What is MCAS?
MCAS is a series of tests given to public school students in Massachusetts. These tests measure students’ progress toward meeting state educational standards. The MCAS test areas are English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and History and Social Science. Students in the same grade level across the state take the same tests once a year.

Why MCAS?
In 1993, Massachusetts set out to improve education through the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA). Standards for all students and assessments (or tests) of students’ learning are key MERA reform strategies. The "Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks" list the Standards for seven academic subjects. "Standards" are statements of what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels.

These standards provide guidelines for what teachers should teach and for what students should learn each year. MCAS tests measure how well students have learned the standards. The results of the MCAS assessments are used as a guide for improving education.

Register now for Visions of Community
our annual conference
March 10, 2007!
(For full story see page 2)
Visions of Community Annual Conference
Saturday, March 10, 2007 • World Trade Center, Boston

The Federation will host its annual statewide conference for families and professionals who work to enhance educational, mental health, health, and family support services for children with special needs at the World Trade Center in Boston on March 10, 2007.

Dr. David Rose, co-founder of the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), and a pioneer in the field of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will deliver this year’s keynote address.

He has co-authored several books and lectures extensively on UDL and its value in helping all students succeed.

There will be over 30 workshops, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, which include information about: parent participation, early childhood, health, transition, disability issues, recreation opportunities, NCLB (No Child Left Behind), IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and more! As always, this is an opportunity to meet Federation staff and learn about all the projects, connect with other parent organizations and visit with many vendors and exhibitors - all of who will have a variety of resources and materials, some for sale, but many for free.

For more information and to register, visit http://fcsn.org/conference/visions_07.php or call the Federation at 617-236-7210 or 1-800-331-0688.

Health Care Transition for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs: Research Project

By Paul Symons, Doctoral Candidate, Brandeis University

Do you have questions and concerns about transitioning your young adult with intellectual disabilities and special health care needs from pediatric to adult levels of care? You are not alone. It is challenging to change providers under the best of circumstances. When your family member has an intellectual disability it may be even harder because the young person may not be able to participate fully in the process, may not be able to speak on his or her own behalf, and may not be able to make his or her own choices.

The transition from pediatric to adult health care is the focus of a research study to provide better insight and understanding of the stakeholders’ (parents/guardians, health care providers, and Intermediate Care Facilities) concerns during development of health care transition plans. The results will contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of health care transition and intellectual disabilities.

Study Participants Needed
This project will include interviews with those persons directly involved in the health care transition process for a specific young adult with intellectual disabilities (autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, mental retardation) and special health care needs. The interviews with these individuals, lasting approximately 45 minutes, will focus on their experience with the health care transition process. In order to explore and include comments on substituted judgment in health care transition, only the stakeholders in the transition process will be interviewed. If you choose to participate, I will travel to your location, and your responses will be completely confidential.

Those parents/legal guardians interested in participating in this study are encouraged to contact Paul at 617-246-5688 or symons@brandeis.edu.

REMEMBERING DEBBIE...

On Saturday, January 6, 2007 Deborah J. Gilbert passed away unexpectedly. Debbie was the Family Support Specialist for the Federation’s MassCARE project in collaboration with the Department of Public Health. As a Family Support Specialist, Debbie was instrumental in establishing support groups for families of children and women affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. Her activities included lobbying, fundraising, planning, transportation, and education issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. She was involved with the Walk on AIDS Committee, AIDS Awareness Day, and World AIDS Day. She also served on the Board of Directors of Healing Light Productions. Debbie will be sorely missed by all who knew her. The Federation fondly remembers her for all that she gave to us and to her community.
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Making Transitions

My two children with disabilities are now young adults. Both are over 22 years old and on the other side of the Transition discussion. As our family planned for each child’s transition from high school to the world of adult services, we thought a lot about the process. We did a number of things well. We started early, worked collaboratively with school personnel, defined our goals, included our children in decision making to the extent possible, and tried to clarify our vision of what their adult world could look like.

That said, these Transitions, like any transition, bad twists, turns and unforeseen dilemmas. Our visions were tempered by reality. Providing social opportunities and community connections for our children remains challenging. Establishing the optimum level of professional services and supports remains a complicated process. Our family has had to make adjustments in our professional lives to serve as a safety net and adjusted work commitments in order to augment necessary supports. However, I am happy to report that both of our young adults are engaged in productive activities they enjoy, seem pretty happy and have adjusted to the new reality.

Much of this issue of Newsline makes reference to Transition and resources for families. Our hope is that by sharing the lessons of a few of us, others’ experiences might be a little less stressful, and that future opportunities for our children in Transition may be even more bountiful.

Progress is being made. The reauthorized IDEA 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) includes new, specific Transition requirements for schools. The Massachusetts’ Legislature passed the Concurrent Enrollment Bill last year. This allows students with significant disabilities to enroll in community college experiences while they remain on an IEP through their local school district. Making transitions to independent living, employment and post-secondary experiences that are consistent with a student’s own goals and aspirations, once a distant dream, are much closer to becoming the new reality.

I hope the resources and life experiences we share will help.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you at the annual Federation conference on March 10th!

Best wishes,

Rich Robison

Rich Robison
The Parent Training and Information Center at the Federation offers Institutes across the state for Massachusetts parents and professionals to learn more about the state and federal special education laws and process.

The agenda includes speakers from the Massachusetts Department of Education, distinguished attorneys and other professionals in the field of special education. Some of the topics are: Federal (IDEA 2004) and MA Special Education Law, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Writing Measurable Goals, Objectives and Benchmarks, Program Quality Assurance and the Due Process System, Understanding Evaluations, Positive Behavioral Supports, Effective Communication, Transition for students 15-22 and more!

Participants should possess some knowledge of special education legislation or experience in working with parents of children with special needs and will acquire the necessary skills to assist parents of children with special needs to effectively design and manage their children’s special education program through unique internship opportunities. This internship, supervised by Federation staff at the Boston office, requires 25 hours of phone consultation at a Federation site as well as 25 hours of pro bono advocacy based on Federation referrals.

