

# NEWS

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## **SAINT BARTHOLOMEW PARISH AND WESLEY SPECTRUM SERVICES FORM JOINT EFFORT TO SERVE RISING AUTISM NEEDS IN PENN HILLS AREA**

PITTSBURGH –Saint Bartholomew Parish, Penn Hills has leased 8,000 square feet of unused space in its school building to Wesley Spectrum Services, a human services non-profit organization dedicated to serving children, adolescents, and families with education, mental health, and family services.

Under the two-year agreement, Wesley Spectrum Services will provide services for children and adolescents with autism and other related development disorders. The focus will be on helping the children progress with social and communication skills. There will be morning, afternoon and evening sessions to meet the needs of all age groups. Programs for children with autism will operate with a ratio of one teacher to three students. In addition to the lease itself, Wesley Spectrum will pay also for their utilities, cleaning and maintenance, and they have agreed to capital expenditures for new doors over the two-year lease.

Wesley Spectrum's interest in a Penn Hills location was sparked by the need for services for children with autism in the Penn Hills area. "We are delighted over this partnership with Wesley Spectrum," said Father David Bonnar, pastor of Saint Bartholomew Parish and Dean of the East Suburban Deanery in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. "It enables our parish to meet a real

need in our community, and fulfill part of our mission—serving the spiritual, physical, and social needs of the community within and beyond the parish. It is heartwarming to know that our school building that once housed 1500 students will be almost totally utilized again, for the benefit of children and families.”

Wesley Spectrum was formed in January 2006 through the merger of Spectrum Family Network that concentrated on families and Wesley Institute, a forty year old operation that was geared toward children diagnosed with emotional disturbances and children at risk of school failure. Through its various programs, the new Wesley Spectrum provides services to 3,000 children and adolescents and 7,000 family members a year in 15 facilities in seven counties.

Almost a year ago, Wesley Spectrum opened its first site for children with autism in the East Hills at the Three Rivers Assembly of God Church in Penn Hills. Currently Wesley Spectrum’s board-certified Music Therapist offers Music Therapy sessions at the church. The sessions help a child with autism to relax or learn by responding to or making music, singing or moving. Music therapy builds self-esteem and refines motor skills.

The Wesley Spectrum Family and Child Development Center has North and South Hills locations, in Gibsonia and Bethel Park respectively. More information about Wesley Spectrum is available on their website, [www.WesleySpectrum.org](http://www.WesleySpectrum.org).