is scheduled in Laramie on November 13. The workshops will be advertised in each community, with plenty of time to make plans to attend.

An in-state toll-free number is available for anyone wishing to contact PIC. The number is 1-800-660-WPIC(9742).

Project Director Terri Dawson (left) and Administrative Assistant Nancy Pedro stand next to the Parent Information Center sign at the PIC office, 270 Fort Street in Buffalo.
All parents want their children to have happy, successful adult lives. Planning for the future of a young person with disabilities is complicated by the need to accommodate the child’s special needs.

There are many decisions about transition to adult life that must be considered by parents and the teen/young adult with disabilities. Educators and agencies can provide information about the issues. The decisions are up to the student and family.

All young people face choices as they leave high school – about post-secondary education, employment and careers, and where they want to live, work and recreate.

One aspect of transition planning the family must consider is how much independence and self-determination is realistic to expect of the individual. Parents must also decide how much they are willing and able to let go, and allow independence and self-determination. If parents have been thinking and planning for transition, they will have been giving their child opportunities to make choices, to reach decisions and to experience consequences – the forerunners of independence. These opportunities need to start at a very young age to allow our children to learn, make mistakes and then learn from their mistakes. If we shelter them by making all decisions for them, they will have no skills or experience in making decisions on their own as they grow to adulthood.

As families plan for transition into the adult world, they are often stunned to discover that the adult service system does not have the guarantees they have become accustomed to under special education law - the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA only provides educational services and supports until a child is 21 years old (in WY), or until they graduate with a diploma. Families assume that the transition of their son or daughter into adult services is a natural progression – that the services will be there when the young adult is ready for them; and that if their child is on the Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver, residential services and supports will automatically be provided and available. With changes to the waiver in the past few years, that is no longer true. Families need to find out what is available for your child on the new Comprehensive and Supports Waivers through the WY Department of Health, Behavioral Health Division at 307-777-8760 or so you can plan accordingly for the future.

Age of Majority
In the State of Wyoming the Age of Majority is 18. This means the person is a legal adult, responsible for their own self and decisions. It is sometimes a surprise to parents to learn that, under Wyoming law, parents have no legal responsibility or control over their child with disabilities after he or she reaches 18 (the Age of Majority), unless the parents apply for guardianship through the courts.

Guardianship
Guardianship is one of the least understood forms of assistance for adults. It can be a valuable means of protection for an individual, 18 years of age or older, who lacks understanding or capacity to make or communicate responsible decisions. Families should carefully consider their child’s needs with regard to guardianship.

A legal guardian is a person who is appointed by the court and has the legal authority and the duty to care for the personal and property interests of another person, called a ward. Usually, this occurs because the ward is unable to
make certain decisions independently. A guardian has the legal authority and responsibility of making decisions and taking actions necessary to care for and protect their ward. Guardianship is a big decision, and not one to take lightly. We suggest families do their research and give it the attention it deserves.

There are a couple of different types of guardianship in Wyoming. More information can be found at Wyoming Guardianship Corp at www.wyomingguardianship.org or WY Behavior Health Division (BHD). BHD has a great handbook on guardianship that can be found on their website at http://health.wyo.gov/DDD/ComprehensiveandSupportsWaiver.html

Selective Service
All males, regardless of disability, are required to register for selective service within thirty days of their eighteenth birthday, unless they are institutionalized or hospitalized. Registration forms are available at the local post office or may be completed on-line at www.sss.gov.

Transportation
Getting a driver’s license is an important goal for most young people. If driver’s training is offered in the high school, students with disabilities are eligible for such instruction and must be accommodated if they have potential for learning to drive.

If a young adult is unable to obtain a driver’s license, then the student should be assisted in learning how to use alternative means of transportation. Many of Wyoming’s smaller communities do not have public transportation, such as city buses, available. However, even some of our small communities have senior center buses who provide transportation to people with disabilities, not just senior citizens, for a nominal fee.

Another important issue for a person who cannot get a driver’s license is the need to get a State Identification Card for personal identification purposes. These can be obtained at the local driver’s license office. A certified birth certificate and original social security card must be presented for identification.

