

CONNECTING

The quarterly newsletter of Raising Special Kids

Summer 2020

**Playtime Is
Serious
Business
for Kids**



Connecting is published by



Raising
Special
Kids

5025 E. Washington St., #204
Phoenix, AZ 85034
800-237-3007

raisingspecialkids.org
info@raisingspecialkids.org

STATEWIDE SERVICES

Central Arizona

602-242-4366

Northern Arizona

928-444-8834

Southern Arizona

520-441-4007

STAFF

Christopher Tiffany, Executive Director
Maureen A. Mills, Editor

Chris Ames, Andrea Anderson, Trudy Billy,
Anna Burgmann, Brandi Clark, Gloria Demara,
Vickie French, Jenny Gibbons, Kristi Grasser,
Kathy Gray-Mangerson, Rachel Hanzuk,
Ceci Hartke, Claudia Jaramillo, Angelica Lara
Brittany Miller, Janna Murrell, Kelly Randall,
Dolores Rios, Vicky Rozich, Jessica Ruvalcaba,
Nannette Salasek, Paulina Serna, Laurie Shook,
Carolyn Sostrom, Nilda Townsend, Neil Wintle

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Kupiszewski, President
Sharon Moyer, Vice President
Trish Robinson, Treasurer
Karen Barr, Secretary
Katie Barclay Penkoff
Kelly Carbone
Michael Chapnek
Charles Douglass
Stacy Jantzi
Mallory Lee
Dr. Lynda Mills
Jill Nico
Alan Tinsley

Parent to Parent support is the heart of Raising Special Kids. Information about local services, educational programs, advocacy, or special health care needs is available in English, Spanish and other languages. Services are provided at no charge to families in Arizona. Raising Special Kids is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Carolyn Sostrom
Family Support Specialist
Central Arizona



CAROLYN Sostrom connects families to the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) through Raising Special Kids. She especially enjoys helping families with new diagnoses locate resources and support.

“I’ve been there too, facing a new diagnosis and I wasn’t sure where to turn,” she says. Looking for support for her son with learning challenges, Carolyn attended a Raising Special Kids IEP training and spoke to a Family Support Specialist. She used this information to help advocate for a more appropriate middle school placement for her son after he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Carolyn started volunteering with Raising Special Kids in 2017 and joined the staff in 2018. Her favorite part of her job is talking to parents.

She grew up in Scottsdale and graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in journalism before taking off for New York City. There, she did market research for Conde Nast Publications whose magazines including *Vogue* and *Glamour*.

After two years, Carolyn returned to Arizona to stay, missing the dry climate and spectacular sunsets. She settled back into Scottsdale and worked for community newspapers and in communication roles for the National Association of Purchasing Management and Honor Health.

Carolyn's sons are now 18 and 16. Her younger son was diagnosed with high-functioning autism in grade school and was later diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Both times, Carolyn found support and resources through Raising Special Kids.

“Throughout my experiences in looking for support for my son, I remember many individuals who were helpful and supportive to me,” Carolyn says. “I hope to be able to provide that same level of support to other families.”

This publication is partially supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Family to Family Health Information Centers, CFDA No. 93.504. The information, content, and conclusions should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

HERE WITH FAMILIES. HERE FOR FAMILIES.

A Message From the Director & Board President

ALTHOUGH March 2020 was only a few months ago, in some respects it feels like it has been a lifetime. It seems like ages ago when parents and families of children who have disabilities gathered together to share their experiences, challenges and hopes. In our March edition of Connecting I wrote about COVID-19 and our organization's belief in the strength of solidarity and unity in community solutions, as we have seen them work in our own lives. We have seen the strength of solidarity and unity again as Arizona communities come together with a common purpose to be a part of the solution to the very real problem of systemic racism and discrimination experienced by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

The disability rights movement was born out of the civil rights movement and Raising Special Kids was founded in 1979, just 4 years after the passage of Public Law 94-142 which would later become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This law had a dramatic, positive impact on millions, as students who had disabilities accessed public education in their local communities for the first time. Their inclusion was not without collision and conflict as school systems adjusted to providing support for students with disabilities and their families. Raising Special Kids went to work providing parents and families the tools they needed to work collaboratively with schools and advocate effectively to integrate students who have disabilities into mainstream education.

We have been asked the question, 'what is Raising Special Kids doing to address systemic racism and discrimination?' We look to productive action-steps to ensure our Board, Staff and Parent Leaders have the space, information and various perspectives to reflect on **how we can do more** to be a part of the solution.

