



# OUR VOICE



Denver Metro

## Community Parent Resource Center

### A Woman's Guilt

By Yvette Plummer

I feel guilty because I can't do it all as stated by the many women magazines I used to read in my 20s like Cosmos, Vogue, Essence, and Self, who led me to believe that I could. It is frustrating. Before my life got complicated, before there were so many people depending on me, before I became a member of the sandwich generation, before I became a single mom of a child with a disability, before I became a director of a small non-profit, I lived a single, glamorous life in Los Angeles working behind the scenes in television and films. Sometimes on my days off, I remember spending it locked in my apartment, teeth unbrushed, still in my pajamas, stinky from not showering, in bed eating popcorn, drinking a Snapple iced tea and watching a foreign independent film with subtitles.



I could take the whole day and read the Sunday paper, if I chose. Or, work on a project for 6 days straight for long hours at a time. I was able to approach a task with all of myself, and if I failed, at least I knew I gave it my best. Now, when I fail at something, usually it's because I didn't have the time to be as

thorough as I would have liked, or I only gave the task or the situation my divided attention instead of my full attention.

While trying to juggle all these balls without dropping them, I attempt to diet and get angry with myself that I can't get down to a size 8. I am disgusted with myself that my house is a mess and that I feed my kid fast food. However, I do serve it with some green veggies so I won't feel guilty for not feeding him a balanced meal.

What is plaguing women today? It is exhaustion with a dose of guilt. The worse perpetrators are caregivers of children with disabilities. We tend to neglect ourselves when doing for our loved ones. I've done this for years and just recently started to make time to care for myself. It's hard. **Continued on page 2**

Volume 1 Issue 2

Winter 2012

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*Special points of interest:*

- Women are doing better than they think if they can only stop feeling guilty for not doing more.
- Will the needs of families who have children with disabilities get lost with a new department of Early Childhood and Youth Development?
- Add detective to the list of roles a parent of a child with a disability does.
- A volunteer loves giving back.

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### EARLY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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The Denver Metro CPRC spearheaded a meeting on January 17th with Executive Director of Colorado Dept. of Human Services, Reggie Bicha, to discuss consolidating early childhood programs

and funds under one office called the Office of Early Childhood and Youth Development which will be under the Dept. of Human Services. Parents of children with disabilities along with organiza-

tions that support families who have children with disabilities like KEJI, Arc of Arapahoe Douglas, Autism Society of Colorado and Parent to Parent were present. This was a rare opportu-



## A Woman's Guilt: You're Doing Better Than You Think

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Where do you find the time when you feel there is no time? You are so busy quenching everyone's thirst while you are left empty and dehydrated.

I invested eight years focusing on my son and his special needs. Did not date for those years, stopped working out and eating right, but rather became a stressful eater. I didn't care about my appearance, about my health, about my emotional well-being. But, I did grab more tightly to my faith in God. It was what brought me through my valley and kept me sane in my insane and task-driven life. However, things have improved recently.

I decided that if a doctor told me that I would die in 6 months if I didn't eat better and exercise, I would find the time to do it. So, I made time to exercise on average 4 times a week and improve my eating habits. Okay, I'm still struggling with late night snacking, but I'm getting there.

After praying to God to bring someone to me who didn't need me so much and would bring strength and fun in my life, He brought me my fiancé. He is a wonderful and supportive man that I feel blessed to have in my life and in my son's life.

I am still learning how to balance my life without feeling guilty but it is getting better. My message to readers, who see themselves in this article, is that you're doing better than you think. When you unselfishly give, sometimes you can't see it. You can only see what you're doing wrong. Allow me to encourage you. You're doing better than you think. You do more right than wrong and the world is a better place because you're in it. **You are doing better than you think.**

## How to Find Resources and Information

By Wayla Murrow

Being the parent of a child with a disability is sometimes like being a detective, sorting through a million pieces of information to find the "key clues" in solving the case. As a parent I know I've come across an indefinable amount of information but being able to keep it in my mind and organized is totally impossible. That's why it's great to know about how to find resources when a need arises.

These are skills that I constantly use as a "Parent Advisor" so I thought I'd share some tips.

**Go to Trainings and Workshops:** I try to attend as many training classes, workshops, conferences, etc. that I can. Sometimes I learn things in a new way or I'm at a different stage in my life and I'm able to absorb the information a little bit better than when I may have heard the same

*Usually when I'm looking for a resource for something the first thing I do is go to "google"*

thing the first time. Sometimes it seems like the more I learn, the more I need to learn, but I guess that's just part of the journey. **Cont'd page 3**

## Denver Metro CADRE OF VOLUNTEERS

The Denver Metro CPRC is presenting an opportunity for parents and professionals to be trained volunteers at an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. The course is 6 hours which includes information on writing effective IEPs, learning communication strategies and applying Special Education law in an easy and understandable way. Our volunteers do not run the IEP meetings for parents. They are there to support the parent's role as

partners in their child's special education. Roberta Curtis is one of our volunteers. She states, "this is a great way to give back to others and help them with all the things you've gone through" This spring the sessions will be conducted on a Saturday. Space is limited. If you are interested in attending the next training, please contact the CPRC office at 303-365-2772. The date and time will be sent to you when it is announced.



Volunteer, Roberta Curtis

## How to Find Resources and Information

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Wayla Murrow, Parent Advisor

**Google it:** Usually when I'm looking for a resource for something, the first thing I do is go to "Google", "Ask.com", "Bing" (or some other favorite search engine) and search for

terms related to my question. This almost always gives me a website or some information I can use (always be cautious though – everything on the internet isn't always true).

