

KIDZ



www.texaskidz.com

ADVOCATES FOR KIDZ AND FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Volume 2, Issue 5

September/October 2005

Monthly Meeting Info

July/August 2005 Summary:

No special speakers in July or August. We just had a good time visiting and talking. Our children made some art projects and had great fun just being kids.

Upcoming Meetings:

Speakers in the following months will be: **September** - Lisha Mack (teaching reading and math), **October** - Margo Dewkett (personalities) and Janet White (siblings point of view). These are great speakers – don't miss out!

KIDZ MONTHLY MEETINGS

PLACE: NEW BEGINNINGS BAPTIST CHURCH
600 GEORGE RICHEY RD.
LONGVIEW, TX
(SEE MAP)

TIME: 2ND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
FROM 6:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

Childcare is available at no charge.

About Us...

KIDZ is a group of parents with special needs children who have joined together to provide support and information for other parents with special needs children regardless of how minor or severe the disability.

- Monthly Meetings
- Bi-monthly Newsletters
- First Contact Brochures
- Support Line (Connecting Parents to Parents)
- Special Events

Visit us on the web at www.texaskidz.com or call or write for more information about KIDZ and our programs. KIDZ mailing address and phone number can be found on the last page of this newsletter. ■



East Texas Fall Sports Fest
For The Disabled
September 24, 2005
Lake Gladewater



Call (903) 295-0926 or (903) 758-8615 for more information.

Contact Amber at (903) 663-5936 or e-mail us at info@texaskidz.com if you would like to be on the mailing list to receive the KIDZ newsletter!

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Family Focus

This column highlights stories from different families.

By Jennifer Puckett

So many times in today's society, families like mine feel like they are abnormal. If someone in your family has an obvious disability, many people can make you feel uncomfortable or unacceptable. Just because your child is in a wheelchair, is on oxygen or maybe they have an obvious mental disability, people all of a sudden don't know how to react to you or your child. It is like they have a disease that they are going to catch. All you want for you, your family and your child is to be accepted and treated just like you would treat them. During the first four days in July, my children and I were able to experience this awesome feeling during a Joni and Friends family retreat that we were able to attend.

I really had no idea of what to expect and the drive was proving to be rather exhausting. I expected around a 4 hour drive, but after an hour lunch break, it turned out

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Respite (n.) a brief rest
from a difficult task

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Encouraging Words

"How we, as parents, respond to our child and our child's disability has a greater impact on the child's life than any medical diagnosis."

- Kathie Snow

Web Resources:

www.texasidz.com
www.ladssg.org
www.benotafraid.net
www.marchofdimes.com
www.rarediseases.org



Family Focus continued from page 1

to be right at 6 hours. All of the kids were tired of being strapped in the vehicle and I was tired of them being strapped in too. When we finally pulled into the campground and as we drove up to the registration building, we were surrounded by clowns. They were awaiting our arrival. We pulled up and we started getting everyone out of the vehicle. They knew our names already and were picking us all out. They told us how happy they were that we were there and led us into the main building where even more clowns were awaiting us. As the kids and I were surrounded by this unconditional love and wave of emotion ran over me and I began to cry. As of the moment we drove up, we weren't the abnormal ones, we were extraordinary. My kids were, I think, as overwhelmed as I was and Dane was overly tired and all of the excitement and noise was just too much for him. He began to cry, but soon was in control and becoming accustomed to the environment. After getting settled, we went to dinner. As we were eating, two young ladies approached us and introduced themselves as Kelly and Brittany. They were Dane and Kiran's short term missionaries (STM's). They explained what their responsibilities were: basically, to care for Dane and Kiran during the day and make sure that all of their needs were met. We went to the opening session with them and afterward to the cafeteria for an ice cream social.

The next morning, we arrived for breakfast where Kelly and Brittany met us and they made sure that Dane and Kiran were fed. After breakfast, the kids were off to their classes and activities. I kept thinking of things to make sure they knew and finally my friend that was with me assured me that if there was a problem, they knew where to find me and to let them go. I admit that it was extremely difficult for me to just let them go, but I choked back my tears and let them go. I then went to worship and devotion. Every day it was exactly what I needed to hear. Even two and a half years after getting a diagnosis, that wound is still fresh. Most days, I am fine, but then there are still days that I feel as though we just found out. I don't know that it is something that ever totally sinks in and melts away. I have come to terms with it and accepted it, but it is sometimes like a piece of wood that has been finely sanded. No matter how smooth it becomes, if you rub it just right, you can still get a splinter. The wonderful thing, at that moment, was that you were surrounded with people that knew exactly what you were dealing with. The other families that I got to know were extraordinary. There was so much freedom in being honest about the struggles that you face everyday. The adults were split into support groups in the afternoon sessions. We were assigned a leader (who was someone that had attended several years of retreats) and given guidelines to our discussions. It was so refreshing to hear someone else say that they struggled with what we struggled with, or maybe their

situation was different and you realized how very blessed you are.

