

# SNAP SHOTS



BROUGHT TO YOU BY *SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES*

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## NOTEWORTHY ~ Setting Sights Towards School by Barb Dittrich



School is on the horizon for most of us. If your summer was a bit frazzled and disorganized, as mine tended to be, NOW is the time to get your ducks in a row! Getting out in front of special needs prior to the start of school is essential for a smooth transition into the school year. Here is a checklist of items for you to make certain you have covered prior to the first day of school:

**1. Have you had a basic doctor's visit with your child's pediatrician or diagnosis specialist?** Many of our children's medications are regulated by body weight and other biological changes. Make certain that your child has a solid start by being properly regulated on all pharmaceuticals. Also, any adjustments that need to be made in therapies should be puzzled out before the start of

the school year. Transitions can be easier for the child to process when handled one at a time!

**2. Have you paid a visit to your child's new school or classroom?** You are probably well aware at how children thrive in familiar surroundings. Make absolutely certain that your child sees their new desk and meets their new teacher. Just these two items will give them a safe place and a safe person to attach to. If your child is starting in a new school, as my son is, more than one visit may be required. Navigating the floor plan of a new building can present a certain level of stress for students. Getting the child's schedule and doing a dry run of changing locations for classes, lunch and recess can provide a huge relief for your student.

**3. Have you done an in-**

**service for the staff that will be in contact with your child?**

Even if staff members think they know about your child's special needs, a brush-up on the diagnosis and basics of treatment are useful at the start of each year. One detail that we always include is a unique biography on our child entitled "Getting to Know Charlie Dittrich" which details his quirks and the nuances of how the disorder behaves in him. This helps us get out ahead of any misconceptions professionals or paraprofessionals have set in their minds. Your child is unique, and each diagnosis behaves in a distinctive way in every child.

**4. Have you met with the school psychologist, counselor and/or principal regarding your child's IEP or 504 plan?** Carry-over in continuity from the previous school year can make for a much better transition. It is essential to discuss what worked for your child last year and what you'd like to see improved upon in the coming school year. As these meetings tend to bring out the "us versus them" attitude in everyone involved, it is to your advantage to foster a team-work spirit with the school staff, winning them over to your side. Making yourself approachable and adaptable as a parent will more likely yield the

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outcome you desire for your child.

**5. Have you made plans for any dietary needs at school?** Planning for meals and snacks that suit any dietary needs your child may have is a MUST prior to the new school year. Be willing to chat with both teachers and those working in the cafeteria about those needs.

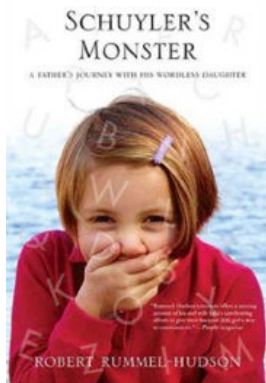
Addressing these needs in August will offer you a much more peaceful September.



*Barb Dittrich is the Executive Director & Foundress of SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES. She lives with her husband and children in Oconomowoc, WI.*

## SNAP SHOTS

### From the BOOKSHELF: Schuyler's Monster by Robert Rummel-Hudson reviewed by Julia Roberts



The book Schuyler's Monster had been on my list of books to read for a long time. The volume was published in 2008 by longtime blogger Robert Rummel-Hudson, whose blog I became a regular reader of for years. He'd had a daughter whose disability baffled doctors early on but who was eventually diagnosed with Polymicrogyria (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymicrogyria>), causing her

lack of expressive language. The book chronicles Robert and wife Julie's courting, job changes, and moves that brought them north, then east and eventually to back to Texas, where they currently live. The author takes the reader on a journey from fear of the unknown diagnosis and prognosis to him embracing his "broken" daughter who eventually taught him about his own perceived shortcomings, with the eventual acceptance of himself as her father and advocate.

Robert is honest about how his and Julie's marriage came back from infidelity. The love they shared for each other and their daughter clarified one thing; Schuyler needed both parents, and it worked best if they were together. It seems all of his relationships are complicated including his

relationship with God. He is unafraid to explore that theme throughout the book.

Rummel-Hudson is funny and honest. He's a bit self-deprecating but it seems to me he is just voicing what I am sure many parents of kids with special needs feel themselves (I know I do). This results in a book that is both entertaining and comforting in equal parts.

Schuyler's Monster is a fast read with both humor and sadness. It is an incredible look into special needs parenting by the often quieter father voice, which I so appreciated. It was a pleasure getting to know the Rummel-Hudson family and especially the strong and charming (and fearless!) Schuyler. I'm sure I'll be reading it again soon.

