

# Visions of Community

Virtual Conference

VOC 23 Recap

The Impact  
of 50 Years  
of Special  
Education

## FCSN NEWSLINE

VOC 2023 SPECIAL EDITION



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## 50 Years and Counting

BY PAM NOURSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step," said Martin Luther King. This is what our founding families did. They took the first step.

They created lists, made phone calls, and saw the possibility of taking that first step.

Continued on the next page ...

## What's Inside?

- This is my story
- What is the  
Children's  
Behavioral Health  
Initiative?

and more...





## Cont'd ... 50 Years and Counting

**BY PAM NOURSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

In March, we had our annual Visions of Community Virtual Conference. This was Massachusetts' largest gathering of families of children with disabilities or special healthcare needs and the professionals serving them, with almost 1000 people in attendance. VOC embodies our vision for an inclusive and more equitable community in the state of MA, where all individuals and families have access to educational and health information and services they need to thrive.

We had a wonderful week leading up to the conference, where we came together to share, listen, learn, watch, and participate! We met with our State Commissioners, networked with other families, discussed Stigma, and learned more about Transition to Adulthood.

Almost 50 years after the passage of Education of Handicapped Children Act, which later became IDEA, many students with disabilities are still being deprived access to education.

We need to continue to take the next step, and the step after that, to continue building the

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## Cont'd ... 50 Years and Counting

**BY PAM NOURSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

staircase that our founders began and that will lead to our vision that all families will have the resources and support they need to ensure that their children reach their full potential.

During this year's conference, we continued to celebrate the 50th year of Massachusetts Chapter 766. We assembled an exceptional panel of speakers who had boots on the ground during the formation of this significant piece of legislation. We heard from families impacted by this law, and of community leaders who continue to work to engage their communities, empower families to participate in the decision-making process, educate schools and professionals on accountability of procedural safeguards, and create collaboration and transparency, which promotes equality. It was incredible!

Throughout the conference, participants had ample opportunity to meet up with other families and professionals, learn new skills, join in the conversation, and received the tools needed to provide a more robust and better-informed future for their loved one or student.

The VOC's curated workshops dove deeply into early childhood, special education, health services and benefits, the impact of trauma, racial equity and intersectionality, self-care, transition planning, and much, much more.

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*The Federation joins the world in mourning  
the devastating loss of lifelong advocate  
for disabled people,*



*Judy  
Heumann*



*The world is better because of  
Judy and we dedicate ourselves  
to carry on her work.*



## **Cont'd ... 50 Years and Counting**

**BY PAM NOURSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

As VOC came to a close, we received the devastating news that “The Mother of Disability Rights,” Judy Heumann passed away. Judy had an outsized influence in improving the world for people with disabilities and therefore all people.

Judy Heumann was a lifelong advocate for the rights of disabled people. She was instrumental in the development and implementation of legislation, such as Section 504, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“She was a giant among giants,” as Joe Petner, Federation Board Member said, and she leaves behind a large legacy that we as the Federation, will continue to do our part to carry on.

Pam





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**Once we start to dream, anything is possible!**

**- Emma Gregory  
Statewide Trainer, PTIC**

## **Judy Heumann Herstory**

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE  
TRAINER, PTIC**

Since Judith Heumann's passing on March 4th, 2023, I've talked about her with family and friends. It's shocking to hear how many people did not know about her and her work fighting discrimination against disabled people.

I'm ashamed to say that I had not heard of Judy until working with the Federation. However, it is no question that Judy's impact on the disability rights movement was monumental. I hope we can share this history of Judy and the many disabled advocates - without whom the world would look very different today - as part of

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

the continued fight for disability justice. Below are some essential lessons that Judy had taught us through her lifelong work as a disability rights activist.

Family Leadership can be Foundational.

Judy, a polio survivor, was denied access to school because her wheelchair would be a "fire hazard." Judy's mother, Ilse Heumann, fought hard to get her into school, including working with other parents to integrate some of the high schools in NYC. This leadership did more than provide Judy with an education, as important as that was. Judy's parents, who fled Nazi Germany as children, instilled in her a sense of justice, and she credits this with contributing to the strong advocate she became. As Judy says, "when something doesn't feel right, they taught us, you must question whether it is an instruction from authority or what a teacher says in class."