Effective immediately, Raising Special Kids initiates an Inclusion and Diversity Task Force made up of Raising Special Kids Board Members, Staff and Parent Leaders. Their charge is to: identify and secure resources needed to carry out their work, conduct a Diversity and Inclusion Assessment, engage and gather input from people who are BIPOC and experiencing disability, and develop, implement and monitor an action plan for continuous organizational improvement.

As we engage in this important work we look forward to July 26, 2020 when we commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the intent of the law "to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."



Christopher Tiffany
Executive Director



Jennifer Kupiszewski
Board President

PLAYTIME IS SERIOUS BUSINESS FOR KIDS

They aren't just having fun, they are learning!

WHEN a baby bats at a mobile overhead, a toddler stacks blocks and knocks them down over and over or a preschooler dresses up like a firefighter and battles an imaginary fire, they aren't just having fun, they are learning. And all young children need time to play and learn as much as possible.

As Arizona's early childhood agency, First Things First (FTF) reminds parents that all children explore and make sense of the world around them through play. In fact, research shows that play has a positive impact on everything from physical abilities and vocabulary to problem solving, creativity, teamwork and empathy.

FTF supports parents in their role as a child's first teacher with a wide range of information available at FirstThingsFirst.org. Parents can also use FTF's Find Programs, an online tool at FirstThingsFirst.org/resources/find-programs/, which can connect them with a variety of no-cost early childhood programs in their local area to help nurture their child's learning and healthy development. The website also features an entire page of information related to playtime as learning time, at FirstThingsFirst.org/resources/learnthroughplay/.

In fact, playtime is such

an important part of healthy development that the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a report urging pediatricians to prescribe play for children in their care. "Play supports the formation of the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with all caregivers that children need to thrive," the report said.

Some of the best toys for babies, toddlers and preschoolers that allow them to explore, discover and learn are everyday household objects. With babies, it's as simple as grasping an object and holding on to it. Families can focus on introducing objects that stimulate curiosity. Babies are fascinated by their surroundings,

especially faces and bright colors. You can use something as simple as a small, lightweight scarf to play peek-a-boo. Learn more about scarf play at FirstThingsFirst.org/scarves.

For toddlers between 1 and 3 years old, look for objects that encourage imagination and problem solving. They enjoy playing hide-and-seek with different objects. As a toddler, your child may begin to arrange objects, which eventually turns into sorting and classifying them. This allows the child to develop thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills.

For preschoolers from ages 3 to 5, look to use objects that will help



preschoolers relate to each other and the world around them. Encourage their imagination by creating a pirate's telescope using a paper towel roll, for example.

Here are five suggestions for using everyday household objects as toys to promote early learning:

1. Tape together two toilet paper rolls to create binoculars for a game of I Spy.
1. Babies love to hold whisks, and as your child gets older, you

can use a whisk in the bath to swirl the water or make patterns in the sand.

2. Depending on the size, cardboard boxes can be used in a variety of ways. Facial tissue boxes make excellent building blocks to build towers.
3. Fill a screw-top plastic water bottle with pasta or beans to make a shaker. Or use them as bowling pins, to knock down with a ball.

4. Laundry baskets can be used to throw rolled-up socks for a game of bean bag, or have your child use their imagination to sit inside and drive a car or steer a boat.

To encourage imaginative play at home, parents and caregivers only have to look around the house to keep little ones entertained and learning. For more information, sign up for FTF's monthly parent newsletter at FirstThingsFirst.org.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GO ONLINE

Necessity Is the Mother of Invention

LIKE organizations and individuals around the world, March 2020 brought many surprises and challenges for Raising Special Kids.

As always, our primary focus is serving families of kids with disabilities and, pandemic or no pandemic, that is what we are determined to do.

In mid-March, when COVID hit, our spring edition of *Connecting* was close to heading to the printer. After assessing the situation and hearing from families their need for accurate, credible information, we changed our focus. Within 11 days we put together and published a COVID-specific issue of *Connecting*.

But information was changing at a rapid pace. We recognized the importance of making up-to-date, reliable information available to families. We quickly created a repository of COVID information on our website as a one-stop resource for families.

The staff at Raising Special Kids had begun working from home as soon as the threat from the virus was recognized. This meant reconfiguring the phones, setting up laptops, setting up Virtual Private Networks and, of course, welcoming staff and families to the wonderful world of online



meetings.