To read more about Rob, visit his book site, <http://www.schuylersmonster.com> or his blog <http://www.schuylersmonsterblog.com>

5  out of 5



Julia Roberts is mom to 2 kids who have special needs and blogs their life at [www.kidneysandeyes.com](http://www.kidneysandeyes.com). She co-founder of the networking site called [www.supportforspecialneeds.com](http://www.supportforspecialneeds.com), where Snappin' Ministries has its own group and manages a group on Faith and Disability.

## Remarkable Resources—Sibling Support Project



The inevitable question always seems to come up amongst parents of children with special needs — What about the healthy siblings? In some parents there is great angst about the unequal attention their children get due to the demanding circumstances of the child with special needs. They worry about the mental health of the siblings without disabilities, and seem concerned that an irreversible resentment will take root.

Thankfully, there is an organization that has already given a great deal of time and thought to this exact concern.

Based in Seattle, Washington, this innovative support was founded in 1990 and is run by Don Meyer, a nationally known speaker and writer. Meyer was the brainchild behind SibShops, a fun, creative workshop program just for siblings. Trainings for these workshops have been held in all 50 states. The group boasts 200 replications in 8 countries worldwide. SibShops can be run as

a one time session at conferences or as a consecutive, regular series. (SNAPPIN' currently collaborates with The YMCA at Pabst Farms to run the program quarterly.)

Besides SibShops, The Sibling Support Project offers so much more in the way of assistance for families. A free e-newsletter is available simply by registering online. In addition, eight different volumes have been published on topics covering concerns from youth to old age. Their most recent offering entitled THICKER THAN WATER:

Essays by Adult Siblings of People with Disabilities features thoughts from such well-known authors as Rachel Simon, Nancy Werlin and Mary McHugh.

Keeping with the current social networking age, The Sibling Support Project also offers a group for adult siblings to connect and chat on either Yahoo or Facebook. Just recently, they added a similar parents group on Yahoo.

For more information on this outstanding resource, visit them on the web at <http://www.siblingsupport.org/>

## AFFECTING YOU & YOURS ~ 8 Ways to Help Your Child Relax by Anjie Kokan



Let's face it, our special needs children are under a little extra stress sometimes. The best way to combat stress is to relax, but that is often easier said than done. Sometimes we just have to make a conscious effort to help our kids relax. Here are ideas that have been successful in my family.

**1. Deep Breathing.** Breathing deeply benefits everyone. Some say it is the best thing for our health. While deep breathing is helpful to do when the stress is coming on, it is also good to just plan this as part of your child's day. To teach your child to breathe deeply, have him inhale through the nose slowly, filling up the lungs, then exhale through the mouth. Ask your child to lay down and put a sticker or soft toy on your child's belly and have him watch it rise and fall. **Tip:** Breathe along with your child and you will relax, too.

**2. Aroma Therapy.** Lavender, vanilla and chamomile are all considered calming aromas. Lavender rules in our home. My son loves the soothing feeling of the lavender lotion on him every night before bed. He also washes his hands in lavender soap before bedtime and often his pillow is sprayed with lavender spray. **Tip:** You can incorporate the breathing with aroma therapy by putting a bit of essential oil on a cotton ball and have your child inhale the scent.

**3. A weighted vest or blanket.** My son has both. Make sure that it isn't too heavy for your child. You can buy a weighted vest in the exercise department of some department stores, and you can get weighted blankets online. The weighted blanket or vest can provide enough sensory input to help ease anxiety with the feeling of security. **Tip:** Our OT advised that we don't leave the vest on for long periods of time. About 20 minutes should do it. This has been successful in our school setting, too.

**4. Music.** Whether it is your child's favorite song or simple relaxation tunes, music will help distract your child from the stressful situation and help calm him. When my son was three, we had some CDs of drumming music that soothed him. His therapist told me that the beats from the drum melody helped him organize. **Tip:** Before buying a CD that your child might not like, sample different types of music online through YouTube or Amazon.

**5. Fidget toys.** Give your child a fidget toy to hang onto. You can find stress balls and other cool fidget toys at the dollar stores. I have found that sometimes my son needs some deep pressure input in his mouth. Some special toys will work for that, but giving him an apple to bite into or pretzels to crunch also provides his need for deep pressure. **Tip:** Make sure the toys are safe for your child.

**6. Massage.** Giving your child a massage can help reduce muscle tension and help him relax. Rubbing your child's back, feet, or shoulders with lotion. **Tip:** Our OT

recommends sesame oil for massage because that also has a calming effect.

**7. Laugh!** Laughter produces endorphins, the feel-good chemical our bodies produce. Funny pictures, stories or clips from movies could evoke laughter in your child. I also highly recommend any collection of Shel Silverstein's poetry. **Tip:** Check out last month's Snap Shots issue to learn more about how humor can help your child and your family.

