

# Informing Families

*Building Trust*

A Partnership for Better Communication  
on Developmental Disabilities Issues in Washington State

## Supporting and Celebrating Siblings

The relationship between siblings is one of the longest and most socially significant bond that exists. And, if one of the siblings has a disability, it's a relationship that comes with a lifelong set of unique issues—some good, some challenging. Just like children with special needs, siblings needs support, connection and recognition.

In honor of National Siblings Day this month, we'd like to acknowledge the meaningful role these siblings play. They are a vital link to the world beyond family; and yet, their concerns often get overshadowed by the day-to-day needs of their brother or sister.

### The Sibling Support Project

A Seattle-based organization with programs throughout the state and nation, the Sibling Support Project understands that siblings (sibs) often feel overshadowed by demands for time and attention of their brother or sister with special needs. Giving them space when they need it, sharing information about the disability (using age-appropriate definitions), and setting a positive tone for how they perceive their brother or sister's disability will help sibs cope with their unique role and challenges.

The Sibling Support Project is most well known for its Sibshops (see inset below), recreation-oriented events where siblings (sibs) have a chance to spend time with peers who “get it.”

For more programs, links and resources that responds to the interests of brothers and sisters of individuals with special health and developmental needs, visit [supportsiblings.org](http://supportsiblings.org).



*Sibshops are pedal-to-the-metal celebrations of the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with special needs.*



Being the brother or sister of a person with special needs can be a good thing, a not-so- good thing, or somewhere in between. The Sibshop model blends information and discussion with offbeat games, cooking activities, and special guests—in a recreational environment. It's not therapy, but it can be therapeutic.

There are currently thirteen Sibshops throughout Washington state. For a list of locations, as well as online networks such as SibNet (for adult siblings), SibTeen and SibKids, visit the Sibling Support Project: [www.siblingsupport.org](http://www.siblingsupport.org)

