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If you have received this newsletter by mail and wish to receive it electronically, call or email Mimi, and she will add you to the Spina Bifida Clinic email list.

Send us your topic and story ideas!
We encourage your comments and input. Please contact us to share your story ideas or any questions or concerns that you feel should be addressed in an upcoming issue of the Spina Bifida Clinic Newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you!
Update from Mimi Ardis

Happy fall!

Speaking of happy, I decided that this newsletter should focus on fun and so many things that the word “happy” conjures up. I want to try to lighten up our worlds after the past couple years of challenging times. I’ve talked about stress, living healthy and getting more sleep, so let’s have some fun now!

Clinic Updates
The search continues for a full time urologist. There’s a physician who is scheduled to come this fall for interviews, so I’ll keep you posted on that.

Dr. Jose Ramirez
Dr. Jose Ramirez, peds orthopedist, is up and running full steam. See his picture and biography on page 7. He will be at some of the spina bifida clinics along with Dr. Michalowitz and Dr. Prince. Remember: The main pediatric orthopedic office is at OSF Center for Health (CFH) on Route 91, but they will soon start seeing patients at the Hillcrest office as well. Their main office phone number is (309) 655-7668. Peds ortho also has Jane Kalmes, physician assistant, who will be seeing inpatient pediatric patients.

Latest update on neurodevelopment
Dr. Wendy Burdo-Hartman, a neurodevelopmental pediatrician, is the new division head of Child Development and Rehabilitation and will be coming to SBC as soon as contracts have been arranged. Annie Kirchgessner, APRN, continues to see patients at the Easterseals office. If you have questions or needs regarding braces and your child was previously seen by either Dr. Sue or Anne, Anne is more than willing to assist. Please contact me or call their office at (309) 681-6960 to make an appointment if that is preferred.

Find us on Facebook!
The Facebook group for Spina Bifida Support of Central Illinois is located at https://www.facebook.com/groups/2583258388573318/?ref=share. This is a private group, so you’ll be asked confirmation questions prior to being accepted into the group.

Stay safe and stay healthy!

Call me anytime you have any needs at (309) 624-4064.

Mimi
Fun: Did you know the word “fun” can be used as a noun, adjective or verb? Here’s the definition: enjoyment, amusement or lighthearted pleasure. It’s a very well-rounded word! The funny thing about fun is that what one person thinks is fun may seem like the total opposite to someone else. I love to hike, but my husband gets a sprained ankle just thinking about it. On the other hand, he will go on a 40-mile bike ride in the blink of an eye, but I say 20 miles is more than enough. So, taking that into consideration, I decided to be broad and vague and list a bunch of activities. Some will have little to no cost, some are more expensive, and some may require travel and time. But most can be adapted to kids with special needs.

Idea that can be done at home and are free or low-cost:

• **Go 24 hours without internet, TV or radio.**
• **Have a family game night.** Our favorites are Game of Life, Chicken Foot, Trivial Pursuit, Candyland or Mousetrap for younger kids.
• **Have a family movie night.** Start with G-rated for the littles. Pop some popcorn or make soda floats. My favorite is Sprite with lime sherbet.
• **Have an outdoor movie night.** This will require some type of backdrop and a projector. Our neighbor built a massive screen out of plywood flooring painted white, and they now have their own “drive-in” theater.
• **Build a fire in a fire pit and make s’mores or whatchamacallits.** I got my first experience with whatchamacallits when I was a nurse at my daughter’s brownie camp. They’re made just like a s’more but using a saltine or Ritz cracker, a marshmallow and a soft caramel. They’re delicious!
• **Play cards:** It could be anything from Go Fish or Uno to Spades and Euchre.
• **Sleep under the stars.** Grab a tent and go camping, or grab your sleeping bag and head to your back yard. My kids spent many a warm summer night “camped out” sleeping on our trampoline.
Ideas for outdoor fun:

- **Have a picnic.** Pack some finger foods, find a beautiful spot outside and enjoy the great outdoors.

- **Go on a scavenger or treasure hunt.** Have younger kids look for things that are green or yellow. Have older kids look for certain types of leaves or give them a list and engage your neighbors in the hunt.

- **Make fresh squeezed lemonade and have a lemonade stand.** Make an awesome poster board sign and make some money!

