



# Children's Therapy Connection

Washington Health System Children's Therapy Center

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## The Power to Change Children's Lives

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**WHS and CTC have now made masks optional and families no longer have to call in to CTC prior to entering the buildings.**

**Thank you so much for your patience and understanding throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.**

<https://whs.org/care-treatment/childrens-care/childrens-therapy-center/>

Design, layout and editing by:  
Cathleen Gompers

## Occupational Therapy

### Family Leisure Opportunities

Written and Researched by Rachel Shirmer OTS



Family leisure outings are a fun way to get everybody out of the house and make memories together. That being said, finding fun activities for the whole family to enjoy together can be rather difficult. It can be especially hard for families of children with physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and/or sensory processing difficulties. As these issues are more widely known and understood, many attractions that offer family friendly things to do are more aware and offer more hours and events to accommodate those with additional needs as much as possible. There are many places here in the Pittsburgh area even which offer different accommodations and opportunities so that they may include those of all ages and ability levels. Attractions that offer such accommodations include:

#### The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

- Offers sensory friendly exploration hours from 1-5PM the second Tuesday of each month.

- Additionally, they offer sound cancelling headphones and weighted neck wraps for the duration of your visit upon request. These can be requested in advance of your visit via email found on their website.
- You can also find a social story of all exhibits with what to expect on their website

#### AMC Movie Theaters

- On the second and fourth Saturdays of each month, they offer sensory friendly film viewings of family friendly films. For more information and to know which film is being shown check the AMC website or call the theater.
- In Pittsburgh the AMC Waterfront 22 Theater participates in sensory friendly movie showings.

#### Carnegie Science Center

- Offers sensory friendly science hours on select Sundays from 9am-noon. A list of specific dates can be found on their website.
- Additionally, they offer sensory backpacks with items that can help make visits easier including a pair of noise cancelling headphones, mittens, sunglasses, fidget toys, and a cue card which are available during any visit upon request. Similarly weighted vests, blankets, or lap pads are available upon request. All can be borrowed for the duration of each visit.

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# Occupational Therapy

(From page 1)

## Family Leisure Opportunities



### Carnegie Museum of Natural History

- Opens early (8:30 am) on select Saturdays to offer 90 minutes of time in the museum as a quieter and more controlled environment. During such visits they also make quiet spaces available for visitors to adjust and decompress as needed.

### Prime Stage Theater Company

- Offer Sensory friendly performances the second Saturday of each show. More information about shows on and availability is available on their website.

### Little Lake Theatre

- Offers sensory friendly stage performances.
- Additionally, they offer social stories and sensory friendly guides for the theater on their website.

### Pittsburgh Symphony/ Pittsburgh Ballet/ Pittsburgh CLO

- Offer occasional sensory friendly performances. You can check their website for more information.

It can also be very costly to take the family out to engage in some much-needed fun outside the home. One thing that can offset costs for many of our CTC families is their Access Card. All of our families who participate in the Medicaid PH-95 Medical Loophole Insurance program will have received an Access card. This Access card can be used at many attractions in the Pittsburgh area for discounted entry or access to the facility.



## Locations that offer discounts with the Access Card include:

- Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library  
Free admission to public play sessions
- The Pittsburgh Children's Museum  
\$2 admission for up to 4 people
- Carnegie Science Center  
\$3 admission per person for up to 4 people
- Carnegie Museum of Art  
\$1 admission per person for up to 4 people
- Carnegie museum of natural history  
\$1 admission per person for up to 4 people
- Andy Warhol Museum  
\$1 admission per person for up to 4 people
- Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens  
\$3 admission per person for up to 4 people (must call in advance to make reservation)
- Pittsburgh Botanic Garden  
\$2 admission per person for up to 4 people



Leisure is a vital occupation to engage in. Taking time for leisure activities is important for maintaining balance in the lives of all of the members of one's family. Should you find that you have any questions regarding appropriateness of these various leisure activities or facilities for you family or your child you can contact the WHS Children's Therapy Center Occupational Therapy Department at 724-942-6100.

# CTC Superstars!



**Speech Therapy**  
**Matthew Gentile**



Matthew Gentile has been working very hard in speech. He has achieved many goals recently and his speech intelligibility has significantly improved. Matthew is a hard worker and loves to play with superheroes. Great Job Matthew! Your therapists are very proud of you.



**Physical Therapy**  
**Braelyn Gordon**



Braelyn is our PT star! Braelyn has been working very hard and has accomplished so much in physical therapy. When Braelyn first started physical therapy, she needed help to stand, walk and crawl. Due to all her hard work, she is now able to walk short distances all by herself, stand by herself and stand up from the middle of the floor without help. Braelyn is very brave and loves showing off her new skills each week. Braelyn always looks her best for PT with her nails done and lip stick on! We are so proud of you Braelyn!



