

Special Points of Interest:

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From the Director, Rebecca Gromala:

Happy Holidays! I'm sure you are all as happy as I am to see the first semester come to an end. Our students and staff have been working extremely hard and I know they are all ready for some much-deserved time-off. Here are some of the highlights from our fall semester:

- Speech-language pathology staff members are committed to ensuring that all students have a meaningful mode of communication. The group has been working on both high- and low-tech options for Assistive and Augmentative Communication tools for our students. Several staff members will also be attending professional development related to apraxia in January.
- Dr. Cathy Pratt will be working with our teachers of students with Autism throughout the school year. Dr. Pratt has observed in all our classrooms and consulted with teachers regarding program needs. We are working as a team to develop a plan to better serve our students in this population. As we progress with Dr. Pratt this spring, our related service staff will be joining to add their input.
- The Indiana Department of Education has made significant changes to the Certificate of Completion, which is awarded at graduation to our students who participate in a modified curriculum. These changes will take effect with the 2018-2019 freshman class. Students working toward a Certificate of Completion will now be required to earn credits or applied units in specific academic areas. We already have most of the requirements in place at both Munster High School and Lake Central High School. We are excited that the students earning a Certificate of Completion will now leave high school with better documentation of everything they have accomplished during their time with us. If you have a student transition to the high school next year, watch for more updates in the spring and during your transition conference.
- Members of the school psychology staff are excited to attend the National Association of School Psychologist conference in Chicago in February. National conferences are a wonderful learning opportunity and we are lucky to have one so close to home.
- All special education teachers have been working with their supervisors to take a deeper look at student achievement data. The supervisors are meeting with teachers to review student data and reflect on what the data tells them about their instruction. The teachers and supervisors have shared some big aha moments.

I hope you enjoy the pictures and stories included in this issue of our newsletter. We have amazing things happening in our classrooms every day and this is just a small snapshot of them. I hope you have a relaxing Winter Break!

WANTED: SUBSTITUTE PARAPROFESSIONALS

If interested, you may fill out an application online [at www.lcsc.us](http://www.lcsc.us) click on the pull down menu [About LCSC](#) and go to [Job Opportunities](#). After filling out the application, click on [Safe Hiring Solutions](#) to complete a criminal background check. Once those two items are complete, call the

West Lake Office, 365-8507 x2946, for further instructions.

The office opens at 7:30am and closes at 4:00pm. each school day.

West Lake serves the Lake Central and Munster School districts.

In November, West Lake Special Education suffered a tremendous loss with the passing of Maxine Schwantes. Maxine was a Speech-Language Pathologist with West Lake Special Education for 22 years. In her time with us, she demonstrated a fierce devotion to her students and the field of speech-language pathology. She had a lasting impact on staff, students, and families. Below are tributes to Maxine shared by some of those who worked with her.

As one of my supervisors, I got to know Maxine really well. She was always passionate about what she did. She truly cared about what was best for each individual student. First and foremost, she loved her family. This was evident by the way she smiled when she talked about them, but I got to know some of her other interests as well. She enjoyed chatting about traveling, music, and cars. She was one of the strongest-willed people I have ever encountered when battling her illness. The best thing she left behind for us is her example. Live each day with the zest for life, passion, and determination she exhibited throughout her life. She will be missed by myself, her family, and everyone in the Lake Central family. – Jake Groszek, speech-language pathology assistant

Maxine was one of my supervisors for 10 years both during the school year and summer school. She was not just a co-worker, but also friend. She was always encouraging, positive, and cheerful whenever we would talk or meet to discuss students. She cared about her job and enjoyed working with her students. She loved her family and enjoyed sharing news about them and always asked about mine. Even through her battle to fight her illness, she was cheerful, positive, and fought a hard fight. I will truly miss Maxine and work will not be the same without her. – Laura Evanich, speech-language pathology assistant