- **Have a water balloon fight.** My sister’s neighborhood has a massive water balloon fight featuring hundreds of thousands of balloons every Fourth of July. They dress up in costumes, mainly for protection, and go at it for an hour. Then they all pitch in to clean up the mess. It’s an awesome sight to see, and they have sooooo much fun.

- **Create a masterpiece sidewalk chalk work of art.** Be creative and utilize all your artistic skills.

- **Go fly a kite!**

Ideas for indoor fun:

- **Build a fort in the living/family room.** Gather all those blankets and pillows and have fun reading books, playing make believe or games, or just hanging out! Get out some flashlights and let the kids sleep all night in the fort.

- **Play dress up.** Even adults need to be someone else once in a while.

- **Have an arts and crafts day.** Find ideas for younger children on easypeasyandfun.com and for teens and adults on allcrafts.net.

- **Put a puzzle together.**

- **Make a family music video.**

- **Research your family tree.**

- **Make a family scrapbook.**

- **Make a collage of your dreams and goals.**

Fun food ideas:

- **Try a new food.** Who knew sushi could be so delicious???

- **Have breakfast for dinner.** This is still one of my grown children’s favorite dinner meals.

- **Make homemade ice cream.**

- **Make homemade pizzas.**

- **Bake cookies or cupcakes and decorate them.**

- **Create an herb garden.** This is a great thing to do for indoor gardening as it can be done in small pots. Use the fresh basil and rosemary on your homemade pizzas.

- **Bake cookies.** Here is my standard cookie recipe with my baking tips:
Mimi’s Cookie Recipe

- 2 cups soft butter (4 sticks)
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 3 eggs
- Mix the cream butter and sugars, then add vanilla and eggs, beat until fluffy (3-5 min), then add the following ingredients:
  - 6 cups flour
  - 1 ½ tsp baking soda
  - 1 ½ tsp salt

The basic recipe above can be combined with any of the following ingredients: Add chocolate chips (2 cups – more or less depending on your preference); add any kind of nut (walnuts, pecans, etc.); add ½ to 1 cup of peanut butter to the wet ingredients, then you can add peanut butter M&Ms to the dough; add ½ to 3/4 cup of cocoa to the dry ingredients, then add Reece’s pieces to the dough; add macadamia nuts and milk chocolate chips; add M&Ms; cut the flour in half and add 4 cups of oatmeal with chocolate or butterscotch chips, raisins or dried cherries, and white chocolate chips. The possibilities are endless.

Once you have your dough complete, wrap it tightly in Glad Press-N-Seal and refrigerate for 24-48 hours. The dough will be pretty hard, but form it into large balls between golf ball and baseball size and place it on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for five minutes at 350 degrees. Then turn the cookie sheets halfway around and move the one on the bottom oven rack to the top and the one on top to the bottom. Repeat after five more minutes. Then check the cookies every two minutes and take them out of the oven when the tops start to get brown. I definitely do not overbake. If anything, they are more under-baked since they continue to bake some when cooling.

These activities may involve some cost and may need adult help or supervision:
- **Perform a random act of kindness:** Donate food, time, volunteer, pick up garbage, etc.
- **Run, walk or roll a 5K:** These are usually associated with a good cause. Find one and participate. Get your friends and family involved.
- **Learn a new language** or at least some useful words or phrases of a new language.
- **Tie dye t shirts.**
- **Go bowling.**
- **Go to a museum.**
- **Go to an aquarium.**
- **Go to a sporting event,** such as baseball, football, hockey, soccer, etc.
- **Go to a play.**
- **Play miniature golf.**
- **Go to a drive-in theater.**
- **Take a road trip.** It can be a short day trip or weekend trip. Go someplace that you’ve never been.
- **Visit a historic site or other places of interest in our state.** Go to enjoyillinois.com to get ideas. The website is very interactive and has great ideas for fun things to do.
Here are some ideas for family fun in neighboring cities and states:

**CHICAGO:**
Lincoln Park Zoo, Brookfield Zoo, Millennium Park, Chicago Children’s Museum, Shed Aquarium, Art Institute of Chicago, Field Museum, Museum of Science & Industry, Chicago History Museum, Chicago Sports Museum, Peggy Notebaert Museum, Bronzeville Children’s Museum, Adler Planetarium, Maggie Daley Park, Grant Park, Urban Kayaks, Navy Pier, Skydeck Chicago, TILT at 360 Chicago, Chicago Riverwalk, American Girl Place, lake and river boat tours. Sports teams: The Cubs at Wrigley Field or the White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field (baseball), da Bears (football) or Chicago Fire (soccer) at Soldier Field, the Bulls (basketball) or Blackhawks (hockey) at United Center, or Chicago Sky (women’s basketball) at Wintrust Arena.

