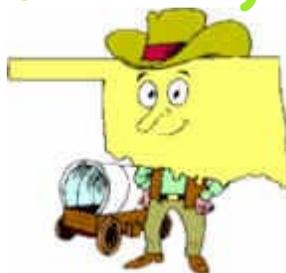


WILL'S CORNER, OKLAHOMA



Volume 7, Issue 4
October, 2006

(Serving the Disability Community of Oklahoma)

Tech-Now — A Program for Schools

Tech-Now is an after school, during school, and summer program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. The program focuses on giving students with disabilities (and increasingly students without disabilities also) the opportunity to access cutting edge technology and encouraging them to explore potential educational and employment opportunities.

Tech-Now began as an after-school program in 1999 for kids who were in Special Education to help them use modern technology to become aware of career fields and to plan for their future in how they would make a living. It has become so successful that some schools have decided they wanted to teach this in their regular curriculum.

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Special Education and You

I had heard the State Department of Education, Special Education Department no longer processed Due Process complaints within the department. The complaint procedure—at least in the area of filing Due Process—has been taken out of the State Department of Education and placed in the *Special Education Resolution Center* in Tulsa. This happened in December of 2005, and I have been meaning to interview Jo Anne Pool about how to grieve an issue in special education when a parent and a school system do not agree about what would be best for a child. I went to a conference in Oklahoma City in September, and guess who was one of the major speakers? You guessed it—Jo Anne Pool. The following information was taken from her presentation at the PTI Conference in Oklahoma City on September 19.

There are four ways to make a complaint about the special education which your child receives. You may contact the LEA (Local Education Authority). You may contact the SEA (State Education Authority). You may seek Mediation through one of the Early Settlement Centers in the state. Finally, you may seek Due Process to formally resolve an issue. These ways to grieve an issue are not mutually exclusive—that is, just because you do one of them, you are not excluded from using the other methods. Mediation may always be used at any stage of resolving your issue. Due Process is generally the final stage of appeal in resolving your concern.

Your Local Education Authority is generally your first avenue when you have an issue with special education in your school. You will have an opportunity to voice your concerns at your child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan). You may contact

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OHC web site:
www.ohc.state.ok.us

Special Education and You (continued)

the principal at the school where your child attends. You may also contact the School Board of the school district in which you reside. To address the School Board at a regularly-scheduled meeting, you must call in advance and request to get on the agenda of the board meeting. If you are not on the agenda, you will not be allowed to speak.

To address the State Education Authority, you must file a formal, written complaint with the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Department. They have several compliance coordinators who may talk with you about the process. Call 405-521-4871 to speak to one of the compliance coordinators. As a rule of thumb, your complaint should not be over a year old.

In your written complaint to the SEA, you should include your child's name, date of birth, and current educational placement. You should also cite how the Local Education Authority has violated one of the requirements of federal law. The federal law governing the delivery of special education services in the United States is the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) which was most recently reauthorized in 2004. The State Department of Education will send you its written decision regarding your complaint within 60 calendar days of the receipt of complaint in most circumstances.

If you are interested in resolution of your concern through Mediation, contact the Early Settlement Center to ask that a mediation session be arranged. In central Oklahoma, call *405-521-6677 or 877-521-6677 statewide. Who are mediators? Mediators are community volunteers trained in mediation

and basic special education issues. They are certified by the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts and screened to ensure neutrality.

Mediation is scheduled at a convenient time for all parties. It is fair and impartial. It is voluntary. (Both the school and the advocate must agree to Mediation.) It is confidential. More importantly, Mediation is legally binding on all parties in its decision.

There were roughly 94,000 IEP's (Individualized Education Plans) operating in the State of Oklahoma to serve the needs of children with disabilities in 2005. Of those 94,000 IEP's, 30 Due Process proceedings were filed in that same year. Due Process is a procedure which usually only occurs after other efforts have been made to resolve an issue.

A Due Process may be filed in writing using either a form or a letter in which you include your child's name, address, school, a description of the facts and your idea of how the issue could be resolved satisfactorily. Your request will be assigned to a hearing officer. The hearing date will be set tentatively within 42 days. A resolution period begins to allow time for the parties to attempt resolution of their issues themselves.

During the resolution period of a Due Process, the parties may come to an agreement. If the parties do come to an agreement, they must put this agreement in writing and sign it. At this point their agreement becomes legally binding, enforceable in state or federal district court.