Graduation
Decisions for a child’s academic success must be considered long before a child enters high school, or indeed, even middle school. Parents must not wait until the last half of their child’s senior year to ask about graduation. Part of the purpose of transition planning is so that the high school program is structured in such a way that both the school and the family are working toward the same goals. If the student is on an academic program and parents are expecting him/her to graduate, then certain course requirement and educational standards must be met. Therefore, this conversation must begin early.

Wyoming law requires school districts to serve students with disabilities until the end of the school year in which they turn 21. If parents want their child to receive independent living and employment training after the regular academic program is completed, they must develop goals on the IEP to address these areas of need.

Education – Employment – Adult Services
Transition planning for students with disabilities should include discussion of continuing education. For many youngsters with disabilities a lack of planning and expectation is the largest barrier to continuing education.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, amended in 2008, provides guarantees of equal access to people with disabilities, allowing that no otherwise qualified person can be excluded on the basis of disability. Most colleges and universities have special services such as tutoring, textbooks on tape, etc. The most important thing to consider when looking at whether your child may be able to attend college if they get assistance from special service is that accommodations may be made, however curriculum and requirements may not be altered.

(Continued on pg 9)
New “Every Student Succeeds Act” Signed into Law

On December 11, 2015 President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). According to the US Secretary of Education, this new bipartisan law, which will replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, will help ensure educational opportunity for all students by:

- Holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
- Requiring that, when students fall behind, steps are taken to help them, and their schools, improve, with a particular focus on the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools, high schools with low graduation rates, and schools where subgroups, including students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color, are falling behind.
- Empowering State and local decision makers to continue to refine their own systems for school improvement.
- Continuing to require annual, comparable statewide assessments, so that parents and educators have the information they need to make sure children are making progress, while encouraging review and elimination of unnecessary tests.
- Establishing as part of the ESEA programs to:
  - Provide more children with access to high-quality preschool – similar to the current Preschool Development Grants program;
  - Spur innovations developed by educators at the local level and evidence-based strategies for high-need students – similar to the current Investing in Innovation (i3) grant program;
  - Encourage States and districts to put in place new supports for teachers and school leaders, including increases in compensation that are based in part on student learning and other measures;
  - Support innovative and evidence-based teacher and leader recruitment, preparation, and development;
  - Support comprehensive wraparound services from early learning to college and career in high-need communities – similar to the current Promise Neighborhoods grant program;
  - Replicate and expand high-performing charter schools for high-need students – similar to the current High-Quality Public Charter School Replication and Expansion grants program; and
  - Provide continued support for magnet schools designed to improve diversity and increase academic achievement.

Protecting students from low-income families and students of color from being taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective teachers – building on existing State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.

You can find the latest information at www.ed.gov/essa, or by e-mailing the US Department of Education at essa.questions@ed.gov.

RESOURCES: It's My Future! iPad App

It's My Future! A new app for iPad, is designed to support students and adults with developmental disabilities to become more self-determined and participate in their annual planning meetings. The app provides self-paced videos to enable people with developmental disabilities to learn more about planning and leading their meetings. Eight sections cover topics such as choice making, decision making, goal setting, community living, employment, fun and leisure, and communication skills. Narration, a written outline, and colorful graphics support people to understand more about self-determination and how to become engaged in their planning meetings. You can download the app from the app store at https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/its-my-future%21/id599009088?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D2
Thinking Ahead Continued...

(Continued from page 7)

Many young people with disabilities attend technical schools or training programs for vocational education to learn the skills needed for a particular job.

Transition planning should also include employment experiences and training. It is important for a student to experience different job opportunities to give them an idea of what kinds of jobs they enjoy and want to pursue. This type of exploration can occur as part of a transition plan while a student is still in high school.

Parents must be aware that adult services for a person with disabilities are not mandated by law as has been their child’s education. Parents must think and plan ahead – not waiting until just before graduation – because that is TOO LATE!

