

NewsLine

Newsletter of The Federation for Children with Special Needs

Double Issue!
Plus:
Gala photos



Major Changes to IDEA 2004

In November 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was passed by Congress so all children, including those with disabilities, would "have a right to education, and to establish a process by which State and local educational agencies may be held accountable for providing educational services for all handicapped children." In 1990, when this act was reauthorized it was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, also known as IDEA. IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 (IDEA 1997), and on December 3, 2004, IDEA was again reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).

IDEA 2004 includes some significant changes meant to ensure that children with disabilities receive a high quality, free and appropriate public education that allows them to achieve high standards in school. It also mandates that schools will be accountable, that there will be enhanced opportunities for parental involvement, and, among other things, that paperwork burdens will be reduced for teachers, local school districts and states.

Major changes included in IDEA 2004 are discussed below. For a side-by-side comparison of IDEA 1997 and IDEA 2004, visit: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/markups/105th/fc/hr5/mu57hr5chart.htm>.

EVALUATIONS & ELIGIBILITY (Effective July 1, 2005)

1. Eligibility as "Specific Learning Disability." Districts may decide to use

continues on page 4

Visions of Community 2005

On March 12, the World Trade Center in Boston was, once again, the venue for the Federation's Annual Conference for families of children with special needs and the professionals who serve them. With thirty workshops to attend, 42 exhibitors to visit, and almost 600 participants, there was a tremendous amount of learning and networking going on. The workshops, framed around the conference theme, "Visions of Community," aimed to provide

continues on page 8



A host of state officials showed their support for parents at this year's conference. Back Row: (L-R) Harry Spence, DSS; Paul Cote, DPH; Gerry Morrissey, DMR; Dave McGrath, OCCS; Sally Fogerty, DPH; John Wagner, EOHHS Middle Row: Marcia Mittnacht, DOE; Joan Mikula, DMH; Madeline Levine, DOE. Front Row: April Maselli, MRC; John Chappell, Jr., MRC. (Ed Dolan, DYS not pictured)

Municipal Medicaid Program

The Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center has received several questions from families regarding school districts that want to bill MassHealth (the Massachusetts Medicaid program) for school-related health services that their student receives during the course of his or her school day.

Massachusetts school districts, because they are considered Medicaid providers, can file

Medicaid claims to obtain federal reimbursements for students who receive special education services, as delineated on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), and who have MassHealth. This is called the Municipal Medicaid Program. In Massachusetts, the federal match for state dollars spent on Medicaid services is 50%. For every dollar that the Commonwealth spends on Medicaid, the federal government contributes 50 cents. Therefore, schools can bill for half of the cost of the services they provide. This can be a significant source of additional funding for schools.

continues on page 9

What's Inside

From the Executive Director:
The Little Engine That Could

Decades of Dedication:
The Federation's Annual Gala

Flexible Supports

Family Support Line

Book Review:
The Sibling Slam Book

A Way to Understand

Easing Access to
Public Transportation

Project Updates, and more!

PARENTS PLACE Bulletin
Parents Learning About Children's Education
The Massachusetts Statewide Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC)

Worth Mentioning

News from the Federation

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers honored Phyllis Sneirson, staff to the Parent Training and Information Center at the Boston Offices of the Federation. The Alliance recognized Phyllis' 28 years of excellent advocacy in building the dream of success for children. This award recognizes Phyllis' lifelong enthusiasm, devotion, and commitment on behalf of children with disabilities and their families.

PARENTS' PLACE—COMINGS AND GOINGS

Parent's Place has three new team members. We welcome Karen Harris our *Statewide Trainer and Outreach Specialist*, Diana Merritt, the *Workshop and Resource Coordinator*, and Valdisa Moura, *Statewide Trainer and Outreach Specialist for*

Portuguese Families. Karen, Diana and Valdisa work out of the Federation Office in Boston and can be reached via e-mail at: kharris@fcsn.org, dmerritt@fcsn.org and vmaura@fcsn.org, or by calling 1-800-331-0688.

OTHER STAFF UPDATES

Sonya Andrade has joined the Federation staff as the new Executive Assistant. Former Executive Assistant, Jackie McKeon, is now working full time as an Associate in the Development Office.

THE FEDERATION OFFICES ARE EXPANDING, WITH NEW PROJECTS AND NEW OFFICE SPACE!

The Federation is now home to the Family Support Line. For more information about this collaboration with the

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, read the article in this issue.

Later this summer, the Federation will complete some physical changes as office, conference and training room space is expanded. The phone system will also be upgraded. The Federation received a generous donation of \$25,000 to support the expansion and would like to hear from corporations and foundations who may be interested in supporting this new growth of the organization. Please call Brooke Heraty at (617) 237-7210 ext. 184 if interested.

PTI News: Fall Parent Consultant Training Institutes

The Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) at the Federation for Children with Special Needs is pleased to announce the Fall Parent Consultant Training Institute schedule. The purpose of these Training Institutes is to produce parents and professionals who are knowledgeable, skilled and able to make a sustained commitment to represent their children, other parents of children with special needs and/or persons with special needs in matters relating to special education.

Depending on the location, the program consists of seven to nine daylong sessions with the option to do a 50-hour internship. Topics include: special education laws, negotiation, mediation, inclusion, transition, communication skills, and parent professional partnerships. Class size is limited to 30.

Fee: \$300.00 for tuition and materials. A limited number of scholarships are available. Parents of children with developmental disabilities can also apply to the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council for Consumer Empowerment Funds, but you must apply at least 45 days in advance of the Institute you want to attend.

Boston: Meeting dates are: October 11, 18, 25, November 1, 8, 15, and 22. Each session will run from 9am to approximately 4 pm, depending on the length of that day's presentation, and will meet at the Federation Offices in Boston (1135 Tremont St., Suite 420). For more information, contact Phyllis Sneirson at 617-236-7210 or e-mail psneirson@fcsn.org.

Central: Meetings will be at Clark University, on Fridays, from 9 am – 3

pm, beginning in September. For more information, contact Mary Loughlin at 508-798-0531 or e-mail mloughlin@fcsn.org.

West: Meetings are on consecutive Wednesdays, beginning September 21 thru November 16, from 4 to 8:30 pm at STCC - Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center, 1 Federal Street, Building 101R, 3rd floor in the East Suites, Springfield, MA 01105. For an application and more information please contact: Julie Sinclair at 413-323-0681 or sinclair@fcsn.org

From the Executive Director

The Little Engine That Could

"You guys are like the 'Little Engine that Could'" a visitor to the Federation offices recently told me. She was making reference to the children's story by Watty Piper. We reminded her of the little blue engine that pulled a stranded train over a mountain to bring a trainload of toys and good things to eat to the children on the other side. The little blue engine puffed and chugged its way over a mountain, all the while telling itself "I think I can, I think I can." Our visitor was commenting on the number of activities, workshops and materials the Federation distributes to parents, in addition to the amount of time Federation staff spends providing one-to-one assistance to help families with the 'mountain' of problems they encounter as they try to get appropriate educational and medical services for their children with special needs, disabilities, chronic illnesses and/or other health issues. After her initial observation, our visitor asked, "Why do you do all this?"

The Federation knows what parents are up against when they have a child with special needs. We can help them when a child with mental health issues is wrongly handcuffed by police at school and taken away. Our **Parents for Residential Reform** and **Pathways for Parents** projects will assist them in understanding the Department of Social Services and in getting the services and placements their children need so they can get an education. We can help when school districts are out of compliance with federal law and students with special needs are not getting services that are on their IEPs (Individualized Education Programs), or when students with disabilities who have met local requirements for graduation are being prevented from participating in senior activities or graduation exercises. Those families will be referred to our **PTI (Parent Training and Information) Project** where they can receive individualized help and, if they'd like, attend a wide

variety of free workshops about state and federal special education laws, and writing clear and measurable goals for their students so they can get the Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) that they're entitled to by federal law. If a family doesn't understand the No Child Left

The truth is, it's the parents that are like the 'Little Engine that Could'. They are the ones puffing and chugging their way up the mountain... trying in the face of overwhelming odds, willing to do whatever it takes to get their children the services they need. The Federation is here to help however we can.

Behind (NCLB) act and needs help figuring out what that means for their child, the Federation will connect them to our **Parent's PLACE**, a project that promotes parent involvement in their child's education and in the schools. Some calls are from parents whose child has just been diagnosed with a medical condition and they want to speak to another parent who shares a similar life experience. Those families will be connected to our **Family TIES Project**. And, unfortunately, every week the Federation receives phone calls from families whose children are being denied needed health care services because of their inability to pay. These families are referred to our **Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center**, where they can learn about public benefits programs and other payment options.

The truth is, I told my visitor, it's the parents that are like the 'Little Engine that Could'. They are the ones puffing and



Richard Robison

chugging their way up the mountain to help their son or daughter get a good, quality education, or to ensure their child receives quality medical care for a disabling condition. Just like the little engine, parents keep trying in the face of overwhelming odds, willing to do whatever it takes to get their children the services they need. The Federation is here to help however we can. Laws such as Medicaid and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) are changing, government resources are tight, and families are facing great odds. We at the Federation believe in the power of parents helping parents. When everyone else says it can't be done, we say just keep trying, and together we'll get over that mountain. Just like the little train, we'll look back and say, "We thought we could."

Richard J. Robison

The Kids' Project

High-quality, affordable adaptive equipment made with care in Maine



Corner Sitter

Sitting on the floor to play with blocks or to color is part of being a child. For children with disabilities, sitting independently is often impossible. The Corner Sitter offers the stability these children need. Available in two sizes and with optional accessories including the Adjustable Tray.

Prices start at \$85.00



Have you seen The Kids' Project Adaptive Toy line? Visit us on-line!

207-443-3341

View product line at www.pinetreesociety.org

The Kids' Project is a program of Pine Tree Society

Major Changes to IDEA 2004

continued from page 1

either a formula that requires a "severe discrepancy" between achievement and intellectual ability, or a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation procedures.

2. Frequency of reevaluations. Re-evaluations may not occur more than once a year, unless the parent and the district agree otherwise. Re-evaluations must be conducted at least every 3 years.

