Hello and welcome to our Back to School edition of our TAPVI newsletter! We hope you are all settling well into a new school year, and are looking forward with hope to great successes for your children! I know it can be hard to stay positive and hope for the best while always keeping eyes open to problems and challenges. But this is what we do! Maybe some of you are new to IEPs and special education programs, with young children just starting out in school. Some of you have been through this many years already. And just when we think we have a good handle on how to interact with a school and a set of teachers, it is time for your child to move on to another. You can do this! One day at a time, one step at a time, is how we all get through the challenges and learn to enjoy each small success and each good day.

As we move into a new school year, reflect on how you feel - are you hopeful that progress will be made and your child will be learning? Are you a bit relieved that the summer is over and you can get back to normal schedules? Are you irritated with the amount of paperwork you have to fill in at the beginning of each year and that that information is always the same stuff over and over again? Are you frustrated knowing that much of that information may never be read? Yes, we’ve all been there. However you feel - it is normal and ok. Maybe you can come up with ideas that work better for your family. There was a great posting on our Facebook page about creating one-page descriptions for children with disabilities that might be helpful.

“IEP season” is typically in the spring in preparation for a new coming year, but some of you may have IEP meetings earlier in the year. There is help all year long if you need it to prepare for an IEP meeting. Google “IEP meeting help”, ask a friend who has been through similar issues, and post questions on our TAPVI Facebook page. There are also local organizations that may help. We are working on the resources listing on our TAPVI.org website. If you see something that might be helpful to others that is missing there, please email or text me and I will get it listed!

Together in spirit always!
Alison Smith (smith_alison@hotmail.com)
Elizabeth (Liz) M. Eagan, currently of Bastrop, Texas, was originally from Creston, Iowa, and spent five years in Seattle, Washington, but raised her family and spent most of her career in Texas. After having earned her AA General Degree from Southwestern Community College in Creston in 1987, she moved to Kirksville, Missouri to attend Truman State University. While there, she married and started a family. She earned her BA in education from Buena Vista University. She then moved to Houston, Texas where she worked as a life skills teacher for seven years before attending Stephen F. Austin University via distance learning where she earned her VI endorsement BA in Education in 1991. Additionally, Liz earned her Masters Degree in Education Administration from the Grand Canyon University (Phoenix) in 2007. Liz received a Certification in Visual Impairment in 2001 (Stephen F. Austin University) to go along with her certifications in Elementary Education K-6, Special Education K-12, and Reading Endorsement.

Since 2014, Liz has worked as an Itinerant Teacher of the Visually Impaired at Bastrop ISD. She is responsible for 20 + students (varies yearly) with varying levels of visual impairments and other additional disabilities including autism in the public school setting. She creates object, theme, and routine books to assist students to learn the tasks assigned to them. Liz provides instruction in braille, low vision device use, testing, and in-servicing student, family and staff on the student’s visual needs. She works to locate and identify all visually impaired students in the district – growing student VI population from 8 to 20+ – and has also hired an additional VI Teacher while training and mentoring her.

Liz is a long-time friend of parents of children with visual impairments, and has been very supportive of our efforts in parent groups. She has given several presentations at HAPVI (Houston Area Parents of the Visually Impaired) and to other parent networks. She also served for three years as a Board Member at Large on our statewide parent network, TAPVI. We at TAPVI want to thank Liz for all of her efforts on behalf of students with blindness and visual impairment and the parents who love them! Thank you, Liz!
SPOTLIGHT ON A STUDENT: MADELYN

Madelyn is 10 years old and will be starting the fifth grade this year. Along with being a great student, Madelyn loves playing music. She plays both the piano and ukulele and will be starting the guitar in the next year. Visual impairments have never stopped Madelyn and along with being a gifted musician she is also a gifted artist. She has won awards for Houston Rodeo and district art contests for her artwork. Her mom believes it's because Madelyn can feel the detail more that she is able to excel at it. Madelyn also is a part of her school's choir, Student PTA, Student Lighthouse Committee, Communications club, Robotics Team, and Chess Club. If that wasn't enough to keep her busy, is in Girl Scouts and loves to travel.

Parent Survey by TEA

The Texas Education Agency has a new Parent Resources Initiative for Special Education and would like input from parents who have or have had children receiving special education services or members of a special education advisory or advocacy group. They would like you to take this survey to tell them what would help you learn more about special education and how it works.

Link for the Survey: https://tea.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_77CEOWqaCO2AYYt
Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCG) are groups of local partners and community members that work with parents, caregivers, youth, and adults to make a service plan. The service plan helps a person with special needs get benefits and services. CRCGs are in almost every county in Texas. The needs of each community are different, so a local CRCG might serve one or all of the following ages:

- Children and youth: 22 and younger
- Adults: 18 and older
- All ages

CRCG HISTORY
Over the last 30 years, CRCGs have grown exponentially in both size and ability to serve Texans. Under the guidance of the Texas Legislature and their MOU, local state agencies came together in order to assist those whose needs could not be met by one agency alone. As of August 2016, there are 141 unique CRCGs that cover 236 counties. During this time period, the State CRCG Office has transitioned from an implementation team to a permanent office housed within the Texas Health and Human Services division under Medicaid Access and Eligibility Services. Currently, CRCGs offer help and assistance to children, youth, and adults with nearly 1,000 individual service plans created each year.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
All CRCGs provide support to people and families using the same basic guiding principles.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CRCGs on the Next Page!
More on CRCGs...

