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## GROUP RESPITE

Group respite offers our consumers the opportunity to enjoy activities with their friends while providing respite for caregivers. The group leaders work hard to provide a variety of activities designed to meet the interests of all participants. Activities range from less active, such as arts & crafts, to more daring, such as zip lining. It's important to remember that these groups are designed for people who enjoy social outings with multiple participants and who can function safely and appropriately in a group setting. Participants should be able to attend to the majority of their needs (bathroom, eating, walking) without 1:1 dedicated assistance. MCS currently hosts 10 separate groups. If you would like more information, email the MCS Group Respite Coordinator, Joe Pirro (joepirro@mcsnet.org).



### Meet the Team...

#### Takisha Holley

I came to MCS in 2016 as a Residential Program Manager when the company I was working for merged with MCS. Although I loved my job, I was also interested in other ways I could help people, so in 2021 I started working in the Family Support sector as a Navigator in the Autism program.

The best part of my job is being able to help my families in their time of need, and, of course, all the wonderful people I work with!

I share my home with Joseph, my amazing husband of 16 years, and the best dog ever...Freddie, who thinks he is the boss. *Editor's note: He IS the boss!*

I am a homebody, but I love to give my time to help others, frequently volunteering for the Fraternal Order of Eagles # 148.

And at least once a month you can find me at a local bingo hall where I go to relieve stress!!!!



## Grandparent's Network

MCS has hosted the Grandparent's Network since 2000. This is a network of grandparents who are the primary caregivers for grandchildren with developmental disabilities. The Network provides grandparents the opportunity to get together to share experiences, provide support to one another, and address challenges as they advocate for their grandchildren's needs. The Network meets on a monthly basis, usually the 3rd Thursday. With the input of the group, the program coordinator develops a plan for the year's activities that may include trainings, educational forums, and/or opportunities for social and recreational activities. The coordinator also provides information and referral services as requested. Given that there are a number of grandparents whose primary language is Spanish; the project's Coordinator is bilingual. The Coordinator can arrange interpreters for other languages. Transportation is provided to those in need. A light lunch is provided for meetings, speaker series, and trainings. For more information, please contact Nydia Sanchez at 413-301-7390 or [nydiasanchez@mcsnet.org](mailto:nydiasanchez@mcsnet.org)

## HIGHLIGHT

This issue's HIGHLIGHT is on 16-year-old Tommy M. Tommy is a talented artist who started painting as a way of communicating when he was just 3 years old. He creates his drawings with markers, colored pencils, and gel pens using a variety of vibrant colors. You're bound to find a new object or detail the more you look at Tommy's drawings due to their intricate nature. Thank you for sharing your beautiful artwork with us Tommy!



Visit our website at [mcsnet.org](http://mcsnet.org)

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## Meet this issue's pet:

Tonks is a one-year old cat who was rescued by Shannon, our Family Support Program Supervisor, and her partner. Tonks enjoys stealing bread off counter tops, singing the blues at 4 am, and chirping at her bird friends nonstop. Tonks has many aliases including Biscuit Head, Honky Tonky, and Baby-head.



## Transition Mini-Series

MCS, DDS and Agawam Special Services are offering an on-going Transition Mini-Series on transition related topics. Sessions are on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. The Zoom meeting number is 222 292 7922 and the passcode is 123456. Feel free to join us—there is no need to register ahead of time.

## Transition Fairs

*The annual DDS Transition Fairs are back! These fairs offer a wealth of information about the transition process. Don't miss them!*

**SPRINGFIELD TRANSITION FAIR**— April 11, 2023 at the Basketball Hall of Fame from 5:30—7:30 p.m.

**HOLYOKE TRANSITION FAIR**—beginning of May...stay tuned for details



**EQUIPMENT SHARE**—MCS frequently receives equipment donations that we are happy to pass along to families. While our family Support Centers do not have the capacity to store items, if you have something you would like us to post in our newsletter, we would be happy to do so.

**AVAILABLE: Rifton Pediatric Activity/Positioning Chair in good condition**



**Portable Folding Wheelchair Ramp—new. Holds up to 600 pounds, 10 feet long, and is appropriate for 2 or 3 steps.**

For more information on the Rifton chair or ramp, or to post a picture, please call Lilly 413-534-3299 / Joanne 413-301-7390 / Leslie 413-782-2500, ext. 325

*This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Robert Tesini, Rafael Ramos, Rey Dee Santana, and Ezequiel Pomales. We wish their families and friends peace and comfort .*

## Local Resources:

**ENLACE**—Every other Saturday Enlace holds a food distribution where families can come into the center located at 299 Main street in Holyoke and take a bag of food items. They also have clothes for donation. If you know of anyone looking to donate food, clothes, or any other item they are always willing to take donations to help the community.

**FREE HOLIDAY MEALS and COATS**—God's Way Ministries is offering free whole chickens and turkeys with all the sides from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 10th. They are also offering free coats for anyone in need. 156 Springfield Street, Chicopee.

**TOYS FOR TOTS**—MCS is hoping to receive a donation of toys from the Toys for Tots program. Please reach out to your Navigator if you are interested.

**PVTA**—All PVTA transit is free for the month of December.

**FUEL ASSISTANCE**—MCS Service Navigators recently attended a training on Fuel Assistance programs in our area, and are available to guide you through the application process.