IEP CONTENT AND PROCESS (Effective July 1, 2005)

1. Parental Consent. If a parent refuses the provision of special education and related services based on the initial evaluation, the district may not file due process to force the parent to accept those services. The district is then not required to provide a free, appropriate public education.

2. Research-based Practices: Consistent with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), special education and related services must be based on peer-reviewed research to the extent possible.

3. Short-term objectives or benchmarks. Short-term objectives are no longer mandated, except for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are taking alternate assessments tied to alternate achievement standards or if the IEP team agrees they are needed. Please note: Massachusetts has determined that school districts must continue to provide benchmarks or objectives for all students in order to meet this requirement (See MASS DOE Advisory at www.doe.mass.edu/sped/)

4. IEP progress reports. IEP progress reports must still describe the progress a child is making toward meeting the annual academic and functional goals, but there is no longer the explicit requirement that the report reference the extent to which the progress is sufficient to attain the goal by the end of the year, unless the IEP team agrees this is needed.

5. Transition to Adult Life. The amendments clarify that the transition process for a student with a disability now begins at age 16, including both appropriate courses of study and transition services, and is not

merely a plan for transition. When a student's eligibility for services ends as a result of graduation with a regular diploma or age, the student is entitled to a summary of academic and functional performance, including recommendations on how to help the child meet post-secondary goals. A reevaluation is not required.

6. Transition to Preschool. Parents of a child transitioning from Part C (early intervention) services to Part B (preschool and school-age) services can request that representatives of early intervention be invited to the initial IEP meeting to assist with a smooth transition.

7. IEP attendance and participation. IEP team members may be excused from attendance at the IEP meeting if their area is not being discussed (if the parent and school district agree), as long as they provide input into the meeting in writing in advance of the meeting. The law also expressly allows alternate means of meeting participation (conference calls, for example), and allows consolidation of reevaluation meetings and other IEP meetings.

continues on next page

**Lawrence Kotin, Esq., Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.
Eileen M. Hagerty, Esq.
Daniel T.S. Heffernan, Esq.**

*Providing representation to children and adults with disabilities,
their families, and non-profit service providers.*

KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP

Kotin, Crabtree & Strong is a general practice law firm one of whose specialties is in law relating to children, including education and child care issues. Other areas of practice include disability issues, civil and criminal litigation, personal injury law, estate planning and administration, intellectual property, corporations, including representation of private schools and programs, child care and other organizations, real estate, taxation and mediation.

One Bowdoin Square, Boston, MA 02114
(617) 227-7031 • Fax: (617) 367-2988
www.kcslegal.com

Ears is now taking
registration for
**BERARD METHOD of
Auditory Integration Therapy**
in
LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

**August 22 to 31, 2005
September 01 to 10, 2005
October 7 to 16, 2005**

EARS, Sharda Ramlackhan, M.A.
54 Jennifer Road, Lowell, MA 01854
PH: 978-458-3277 Cell: 508-397-3277
E-Mail: shardaeears@aol.com
www.autismusa.com

REGISTER EARLY

*Sharda is also a certified Parent Advocate
specializes in the Educational
issues of Kids with Autism*

Major Changes to IDEA 2004

continued from previous page

8. Changes to IEP after an Annual IEP Meeting. Parents and the district may agree not to have an IEP meeting to make changes to the IEP after the annual meeting is held. Instead, they may develop a written document to amend or change the IEP. The parent may receive the revised IEP upon request. The statute does not explicitly require written parental consent to make these changes after the annual review.

9. When Children Move. If a student changes districts within a state within the same academic year, the new district must provide comparable services to those in the previous IEP until it adopts the previous IEP or develops and implements a new IEP. If a student moves to a new state, the new district must also offer comparable services until it conducts an evaluation (if it

determines that an evaluation is necessary) and it develops a new IEP.

10. Pilot Program for Multi-Year IEPs. Up to 15 states will be allowed to let local school districts offer, with informed, written parental consent, a multi-year IEP, not to exceed 3 years. The new IEPs will contain multi-year goals. The federally required elements for the multi-year IEPs are not as inclusive as for annual IEPs. However, states may include these as required elements in their multi-year IEPs.

11. Pilot Program for Paperwork Reduction. Waivers of statutory and regulatory requirements, for a period not to exceed 4 years, may be granted to 15 states proposing to reduce excessive paperwork and non-instructional time burdens.

DUE PROCESS (Effective July 1, 2005)

1. Procedural safeguards notice. The procedural safeguards notice will be distributed only once a year except that a copy will be distributed upon initial referral, when a parent makes a request for an evaluation, when a due process complaint has been filed or if a parent requests a copy. The notice will no longer be automatically distributed with the IEP team notice or upon reevaluation.

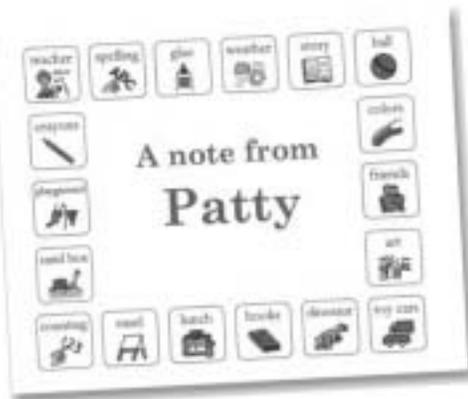
2. Timelines. Parents now have two years in which to exercise their due process rights after they knew or should have known that an IDEA violation has occurred. An appeal of a due process decision must be filed within 90 days from the date of the decision of the hearing officer unless the state has a different timeline.

3. Due process complaint notice. Parents who feel their child's educational rights are being violated must file a complaint with the school district (with a copy to the state) identifying the name and contact information of the child, the nature of the problem with supporting facts, and a proposed resolution. The school district must respond within 10 days unless the district within 15 days notifies the state hearing officer that it is challenging the sufficiency of the parent's due process complaint notice. The State hearing officer has 5 more days to make a finding.

4. Resolution session. Parents must go through a mandatory "resolution session" before due process. The school district will convene a meeting with the parents and relevant members of the IEP team within 15 days of when the school district receives the parent's due process complaint. The school district has 30 days from the time the complaint is filed to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the parents, after which a due process hearing can occur. This provision may encourage school systems to wait until a due process

Share Symbolic Sentiments™

Cards & Gifts that Say it with Symbols!



These simply delightful cards and gifts are a special way to say thank you to teachers, therapists, aides and families who support children with special needs.

Choose from note cards, personalized stationery and other unique gifts - all featuring colorful Mayer-Johnson picture symbols used to help children with autism and other developmental disabilities express desires and choices. Exclusively from Giving Greetings!

A portion of the every note card sale is donated to The Federation for Children with Special Needs.

Order your year-end teacher gifts today at

GivingGreetings.com

Easy online ordering 24/7!

Email: info@GivingGreetings.com Call: 978-440-9540



Major Changes to IDEA 2004

continued from previous page

complaint is filed before trying to resolve issues, or it may encourage parents to file requests for due process at earlier stages in the process since it will take so long from their request until the actual hearing can occur. Parents' attorney's fees are not reimbursed for work related to the resolution session. Although districts can't bring an attorney to this meeting unless the parent brings an attorney, districts will still have access to their attorney in preparing for the meeting, while parents will not.

5. Attorney's fees. Parents' attorneys may be responsible for paying the school system attorney's fees if a hearing officer or judge finds the complaint to be frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation. Parents may be responsible for the school system's attorney fees if a judge finds their complaint was for an improper purpose, such as to harass or cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of litigation. This could affect parent's willingness to obtain legal representation and/or file valid complaints to improve their children's education.

6. Qualifications for Hearing Officers. There are now explicit qualification requirements for Hearing Officers, who must have knowledge regarding the law and how it has been interpreted, and must be able to conduct hearings and write decisions consistent with standard legal practice. They must be objective, and not have a personal or professional interest that would conflict with their objectivity.

7. Grounds for Hearing Officer Decision. The Hearing Officer must make his/her decision based on whether the child received a free appropriate public education. If the parent alleges a procedural violation, the Hearing Officer may find that a child did not receive a free appropriate public education only if the violations impeded the child's right to a free appropriate public education; significantly impeded the parents' opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of a free

appropriate public education to the parents' child; or caused a deprivation of educational benefits.

DISCIPLINE (Effective July 1, 2005)

1. Manifestation Determination Review. Behavior is a manifestation of a child's disability only if the behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability, or if it was a direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP. Language requiring the IEP team to consider whether the disability impaired the child's ability to control or to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior has been deleted.

2. Special Circumstances. School authorities can now unilaterally remove children for 45 school days (not calendar days), for "inflicting serious bodily injury" (involving a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty), in addition to possession or use of weapons and drugs. In determining whether to remove a child because keeping them in their current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to self or others, a Hearing Officer is no longer required to consider whether the school district's proposed change in placement is based on a preponderance of the evidence. The law no longer requires the hearing officer to consider whether the school has made reasonable efforts to minimize the risk of harm, including the use of supplementary aids and services.

3. Stay put. The right of a student with a disability to "stay put" in his/her current educational placement pending an appeal of a child's placement in an interim alternative educational setting is eliminated under federal law. The placement during the appeal is the interim setting, although the hearing must take place within 20 school days and a decision must be reached within 10 school days from the hearing.

4. Services to be received in interim alternative educational setting. A child is entitled to receive programming and services necessary to enable him or her to receive a free appropriate public education consistent with section 612(a)(1) during the period in which he/she is in an interim alternative education setting. Under IDEA 2004, the student must be provided services to enable him or her to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward meeting the goals in the IEP.

5. Functional Behavioral Assessments. The requirement for Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavioral Intervention Plans are maintained in the discipline provisions.

6. Case-by-case determination. A paragraph has been added to the discipline provisions, which states that school personnel can consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to change the placement of a child with a disability who violates a school code of conduct.

