

The Special Edition

March 2025

Message from the Director...

How exciting is the anticipation of spring? Longer days with more daylight, warmer weather—there's something about the sun shining that makes us all feel more productive and energized. Several of us have commented on how much better we function when the weather is nice.

Some of you may know that I'm a group exercise instructor at a local gym. What you may not know is that I also run. Now, I won't go so far as to call myself a "runner" because, truthfully, I'm slower than a turtle and constantly wavering between enjoying it and dreading it. But I do use my runs as a way to measure my fitness level. I track things like my resting and active heart rate, heart rate variability, VO2 max, and cardio recovery—all numbers I pull from my Apple Watch. I'm passionate about exercise and lifting weights because I know that being strong and healthy matters. Another area I focus on (and admittedly struggle with) is my nutrition. There's always room for improvement!

Lately, I've been thinking about how this ties into another passion of mine—special education and serving as your director. Just like I track my fitness progress, I also reflect on the key metrics that determine the health of our cooperative. Am I producing the right outcomes to ensure we grow and thrive?

As we approach parent-teacher conferences, I encourage each of you to think about the ways you measure student growth and progress. These conferences are a critical time to connect with families, celebrate student achievements, and discuss areas for growth. One of the most important tools in these conversations is the progress report. Ensuring that progress reports are completed on time allows us to provide families with clear, accurate information about their child's development and the supports in place to help them succeed.

Thank you for the time, effort, and dedication you put into your students every day. Your work truly makes a difference, and these conferences are a great opportunity to highlight that impact. Let's make sure we're prepared to share meaningful insights with our families!

~Erica

**The Coop will be closed for
spring break March 17-21.**

January/February Kudo's Winner



***Congratulations to Cayla Heckman,
Para at Central Elementary School!***

***Nominated by Olivia O'Neill, Special Education Teacher at
Central Elementary School***

Kudos to...

Eden Anderson, Speech Para in the Wabaunsee School District

This year, Eden is a newcomer to our USD 329 staff and has jumped right in. She has been a wonderful addition to our team.

We appreciate how quickly she is willing to help out in the preschool classroom when we have been short staffed, especially when her schedule permits her to spend some extra time.

She is always upbeat and positive with students even on their most difficult days. Her friendly demeanor and smile puts the kids at ease and creates an enjoyable atmosphere for everyone who works with her,

We appreciate all that she does and her TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) approach.

Cayla Heckman, High Incidence Para at Central Elementary School

I can't say enough about how much I appreciate Cayla and everything she does for our classroom. She steps in without hesitation, whether it's working one-on-one with a student to help them through a challenge, leading the class when I'm busy putting out fires, or just being that steady, loving presence that our kids need.

*She doesn't just show up—she truly *shows up* for these students, meeting them where they are, guiding them through tough moments, and celebrating their victories like they're her own. Her flexibility and willingness to do whatever is needed, without skipping a beat, is something I admire so much. And on top of all that, her attendance is exceptional—she's always here, always present, and always giving her best.*

Cayla, the way you love these kids as if they were your own speaks volumes about who you are. Thank you for being such a vital part of our team! Cayla deserves so much more love than just a shout out I could not do what I do without her support.

Annie Frank, Social Worker at the Coop

Thank you to Annie for all you do to help fill the gaps at Central during these challenging times of staffing changes. We couldn't do it without you!

END OF YEAR CHECK-OUT DATES for 2024-25

USD 320 - Tuesday, May 20 ~ 8:30-11:30 am and 1:00-4:00 pm

Wednesday, May 21 ~ 8:30-11:30 am

Thursday, May 22 ~ 1:00-4:00 pm

USD 329 - Wednesday, May 21 ~ 1:00-4:00 pm

USD 323 - Thursday, May 22 ~ 1:00-4:00 pm

Friday, May 23 ~ 8:30-11:30 am and 1:00-3:30 pm

*An email from Robin will be coming soon about sign-ups and the checklist. Every sped teacher and provider **MUST** complete the check-out process at the Coop.*