Applications are available online at www.fcsn.org/pti/advocacy/becomeanadvocate.html or by contacting the Institute facilitators listed below. Tuition for parents is $325, and $425 for professionals. Limited scholarships are available for parents. You may elect to apply for Consumer Empowerment Funds from the MA Developmental Disability Council at 617-770-7676 or download the application at: http://www.mass.gov/mddc/documents/cef_p_application.doc

**SPRING 2007**

**Cape Cod:** Meetings dates are March 19, 23, 26, 30 and April 2, 4, 9, 11 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Corpus Christi Parish Center, Sandwich, MA. The application deadline is March 2. For more information, contact Terri McLaughlin at 800-331-0688, ext. 336 or tmclaugh@fcsn.org

**West:** Meeting dates are consecutive Tuesdays and Thursdays, March 27-April 12 and continue on April 24 & 26, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Location for this training will be announced. Application deadline is March 27. For more information, contact Julie Sinclair at 413-323-0681 or sinclair@fcsn.org.

**SUMMER 2007**

**Central/West:** Save the Date! Intensive one week Institute will begin June 25 in Sturbridge, MA. For more information contact Julie Sinclair at 413-323-0681 or sinclair@fcsn.org.

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**Franciscan Hospital for Children**

Giving you more reasons to smile!

Franciscan Hospital for Children offers dental services for children and adolescents, as well as children with special health care needs. We accept most insurance plans, including MassHealth (Medicaid). We provide free parking.

To schedule an appointment, or for more information, call our Dental Department at (617) 254-3800, ext. 3790.

30 Warren Street, Boston, MA 02135
www.francciscanhospital.org

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**Kent’s Kards**

Whimsical Note Cards to Send to Your Friends

Colorful and Fun...
boxed in sets of 10 with envelopes.

Kent is an autistic 15-year-old who loves to draw. His drawings are reprinted in bright, beautiful colors - check out his web site! kentskards.com

A portion of the sale of each box will be donated to charity.
A Transition Discussion

By Terri McLaughlin, Transition Coordinator

Transitions are part of everyone’s life. At no time is the process more intense and pivotal than when a child prepares to move on to adulthood. Even though you have supported your child in special education for many years, it is critical you understand what federal and state laws say regarding transition.

For students with disabilities, participating in all school has to offer will truly prepare a student for success in the adult world. Moving through grades, taking appropriate coursework, choosing electives, participating in extra curricular activities, and celebrating the end of their high school career is important for all students. IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) must include appropriate supports to ensure full participation in the school community. Under federal and state special education laws, Transition begins for students in special education at age 15 and may continue through age 21.

IDEA 2004
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA 2004, is the federal special education law. Important changes in IDEA 2004 reinforce the importance of thoughtful Transition planning as an integral part of the IEP process. The law states “the term TRANSITION SERVICES means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, independent living, or community participation.”

Regulatory language states that IEP Teams must include "appropriate, measurable, post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills.” A commitment to individualized Transition planning provides a structured path of learning that prepares the student for a rewarding adult life experience.

What are Transition services and why are they so important?
Transition services are skill-based activities and experiences that are necessary to help students achieve desired outcomes in adult life. When developed by the Team and delivered in a systematic and purposeful way through the IEP process, Transition services ensure that learning happens on schedule. These services do not guarantee that the student will master a specific skill, such as carpentry or graphic design. However, it ensures the student has the opportunity to learn new skills and/or build on existing skills as they seek to reach their desired goals in adult living, work and college environments.

Who determines what Transition services and supports are necessary?
The Massachusetts Department of Education mandates that schools use the Transition Planning Chart, available at www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr_meetings/iep_transition.doc. Discuss Transition and develop yearly Transition goals at your student’s IEP meetings. Invite your child’s guidance counselor, a coach, teammate or club peer, sibling, state agency staff, or others to the IEP meeting. This will ensure a dynamic, creative, collaborative process.

What is a Chapter 688 referral?
A Chapter 688 referral is a written Individual Transition Plan (ITP) that identifies the adult services and supports your student may need after high school. The purpose of the 688 referral is to inform the MA legislature and adult service agencies of the needs of students who may be eligible for continued services. Unlike the IEP, the 688 referral plan is NOT a guarantee of service and it does NOT determine eligibility. It is important that the school file a 688 referral at least two years before your student expects to graduate or turns 22.

Begin Early
The best Transition plans begin with a vision focused on a student’s preferences and strengths.

• Under federal law and state special education law, planning should begin with the development of measurable Transition goals in the IEP the year the student turns 16. If necessary, planning can start earlier.

• Each Transition plan is highly individualized. Student choice is integral to the Transition planning requirement. Include self-advocacy goals on the IEP to help create a student-driven process.

• Talk about the “expected graduation date” or “exit” from special education every year to document the timeframe for all Transition services. This will ensure the completion of all necessary coursework and/or graduation requirements. It also allows for the appropriate linkages to adult service agencies and/or supports the student will need when she leaves the school setting.

How can you get more Transition information?
Visit our website: www.fcsn.org/pti/topics/transition/index.html, or contact Terri McLaughlin at 800-331-0688, ext. 336 or tmclaugh@fcsn.org
In short, what students are taught, what students should know, and what they are tested on are all linked. The MCAS test results tell us how well schools are educating students - including students with disabilities - in core academic areas.

Must students with disabilities take MCAS tests?
Yes, both state and federal laws require that all students with disabilities take state assessments. Students with disabilities are entitled to receive appropriate accommodations for test taking, similar to the ones they use in the classroom. Students who cannot adequately demonstrate their knowledge and skills, even with accommodations, are offered “alternate assessments” - the MCAS-Alt, a portfolio of student work.

Tips to Help Your Child Prepare for Tests

Set the Foundation for Success at Home
What you do at home makes a big difference at test time. All year, make sure your child gets enough sleep, eats properly, and gets to school on time. Make this a special effort on test days. Also:

- Encourage your child to read - the key to academic success. Even the math tests include word problems.
- Provide a quiet, well-lit place to study. Set times for homework. Ask about homework everyday, and check it for completion and neatness.
- Praise your children for hard work and for what they do well.
- Comfort counts. On test day, send a sweater if it’s cool. Dress in layers if it’s warm.
- Confidence counts. Send your child prepared with needed tools (pencils, erasers, rulers, calculators, etc.).