Social Change is Always "We" and not "I."

Judy clarified in her memoir that this story isn't hers alone. She says, "For any story of changing the world is always the story of many. Many ideas, many arguments; many discussions, many late-night, punchy, falling-apart-laughing brainstorming sessions, many friendships; many failures, many times of almost giving up; and many, many, many people." We saw this in the fight for the implementation of Section 504 when Judy and a group of other disabled activists occupied a Federal Building for 24 days

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

(which they were successful in).

Judy talked about how this was one of the first times the public saw people coming together across disability and civil rights movements. This effort would only have had happened with everyone involved. Deaf activists signed out of the windows to communicate with allies outside the building after the phones were turned off. Brad Lomax got the Black Panther Party to bring food to the activists daily during the occupation. Personal care attendants were necessary to ensure activists got turned over at night so they wouldn't develop bed sores. Each night, Judy encouraged the group to stay one more night and keep fighting. And every night, nearly everyone stayed despite the hardships. This effort would not have had been possible without every single person involved.

Disabled People do NOT need your Pity – They Need Accessibility.

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

Judy began her memoir by saying, "I never wished I didn't have a disability." When she first got involved in activism, disabled people were, and to some extent still are, often portrayed as, in Judy's words, "the kind of people for whom you felt pity and raised money to cure their disease. Not the kind of people who fought back." The occupation challenged that image, and Judy and her fellow advocates showed the world that people with disabilities are whole human beings with strengths. The only thing that stood in their way was the lack of accessibility to the world around them.

Judy described the occupation as, at times, being like her time at Camp Jenad (which you can learn more about in the film "Crip Camp"): "Camp was the one other time in our lives when we'd lived in a world that worked for us and our needs. Where we didn't have to feel inferior for being too slow or different. For being a burden. Where we could be ourselves without apology, in the building, just like camp... the inaccessibility of the outside world, which so often left us isolated, felt very far away." In a

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

space, inaccessibility of the outside world, which so often left us isolated, felt very far away." In a space where inaccessibility wasn't an issue, Judy and other activists showed the world what people with disabilities are capable of.

Disability Justice is Global.

Judy's advocacy went beyond US borders. She co-founded the World Institute on Disability before becoming the first Advisor on Disability and Development at the World Bank. She was also involved with the United Nations Convention on the Rights for People with Disabilities, a treaty which continues to be "a major catalyst in the global movement for changing how disabled people are seen – that is, no longer as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection, but rather as full and equal

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC

members of society, with human rights." The US senate, by the way, had still failed to ratify this treaty. Judy reminded us that discrimination against people with disabilities exists everywhere, and the fight for disability justice goes across borders.

The Fight for Disability Justice Continues.

Judy was a lifelong advocate, and her work continued until the end of her life, serving under both the Clinton and Obama Administrations. In fact, the last time she was arrested was in 2017 while protesting the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, which would have gutted many of the provisions that support disabled people. Judy reminds us that there is still so much work to do. I can't think of a better way to thank Judy than to continue to fight for disability justice. Here are just a few things that you can do to help carry on Judy's legacy:

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC

- Learn and teach history: Watch the documentary "Crip Camp," read books such as Judy's memoir, "Being Heumann," or "A Disability History of the United States." Join the movement to #TeachDisabilityHistory with EasterSeals.
- Amplify the voices of disabled activists and content creators: Do you follow anyone on social media with disabilities? Amplify their voices and financially support them.
- Support organizations run by and for people with disabilities: See what organizations may exist in your local area or look into national organizations.
- Think about disability issues when you vote and advocate for disability policy: What are some of the current bills that may impact people with disabilities? How can you support these bills?
- Become a Special Education Decision Maker for a child in state custody: Support children with disabilities whose parents are unknown or unavailable and ensure they receive their educational rights.
- Work to make your community accessible: Look for things that might be inaccessible for people with disabilities. Work with your local government to improve accessibility in your community.

