BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSOCIATES

NEWSLETTER

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LAYING DOWN THE LAW

BHA took a confident first step into a new area of education. The organization hosted its inaugural Special Education Law Conference on the Lehigh University campus on Friday, October 23. The law conference was attended by 87 individuals, including LEAs, school district special education directors, legal professionals, and more.

"I was pleasantly surprised at the number of participants and how well all of the sessions went," said Dr. Christina Fish, who spearheaded the project. "I was particularly proud of the BHA team and how we worked together to make it all appear seamless."

The theme of the conference was "Law that works for you." Dr. Perry Zirkel, a superstar in the special education law space, served as keynote speaker for the day's events. Linda Fusco bookended the event with the final keynote remarks that afternoon.

Zirkel used to hold the symposium at Lehigh University until his retirement, but BHA has taken the mantle and brought it back with his blessing.

"Dr. Zirkel being there and being able to pass the torch to us was very meaningful for me," Fish said. "He emailed me several times telling me how well the conference was done after the fact."

Fish and the planning committee have already solidified dates for a potential multi-day law conference next October. Stay tuned for more information in the near future!





ORANGE OUT

BHA has been remarkably orange over the past two mid-Octobers. October 21 marked Unity Day, a day for people to unite against bullying by wearing orange. BHA staff members wore coordinated orange shirts to show their support for the cause.

Bullying Prevention Month, held every October, is an opportunity to reflect on how prevalent bullying is in our society. One in every five students reports being bullied. Most bullyling, in a 2024 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, regards spreading rumors (13.0%) and being made fun of or called names (11.9%).

You can put an end to the practice. It takes an entire community of students, parents, teachers, and community members to come together to put a stop to this toxic and demeaning act.



HALLOWEEN TIDINGS

Halloween means two things at BHA: costumes and treats. There was no shortage of either at our programs on Halloween week. Whether students and staff went door-to-door, or took part in a parade thruogh the parking lot or the hallway, there was plenty of spooky spirit permeating throughout the organization.

If there is one thing that is a certainty at BHA, it's that our staff goes above and beyond to make the Halloween experience at school second to none. Hallways are decorated from floor to ceiling. Treats everywhere. This is the big dress rehearsal ahead of Thanksgiving and Christmas festivities, where the true tests lie ahead.

We're looking forward to even more celebrations as the year goes on.



HUMAN RESOURCES CORNER

by Alyssa Spotts — Director of HR

November is National Career Development Month, a great time to reflect on your professional goals and consider new opportunities for growth.

Career development doesn't always mean changing positions. It can be as simple as learning a new skill, gaining confidence, or continuing your education.

At BHA, we encourage our employees to invest in themselves and their futures. Here are a few ways to get started:

- **Set a goal:** Identify a skill you'd like to strengthen or an area where you'd like to grow.
- **Keep learning:** Explore trainings, certifications, or professional development opportunities.
- **Take advantage of available resources:** BHA offers a tuition reimbursement program for employees who have completed six months of full-time employment.

Remember, career growth looks different for everyone. Whether you're working toward a degree, pursuing a new certification, or building confidence in your current role, every step forward counts.

Your career is a journey, not a race. Celebrate your progress, stay open to learning, and remember that investing in yourself today can create opportunities for tomorrow!



MENTAL HEALTH CORNER

by BHA Outpatient Services Staff

November is here! Between short daylight hours, students itching for holiday breaks, and escalating caseloads or increased work, this month can leave educators and mental health professionals running on empty long before the holiday break arrives.

Outpatient is dropping into this month's newsletter with a quick reminder: you can't pour from an empty cup. When your days are spent holding space and supporting everyone else, try these three easy strategies to keep your own tank filled:

- The "Doorway Reset": Before entering a classroom, office, or meeting room, take three seconds to drop your shoulders away from your ears, release your jaw, and take one deep breath. Let the doorway be your prompt to drop the weight of the last task.
- Try for 5 minutes of Quiet: Guard even 5 minutes of your prep time or lunch break for absolute silence. Step away from grading, session notes, and screens to grab a warm drink or step outside for a breath of crisp autumn air.
- Practice "Good Enough" Grace: Perfectionism feeds burnout. Identify one task this week where "done" is better than "perfect," and allow yourself to leave it at 80% without guilt.

Thank you for everything you give to our school community every single day. Remember to extend the same empathy to yourself that you give so freely to others!



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HEALTHY LIVING CORNER

by Kristal Nemeroff, RN, CSN — Polk Academy Nurse

Did your Trick-or-Treaters see TEAL this Halloween?

While trick-or-treating this Halloween, you may have noticed a child carrying a teal pumpkin or candy bucket. Teal is widely used to represent food-allergy awareness, and some families use teal buckets to help signal that their child has a food allergy. You may have also seen teal pumpkins displayed outside of homes, letting families know that non-food treats were available. Halloween may be over, but food-allergy safety is important all year long!