****IEP due date is Friday, April 11.****

PARA INFORMATION

- **Para Timesheet Approvals.** The payroll processing period for March is extremely narrow (less than a 10 day turnaround between the time period deadline and payroll being processed.) In an effort to stay on top of any potential timesheet issues, we will be checking timesheets each Wednesday for the week prior. Please be sure to have your paras enter leave asap, as it is used. They also need to submit their timesheets to you for approval each Friday or first thing the following Monday. Please be sure to approve their timesheets as soon as you receive them (after reviewing them and making any necessary edits).
- **Para Evaluations are due no later than March 31st.** All paraprofessionals (and transitional teachers) must have an evaluation completed on them using the cooperative para evaluation Google Form. If they are new paras or paras on improvement plans they would have needed one to be done in the fall and another this spring, before the March 31st deadline. When you are doing your evaluations please be sure to include any concerns and or issues that you have encountered this year regarding the para's work performance, attendance issues, and professionalism. These evaluations should be comprehensive and include details. If you have reached out to our offices regarding a situation with a para at any time this year, that needs to be included in the evaluation. If the para has improved as the year has gone on, go ahead and note that, but do not disregard putting it in the evaluation just because it is not a current issue. For example, you might write "Para had 10 absences in the first nine weeks. We met to discuss absences and strategize how to address the barriers affecting Para's attendance in October. Since that meeting, Para has shown a noticeable improvement in attendance and punctuality." We need information to be documented regarding para issues, throughout the year, in the event that future actions need to be taken. Courtney Carpenter, HR coordinator, is a great resource in regards to how to document any type of para issues, so please do not hesitate to reach out to her, or our office staff, for assistance with wording. Here is the link to the Google Para Eval doc which you will complete and share with the para, your building admin, Jennifer Nider, and myself: ['24-25 Para Evaluation Form](#) . Here is the link to the one page para eval signature page that you will print and all parties will sign: [Para Eval Signature Page](#) . Be sure to share the para evaluation form with the para, Jennifer Nider, Teri Bailey-Johnson, and your building principal. The Para Eval Signature page must be printed and signed by all parties and submitted to the cooperative offices no later than March 31st.
- **Challenging Duty Pay** - If you have changes regarding which paras should be receiving challenging duty pay, due to long term changes in staffing or changes in student needs, please send that information to me as those changes occur. **This is only in regards to students who have already been approved to have challenging duty para support.** For example, if a para who was working with one of the approved students is no longer employed with the cooperative, and you had to move staff to cover that student, you can just send me an email saying: Para B is taking the place of Para A in our schedule covering Student X. This will help us to keep our records updated for timesheet reviews.

PARA SHORTAGES

As you know, the coop continues to face significant paraeducator shortages. To address this, we are actively recruiting by posting positions on the USD 320 Talent Ed portal and K-State Handshake, distributing advertising flyers, attending recruitment events in the community and at the university, and offering training, professional development opportunities, and para stipends for completing inservice hours. Please share the para flyers again with your school community. If you have any other ideas for recruiting and/or retaining paras, feel free to reach out to me.

While increasing the number of paras is our goal, this situation also presents an opportunity to evaluate our systems and consider other ways to support students. Please consider the following:

- Identify the specific skills students need to be successful and determine how those skills can be explicitly taught. What would the para do to help the student succeed? For example, skills might include chunking tasks, checking for understanding, or reading directions. Reflect on whether these accommodations and modifications could be implemented by all staff, rather than increasing inclusion minutes on the IEP. This approach would be less restrictive and more ideal.
- If multiple classrooms at the same grade level are teaching the same core instruction, consider whether students who need extra support could receive it in one classroom, reducing the number of staff needed.
- Use this shortage as an opportunity to reassess the services provided. For instance, consider whether one para could support multiple students in the same class rather than assigning multiple one-to-one paras. Review data on student progress without para support to determine if current services exceed what is necessary to meet their needs.
- Review schedules to see if adjustments could be made system-wide or for individual students to ensure they receive the needed support.
- Prioritize support for the highest-need students. Although this isn't ideal, it's necessary given the current shortage.
- Good communication with families is essential to ensure we work together as a team.

IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

As we continue our ongoing file review and address a formal complaint, it has become evident that there are significant concerns regarding confidentiality. It is essential that we all prioritize accuracy and diligence when handling student information.