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## Cont'd ... Judy Heumann Herstory

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

Today, my brother, who is in a wheelchair, and countless others, cannot be told they cannot attend school because they are a "fire hazard." People with disabilities cannot be told they can not ride in an airplane without a companion (something that Judy experienced) and they cannot enter a profession simply because of their disability. The world would look very different without Judy Heumann and her fellow disability activists, and we must work to carry on their legacy. Thank you, Judy, for refusing to take no for an answer and fighting tirelessly for disability justice.

Contact Emma Gregory, PCTI Statewide Trainer, at [egregory@fcsn.org](mailto:egregory@fcsn.org).





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**These trainings have a big impact on my journey advocating for my son at school.**

**- Minh Chan Nguyen,  
Recent Graduate of the Vietnamese PCTI Series**

## **This is my story**

**BY MINH CHAN NGUYEN, RECENT GRADUATE OF THE VIETNAMESE PCTI SERIES**

I'm one of the parents in the Circle of Vietnamese Parents group, which had weekly training for parents every Thursday night on Zoom. This group had invited many experts who came to present their presentations about Autism, Special Education, IEP, and other services for special children. Most of them come from FCSN. These trainings had a big impact on my journey advocating for my son at school. I live in California and have three kids.

In 2020, when my little, cute and smart boy who had a speech delay got an Autism diagnosis from a Neurologist, we started an intensive program- ABA, speech, OT- for him and approached Special Education in

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## Cont'd ... This is my story

**BY MINH CHAN NGUYEN, RECENT GRADUATE OF THE VIETNAMESE PCTI SERIES**

our School District. This was completely new to me. In fact, it was a huge difficulty, and I had a lot of stress.

In 2021, a friend of mine introduced me to the Circle of Vietnamese Parents group. At that time, FCSN had a training series for us via Zoom. I attended these sessions and started to learn about Special Education, especially Basic Rights, Assessments, and IEP. This information helped me a lot when I tried to understand my son's evaluation and IEP reports, and I recognized that I had to be an active member of his IEP team as well as advocating for his education. My little son had made much more progress than one year ago, and I felt more confident and less stressed in his IEP meetings. I've also gradually realized what I should do to help him so that he can learn and grow. In my experience, I saw the Federation's training as very useful and important for us. I hope other parents, especially Vietnamese parents who have had the English barrier and special kids, can join these sessions and be able to turn the knowledge that these experts delivered into their own knowledge, so they can advocate and support their children's learning at school.

For more information on the Circle of Vietnamese Parents group, contact Vòng Tay Cha Mẹ Việt at [vongtaychameviet@gmail.com](mailto:vongtaychameviet@gmail.com).



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**... Because of organizations like the Federation, we knew we weren't alone. There was always someone to connect with ...**

**- Melanie McLaughlin, EdM  
Project Manager**

## **What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?**

**BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M.,  
PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES**

The United States is experiencing a mental health crisis, particularly among children.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, [up to one in five children](#) (ages 3 to 17) in the U.S. have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. The isolation of the pandemic along with disrupted routines and relationships has heightened the problem for children and families. Nearly half of all high school students struggle with persistent feelings of sadness

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## Cont'd ... What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?

**BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M., PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES**

or hopelessness (Rico et al.).

As caregivers of children and youth with special health care needs, we have lived experiences managing behavioral, social/emotional, academic, and other needs. Yet, as many of you have shared, the workforce shortage has made finding behavioral health support seemingly impossible. There was a time not too long ago when it was genuinely impossible - which is why parent advocacy and legislative actions are critical. This is a story of how parent advocacy resulted in significant changes in reforming the mental health care system for children in MA. Additionally, this article offers resources for families and

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# Cont'd ... What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?

BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M., PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES

caregivers seeking behavioral health supports for children and youth with special health care needs.

In 2006, The Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) was created because of a class action lawsuit in Massachusetts. The case *Rosie D. v Patrick* was brought on behalf of Medicaid (aka MassHealth)-eligible children and adolescents under the age of 21 who needed but were not getting mental health services necessary for them to remain with their families and in their home communities. Through the *Rosie D. v Patrick* case, the Court ordered the State to develop in-home services, including comprehensive assessments, case management, behavior support, and mobile crisis services. In 2007 a landmark plan, the **Rosie D. Remedial Plan**, was put into action to reform the children's mental health system in Massachusetts. CBHI began as an interagency initiative to carry out the remedy from the *Rosie D.* class action lawsuit. CBHI is now part of the MassHealth Office of Behavioral Health. This is all because families and caregivers decided to take action to create systemic change.