OTHER

1. Use of IDEA Funds for Early Intervening Services: Districts may use up to 15% of their federal special education funds for "early intervening services" for students not yet determined to be eligible for special education but who need additional academic and behavior support. Emphasis is on services in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Funds may be used for professional development as well as educational and behavioral services and support. Districts *must* use these funds for early intervening services if they are determined to have significant racial disproportionality in special education.

2. Prohibition against mandatory medication. School districts cannot require a child to take medication as a condition of attending school, receiving an evaluation, or receiving services.

Parents for Residential Reform (PFRR)

by Andrea Watson

Andrea Watson, Director of PFRR, and Rebecca Cohen, PFRR Project Associate, attended the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) National Conference this year in Washington D.C. Andrea, who also serves on the CWLA National Residential Advisory Board, stated, "It is always nice to get together with folks from around the country, see what they are doing, what is working and what isn't working, and to bring that wealth of information back to the Federation and Massachusetts."

Andrea not only brought information back from the conference, she was also a presenter. Together with David Hirshberg, Executive Director of Germaine Lawrence, Inc., and Robert Wentworth of the Department of Social Services (DSS), Andrea shared her vast expertise about residential placements and parents rights.

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY GIFT FUND

On June 17, 2005 PFRR's held its 7th Annual Silent Auction and Dinner Dance at Anthony's Pier 4 in Boston. All proceeds from this event benefit the Children's Holiday Gift Fund. This fund provides age appropriate holiday gifts for young people in the custody and care of DSS due to abuse, abandonment or neglect and who have little or no family involvement. This event gets bigger and better every year. Boston Radio Legend JJ Wright was the



Eliot Tatelman displays his Powerful Friends award with Mass. Department of Social Services Commissioner Harry Spence.

emcee. PFRR's Powerful Friends Awardees were Senator Ted Kennedy (Connie Garner accepting) and Barry and Eliot Tatelman from Jordan's Furniture. They were all very deserving of this great honor, as *powerless children need powerful friends*

This year's honorary co-chairs were Marjorie Clapprood and James Taylor. Our Event Chairs were Michael McGuirk and Jan Nisenbaum. VIP guests included actors Robert Wahlberg and David Chokachi, comedians Patrice Vinci and Jay Gionnone. Additionally, guests bid on fantastic silent auction items, enjoyed a fantastic meal, and spent a good portion of the evening on the dance floor dancing to the Marsels.

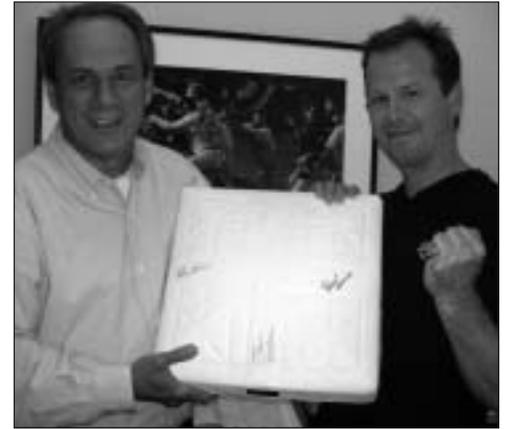
If you missed this event, but would like to support the Children's Holiday Gift Fund, send your check, payable to PFRR-FCSN Children's Holiday Gift Fund, to PFRR c/o FCSN, 1135 Tremont Street, Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120. Your contribution is tax deductible.

OTHER NEWS FROM PFRR

Rebecca Cohen, our intern since October of 2004, recently graduated from Northeastern University. Her major was Criminal Justice with a focus on Juvenile Justice. She will be attending a Doctoral Program at JFK University in California, where she plans to study psychology.



Connie Garner, with PFRR's Andrea Watson, accepted the Powerful Friends award on behalf of Senator Edward Kennedy.



Actor Bob Wahlberg displays the Red Sox championship ring and accepts an autographed base for the silent auction from team President Larry Lucchino.

Parent Advisory Councils: Does your child's 766-approved day or residential school have a Parent Advisory Council (PAC)? The Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE) requires that all 766-approved schools have a PAC. PFRR is collecting this information to ensure that all applicable schools are in compliance. Please e-mail pfr@fcsn.org or call 1-800-672-7084 and let us know the name of the school/program, whether or not it has a PAC, and if so, the name of the PAC contact.

OCCS Group Care Licensing: Due to reorganization within the Executive Offices of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS) will be moving to the new Department of Early Education and Child Care next fiscal year.

As of now, it looks as if Residential and Group Care Licensing, which consists of approximately 700 programs that serve 7000 children and adolescents, will be moved from OCCS to EOHHS. There will be seven licensors; this includes: two supervisors, one half-time attorney, and one support staff. There will be no investigational staff. As there is no firm transition plan in place, from July 1, until further notice, OCCS staff will still oversee the licensing for Residential and Group Care. As more information about this change becomes available, we will post it on our website at <http://www.pfrr.org> and listservs.

Visions of Community 2005

continued from page 1

knowledge about federal and state laws, communication skills, inclusion, health care and other programs and services that would inspire families, in the words of Dr. Rich Robison, Executive Director of the Federation, to “find new strength to shape our changing world,” so that our family members with special needs will be able to live, attend school, work and play in their own communities.

Dr. Robison welcomed attendees, and introduced special guests that included: John Chappell, Deputy Commissioner of the MA Rehabilitation Commission, Paul Cote and Sally Fogerty, Commissioner and

Assistant Commissioner, respectively, of the MA Department of Public Health, Edward Dolan, Deputy Commissioner of the MA Department of Youth Services, David McGrath, Assistant Commissioner of the MA Office for Child Care services, Joan Mikula, Assistant Commissioner of the MA Department of Mental Health, Marty Mittnacht, State Director of Special Education Services at the MA Department of Education, Gerald Morrissey, Commissioner of the MA Department of Mental Retardation, Harry Spence, Commissioner, MA Department of Social Services and John Wagner, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Children, Youth and Family Services.

Dr. Michaela D’Aquanni, an Associate Professor in the Department of Special



Dr. Michaela D’Aquanni delivers the keynote address at this year’s conference.

Education at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, gave the keynote address, entitled, “Creating Community Using the Vision of a Child.” Dr. D’Aquanni began by saying how pleased she was to see so many attendees. Their willingness to come out, despite the poor weather (it alternately snowed and rained the entire day) showed how committed Massachusetts parents are to supporting their children with special needs.

Dr. D’Aquanni spoke about how each of us is on a personal journey, and that our personal journeys teach us who we are. Her first slide (Dr. D’Aquanni’s PowerPoint presentation is available for viewing on the Federation’s website) was of some of her teachers—a composite of some of the children she’s taught throughout the years. Teachers are charged with developing a love of lifelong learning in their students, but the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal, and teachers must also be willing to be lifelong learners and to learn from their students. Dr. D’Aquanni acknowledged that her students were her first “inclusion” experts, and that every child can learn, as long as the curriculum is “meaningful, connected, motivating, fun and based on best practice.” She emphasized that inclusion does not mean trying to fit students with special needs into the mainstream. Rather, it means creating a mainstream where everyone fits. When parents learn from their children and teachers learn from their students, together we can recognize each child’s gifts and talents, recognize each child’s vision, and help them make that vision a reality.

Freedom Flight I: A Poster and Poem by Jessica Vohs

Available for \$12, includes shipping/handling. Discount on orders of 20 or more. The poster is a reproduction of a beautiful watercolor, and can be seen in color on www.jessicavohs.com. 18 x 24 inches, reprinted on a heavy poster stock paper with glossy coating.



Freedom Flight I by Jessica E. Vohs

*Butterflies flying free together,
each beautiful in its own way.*

*This is the spirit of human beings.
These spirits are not disabled.*

We can do and achieve things beyond our wildest dreams.

*All we need to be flying free is understanding
and a supportive environment that helps our dreams come true.*

*Let’s open our minds and hearts and fly free
together in a most beautiful dance of true life.*

Jessica Arts

www.jessicavohs.com

Municipal Medicaid Program

continued from page 1

There are two categories of Medicaid billable services that schools provide:

1. Direct services to students—this includes physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language services, audiological services, behavior management and/or counseling, and 1:1 nursing services.
2. Administrative activities—these are indirect services that are not child-specific, and include: providing resources and referrals, overall planning for all student health services, prenatal/postnatal counseling for pregnant students, and outreach to identify and enroll eligible students in MassHealth (including helping families with the MassHealth application), although no family is required to enroll their child in order for him or her to receive FAPE (a free and appropriate public education).

In order for your school to bill MassHealth for Municipal Medicaid services, the parent or guardian must give consent, as the school will be sharing information about the student with MassHealth in order to submit a claim for Medicaid reimbursement for school-based health services. The school should also have a

written policy and procedures for documenting all health services. Additionally, school personnel must meet both federal and state provider qualifications for the service he or she provides. For example, a speech and language therapist must have a current license from the Massachusetts Division of Registration and have either a certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association (ASLHA) or have a statement of Certification Equivalency from ASLHA.

Not all Massachusetts school districts participate in the Municipal Medical Program. Regional school districts that do participate receive their Medicaid reimbursements directly. For local school districts, the federal reimbursement goes to the city or town treasurer. Each municipality then decides whether to pass this money along, in part or in whole, to the school. In fact, this is why some families do give consent for the school to bill for services for their child, as they want to be assured the money will come back to the school to be used for special education.

If you have questions about public benefits, please leave a message for the Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210. Your call will be returned. You can also e-mail: massfv@fcsn.org.

NewsLine

Editor:

Beth Dworetzky

Production Manager:

John Sullivan

Layout & Design:

Hudson Nummerdor

Advertising:

Brooke Heraty

Translators:

J. Nilson Melo (Portuguese)

Walter Mena (Spanish)

NewsLine is a quarterly publication of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, 1135 Tremont St., Ste. 420 Boston, MA 02120.

NewsLine is supported in part by grants from the U.S. Department of Education. The views and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, or of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Ads herein do not constitute endorsement by the Federation for products, services, or organizations.

NewsLine contents are copyrighted by the Federation for Children with Special Needs; some material may carry other copyrights as well (noted where appropriate). Permission is granted to quote from us at length, while giving credit to *NewsLine*, a publication of The Federation for Children with Special Needs (and original author, if appropriate).