Within weeks we had a cadre of trained online presenters and hosts and a system for providing what were once in-person workshops, virtually for families across the state.

We also added two COVID-specific trainings: Special Education During COVID-19 and Health Care During COVID-19. During the months of April, May and June 2020, Raising Special Kids offered more than 50 online trainings.

Being parents of children with disabilities, the staff were experiencing the stresses of trying to adjust to the rigors of working from home, assisting children with their online schooling and therapies, and just generally dealing with the challenges of navigating everyday life with children, many of whom are at an elevated risk for infection, during a global pandemic.

continued on page 8

AQUÍ CON LAS FAMILIAS. AQUÍ PARA LAS FAMILIAS.

Un Mensaje del Director y del Presidente del Consejo

AUNQUE el mes de Marzo de 2020 fue hace solo unos pocos meses, de alguna manera se siente como si hubiera transcurrido una vida entera. Parece que fue hace mucho tiempo atrás cuando los padres y familias con niños que padecen discapacidades se reunían para compartir sus experiencias, desafíos y esperanzas. En nuestra edición de Marzo de “conectándonos” comenté acerca del COVID-19 y la creencia de la organización en el poder de la solidaridad y la unidad para la búsqueda de soluciones en favor de toda la comunidad, de la misma manera que este ejercicio aplica para nuestra vida diaria. Hemos visto el poder de la solidaridad y la unidad una vez más cuando las comunidades de Arizona se unieron en un propósito común de ser parte de la solución para el problema severo del racismo y discriminación sistémicos que experimentan las comunidades con personas de piel negra, indígenas y personas de color (BIPOC por sus siglas en ingles).

El movimiento en pos de los derechos de las personas con discapacidad surgió a partir del movimiento de los derechos civiles y Raising Special Kids fue fundado en el año 1979, apenas 4 años después de la aprobación de la Ley Pública 94-142 que más adelante se convertiría en la Ley de Educación para las Personas con Discapacidades. Esta ley tuvo un impacto drástico y muy positivo en millones de personas, ya que estudiantes con discapacidades pudieron acceder por primera vez al sistema público de educación en sus comunidades locales. Esa inclusión no estuvo exenta de afrentas ni de conflictos en lo que el sistema escolar se iba ajustando a brindar el apoyo para los estudiantes con discapacidades y sus familias. Raising Special Kids se puso manos a la obra para ofrecerles a los padres y a las familias las herramientas que necesitaban para trabajar en colaboración con las escuelas y abogar de forma efectiva en la integración de los estudiantes con discapacidades dentro del sistema educativo ordinario.

Nos han preguntado: “¿Qué es precisamente lo que está haciendo Raising Special Kids para abordar el racismo y la discriminación sistémicos?” Estamos enfocados en implementar un curso de acción positivo para asegurarles a nuestro Consejo, Empleados y Padres Líderes un espacio, información y perspectivas varias que ayuden a reflexionar sobre **cómo podemos aportar más para** ser parte de la solución.

A partir de ahora y con efecto inmediato, Raising Special Kids inicia un Equipo de Trabajo sobre la Inclusión y Diversidad conformado por Miembros del Consejo Directivo, Empleados y Padres Líderes. La labor incluye: identificar y asegurar los recursos para llevar a cabo sus tareas, realizar una Evaluación de Inclusión y Diversidad, comprometerse y recolectar información sobre las personas que pertenecen a las comunidades BIPOC (por sus siglas en inglés) que experimenten alguna discapacidad, y desarrollar, implementar, y monitorear un plan de acción para la mejora continua de la organización.

Al emprender esta labor importante, quedamos a la espera del 26 de julio de 2020 donde celebraremos nuestro 30º Aniversario de la firma de la Ley para los ciudadanos estadounidenses con Discapacidades (ADA por sus siglas en inglés) y el propósito de la ley de “asegurar la igualdad de oportunidades, la participación plena, la vida independiente y la autosuficiencia económica para las personas con discapacidades”.



Christopher Tiffany
Director Ejecutivo



Jennifer Kupiszewski
Presidente del Consejo

EL JUEGO ES DE VITAL IMPORTANCIA EN EL DESARROLLO DE LOS NIÑOS

¡No solo se están divirtiendo, están aprendiendo!

Cuando observamos a un bebé que intenta agarrar un juguete móvil, un niño pequeño que apila sus bloques y los derriba una y otra vez o a un niño en edad pre-escolar que se disfraza de bombero y pelea contra un incendio imaginario, no solo se divierten sino que al mismo tiempo también aprenden. Y así, todos los niños pequeños necesitan su espacio para jugar y aprender la mayor cantidad de tiempo posible.