The following is from the [www.rosied.org](http://www.rosied.org) website:

The Court's order in *Rosie D.* applies to children and adolescents under the age of 21 who reside in Massachusetts and meet the following criteria:

- Are eligible for MassHealth, the Massachusetts Medicaid program, under either MassHealth Standard or CommonHealth;
- Are diagnosed with a serious emotional, behavioral, or psychiatric condition meeting the federal definitions of serious emotional disturbance; and
- Are determined through a mental health evaluation to need home-based services. 2

Children who do not have social/emotional disorders (SED) may still be eligible to receive many new home-based services. There are eligibility requirements (called medical necessity

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# Cont'd ... What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?

**BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M., PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES**

criteria) for each new home-based service, such as intensive care coordination, family partners, mobile crisis, crisis stabilization, in-home therapy, in-home behavior, and therapeutic mentoring services. Children with SED who may have a co-occurring disability such as autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, or substance abuse are eligible for services under the Rosie D. Remedial Plan.

In addition, Children's Hospital and the Boston Bar Foundation produced *The Parents' How-To Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts*, which is available to download at [https://www.bostonbar.org/app/uploads/2022/06/bbaguide\\_2011update\\_2.pdf](https://www.bostonbar.org/app/uploads/2022/06/bbaguide_2011update_2.pdf). This guide is an *excellent resource* with especially useful advocacy tips. For a printed copy, contact 617-778-1934 or [www.theguide@bostonbar.org](mailto:www.theguide@bostonbar.org).

You can also search for a mental health provider through the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA) website: <https://www.mabhaccess.com/Search.aspx>.

But what if we still cannot get behavioral health support? This problem has a name – it's called an "adequate access" problem. If you find, after working with your pediatrician and insurance provider, and others, that you still cannot access behavioral health supports, here are some suggestions:

- Ask the insurance company to provide you with a list of available providers.
- Ask the insurer to investigate and confirm the availability of providers in its network.
- Look for another type of mental health provider within the network who might provide the service your child needs.
- Ask the insurance company to approve and pay for services from a mental health provider who is available but who is not in the network.
- Switch to a different insurance plan.
- File a complaint with the Massachusetts Division of Insurance (DOI).
- If all else fails, consult with a lawyer who is knowledgeable about mental health advocacy.

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# Cont'd ... What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?

**BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M., PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES**

Following are a few additional resources for families supporting children and youth with behavioral health care needs.

Bazelon Center for Mental Health: [www.bazelon.org](http://www.bazelon.org)

Family Ties of Massachusetts: [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org)

Mass Family Voices: [www.fcsn.org/mfv](http://www.fcsn.org/mfv)

The Federation for Children with Special Needs: [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org)

Massachusetts Association for Mental Health: [www.mamh.org](http://www.mamh.org)

The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill/Massachusetts Chapter: [www.namimass.org](http://www.namimass.org)

The National Center for Children in Poverty: [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

View their publication Towards Better Behavioral Health for Children, Youth and their Families - Financing that Supports Knowledge: [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_804.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_804.pdf)

Parent / Professional Advocacy League (PPAL): 617-542-7860 or [www.ppal.net](http://www.ppal.net)

PAL's Parent Resource Network (PRN) Line: provides information regarding child and adolescent mental health issues; staffed by trained family advocates. 866-815-8122

Parental Stress Line: 24-hour hotline: 1-800-632-8188

Parents Helping Parents: 1-800-882-1250 or [www.parentshelpingparents.org](http://www.parentshelpingparents.org)

## **Insurance Information**

Health Care for All: 617-350-7279

MassHealth Customer Service Center: 1-800-841-2900

MassHealth website: <https://www.mass.gov/topics/masshealth>

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership: 1-800-495-0086 or [www.masspartnership.com](http://www.masspartnership.com)

Please remember, you're not alone. Our Mass Family Voices, Parent Information Center and Family Ties staff are available to talk over the phone or virtually to help support your family. We offer interpretation services in multiple languages. You can reach us at <https://fcsn.org/contact-us> or call 1-800-331-0688. We are stronger together.