Learn about MCAS
Review parent reports. Each fall, families receive a Parent/Guardian Report with details of how their child did on the previous spring’s MCAS tests. Parents of students who participated in the MCAS-Alt receive two reports- one standard report and one on the alternate assessment.

- Identify strengths and weaknesses. Were scores higher in math or English? Were your child’s math skills stronger in computation or in solving word problems?
- Review past tests and help your child practice test questions. Previous MCAS tests are online at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html.

Work with the School
- Ask the teacher(s) how you can support your child’s learning.
- Seek help in reviewing parent reports. If MCAS scores are inconsistent with report cards, ask why. Together, pinpoint strengths and needs.
- The minimum passing MCAS score is 220. If your child scored below that, ask what extra tutoring/support is available.
- Ask whether the school is developing an Individual Student Success Plan to identify and address your child’s academic needs.

- Since passing MCAS is a graduation requirement, students who score below 220 on the grade 10 tests have more opportunities to pass these tests. Only students who did not pass the 10th grade tests take “retests.”
- The MCAS Performance Appeals gives students who have taken and failed a test three times another chance to show they can meet grade 10 standards. Learn more about the appeals process at www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/.

Students with Disabilities
- If your child has a disability, meet with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Team to decide how your child will participate.
- If your child needs accommodations, make certain they are appropriate and listed in the IEP or 504 Plan.
- The Team’s decisions are written into the IEP or 504 Plan, and are subject to parental approval. (Learn more about accommodations and alternate assessments at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/part_req.html.)

You are important to your child’s success. We hope these suggestions help you help your child be successful in school and in life.

For more information, read the entire Pointer (available in English, Español and Português) at www.pplace.org, or call Parents’ PLACE at 1-877-471-0980.

Labeled for Life?
Labeling children with learning disabilities can complicate their lives. Often, learning disabilities are not just about reading and math. They include:

- Speech/Language
- Learning Difficulties
- Emotional/Behavioral
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Sensory
- Other

If you believe your child is labeled for life, contact DORE Center to learn what to do. DORE can help you file an IEP on your behalf. DORE can develop an Labeled for Life plan to help your child get the services they need.

For your FREE online tests with instant reports www.dorecenter.com
DORE 1-866-784-4377
Oral Health Initiative: Access to Dental Care for Children with Special Needs

By Anne Getzin

In the 2001 National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs, the most common unmet need reported by families was dental care. Children’s Hospital Boston, in partnership with pediatric care centers throughout Massachusetts, is conducting a survey on access to dental care for children with special needs. It is our hope that results from this survey will lead to a better understanding of the specific needs and challenges for families with children with special needs in acquiring adequate oral and dental care, and eventually lead to improvement of services.

Funded by the Oral Health Initiative, this research project seeks to identify and characterize issues of access, and barriers to oral and dental care by interviewing 1500 Massachusetts families with children with special needs by telephone. The telephone survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, is entirely anonymous and confidential, and will in no way affect your child’s medical care.

If you live in Massachusetts and have a child with special health care needs between the ages of 1 and 18 years, you may receive a letter about this study from one of your child’s medical providers. If you have not received a letter and you are interested in participating, please contact Anne Getzin at Children’s Hospital Boston at 617-355-8975 or anne.getzin@childrens.harvard.edu. Additionally, the survey will be available at the Mass Family Voices exhibit table at the Annual Federation Conference on March 10.

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Latino Down Syndrome Group Holiday Celebration

Christmas came early for Familias Unidas por el Sindrome de Down, the Latino Down Syndrome Group. On December 17, 2006, more than 25 members of this support group participated in an annual Holiday Celebration. The Federation office in Roxbury was the site of the festivities, but visitors, drawn in by the smell of holiday foods and the sight of children in traditional dress, dancing to the sounds of holiday music from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Colombia, thought they were in another country. After sharing a homemade potluck meal, Santa Claus arrived with a gift for each child. A generous "friend" of the Federation donated the funds for the children’s gifts.

This support group was established in 2001 as part of a Community Outreach and Empowerment Program, a Federation and Boston Foundation collaboration. They continue to meet every month at the Federation. Meetings usually include a guest speaker, followed by time for networking and sharing.

For more information, contact Sara Miranda at 800-331-0688, ext. 376.

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Celebración anual del grupo latino de Sindrome de down

La navidad llegó temprano para las Familias Unidas por el Sindrome de Down, el grupo latino de Sindrome de Down. El 17 de Diciembre del 2006 más de 25 miembros de este grupo participaron en la celebración anual de las fiestas navideñas. La celebración se llevó a cabo en la oficina de la Federación en Roxbury y visitantes creían que estaban en otro país por el olor a comida navideña, niños con ropa típica y bailando al ritmo de música de diferentes países como Puerto Rico, República Dominicana, México, y Colombia. Después de compartir el almuerzo casero, Santa Claus llegó con regalos para cada uno de los niños. Un "amigo" generoso de la Federación donó los fondos para los regalos de los niños.

Este grupo fue fundado en el año 2001 como parte de un programa de Community Outreach and Empowerment Program, y la colaboración de la Federación y Boston Foundation. El grupo continua reuniéndose cada mes en la Federación. Las reuniones usualmente incluyen a oradores visitantes, seguido por tiempo para compartir y establecer contactos. Para mas información llame a Sara Miranda al 800-331-0688, ext. 376.
Ajude Seu Filho(a) a se Preparar para o MCAS

Por Janet Vohs, Diretora de Publicações e Currículo de Treinamento, CLUBE dos Pais

M-C-A-S: quatro letras que significam geralmente ansiedade para os pais e para os alunos! Estas letras significam Sistema Compreensivo de Avaliação de Massachusetts, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. Este artigo oferece dicas em como ajudar os alunos na sua preparação para os testes do próximo mês de março. Para maiores informações, leia todo o exemplar de Pontos (disponível em inglês, espanhol e português) no site www.pplace.org ou telefone para o CLUBE dos Pais no número: 1-877-471-0980.