Courageous, never gave up, determined are 3 ways that I would use to describe a wonderful educator that passed away before her time. Maxine was a courageous lady that embodied determination daily. When I first heard that she had cancer, I was devastated. I could not believe it. She had such drive and devotion for life and a tremendous sense of faith and encouragement. She was an outdoors person with a motivating and energetic spirit. Maxine always had a smile on her face when saying, "I am going to kick cancer's butt, Scott. Trust me." Even though cancer may have won this time, I am compelled to believe that Maxine fought a true fight up until the end of her journey. When I received the phone call from her husband that she had passed away, I was truly upset because the CMS family had lost a battle. I can still see her walking into Clark shortly after receiving treatment to show me her new hair pieces, hats, and scarves. The excitement and laughter that we shared about the long blonde wig are memories that I treasure. She was so excited to be back at work. I, as principal, was thrilled to see her smiling face in the hallways and enjoyed seeing her work with our students at CMS. As her journey has ended, Maxine Schwantes was a true blessing to those around her. She was an incredible person who will be dearly missed. – Scott Graber, principal at Clark Middle School

Kind, energetic, compassionate, dedicated, and enthusiastic are just a few words that come to my mind as I remember Maxine Schwantes. I was always amazed with Maxine's enthusiasm during our speech groups. She could always make the students feel excited about speech even when it was difficult for them. Maxine always had fun activities and games to help the students work on their speech skills. There are NO words to express how much Maxine will be missed by my students and myself! Rest in peace, dear Maxine. – Kelly Wojciehowski, special education teacher at Clark Middle School

It was a pleasure to see Maxine throughout the day because of her warm smile, friendly hello, and her positive attitude. Maxine was a devoted and caring teacher to all the students she worked with. I'm honored to call her my friend and will miss her. –Laura Peters, administrative assistant at West Lake Special Education

From the desk of Barb Kepchar:

Soles in Step

By Rachel Zabaneh-Clark Middle School

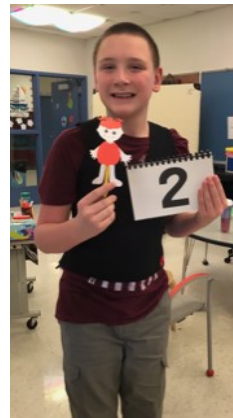
The Clark Middle School ECO-Teens and students in the Synergy program have been collecting shoes to donate to Sojourner Truth House in Gary. The collection program, called Soles in Step, aims to give old shoes a new life and take steps to end homelessness. Sojourner Truth House (STH) will receive \$0.40 for each pound of shoes and boots collected. All proceeds support the STH Food Pantry, Client Transportation, and Client Programming.

Collected shoes that are in good condition can be distributed to people in need and shoes in poor condition can be recycled.

We have been able to collect a large amount of shoes this year and hope to participate in the program again next year. Collections for this year ended October 31.

Cards Bring Smiles to Kids at School and in the Hospital!

Submitted By: Amy Alessandrini

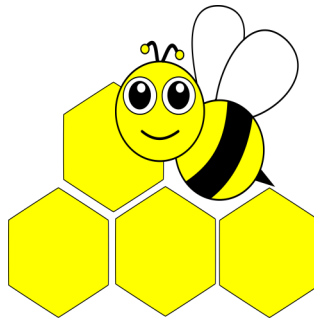
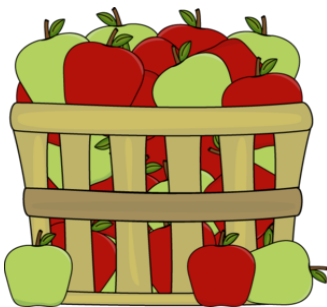


Students at Kahler Middle School have been busy this year with a group service project-. They are making cards for kids who are sick and in the hospital. Every week, each student follows numbered directions to create a colorful and fun card to cheer up another child who is hospitalized. So far, the kids have been creating Halloween cards. Each card includes a paper puppet for the kids to enjoy when they open their cards. Altogether, the kids were able to send 25 Halloween cards to the non-profit organization called Cards for Hospitalized Kids. This organization will then distribute the cards to children both locally and throughout the country as needed. Currently, we are creating "Thanksgiving" cards, with plans to create a new batch of themed cards each month. The kids enjoy listening to their favorite music while practicing social & fine motor skills as they work toward this common goal. We hope that this project will make someone else's day a little brighter too!