A hearing occurs after a resolution period if no agreement is reached. The hearing officer is expected to be fair and impartial. The hearing will produce a decision within 45 days unless one of the parties has requested an extension. The hearing decision is final unless an appeal is requested within 30 days of the decision. If an appeal is requested, an appeal officer will examine the entire

***Alternative Dispute Resolution
Early Settlement Mediation**

www.oscn.net/static/adr/

*Corrected phone number and added web site after printed mailing.

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Special Education and You (continued)

hearing record, seek additional evidence and give the parties the opportunity for oral or written argument.

Any party in the Due Process procedure has the right to bring a civil action if they disagree with the decision of the appeal officer. This action must be brought within 90 days from the date of the decision of the appeal officer. The court will base its decision on the preponderance of the evidence and grant relief it determines appropriate.

The complaint to the LEA, the complaint to the SEA, Mediation and Due Process are the four avenues open to grieve an issue in special education in Oklahoma. Parents must follow procedure

in each of these methods. Failure to follow procedure will result in dismissal of the grievance before it has the chance to be heard. Schools may file Due Process against a parent although in most situations it is the other way around. If you have a concern about the special education of your child, you may contact Jo Anne Pool at the Special Education Resolution Center in Tulsa. Their local number is 918-712-9632 or 800-267-0028 statewide. The website of the Special Education Resolution Center is [Http://serc.okstate.edu](http://serc.okstate.edu). Jo Anne Pool will provide you information on the procedure you must follow to grieve your issue. She will not provide legal advice on your concern.

WAR AND PEACE

Many young Americans are serving their country in Iraq and Afghanistan. As in all wars, some of those men and women are returning to their homes with mental and physical disabilities. *Will's Corner, Oklahoma* visited the Veterans Administration Hospital in Oklahoma City to get some information on returning veterans who may have acquired a disability.

There are similarities with Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan are called and all wars in which we have been involved. There are also differences.

The current war places people in situations of great stress where they must be on guard at all times. Soldiers are required to make life and death decisions instantly, and a wrong decision has immediate results.

This war is different than some wars in that there are no front lines. Soldiers have no truly safe place to be. Some civilians are friends and some are not, and it is difficult to know the difference.

In this war we have administered the latest in medical care promptly where many of our wounded are

saved who would not have lived with their injuries in previous conflicts. We have new technology in body armor and helmets which is bringing greater protection to our armed forces.

Our VA Hospital in Oklahoma City and VA hospitals across the country are preparing to serve returning veterans whatever their needs may be. Support groups began in July, 2005 at the VA Hospital in Oklahoma City for both returning veterans and their families.

Some of the skills that soldiers need to fight a war have to be unlearned when they return to their families and their jobs. To survive, military per-

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Some signs and symptoms of inner peace:
An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment



Your Personal Health Record (PHR) Making It Work for You

(Edited text for this article was taken from Deresa Claybrook, MS)

We all hate to hear those dreaded words after an examination by our physician. We hate to hear that our physician recommends that we go over to the hospital for surgery or a test. Those words can be some of the scariest, most frightening words heard in an examination room. The words themselves just send thoughts of fear into a frenzy and confusion clouds our minds when we really should be asking important questions about our upcoming surgery or test. For most people, it is usually in the car on the way home that we think about all the questions that we should have asked.

You might be wondering is there anything that we, the health care consumer with a disability can do to be better prepared for an office visit that leads to the hospital front steps. The answer is yes, there are several things that we all can do to prepare. First bring a friend or family member along for an extra set of eyes and ears to ask those questions that you might otherwise forget.

The second thing that needs to be done is to prepare a *personal health record*. You might ask, what is a personal health record? A personal health record is a collection of important information about your health or the health of someone you're caring for.

You can start out purchasing a three-ring binder to compile your health information from your different physician offices. Request your medical records from all physicians you have used and place this information in your binder. Add new information to your *personal health record* after each doctor's visit. Why is your complete personal health record so important?

The more complete and accurate your health information, the better tool you have to help you play an active role in your own quality of health care. Having information like an updated medication list in your possession can prevent the risk of a drug reaction when this information is shared with your physician.

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If a physician can visit with you about your past health care experiences prior to surgery or testing, your physician can assure that they will not duplicate the same test you had recently at another doctor's office. That can save you time and money.

The next question is, "What should a personal health record contain?" A personal health record should include several things, and below is a list with some of the items that you might want to consider.

