Raising Special Kids Mission

Raising Special Kids exists to improve the lives of children with the full range of disabilities, from birth to age 26, by providing support, training, information and individual assistance so families can become effective advocates for their children.

Letter from the Board President

Each year seems to bring new changes and growth at Raising Special Kids. We are pleased to present the 2014 Annual Report to feature the latest news about our mission and accomplishments from the past year.

As a medical professional, and parent of a beautiful, accomplished daughter with Down syndrome, I am particularly proud of the fact that so many professionals in health, education, and social services attended training last year to improve their skills in providing a better quality of care for families and for children with special health care needs.

As you read through the report, you’ll see how hard we’ve been working to achieve our mission of family support for parents of children with the full range of disabilities. We served more families in 2014 than we have in previous years, forged more community partnerships, and trained more professionals than ever before. The numbers are all described and presented, and you can see the impact we’ve had on the community, but Raising Special Kids has never been about the numbers.

Raising Special Kids is about the kids, each and every single one of them. I hope you will take the time to read the story from the Nico family. Jill Nico tells the real story of 2014.

For 35 years Raising Special Kids has been there: for the Nico family, for your family, and mine. For all our children, here’s to a bright future full of promise and potential.

Paula Banahan, President
Board of Directors
Who we Serve

75% Families with disabilities and special health care needs
25% Professionals (health, education, social services)

8593 families received information, training, and individual assistance
98% of parents said I received information to help me address a critical need related to my child’s education
352 Parent to Parent Matches
92% of parents said that Parent to Parent support improved my ability to advocate for my child’s needs, services, and care

Raising Special Kids helps me develop my toolbox

One of the most important things I’ve learned from Raising Special Kids is that parents are valuable members of any team decision-making process and their participation is required by law. Parents are powerful when given the right tools and Raising Special Kids helped me develop my toolbox.

Jill feels Jon has also provided her with a “unique perspective” in her current position as a program advisor in the Disability Resource Center at Estrella Mountain Community College. Jill recognizes the students she works with as “risk-takers and overcomers” and hopes her experience with them will help her help Jon when it is time for him to make post-high school plans. It is a very different and much more fulfilled future than Jill envisioned the day he was born.

Jill has continued to expand her toolbox as Jon has gotten older and other parents often turn to her for advice. “I regularly refer parents to Raising Special Kids and I tell them how much the organization has helped me. I explain that the Family Support Specialists really understand because they are parents, too. And, most importantly, Raising Special Kids never turns anyone away.”

Programs for Parents and Families

Parent-to-Parent support has always been the heart of Raising Special Kids. Each year, more than 300 families in Arizona are connected with veteran “mentor” parents who have walked a similar path, and who understand the challenges of raising a child with a disability or special health care need. Raising Special Kids provides training and consultation in special education to families, schools, teachers, and other professionals.

Workshops offer training in a variety of skills including advocacy, effective communication and collaboration techniques. Our newsletter, Connecting, reaches more than 11,000 parents and professionals and e-news alerts are shared by request with a growing list of interested individuals.

Over 12,000 parents and professionals were reached through e-news alerts by request.
**Programs and Services for Professionals**

Programs for resident physicians in pediatrics and family practice relay information about parents’ perspective on issues relating to medical services. Parent Panels and staff-led workshops are available to students in education, medical, oral health and social service fields.

**4,676** Training/Conference Attendees

(Parents 2,004; Professionals 2,672)

**98%** of educational professionals reported being better prepared to work with families

**57** pediatric and family practice physicians from five hospitals and medical centers completed training and home visits

**98%** of physicians reported training improved ability to communicate with families

“Having experienced parents help new or overwhelmed parents navigate the system is exactly what they need. Why aren’t all children with special needs referred to Raising Special Kids? It’s amazing how the human spirit can overcome such difficult circumstances.”

- Chris Cassidy, M.D., Phoenix Children’s Hospital

**Children Demographics**

- **Age**
  - 0-2 year – 12%
  - 3-5 years – 18%
  - 6-11 years – 34%
  - 12-15 years – 18%
  - 16-18 years – 12%
  - 19+ years – 6%

- **Disability**
  - ADHD – 12%
  - Autism – 24%
  - Intellectual – 4%
  - Deaf/Blind – 3%
  - Developmental – 10%
  - Emotional/Mental – 7%
  - Epilepsy – 3%
  - Hearing Impairment/Deaf – 1%
  - Multiple Disabilities – 1%
  - Other Health Impairment – 9%
  - Orthopedic – 1%
  - Specific Learning Disability – 6%
  - Speech/Language – 5%
  - Suspected/Undiagnosed – 5%
  - Traumatic Brain Injury – 1%
  - Visual/Blindness – 1%

- **Ethnicity**
  - African American – 6%
  - Asian/Pacific Islander – 2%
  - Bi-Racial – 2%
  - Caucasian – 48%
  - Hispanic/Latino – 37%
  - Native American – 5%
Financials

At Raising Special Kids we are committed to using funds responsibly to ensure we help families today and in future generations.