O que é o MCAS?
O MCAS é composto de uma série de testes administrados aos alunos das escolas públicas em Massachusetts. Estes testes avaliam o progresso dos alunos para que possam alcançar os níveis educacionais exigidos pelo estado. As áreas de atuação do MCAS são a Literatura e Língua Inglesa (ELA), Matemática, Ciências e Tecnologia/Engenharia, bem como História e Ciências Sociais. Os alunos que estiverem cursando uma mesma série através do estado, prestarão o mesmo teste uma vez ao ano.

Por que o MCAS?
Em 1993, o estado de Massachusetts, teve como proposta a busca de um melhoramento na educação através da lei de Reforma Educacional de Massachussetts, Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA). Os Padrões para todos os alunos, bem como as avaliações (ou testes) do aprendizado dos alunos são a chave das estratégias de reforma da MERA. As "Estruturas Curriculares de Massachusetts", Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, relacionam os Padrões para sete matérias acadêmicas. Os "Padrões" explicam o que os alunos deverão saber e serem capazes de fazer nos específicos níveis das séries. Estes padrões oferecem diretrizes sobre o que os professores deverão ensinar e o que os alunos deverão aprender a cada ano. Os testes MCAS avaliam quão bem os estudantes aprenderam os padrões. Os resultados das avaliações do MCAS são usados como um guia para o melhoramento da educação.

Em resumo: existe uma ligação entre o que os estudantes aprenderam, o que os estudantes deveriam saber e no que são testados. Os resultados dos testes MCAS nos mostrará quão bem nossas escolas estão educando nossos alunos - inclusive os alunos com deficiências - nas áreas das matérias curriculares.

Os alunos com deficiências deverão prestar os testes MCAS?
Sim, tanto a lei estadual como a lei federal exige que todos os alunos com deficiências passem por avaliações estaduais. Os alunos com deficiências estarão capacitados para receber as acomodações apropriadas quando prestarem os testes, exatamente como as que costumam receber nas salas de aula. Para aqueles alunos que não puderem demonstrar adequadamente seus conhecimentos e capacidades, mesmo com as acomodações, serão oferecidas as “avaliações alternativas” - o MCAS-Alt, e um porfólio e constitui-se como uma "pasta avaliativa" com a compilação de vários trabalhos produzidos pelo aluno.

Dicas para Ajudar seu filho(a) a se Preparar para os Testes
Construa em Casa a Base para o Sucesso.
O que você faz em casa tem uma enorme diferença em época de teste. Assegure-se durante todo o ano, para que seu filho(a) durma o suficiente, coma apropriadamente e chegue na escola no horário. Faça disso uma prioridade nos dias de teste. Também:

• Encoraje seu filho(a) a ler - que é a chave para o sucesso acadêmico. Até mesmo os testes de matemática incluem com prensão do enunciado do problema.
• Providencie para que tenha um lugar para estudar que seja tranqüilo e bem iluminado. Marque um horário para os deveres de casa. Pergunte-lhe todos os dias sobre o dever de casa e verifique se tudo foi terminado e está bem legível.
• Elogie seus filhos(as) por seu trabalho árduo e pelo que fizeram de bem feito.
• O conforto conta. Em dias de teste, aconselhe-o(a) para que leve um suéter se estiver frio. Mais de uma peça de roupa para trocar se estiver quente.
• A confiança conta. Mande seu filho(a) preparado com o material escolar necessário (lápis, borrachas, régua, calculadoras, etc.).

Aprenda sobre o MCAS.
Reveja os boletins dos pais. Em todos os outonos, as famílias receberão um Boletim para Pais/Responsáveis, Parent/Guardian Report que descreverá com detalhes o desempenho obtido por seus filhos(as) nos testes MCAS que foram administrados na primavera anterior. Os pais dos alunos que participaram do MCAS-Alt receberão dois Boletins - um boletim normal e outro com a avaliação alternativa.

KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP

Kotin, Crabtree & Strong is a general practice law firm one of whose specialties is in law relating to special education. Other areas of practice include civil and criminal litigation, personal injury law, disability issues, employment law, estate planning and administration, intellectual property, corporations, real estate and taxation.

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Partnership Makes a Difference in Child Welfare

By Harry Spence, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services

The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Federation for Children with Special Needs are proud to be partnering in efforts to strengthen Massachusetts' support to children and families.

Five years ago, DSS defined six core values to guide its child welfare practice. DSS aspires to a practice that is:

- Child-driven;
- Family-centered;
- Community-connected;
- Strength-based;
- Committed to diversity and cultural competence; and
- Committed to continuous learning. Since that time, DSS has been striving to revise its practice to reflect these core values.

The Federation supports these values and has partnered with DSS to make them a more consistent reality in several important ways. Parents for Residential Reform (PFRR), a project of the Federation, has worked with DSS and its residential providers to assist in the transition of the Massachusetts residential school network from a long-term care system to a system that provides crucial support services to children in the community. Pursuant to its values, DSS has focused on ensuring that all children arrive at adulthood with a safe family, or the closest approximation to a family that DSS and the child can jointly develop. In accord with this goal and recent research findings, DSS has sought to keep more children in the community and reduce the use of long-term care for DSS children. This transformation calls on residential schools to focus their services increasingly on short-term diagnostic work with children, respite care and crisis intervention. The Federation has been an important intermediary, working with DSS and providers through the challenges of transforming both the public and private sectors to better serve children, helping to change a whole culture to benefit the youth and families we serve.

At the same time, the Federation has partnered with DSS to pursue children missing from care. Andrea Watson, from PFRR, and Susan Getman, Deputy Commissioner of DSS, jointly co-chair a Task Force on Children Missing from Care. Working in concert, the Federation and DSS have returned an increasing number of missing children to the care and protection of DSS.

Some of the young women who have run have been sexually exploited during their flight, and the Federation has contributed to a developing body of knowledge about how best to care for and assist young women who have been abused through sexual exploitation.

