

special  
**Indy's Child**  
RESOURCE FAIR 2016



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# 2016 INDY'S SPECIAL CHILD RESOURCE FAIR

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**W**elcome to the 2016 Indy's Special  
Child Resource Fair! Midwest  
Academy is pleased to partner with  
Indy's Child Parenting Magazine and Indy's  
Special Child for this event's inaugural year.

I invite you to explore all that today's event has to offer and hope that you find it informative and helpful as you seek out resources for your child.

The term "special child" applies to so many different challenges a child may face.

At Midwest Academy, we serve children with a variety of learning differences, such as high functioning autism, ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, and school anxiety. Our wonderful learning community is designed to provide students in grades 4-12 with opportunities for academic success, personal development and social/emotional growth. Midwest offers a family-centered environment that thrives because of strong partnerships between school and home, strong student-teacher relationships and a student-embraced, inclusive atmosphere.

While students are the center of our community, our teachers are at the heart of what we do. The faculty embraces each student, leading them to see their strengths, develop resilience and grit as they overcome personal obstacles, and develop a path for learning and life after Midwest. We are truly a school that changes the lives of students who previously could not succeed in more traditional, or less flexible settings.

On behalf of Midwest Academy, enjoy the Indy's Special Child Resource Fair and have a wonderful day!



Sincerely,

Kevin R. Gailey  
Head of School  
Midwest Academy



# CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S

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**S**upport and family participation in research are critical to putting all the pieces together. Individuals with autism and their families play a vital role in advancing understanding about autism. Such participation will help move forward advances in improving the diagnosis and treatment of autism. Families are the only ones that can offer vital information about autism that can't be obtained in any other way. Dr. Craig Erickson, Dr. Logan Wink, Dr. Ernest Pedapati and Dr. Kelli Dominick are national leaders in autism research. The Behavioral and Developmental Neuropsychiatry Research Team (BDNR) at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) work with families both clinically and through autism research to improve the understanding and treatment of autism. Their team is involved with new cutting edge research in genetics, studies of factors in human blood that predict risk of autism, and in new treatment development. Their work may lead to the development of better, more precise early life tests that will lead to earlier interventions and individualized therapies and improve long term outcomes for individuals with autism and their families. There is momentum in the field of autism research including social skills interventions, individualizing medications, and diagnostic developments. Family involvement can be as simple as enrolling in a project online to coming in for 3 or 4 visits over several months. Families and individuals can choose their level of participation and decide which projects work best for their family.

Cincinnati Children's is one of 21 sites involved in the Simon's Foundation's SPARK project. Families that participate in SPARK can enroll online and provide samples from their own home. SPARK aims to recruit 50,000 individuals with professionally diagnosed autism nationwide and, when possible, their bio-

logical parents which will make it the largest genetic research in the U.S. The mission of SPARK is simple: to ignite research at an unprecedented scale to improve lives by advancing our understanding of autism. This first of its kind study is designed to encourage all in the autism community to participate. Registering for SPARK can be done entirely online, in the convenience of one's home at no cost at [www.SPARKforAutism.org/CincinnatiChildrens](http://www.SPARKforAutism.org/CincinnatiChildrens). Unlike other studies of autism genetics, DNA will be collected and analyzed using saliva kits shipped to participants' homes, making the process less intrusive and more convenient for families and adults on the autism spectrum. Families have the option to receive the genetic results if any links to autism are found in their saliva sample.

Cincinnati Children's is also a part of the CAMP-01 metabolome project which enrolls 18 month to 48 month olds with a goal to determine biomarkers in the blood that, if successful, will lead to an earlier individualized diagnosis.. An early diagnosis means early intervention including speech, occupational, and social skills therapy. This is extremely important in the long term outcome for individuals with autism. The visit includes developmental testing and the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS). Families are able to receive the results of the developmental testing and ADOS and discuss the results with a specialist during the visit. They are also compensated \$100 for time and travel.

The science is complicated but the solution is simple-get as much information about autism as possible and use it to improve the outcome together. Families have the opportunity to participate in research projects that best fit their family.

**CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S**

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# LITTLE STAR CENTER

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*Autism services with a family-first philosophy*

**“W**hen parents hear an autism diagnosis from a doctor it’s overwhelming. Most parents don’t know where to go and what to do. I know, as my son was diagnosed at age 3. That’s when Applied Behavior Analysis became an integral part of our lives,” says Mary Rosswurm, executive director of Little Star Center.

Little Star Center is a non-profit therapeutic ABA facility offering in-home and center-based therapy along with transition and community programs for children and their families. Founded in 2002 in Carmel, Ind., there are now six Little Star Center facilities in Indiana (Carmel, Bloomington, Lafayette, West Lafayette, Clarksville and Newburgh). Little Star Center is known for its family first philosophy.

“Our tagline is, ‘Where kids with autism learn to live in the world. Where parents learn they’re not alone.’ and we take that literally,” says Rosswurm. “Our team is not only among the most skilled and experienced, they are the most caring and professional team working with children and families in the state.”

The Little Star Center team offers three levels of programming for young children to teens designed for their skill level, needs and interest. In Indianapolis, an in-home program also is offered. The team provides community-based programs as well.