County Line Orchard

By Lisa McKinney-WWMS

The students in Mrs. McKinney's room at Wilbur Wright Middle School went on a field to County Line Orchard at the beginning of October. We really enjoyed the beautiful weather while we ate our picnic lunch and toured the orchard. We loved learning about bees, how the apples are packed, the machine for squeezing apples, and thought the apple cider was delicious. All of us had fun on the tractor ride. Choosing a pumpkin out of the pumpkin patch was a tough decision for us! After the tour, we shopped in the store to buy the awesome apple and pumpkin doughnuts to take home. At the conclusion of the day, we were able to visit the petting zoo. The best part was eating doughnuts when we returned to school!



From the desk of Mary Rebey:

Jackie Holden's English 9 Class

Rachael Spoolstra is a student from Indiana University Northwest completing a field experience in my classroom. She will spend a total of 10 weeks with us (only on Mondays). She did a wonderful enrichment lesson connected to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The students chose a character they connected with, and they chose a quote to go with their character. They had to explain the meaning of the quote, and they were able to decorate their characters' masks that would be worn to the Capulet's party. The classes enjoyed the project very much. She did a great job with the students.



Homecoming 2017

Congratulations to our beautiful Joy Wozniak and our handsome Kyle Kujawa for being crowned Lake Central's Homecoming Queen and King for 2017! Such a magical night for them both.

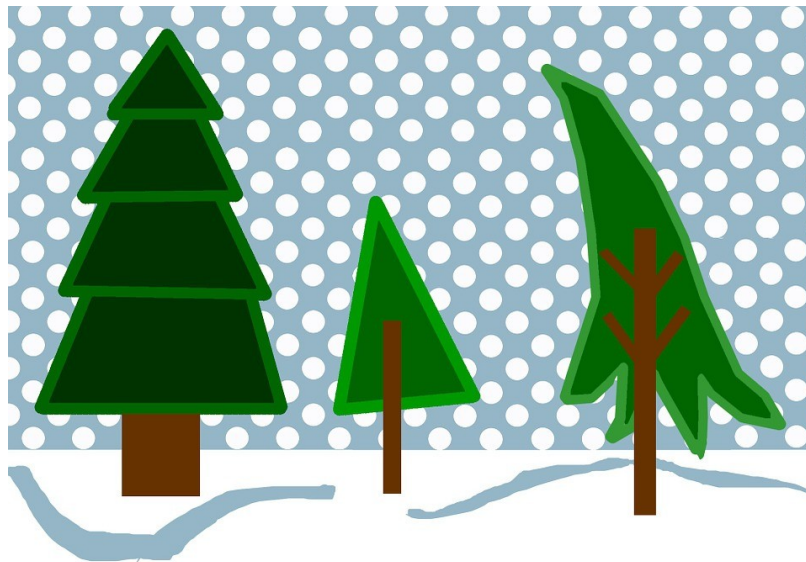


From the desk of Alison Mazurkiewicz:

Peifer's Pet

Submitted by Mrs. Dallman, teacher

Mrs. Dallman's class at Peifer, adopted a rescue guinea pig named Samson. Samson had pulled out quite a bit of hair from his back and belly and was fearful of loud noises. When he first joined the class, he was thin and very nervous. The class has given Samson lots of care; a safe home with lots of warm fluff, food and love! His hair has grown back and he is even gaining weight. Samson is helping the student's learn how to care for a pet. He is also helping them to learn how to manage their own stress, by using the coping skills taught in class to remain calm, as loud outbursts frighten Samson. The class earns time to pet Samson and to pick fresh dandelion leaves and grass to feed him as a treat! The younger students love showing Samson their finished work. He stops what he is doing and looks right at the page with his big blue eyes! Student's have also written stories about Samson and have researched information about the history and care of guinea pigs. Samson loves his new home and family at Peifer and his Peifer family loves him too!