Finally, DSS has made a commitment to involving parent representatives in all key policy deliberations as it works to revise its model of child welfare practice to agree with the six values. DSS has established a Parent Advisory Committee, and parents have participated in the development of the new provider system, Family Networks, and the new Family Engagement Model that is being proposed for the future of DSS. Through its Pathways for Parents Initiative, the Federation has been an active participant in DSS policy deliberations, representing the perspective of parents along with other parent representatives.

To learn more about DSS programs, services and initiatives, visit www.mass.gov/dss or contact the Federation at 800-331-0688.

Alunos com Deficiências.

Se seu filho(a) tem uma deficiência:

- Encontre-se com um funcionário do Programa de Educação Individualizado (IEP) ou da equipe 504 para decidir de que maneira seu filho(a) poderá ter uma participação.
- Se seu filho(a) necessitar de acomodações, assegure-se de que serão as apropriadas e que se encontram relacionadas no IEP ou no Plano 504.
- As decisões da Equipe se encontram escritas no IEP ou no Plano 504 e estarão sujeitas à aprovação dos pais. (Aprenda mais sobre as acomodações e as avaliações alternativas no site www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/part_req.html.)

Você é importante para que seu filho(a) obtenha sucesso. Esperamos que estas sugestões ajudem você para que também possa vir a ajudar seu filho(a) a ter sucesso na escola e na vida.

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• Identifique em que estão fortes e em que estão fracos. Suas notas foram mais altas em matemática ou inglês? A capacidade de raciocínio de seu filho(a) foi mais forte em computação ou em solucionar os enunciados dos problemas?
• Reveja testes passados e ajude seu filho(a) a praticar as questões dos testes. Testes anteriores do MCAS podem ser encontrados no site www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html.
• Busque ajuda fazendo uma revisão dos boletins para os pais. Se as notas do MCAS forem inconsistentes com as dos boletins esco lares, pergunte o porquê. Juntos procurem assinalar em que estão fortes e em que necessitam melhorar.
• Pergunte ao professor(es) em como você poderá apoiar o apren dizado de seu filho(a).
• A nota mínima para passar no MCAS é de 220. Se seu filho(a) obteve média inferior a exigida, que aula particular/apoio poderá estar disponível.
• Averigue se a escola está desenvolvendo um Plano de Sucesso Individual para o Aluno para identificar e orientar sobre as necessidades acadêmicas de seu filho(a).
• Como passar no MCAS é um requisito para a formatura, os alunos que obtiverem média inferior a 220 nos testes da 10ª série, terão maiores oportunidades de passar nestes testes. Somente os alunos que não passaram nos testes da 10ª série poderão ter a "2ª chamada".
• O Processo de Apelação de Desempenho do MCAS dará uma outra chance aos alunos que prestaram um teste por três vezes mas não passaram e que demonstrarem que poderão alcançar os padrões da 10ª série. Aprenda mais sobre o processo de apelação no site www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/.

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To learn more about DSS programs, services and initiatives, visit www.mass.gov/dss or contact the Federation at 800-331-0688.
The APPLE (Advancing Parent/Professional Leadership in Education) Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is a project of the Federation. The goal of the APPLE Project is to help build better relationships between parents and schools around issues of special education. In addition to providing training to parents and special education personnel, this project has a research component. Our research partners at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts-Boston follows the participants to learn if their involvement with APPLE is helpful in building partnerships between their school administrations and the Parent Advisory Committees (PACs) in their towns.

In October 2006, the APPLE Project held its second Leadership Development Institute for five school districts: Canton, Billerica, Medfield, Gardner, and Grafton. Each district sent a team of parents whose children have IEPs (Individualized Educational Programs) and one special education professional; three Special Education Directors attended as part of their district’s team. The APPLE faculty included Dr. Richard Robison, Executive Director of the Federation, and co-director of APPLE; Barbara Popper, APPLE co-director; and Marilyn Gutierrez-Wilson of the Federation’s PTI (Parent Training and Information) and APPLE projects. Additional faculty included Roberto Chene of New Mexico whose specialty is conflict resolution; Kathleen Osta, of North Carolina, a specialist in communication strategies, and Cassie Johnston of PAVE, the Washington state PTI, who conducted the True Colors ™ Training to help individuals identify and understand their learning styles.

During the three-day Institute, participants identified barriers to the parent/professional relationship and brainstormed ways to overcome those barriers. They also learned about forming relationships that enhance parent/professional collaboration, setting goals, creating action plans, and about starting new PACs or re-energizing established PACs. As follow up to the Institute, APPLE project staff has sent finalized Team Action Plans to each of the five districts. A main goal of each plan is to increase parent involvement in their PACs over the next year. Each team will receive continued technical assistance from the Federation, and the Federation will incorporate their ideas into future Institutes.

APPLE staff has been working with the five teams that participated in the first Institute in March 2006. Follow-up activities have included meeting with the Ashland PAC, and speaking at a PAC meeting in Cambridge. Staff will present True Colors ™ for the Grafton PAC. Many of the teams have made changes, as specified in their Team Action Plans, and are working to make further progress.

Currently, APPLE staff is recruiting parents and special education professionals from Foxboro Regional, Harvard, Pentucket Regional, Mansfield and Milton to participate in the third Institute, scheduled for May 17-19, 2007. If you are interested in having your town participate, or would just like more information, please have your PAC Chair or SPED Director contact Barbara Popper at the Federation at 800-331-0688, ext. 322 or bpopper@fcsn.org.
Ayudando a su niño a prepararse para el MCAS

Por Janet Vohs, Directora de Publicaciones & Entrenamiento, El Club de los Padres

M-C-A-S: Cuatro letras que pueden causar ansiedad tanto a los padres de familia como a los estudiantes. Ellas significan: Sistema de evaluación global de Massachusetts. Este artículo ofrece sugerencias para ayudar a los niños a prearse para los exámenes del MCAS de marzo. Para mayor información, lea todo el artículo de Puntos (disponible en inglés, español y portugués) en www.pplace.org, o llame al Club de los Padres al 1-877-471-0980.