## **What is ABA?**

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a widely recognized and safe therapy for autism. The U.S. Surgeon General endorses the therapy, which helps a person affected by autism to live a fulfilling life. Behavior analysis is scientifically validated and used to understand behavior and how the environment affects it.

On a practical level, the principles and methods of behavior analysis have helped many different kinds of learners acquire many different skills – from healthier lifestyles to the mastery of language. Since the 1960s, therapists have been using behavior analysis to help children with autism and related developmental disorders.

Effective ABA therapy is not one size fits all. Little Star Center learners receive individualized therapy plans and parents receive regular updates. Our team boasts one of the highest numbers of Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBA) of any center in Indiana.

## **What to look for in an ABA Center.**

“Parents who have just received an autism diagnosis and contact us for the first time have a lot of questions. We expect that and are ready to provide as much support as possible,” says Victoria Blessing-Wade, family services director. She is also a parent of a teenager with autism.

Blessing-Wade is the first point of contact for families calling Little Star Center for services. She welcomes them to the center, provides a tour and guides families through the insurance process. She answers questions that can include what is a BCBA, why is ABA therapy considered the gold standard, how does the insurance process work and more.

“We know this is an overwhelming time for families trying to not only cope with the diagnosis, but also decide what course of action to take that’s best for their child. It’s why we work in partnership—to provide peace of mind,” says Blessing-Wade.

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Special Olympics Indiana is a not-for-profit organization that provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in more than 20 Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, reaching nearly 12,000 athletes across Indiana. Special Olympics Indiana is part of the international network of accredited Special Olympics Programs that reaches more than 3 million athletes with intellectual disabilities worldwide.

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**T**he Joseph Maley Foundation is a nonprofit organization with the mission to “serve children of all abilities.” The Foundation accomplishes this through seven programs: disABILITY Awareness, JMFriends Puppet Troupe; Health through Outreach, Personal Perspectives and Engagement (HOPE), Service Day, JMFitness, JMFAMILY Advocacy, and Love Remains. Respectively, these programs promote awareness of disabilities; engage individuals in advocacy and understanding of physical, mental, and emotional health; facilitate service-learning opportunities; offer inclusive and adaptive athletics; bridge families and schools throughout the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process; and provide resources for families navigating the difficult journey of infant loss. For more information, please contact Allison Boyll at [aboyll@josephmaley.org](mailto:aboyll@josephmaley.org) or visit our website at [www.josephmaley.org](http://www.josephmaley.org).

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# CARTER'S PLAY PLACE

---

*New kids' sensory gym in Westfield*

**C**arter's Play Place is alive and hopping with children bouncing on the trampoline and gliding by on the 40' indoor zip line. Several more children are playing with the train table and in the sensory table bins.

"At Carter's Play Place, we designed this gym with the specific needs of children of all abilities in mind." Adam Meents, co-owner, has been working tirelessly over the last year with his fellow co-owners Joseph Blamer and Brandon Warren to make this dream a reality. "The idea was born out of the inspiration I have for my autistic son, Carter, and the ambition to do more for our local special needs community in central Indiana."

The design of the gym is unique. "My son is an eloper so we wanted to make sure our gym was set up to keep the kids' in a secure area where the parents, caregivers, and staff have a peace of mind." As soon as you walk in and before you enter the gym area, a swinging gate is present just for that purpose. The gym area is nestled in an area where there is plenty of natural light with all the windows. The windows are also tinted enough to keep the gym from being too bright. "We fell in love with this space because it invites the kids to stay in the main area where all our featured attractions are. The kids do not want to leave even the elopers. We see more kids tearing up when it is time for them to leave."

The gym also has a separate party room, multi-purpose room, and quiet room. "The thinking behind the rooms was to be able to host birthday parties, have another room for various classes, and a small room in the back away from the action if a child in our gym becomes overstimulated. Our multi-purpose room is really turning into a toddler play area."

The new stainless steel-themed Melissa & Doug play kitchen, accessories, toy instruments, and large rug adds a nice touch to this new toddler area.

Walking towards the party room, the strong scent of popcorn fills the air. "We offer free popcorn and coffee to all of our guests. I have fond memories of a child going out to a particular restaurant that would always give us free popcorn as an appetizer. Not everything in a business needs to be add-on. We believe in treating our customers like gold." They even have a couch and love seat under a sign that reads, "Parent's Recess." Throw in free Wi-Fi access and the adults have quite a lounge to hang out in.

The gym area has a nice comfortable one-inch thick matting under all the equipment. Carter's Play Place has a large Spring Free trampoline, 40' indoor zip line with crash pit, large 20'x24' steel swing apparatus equipped with bolster, cuddle, platform, curvy, hammock swings just to name a few. A steamroller slide and several other fun toys like the two spin discs up front. "We thought hard about what equipment we wanted in our gym. Safety was our first priority as you can tell by looking at how our steel swing apparatus is completely welded together and our trampoline is the safest one they manufacture. Also, our zip line holds up to 400 lbs."

"At Carter's Play Place, we set out to build an oasis for the local special needs community open seven days a week. We want to be more than just a recreational sensory gym -- we want to be a resource center for the community. Our slate is still fairly blank and that is a good thing. We are entertaining hosting a lot of different events: parents night out, playdates, birthday parties, and are open for suggestions."

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