**8. Water.** Whether it is a warm bath or the sound of a fountain, water eases tension. When swimming is an option, the exercise is an extra benefit because it also relieves stress and can help your child sleep better. **Tip:** Squeeze a few drops of calming essential oil into the bath.

As we know, each child is different and it takes a little trial and error to figure things out. Hopefully, it will be worth it!

### **Recommended Resources:**

Stress Free Kids (Relaxation CD's & Books)

<http://www.stressfreekids.com>

Hugz4me—The Sensory Place (Weighted Vests & Blankets) <http://www.hugz4me.com/>

Kid Companions (Fidgets) <http://www.chewelry.ca/about.html>

WebVitamins (Essential Oils & Massage

Lotions) <http://www.webvitamins.com/SearchResults.aspx?searchText=essential+oils>



Anjie Kokan enjoys presenting her poetry and facilitating writing workshops for all ages and abilities to community groups and schools. She gives thanks to God for simple pleasures and a quiet life in the Kettle Moraine area with her husband Robert and two children. You can find more about her at [BookThatPoet.com](http://BookThatPoet.com).



## SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES

### Special Needs Parents Network

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#### **Mission Statement:**

*Our pursuit is to continuously support and encourage those living with the daily challenge of parenting a special needs child, so that the genuine love and hope of Jesus will be experienced and shared in their everyday lives.*

### Upcoming Events—Some dates of particular interest from our Calendar on the SNAPPIN' website

**Saturday, August 14, 2010, 1-4PM**  
Elmbrook Church, Brookfield, WI,  
*Monthly Respite Care Program.*  
Providing special needs children & their siblings with a safe and enjoyable place to play games, enjoy activities and benefit from peer support, parents enjoy a much-needed break for the afternoon. For More Information & Consent Forms, please visit <http://elmbrook.org/articlelink.asp?mid=51&pid=358&iid=565>

**Sunday, August 15, 2010, 4-8 PM**  
*Back-to-school shopping & supper, fundraising dine-out to benefit SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES.* Purchase your kids' school clothing & supplies at one of the convenient retail venues at Hwy 83 & I-94. Then join us for dinner at

Rocky Rococo's, 2798 Heritage Drive, Delafield, WI. 15% of all menu sales will return to our organization to continue supporting parents. INVITE A FRIEND!!!

**Tuesday, August 17, 2010, 9 AM—1 PM** OCONOMOWOC KID'S FEST, Roosevelt Park. Located right next to the fully accessible Imagination Station, Community Built Playground. For more information, visit The YMCA at Pabst Farm's Community Events Calendar at <http://www.ymcaatpabstfarms.org/calendar.php?mm=8&yy=2010&ID=274>

**Saturday, August 28, 2010, 8:30 AM—11:30 AM** *End of Summer Sanity Break for Special Needs Parents* courtesy of CROSSPOINT COMMUNITY CHURCH'S All-In Program. Parents

will have the opportunity to get 3 hours of refreshment by dropping both children with special needs and their siblings at Crosspoint Community Church, W380 N6931 N. Lake Rd, Oconomowoc. The program is limited to 30 children and no diapering or tube-feeding will be provided. Registration deadline is August 12, 2010. E-mail [snappin.ministries@gmail.com](mailto:snappin.ministries@gmail.com) to attend.

**Friday, September 10, 2010, 6:00—8:30 PM,** *Fun Fridays* at the YMCA at Pabst Farms, for ages 10 and up. The theme will be "Minute to Win It". Enjoy a night of arts, crafts, gym activities & fun! Visit <http://www.ymcaatpabstfarms.org/content.php?id=99> for more information.

### You Can Help!

SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation funded by the support and donation of churches and individuals around the country. Here are some ways you can help:

Direct tax-deductible donations made payable to SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES, mailed to our headquarters or made through our website using Pay-Pal.

Donations may also be made via our Facebook SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES Cause.

In-kind donations of gift cards for gas, restaurants and grocery stores are fully tax-deductible

and go directly to families in need. Luxury items like lotions, soaps, candles and chocolates are used for gift baskets to bless mothers of special needs children.

Designate us as your charity of choice on Good Search & Good Shop at <http://www.goodsearch.com/>! One cent from each search goes to the ministry. In addition, up to 30% of every purchase you make shopping on this site will also bless our organization.

Do your children drink juice pouches like Capri Sun or a generic equivalent? As part of the Drink Pouch Brigade, the ministry earns 2

cents for every pouch turned in. Save yours in a clear zip-seal type bag and get them to us!

On certain occasions, SNAPPIN' holds fund-raising events like brat fries, dine-outs or concerts. Your participation is ALWAYS appreciated!

SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES offers self-published materials like a devotional, Bible studies and a how-to guide. A certain part of your purchase is tax-deductible.