¿Qué es el MCAS?
El MCAS se refiere a una serie de exámenes que realizan los estudiantes de las escuelas públicas de Massachusetts. Estos exámenes miden el progreso de los estudiantes con el propósito de alcanzar las normas educativas del estado. Los exámenes del MCAS se realizan en las siguientes áreas: Artes del lenguaje inglés (ELA, por sus siglas en inglés) Matemáticas, Ciencia y Tecnología/Ingiería, Historia y Ciencias sociales. Todos los estudiantes del estado en el mismo grado toman los mismos exámenes una vez al año.

¿Por qué el MCAS?
En 1993, Massachusetts estableció una mejora a la educación a través de la Ley de reforma educativa de Massachusetts (MERA, por sus siglas en inglés.) Las normas de aprendizaje para todos los estudiantes y las evaluaciones o exámenes de aprendizaje son parte clave de las estrategias de la reforma de la Ley MERA. El Marco de currículo tiene una lista de normas de aprendizaje para siete de las materias académicas, las cuales son pautas sobre lo que los estudiantes deben saber y ser capaces de hacer de acuerdo al grado en que están; y ofrecen guías sobre lo que los maestros deben enseñar y los estudiantes aprender cada año. Los exámenes del MCAS miden cuánto han aprendido los estudiantes de las normas de aprendizaje y los resultados del MCAS son usados como una guía para mejorar la educación.

En resumen, lo que se les enseña a los estudiantes, lo que los estudiantes deben saber y en lo que se les evalúa está todo relacionado. Los resultados de los exámenes del MCAS nos dicen cómo las escuelas están educando a los estudiantes - incluyendo a los estudiantes con discapacidades - en las materias académicas principales.

¿Deben los estudiantes con discapacidades tomar los exámenes del MCAS?
Sí, tanto la ley estatal como la ley federal requieren que todos los estudiantes con discapacidades tomen los exámenes del estado. Los estudiantes con discapacidades tienen el derecho de recibir las acomodaciones apropiadas similares a las que actualmente usan en el salón de clases para que pueda realizar el examen. A los estudiantes que aún con acomodaciones no pueden demostrar adecuadamente sus conocimientos y habilidades, se les ofrecen evaluaciones sustitutivas del MCAS (MCAS-Alt) que es un portafolio del trabajo del estudiante, el cual se establece en el Plan educativo individual del estudiante (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés).

Sugerencias para ayudar a su niño a prepararse para los exámenes

Establezca la base para el éxito en la casa.
Lo que usted haga en casa tiene gran influencia a la hora de los exámenes. Durante todo el año y especialmente en los días de los exámenes, asegúrese que su niño duerma lo suficiente, coma apropiadamente y llegue a la escuela a tiempo. También:

- Anime a su niño a LEER - la clave para el éxito académico ya que aún los exámenes de matemáticas incluyen problemas escritos.
- Proporcione un lugar cómodo, tranquilo y bien iluminado para estudiar.
- Establezca un horario fijo para hacer la tarea. Pídale a su niño la tarea y revisela todos los días.
- Felicite a sus niños por su esfuerzo y por las cosas bien realizadas.
- La comodidad es importante: el día del examen asegúrese que su niño lleve un suéter
- Revise que su niño lleve todo el material que necesita como lápices, borradores, reglas, calculadoras, etc.

Aprenda sobre el MCAS.
Revise los reportes para los padres de familia. Durante el otoño, las familias reciben un Reporte para padres de familia o guardianes que describe detalladamente el desempeño de su niño en los exámenes del MCAS de la primavera anterior. Los padres de los estudiantes que participaron en el examen sustitutivo del MCAS (MCAS-Alt) reciben dos Reportes: un reporte estándar y uno del examen de evaluación sustitutivo.

- Identifique las áreas fuertes y débiles de su niño. ¿Fueron las notas más altas en matemáticas o en inglés? ¿Fueron las habilidades de sus niños más fuertes en resolver problemas de operaciones matemáticas directas o de matemáticas aplicadas?
- Revise exámenes pasados y ayude a su niño a practicar preguntas. Los exámenes anteriores que hicieron del MCAS están en el Internet en www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html.

Trabaje con la escuela

- Pregunte al maestro cómo puede apoyar el aprendizaje de su niño.
- Pida ayuda para revisar y entender los reportes para los padres de familia. Si los resultados del MCAS no son consistentes con los reportes de las notas, pregunte el por qué. Junto al maestro descubra las fortalezas y las necesidades de su niño.
- La calificación mínima para aprobar el MCAS es de 220. Si la calificación de su niño ha sido más baja, pregúntele a la escuela qué tutoría o apoyo le puede ofrecer.
- Averigüe si la escuela está desarrollando un Plan individual para el éxito del estudiante que considere las necesidades académicas de su niño.
- Aprobar el MCAS es un requisito para graduarse, los estudiantes de grado 10 que obtuvieron menos de 220 en los exámenes, tienen más oportunidades de tomarlos y aprobarlos antes de terminar el grado 12. Los grados bajos no necesitan repetir el MCAS.
- El proceso de Apelación del resultado del MCAS proporciona a los estudiantes que han tomado y reproducido el examen tres veces, otra oportunidad para mostrar que pueden alcanzar las normas del 10 grado. Aprenda más sobre el Proceso de apelación en www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/.

Continúa en la página 13
We need you! Ways you can help the Federation

By Jane Wolfson, Director of Development

A Very Special Yard Sale Community Fundraising Event
April 28-29, 2007

A Very Special Yard Sale will be the first annual community fundraising and awareness event sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Calling on an extended network of volunteers and friends of the Federation, we hope to have 100 yard sales, held simultaneously across the state during the last weekend in April, to raise awareness and funds for the Federation. The idea for A Very Special Yard Sale was born out of our desire to include all the families we serve in a community initiative. A yard sale is a unique opportunity for any and every neighborhood in Massachusetts to show support for the Federation – an organization that works diligently to serve you!