**Occupational Therapy**  
**Dominic Jandrasits**



Dominic has been working hard the past year in OT. He has achieved all of his writing and scissor goals and has been making great strides toward trying new foods in his OT sessions! Dominic is a hard worker, has a great imagination, and always brings a lot of energy and fun into OT. Miss Julia is very proud of you Dominic, keep up the good work!"





## New CTC Staff

### Family Resource Coordinator Jenna Baer



Hello! My name is Jenna Baer. I am a mom of 4 wonderful daughters and I am honored to be WHS Children Therapy Center's new Family Resource Coordinator!!

Our family has been a part of the Children's Therapy Center since our first daughter was diagnosed with Autism and Epilepsy. She has recently "graduated" from CTC at the age of 18 and my husband and I are navigating a whole new journey as parents of an adult with special needs. Our other daughters are 15, 10, and 6. All 4 of them keep us very busy with music, dance, voice, musical theater, basketball, and most especially with all of their laundry!!!!

I am very excited to be a part of CTC as the Family Resource Coordinator. It is lovely to see and work with so many familiar faces at CTC, and I look forward to meeting everyone else very soon!

### Occupational Therapy Marissa Stout, MOT, OTR/L



Marissa is a board certified occupational therapist who completed her bachelors degree in Communication Science and Disorders and her masters degree in Occupational Therapy at the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her fieldwork at CTC specializing in pediatrics and has since been a per diem OT at the center, along with WHS outpatient hand clinic experience. She is now joining the team as a part-time therapist. Marissa is very excited to continue helping the children and their families at CTC as she is passionate about making the most out of everyday life. In her free time she loves spending time with her family and fur babies, traveling, exploring unique foods/restaurants, and spending as much time as possible in the sunshine!

## Miss Karen's OT Activity Corner

Spring is a wonderful time of year filled with possibilities, renewal, and growth. Here are a few fun activities involving repurpose, recycling, and discovery all while celebrating Spring.

### 1. Crayon Making

*Materials: muffin tin, silicone mold, old crayons, bowl*



First, find worn or unused crayons. Have your kiddos fill a bowl with water and then soak the crayons for about 30 mins. While the crayons soak, preheat your oven to 300 degrees. Retrieve the crayons from the bowl and everyone can start peeling the paper off the crayons. Next, everyone can break up the crayons and start filling the molds or muffin tins with various colors. Once filled, place them into the oven. Baking times will vary with the size of the mold/material, and the crayons can take anywhere between 8-18 mins to melt. Safely remove from the oven and keep them out of reach until they are completely cooled. If need be, the molds can be placed in the freezer to help release the crayons. This activity can enhance fine motor skills and also allow kids to practice color and shape identification. With the new crayons, imagine all of the coloring fun that's ahead!



### 2. Recycled Materials Bird Feeder

*Materials: Raid the recycling bin, twine, paint, glue, dowel, bird seed*

Clean out the container to be used as the bird feeder. Next, paint and decorate the outside of the container. Once dry, puncture a hole in the top of the container. Cut a length of twine and feed one end through the hole, tying a loop on this end and a knot on the other end that's inside of the container.

Then glue or twine to adhere a dowel (or pencil etc) to provide a perch for the birds. Finally, fill with birdseed and hang in an accessible location. This activity provides a creative outlet with the design and decor involved, and it also allows us to provide a meal for our fine feathered friends!



### 3. Outdoor Scavenger Hunt

Just in case we haven't had enough fun with Easter egg hunts, planning an outdoor scavenger hunt is a great way to spend time exploring nature and putting our scanning and observation skills to good use! Create a list of items via a grid, or on a dry erase cube, the possibilities are endless. Next get outside and start searching!!

I have enjoyed cultivating a selection of O.T. inspired activities over the past several months. Thank you for taking the time to check them out!

# Speech Therapy

## Spring has Sprung...and so can speech and language skills!

Submitted by Liza Tyler, MS, CCC/SLP

A natural way for children to learn is through play. When the weather gets nice, there are so many added opportunities for play that prompt your child to communicate. Think about how you can incorporate your child's speech and language goals into everyday activities!

Instead of staying inside when it rains, go out and play in it. Jump in puddles and use as many action words as you can such as hop, skip, splash, jump. Talk about different concepts, such as how our shoes get wet, but our head stayed dry under the umbrella.



Activities that use the five senses are a great way to learn about nature. You can talk about how our eyes see the green grass, kites in the sky, the little caterpillar on a leaf. Our nose smells the blooming flowers, food cooking on the grill, freshly cut grass. We can feel the cool breeze, the sun on our face and dirt on how fingers as we plant the garden. Our ears hear the birds chirping, roar of a lawnmower, raindrops on the window. We can cold glass of water, yummy s'more from a campfire.



Sidewalk chalk is a great way to engage children. You can work on skills such as requesting, color identification and letters. You can write out words that contain target speech sounds or use tally marks to keep track of how many times your child says each sound or word. Draw a picture of a snake to practice your ssssss sound! Work on following directions by learning a new game of hopscotch or tic tac toe.