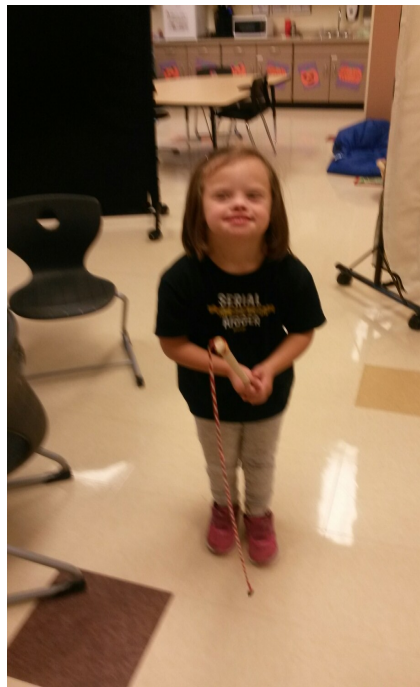
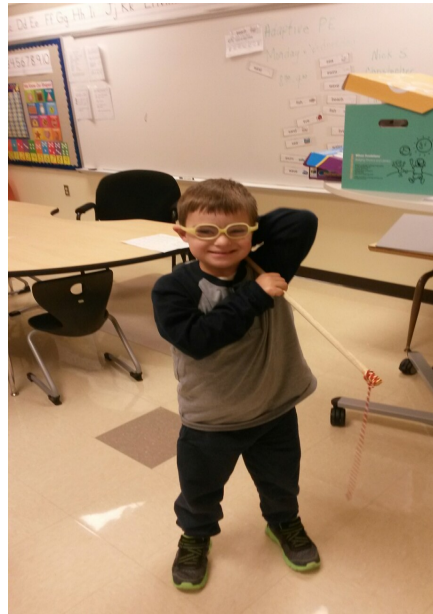
Want information at your fingertips? Make sure to bookmark our West Lake webpage, westlake.lcsc.us . Check it often!

Another way to keep in the loop is to join our LISTSERV®. Email Kimm at kmaznari@lcscmail.com to be added or call her at 365-8507 x2947.

Protsman Pond

Submitted by Janet Jayo

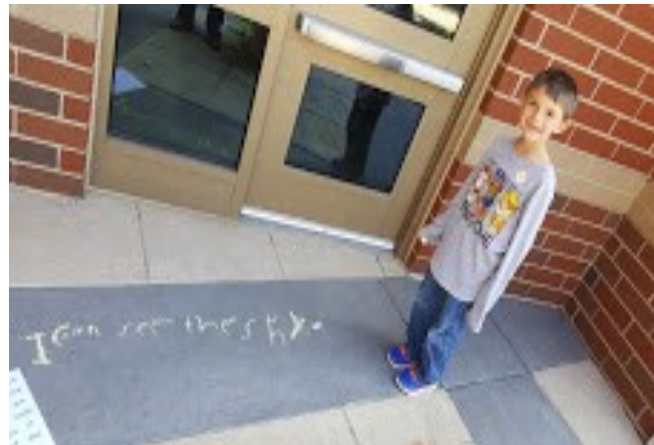
Essential Skills Students at Protsman have Gone Fishing for ABCs. Students are identifying letters and corresponding sounds as they catch them in the Protsman Pond.



Sight Words to the Sidewalk!

By Janet Jayo, Teacher

My students took their Sight Words to the Sidewalk. They practiced writing their sight words in a simple sentence. Each student thoroughly enjoyed this activity and it was great way to complete a Friday afternoon.