- Personal identification that includes name, birth date and social security number
- Person to contact in case of emergency
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of your physicians, dentist, and other specialist
- Health insurance information
- Living wills and advance directives
- Organ donor authorizations
- Current medications and dosages
- A recent physical examination

This is just a partial list. Put in your personal health record whatever is pertinent to you and your health care.

If your physician does recommend surgery or special testing for you, what kind of information do you need to add to your personal health record? Here are a few things to consider.

- What do you need to do prior to the surgery or test?
- Can you eat or drink anything prior to surgery/test?
- What time do you need to arrive at the hospital/facility?

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Your Personal Health Record (PHR) Making It Work for You (continued)

- Do you need to bring someone to drive you home?
- What paperwork do you need to complete before arrival?
- How long with the surgery/test last?
- Will you be able to visit with the doctor before the surgery?
- Do you need to bring current medications?
- What is the recovery process?
- When can you resume normal activities?

I had a personal experience on that next to the last bullet concerning the recovery process. I had a procedure which required complete anesthesia in an operating room about three years ago. I had a driver to take me home and was feeling very good that everything went well. Nobody told me to watch what I ate for several days, especially spicy foods after anesthesia.

Thursday night is pizza night at my house, and early Friday morning was almost emergency room morning. Ask about your recovery process. Get information on all the above bullets, and put that in your personal health record where you can access it easily. It will come in very handy.

If you have questions about a personal health history, ask your doctor. You may want to ask if your doctor feels this information gathering would be useful for you to do and what they think would be good information to have in your history. Nowadays we may have a general practitioner who we use in routine medical situations and one or two specialists. We may have a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, and/or a speech therapist. None of these medical personnel may be aware of what the others are doing to better your health.

WAR AND PEACE (continued)

sonnel must learn quickly not to trust in a war zone. It's better to assume that everyone is the enemy until proven otherwise. At home, mistrust and suspiciousness severely damage most important relationships, including marriage.

One third of returning veterans are taking advantage of programs to help them make the adjustment to civilian life, and they are doing it sooner than in previous wars. This is good.

While soldiers are still on active duty, they are served through military hospitals both in this country and abroad. The new Balad Hospital has recently opened in Baghdad, and small local military hospitals are available to meet immediate medical needs.

The Veterans Administrations has set up several polytrauma centers across the nation to serve returning veterans who may have experienced multiple injuries. The polytrauma center serving Oklahoma is the VA Hospital in Houston.

The VA in Oklahoma City is preparing to serve returning veterans who have experienced a traumatic brain injury or who have lost a limb in the line of duty. In previous wars, many of these people would not have survived.

We are prepared to provide these returning men and women with the latest technology in artificial limbs to assist them to live fuller, more-productive lives. Artificial limbs have computers which are activated through nerve impulses and simulate real arms and legs in what they can do.

Returning veterans may actually miss the excitement of deployment for awhile. Spouses of returning veterans may feel the service member has changed. Small children of returning vets may have no memory or little memory of their dad or mom.

A tip sheet for returning veterans suggests they take time to listen and talk with loved ones. It takes time to re-adjust to family and friends. Civilian life

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Tech-Now — A Program for Schools (continued)

Not only did they want to expand the times this curriculum was offered, but schools have decided that planning for one's future is good not only for students in Special Education but for everybody. Maybe that's part of what schools should do. So how does Tech-Now go about challenging students to prepare for their future?

The program begins with an interest inventory which when completed targets a cluster of careers which a student may be interested in. For instance, the careers of minister, teacher, and social worker might be together in a career cluster. If a student feels the career cluster which appeared to agree with their interest does not accurately reflect their interest, the student is free to choose another career cluster.

With a specific career in mind, the student creates a career poster researching information for that poster which might include education and preparation necessary, how much such a career pays, and other valuable details. In the process of gathering information for the career poster, the student will gain valuable knowledge about what his or her chosen career is really all about.

Next the student will prepare a radio announcement for their career of choice using some important computer programs such as desktop publisher, audio engineering, and multi-media production. Kids are interested in technology and readily use this technology in preparing for their future.

Using computer graphics, animations, and audio/video technology, students are challenged to prepare a video/movie book about their career of choice. All of these student projects serve to familiarize the student with a job which they may be interested in when they get out of school.