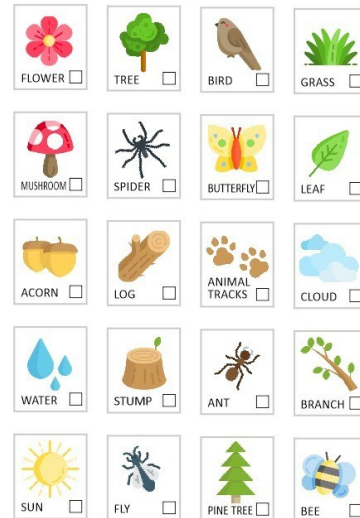
As a speech therapist and a mom, we can not forget about BUBBLES! Bubbles provide amazing opportunities to work on just about everything. Practice blowing the actual bubble, using a variety of verbs (e.g., open, go, pop, more), earning bubbles between each skill or task you are working on.

For example, say this /k/ word three times and then blow a bubble!

Other fun activities include going on a nature scavenger hunt, taking a walk talking about all the things you see or "spy", picnics in the backyard. Going to the park provides loads of chances to use functional words such as stop/ go on the swing, up/ down on the slide, on/off the spring riders.



### Nature Scavenger Hunt



© 2017 MakingFriends.com, Inc.

Images courtesy of freeicon.com

Download a full size version here:

<https://www.freekidscrafts.com/summer-savenger-hunt/>

Most importantly, just have fun being creative and spending time with your child engaging in activities you both enjoy. Getting outside to appreciate the break in the weather gives us added opportunities to do so in a more naturalistic and functional way!



## Physical Therapy

### Whole Body Vibration

Submitted by: Miss Jenn Kraus, PTA

We are happy to announce a cutting-edge treatment method now available at CTC! We've recently received two Hypervibe whole body vibration platforms and have been using them during our sessions with a variety of kids. Vibration has long been used to aide in cuing for muscle use, sensory input for calming or arousal, reduction of spasticity, and improved joint sense awareness. With whole body vibration, these concepts are applied by use of a vibrating platform. Patients are placed in various positions on the vibration plate, either maintaining static positions or while performing exercises, to reap the therapeutic benefits. The vibration plate can be used for just minutes at a time, or a full 30-minute therapy session, making this an excellent modality to use with our kids. Just fifteen minutes of exercise on a vibration plate can equate to up to an hour of traditional exercise!



Therapeutic grade whole body vibration machines can be used at a wide range of frequencies to affect the body in different ways. They also utilize a pivotal style vibration that is shown to recruit more muscle fibers and reduce vibration of the head. Recreational grade machines are significantly more affordable, but they typically have a much smaller frequency range and are predominately good for balance training and sensory input. They often use lineal style vibration which does not have the same

effect on muscle strength and causes increased shaking at the head. The Hypervibe units we have are therapeutic grade and can be customized to target specific areas of need for each individual child. Low/slow vibration frequencies target receptors in the joints for improvements in balance and body awareness. Mid-range frequencies increase circulation and muscle relaxation for stretching, as well as relief of muscle spasticity in patients with neurological diagnoses. Higher end frequencies stimulate use of additional muscle fibers during exercises to increase strength, muscle power, and bone density.



Many of the functional activities and exercises we already do with our patients can be performed on the vibration plate. Children find the vibration of the platform to be fun, with good tolerance and increased participation in activities performed on the machine. This leads to accelerated results in achieving goals like independent sitting, crawling, walking, running, and jumping. Whole body vibration is safe for most patients, although sometimes physician clearance is required prior to trialing the device. Ask your therapist today if your child would benefit from the use of this fun and effective equipment.

## CTC Information

### Social Media

Follow Washington Health System  
on Facebook!



### Freedom Transit

Families of CTC may be eligible for reimbursement of travel to the Children's Therapy Center. If your child receives Medical Assistance call 1-800-331-5058 to inquire whether you qualify for this service.

To view the reimbursement form:  
[https://www.freedom-transit.org/forms/MATP-Reimbursement-Form-5\\_26\\_16.pdf](https://www.freedom-transit.org/forms/MATP-Reimbursement-Form-5_26_16.pdf)



### Health Insurance

We only learn of your  
child's insurance changes by you  
informing us.



Please inform the front office of any  
changes ASAP to avoid financial issues.

**WHS is proud to partner with  
Washington United Way**



## New CTC Staff

### Jennifer Cimino Administrative Associate

My name is Jennifer Cimino. I recently joined the CTC team as an administrative associate. I have worked in the administrative field for 22 years. I'm a mom of 1 (my daughter Farrah). I enjoy watching movies and spending time with family and friends. I'm a big animal lover and I especially love my dog Oliver and my cat Jax. I'm enjoying my time seeing the kids and families each day at the Children's Therapy Center! I look forward to meeting you!