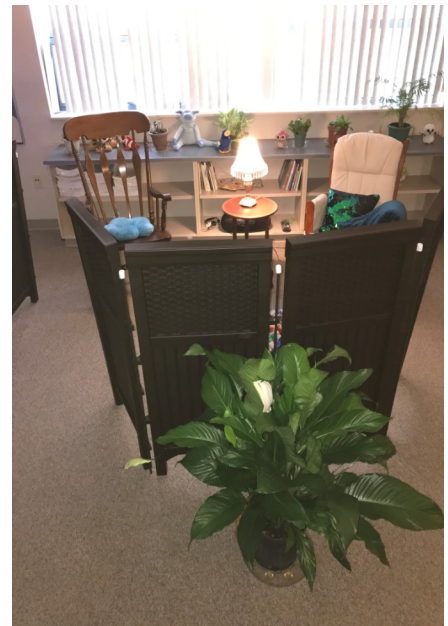


From the desk of Kim Beach:

New Sensory Room at Eads

By Reyne Plesha, SSP

Eads Elementary has a new sensory room. School Service Provider, Reyne Plesha obtained a grant from the Munster Education Foundation to create the room. With the support and vision of the principal, Linda Bevil a classroom was made available for the project. The room has stations to promote creativity, relaxation, sensory stimulation and physical outlets. It's benefits are seen daily when the students spend their planned breaks or earn rewards breaks in the room. Students are also encouraged to use the room when they begin to feel upset or frustrated, promoting self-regulation. It has created a whole new way for us to work with the students, proactively instead of reactively. All students are encouraged to use the room as well as staff! Providing a place where the staff can get away for a few minutes and recharge has been very beneficial. Thanks again to the Munster Education Foundation for this wonderful opportunity!



Parents and Students: Our Lake Central Community Activities page on the Corporation website contains links that will connect you to many of the organizations that are involved within our community. Check out the wide variety of opportunities available for our students by visiting <http://lcsc.us> and Community Activities under the Parents tab. Most of the activities will be different than what is listed on our West Lake Community Events page.

Elliott Travels to Camp Tecumseh

Submitted by Scott Pickell, Teacher



Elliott Elementary's Fourth Grade class and Parent Volunteers completed their annual field trip to Camp Tecumseh. They spent two days learning about pioneers and their way of life. Students were prepared in a variety of ways to fit their specific needs. They completed Social Studies lessons about the 1800's and the pioneer's way of life, read social stories, and practiced the vocabulary that was pertinent to the trip through verbal and assisted communication.



The students participated in a variety of activities including fishing, animal trapping, and path finding.

They visited a pioneer schoolhouse to learn about what a school day was like in the 1800's. Students stayed overnight in cabins and told stories and acted out skits by the campfire. Some students even opted to do a midnight hike. The entire fourth grade class participated across the two day field trip.



Where There is a Will, There is a Way!

Submitted by Sandra Kurowski, Physical Therapist

Dax Zemaitis, a preschooler at Frank H Hammond, works on a twin walker during his physical therapy session. The twin walker is a favorite apparatus for the students. It works on reciprocal movement, coordination, strengthening, and motor planning.



Animal Research at Frank Hammond

Submitted by Tammy Katalinic, Resource Teacher

Frank H. Hammond 5th grade students worked diligently creating PowerPoint presentations on an animal that they were assigned to research. The PowerPoint had to include physical characteristics, habitat, pictures, and interesting facts about their animal. The students then presented what they learned to their classmates. This project helped prepare them for the 5th grade Camp Good Fellow class trip that took place in October.



Bringing the Outdoors Indoors

Submitted by Deb Sanders, SLP

Students from the Functional Skills Class at Frank H Hammond participated in a sensory art activity to create a fun fall window pane with the wet leaves from outdoors. Students were encouraged to participate verbally or manually as a group. The group was co-facilitated by Deb Sanders, SLP and Paul Benninghoff, Classroom Teacher.