Reading food labels is an important part of keeping children with food allergies safe. Food labels must clearly identify the nine major food allergens: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, and sesame. These allergens may appear in the ingredient list or in a separate "contains" statement. Always read the entire label, even if your child has eaten the food safely before. Ingredients and recipes can change without warning! Pay attention to food label statements such as "may contain", "processed in a facility that also processes", or "made on shared equipment". These warnings are voluntary and are used when there may be a risk of accidental cross-contact with an allergen. Because these statements are not federally required, the absence of a warning does not always mean there is no cross-contact risk. If you are unsure whether a food is safe for your child, contact the manufacturer for more information.

Allergens can show up in foods where you may not expect them. For example, milk can appear as casein or whey, wheat may be found in soy sauce, and peanuts or tree nuts may be used in sauces or other prepared foods. Teach children with food allergies never to share food or eat something unfamiliar without checking with a trusted adult first.

Check the label every time, and never guess about an unknown food. When in doubt, leave it out!



GOOD NEWS CORNER

Let's get into the good news! We have enough bad news in our news feeds these days.

- According to Our World In Data, Indonesia has decreased extreme poverty from 86% in 1984 to less than 4% today.
- A study published in the most recent JAMA Network issue found a link between step count and mental health symptoms. Those who took fewer than 5,000 steps a day showed the most symptoms for poor mental health, while those who took over 12,000 had the fewest. This was shown by having thicker brain tissue in movement and emotional regulation segments of the brain.
- Jeff Robertson of Holly Springs, North Carolina started a fundraiser called Skeletons for St. Jude. People can donate to the Halloween decorated house of their choice. Since 2020, they have raised over $1.1 million for the cause. Some of these decorations can only be seen to be believed!
- A state forest in Milwaukee is the site of a new "braille trail." The 1/3 mile trail features braille signs and audio guides for visually impaired people to enjoy the outdoors.



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ACHIEVEMENT CORNER

GRADUATIONS

Amanda Stezenko (Licensed Social Worker (LSW) — Kutztown University) - PRIDE at Ashfield Academy; Jordan Kuhns (M.S. in Digital Marketing — Western Governors University) - Communications; LJ Sakalauskas (B.S in Psychology — Wilmington University) - PRIDE IES at Willow Academy; Pattie Hughes (M.S. in Trauma-Informed Education — Columbia College) - Journey at Valley Ridge Academy; Krissy Bedocs (M.S. in Curriculum & Instruction — Western Governors University) - Journey at Valley Ridge Academy

CERTIFICATIONS

RBT
Diana Snyder (SAIL at Polk Academy); Samantha Fortunato (PRIDE IES at Willow Academy)

DBT
Kaitlin Spayder (Journey at Valley Ridge Academy)

EDS
Scott Nietz (Specials)

CPR/First Aid
Jessica Dougherty (Transportation); Jeffrey Miller (Transportation); Donna Miller (Transportation); Donna Behler (Transportation); Terry Carrigan (Transportation); Scott Fairchild (Transportation); Zackary Adams (Transportation); Becky Adams (Transportation); Mary Ann Resh (Transportation); Zachary Terpstra (Transportation); Caitlin Cramsey (Transportation); Tammy Whiteman (Transportation); Samuel Strohl (Transportation); Michael Mertz (Transportation); Amy Graver (Transportation); David Guth Jr. (Transportation); Michael DeSantis (Transportation); Raul Rivera (Transportation); David Silfies (Transportation); Denise Silfies (Transportation); Sierra Walck (Transportation); Richard Workman (Transportation); Robert Rehrig (Transportation); Lisa Richardson (Transportation); Melody Olswfski (SAIL at Polk Academy); Jordan Kuhns (Communications); Lenny Ogozalek (Chief Clinical Officer); Jillian Horton (Chief Mental Health Officer); Monroe Berger (Career Employment Program); Ken Jordan (Career Employment Program); Evelyn Jordan (Career Employment Program); Samantha Hammonds (Career Employment Program); Jamie Ahner (Career Employment Program); Kim Sully (Career Employment Program); Dina Tudisco (Career Employment Program); Carol Yurchak (Career Employment Program); Laura Krause (Career Employment Program); Luciana Pope (Career Employment Program); Kristin Sutton (Career Employment Program); Arlene Barron (Career Employment Program); Shawn Everett (Career Employment Program); Lisa Ayad (Career Employment Program); Lorrie Balliet (Career Employment Program; Hollie Gower (Career Employment Program); Melissa Martin (Career Employment Program); Regina Schnell (eBridge Academy); Tammy Carr (eBridge Academy); Sarah Clabia (eBridge Academy); Sarah Stadnik (eBridge Academy); Jen Shappell (eBridge Academy)

Congratulations are in order to all of these individuals on continuing their education. We will continue to share more achievements!



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