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## Cont'd ... What is the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative?

**BY MELANIE MCLAUGHLIN, ED.M., PROJECT DIRECTOR, FAMILY VOICES**

Overview and Methodology of the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey – United States, January–June 2021 Adriana Rico, MPH1; Nancy D. Brener, PhD1; Jemekia Thornton, MPA1; Jonetta J. Mpofu, PhD1; William A. Harris, MM1; Alice M. Roberts, MS2; Greta Kilmer, MS1; David Chyen, MS1; Lisa Whittle, MPH1; Michelle Leon-Nguyen, MPH1; Connie Lim, MPA1; Andrew Saba1; Leah N. Bryan, MPH1; Jennifer Smith-Grant, MSPH1; J. Michael Underwood, PhD1

<http://www.rosied.org/page-73386>

Contact Melanie McLaughlin, Project Director for FCSN's Mass Family Voices, at [mmclaughlin@fcsn.org](mailto:mmclaughlin@fcsn.org).





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**Once we start to dream, anything is possible!**

**- Mary-Beth Landy  
Sr. Trainer, and Support Specialist**

## **Spring's Beginnings**

**BY MARY-BETH LANDY, SR. TRAINER,  
AND SUPPORT SPECIALIST, RTSC**

Spring is a time of renewal and new beginnings. It marks the end of a long winter and the start of a new season. The world comes alive again with new growth, fresh blooms, and a sense of rejuvenation. Spring is a time to shake off the winter blues and embrace the possibilities of the future.

The changing of the seasons is an important reminder..

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## Cont'd ... Spring's Beginnings

**BY MARY-BETH LANDY, SR. TRAINER, AND  
SUPPORT SPECIALIST, RTSC**

The changing of the seasons is an important reminder of the cycles of life. Just as the earth goes through its own renewal each year, we too can use this time to start fresh and begin anew. Spring is a time to let go of the past and look forward to the future with hope and optimism.

Spring is the perfect time to explore new hobbies or take up a new activity. Whether it's starting a garden, trying a new workout routine, or taking a cooking class, trying something new can help you feel invigorated and excited about life along with focusing on personal growth and self-improvement. This could mean setting new goals for yourself, whether they be personal or professional. It is time to take action towards achieving these goals and making positive changes in your life! Spring is a time to celebrate life and all of its possibilities. It's a time to embrace the beauty and wonder of the world around us and to look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm. By embracing the spirit of spring, we can let go of the past and begin anew with a sense of purpose and direction!

*Mary-Beth Landy is the Senior Trainer for FCSN's Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC). Contact Mary-Beth at [mlandy@fcsn.org](mailto:mlandy@fcsn.org).*







# MRC NexGen Careers

**BY REBECCA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF  
TRANSITION PROJECTS**

We're in the business of possibility at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), and we're excited to share that we've launched NextGen Careers, a new initiative to help young adults (ages 18-30) to explore the world of work.

This innovative program will teach jobseekers to advocate for themselves, gain self-confidence, and become self-sufficient on their career journeys. Once individuals enroll in the program, they are paired with a team of counselors, benefits advisors, and employment specialists to help them find the best career path.

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## MRC NexGen Careers

**BY REBECCA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF TRANSITION PROJECTS**

Other important roles on the NextGener's team is a peer mentor and family partner! Knowing the projected growth of career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), NextGen specializes in providing NextGeners pathways to apprenticeships and internships in these fields. The NextGener is at the center of their team, choosing and driving the activities to pursue their personal career goals.

Currently, NextGen Careers operates in the service areas of the following MRC Offices: Boston, Braintree, Lawrence, Lowell, Roxbury, Springfield, and Worcester.

For a list of the cities and towns in those service areas and to learn more information about NextGen Careers, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/nextgen-careers>.