NewsLine's mailing list is occasionally made available to organizations in which we believe our readers may have interest. If you wish your name to be withheld, please call or write the Federation's Boston office to inform us.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs, Inc.

Our Mission:

To provide information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. We are committed to listening to and learning from families, and encouraging full participation in community life by all people, especially those with disabilities.

Board of Directors:

Dan Heffernan, President;

Peter Brennan, Treasurer;

Miryam Wiley, Clerk

Deborah Allen, Hope Colen,

Sara Commerford, Ed DeNoble,

William Henderson, Anne Howard,

Randi Sargent, James Whalen, Jane Wolfson

Executive Director:

Richard J. Robison

SAVE THE DATE!

THE FEDERATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE: VISIONS OF COMMUNITY

for Families of Children with Special Needs
and for the Professionals Who Serve Them

Saturday, March 4, 2006
7:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

World Trade Center, Boston, MA
Seaport District/Northern Avenue



News from Family TIES of Massachusetts

by Mary Castro Aten, Director, Family TIES

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide information and support network for families of children with special needs. It is a project at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division for Special Health Needs. Families of children with special needs can receive information, referrals, direct parent-to-parent support, and training.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

We are sorry to say good-bye to Kathy Morin, who has served as our Northeast Regional Coordinator and provided incredible support and information to families and professionals from that region for the past two years. We will miss her kind spirit, enthusiasm, and willingness to support others. In her absence, we are seeking someone to step into that role. If you are the parent of a child with special needs, reside in the Northeast Region, and would like to know more about joining our staff, please see the job posting on the Family TIES and Federation websites, at www.massfamilyties.org or www.fcsn.org, respectively, or e-mail mcaten@fcsn.org.

2005 DIRECTORY IS AVAILABLE

The newly updated 8th Edition of the Family TIES of Massachusetts Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs is now available. The directory has listings for regional, statewide and national resources about accessibility and travel, advocacy, recreation, legal services, resources for specific conditions and disabilities, plus LOTS MORE! To receive a copy, call your Regional Coordinator (staff list and contact information appear below), or leave a message at **1-800-905-TIES (8437)**. You can also access the directory on-line at the Family TIES website: www.massfamilyties.org.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Family TIES, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), held focus groups across the state to provide an opportunity for families to talk about issues related to emergency planning for their children with special health care needs. Parents shared specific areas of concern for their families, and staff from DPH and community programs brought information about state and local resources. One item of particular interest is the **Disability Indicator Form**, which when filed with local police, fire department or other

emergency agency, will alert 9-1-1 responders that a member of your household has special needs. You can download a copy of the Disability Indicator Form from the What's New section of the Family TIES website. Your Regional Coordinator can help with any questions you may have about completing the form.

TRAININGS

Interested in learning organizational skills and getting hands on experience with different organizational methods? Family TIES offers a wonderful, engaging **Let's Get Organized** workshop for families of children of all ages with special needs. Call your Regional Coordinator for the workshop schedule, or to make arrangements to schedule this workshop in your community.

FAMILY TIES REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Boston: Roxanne Hoke-Chandler

617-541-2875

Southeast: Karen Douglass

781-774-6749

Metrowest: Lisa Mayer

781-774-6602

Central: Barbara Donati

508-792-7880, Ext. 2337

Northeast: Position Available

978-851-7261, Ext. 4018

Western: Michele Wolf

413-586-7525, Ext. 1133 or

800-445-1255 (Western Region only)

Family Support Line

by Rebecca Cohen, PFRR Project Associate

Parents For Residential Reform (PFRR), and the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) are working together to support parents and guardians of children involved with DHS. The result is a newly created Family Support Line (FSL). This hotline was established to ensure good, open communication between parents and guardians of youth involved with DHS. PFRR staff also provides information to parents and guardians about the DHS

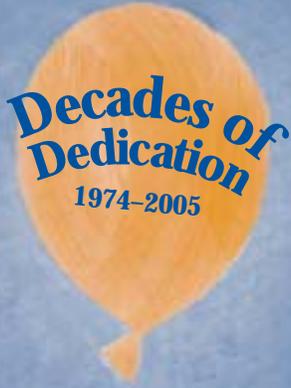
system and supports them through the DHS processes in which their children and families are involved.

The FSL operates from 9 am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and is answered by PFRR staff who have a vast working knowledge of the DHS system. At times, callers may have to leave a voice mail message. Your call will be returned in 24 to 48 hours.

Parents and guardians can call the FSL line to get information about their child's placement, get information and support to help

ensure their child will have a successful transition back home, or ask questions and receive guidance about DHS. As appropriate, callers will be referred to the appropriate contacts within the Department of Youth Services in order to ensure that their needs are met. These contacts may include the specific detention or residential placement of the child, as well as DHS officials.

The FSL serves as an essential step towards ensuring better outcomes for youth involved with the Department of Youth Services. To reach the PFRR/DYS Family Support Line, call 1-800-672-7084.



Decades of Dedication: 1974-2005

The Federation's Annual Celebration and Gala Dinner

by Brooke Heraty

Federation staff, family, friends and supporters gathered together at the Seaport Hotel in Boston on May 20, 2005 to celebrate the Federation's "Decades of Dedication" and to acknowledge the contributions of everyone who makes our work possible. The Federation is celebrating its 31st year as a Massachusetts parent center and as a national leader in parent information, resource, and training services.

This year's Gala was a "spectacular event" with over 400 guests. Holt Lunsford Commercial, Inc., JP Morgan, Michele and David Mittleman Family Foundation, Jon Jacobson Family Trust and Morgan Stanley provided generous support.

The evening began with a reception in the Plaza Lobby and a silent auction that drew an enthusiastic crowd of interested bidders. A vast array of unique gifts, including special tickets and gift certificates to area restaurants, hotels, and museums, brought in a record high from

the donated items. Over 170 restaurants and businesses willingly donated their time, services, products, merchandise and food to augment the Federation's fundraiser. The music of the Berkshire Hills Music Academy Performance Troupe created a festive note during the reception and complimented the elegant dinner and awards ceremony that followed.

This year the Federation presented the Martha H. Ziegler Founder's Award to attorneys Robert Crabtree and Lawrence Kotin for their outstanding efforts in crafting legislation, which led to the passage of the first special education law in the United States, Chapter 766. Mr. Crabtree's and Mr. Kotin's exemplary support of individuals with special needs opened the doors of schools to all children, giving students with disabilities unprecedented access to the general curriculum.

In March 2005, the Federation's Board of Directors voted to establish the Patricia Blake

continues on next page ←



Pat Blake



Robert Crabtree (left) and Larry Kotin (right)



From left: John Downing, Lisa Andreu, Dr. Mary Carson, Board Member Ed DeNoble, Dawnmarie Jadu



Ed McLaughlin (left) and Chris Jones (right)



From left: Dave Randall, Karen Randall, FCSN Board Member Sarah Commerford, Liam Commerford



From left: FCSN Board Member Miryam Wiley, Bob Crabtree, Steve Rosenfeld, and Steve Bing



Terri McLaughlin (left) with daughter Whitney McLaughlin (right)



Parents' PLACE Co-Director Janet Vohs with daughter, artist Jessica Vohs

Decades of Dedication

continued from previous page

Advocacy Award in honor and recognition of the legacy of advocacy Pat has given to parents of children with disabilities and self advocates. Pat's commitment to the Federation has empowered countless parents and individuals with disabilities to fulfill their potential through education and quality healthcare. The Federation is proud to extend her legacy with this annual recognition. We are pleased to announce that Pat herself was the first recipient of this important award. Congratulations, Pat!

We were delighted to have Joe Sciacca, Deputy Managing Editor for Politics at the Boston Herald, return as our emcee for the evening. As a parent, his wit and humor set just the right tone for the evening.

Proceeds from the Gala 2005 provide the critically needed funds to support the work of the Federation. Over the past year, staff, volunteers, and board members worked together to ensure the financial success of this annual event. It is a collective effort and we are pleased to announce that we exceeded our fundraising goal of \$150,000.

The Federation wishes to commend all the donors, volunteers, program participants, and supporters who made this the best Gala yet. We are honored by your commitment to the Federation's mission and thank you for your support.

Excerpts from Robert Crabtree's speech upon his and Larry Kotin's acceptance of the Martha H. Ziegler Founder's Award

Attorney Crabtree began by extending his thanks first to Martha Zeigler, FCSN founder, and then his wife of 26 years, Prill Ellis, followed by his and Larry Kotin's fellow lawyers, partners, associates and support staff at Kotin, Crabtree and Strong. He then thanked the Federation Board of Directors and staff.

"Larry and I can think of no award or honor from any organization that could make us prouder. For all its years of existence, the Federation has provided an inspiring and hugely effective model for empowering children and their parents with education and training and the production of so many resources to help parents understand and navigate this complex [special education] system. Without your work, it is impossible to imagine [Chapter] 766 having achieved the great degree of success it has achieved in its implementation.

It is so fitting that we celebrate the Federation and its work in this year as we celebrate the 51st anniversary of Brown vs. the Board of Education, the landmark case that defined and expanded the civil rights of people of color in our schools.

Chapter 766 had its birth in the midst of a great national wave advancing civil rights for large segments of our population who had not

continues on next page ←



From left: Martha Ziegler, Joe Sciacca,
Kathy Sciacca



From left: Robert Thompson, Kevin McLaughlin,
Joanne Thompson and Tere McLaughlin



Oakland Lopez and Carmen Roman



From left: Maria Gomez, Reina Perez, Benjamin Perez,
Amador Cabrero and Sonia Cabrero



From left: Joanne Brennan, Jim McEleney, Don Brennan,
Brendan Walsh and Kay Walsh

enjoyed genuine equal access to our public benefits and accommodations. The population that Chapter 766 was meant to serve had clearly suffered discrimination—children whose disabilities had blocked their very access to the classroom and who, once there, had been deprived of special educational services that could enable them to learn.

766 was developed and lobbied into law by literally hundreds of groups and individuals who joined together in the public arena to shape a massive change to an unacceptable denial of opportunity.