“Kooking” with Kutemeier

Submitted by Michelle Kutemeier, MHS Teacher

Mrs. Kutemeier’s Class at Munster High School are perfecting their independent functional life skills in the kitchen. We have been learning how to read recipes and to assemble all of the necessary ingredients and cooking utensils. Mrs. Sanders, our speech path, also assisted the students in reading and pronunciation during our cooking class.

We have made chocolate chip cookies (that were delicious) by learning how to appropriately use the oven as well as learning about the microwave to make some scrumptious popcorn.

During the next few weeks the class will be working on more tasty treats!



Best Buddies Munster Continues to Grow

Submitted by Brent Barton, MHS Teacher

Best Buddies Munster is starting its 8th year at Munster High School! Officers have been busy planning for the year, interviewing Peer Buddies and putting together this year's matches. It all came together on Sunday, October 1st, when we held our annual Match Party! All of the Peer Buddies and Buddies meet for the first time during the Match Party. We were able to make 18 matches this year!

The Match Party was a huge success, but the only problem was that all of the Peer Buddies were missing! It was up to the Buddies to find the clues hidden throughout Community Park to find them. The Buddies broke up into groups and followed the clues that led them to their new Peer Buddies. Once they were found, they all spent the rest of the party eating and getting to know their new friends. Parents and family were also invited. We held a Parents' Meeting to help them understand what to expect this year from their, and their children's, involvement with Best Buddies Munster. All in all, the Match Party was an exciting start to another great year at Munster High School.

We have many big plans for this school year! Our goal, as always, is to promote INCLUSION both within the school and the community. In order to do this, we are encouraging our student members to join other extracurricular organizations at MHS. We also have some big events planned, outside of our monthly events, that we hope will promote Inclusion. One of the biggest events we will hold is the Second Annual Best Buddies Bowl in January or February (It is still in the planning stages). The Best Buddies Bowl is a flag football game held in the Fieldhouse in which members of Best Buddies and members of the MHS football team participate in a flag football game with each other. This event was started last year as a way of bringing awareness to Best Buddies and people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). In order to promote awareness and foster new friendships, we also invite other MHS clubs to the Buddies Bowl. These clubs perform demonstrations, promote their organization and, in general, help out with this event.

Our biggest event of the year is the Annual Lake County Friendship Walk. It is a fundraiser for Best Buddies Indiana and is held in Lake County to raise money and promote our mission of Inclusion. It is usually held in early May. The Friendship Walk is a team effort between the Best Buddies chapters at Munster, Lake Central, Crown Point and Griffith High schools. This year we will be joined by the new chapter at Purdue Northwest. It is always a fun event and is open to the general public!

We also plan on holding a few events with Lake Central's chapter. Our chapter has been holding an annual Valentine's Day Dance, complete with DJ, for several years now. This year, we are going to invite members from Lake Central. Lake Central has a tradition of holding a Best Buddies Prom in May and we are invited to attend this year. We hope to make this an annual collaboration between our chapters.

We have a very busy and exciting year planned. Our officer group is busy planning for both the events listed above, but also for our monthly events and meetings. If you have any questions about Best Buddies, or you would like to volunteer to help at any of the events (especially the Best Buddies Bowl or the Friendship Walk), feel free to contact Brent Barton, Special Education Advisor, at babarton@munster.com or Pete Fatouros, Faculty Advisor, at pwfatouros@munster.us.



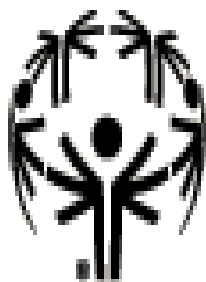
West Lake All-Star Basketball



West Lake basketball starts in January, fresh off of winter break. We do not run our basketball through Special Olympics but our students have a great time. We have 2 teams and play each other as well as a couple other local teams. Current West Lake Students, ages 14-22 and with intellectual disabilities, are welcome to participate. Please note that players should have a physical to participate in this event.

