Message from Dr. TaraColleen Macatee:
It always brings a smile to my face when I reflect on the fact that Autism Awareness Month coincides with Kaleidoscope’s April Vision Statement to “Encourage Excellence.” I really can’t think of a better way to honor our ongoing mission to bring more awareness and acceptance to autism and mix it with a passionate batch of the inspiration to be our best selves, thus a life lived with excellence. Isn’t it wonderful that as organizations all over the world celebrate our connected commitment to bring a new light to autism, we know that KFS is in the forefront with a never-ending focus that exudes programming in all of our offices across the country!

Speaking of excellence, I thought I might share a recent experience at our last KFS staff meeting. As I released that our agency of once three, has grown to now over 70, it hit me that we have the ability to positively affect thousands, yes thousands, of lives. Not only do I feel a surreal jubilation when I get the enormity of the good we can do, it makes me want to come to work every day so we can continue our growth.

Finally, it comes to mind comes to mind as I write this is the fact that spring is here. As you must already know, I speak about new beginnings quite often; and this seems like a great time to bring it up. Flowers, sunshine, green grass, longer days … all examples of nature encouraging excellence! With that said, I wish you all a wonderful month full of new and beautiful blessings.

Parent Support Group & Evening Peer-Support Group

Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 7:00pm–8:30pm
“Effectively Navigating the Postsecondary World of Autism and I/DD”
Presenting Josh Kershenbaum, Esq. and Maria Vetter, Education Consultant and Advocate from Frankel and Kershenbaum

Location: Bethel AME Church, 50 S. Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.
The focus of this workshop will be education law and how it applies to the transition age student through life in the postsecondary world of education, employment and independent living. The often, ambiguous disability challenges that individuals and their families face when moving from the safety of IDEA into ADA will also be addressed.

Questions or RSVP to pfrebowitz@kfamilysolutions.org

Peer Support Group Topic (ages 18 and above): Social Skills: Honoring Autism Awareness Month with a Group Art Project

Bryn Mawr Peer Support Groups

4/3 12:30-2:30pm Social Skills: Let the Olympic Games Begin!
4/3 Evening Group 6:30-8:00pm Fitness: Hip Hop with Chris
4/10 12:30-2:30pm Independent Living: Matzo Ball Soup!
4/17 12:30-2:30pm Career Readiness: Presenting our Best Selves
4/17 Evening Group 7:00-8:30pm Career Readiness: Are You Interview Ready?
4/24 12:30-2:30pm Social Skills: Mindfulness Techniques

Bryn Mawr: Bethel AME Church: 50 S. Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

Allentown Peer Support Group – Every 3rd Friday!

4/20 1:00-3:00pm Social Skills: Mindfulness Techniques
2200 Hamilton Blvd., Allentown, PA 18104 Basement Level

Questions or RSVP to pfrebowitz@kfamilysolutions.org

April is Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month

One of our April traditions is to attend Phillies Autism Awareness Night at Citizen’s Bank Park! Last year, our Phillies’ rep, Catherine, helped us celebrate Wanda’s birthday.

Check out Patti in action at the Greater Philadelphia Autism Society’s Weighted Blanket and Lap Pad Class at Steve’s Sewing. Patti helped the families that attended measure the pellets that filled the blankets to make them the appropriate weight for children and adults with autism. And, to top it off, Patti helped make thousands of ribbons that were sent to schools and organizations to show support for Autism Awareness Month!
The SPOTLIGHT is on Julius!

Autism Awareness Month

Julius has been successfully working at the Pennsylvania Independence Visitor’s Center since 2014. But that’s not the best part of our story. As a young adult with autism, it is not always easy to advocate for yourself; especially when your life is completely changing because the safety of high school is over. After being rejected at various vocational programs and job-training opportunities due to social anxiety, Julius decided to take his fate in his own hands. With a life-long dream to work at the Visitor’s Center in downtown Philadelphia, Julius dressed in his finest clothing and walked in and asked to speak to the manager. With a usually shy demeanor, Julius was able to say, “I want to work. I don’t even need to get paid at first. I just want a chance.” Julius maintains his job with responsibilities that include organizing and filling the department’s brochures and pamphlet displays. He won Employee of the Quarter two times and is a respected member of the team!