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) at the WY Department of Workforce Services should be included in a student’s transition plan and a part of the IEP team. Schools need to get consent from family and/or student before DVR can be invited. More information can be found at www.wyomingworkforce.org/workers/vr/

Student should also be learning independent living skills. Many high schools provide this training and some contract with local Adult Service Providers to give students an opportunity to experience independent life skills and supported employment. Adult services are governed by funding and ability to pay – and they are expensive. Parents should explore the adult service providers in their areas and discuss the costs of these services and means of funding.

Funding

Some adults with disabilities will be able to become self-sufficient, having jobs and living arrangements that make it unnecessary for them to have financial assistance. However, most adults who have more significant disabilities need some kind of financial assistance, or will in the future, because they are not able to make enough to support themselves.

Parents must educate themselves about the various funding sources available to adults with disabilities, and in most cases, find creative and assertive ways to get needed services.

Some parents want to find ways to make their adult children with disabilities financially secure. This must be handled carefully. Parents must talk to a financial planner or attorney to find the best ways to provide for the future of a person with disabilities.

Join the Parent Information Center as we celebrate 25-Years of supporting families in OPENING DOORS for their children with disabilities.

This year, PIC is expanding our Parent Conference on disAbilities to two and a half days: Feb 26-28, 2016 in Casper. The conference will feature Paula Kluth, nationally recognized speaker and author on Autism and Inclusive Classrooms, all day, Fri Feb 26, 2016.

Sat and Sun, Feb 27 & 28, 2016, will feature a variety of sessions on topics such as:

- creative ways to use apps to support learning,
- skill building for getting and keeping a job,
- Self-advocacy –a special session for youth with disabilities in finding their own way with confidence, &
- strategies for challenging behaviors in the classroom.

Saturday’s banquet will celebrate 25-years of great families supporting and networking across Wyoming!
ABOUT US:

Parent Information Center (PIC):

Outreach Parent Liaisons (OPL) provide information and support to families of children with disabilities, on their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). PIC can attend IEPs with families to help empower them to partner with schools effectively. We also provide workshops on IDEA, IEPs, and specific disabilities such as attention disorders and autism spectrum disorder.

For more info check out our website at www.wpic.org or call PIC at (307) 684-2277:

Terri Dawson, Director, tdawson@wpic.org (307) 217-1321
Serves the entire state

Juanita Bybee, jbybee@wpic.org (307) 684-2277
Serves Buffalo & Sheridan

Janet Kinstetter, jkinstetter@wpic.org (307) 756-9605
Serves Moorcroft, Gillette, Sundance & Newcastle for phone support only. Janet no longer attends IEPs or provides workshops

Tammy Wilson, twilson@wpic.org (307) 217-2244
Serves Green River & Rock Springs

Sign up for PIC E-news!

Keep up-to-date on “What’s Happening in Wyoming” and continue to read interesting and relevant articles by subscribing to our online E-News at www.wpic.org (free to all) or by subscribing to our hard copy PICs-N-Pieces newsletter—available at no cost to parents/family members of children with disabilities/ $20 professionals. All donations appreciated!

Making a Difference TOGETHER for 25 years!
The happiest people do not have the best of everything. They make the best of everything they have.

Anonymous

Help us reach our goal of $25,000 in our 25th year

Your donation helps PIC reach more families by:

Attending special education meetings across the state to help families develop their child’s individual education plan (IEP) as partners with school staff.

Providing workshops and training to help families understand their child’s disability and the maze of special education services and supports.

Supporting families one on one with phone support to problem-solve school issues and to increase family engagement to increase their child’s school success.

Empowering families to be more confident and informed as they advocate for their child’s most appropriate educational program.

Name: ________________________________________ Phone: (H) _______________ (W)__________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________ Zip: ________________

Street

City

State

This is my:   ___ Home address ___ Work address (Please check one)

E-mail address: ______________________________________________________________________

Donation amount________________. Thank you!

PIC is also accepting donations for our silent auction at our 25th celebration banquet. Call us if you have an item to donate for this purpose.

Mail to: Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc.

500 W. Lott St, Suite A

Buffalo, WY 82834

For more information:

Contact PHP at (307) 684-2277

or e-mail tdawson@wpic.org
Save the Date: PIC Parent Conference on dis Abilities
25 Years of Opening Doors

**PTSB credit and STARS available**

Parent Information Center
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A Project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.

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