Please take the following actions to help ensure compliance and maintain the trust of our families:

1. When copying and pasting information into IEPs or other documents, verify that the correct student's name is used throughout. We have identified a recurring issue of documents containing the wrong student names, which can lead to serious confidentiality breaches. Make certain you provide copies including any handwritten changes to paperwork completed at the meeting as soon as the meeting is over. Then a clean copy could be sent to parents once it is ready if requested. Timeliness and accuracy is essential.
2. Before sending any student information electronically, confirm that the parent or guardian has provided written consent for electronic disclosure. Additionally, double-check that you are attaching the correct student's paperwork to avoid miscommunication or unauthorized disclosure.
3. Under no circumstances should information regarding one student be shared with the parents or guardians of another student. Maintaining strict confidentiality is both a legal obligation and a fundamental component of our professional integrity.

Accuracy in our documentation is essential, as our parents entrust us with their most precious gift, their children. We must honor that trust by safeguarding their personal information with the highest level of care. Thank you for your prompt attention and commitment to ensuring confidentiality and compliance in all aspects of our work.

IEP REMINDERS

USD 320 and USD 329 are in file review this year. Throughout the file review process at the cooperative level, there have been some inconsistencies noted on IEP's and paperwork.

Reminders:

- Ten-day notice must be given at least 10 days in advance. KSDE has access to the change logs in WebKIDSS, which means they are able to tell when these notices are being generated. Ten-day notice may be waived by the parent with appropriate paperwork; however, this should be used sparingly.
- What does this mean for you? Schedule the first meeting at least 20 days out from the IEP being due. Then make two attempts to contact parents (email and send home NOM with the student as an example). If the parents don't show at the meeting, then they schedule another for ten days out and document at least two attempts to contact parents for the new meeting. If the parents don't show up for the second meeting, then you can meet without them.
- To be consistent across the coop, please follow this procedure for Notices of Meeting: The Kansas Special Education Process Handbook states that the Notice of Meeting must be provided to parents at least 10 calendar days before the meeting to ensure they have adequate notice. The notice should document the date it was sent, the purpose, time, and location of the meeting, and the individuals expected to attend.
- If the notice was sent home on time but was not returned and the parent signs it on the actual meeting date, the notice should not be backdated. Instead, the date of the parent's signature should reflect the actual day they signed it. The documentation should clearly indicate when the notice was sent and when it was signed. This maintains transparency and compliance with procedural requirements.
- In such cases, it's best practice to document all communication attempts (e.g., phone calls, emails) to show that reasonable efforts were made to ensure parental participation and acknowledgment of the meeting notice.
- The meeting notice form must be sent to parents ahead of time. It is required to send notice to both parents when living in two separate households. It is also required to document sending it to both as long as both have parent rights.
- Staffing summaries should be kept anytime a parent is a no show for a meeting to document the contacts
- Parent participation in the IEP process is crucial. Parents are one of the five required members of the IEP team. They know their child best. It is critical that they participate in the IEP process.

Important-Medicaid Replacement State Aid Window Opening Soon

KSA 72-3440 requires the State Department of Education to distribute to school districts special education state aid as Medicaid replacement state aid in the amount of \$9,000,000. Allocations are determined based upon the number of special education children that have been approved for Medicaid reimbursement on March 1, 2025. Because this falls on a weekend, the count date is moving to March 3, 2025. Note: You are allowed to include Medicaid services for special education students one week prior and one week after March 3 (February 24 through March 10).

Providers, this window is extremely important to ensure that our cooperative is able to receive the appropriate allocation of Medicaid replacement state aid. Please be sure to see each of your Medicaid eligible students at least one time during this window. If a session is missed during this time, please try and make it up during the same week it was missed.

Reminder, the billing for these 2 weeks must be submitted to KMAP prior to April 1st. This is earlier than the typical mid-April date in past years.

The Just Right Amounts of Supports: Accommodations & Modifications

One of the hardest things to do as a special education teacher or related service provider is to quantify the needs of students by converting a student's skill deficits equivalent to a specific number of minutes. There is no basic mathematical formula that we can just drop a list of skill deficits in, that cranks out an answer that the student needs X number of minutes to best meet their needs. Instead we do our best to put a number of service minutes on IEPs that we hope isn't too much or too little, but is "just right."

When trying to get the "just right" amount of support for students to be successful, we may be overlooking the true power of accommodations and modifications. Accommodations and modifications are not tied to a number of minutes, but rather to the specific changes needed to help students learn and progress. **Accommodations are changes to a student's learning environment that help them to access and progress in the curriculum.** Modifications are changes to a student's curriculum, assessment, or instructional materials that help them to learn and progress.