De esta manera, la Agencia de la Infancia Temprana de Arizona, First Things First (FTF por sus siglas en inglés) les recuerda a los padres de familia acerca de la importancia de que los niños exploren y comprendan el mundo que los rodea a través del juego. De hecho, las investigaciones realizadas demuestran que el juego tiene un impacto positivo en todo, desde las habilidades físicas y el vocabulario hasta la resolución de problemas, la creatividad, el trabajo en equipo y la empatía.

FTF apoya a los padres en su rol de primer maestro del niño con una amplia gama de información que está disponible en FirstThingsFirst.org. Los padres pueden también utilizar la búsqueda de programas

Find Programs de FTF, una herramienta en línea disponible en FirstThingsFirst.org/resources/find-programs/, que puede conectarlos con una variedad de programas gratuitos de educación infantil en su área local para ayudar a enriquecer el aprendizaje y desarrollo saludable del niño. El sitio web también cuenta con una página entera de información <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/resources/learnthroughplay/> relacionada a los juegos como dinámica y espacio de aprendizaje, disponible en FirstThingsFirst.org/resources/learnthroughplay/.

De hecho, el espacio de juego es una parte tan importante del desarrollo saludable del niño que la Academia Americana de Pediatría publicó un informe instando a los pediatras que receten el

espacio de juego a los niños que están bajo su cuidado. En dicho informe, se afirma que “el juego fomenta que los niños establezcan relaciones seguras, estables y enriquecedoras con todos sus cuidadores que son necesarias para que crezcan saludables y puedan desenvolverse de manera óptima”.

Algunos de los mejores juguetes para bebés, niños pequeños y de edad pre-escolar que les permiten explorar, descubrir y aprender son los objetos domésticos de uso cotidiano. Con los bebés, es algo tan simple como agarrar un objeto y



sostenerlo. Las familias pueden enfocarse en introducir aquellos objetos que estimulen la curiosidad. Los bebés siempre se fascinan con su entorno, especialmente con los rostros y colores brillantes. Se puede utilizar algo tan simple como una bufanda que sea pequeña y liviana para jugar al escondite. Encuentre más información sobre el juego con la bufanda en el siguiente enlace <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/first-things/its-scarf-season-bonding-and-brain-building-with-your-baby/>.

Para los niños pequeños en edades entre 1 y 3 años, busque objetos que estimulen la imaginación y resolución de problemas. En esta edad disfrutan de jugar al escondite con diferentes objetos. El niño ya puede acomodar objetos, lo que eventualmente se convierte en orden y clasificación. Esto permite que el niño vaya desarrollando sus habilidades para pensar, razonar y solucionar problemas.

Para niños en edad pre-escolar,

entre los 3 y 5 años de edad, busque objetos que ayuden al niño a relacionarse con otros niños y con el entorno que lo rodea. Estimule su imaginación creando un telescopio pirata utilizando, por ejemplo, un rollo de toalla de papel.

A continuación se enlistan cinco sugerencias para utilizar objetos domésticos de uso cotidiano como si fueran juguetes y así fomentar el aprendizaje en los primeros años de la infancia:

1. Pegue con cinta adhesiva dos rollos de papel higiénico y arme unos binoculares para el juego “Veo, Veo”.
2. A los bebés les encanta agarrar el batidor, a medida que su hijo crezca, lo puede utilizar también en la bañera para hacer girar el agua o crear distintos patrones en la arena.
3. Dependiendo del tamaño, las cajas de cartón se pueden utilizar de distintas maneras. Las cajas de pañuelos descartables resultan excelentes bloques para armar

y construir torres.

4. Llene una botella plástica de agua con tapa a rosca con fideos o frijoles para convertirlo en un sonajero. O también puede utilizarlos como bolos de boliche, y derribarlos con una pelota.
5. Los canastos de lavandería se pueden utilizar para arrojar los calcetines enrollados como si fuera el juego de la bolsa de frijoles, o haga que el niño utilice su imaginación, y se siente adentro pretendiendo manejar un carro o dirigir un barco.

Para motivarlos con juegos imaginarios en su hogar, los padres y las personas de cuidado solo deben observar a su alrededor y así podrán mantener a los pequeños entretenidos jugando mientras aprenden. En caso de requerir mayor información, favor de suscribirse al boletín mensual para padres en el siguiente enlace [FirstThingsFirst.org](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/).



