Mission

The Federation for Children with Special Needs provides 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.

The Federation believes that individual differences in people are a natural part of life, and that disabilities provide children and adults with unique perspectives, insights and abilities which contribute to the overall well-being of society.

The Federation values children as the hope for the evolving improvement of humankind, and places great value on the family as a caring protector of children’s vulnerability, as well as a catalyst for their healthy growth and development.

The Federation places a tremendous value on parents because of the contributions they make as the leaders of families toward supporting the health, education, and development of their children at home and in society.

The Federation promotes the active and informed participation of parents of children with disabilities in shaping, implementing, and evaluating public policy that affects them.

The Federation believes in the power of parents helping parents and has infused a proven model of peer support throughout all its work.

Most Federation staff members are parents or family members of children with disabilities and people with disabilities.

Dear Friends ........................................................................................................7

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Dear Friends,

More than forty years ago, the Federation for Children with Special Needs was founded by parents of children with disabilities who gathered at a kitchen table to develop successful strategies to ensure the full participation of their children in society. Their efforts along with many others resulted in the first comprehensive special education law in the country, known as Massachusetts Chapter 766, a forerunner to the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It was the fall of 1974 when the Federation was formally organized out of a coalition of parent advocacy groups representing different disability types.

We celebrate the Federation as a vital resource for the more than 40,000 families and professionals we serve annually. The Federation houses 15 major projects, receives 16,000 phone calls and emails from parents seeking assistance, and conducts 600 workshops for over 9,000 parents and professionals at 100 locations throughout Massachusetts each year. Over 30,000 families and professionals receive the Federation’s newsletter, and the Federation’s annual Conference is attended by over 900 families and professionals. The Federation remains committed to listening to and learning from families, and encouraging full participation in community life by all people, especially those with disabilities.

We are proud of our many initiatives that continue to change the world and change the lives of children with special needs, one family at a time. As we look to the future, we know that together we must continue to empower families to do great things for their children with special needs, and we must remain vigilant – never taking the rights of our children for granted.

Whether you are a longtime supporter of the Federation, or new to our organization, we extend a special thank you for being a part of our work. Your generous support enables the Federation to continue to make an important difference in the lives of children with special needs. You encourage us to keep on going forward.

Richard J. Robison  James F. Whalen
Executive Director  Board President
**Special Education Center**

Projects include: the Parent Training and Information Center, which under the Individuals with Disability Education Act, provides free information, support, technical assistance and workshops to Massachusetts families of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them; the LINK Center/PTIC Transition, which serves individuals with disabilities and their families in meeting the transition needs of individuals with disabilities – including postsecondary education, vocational and independent living and rehabilitation needs. The LINK Center works with the Parent Training and Information Center to bring together state and community partners to provide individuals and their families much needed information about transition, vocational rehabilitation, independent living and other adult services; the Community Outreach and Empowerment Project, which seeks to increase assistance and support to families of children with special needs whose ability to access education and health care information and services is complicated by race, class, language and/or poverty; the Parent Consultant Training Institute, an eight-week intensive training offering an opportunity for Massachusetts parents and professionals to learn more about state and federal Special Education laws and process.

**Family Support Center**

Projects include: Family TIES of MA, a parent to parent support, information and referral project, funded by the MA Department of Public Health which provides information, referrals, and parent to parent matching to families who have children with special health care needs or disabilities, through six regional Department of Public Health offices; MassCARE, which provides support to women, children, adolescents and young adults infected/affected by HIV/AIDS; Project Launch/My Child, which provides clinical, diagnostic, prevention and coordination services for children and families living in Boston, with a focus on early childhood mental health issues; Pathways for Parents, which in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides “peer to peer” support and advocacy to parents who have serious mental health challenges and complex DCF cases with child custody concerns.

**Health Advocacy Center**

Projects include: Mass Family Voices, the MA chapter of a national network speaking on behalf of children with special health care needs, which builds capacity for family partnerships and supports partnership activities between managed care organizations and parents around improved access to services and supports for families of children with special health care needs; the Family-to-Family Health Information Center, which offers health care information and support to families of children with special needs as they negotiate various systems to enable their children to live in the community and become active participants in the decision making process; Mass Family Voices collaborates with Massachusetts' Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) Quality Demonstration Grant partners in developing and enhancing authentic family-professional partnerships through participation in the Children's Health Quality Coalition and the National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) medical home initiative.

**Family and Community Engagement Center**

Projects include: the Family and Community Engagement Team, which offers education improvement services to districts and schools in Massachusetts, partnering with districts and schools to improve student achievement and school performance through strengthening family and community engagement policies, designing strategies for enhanced family and community engagement and implementing activities directly with families, teachers, administrators, community members and other stakeholders; the Recruitment Training and Support Center for Special Education Surrogate Parents ensures that students whose parents are unavailable to participate in educational decision making processes are provided with a “surrogate parent” for educational decision making. The Family and Community Engagement Center also provides training and technical assistance on family engagement to school districts as a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved Title I Support Partner and District/School Assistance Provider.

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Mass Family Voices: Vicki’s Story

Vicki is the mother of a 12 year old with a behavioral health diagnosis. Vicki contacted the Federation’s Health Advocacy Center and spoke with the staff from Massachusetts Family Voices, our Family to Family Health Information Center, about a number of concerns and problems she was having in accessing supports, services, and programs for her child.

When Vicki first called, she had been trying to navigate the complicated world of insurance coverage for her child. But it soon became clear that Vicki needed more than just information. A single parent, Vicki had been struggling with feeling isolated in caring for her child, who had recently been hospitalized. They had no home-based services, no family support, and Vicki was under extreme stress, worried that her job was in jeopardy because of the preoccupation and distraction of caring for her child’s needs.