When we are discussing what a student's needs are, we often hear that they need X amount of minutes of inclusion support, but we are unable to specifically identify what that inclusion support is. Rather than focus on a specific number of minutes, what if we were able to specifically identify the support that the student receives during inclusion times in the general education classroom and list them as an accommodation or modification that can be accessed as the student needs it?

Which of the following statements provides better context and understanding of what the student needs?

#1 - Student A has 25 minutes of inclusion support in their math class, because they struggle with operational math concepts.

#2 - Student A needs to have an adult check with them for understanding after directions are given to ensure they have a good understanding of the assignment. They also need to do two problems, and have them checked by an adult to ensure they understand the operations of the assignment and provide any necessary feedback or reteaching, before completing the assignment.

Statement #2 provides the specific support that a student needs, which they can access at any time, therefore creating a truly individualized support that is tailored to meet each student's skill deficits as they work towards future independence in these skills. In addition, as the student progresses there is no need to amend minutes on the IEP.

By focusing on the power of accommodations and modifications, we may be able to reduce the number of inclusion minutes on an IEP, as we are able to meet those needs through the use of accommodations and modifications, which a student can access as they need them (not limited to a certain number of minutes).

****If you have an accommodation or modification listed on an IEP there may not be a need to list a certain number of minutes, too as that skill deficit is being addressed.****

If you'd like to visit more about how accommodations and modifications can create independence, please do not hesitate to reach out! ~ Teri



Wamego Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Fundraiser

Dr. Jon Pachta, Treasurer of the Wamego Knights of Columbus, presents a check for \$2,360.84 to Erica Bammes, Wamego Special Education Director. This represents 80% of the funds raised last fall from the Tootsie Roll fund drive. The other 20% goes directly to the Kansas Special Olympics. This money is used to purchase equipment and materials for our students. Thank you so much to all those who donated!

NCI Training Dates

Friday, March 28 ~ Initial or Refresher as needed ~
Wamego ~ PLC Bldg

Call Robin at the Coop, 785-456-9195, to sign up for a session.



March is
**DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES
AWARENESS MONTH**

DLM Testing - DLM testing must take place in both fall and spring.

Spring window is February 3 through April 25, 2025. Plan early so you aren't rushed at the end of the window.

Child Find Screenings

March 28 - Wamego

Medicaid Logs

Quarterly due dates for 2024/25 Reminder of the School year are as follows:
March 18 (January, February, March 8)
May 24 (March 18-May 21)

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO REVIEW YOUR CASELOAD AND REMAINING IEP DUE DATES.

Be sure to move up IEPs as needed to help ease the spring marathon. Reminder, the due date for all regular IEPs is April 11th. Only new placements, EC transitions, or move-in IEPs should take place after April 11. Looking ahead to fall 2025 IEPs, any annual IEP that is due on or before September 15 should be held in the Spring by April 11. Every team member in the Coop appreciates this so they are not scrambling with a beginning of the year IEP when students transition to them. Thank you for planning ahead.

ESY 2025

We are beginning to plan for ESY 2025! As Spring Break quickly approaches, please make sure to have all of your data collected for any students you noted you would be recommending for ESY, when we reached out in December. We will be gathering that information to make decisions regarding ESY participation when we return from Spring Break.

Please remember that eligibility must be determined annually. While students may qualify for ESY one year, they may not qualify for ESY the next year. This eligibility determination should be discussed with families on an annual basis. *ESY is not for students who are gifted, nor is it designed to help students with disabilities advance in relation to their peers, or recover credits in their secondary programs. It is not designed for students who regress solely due to transitional life situations, inconsistent school attendance, or medical issues resulting in degeneration of skills.*

ESY is determined as a necessary service to eligible students, who without such service would not be able to recoup specific IEP skills following a break in service. See below for qualification information. The IEP team must determine if the regression, experienced by the student following a break in service, is so substantial that the skills cannot be recovered in a comparable amount of time to the length of the break. Some degree of loss in skills typically occurs with all students during normal school breaks, and would not be considered substantial.

ESY QUALIFICATION INFORMATION

A student must meet either the significant regression criteria and/or the nature and severity of the disability criteria in order to demonstrate a need for special education ESY services. Below is the guidance for both areas.