If your son or daughter meets the above criteria and would like to participate, **contact Kimm at the West Lake at 365-8507 x2947 or via email at kmaznari@lscsmail.com.**

Although West Lake only participates in Special Olympics Bowling and Track and Field, they provide year round athletic competitions in a variety of Olympic-type sports for persons with intellectual disabilities. **For those students who have graduated or are interested in other sports, please contact Teresa Parker, Area 1 South Lake County Coordinator, at 219-613-7284 or solakecounty@yahoo.com to participate at the county level.**

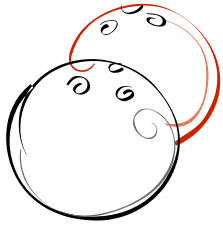


Special Olympics
Indiana

West Lake Special Olympics Track and Field

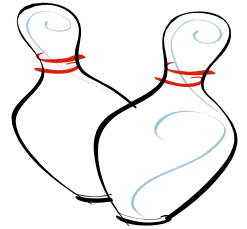
West Lake will once again be participating in our area's Special Olympics track and field competition in the spring. Athletes are to be between the ages of 8 and 22, with intellectual disabilities, and currently be a West Lake student. More information will be sent home in March 2018.





West Lake Special Olympics Bowling

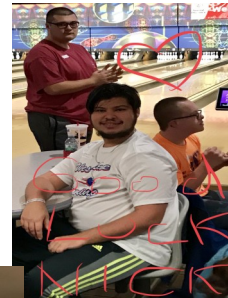
We had another successful bowling season with 31 participants, 12 of which went on to the State competition in Indianapolis. Fun was had by all and many medals and ribbons were won. Coach Karen Brann makes bowling and all our sports a great experience for all our athletes!



Area Tournament



State Tournament



The West Lake Early Childhood Program is always accepting donations of gently used items for our classrooms. Items currently needed include the following: Little Tikes outdoor equipment, tricycles, ride-on toys, dress-up clothes/costumes (nothing scary, please), and educational infant/toddler toys. **If you have items to donate, please contact Sara Pietrzak at 365-8507 x2946.**

Pre-school for the 2017-18 School Year

It is not too early to begin thinking about pre-school enrollment for next school year. All pre-school students must be screened prior to enrollment. Please see the upcoming screening dates below and **call Sara Pietrzak at 365-8507 x2946 to schedule your appointment.**

West Lake Preschool Screenings

- Monday, January 22, 2018 at LCHS
- Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at Munster Town Hall
- Thursday, April 19, 2018 at LCHS

Helpful Links

Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities - www.in.gov/gpcpd - for information on Medicaid Waivers and other valuable information

IN*Source / Indiana Resource Center for Families with Special Needs - www.insource.org

Cooperative Special Recreation Initiative (CSRI) - email csri2004@yahoo.com to join their email list or visit them via www.lakecountyparks.com

Indiana Department of Education - Article 7 and other informative information - <http://www.doe.in.gov/specialed/laws-rules-and-interpretations>

Indiana Institute on Disability and Community - Providing Hoosiers with disability-related information and services from birth through older adulthood -

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php>

Autism Support Network - Designed as a place by those living with ASD, for those with ASD and those seeking social connection, peer guidance and a feeling of community with those that understand - www.autismsupportnetwork.com

Down Syndrome Association of NWI - Serving Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper and Newton counties - <http://www.dsaofnwi.org>

Center for Possibilities - Their mission is to improve the quality of life for children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Visit their site as www.centerforpossibilities.org

Asperger's Syndrome support at Lakeview Health including 24/7 live private and confidential chat option. Visit them at www.lakeviewhealth.com/mental-health-and-aspergers-syndrome.php

Opportunity Enterprises - providing innovative and impactful services for individuals with a wide range of physical and developmental disabilities. Visit their site at <https://www.oppent.org/>

West Lake Special Education Cooperative

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