This is a great motivator to start “spring cleaning,” and for you to make a tax-deductible gift to the Federation from the proceeds of your sale. There is no cost to participants; the Federation will supply a pre-packaged yard sale kit to interested families. This kit will contain all the information you need to get your yard sale up and running: posters, yard sale tips, media sheets, etc. Check out our website for updated information, including prizes the Federation will be giving in recognition of the top fundraising families; these include complementary tickets to our May Gala, Federation sweatshirts and other prizes to be named later!

Also, everyone who holds a yard sale will automatically be entered into a drawing for an iPod nano.

To sign up for A Very Special Yard Sale, please contact Jane Wolfson at 800-331-0688, ext. 374 or jwolfson@fcsn.org.

The Shopping Benefit at Bloomingdales, Chestnut Hill Mall
Route 9 West in Chestnut Hill
Wednesday, February 28, 2007
10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Shop in support of the Federation!

The newly opened Bloomingdales at Chestnut Hill Mall will host The Shopping Benefit, a storewide event to raise funds for the Federation for Children with Special Needs and other charities throughout greater Boston. The Shopping Benefit will feature savings, special gifts-with-purchase, live entertainment, fashion events, kids’ activities, and prize-drawings. The children’s department will host a kid’s party that includes caricature drawings, a balloon artist, and an interactive gaming area. Boston’s star chef, Dante de Magistris will perform a cooking demonstration, and there will be a Roberto Coin trunk showcase.

Tickets, available for $10.00 each, entitle you to a 15-20% savings certificate valid only during The Shopping Benefit; 100% of our ticket sales go directly to support the work of the Federation. Discounts will apply to the Bloomingdale’s Home and Men’s Store, as well as the Women’s Store and children’s department.

For every person who purchases a ticket and attends the event, the Federation will receive an additional $5. No one is required to buy merchandise, but please come experience the festivities which will be ongoing from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Wednesday, February 28th. Customers with tickets who may be unable to attend the event or who have limited time to shop on this date may shop in advance and pre-select purchases for The Shopping Benefit beginning Thursday, February 22, 2007.

Please contact Jackie McKeon at 800-331-0688, ext. 372 or jmckeon@fcsn.org to purchase your tickets to The Shopping Benefit, or visit https://fcsn.org/giving_events/donate.php to order them via credit card online. Simply check off In Honor Of and enter “Shopping Benefit” in the corresponding message box. Tell your friends!

Children’s Art Needed for A Very Special Silent Auction

The Federation is seeking donations of artwork created by children with special needs to highlight at our upcoming Gala on May 11, 2007. The theme of the evening is “Possibilities” and we are looking for artwork that communicates the aspirations of what the artist would like to be when he/she grows up.

The Federation works each day to fill all children’s lives with infinite possibilities. We would like to showcase those children, whose families we’ve helped to achieve “possibilities,” by exhibiting their artwork beside a narrative written by the artist. A panel of independent judges will choose twenty submissions that represent a broad range of ages and disabilities. The selected drawings and paintings will be displayed and auctioned at the Gala to benefit the Federation. All artists who submit their artwork will receive a certificate of achievement from the Federation.

Judging guidelines for submission

Theme of Artwork:
What I Want to be When I Grow Up

Requirements:
Digital photo of the artwork (preferred) or actual artwork
Description of artwork and artist biography (200 word maximum)

Email submission to: Jane Wolfson at jwolfson@fcsn.org
Mail submission to: Jane Wolfson
FCSN
135 Tremont Street, Suite 420
Boston, MA 02120
Early Intervention is the educational services and supports provided to families with children, birth to age three, with developmental delays. Early Intervention (EI) is a family affair. Successful intervention relies, in part, on communication and collaboration between the family and their EI service providers. The provider is skilled in and knowledgeable about child development and a variety of therapies. The family brings their expertise - an in-depth knowledge of their child and his or her diagnosis ("-gnosis - a suffix meaning knowledge," page 70).

Enter the Early Intervention Dictionary, now in its third edition, with more than 4,000 definitions, ranging from 'abdominal' to 'zero-reject' ("the principle that no child with a disability should be refused a free, appropriate, public education," page 444). The author, an EI program director in California, has written this dictionary as a tool for both providers and parents so that everyone can literally be on the same page, speak the same language and work together, so children with disabilities or risk factors for developmental delays receive the services they need to be as successful as possible.

Woodbine House has donated a copy of this book, and other books from their Special Needs Collection, to the Federation. Call to see if the book you want is available. For more information about the Woodbine House Special Needs Collection, and to receive a free catalog, call (800) 843-7323 or visit www.woodbinehouse.com.

Link to Amazon.com through the Federation website at www.fcsn.org and up to 6% of your purchase will help support the Federation.

Massachusetts Early Intervention Services

Family TIES of Massachusetts:
If you have concerns about your young (zero to age three) child’s development, and need help locating the Massachusetts Early Intervention program that serves the city or town where you live, contact Family TIES at 800-905-TIES or access their EI Directory at http://www.massfamilyties.org/ei/index.html.

Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project:
If your family is enrolled in an EI program and you have not connected with this parent-run project, call 1-877-35-EIPLP or visit www.eiplp.org. Staff can provide information about EI and family opportunities within the EI system. Be sure to sign up for the Parent Perspective, the free newsletter with wonderful information about resources and supports, and news about the EI system.

Ayudando a su niño a prepararse para el MCAS (Continued from page 11)

Los estudiantes con discapacidades
Si su niño tiene una discapacidad:

• Reúnanse a principio de año con el Equipo del Programa Educativo Individualizado (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés) o con el Equipo del Programa 504 para decidir como participará su niño.

• Si su niño necesita acomodaciones, asegúrese que sean las apropiadas y que estén escritas en el IEP o en el Plan 504.

• La decisión del Equipo está escrita en el IEP o en el Plan 504 y están sujetas a la aprobación del padre de familia. Aprenda más acerca de las acomodaciones y los exámenes sustitutivos del MCAS en www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/part_req.html

Usted es muy importante y contribuye al éxito que tenga su niño. Esperamos que estas sugerencias le ayuden a apoyar a su niño para que tenga éxito en la escuela y en la vida.