Each workshop only required $135 of revenue

Total 3,626 hours would equal over $75,000

“...I regularly refer parents to Raising Special Kids and I tell them how much the organization has helped me. I explain that the Family Support Specialists really understand because they are parents, too. And, most importantly, Raising Special Kids never turns anyone away.”

Community Outreach

- Annual Parent Day – Ganado
- Assistive Technology Center Open House – Flagstaff
- NAZ Transition Fair – Flagstaff
- Gila River Education Summit – Sacaton
- UMOM
- APS Agency Fair – Phoenix
- SPED Director’s Institute – Glendale
- Foster Care Family Resource Fair – Glendale
- East Valley Transition Expo – Mesa
- International Dyslexia Association Conference – Phoenix
- 10th Annual American Indian Disability Summit 2014 – Phoenix
- Special Day for Special Kids – Scottsdale
- Health & Wellness Fair – Phoenix
- AZA United 2014 Conference – Phoenix
- Special Needs Resource Fair – Kingman
- EPP Support Group – Tucson
- Outreach Challenger Baseball – Tucson
- Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired Conference – Sedona
- Yuma High School Transition Fair – Yuma
- Regional Medical Center Family and Community Welcome Day – Yuma
- High School Transition Fair – San Luis

Where Does our Money Come From?

2014

Grants and contracts .................. $1,759,926
Donations ............................... $224,345

PROGRAM EXPENDITURES
(in thousands)

- Parent Support Services .......................... $1,055,956
- Training Support Services .................. $439,982
- Fundraising .................................. $35,199
- Management and General .............. $228,790

$1,507,886 Grants and Contracts

$224,345 Donations
Thank You to our Donors!

Your generosity helps us serve thousands of families each year.

6,859 Families Assisted
375 Community Partners
3,626 Donated Hours
2672 Professionals Trained

“I really wanted to thank you again for all of your help and guidance. You helped us get started on our path to healing and getting us on track to a brighter future. We couldn’t have done this without you!”
“Thank you again for all your advice and guidance as it helped me tremendously in making the best decision for my son’s education. I couldn’t have asked for a better outcome. Most importantly, my son is happy and excited about school again.”

Thank you for your extraordinary generosity.
The "Parent Center of Excellence Award" is the highest award given to Parent Centers which achieve 100% of the “Required” indicators, at least 75% of the “Effective” indicators, and at least 75% of the “Best Practice” indicators.

Raising Special Kids meets Parent Center Standards for Excellence

The Parent Center Standards for Excellence, developed under the guidance of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), consist of indicators that measure quality in nonprofit management and family-centered services. The standards reflect current best practices and federal requirements for OSEP-funded Parent Centers.

*Exemplary practices noted: office location and accessibility; the strategic use of an Advisory Council; fund diversification efforts; parent leadership practices, outreach to diverse populations and communities; and professional development opportunities.

Boards and Councils Served by Raising Special Kids Staff

| Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits Policy Council | Employment First |
| Arizona Autism Coalition | First Things First |
| Arizona Department of Education | Flagstaff Medical Center Patient and Family Advisory Council |
| • Community of Practice on Transition | Institute for Patient-Centered Design |
| • Special Education Advisory Panel | Maricopa Family Support Alliance |
| • Rules Committee | Maricopa County CSHCN Coalition |
| • State Inclusion Coalition | Parent 2 Parent USA, National Board of Directors |
| Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council | Phoenix Children’s Hospital |
| Arizona Disability Advocacy Coalition | • Family Advisory Council |
| Arizona State University, Presidents Community Council | • Genetic Services Advisory Committee |
| ASPIRE (Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment Advisory Council) | Positive Behavior Intervention Advisory Committee |
| AFN Emergency Preparedness Task Force | Smooth Way Home |
| Center for Parent Information and Resources | State Medicaid Advisory Council |
| Division of Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council | State Rehabilitation Council |