Hundreds of parents and professionals who saw the need for change seized the opportunity to bring it about. For all those folks to accomplish that goal, it meant sacrificing time with their families. It meant making calls, sending letters, showing up for meeting after meeting. It meant reading long and complicated bills, wrestling with the meaning of endless pages of legal language and figuring out how to separate the important battles from the less important. But so many people did do all this that by the time the bill was heard by the Committee on Education

in a public hearing, Gardner Auditorium was jammed with people and this revolutionary bill could not be stopped.

With Chapter 766 and, later, with the Education of All the Handicapped Act (now known as IDEA), children with disabilities began to take their rightful place in school. But this was not a self-implementing change. While many state and local educators worked hard to ensure that programs would be developed and that they would be effective, others resisted and looked for ways to thwart the full implementation of the law. Some of those opponents were motivated by fiscal concerns - the sense that no one part of the school population should enjoy an entitlement that was so costly at the expense of other school programs and activities. Some were motivated by cultural and philosophical attitudes—prejudice, in a word—an attitude that had reached its height in the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century—the sense that kids with disabilities, especially those with the more obvious and severe disabilities, could not learn, could not be effective and self-supporting citizens, would always be a drag, and were not worth the

money. One senator said to me: “You are disserving the Commonwealth and you are deceiving the parents of those kids. You are fooling the parents into believing that these kids can learn, and you are wasting the taxpayer’s money.”

Attitudes like this still exist. Words like that senator’s are rarely spoken so openly, but in subtle and systemic ways, these attitudes continue to fuel efforts to cut away at the rights and remedies of 766 and IDEA.

It is because of the fiscal concerns and those prejudices and also the natural resistance of schools to having parents and experts in there with some actual say over how a student will be educated that the rights given to parents to participate in Team meetings, to have independent expert evaluations and to have independent hearing officers and courts resolve disputes over educational plans are so critical. Parents and kids have lost some ground over the last few years in the definition of their rights and in the ground rules that govern their access to due process, but the heart of this law persists, and overall this is still an incredibly successful system.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of the following individuals and organizations. They helped make the Federation's 2005 Gala possible. It is through the collective support of those who gathered on the evening of May 20, 2005 to volunteer their time, energy and financial support that we are able to continue to grow as well as ensure that the Federation's capacities are significantly enhanced to meet the needs of our families.

Presenting Sponsors

Holt Lunsford Commercial, Inc.
JP MorganChase
Michele and David Mittelman
Family Foundation
Morgan Stanley
Jon Jacobson Family Trust

Friends of the Federation

Bank of America
Chicago Title Insurance Company
Robert and Dyan Cutro
DeNoble Family
Dr. and Mrs. Stephen Fish and Family
Goodwin Proctor
LaBranche and Co.
NSTAR
Nutter, McClennen and Fish, LLP
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Maurice and Luly Samuels
Jim C. Suttles / Partners Title Company
Jane Wolfson & Bill Mitchell

Table Sponsors

Berkshire Hills Music School
Bingham McCutchen
John E. Bostock
Peter and Jennifer Brennan
Child Development for Kids, Inc.
Flexo Concepts
Robert Crabtree
The Heraty Family
Kotin, Crabtree & Strong, LLP
Larry Kotin
The McKeon Family
The Megley Family
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce G. Monaco
Kenneth F. Plifka
Rosenfeld & Rafik, P.C.
The Robison Family
Sullivan & Nuttall, P.C.
Craig and Kristen Szeman
Van Der Moolen N.Y.S.E. Specialists, LLC
The Whalen Family

Silent Auction Donors

Abe & Louie's
Albert's of Brookline
Anderson Jewelers
Ardan
B&D Deli
Baker's Best
Beacon Hill Athletic Clubs
BellaJosie Face & Body Spa
Benchmark Company
Bertucci's Corporation
Best Cellars
Blue Man Group

Body in Balance
Bomboia
Bose Corporation
Boston Athletic Club
Boston Harbor Hotel
Boston Marriott Hotel Copley Place
Boston Marriott Newton Hotel
Boston Red Sox
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Brae Burn Country Club
Brattle Book Shop
Brookline Holiday Inn
Brussels Sprouts
Café Nicholas
Cape Cod Winery
CarReservations.com
Charles River Canoe & Kayak
Chesterwood National Trust for
Historic Preservation
Claremont Café
Coolidge Corner Theatre Foundation
CVS # 46
Davió's
Davis at Dusk
DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park
Denise Lindquist
DeNoble Family
Direct Tire & Auto Service
Eckersley Family
Edwin Case Comfort Shoes
Elizabeth Renee Esthetics
Eureka!
Evoo
Fairmont Copley Plaza
Fast Frame
FEI Theatres
Fig's
Finagle a Bagel
Fleet Center
Frederick Halström
Funrise Toys
Good Time Emporium
Gregory Stone
Hamilton Beach
Harpoon Brewery
Harvard University Art Museums
HC Salon
Heraty Family
Huntington Theatre Company
Hyatt Harborside
Island Alliance: Boston Harbor Islands
J.P. Licks
JessiArts
Jillian's Billiard Club
Jordan's Furniture
Kaleidoscope Decorative Arts
Kay and Moore Gift Baskets
Killington
Kyocera Wireless Corporation
Landmark Theatre Corporation:
Embassy Cinema
Le Soir Bistro
Learning Express
L'Espalier
Lindamood Bell
Lobster Tale
LongHorn Steak House
Lord and Lady's Hair Salon
MaComber Carpentry & Construction
Marco Polo
Metro Catering
Michele Topor's North End Market Tours
Millenium Nails
Mint Julep
MotoPhoto
Mr. Sid
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Museum of Science
National Jean Co.
New Balance Athletic Shoe, Inc.
New England Aquarium
New England PGA
New Repertory Theatre
Norman Rockwell Museum
North Shore Music Theatre
Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.
Old Sturbridge Village
Old Town Trolley Tours
Pageo Jewelers
Panera Bread
Party Favors
Pauline Pierce
Peabody Essex Museum
Pemberton Market
Periwinkle II
Picco Pizza & Ice Cream Company
Pomodoro
Pro-Active Fitness Inc.
Puppet Showplace Theatre
Redbones
Salon 187
Salon Capri
Sam Williams
Seaport Hotel
Senator Ted Kennedy
Simply Design
Starbucks
Sterling Golf Management, Inc.
Susan Purcell
Susan Shulman Interiors
Team Super-Fitness
Terra Firma
The Clayroom
The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for
Autism, Inc.
The Fireplace
The Little Swiss House
The Mount Washington Hotel & Bretton
Woods Mountain Resort
The New England Patriots Charitable
Foundation
The Pear Tree
The Preservation Society of
Newport County
The Upper Crust
Thomas Bausemer
Trader Joe's

Union Bar and Grille
Wachusett Mountain
Washington Square Tavern
Wellesley Booksmith
Wellesley Optical
Whalen Family
Wheelock Family Theatre
Winston Flowers
WODS Oldies 103.3 Boston
Yayla Tribal Rugs
YMCA of Greater Boston

The Federation for Children with Special Needs wishes to thank all staff, volunteers and board members for their dedication and commitment to quality education, health-care, and for their tireless efforts working to protect the rights of all children.

The Federation also wishes to thank the program participants: Attorneys Robert K. Crabtree and Lawrence Kotin, the Berkshire Hills Music Academy, Patricia Blake and Joe Sciacca as well as all those in attendance at the 2005 Gala.

With Appreciation...

The Federation would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their support and assistance with 2005 Gala:

Printing by Gnomon Copy
Hotel arrangements by Rachel Scott
Gala Photographer, Denise Smith
Flower arrangements by Donna Pinzone
AV & sound by Projection
Invitation Design & Program Layout by Hudson Nummerdor

And Extra Special Thanks to

John Doucet, Video Producer
Carlos Bermudez, Cameraman
Robert Cuddy, Gaffer
Stewart Adams, Audio Recordist
Wally Argo, Key Grip
Tyler Guertin, Production Assistant
Ken Perham, Lighting Equipment
Boston Camera, Camera Equipment
Brian Procopio, Assistant Video Editor
Peter Swanson, Video Editor
Putnam Investments
Finish Editorial
Soundtrack Studios

for their generous gifts of time and talent, to create this year's video presentation, "Helping Families: One Child at a Time"

The video provides a compelling picture that speaks to the heart of all that the Federation continuously works for and represents. Each video participant's story gives some insight into the profound difference the Federation is making in the lives of individual children and families across the Commonwealth. Watch for the video on our website: www.fcsn.org.

O Programa Medicaid Municipal

O Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education tem recebido muitas perguntas das famílias com respeito aos distritos escolares que querem cobrar o MassHealth (o programa Medicaid de Massachusetts) pelos serviços de saúde relacionados à escola que os alunos receberam durante o curso do dia escolar.

Como são considerados provedores do Medicaid [assistência médica gratuita ou a custos reduzidos], os distritos escolares de Massachusetts podem requisitar reembolsos federais para os alunos que recebem serviços de educação especial, conforme delineado no IEP (Plano Educacional Individualizado), e que tenham o MassHealth. Isto se chama Programa Medicaid Municipal (“Municipal Medicaid Program”). Em Massachusetts, a cobertura federal para os gastos estaduais nos serviços do Medicaid é de 50%. Para cada dólar que o estado gasta com o Medicaid, o governo federal contribui com 50 centavos. Assim, as escolas podem cobrar a metade dos custos dos serviços fornecidos. Isto pode ser um recurso significativo de fundos adicionais para as escolas.

Há duas categorias de serviços do Medicaid que as escolas fornecem e que podem ser cobrados:

1. **Serviços diretos para os alunos**—isto inclui fisioterapia, terapia ocupacional, serviços ligados à fala e à linguagem, serviços audiológicos, gerenciamento de comportamento e/ou aconselhamento, e serviços de enfermagem 1:1.
2. **Atividades administrativas**—serviços indiretos que não são especificamente da criança, e que incluem: fornecer recursos e referências, planejamento geral para todos os serviços de saúde do aluno, aconselhamento pré-natal/pós-natal para alunas grávidas, e programa de alcance para identificar e registrar alunos elegíveis ao MassHealth (incluindo ajudar as famílias com a aplicação do MassHealth), ainda que não se exija que a família registre sua criança neste programa para que ela receba a FAPE (educação pública apropriada e gratuita).