**MILWAUKEE:**

**INDIANAPOLIS:**
Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Art Center, Indianapolis Zoo, IMAX Theater (inside the Indiana State Museum), Rhythm! Discovery Center, Speedway Indoor Karting, Conner Prairie, Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Veterans Memorial Plaza, White River State Park, Eagle Creek Park. Sport teams: Colts (football) at Lucas Oil Stadium, Pacers (basketball) at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, Indians (baseball) at Victory Field, Indy Eleven (soccer) at IU Michael A. Carroll Track & Soccer Field, Indy Fuel (hockey) at Indiana Farmers Coliseum, Indianapolis Motor Speedway (car racing).

**ST. LOUIS:**
St. Louis Zoo, City Museum, The Magic House, St. Louis Children’s Museum, Contemporary Art Museum, Field House Museum, St. Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis Science Center, St. Louis Union Station, St. Louis Wheel, Grant’s Farm, Gateway Arch, Gateway Arch riverboats, St. Louis Aquarium, Missouri Botanical Garden, Myseum, Raging Rivers Waterpark, Six Flags, Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House, Adventure Valley Zip Line, Citygarden, Meramec Caverns. Sport teams: Cardinals (baseball) at Busch Stadium, Blues (hockey) at Enterprise Center, St. Louis FC (soccer) at World Wide Technology Soccer Park, St. Louis Surge (women’s basketball) at WashU Fieldhouse, car racing at Tri City Speedway (Pontoon Beach, Illinois).

**IOWA:**
Adventureland Park (Altoona), Arnolds Park Amusement Park (Arnolds Park), Blank Park Zoo (Des Moines), Carl A. and Peggy J. Bluedorn Science Imaginarium (Waterloo), Science Center of Iowa (Des Moines), Iowa Children’s Museum (Coralville), Railroad Museum (Boone), Charles H. MacNider Art Museum (Mason City), Sullivan Brothers Iowa Veterans Museum (Waterloo), National Balloon Museum (Indianola), Sanford Museum and Planetarium (Cherokee), Crystal Lake Cave (Dubuque), Greater Des Moines Botanical Center, Effigy Mounds National Monument (Harpers Ferry), Field of Dreams movie site (Dyersville). There are no major league sports teams in Iowa, but there are several minor league teams, including the Iowa Cubs (the AAA affiliate of the Chicago Cubs in Des Moines).

These are just a sampling of fun options for the whole family, but there are so many more. Visit each state’s website for more ideas.
Meet Dr. Jose Ramirez!

Dr. Ramirez completed his BA and MA at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and graduated from medical school from Columbia University in New York City. He completed his orthopedic surgery residency and trauma fellowship at Brown University and his pediatric orthopedic fellowship at Children’s Health Care in Atlanta. He is seeing patients at the OSF HealthCare Children’s Hospital of Illinois’ pediatric orthopedic offices at OSF Center for Health and in the Hillcrest office, Ste. 301. In December, he will start seeing patients in the adult spina bifida clinic.

His main office phone number is (309) 655-7668.

Funds available through the Illinois Spina Bifida Association

Did you know that ISBA offers funds for equipment and emergency assistance?

**Equipment Fund:** Families may request up to $250 toward out-of-pocket costs for orthotic or other mobility equipment. To qualify, the equipment must be utilized by an Illinois resident with spina bifida. Check the ISBA website!

**Emergency Assistance Fund:** Illinois residents with spina bifida can apply for emergency financial assistance up to $500. Money is paid directly to the vendor/supplier, and documentation of need is required. Call ISAB at (773) 444-0305 for more information.

Information about ISBA funds is available at i-sba.org.

Illinois Spina Bifida Association Support Groups

The Illinois Spina Bifida Association offers support groups in the following areas/regions:

Peoria, Bloomington/Normal, Rockford, Southern Illinois and Western Illinois.

For information, contact (773) 444-0305 or info@i-sba.org.