

# Family to Family

A Newsletter to families from families

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## Speak Up! Your Voice Matters. (Feature Article) By Kerry Ellmer

Hello my name is Kerry Ellmer. I'm a family faculty member here at Children's. My journey began 14 years ago when my 17 month old daughter Melissa sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury after being struck by a car.

What I would like to share with you today are the most important things I have learned over the last 14 years.

So what have I learned in 14 years? It is pretty simple; I have learned to speak up. I have learned that I

know my child better than anyone and that I had to be her voice. You can do this in simple ways.

Below are a few simple tips that helped me. I hope they help you in your journey.

- Make a list of all your child's medications including herbs, Vitamins and over the counter medicines bring this list with you to every doctor's appointment.
- You know your child better than anyone don't be afraid to ask questions.
- You are one of the



### Speak up!

most important members of your child's treatment team and the team wants to hear from you.

- You are not alone in this

## Hand in Hand (Building Family) by Megan Fennelly

Children's Specialized has created a community focused outreach project, *Make Friends With Autism*, with funding provided by Kohl's Department Stores to promote autism awareness. The initiative provides tools, guides, and resources for successful inclusion for people affected

with autism and their families within the community. It also provides training materials for businesses and recreation providers to help provide welcoming environments and to improve challenges faced by people affected with autism during everyday community outings. A 20 minute docu-

mentary was created to offer a glimpse of some of these challenges and successful experiences of families during community excursions. All materials are available for free downloading in either English or Spanish online at

[www.makefriendswithautism.org](http://www.makefriendswithautism.org)

### Parent Tips

- Even though it is not summer yet, remember to always protect your children with sunscreen when you are outdoors of a SPF 20 or greater.
- It helps if you prepare your child in advance before you leave your house. Let them know where you are going, who will be there, how long you will stay and what is expected from them. If everyone is on the same page from the start, outings will be much easier for everyone!
- Establish a good wind down/bedtime routine and be consistent with it.



## Healthy and Happy (Health and Wellbeing) By Michele Tomaino

Warm weather is just around the corner and I couldn't be happier! It's so hard to keep our children (and ourselves) active during those cold winter months, not to mention break out of the winter doldrums. But spring brings us just the energy we need.

What are your plans for an active spring? How about a family stroll in the park? Join Kohl's Walk n' Roll at Johnson Park in Piscataway [www.walknroll.kintera.org](http://www.walknroll.kintera.org) on May 22. Enjoy the beautiful scenery of the

Raritan River while supporting Children's Specialized Hospital. Following the walk is a carnival for all to enjoy music, games and prizes. Is walking too slow a pace for you? Try the Run for Children's with the New Jersey Marathon Team [www.runforchildrens.kintera.org](http://www.runforchildrens.kintera.org) on Sunday, May 2 in Long Branch.

Or, my personal favorite is take a family bike ride. Everyone of every ability can go for a ride.

A company called Freedom Concepts [www.freedomconcepts.com](http://www.freedomconcepts.com) makes bicycles for special needs children. My son is wheelchair dependent, but on the bicycle, he feels free.



Here's to hoping spring rejuvenates your body, mind and soul.

What are your plans for an active spring?

## Did You Know? (Educational Tidbits) By Lori Velasco

The trauma of a brain injury often effects not only the child or individual, but those loving family members who are their caregivers. The Brain Injury Association of NJ has a mentoring program available for families and people who have a brain injury. Families or individuals are carefully matched with someone who can share similar experiences. This is

**"There is nothing like sharing or speaking with someone who truly understands."**

a one-to-one emotional and practical support program to help people and families address the day to day issues of coping with a brain injury. There is nothing like sharing or speaking with

someone who truly understands. For more information on connecting with a mentor or if you are interested in being a mentor, please call 732.745.0200 or visit the website [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org)

## Family Fun (Family Activities) By Deidre Genovese

Spring is finally here! Having 4 children I am so happy to finally be able to have some outside play activities to look forward to.

Here are some fun things we do as a family.

I have my kids go around the house looking for small items that could be used on a treasure hunt, pack them in a bag with some lunch and we go to the

local park. This is a great way for kids to run, play and problem solve.

If you're looking for some outside arts and crafts activities, go to your local dollar store pick up a kite or Frisbee, some stickers and markers. Kids love to decorate, it makes them



feel creative. When your project is done go to your local park, boardwalk or beach.

Enjoy the fresh air but most of all enjoy your KIDS!!!!