Para que sua escola cobre o MassHealth pelos serviços do Medicaid Municipal, o pai ou responsável deve dar o seu consentimento, pois a escola compartilhará informações sobre o aluno com o MassHealth para submeter a conta para o reembolso do Medicaid pelos serviços de saúde com base na escola. A escola deve ter, por escrito, uma política e um procedimento para documentar todos os serviços de saúde. Além disso, o quadro de pessoal escolar deve estar de acordo

com as qualificações de provedores, tanto estaduais quanto federais, pelos serviços que ele ou ela venha a fornecer. Por exemplo, uma fonoaudióloga deve possuir uma licença do Massachusetts Division of Registration, assim como um certificado de “Clinical Competence” da American Speech, Language and Hearing Association (ASLHA) ou uma declaração de “Certification Equivalency” do ASLHA.

Nem todos os distritos escolares de Massachusetts participam do Programa Medicaid Municipal. Os distritos escolares regionais que participam recebem o seu reembolso do Medicaid diretamente. Para os distritos escolares locais, o reembolso federal vai para a tesouraria da cidade ou do município. Cada municipalidade, então, decide se repassa o dinheiro, em parte ou no todo, para a escola. De fato, é por isto que algumas famílias dão o consentimento para que a escola cobre pelos serviços prestados para sua criança, pois querem ter certeza de que o dinheiro voltará para a escola para ser usado na educação especial.

Se tiver dúvidas sobre os benefícios públicos, por favor deixe uma mensagem na Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center, telefone 1-800-331-0688, ramal 210. Sua chamada será respondida. Você também pode enviar um e-mail: massfv@fcsn.org.



MATCHING GIFTS Make Your Contributions Go Further!

1. Check with your company's personnel department to see if they have a matching gifts program.
2. Ask for matching gifts forms for all the members of your team.
3. Review the requirements of your matching gifts program carefully—each program has its own policies.

Go to www.fcsn.org for more ways to give.

Programa Municipal de Medicaid

El Centro de Información y Educación del Cuidado de la Salud de Familia a Familia de Massachusetts ha recibido varias preguntas de las familias con respecto a que los distritos escolares desean enviarle la cuenta a MassHealth (el Programa de Medicaid de Massachusetts) por los servicios de salud que los estudiantes reciben durante el transcurso del día en la escuela.

Los distritos escolares de Massachusetts son considerados proveedores de Medicaid, por lo tanto, pueden pedir reembolsos federales por los estudiantes que reciben servicios de educación especial tal como esta escrito en el IEP (Plan Educativo Individualizado) y que tienen MassHealth. A esto se le llama **Programa Municipal de Medicaid**. En Massachusetts, el gobierno federal iguala el dinero que se gastan en los servicios de Medicaid en un 50%. Por cada dólar que el estado gasta en Medicaid, el gobierno federal contribuye con 50 centavos. Por lo tanto, las escuelas pueden cobrar por la mitad del costo de los servicios de salud que proveen. Este puede ser un recurso significativo de fondos adicionales para las escuelas.

Hay dos categorías de los servicios que Medicaid presta, por las cuales las escuelas pueden pedir reembolso:

1. Servicios directos para los estudiantes— Esto incluye terapia física, terapia

ocupacional, servicios del habla y lenguaje, servicios de audición, asesoramiento sobre el manejo del comportamiento y/o consejería y servicios de enfermera individualizados.

2. Actividades administrativas—Estos son servicios indirectos que no son específicamente relacionados con el niño y ellos incluyen: proporcionar recursos y referidos, desarrollar un plan general para todos los servicios de salud del estudiante, consejería pre-natal y después del parto para las estudiantes embarazadas; búsqueda, identificación e inscripción de estudiantes elegibles para recibir servicios de MassHealth (incluyendo ayuda a las familias para llenar su hoja de inscripción.) aunque no es necesario para ninguna familia que inscriba a su niño para que el o ella reciba una educación pública apropiada y gratuita (FAPE por sus siglas en Inglés.)

Para que la escuela pueda pedir reembolso a MassHealth por los servicios de Medicaid Municipal, el padre de familia o guardián debe dar su permiso, debido a que la escuela compartirá información del estudiante con MassHealth para pedir el reembolso correspondiente a los servicios de salud que se proveen en la escuela. La escuela debe también tener una póliza y procedimientos escritos para documentar todos sus servicios de salud. Además, todo

el personal escolar debe tener las calificaciones federales y estatales por los servicios que proporcionan. Por ejemplo, una terapeuta del habla y lenguaje debe de tener una licencia válida de Massachusetts Division of Registration y tener un Certificado de Capacitación Clínica de la Asociación Americana del Habla, Lenguaje y Audición (ASLHA por sus siglas en Inglés) o tener una certificación equivalente de ASLHA.

No todos los distritos escolares participan del Programa Municipal de Medicaid. Los distritos escolares regionales que participan reciben su reembolso directamente de Medicaid. Para los distritos escolares locales, el reembolso federal va para el tesorero de la ciudad. Cada municipalidad decide si pasa todo el dinero o parte de este a la escuela. De hecho, es por esta razón que algunas familias dan su permiso a la escuela para pedir reembolso por los servicios prestados a sus niños, pues quieren asegurarse que el dinero volverá a la escuela para ser usado en educación especial.

Si tiene preguntas sobre como recibir los beneficios públicos, por favor deje un mensaje a El Centro de Información y Educación del Cuidado de la Salud de Familia a Familia de Massachusetts al 1 800-331-0688, ext. 210. También puede enviar un correo electrónico a massfv@fcsn.org.

Save the Date!

The Federation for Children with Special Needs presents:

Annual Gala Celebration

April 28, 2006 at the Seaport Hotel, Boston

Please join us!





Bulletin

Parents Learning About Children's Education

The Massachusetts Statewide Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC)
Available online in English, Spanish, and Portuguese at www.pplace.org



Let's begin by taking a look at what media literacy is and why it is so important.

From T.V. to T-shirts, from billboards to cereal boxes, from computer games to the Internet, children are bombarded by media messages every day. "Media" means a form of mass communication. It includes printed material such as newspapers, magazines, and comic books. And it includes messages we can see and hear on T.V., computers, video games, radio, and at the movies. These messages are around us all the time and they are readily accessible by everyone, with or without a parent's O.K.

Literacy, the ability to read and understand the written word, is very important to a child's education at any age. Media literacy is just as important. "Media literacy," in its simplest terms is being able to see, read, or hear any media message and understand how to make sense of it.

Knowing how to "read" (or decode) media messages begins with the understanding that all media messages are made *by someone for a specific purpose*. To make sense of media messages, children need to learn how to take them apart and to

As part of Parents' PLACE's collaboration with local community organizations, we have joined with WGBH Boston, a major public broadcasting producer, to bring you this special issue of the Bulletin on media literacy. WGBH views the media as playing an important role in helping to prepare children for success in school and has a special interest in media literacy.

see what is really going on.

In learning to read, children learn that words in a story convey certain feelings and beliefs. In learning to read media messages, they must learn the meaning of images and sounds. They need to know that just because something is printed or said does not make it true. Learning to understand why and how messages are created in T.V. commercials and magazine ads, for example, is part of becoming a good critical thinker.

Parents can do a lot to teach their children what they as parents believe is best. When children are alone in their interactions with media, they draw on these lessons to create meaning for themselves. This issue of the *Bulletin* explains media literacy and gives practical suggestions for ways parents can help their children develop skills they can use every day to become good critical thinkers.

We hope you enjoy the article provided by WGBH and find all the information in this *Bulletin* useful in starting to talk with your children about media literacy. Have fun!

*Jessica Krywosa, Parents PLACE
Media Coordinator*

Media Literacy Begins at Home: Tips for Parents

by WGBH Educational Outreach

WGBH, your local public television station, aims to help families prepare children for success in school. One way we do this is through our educational programs. WGBH believes that media can play a positive role in the lives of children when used wisely. To use the media wisely and to really benefit from T.V. and other media, we need to know about the impact that media has on our lives. *We need to become media literate!*

So, What is Media Literacy?

Literacy means being able to read, write, and understand the written word. Media literacy is the ability to read, analyze, evaluate, and produce messages in a variety of other forms, such as television, radio, and computers, as well as in print.

We all know that reading and writing will always be VERY important. Today we live in a world where people get most of their information in ways that combine text with pictures and sound. Today, being able to read and write is no longer enough to make a person literate.

continues on page 2

Parents' PLACE is a project of the
 Federation for Children with
Special Needs
1135 Tremont St., Ste. 420
Boston, MA 02120
Toll free (877) 471-0980
www.pplace.org

Media Literacy Begins

at Home, continued from page 1

Tips for Families

Dr. Faith Rogow, Founding President of the Alliance for a Media Literate America, offers these tips to help families become more media savvy:

Know Your Values

Make a list of the values you most want to pass along to your children. Use that list to judge the media your child sees. Put a star next to every program or game that reflects your values. Cross out every value that does not agree with yours. If lots of your values are crossed out, you may want to make some new choices.

Remember that media are powerful teachers. When the messages in your child's media choices contradict your values, your job as a parent becomes more difficult (and being a parent is hard enough!)

Look at the Balance

Look at how your child uses media. Plan "screen time" to fit into a balanced routine of many different activities. Screen time means the time spent in front of the T.V., computer, or video games. A balance of activities might include:

- chances to make noise *and* quiet time;
- chances to have conversations *and* to express themselves in other ways, like drawing or dancing;
- chances to move all their muscles, in both big ways (like running) *and* small ways (like putting together a puzzle);
- time to play alone *and* with others, time to imagine; and
- chances to explore the world around them.

Observe Behavior and Mood

By watching children's behavior after screen time, you can tell a lot about how they are affected by what

they've seen. If, after viewing or playing a computer game, your child is aggressive, cranky, scared, or sad, you may want to consider making different media choices.