FIRST THINGS FIRST

continued from page 4

The staff knew other families were feeling the same levels of stress and began increasing How Are Things (HAT) calls to families we've served. Calls just to check in and let families know they are not alone and that Raising Special Kids is here to assist in whatever way we can.

Raising Special Kids turned to social media to further reach out to families and our community in general holding our first Facebook Live event on April 10. Each week, Family Support Specialist Brittany Miller engages families on different topics either solo or with guest speakers such as the May 1 event with Angelo Odom and Lori Bird from the Arizona Department of Education. Ceci Hartke hosted our first Facebook



En Vivo on April 22 to engage our Spanish speaking families. In addition, Raising Special Kids has invited experts to address various topics through a speaker series. All of our speaker series, Facebook Live and Facebook en Vivo events are recorded and available on our website at raisingspecialkids.org and on our YouTube channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RaisingSpecialKids1/videos>.

Regardless of the surprises waiting in the wings, Raising Special Kids is ready to nimbly tackle any challenges and continue to assist Arizona families just as we have for over forty years.

PARENT LEADERS

March-May 2020

Cave Creek

Cheryl Gilroy

Sarina Siebenaler

Chandler

Marti Baio

Samantha Flores

Regan Iker-Lopez

Jane Jollie

Lisa Myers

Michaela Noterman

Kara Swierz

Flagstaff

May Sheppard-Ketchner

Jean Richmond-Bowman

Gilbert

Shylo Ferland

Eliana Matthies

Heather Prouty

Kim Updegraff

Glendale

Nicole Guysi

Jillian Salasek

Laveen

Michelle Dumay

Mesa

Meslissa Martinez

Phoenix

Ana Arjona

Paula Banahan

Rosa Maria Castañeda

Nieto

Susan Coates

Belinda Johnson

Kristin Loboda

Sharon Moyer

Terri Nigro

Ched Salasek

Sherry Scruggs

San Tan Valley

Emily Smith

Scottsdale

Erika LeBlanc

Surprise

Jessika Moreno

Tempe

Janet Romo

Tucson

Estella McClain

Taymar Pixleysmith

Allyson Schug

Melanie Speights

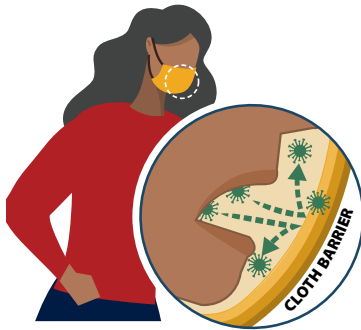
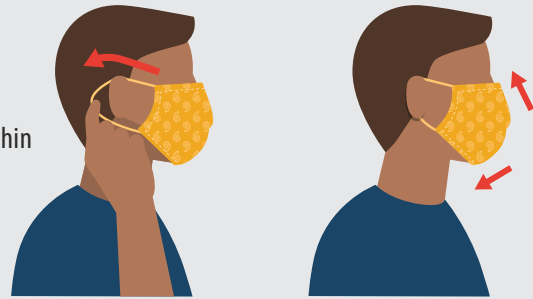
Wendy Swartz

How to Safely Wear and Take Off a Cloth Face Covering

Accessible: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

WEAR YOUR FACE COVERING CORRECTLY

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- Do not place a mask on a child younger than 2



USE THE FACE COVERING TO HELP PROTECT OTHERS

- Wear a face covering to help protect others in case you're infected but don't have symptoms
- Keep the covering on your face the entire time you're in public
- Don't put the covering around your neck or up on your forehead
- Don't touch the face covering, and, if you do, clean your hands

FOLLOW EVERYDAY HEALTH HABITS

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds each time
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available



TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTH FACE COVERING CAREFULLY, WHEN YOU'RE HOME

- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Place covering in the washing machine
- Wash your hands with soap and water



CS 316488A 06/10/2020

Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators, both of which should be saved for health care workers and other medical first responders.

For instructions on making a cloth face covering, see:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



Raising Special Kids
5025 E Washington, Ste #204
Phoenix, AZ 85034

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
PERMIT NO. 2017

**5TH ANNUAL
TRANSITION INSTITUTE**
FOR PARENTS YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

ONLINE SATURDAY, JULY 18 VISIT [BIT.LY/2020RSKTI](https://bit.ly/2020RSKTI) FOR MORE DETAILS