Most of the day was mine to do what I wanted. I was free to go to all of the activities planned for the adults or if I wanted to just go back to my room and sleep, I was also free to do that. It was wonderful knowing that the kids were being taken care of and that they were in good hands. After the first few hours of them being gone, I didn't worry about them. Their STM's even sat with us at our meals and fed the little ones for me. My older two kids were having a ball. We had some family time during the afternoon hours and dinner with them and then they were off for more activities. We didn't even eat lunch together! It felt rather strange, although I have to say it didn't take long to learn to enjoy

Family Focus continued in next column →



- We need your help! One of our goals is to have a "library" of information pertaining to different diseases, afflictions, or disabilities that you have dealt with. We would like to make this information available to others who are faced with the same situation for the first time. Please ensure that all the information you submit is 100% accurate. Send articles or references to info@texaskidz.com or mail copies to KIDZ, PO Box 10015, Longview, TX 75608-0015.
- If you are interested in purchasing advertising space in our newsletters, please e-mail us at info@texaskidz.com. Ads will be restricted to a limited number per issue and will be accepted/denied and placed at our discretion.
- **KIDZ** wants to congratulate Neal McCoy on his recent winning of a Humanitarian award.
- **KIDZ** is working on getting universally accessible playground equipment placed in the Longview area. If you are interested in helping with this effort, which will benefit your children and the entire community by allowing all children to play together in one place, please contact us!

feeding just myself and being able to have an uninterrupted conversation with an adult. The days were very refreshing for me and fun and exhausting for the kids.

As a parent with a child that has a disability and usually being around other families with children with disabilities, I don't often get a chance to talk with an adult with a disability. There were several adults with disabilities that I got to know and learn about. These adults provided such insight and you can learn so much from them. This is definitely another aspect of this retreat that I enjoyed.

As the retreat came to an end and we had to say goodbye to everyone, we realized that we didn't just visit with others. There was a connection with other families. These were people that we would continue enjoying relationships with, leaning on and trusting to help us when we needed a helping hand or prayer. Not only did these families sympathize, they completely understand. After we said goodbye to the other families and packed our vehicle, we said a bitter-sweet goodbye to Dane and Kiran's STM's. I am sure that they could not have known the impact their love and friendship had been, and will continue to be, to my family. Neither of my oldest two children wanted to leave. They enjoyed camp so much and I cherished that they were able to be kids and not assistant caretakers or babysitters. As the campsite faded in our rearview mirror, tears began to roll down my cheeks. My oldest was beginning to cry too. She asked if we could come back next year and I told her that we would plan on it. She didn't want to leave this feeling of acceptance and unconditional love. I didn't want to either. God's love was so evident in this retreat. It was one of the most unforgettable and indescribable experiences of my life. It is definitely an experience that I would suggest to any family like mine. I promise that it would be unforgettable for you and your family too.

For more experience about family retreats or Joni and Friends, visit www.joniandfriends.org ■

FAST FACTS

"Birth defects affect about one in every 33 babies born in the United States each year."
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved Aug. 30, 2005, from <http://www.cdc.gov>



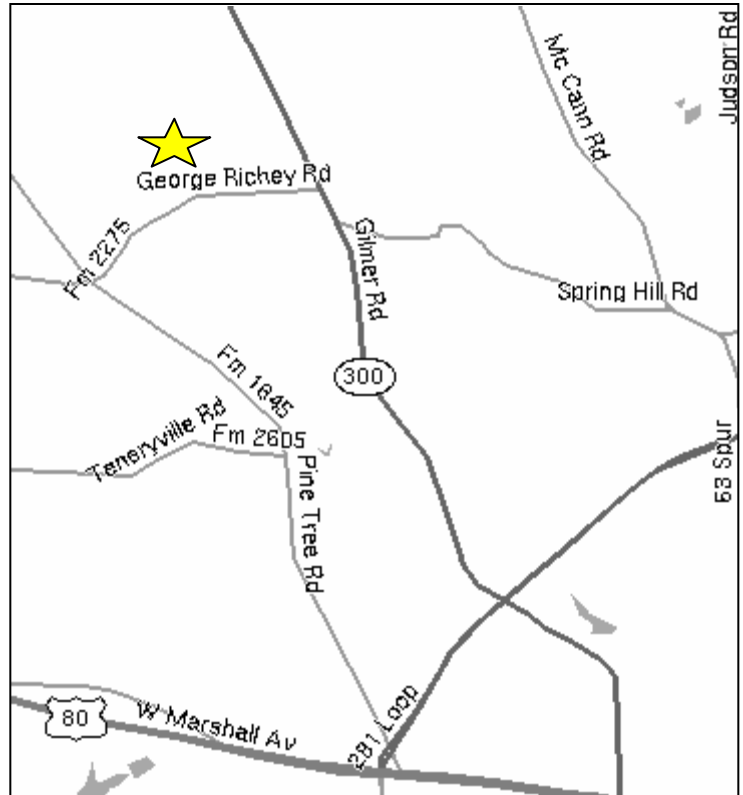
To those marvelous ladies who take care of our children during our KIDZ meetings:
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. What you do for us and our children is such a blessing to us. Thanks for showing love and acceptance to our kids each and every time.
Your caring, loyalty and willingness will be remembered forever!

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If you would like to make a donation to KIDZ, please make checks payable to:

NBBC c/o KIDZ

Donations are tax deductible.

KIDZ is a bimonthly publication. As the KIDZ fiscal sponsor, New Beginnings Baptist Church oversees donations and disbursements on behalf of KIDZ in order for KIDZ to direct its efforts to the families in need.

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