Over the course of several months, a Federation resource staff member guided Vicki through obtaining appropriate insurance coverage and the child disability supplement, financial planning, camp scholarships, and a continuum of care services. With support from the Federation, Vicki is growing more confident in her ability to access the education, health and community support her child needs. Her child is doing well, and has been able to remain in the home, while getting services in school and in the community.

Parent Training and Information Center: Susan’s Story

At age ninety, Susan, who is legally blind, probably never expected to be raising a 16 year old. But, due to tragic circumstances, Susan found herself raising her teenage grandson. He had autism as well as physical issues that impaired his mobility, and he had also been witness to trauma in his home as a child. Susan reached out to the Federation when it was determined that her grandson was not making effective academic progress because the school could not accommodate his needs. Susan was assigned a peer advocate to help her get the services her grandson needed. As she began to understand the special education process and learned more about how best to advocate for her grandson, Susan began working with the school herself. Subsequently, the school began to listen. Because she was empowered to advocate on her grandson’s behalf, he was finally able to access the resources he needed.

Our Impact

42 federation staff members steward 642 volunteers, training
1,400 Special Education Surrogate Parents, guiding 2,700 parents and professionals via Family TIES of MA, supporting
3,000 families through the Mass Family Voices project, and helping 4,300 parents who reach out to the PTIC Call Center.

Over 5,000 attendees visit our workshops each year, and our resource fairs attract an annual audience of approximately
15,500. Our quarterly newsletter reaches 30,000 readers.

In 2015, we touched over 62,000 lives.
Visions of Community Conference

On Saturday March 7th the Federation welcomed over nine hundred attendees to the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston for its annual day-long Visions of Community conference. Dr. Joe Petner and Dr. Bill Henderson presented the keynote, using music, data, and personal experiences to provide strategies and inspiration for furthering inclusion in school communities.

This year, the Federation was able to offer workshops in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Somali during each of the three sessions in addition to 35 workshops in English.

Family TIES of Massachusetts: Maria’s Story

Family TIES of Massachusetts responds to a wide range of calls for assistance from families of children with special needs. Over the years, one family has defined COURAGE for us.

By the time they arrived in the United States, Maria and her twin sons had experienced domestic violence, homelessness, and poverty. The young family came to join relatives in Massachusetts, seeking health care options that were not readily available in their native country. One boy had a hearing impairment and the second had cerebral palsy and complex medical needs. Lacking insurance, they were badly in need of durable medical equipment and supplies, which Federation staff helped to collect. Continuing support and conversations with Family TIES and colleagues at the Mass. Department of Public Health, Division for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs led to resolutions of all of these issues.

Today, the family enjoys a modest apartment that adequately meets their needs. Insurance coverage has been assured for the family. Public programs and part-time work for one twin, who recently graduated from high school, has improved the family’s circumstances. The second twin continues to thrive and receives academic supports in the local school district. Maria hopes to write a book to chronicle their journey and successful outcomes.

Patience and kindness have flowed from this family throughout their ordeal. Maria has been empowered to advocate for her children, and last year became a volunteer Support Parent in the Family TIES Parent-to-Parent Program. In a recent Match, she offered emotional support and assurance to another immigrant parent who faces a very similar situation. Families come to our program for information and referral services, with hope that in sharing their complicated family circumstances, they will find programs and services, guidance and emotional support. They learn how to alleviate some of the challenges they face. Our staff is grateful to offer resources and direction. We are heartened and inspired by Happy Endings.

THANK YOU for helping us help families like these.
Walk, Roll, Shobble, Stroll

The weather was beautiful for the third annual Walk, Shobble*, Stroll for the Federation for Children with Special Needs, held on September 27, 2015, at the Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton, MA.

This event is more than just a walk. Participants were invited to play games and to get creative with arts and crafts. There was face painting, music, and dancing as well! All of us at the Federation look forward to another fun-filled walk next year!

This year’s walk raised $9,000 to help the Federation continue its work supporting families of children with special needs.

FCSN Gala: 2015

Our annual gala, “Celebrating Every Child”, was held on Friday, May 15th at the Westin Watertown Hotel. Guests were welcomed by the Federation’s Executive Director, Rich Robison, joined by former WCVB news anchor Susan Wornick.

Honorees included Federation Board member Anne Howard, receiving the Martha Ziegler Award, and youngsters Tim Keefe and Tommy Cooney, who received the Patricia Blake Advocacy Award.

Our President’s Award was presented to John Hancock, in recognition of their long-standing support. Tom Crohan accepted the award, noting that “disabled does not mean UN-able.”
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INCOME AND EXPENSE CHARTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2015

Income

State Grants & Contracts 64%
Federal Direct Grants & Contracts 17%
Program/Conf. Fees 6%
Fundraising (Private) 12%

We have made every effort to include all donors for FY15 in this report. If any errors have been made, please let us know so that we can correctly acknowledge your gift.

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The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
The Paint Bar
The Sports Museum
Trader Joe’s

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Greg Waxman
Michael and Susan Weiner
Westport River’s Inc.
James and Diane Whalen
Wheelock Family Theater
Zoo New England

State Grants & Contracts ......................... $2,036,479
Federal Direct Grants & Contracts ........... $541,339
Program/Conf. Fees .......................... $212,099
Fundraising (Private) ......................... $387,831
Total Income ..................................... $3,177,748
Program Expenses: $2,419,707
G & A Expenses: $534,648
Development Expenses: $141,603
Total: $3,095,958

This financial information is derived from audited financial statements. Copies of audited financial statements are available upon request.