



Resource Page

Compiled by Randy Pinsky

Confidence for all abilities

Known for its fantastic performances, dedicated teachers, and variety of dance genres offered, The Studio by Funky Feet has launched a new program for children with special needs. Whether it is Aspergers syndrome, high functioning autism, or intellectual disabilities, this initiative has been very popular among families since its debut in March. Guided by the mentality of 'no limits', founder Livia Avrieth was inspired to start this adapted dance program in memory of her aunt who never let her limitations hinder her ambitions.

Dancing helps children develop both gross and fine motor skills, coordination, and body awareness. Socially, they connect with others through teamwork, following instruction, and having a final performance to work towards. And at its essence, dance is an incredibly powerful non-verbal means of self-expression, in its simplest form enabling the 'feel good' emotion. Through word associations, dancing and singing, the Diamond Dance Approach is more than 'just dancing', but rather is a truly creative form of collective movement.

Small class sizes allow students to feel uninhibited and able to express themselves in a non-judgmental and welcoming environment. For information visit www.funkyfeet.ca, email livia@thestudiobyfunkyfeet.ca or call (514) 684-7300.



A community of support and empowerment

Families of children with special needs experience a whole spectrum of emotions on a daily basis, from the celebration of special moments, to overwhelming challenges, with everything else in between. It can often be an isolating situation with constant worries about therapies, finances, making friends, and developing supportive

networks. It was for this reason that HAVI Friends was born.

Montreal-based charitable organization Happy Village International (HAVI) advocates for children with alternative abilities, promoting educational programs and community involvement to increase integration and reduce social stigma. In addition to its Montreal activities, HAVI also runs the Educate Our Girls project in the Volta region of Ghana, West Africa.

Packed with a diversity of themes, HAVI Friends is a bi-monthly mentorship program of volunteer-led activities and resource-based sessions facilitated by professionals in the field of disability. From art projects and indoor gardening, to sports and cupcake decorating, children make friends and enjoy a one-on-one ratio with volunteers. Together We Are Able. For information visit www.happyvillageintl.com, or contact Luiza Baez, program director of HAVI Friends at luiza.baez@happyvillageintl.com or (514) 917-5505.



Agence Ometz: Support for after 18

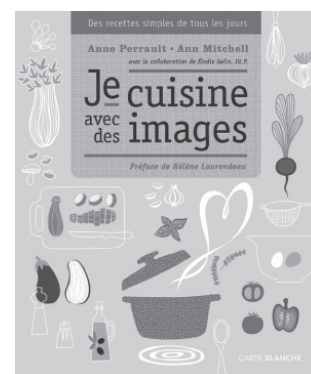
For parents of kids with special needs, a lingering concern is always what their options are once their children are out of school. In collaboration with Emploi Québec, Ometz Supported Employment Services directly addresses this issue, and assists adults with intellectual challenges, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and mental illness, secure and maintain employment. The employment specialists assess interests, skills, and abilities, and have been effectively integrating adults into the job market for close to three decades.

Ometz Supported Employment specialists educate employers from various industries about hiring their clients on topics ranging from safety and workplace productivity, to needs for accommodation. This group of clientele is in fact an untapped pool of valuable resources as they can provide specialized skills and alternate perspectives that can contribute to raising productivity as well as help sensitize others about disability, diversity and inclusion.

Through ongoing meetings, Ometz employment specialists assist clients with interview preparation, job matching, and on-the-job coaching. Such long-term support, vocational guidance and soft-skills training enables the best possible and meaningful fit, and a winning combination for all involved. For information contact Edina Markovitz, Manager, Supported Employment Services at (514) 342-0000, ext. 3377, email Edina.markovitz@ometz.ca, or visit www.ometz.ca/employment/job+seekers/special+needs+employment.



Cooking up accessibility



entire memoirs on making the perfect crepe.

There is no lack of resources to cater to every palate and taste, but have you ever considered how it is for those with reading difficulties? In fact, the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network notes that four in 10 Canadian adults have low literacy skills. This cohort is, therefore, unable to use recipe books due to the complicated text, over-detailed instructions, and endless reminders and tips.

Je Cuisine avec des Images has created a unique cookbook designed with all literacy levels in mind. Whether it be adults with learning or intellectual disabilities or young children starting out in the kitchen, the easy-to-read recipes help make homemade cooking accessible to everyone. Knowing that preparing meals is critical for fostering empowerment and independence, authors Anne Perrault and Ann Mitchell tirelessly worked to compile nutritionally balanced and simple recipes that do not skimp on

taste or quality. Explained with appealing illustrations and simplified text, everyone can now put Gordon Ramsay to shame. Freshly made chili, anyone? For information visit www.aimercuisiniersante.com, or contact aimercuisiniersante@gmail.com.

Step aside Captain Planet; Kit Planete is here!

For children with different abilities, tasks such as sitting still, eating, or writing can present a challenge as the tools required are not adapted to their particular needs. Kit Planete to the rescue! This innovative company offers an impressive diversity of affordable therapeutic gadgets for every occasion and reality.

Designed with parents and educators in mind, the colorful website effectively groups products by environment (daycare, school, home), targeted focus area (fidgeting, fine motor skills, picky eater) and diagnosis to make searching for the right resource easier and more efficient. From posture aids and adapted school supplies, to stress balls, activity cards, and 'smarkers' (scented markers), the focus is to "empower parents and help [youth] develop confidence in their abilities".

The team's commitment is evidenced by the consistency in their messaging with locally purchased products and environmentally-sustainable packaging. Each product is accompanied by an informative factsheet with helpful hints to maximize the benefits of each tool. Help your children conquer the world, and add Kit Planete to your toolbox of resources! For information visit www.kitplanete.ca, or contact info@kitplanete.ca or (514) 990-0473.