The Message is in the Images

Images are more powerful than words, especially for young children who are just learning to speak and understand language. So, to see what your child might be most likely to remember, try watching media or playing video games with the sound off.



Talk, Talk, Talk

It's never too early to get kids into the habit of talking about media. Ask your children questions about what they see or hear in advertisements, on T.V. shows, or on a Web site. Encourage them to ask questions, too. You will not only help your child become media literate, but will also support their critical thinking skills!

Making the Most of Media

Media works best when it extends learning and natural play. Try some of these media literacy activities to



help children get the most of their screen time:

With Younger Kids

After the T.V. is turned off, your kids can put on their own show. A simple prop, like a paper towel tube, can be a microphone. An empty box can become a T.V. set. There's no right or wrong way to make your own T.V. show. The important thing is to have fun together.

With Older Kids

Have your child create his or her own commercial. Find an ordinary item to advertise (a belt, sunglasses, etc.). Have children think of words to go along with an existing tune, or come up with their own jingle. Tape the ads and then replay them for children to hear. Discuss how their ads are similar to or different from ads that they have seen or heard.

("Tips for Families" were adapted with permission from "Choosing & Using Media with Young Children," 2001, by Dr. Faith Rogow, Insighters Educational Consulting.)



WGBH Boston is the source of some of public television's best-known children programs, including *Zoom*, *Arthur*, *Between the Lions*, *Postcards from Buster* and *Peep and the Big Wide World*.

WGBH provides a wide array of on-air, online, and print resources to help parents prepare children for success in school. For more information, you can visit them online at www.wgbh.org, or write to: WGBH Educational Outreach, 125 Western Ave., Boston, MA 02134.

The Basics

Monitoring T.V. viewing and video game playing

If you think about it, although school is very important, it does not really take up very much of a child's time. Clearly, the hours and days that a child is *not* in school are important for learning, too. One thing that you can do to help your child to make the most of that time is to monitor T.V. viewing and video game playing.

American children on average spend far more time watching T.V. or playing video games than they do completing homework or other school-related activities. Here are some suggestions for helping your child to use T.V. and video games wisely:

- Limit the time that you let your child watch T.V. Too much television cuts into important activities in a child's life, such as reading, playing with friends and talking with family members.
- Model good T.V. viewing habits. Remember that children often imitate their parents' behavior. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members watch a lot of T.V. are likely to spend their time in the same way. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members have "quiet" time away from the T.V. when they read (either alone to each other), talk to each other, play games or engage in other activities tend to do the same.
- Watch T.V. with your child when you can. Talk with him about what you see. Answer his questions. Try to point out the things in T.V. programs that are like your child's everyday life.
- When you can't watch T.V. with your child, spot check to see what she's watching. Ask questions after the program ends. See what excites her and what troubles her. Find out what she has learned and remembered.
- Go to the library and find books that explore the themes of the T.V. shows that your child watches.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with T.V. programs, be aware of the games he likes to play and discuss his choices with him.

T.V. Time Activity

Good T.V. programs can spark children's curiosity and open up new worlds to them.

For children ages 9 to 11

Watching television can be educational for your child or just something that she does to fill the time.

What You Need

T.V. set, World map, Reference books (or online Web news, biography and geography sites)



What to Do

- Place a world map next to the T.V. set. Arrange to watch T.V. news programs with your child.
- After the program have your child use the map to find world news spots.
- Have your child use reference books such as encyclopedias or appropriate online Web sites to find out more information about a story, a country or a person in the news.

Excerpted from "Helping Your Child Succeed in School," U.S. Department of Education, 2002. The entire booklet is available free by calling ED Pubs at 1-877-433-7827 or 1-800-437-0833 (for TDD or TTY). It can be ordered online at: www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html, or downloaded at: www.nochildleftbehind.gov. It is also available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, audiotope or computer diskette by calling 1-202-260-9895 or 1-202-205-8113. The entire booklet is in the public domain and may be reproduced freely for educational purposes.



Ready To Learn

Kids! Check out even more media literacy activities at "Arthur's Guide to Media Literacy" and "Don't Buy It!" at pbskids.org/go.

Parents! Make the most of time together. Visit PBSparents.org for thousands of activities tied to your child's favorite PBS KIDS programs. Get expert advice from leaders in child development on many topics. The Web site is also available in Spanish.

Teachers! PBS Teacher Source can help you connect with each and every one of your children, regardless of their abilities. At PBS.org/teachersource you'll find free educational resources tied to PBS programs. Resources are matched to state and national standards, and can be searched by subject, grade level, or keyword.

Getting Familiar with the Learning Standards for Media

“Learning standards” are what students should know and be able to do as a result of their education. Separate learning standards are set for each core subject area and for grade levels from pre-k through 12th grade. In Massachusetts, these learning standards are known as “Curriculum Frameworks.” Schools use the standards as the “framework” for what they teach each year. Then, statewide tests known as MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) test how well students have learned these standards.

Recently, many states—including Massachusetts—have added media learning standards to the core subject area of English Language Arts (ELA). The media learning standards set the expectations for what students should learn in order to understand and use media effectively in the world today.

In Massachusetts, the **English Language Arts Curriculum Framework** has four Strands, all having to do with communication. The four Strands are **Language, Reading and Literature, Composition, and Media.**

The **Media Strand** has two general standards: 1) Analysis of Media and 2) Media Production. Both media standards are designed to help students develop media literacy as well as thinking and language skills.

The first Media standard, Analysis of Media, states what students should know about different media formats and how they are used in everyday life. The second Media standard, Media Production, sets the expectations for what students should be able to do in order to create and use different types of media. For example, students should be able to use a computer to create a presentation or be able to design a web site.

Here is an example of a specific standard under **Analysis of Media** for 3rd or 4th graders:

Standard 26.2: Compare stories in print with their filmed adaptations, describing the similarities and differences in the portrayal of characters, plot, and settings.

The ELA Curriculum Framework gives an example of how a student might have this learning experience.

It suggests that students could compare the way the author describes Stuart Little in the book to how Stuart Little appears in the movie.

Parents could guide this kind of discussion at home. They could ask their children questions like “what was the same” and “what was different” about the way the book describes Stuart compared to how the film describes him. Parents could also ask their children to talk about the way the movie uses images and sounds to tell us about Stuart.

Students have the chance to learn and practice their media literacy skills in other subject areas both inside and outside of school. In fact, media literacy can play an important part in every course, just as books do.

The Curriculum Frameworks for the various core subject areas are a good place to learn more about what students are learning. **The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks** for the core subjects can be viewed online at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html. If you would like copies of the Frameworks or parts of them, please contact Parents’ PLACE.



Bulletin

Parents Learning About Children’s Education
The Massachusetts Statewide Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC)



Pointers

The Massachusetts Statewide Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC)

Parents’ PLACE Bulletin and Parents’ PLACE Pointers
are available online in English, Spanish, and Portuguese

www.pplace.org

Quick Fact!

Children spend almost 4x more time with “screened media” [T.V., computers, and videos] than they spend reading books, newspapers or magazines. (Source: *Annenberg 2000 Study*)

Parents’ PLACE Bulletin is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Grant #U310A030443. The views and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or of the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

Permission is granted to copy or reprint this newsletter or any portion of it with the exception of articles we have reprinted with permission. Please credit **Parents’ PLACE Bulletin**, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and author if indicated.

© Federation for Children with Special Needs, 2005

Flexible Supports: What it Means to Massachusetts Families and how they can Impact Family Support Services

Prior to 1992, families eligible for Family Support Services from the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) received a single service option—respite—and it wasn't flexible and it wasn't portable. This was a case where you truly couldn't 'take it with you'. If a family was going to use respite, it meant having someone come to their home to care only for their child with special needs. Fast-forward to 2004—DMR now has more than 20 options for Family Support and the type of support each family receives is tailored to their individual needs. A family may still choose to have a provider come to their home to watch their child with special needs, but Family Support Services also include recreation and leisure activities, life planning, after school care, home adaptations, financial assistance, and the list goes on.

DMR is not the only state agency that offers a much-expanded menu of flexible support services to families who have individuals with special needs whom they are caring for at home. The MA Commission for the Blind, the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Departments of Mental Health and Public Health, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and MassHealth

(formerly the Division of Medical Assistance) also provide flexible supports to eligible individuals and their families. In fact, while many agencies are committed to family-centered care, there is a Massachusetts General Law that mandates that these seven state disability agencies provide flexible Family Support Services.

Passed three years ago, after 11 years of lobbying, this law, *Chapter 171: An Act Providing Support to Individuals with Disabilities and their Families*, not only provides for flexible Family Support Services, but also mandates that each agency develop annual **Individual and Family Support Plans**. These plans must be developed with substantial consultation from individuals and families. Substantial consultation, when fully implemented, will offer individuals and families a say in key decisions that will shape and determine the services that each agency provides.

The implications of this law and what it means for individuals, families and the 7 state agencies is still not clearly understood. In order to help with the implementation of Chapter 171, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council has given

a multi-year grant to Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC). The grant is designed to:

1. Provide training to help individuals and families understand Chapter 171 and to help them get involved in providing substantial consultation for the development of the agency support plans.
2. Provide technical assistance to the 7 named state agencies around obtaining substantial consultation and writing individual and family support plans that focus on flexible support services.

On June 16, MFOFC hosted a conference to help participants become familiar with the contents of the law, and to gather input about what works, what doesn't work, and what might work better at each of these state agencies. This was the start of a campaign to spread the word about this law, with the hopes that Chapter 171 will eventually become as common a reference as IDEA, Chapter 766, 504, and the ADA.

For more information about Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, visit www.mfofc.org or call 1-800-406-3632. If you have questions about Chapter 171 and its implementation, contact Tanya Wheeler, the MFOFC consultant for Chapter 171 implementation grant. Tanya can be reached at ryc-tanya@aol.com or by calling 413-562-7395.

