

H.E.A.R.T.S. 20 Years of Service in Kern Country

Written by Susan Graham

Thursday, 11 February 2010 22:47 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 February 2010 22:57

H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection Family Resource Center and Family Empowerment Center was started in 1990. The Kern Infant Council received a grant to start a support group for families of children with special needs from birth to 36 months of age. Special thanks go to Dian Schneider, Jani Pittman, Donna Hayes, Jane Warren, Michelle Getches, Sandi Link, Mike Clark, Debbie Oftedal, Wilma Sweeney, Darlene Jehnsen, and Mike Thompson for laying the groundwork for our agency's birth.

The hope was that this group would start a Family Resource Center with the support of the Kern Infant Council. Twelve Kern County families were treated to a weekend at Stallion Springs Resort in Tehachapi. Activities were planned for parents, special-needs children and siblings. We laughed together, cried together and made lifelong friendships that weekend. Most importantly, we were no longer alone.

One of our first tasks was to come up with a name. I remember the many hours that we spent tossing possibilities around, finally settling on H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection. H.E.A.R.T.S. is an acronym for Help, Encourage, Advocate, Resources, Training and Support.

H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection is hosting several events this year in celebration of our anniversary, beginning with the Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Conference, featuring Pete Wright. The conference will be held on March 25, 2010 at the Doubletree Hotel, 3100 Camino Del Rio Court. The conference program focuses on special education law, rights and responsibilities; tests and measurements for progress and regression; SMART IEPs; and introduction to tactics & strategies for effective advocacy. The conference will close at 300 participants.

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In July, H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection is having a Sibling Workshop. This workshop will be for siblings of special-needs children, ages eight to adult. We will have a guest speaker and a sibling panel. This workshop will close at 100 participants.

There will be other events planned throughout the year, such as an Open House. Check our website for more information, www.heartsfrc.org.