



Little Sport Of Maple Shade Establishes A Weekend Agenda For Young Children With Autism And Their Families

**The local sports & play center offers a unique "Champions Program"
on Sunday afternoons for young autistic children and their caregivers.**

This fall Little SPORT of Maple Shade in South Jersey, is set to resume its **Champions Program** for children with autism. The program utilizes a creative exercise and play curriculum that has been specially designed to meet the needs of both the children and their families and primary caregivers. It focuses on teaching independence as well as socialization and the development of imperative social skills through team building sporting activities and guided play.

Program coordinator Coach Lindsey Pirillo, a special education teacher with expert instruction in children with Autism, has created a curriculum that focuses on the special needs of children with autism. This includes the use of visual storyboards, active engagement and intensive sign language integration. "We're extremely excited to launch this program. We get the opportunity to help families help their children doing what we love and do best; develop healthy, joyful, respectful children through exercise, sport activity and, most importantly, play," said Jen Leonard, founder and CEO of Little SPORT.

The program, which offers classes Sunday afternoons, also fills a gap that families of children with autism are often desperate to fill. The Sunday class offering allows families a place to go to continue a structured learning routine; which is so important to these children's lives, explained Leonard.

Parents who have participated in previous autism programs with Little SPORT speak of the improvements they have seen in their children. Carrie Dunn, a mother of a child with special developmental needs, has found a home at Little SPORT. Dunn says, "Champions has given our autistic son the opportunity to grow and learn amongst peers. Storyboarding and picture activities help to map out his day. The structure, yet flexibility, of class is exactly what our family is looking for. As we say in class 'Work Together...Have Fun!' Thanks Little SPORT." The program accepts children ages 18 months through 9 years of age and begins on **Sunday, September 11th**. They are currently accepting new and returning students for the fall trimester.

Visit Little SPORT'S website, www.littlesport.net, for further details.

Founder and CEO Jen Baker Leonard opened Little SPORT in 2003 with the goal to promote life education through sports and play. In addition to a private training room for parent and baby, toddler classes and a preschool enrichment program, there's a Play Arena and private party room. The center has over 6,000 sq. ft. of Creative Learning & Play Space!