Easing Access to Public Transportation through Public Hearings

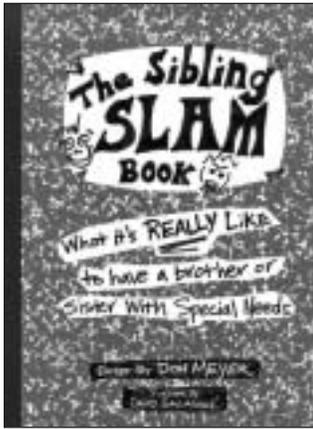
by Linda Hillyer, Ride Advocacy Project

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has a program called *THE RIDE*. This is a shared-ride service (you travel with other passengers), which provides door-to-door transportation to individuals who, due to a physical, cognitive or mental disability, cannot use subways, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation, which are available to the general public. To be eligible for *THE RIDE*, you must first complete an application and establish a *RIDE* account. The application and more

information are available on the web at http://www.mbta.com/traveling_t/disability_theride.asp, or by calling *THE RIDE* Administrative Office at their in-state, toll-free number: 1-800-533-6282 or 617-222-5123; TTY 617-222-5415. Office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

THE RIDE operates in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, there are some compliance issues.

The RIDE Advocacy Project (RAP) is a grassroots, community-organizing effort aimed at bringing *THE RIDE* into compliance with the ADA. In fact, RAP played a crucial role in the MBTA's decision to hire an independent firm to conduct a study about *THE RIDE*'s compliance with this federal law. As part of this study, public hearings will be held later this summer. To find out more about the hearings, or learn about alternative ways to share your ideas about how to improve *THE RIDE*, contact the RIDE Advocacy Project at 617-277-0080 (messages only) or e-mail rap@rideadvocacy.org. To learn more about RAP, visit us on-line at www.rideadvocacy.org. **It's our RIDE. Let's make it work!**



Book Review

by Beth Dworetzky, *Mass Family Voices*

The Sibling Slam Book: What it is really like to have a brother or sister with special needs!

Edited by Don Meyer.
Special-Needs Collection,
Woodbine House, 2005. 151 pp.

When I started reading the *Sibling Slam Book*, I had no idea what a slam book was. After reading the introduction by Don Meyer, the Director of the Sibling Support Project and designer and editor of this book, I became educated about the concept, and then I marveled at how he applied the slam book technique to create such a wonderful compendium of thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams and experiences of brothers and sisters of kids with special needs.

Briefly, a slam book is a notebook that is passed around school, from student to student. Contributors sign in on the first few pages and assign themselves a number. Then they write their responses to the different questions that are listed on subsequent pages. Don Meyer used the slam book format to create this book. After providing some brief biographical information about the 80 teen contributors, and some demographic information, these candid brothers and sisters wrote their responses to the questions listed on each page. The ques-

tions gave the kids an opportunity to share personal information. How'd they describe themselves to someone who can't see them, what item they must have with them at all times, and what pet peeves they may have. Eventually the questions focused on their sibling with special needs and the kids wrote about what it's like to hang out with their sibling, what, if anything they'd change about their sibling, if their sibling ever frustrates them, and much more.

The answers are insightful and compelling. I alternately laughed and cried at some of the responses, and true to the original slam book format, some responses are written on the lines, but for many, you must literally read between the lines, or follow serpentine patterns around the pages. And, while not always ample, there is white space where readers are encouraged to add their own responses.

This book will appeal to adults and teens alike. Even with the most open family communication, I imagine parents will

gather fresh insight into the unique issues their teens face as siblings of children with special needs. Some of the questions may even be good starting points for new and/or next phases of conversations, such as what role your teen thinks he or she will play in their sibling's future.

Teens who read this book will realize they are not alone, and will most likely identify with some or most of the situations the contributors have written about. It may even be cathartic for your teen to write his or her answers to the questions.

A copy of this book is available at the Federation.

For more information about the Sibling Support Project of the Arc of the United States visit www.thearc.org/siblingsupport. Visitors can learn about Sibshops, a workshop that uses games, discussion and meeting others to acknowledge the unique role of kids who have siblings with special needs. There is also information about the Sibkids and Sibnet listservs. Sibkids is for young brothers and sisters of people with special health, developmental and emotional needs. Sibnet is the counterpart for adult brothers and sisters.

Woodbine House is a publisher specializing in books about children with special needs. They provide parent-friendly, useful books about disabilities for parents, children, teachers and other professionals. For more information, and/or to receive a catalog, call 1-800-843-7323 or visit www.woodbinehouse.com.

Purchase books at Amazon.com, help the Federation!

The Federation for Children with Special Needs is pleased to announce its association with Amazon.com, the "World's Biggest Bookstore." In addition to news and information about special education and special health care needs, visitors to the Federation's website will now also see a link to Amazon.com.

If you are looking for a disability-specific book, a book about special education,

healthcare, or other topic of interest, the Federation has created a list of recommended titles to help you start your search. You can access these recommendations by clicking on the link below the Amazon icon. Topics include: accessing the general curriculum, anxiety, assistive technology, Down syndrome, friendships and social relationships, play, sign language, sensory integration, and much more. There are both adult and children selections. The

children's titles include such classics as *Leo the Late Bloomer* by Robert Kraus, as well as newer children's books, for example, *Through the Cracks* by Carolyn Sollman.

The Federation receives a percentage of any purchase (books as well as other Amazon products) you make when you "enter" the Amazon site through the Federation's home page. The next time you shop on-line, please consider accessing the Amazon site from www.fcsn.org to make your purchases, as every purchase will help support the mission of the Federation.



Jessica Vohs

A Way to Try to Understand

by Jessica Vohs

On April 1, 2005, Jessica Vohs gave the following speech at the "All Means All: Welcoming and Supporting Children and Youth of all Abilities Within Out-of-School Time Programs" Conference at Northeastern University. The conference, sponsored by the LOYD (Lead to Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities) initiative, was to promote inclusion of students and others with disabilities in after school, camp, and community service programs.

Jessica wrote her speech using facilitated communication, and needed someone to read it for her. When people asked questions, she used a written keyboard to select the letters and type out the answers. In spite of severe communication and mobility disabilities, Jessica is able to live in the community with supports, thanks in part to Medicaid, which provides funding to pay for Personal Care Assistants (PCA). Without this support, Jessica would not be able to live in her own apartment in the community.

Deep inside, you and I are exactly the same. Everyone is in this world together. If we can respect each other and connect, then that is a place to begin. My life is like yours. Now that you start there [from a place of mutual understanding], we can

begin to appreciate the differences between you and me. But only after we meet at this same point.

I have a unique experience and you have a unique experience. By sharing these, we may discover something new and deeper and richer about this world we live in. So, by not excluding anyone and by not treating anyone special or different, we can share life and find out what the important activities of life are.

How we think about our desire for life is the same. We would like life to be better. Next we need to really think about what makes life better for all of us. For me what makes my life better is being treated like I am a human being with feelings and emo-

tions just like you. If you only look at someone's outside appearance you may miss this. You may think I look like I am less aware than I really am. You will see me better if you see very deep into my soul. By looking into my eyes, you will find me there. Even people without disabilities may overlook this important moment of connection with people in their everyday lives.

We really have to respect each other equally and respect our lives. It is easy to miss life and take away the chance to experience it fully. Don't miss the life you are in. This is something I can really let you know. Always life is a struggle. If you avoid that struggle and take the easy way out, you will never reach your dream to be better, to experience all we have at our fingertips.

So, I am very grateful that now I live in a house like a person in a community, sharing my vision through being able to communicate. I can do this because people took the moment to see themselves in me and I could see myself in them and we could share life like normal people, like humans. Life can be less than human unless you try full of heart. I am happy to share today with you and we should try to be good friends.

Thank you, Jessica

Mass Accessible Housing Registry

by Melissa Quirk, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association

The Mass Accessible Housing Registry is a free program that helps people with disabilities find rental housing in Massachusetts, primarily accessible and barrier-free housing. In 1995, Mass Access began working with housing providers to match people with disabilities to vacant, accessible apartments. The database has information about apartments throughout the state, and maintains information about their availability, including vacancy information for over 12,000 accessible units.

People with disabilities can search this information to identify housing opportunities that suit their needs. Consumers can

search by bedroom size, rent amount, location, vacancy status, accessibility features and neighborhood amenities, such as proximity to public transportation. A contact person and phone number is provided for each development and unit so that people searching for housing can call directly if they are interested in applying for a particular apartment or getting on a waitlist for a desired development. The "What's New" page also lists open waiting lists, homeownership opportunities and affordable non-accessible units.

A person looking for accessible housing can visit: www.massaccesshousingregistry.org

or call one of the eleven regional Independent Living Centers (ILCs) in Massachusetts for assistance. ILC contact information is available on the Mass Access website. The program is based at Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA). CHAPA's core task on the Mass Access program is working with housing managers to maintain up-to-date housing and vacancy information.

[*Editor's Note:* If you do not have internet access and would like contact information for the Independent Living Centers in MA, call CHAPA at 617-742-0820. Family TIES, the statewide information, resource and referral network also maintains up-to-date contact information about ILCs. Contact Family TIES at 1-800-905-TIES (8347).]



Federation for Children with Special Needs

1135 Tremont Street, Ste. 420
Boston, MA 02120
617-236-7210 Voice/TDD
MA Toll Free 800-331-0688
email: kidinfo@fcsn.org
web: www.fcsn.org

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO.
50539

Central Massachusetts (508) 798-0531 • Western Massachusetts (413) 323-0681

Decades of Dedication: The Federation's Annual Gala Celebration

More Photos Inside!



From left: Michael Votto, Amanda Votto, Tony Dodek and Rosemary Dodek



FCSN Board Member Jane Wolfson (left) and Brooke Heraty, Director of Development (right).



From left: DPH Director of Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood & Special Health Needs Ron Benham, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, EITC Director Peggie O'Hare, Padraic O'Hare



Berkshire Hills Music Academy Performers
From left: John Libera on saxophone and Robby Belknap on trumpet



From left: Dan Cummings, Magi Bish, Actor/Producer/Writer/Director Jimmy Cummings, and aspiring actress Amy Robison



From left: Jenny Weisz, John Weisz, FCSN Board President Dan Heffernan, and Julie Heffernan