



The Lekotek Newsletter

Summer/Fall 2008
July-November

NLC WELCOMES NEW INTERN, MONICA, MAY 2008

From Monica:



My name is Monica Thomas, and I'm studying Therapeutic Recreation at Indiana University. In the two summers prior to my internship with Lekotek I worked at a summer camp for children with physical disabilities. At school, I also volunteered with a weekly Adaptive Physical Education program for children 3-16 years of age with a variety of disabilities. I have completed almost two months now at Lekotek and have loved it. I'm really enjoying getting to know many of you through play sessions and especially our playgroups! It's been great, not only to see children at play, but really interacting with each other and forming relationships with other children and parents. I look forward to meeting many more of you throughout the summer! I will be organizing the Summer Picnic this year and the theme is Summer Olympics. Please read more about this on the next page! Thank you to everyone I've met so far. You have all made me feel very welcome and lucky to experience the Lekotek family!

REMINDER ABOUT NO SHOW FEE FOR MISSED SESSIONS

The staff at Lekotek take great pride in the services we offer. We always make sure our children and families are getting the highest quality programs. Unfortunately, over the last year, we have seen an increase in families who do not attend their scheduled appointments and do not provide advance notice of the cancellation. When no advance notice of a cancellation is provided, this eliminates the opportunity for our Family Play Specialist to schedule another family, ultimately wasting valuable time.

To remedy this issue and ensure we are providing the greatest benefit to all families, we have established a "no show fee." Effective January 1, 2009, families have been charged a "no show" fee of \$5.00, that is billed directly to families and paid within 30 calendar days. Any unpaid fees may result in a discharge from the program. A "no show" is defined as a family that does not call their Family Play Specialist with 24 hour advance notice to cancel or reschedule their session.

We value our Lekotek families. We believe this new policy has helped us better serve all families. If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to contact Deidre Omahen, Director of Programs at 773-528-5766 ext. 403.

ANNOUNCING THE 2008 LEKOTEK SUMMER OLYMPICS!

Who: Families who are members
of the toy lending program



When: August 9th from 11AM—1PM

** The first 30 families that arrive will receive a free
pass to the Chicago Children's Museum*

Where: Anixter Center (across the street
from Lekotek at 2032 N. Clybourn)

What: Each family must choose a country to represent. The choices are: Canada, Brazil, Spain, Egypt, or Ireland. Lekotek will provide you information on your country: size, population, location, typical food and dress, customs, language, etc. Each family is asked to bring a typical dish from the country they choose, so that we may all experience a variety of cultures at the picnic. We will also hold "games" for children and families similar to those of the Olympics!

How: Register for the Summer Olympics with Monica Thomas by August 1st at (773) 528.5766 ext. 400

Top Three Reasons to come to the Lekotek Summer Olympics 2008:

- Meet and play with other Lekotek families!
- Take part in the Olympic games!
- A chance to win raffle prizes!



- - - Upcoming Playgroups - - -

" Kids Connect"

This group is a great deal. Most social skills groups are very expensive. We have family activities and then a parents only time for networking.

We focus on friendship, team building, communication, sharing and having fun!

This group is for children ages 4-7.

Dates: Saturdays from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

- July 12
- September 13
- October 11
- November 8



Cost is \$15 for this group's four week session. A sliding scale is available. **To sign up call Kerry Bauer at (773) 528-5766 ext. 407**

" Creative Arts with Juana"

This group is for children ages 3-6 and their families. We will have activities focused on art, music, dance and more! Snacks are provided.

Dates: Saturdays from 1:30-3:00 p.m.

- July 12
- September 13
- October 11
- November 8



Cost is \$15 for this group's four week session. A sliding scale is available.

Spaces are limited to 10 families, so call soon to reserve a space!

To sign up call Juana Ortiz at (773) 528-5766 ext. 406

TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUP

This group is so much fun! Parents and toddlers play together and parents leave with play ideas. This group is for children ages 12-36 months. **Children with and without disabilities are welcome.**

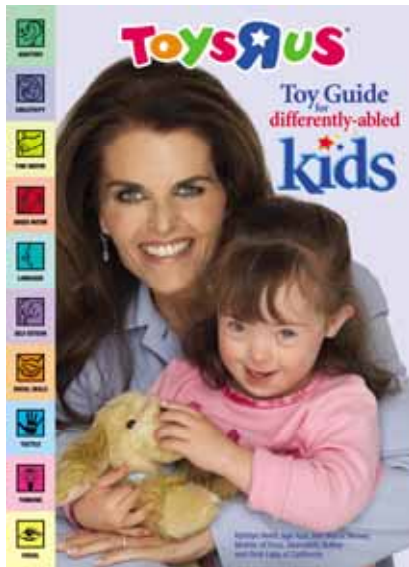


Cost is \$15 for the 5 sessions (a sliding scale is available), a yummy snack is included. This group starts August 12 so call soon. There is usually a waiting list for this group!