1. Significant Regression Qualifications

- a. Significant regression means loss of skills requiring 40 school days or more (9 weeks) to recoup.
- b. Measuring Regression:
 - i. Summer Break: Collect data in May on specific skill(s). Collect the same data in August when the student returns. Collect the same data at the end of the first quarter. Did the student recoup the skill(s) they had prior to summer break?
 - ii. Winter Break: Collect data in December prior to winter break on specific skill(s). Collect the same data when the student returns in January. Collect the same data at the end of the third quarter. Did the student recoup the skill(s) they had prior to winter break?

1. Nature & Severity of the Disability

- a. This justification applies to students who would be eligible for the Kansas Alternate Assessment (DLM model). These students require our most intensive services. *These students should have the 'Rubric for Determining Student Eligibility for KS Alternate Assessment (DLM) for Students with the Most Significant Disabilities' completed within Webkidss.

To be eligible, students must demonstrate:

1. Significant cognitive disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior;
2. Learning content standards linked to the Essential Elements;
3. Requiring extensive direct instruction and substantial modifications and supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum.



Job Olympics 2025

Mark your calendars! The 7th annual Job Olympics competition will take place on Wednesday, March 5, at the KSU Chester E. Peters Recreation Complex. Job Olympics is an exciting event that provides an opportunity for our high school students to compete and demonstrate their transition and employability skills. Students across the Coop have been practicing job skills and will be competing. Students can choose up to 4 events which could include Pre-basic, Basic, and Advanced levels in events like: shredding, vacuuming, filing, job interviewing, making change, rolling silverware, sorting and folding laundry to name a few. GOOD LUCK TO OUR STUDENTS!

STAFFING NEEDS FOR 2025-26:

USD 320 – Wamego:

- *Social Worker Paraeducator
- *Social Worker
- *Interrelated Sped Teacher – West
- *High Incidence Sped Teacher – Secondary – WHS
- *High Incidence/Interrelated Sped Teacher – WMS
- *Low Incidence/Interrelated Sped Teacher – WMS

USD 323 – Rock Creek:

- *Interrelated Early Childhood & Elementary Sped Teacher – Westmoreland
- *Interrelated Secondary Sped Teacher – RCMS
- *Sped Paraeducators – All Districts
- *Substitute Paraeducators – All Districts
- *Behavior Integration Specialist – All Districts
- *Occupational Therapist – USD 323 & 329
- *Individual Education Plan Writer – All Districts
- *Physical Therapist – All Districts
- *Speech Language Pathologist – All Districts
- *Transition Sped Teacher – Secondary – All Districts
- *Transition Sped Teacher – Elementary – All Districts

*Do you know
anybody looking for
a Sped job? Help us
in our efforts to
recruit for our open
positions.*





GREENBUSH
THE EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER

If you're interested in a March session, contact the Coop, 785-456-9195.

De-Escalation 101

*CHOOSE YOUR
DATE
& Register Today*



This workshop is designed for classroom teachers, special educators, building and district administrators, school counselors, social workers, paraeducators, related service providers, and transportation providers. Participants will enhance their understanding of how the nervous system affects our capacity to regulate emotions and recognize signs of distress. Additionally, attendees will examine the elements of de-escalation and explore ways educators can better support students facing challenges with emotional regulation.

Objectives:

- Consider the effects stress has on the nervous system
- Define regulation and dysregulation
- Identify biological and behavioral indicators of stress
- Identify the state of arousal shifts
- Outline strategies for de-escalation that are respectful to both brain and body



3/26/25
Girard
9am-3pm



3/27/25
Lawrence
9am-3pm

Contact Tommie Gonzalez, tommie.gonzalez@greenbush.org with questions.



Greenbush Main Campus
947 W. 47 Hwy
Girard, KS 66743



Greenbush Campus Lawrence
1104 E 1000 Rd
Lawrence, KS 66047

Click here to learn more about
what SLS has to offer! >>>>





GREENBUSH

If you're interested in an April session, contact the Coop, 785-456-9195.

De-Escalation 102

**A Deeper Look
at De-Escalation**

*CHOOSE YOUR
DATE*

& Register Today



This workshop is for classroom teachers, special educators, building administrators, school counselors, social workers, paraeducators, and anyone who wants to know more about why escalation happens and what you can do to prevent it through your interactions. Participants will take a deeper look at the factors that lead to escalation in the school setting, and discover universal proactive de-escalation strategies. Tools for use during a conflict, and post-conflict supports for students and teachers will be shared.

Objectives:

- To consider a different lens regarding the systemic problem with challenging behavior.
- To understand physiological regulation and dysregulation in students.
- To become acquainted with Dr. Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory.