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**“Through this and other experiences playing, singing, and listening to good music in the company of loving comrades, my mantra is "music heals!" Believe it!**

**- Bob Crabtree, "of counsel" with the Special Ed and Disability Law practice group of Kotin, Crabtree & Strong, LLP**

**What is the Me2/  
orchestra, and how is  
it different from  
other orchestras?  
How did it start, and  
what is its mission?**

**BY BOB CRABTREE, "OF COUNSEL"  
WITH THE SPECIAL ED AND  
DISABILITY LAW PRACTICE GROUP OF  
KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP**

Me2 is the brainchild of its conductor, Ronald

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## What is the Me2/ orchestra, and how is it different from other orchestras? ...

**BY BOB CRABTREE, "OF COUNSEL" WITH THE SPECIAL ED AND DISABILITY LAW PRACTICE GROUP OF KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP**

Braunstein, a graduate decades ago of the Juilliard School in NYC who was quickly recognized internationally as one of his generation's most promising orchestra conductors.

A few years into his career, Braunstein was knocked off his track by bipolar disorder: his agent dropped him, and he could not find work as a conductor. Skipping ahead some decades to September 2011, he and his wife, Caroline Whiddon – an excellent French horn player in her own right - decided to try an idea that might enable Braunstein to return to his calling as a conductor and simultaneously challenge the assumptions of a music industry that so often stigmatizes and excludes those with mental illness. They advertised for musicians who struggle with mental illness and those who support them to form a stigma-free, no-auditions-required orchestra. Burlington's Me2/Orchestra is now going on 12 years of age and thriving.

In 2014, leveraging their success in Vermont, Ron and Caroline inaugurated a second Me2/ Orchestra in Boston, commuting between Burlington and Jamaica Plain to ensure that both iterations grew and remained strong. Covid interrupted rehearsals for about two years, but when things opened up

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## What is the Me2/ orchestra, and how is it different from other orchestras? ...

**BY BOB CRABTREE, "OF COUNSEL" WITH THE SPECIAL ED AND DISABILITY LAW PRACTICE GROUP OF KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP**

enough, the two orchestras joined to perform a 10th-anniversary concert at Boston's Symphony Hall in January 2022 (I encourage readers to view a video of that concert at [youtube.com/watch?v=AOHbkgf1H-U](https://youtube.com/watch?v=AOHbkgf1H-U)).

My wife Prill, a violist, and I, a clarinetist, joined Me2/seven years ago and never looked back. The community, the repertoire's quality, and the members' mutual support had been tremendous sources of strength and healing for members and for audiences both. Through this and other experiences playing, singing, and listening to good music in the company of loving comrades, my mantra is "music heals!" Believe it!

*How has the Me2/ orchestra impacted you and other performers in the orchestra?*

At each of our concerts, some of our musicians spoke in witness of their struggles with mental illness and of the part that music - specifically playing in our stigma-free environment - has played in their lives. This had conveyed a powerful message to our audiences and, indeed, to our fellow players. We often only learn about each other's histories and struggles when we hear their stories at concerts.

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## What is the Me2/ orchestra, and how is it different from other orchestras? ...

**BY BOB CRABTREE, "OF COUNSEL" WITH THE SPECIAL ED AND DISABILITY LAW PRACTICE GROUP OF KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP**

Beyond this, we had experienced countless occasions where the compassionate leadership of our conductor and our exec, Ms. Whiddon, had prioritized a member's health and need for support over the musical work at hand in a rehearsal. Such moments are healing not just for the musician experiencing a crisis but for all members and the music itself. The quality of our musicianship benefits enormously from an atmosphere rooted in love and mutual care.

*What do you hope this orchestra will bring to its audiences?*

People are not their illnesses. As an audience hears our music, learns about Me2/'s mission, and listens to players describing their journeys, they get to see and hear that musicians' struggles do not define them; they are simply humans like all of us, navigating an extremely challenging world, bearing a backpack of their own particular issues, large or small, but able to put that aside in good company and a caring environment to make music. They see the power of a loving community focusing on a common task as a healing force. Perhaps some can apply that model in their own lives and figure out ways to make the message of Me2/ bear fruit in their families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities at large.

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# What is the Me2/ orchestra, and how is it different from other orchestras? ...