Otros recursos:
Guía del MCAS para padres y guardianes 2006www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/2006/pgguid e/spanish.pdf

Marcos de currículo del Lenguaje inglés, Matemáticas, Ciencia y Tecnología/ Ingeniería e Historia y Ciencias sociales www.doe.mass.edu/Frameworks/current.htm
Family TIES of Massachusetts, Together In Enhancing Support, 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 Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs. Family TIES provides parent-to-parent support, information and referrals, and training.

Parent-To-Parent Program
The mission of Parent-to-Parent is to connect parents that face similar challenges in raising their children with special needs. This volunteer-based program is an opportunity for all parents to share experiences and to provide mutual support. Parents contact us in search of a listening ear, another parent who has faced some of the same issues and concerns they now face. This may be due to a new diagnosis, a response to new challenges as your child gets older, or transitions between systems of care. Often a parent will tell us they just want to talk with someone who understands. Family TIES support parents are here for you; you are not alone in your journey!

In November 2006, the Family TIES Director and Parent-to-Parent Coordinator attended the annual Parent-to-Parent USA in Washington, DC. This three-day conference brought together staff from 30 parent-to-parent programs from across the country. We shared details about how our programs work, exchanged copies of our materials and training curricula, and ideas for supporting each other. This conference reinforced our belief in the value of parent-to-parent support and the methods we are using to match families. We left energized and with many new ideas for supporting families.

Parent-to-Parent is a give and take program. You are not only encouraged to call for support, when the time is right, you may be in a position to offer support to another family. If you are interested in becoming a support parent, you are invited to attend a two-hour "Listening and Learning" training. To set up a parent match or for more information about becoming a support parent contact Linea, Parent-to-Parent Coordinator at 508-792-7880 or at lpearson@fcsn.org.

Information and Referrals
Family TIES staff assist parents of children with special needs (ages birth to 22) and professionals in finding resources on a wide range of topics such as Early Intervention, local and national support groups, community recreational activities, specialized equipment, and transition to adult services. For the full-range of available services and supports, check out our Family TIES of Massachusetts Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs. To receive a free copy, call 800-905-TIES or view the directory on-line at www.massfamilyties.org.

Training
Need help in making sense of the piles of paper that are collecting in your kitchen? Let’s Get Organized is a free workshop for parents of children of all ages with special needs. Call your Regional Coordinator at 800-905-TIES for the workshop schedule, or to arrange one in your community.

News from Family TIES of Massachusetts
By Mary Castro Summers, Director, Family TIES of Massachusetts

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For all the convenience of making phone calls, sending e-mails or connecting through virtual communities on web pages, in chat rooms and via list servs, there’s nothing quite like the excitement generated when parents of children and youth with special health care needs get together in person. The Joining Voices conference, hosted by the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center, a project of Mass Family Voices at the Federation, was just such an opportunity. On November 29, 2006, parents and professionals from throughout Massachusetts traveled to the UCC Conference Center in Framingham for a day of networking and learning.

Patti Hackett, co-director of the Healthy and Ready to Work National Resource Center, and mother of Glen Gallivan, a young man who despite his disabilities was able to achieve many of his life goals in his 30 years, gave the keynote address entitled, “Preparing for Life: Survive & Thrive!” The Maternal Child Health Block Grant National Performance Measure (NPM) 6 provides guidance about youth with special health care needs and the services they need to transition to all aspects of adult life, including adult health care, work, and independence. Using NPM 6 as a framework, Patti gave a funny, poignant, and inspirational presentation, illustrated with stories about Glen, which included strategies parents can use to move forward when the dreams they originally envisioned for their child had to change. Ultimately, families are the facilitators, advocates and life planners for their children. Patti stressed how important it is for families to create a plan that ensures their children with special health care needs/disabilities have the skills to manage their own health needs and services so they can transition to adulthood and be as healthy, independent and successful as possible. She also emphasized that life planning is not something families do alone; it is vital to build a support network that includes physicians, family, friends, your child’s peers, mentors and other role models.

After a networking activity and lunch, participants had a choice of afternoon breakout sessions. These included legislative advocacy, managing paperwork, life planning, and an update about mental health services for children. For those who wanted to learn about and understand their individual communication style and how and why they interact with people with differing styles, a True Colors™ workshop was also an option. The MA Family-to-Family Center extends its thanks to our presenters who graciously volunteered their time to share their expertise. In addition to Patti Hackett, our presenters were Lisa Mannix, Betsy Closs, Lisa Lambert, Barbara Popper and Marilyn Gutierrez-Wilson.

For those unable to attend Joining Voices, some of the presentations are available on the Mass Family Voices website at www.massfamilyvoices.org.

**Transition Resources**

The Healthy & Ready to Work website at www.hrtw.org is one-stop shopping for information about transition to adult life. There are easy-to-understand descriptions of federal initiatives and government benefits, information created by youth for youth, tools, checklists and other resources, and information about laws and access to health care. In addition, if you have a transition tip, make sure to read the HRTW-U section to learn how to share your idea.

The purpose of the Social Security Administration Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program is to help SSI-eligible individuals with disabilities fund education, training or other items to reach a specific job goal. Learn more about the PASS program at the Federation’s annual conference on March 10, 2007. Members of the PASS Cadre will give a workshop for families with transitional aged children with special health needs who want to attend college/university, or get other training to succeed in a chosen career or job.

The PASS Specialists also provide training to organizations that help people who have disabilities. They are available to visit with groups to explain how PASS works, how to complete the application, and the evidence needed to support the application. Call the PASS Specialists at 1-800-297-4291 to ask questions or schedule a training in your area.
Mark your calendars for these upcoming Federation Events

March 10, 2007  Visions of Community Conference

May 11, 2007  Annual Federation Gala

Fundraising Events:
February 28, 2007  Shopping Benefit at Bloomingdale’s
April 28-29, 2007  A Very Special Yard Sale

For more information on these or any Federation events, please call us at 617-236-7210 or email fcsninfo@fcsn.org