**Look at Specialized Resources:** If it's a special education related question I look to resources that I know specialize in special education. Two of my favorites are Wright's Law ([www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)) and the book *The Everyday Guide to Special Education Law* by Randy Chapman of The Legal Center ([www.thelegalcenter.com](http://www.thelegalcenter.com)). Purchasing or having on a hand a few highly used resources is very helpful.

**Use Colorado resources** that have already been prepared: Parent to Parent of Colorado has a terrific resource called "Where Do I Start?" This is a series of three documents; General, Disability

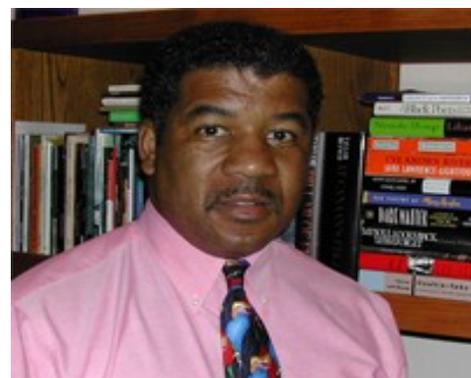
Specific, and the 3 "P's" in Colorado. These documents have websites and phone numbers for specific family organizations in Colorado. Giving one of these organizations a call usually gets me well on my way to an answer.

These are just a few of the ways that I use to find answers to my questions and learn about resources to help others and to help in my own journey as a parent of a child with a disability. The help that's available is amazing when you are able to get started and connect with others who have traveled the same road.

## PEAK'S Inclusion Conference

PEAK Parent Center will present their annual conference on inclusive education at the Hyatt Regency Tech Center in Denver on February 9-11th. PEAK has held the conference for the past 25 years and has attracted attendees nationally and internationally. Featured speakers this year are Norman Kunc, world renown disability rights advocate, inclusive practitioner, advocate and behavior strategist;

Doug Fisher, award winning college professor and teacher leader, as well as effective teaching strategist; and Arthur McFarlane II the Great-Grandson of W. E. B. Du Bois who will share stories about his "Grandpa" and his role in history. There are \$100 vouchers that can be applied towards the registration fee. For more information call 800-284-0251 or visit their website at [www.peakparent.org](http://www.peakparent.org)



Arthur McFarlane II to speak at conference

## DID YOU KNOW...

The CPRC receives many calls from families requesting advice. One of the things we have heard are some IEP meetings are not attended by the required team members. Some are attended by only the parent and the special education teacher. When this happens the school is breaking the law according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Required attendance at an IEP meeting are the fol-

lowing: the student's parent(s); not less than one regular education teacher; not less than one special education teacher; a representative of the school district (must have the ability to make decisions on the district's behalf and have knowledge of availability of district resources); a person who can explain to a parent the results of an evaluation and how it affects the student's education; other individuals that

the school or parent feels can add useful information, this includes related services (speech, occupational therapy, mental health, etc.) and the student when appropriate. If a child is turning 3 years old, a service coordinator from Early Intervention services should be present to assist with the transition of services from an Individual Family Support Plan to an Individual Education Plan.



## Denver Metro Community Parent Resource Center

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The Denver Metro Community Parent Resource Center's (CPRC) mission is to inform and empower low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse families as advocates for their children with disabilities, ages birth through 26 to achieve meaningful participation in their schools and communities who live in the Denver metro area (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties).

The CPRC provides free parent advice by telephone, Internet or face-to-face. They also offer free trainings for parents and professionals. Some of the topics are on Advocacy, Writing Effective Individualized Education Plans, Understanding Special Education Law, Sexuality and Puberty, Response to Intervention, and Positive Behavior Supports. They also have a resourceful website at [www.denvermetroprc.org](http://www.denvermetroprc.org).

If you would like to be on their email list to keep abreast on what is happening in the Denver metro area regarding issues that pertain to disability and education, or upcoming workshops, please contact them by email or phone at 303-365-2772.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Cont'd from page 1

nity for families to discuss changes before they happen. The Department of Human Services has stated that the purpose for this change "is to strengthen interagency partnerships and collaboration as a way to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of childhood & youth supports, services and programs in Colorado."

Bicha shared his personal experience of how his family benefited from early intervention services and understands its value and importance. Bicha stressed a renewed focus on outcomes. "...Because there are so many good early childhood programs scattered in different agencies we need to look at governance. Various programs need to share and compare outcomes with each other." Families' privacy would not be violated due to privacy laws like FERPA and HIPAA.

Bicha went on to state, "there needs to be a better way of identifying children and pregnant women upfront. Linking fami-

lies to services and making sure services will result in outcomes that we want." For example, he mentioned immunizations should be timely and tracked. The data should be analyzed monthly and interpreted. Departments would have a mutual responsibility to provide quality and streamlined services to families. A parent raised a concern "... how do we ensure that data will not be skewed?" Bicha answered, "...by agencies talking to each other and audits." Another concern was Child Welfare Services sharing office



space with Early Intervention. Parents may be concerned that Child Welfare may take their kids. "Child Welfare will not be in the same office even though they are under Department of Human Services," Bicha replied. Another concern was that some agencies seem to view parent organizations as the enemy rather than a source for collaboration and partnership. The group shared with Bicha that parent organizations want to be viewed as a resource. There was also a concern about Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing (EPSDT) being moved from the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance under this new department. "EPSDT is not only for children but young adults too. How will families know this?" Bicha didn't have answers for all the questions that were posed to him but he was open to hear concerns and solutions from stakeholders which parents at the meeting appreciated. It is hoped that with these changes the needs and interest of infants and young children with disabilities will not be lost.