**CRCG Representatives** - Each CRCG should include members from:
State agencies or their local affiliates that have signed an agreement called the Memorandum Of Understanding

**Private groups** - Someone who has received services, either as a client, a family member, or a caregiver, and who understands the process. At least one person with lived experience (individual, family member, or caregiver who understands the CRCG process). All CRCG members should have the authority to commit services or resources for people and families referred to the CRCG.

**Role of a CRCG**
The CRCG will create an Individual Service Plan based on the person's or family's strengths. The plan will help the person or family get the services they need. It is developed with the person or family and the agency representatives.

**Service Environment**
Services should be provided in the most homelike, nurturing environment and the least restrictive setting possible. Whenever possible, the service plan will recommend services within the community. When services outside the community are necessary, they will be in the least restrictive environment possible.

**Reintegration**
When placement outside the community is necessary, the service plan will include a plan for bringing the person back into the community and, as appropriate, into the family.

**Family Involvement**
The involvement of the person or family is vital to successfully create and carry out the service plan.

**Referral**
People referred to CRCGs are those who face barriers or obstacles to having their entire needs met through existing resources and whose needs can be met only through agencies working together. The referring agency will explore services and resources within and outside the agency before sending someone to a CRCG.

**Flexibility**
Agencies must be as flexible as possible when committing services and resources for people referred to the CRCG, within existing eligibility criteria and funding policy.

**Plan Oversight and Follow-Up**
The CRCG will assign an agency (usually the agency who is providing most of the services on the plan) to help oversee the service plan and follow-up with the person or family.

**Confidentiality**
Each CRCG member is responsible for ensuring confidentiality for people and families referred to a CRCG. Members who represent an agency or organization should follow their agency's/organization's policies for confidentiality.
Creating with Blind Abandon is an art program for children who are blind or visually impaired founded by Katherine Trimm, a CTVI Teacher, and Linda Brown, a Braillist. Their inspiration came after working with visually impaired students who love art, but do not have the opportunity to express themselves creatively. Katherine and Linda joined forces and began meeting monthly in January of 2018 at the public library in New Caney. Since then, the program has grown and moved to a more centrally located facility in Houston. During the first year of the program, in addition to creating tactile art such as painting on canvas, working with clay, making jewelry, dreamcatchers, horseshoe wind chimes, and ugly Christmas sweaters, the kids also participated in a friendly pumpkin decorating contest! The program was also involved in the community by celebrating Houston's White Cane Safety Day and was featured on ABC Channel 13 spotlighting its participation in the Houston Art Car Parade. The group also celebrated at Houston's White Cane Safety Day, and TSBVI featured Creating With Blind Abandon in their Summer 2018 edition of the Texas Sensabilities Newsletter. The 2nd year of the program continued with the young artists working with an Austin artist, Rudy Anderson, to create stained glass art. Additional art projects included braille art, bottle cap fleur de lis and fish pictures, confetti art, and beach bottles. Community involvement continued with group participation in the Houston Area Visual Impairment Network (HAVIN) Expo, being spotlighted once again in the Summer 2019 edition of TSBVI Texas Sensibilities Newsletter, and creating art with children at the NFB BELL Academy. Creating With Blind Abandon is thrilled to continue dreaming big for the future! Katherine and Linda have had the honor of being invited to present about the program at the Texas Focus Conference in Houston in February of 2020! In addition, they look forward to participating in Houston's White Cane Safety Day in October, in various Art shows, and are entertaining the idea of participation in the 2020 Houston Art Car Parade.

"Ultimately, our program is for the kids! We would love to welcome guest artists to participate in our program! We would love nothing more than to reach the kids in the Houston area to let them know that we are here and that our program is free to the participants!"
Based on the feedback you provided in our membership survey, we are now going to have monthly Parent Support Conference Calls based on the topics that you chose! Look for information regarding Parent Support Conference Call dates, times and topics on our Facebook Page and Website!
Come Volunteer with US!

As you know, TAPVI is a volunteer organization made up of parents just like you. We don't get paid for the work we do to help others, and the training that we get is hard-won through our own efforts. We try to help others around our own personal schedules with our other paid jobs, raising our children, and taking care of our families. We are all in this together! If you see something missing in what we do, please join us and help us by serving on a committee, posting information on our Facebook page, emailing information you feel should be on the website, or giving us any other ideas you may have. You may have special skills that we need - let us know!

We would love to hear from you about your "back to school" fears, feelings, hopes and joys, questions, ideas ... please email us or post on our Facebook page!

Find us on Facebook at:
our website is here: www.TAPVI.org
email Alison at smith-alison@hotmail.com