Julius has proven to be a reliable, productive and dedicated employee. In an article to commemorate the benefits of autism inclusion, the Visitor Center shared that, yes, Julius benefited from this job; yet, they benefited more. Since we cannot say it better than them, we will quote their CEO, Jim Cuorato, “That’s the major takeaway we want people to have by hearing about Julius; the employment of people on the autism spectrum is not an obstacle so much as an opportunity. Employees like Julius contribute unique skill sets and perspectives that catalyze the overall growth of the teams they join.”

Julius and his family also praised Kaleidoscope in the article by attributing much of his earliest growth to our support and services.

Congratulations Are in Order …

- Trevor passed his computer training for his job at Acme Markets!
- Lee made a new and special, black & white friend at Kitty Cottage!
- Lydia swam at the Elizabethtown College Special Olympics Invitational Meet and won both bronze and silver medals.
- Dylan is able shop for groceries and he is using his credit card to pay for things independently!
- Lamar is doing a great job working at UPS!
- Isaac got a job at a local coffee shop!
- Allie is working hard at her two new jobs!
- Thomas is having a great time volunteering for Meals on Wheels!
- Andrew got a job at a grocery store! (with assistance from KFS provider Ayesha Jackson!)
- Jessica had an interview at Walmart!
- Edward got a new job as a chef at the Stables of Yellow House!

Sometimes we just need to relax with our friends!
Mission Monday is our space to thank providers who continue to go above and beyond when servicing KFS individuals. Please help us salute our monthly winners!

Katelyn White and her husband Tim came all the way in their free time to cheer for Lydia at the Special Olympics Bowling Competition. She also made Lydia a banner. Lydia was thrilled to have her there!

Angel Smith is one of those providers that is always consistent and reliable. She gets her paperwork on time, always completes her hours each week and Tyler and his family really love her.

Grace O’Rama has been working with Adam and has been very supportive and engaged with him. She is dedicated to helping him become more independent and a self-advocate.

Kristi Kreg is reliable and very well organized. She has begun to plan activities in the Beaver Co. area of Western PA and feedback has been very positive and our individuals are excited. Kristi always comes up with new ideas and brings many opportunities to the individuals she supports.

What is your proudest accomplishment so far of this year?
I passed a ride operator training test for Dorney Park and will be able to spend a week working at King’s Dominion in Virginia.

What is a goal you wish to accomplish this year?
I want to be more independent by getting my driver’s license and a car.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
I want to continue moving up with my job at Dorney Park.

What advice would you offer to your peers to help achieve their goals and dreams?
My motto is “Believe in yourself and never give up!”

Tell me an interesting fact about yourself.
My life is Halloween 24/7!

Praise for Kaleidoscope

“Toren has been communicating so much more since Autumn has started working with him. His family and SC have both commented on the progress and are very happy.”
--Jenelle Eshlelman, Clinical Coordinator

“Adriana’s mother has said how great KFS has been for Adriana and how much she loves peer group and making new friends
--Grace Newman, Clinical Coordinator

“Gabe loves coming to peer support group. He is so happy with Kaleidoscope – and we love his KFS provider Paul!”
--A happy mom
One of our recent peer support groups focused on character. How are we trustworthy, show we care, are respectful, responsible; and why is it important to be fair? Here are some of our answers:

“I care for friendship all around the world by being a good leader and responsible with music and designing to become a star.”
“I show I care by helping others without being asked and giving my time and gifts.”
“I am trustworthy because I am a good person and good listener.”
“I am involved in my community by recycling and donating clothes and toys.”
“It is important to be fair by being aware of boundaries.”
“I show I care by asking nicely for stuff.”
“Being responsible means making sure I take care of things on my own and am careful when I am crossing the street.”
“As an animal sympathist, I let animals come up to me and then pet them if they want me to.”
“You will have more friends if you are fair.”

Good Morning Kaleidoscope Family Solutions,
I came up a good article for KFS April Newsletter from Bette Allentown KFS.

Poem for Spring:
Sunshine
Pretty flowers
Ready for warm weather
I love warm fresh air comes out
No more snow and cold weather
Grass is growing green

We had a great St. Patty’s Day party!

The girlfriends posing for World Down Syndrome Day!