4/15/25
Lawrence
9am-3pm



4/17/25
Girard
9am-3pm

Contact Jennifer Taylor, jennifer.taylor@greenbush.org with questions.



4/15/25 Lawrence

4/17/25 Girard

4/28/2025



COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

Two Opportunities to Learn!

3/25/25  3/27/25

9am - 3pm  9am - 3pm

Lawrence
1104 E 1000 Rd
Lawrence, KS

 Girard
947 W 47th Hwy
Girard, KS



CHOOSE
YOUR
DATE
\$ Register
Below

Workshop Overview:

In today's educational landscape, understanding and accurately assessing the needs of students with disabilities is crucial for providing them with appropriate support and services. The training is designed to equip school psychologists and special educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct thorough and effective evaluations for students with diverse learning needs.

Workshop Objectives:

- Review special education law and regulations, as it pertains to comprehensive evaluations
- Identify elements of evaluation planning
- Discuss evaluation and assessment techniques and data collection domains
- Collaboration with mutli-disciplinary teams as part of the evaluation process
- Review ethical considerations and professional standards

Questions? Reach out to:



Tommie Gonzalez, tommie.gonzalez@greenbush.org
Susan Severin, susan.severin@greenbush.org

3/25/25 Lawrence

If you would like to attend, contact Erica at the
Coop for approval.

3/27/25 Girard

March Celebrations



Emily Miser - 2
Chris Blanton - 6
Joni Webster - 9
Trevor Keller - 12
Cristina Hargitt - 14
Eden Anderson - 15
Jacey McElwain - 15

Chandler Gann - 16
Lorriel Dover - 21
Seth Holliday - 24
Coleen Deschner - 24
Carole Hay - 27
Olivia O'Neill - 31
Chris Young - 31



Social Work Awareness Month
A BIG SHOUT OUT TO OUR
DEDICATED AND FANTASTIC
SOCIAL WORKERS:

Annie Frank

Erin Hudson

**You are amazing and we thank you for all
you do for our students!**

March Fun Facts

- "March" is named for the Roman god of war, Mars. In the early Roman calendar, March (or Martius) was the first month of the year.
- March became the third month when January and February became the first and second months around 450 BCE.
- March 4 is Mardi Gras (aka "Fat Tuesday" or Shrove Tuesday).
- Birthstones: The birthstones for March are aquamarine and bloodstone, which symbolize courage
- Animals: March is when animals start to wake up from hibernation and the first robins appear, a symbol of spring.
- March's birth flowers are delightful daffodils and charming jonquils.
- March 7: The popular board game Monopoly was invented on March 7, 1933.
- March 19: The sun shines on the equator for the vernal equinox, giving us a near 50-50 split of day and night.

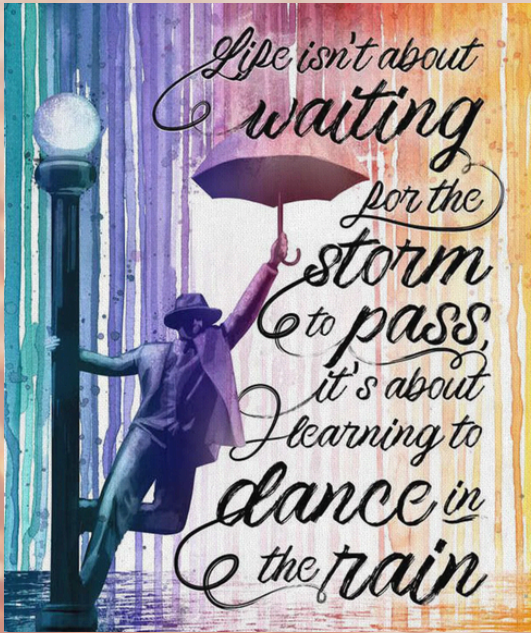


Spread Positivity and Encouragement

you
are
awesome

International Day
of AWESOMENESS
March 10

BE MINDFUL. BE
GRATEFUL. BE POSITIVE.
BE TRUE. BE KIND.



“Try to be a
rainbow in
someone’s
cloud.”

you are
LOVED
you are
NEEDED
you are
WORTHY
you are
BEAUTIFUL
you are
IMPORTANT



Start your day
with
Happiness
and
Gratitude

Beauty is
everywhere.
You only have to
look to see it.