But there is more than this. Tech-Now challenges its students to get together in groups and form a mock company. This company is going to produce an automobile—actually a paper automobile weigh-

ing less than two ounces—but it is the product that counts. The company has to decide who is going to be in management, who is going to be on the production line, and who is going to design this automobile. Students have to decide how much they are going to pay their staff and what they will charge for the automobile they are creating.

All of a sudden it becomes real to the students that if for instance you pay your workers \$25 per hour to assemble tacos that your tacos are going to sell for so much that nobody will buy them. Students see that it is wise to come to agreement about their product and learn skills in good communication. Academic skills that students learn in school begin to show practical application in the adult world.

Tech-Now projects to be in almost three dozen schools in Oklahoma in this school year. These schools and their students compete for awards in an annual awards ceremony held in the Blue Room of the Oklahoma State Capitol each April. Scholarships, cash, and donated products are incentives for students to excel.

Talk to Rick DeRennaux who is the person who brought Tech-Now to Oklahoma way back in 1999. His energy and enthusiasm will inspire you, I promise, as he shares his vision of what this program can do for young people in Oklahoma. Programs in each state are structured differently, but thanks to Rick our program is the second largest in the nation.

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Tech-Now is a win/win program for school systems, teachers, and students alike.



**Tech-Now —
A Program for Schools (continued)**

Rick DeRennaux began as the sole employee of Tech-Now, and he now has three part-time staff with almost 100 contracted teachers and teacher aids who actually teach the program in schools all over the state. One positive outgrowth of Tech-Now which nobody anticipated is its widespread appeal.

It began as an after-school program for Special Education students in a handful of schools, but schools began to notice that the program would benefit students without disabilities as well. Rick shares that in many schools the Tech-Now program has about 20% students without disabilities, and this percentage stands to increase.

The truly strange thing is that in many cases it is the special education students who are the mentors to students without disabilities on the technical computer programs such as desktop publishing and audio engineering. Since the program began in Special Education, it is these veterans who have mastered the skills which the kids without disabilities are eagerly wanting to learn. What a role reversal. Integration of kids with disabilities and those without comes so naturally.

Schools have found that the program is beneficial to them, especially after the State Department of Education began requiring two credits in a technology subject required to graduate. Schools have begun to teach Tech-Now in the classroom during school hours as it satisfies this state requirement. Tech-Now is a win/win program for school systems, teachers, and students alike. The technical aspect holds a special attraction for kids and provides a seemingly effortless means to the wonderful end of preparing for their future.

If you are interested in learning more about Tech-Now, email tech-now@hotmail.com. You may also call 405-640-7606. Tech-Now's fax number is 405-912-7978. Check it out and see what you think. Rick reminds us, "I want to help bring the 21st century into today's classrooms."

Something to think about...

Why does a round pizza come in a square box?



WAR AND PEACE (continued)

is different, and the rules necessary in wartime are no longer necessary.

Spouses of returning vets are encouraged to not schedule too many activities which may overwhelm the adjustment the returning veteran is making. Families have assumed the responsibilities of their deployed members, and the returning husband or wife needs to be reassured they are still needed. Children of returning vets may be encouraged to talk about what happened during the time mom or dad was away.

If a person returning from Iraq or Afghanistan or their family members would benefit from support or information, contact Dr. Ursula Bowling or Dr. Dutch Doerman at 405-270-5183 at the VA Hospital in Oklahoma City. We support our troops who have risked their lives in service of their country.

Information for this article comes from an interview with Dr. Ursula Bowling, Dr. Dutch Doerman, and Dr. William Leber who are professionals working at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Oklahoma City.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- October 20, 2006** Frontier City and Make Promises Happen camps have teamed up for this 16th annual Halloween celebration in Oklahoma City. Call 800-299-2811 or 405-282-2811 in Oklahoma City for more information.
- October 25, 2006** National Respite and Caregiving Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. For more information call 405-996-8444 or email respitcenter@yahoo.com.
- November 11, 12, 2006** Statewide conference for People First at the Doubletree Warren Place Hotel in Tulsa, Oklahoma. For more information, contact Elma Rodd at 405-275-3624.
- December 5, 6, 2006** Oklahoma Turning Point will host their 9th annual Conference at the Clarion Meridian Conference Center in Oklahoma City. You may register online at www.okturningpoint.org/tp2006.

If you have an event coming up relating to disability, let us know at 800-522-8224 and we'll help you publicize.

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