Call Juana Ortiz at (773) 528-5766 ext. 406 to register.

Dates: Every other Tuesday 10:00-11:00

August 12 • August 26 • September 9 • September 23 • October 7



The new Toys R Us guide for the Differently-Abled kids is now available. The Lekotek staff evaluated the toys and helped write the Guide. We have copies at Lekotek available for families and professionals. This Guide is useful when selecting toys for children. Check out their website for a searchable version for the guide.

<http://www.toysrus.com/sm-differently-abled-toy-guide--ci-2257808.html>

Toys Help Children with Autism Gain Needed Skills

www.ableplay.org

AblePlay offers families, educators and therapists toys and information that can help children with autism gain needed skills and provide fun and entertainment at the same time. Toys are the perfect way to teach, motivate and open up new experiences for all children. Buried in the play process are important learning opportunities that are often easier to accomplish because of the fun factor.

AblePlay has identified four important goals that relate to challenges some children with autism face.

1. Leading children from repetitive behavior to task completion
2. Moving from concrete concepts to creative play
3. Developing patience and sustained engagement
4. Encouraging speech, dialogue and interaction

Here are some toys we feel help accomplish these important goals:

Give Gratification of Completion

Children with autism sometimes fall into ritualistic and repetitive behavior and may be missing that wonderful sense of accomplishment gained from a task being completed. This feeling of gratification in accomplishing a job can be reinforced through play. Puzzles are a perfect tool to introduce task completion. Puzzles, along with other toys, are great opportunities to encourage completion goals. Two toys that can help children gain great satisfaction in completing a task and getting it right are **Speed Stacks** and **Scramble Squares**. **Speed Stacks** challenges children to stack cups up in predetermined order as fast as they can to win. Also **Scramble Squares Frogs** by b.dazzle offers children an intriguing puzzle to solve and complete. Be sure to read the comments about **Scramble Squares Frogs** at www.ableplay.org by a teacher who works with children with autism

Develop Patience and Sustained Engagement

Some toys offer children the challenge of making them focus and devote time to finishing a play task. This can serve all children but especially those with autism. One secret to engagement is to present children with patterns to duplicate and simple pathways to practice these important developmental skills. AblePlay offers two excellent tools, **Gears! Gears! Gears!** from Learning Resources where connecting gears becomes fun and entertaining. Children with Autism often perservate on wheels and moving gears. This set expands a child's interest by incorporating building and problem solving. Also introduce your child to the challenge of matching while expanding your child's mind with **Lonpos 303** by Mic-O-Mic. This compact game offers many levels, options and hours of puzzle play and patterning opportunities.

Teach the Skill to be Social

Social skills and cooperative play are two goals many children with autism struggle with. Children with autism often have a strong desire to communicate, but need to learn how to translate their needs and desires into appropriate words and dialogue. **DbD Play Packs** by The Pencil Grip, Inc. fosters social skills and encourages language development and interactive dialogue.

Music helps Speech and Memory

Research supports connections between speech and singing; rhythm and motor behavior; and memory for song and memory for academic material. Music contains the ability to enhance mood, attention, behavior and to optimize a child ability to learn and interact. Therefore, one of the purposes of introducing musical toys to children with autism is to establish the benefits of melodies and rhythms which then sets a platform for speech development. A great introduction to music for young children is the **Mozart Magic Cube** by Munchkin, Inc. which allows the child to listen and layer musical instruments into classical Mozart music. The **Designer Spinnet Toy Piano** by Schoenhut and the **Bee Bop Band** by Parents® are two additional musical options to present children with toys to experiment with melodies, play with sound and get involved in rhythms.

The National
Lekotek Center

NEW
ADDRESS!

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a division of Anixter Center

We're on the web at
www.lekotek.org
www.ableplay.org

Look
Inside

New Intern

Upcoming Playgroups

**Annual Family
Summer Picnic**

**Fee for Missed
Appointments**