**BY BOB CRABTREE, "OF COUNSEL" WITH THE SPECIAL ED AND DISABILITY LAW PRACTICE GROUP OF KOTIN, CRABTREE & STRONG, LLP**

*What will you be playing in the next concert?*

Beethoven's Fifth and a sample of Dvorak's Slavonic Dances! It'll be great if some of the Newline's readers can make it to a Me2/ concert. We expect to play at Newton North High School on Sunday, May 7, in the afternoon; other dates and locations are in the works. Details for those concerts will be posted on Me2/'s website at <https://www.me2music.org>. One can also find information on that site about joining Me2/ and other ways to support the orchestra's profoundly beautiful mission.

Robert Crabtree is "of counsel" with the Special Ed and Disability Law practice group of Kotin, Crabtree & Strong, LLP. Our offices have moved to 2223 Washington St., Newton, MA 02462.





**(800) 208-2242**

**fcsn.org/SchoolFinder**  
**SchoolFinder@FCSN.org**

## **School Finder Phone Line**

Helping families understand your options for school

### **Liy telefòn pou chache enfomasyon sou lekòl**

Lap ede fanmi yo konprann opsyon yo genyen pou lekòl

### **Línea directa de localizador de escuelas**

Ayuda a las familias a comprender sus opciones para la escuela

### **Linha Direta do Localizador de Escolas**

Ajudando as famílias a compreender as suas opções de escolas

### **Đường dây Điện thoại Tìm Trường học**

Giúp các gia đình hiểu được các lựa chọn trường học phù hợp



### **学校查询专员热线电话**

帮助家庭了解您的教育选择

Open to families and children of all backgrounds, languages, needs, and abilities. You can call our NEW School Finder helpline to learn about your educational options.

Middle School Families: we are especially excited to share information about career and technical education high schools!

Staff are available to speak with families in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese or Haitian Creole.

See our website or call our helpline for more information: (800) 208-2242 or [www.fcsn.org/SchoolFinder](http://www.fcsn.org/SchoolFinder).







# How do I get the job I want?

**BY REBECCA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF  
TRANSITION PROJECTS**

FCSN participates in a regional community of practice with other parent centers called REAL Transition Partners. REAL Transition Partners produce free Lunchtime Learning Webinars on topics about postsecondary transition throughout the year. Presentations target different audiences from transition professionals to parent center staff to families to young adults themselves.

On November 30th, the Lunchtime Learning Webinar was How Do I Get The Job I Want? presented by Tonia

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## Cont'd ... How do I get the job I want?

**BY REBECCA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF TRANSITION PROJECTS**

Weichmann, Transition Coordinator and Project Coordinator from the Parent Network of Western New York.

Topics covered in the webinar included the following:

- Employment should be an expectation for young adults with disabilities
- Ideas to help you figure out what kind of job you want
- Things to consider before starting a job search
- Tools to help you complete applications
- Preparing for interviews

After sharing the details of How Do I Get The Job I Want? with our Transition Listserv and the FCSN community, we were excited to see that a teacher from the Visions Program at Pentucket Regional High School, Cara Wilson, had registered. The Visions program is a postsecondary transition program serving young adults 18 to 22 with intellectual disabilities. Cara found out about the presentation from a parent, so she and 5 students attended

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## Cont'd ... How do I get the job I want?

BY REBECCA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF TRANSITION PROJECTS

virtually. Her students learned some new things and were excited to recognize some of the topics and keywords. Cara said, “the webinar aligned so nicely with what we have been working on over the past couple of months.”

The Transition Team at FCSN is grateful to the parent of Cara’s student for sharing the information about our Lunchtime Learning Webinars. We are so glad Cara and her students could attend. We encourage families, educators, and youth to share information about the Lunchtime Learning series and our other presentations with your communities. We would love to see you at the next one! If you are not on our Transition Listserv, email [Transition@fcsn.org](mailto:Transition@fcsn.org) to be put on the list. You will get updates on transition presentations, free or low-cost events, and topics of interest.

If you are interested in **How Do I Get The Job I Want?**, it was recorded in English and Spanish and can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzHRRRewKp8> (English)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8lVlnMP3uk> (Spanish)

Rebecca Davis is the Director of Transition Projects for the Federation. Contact Rebecca at [rdavis@fcsn.org](mailto:rdavis@fcsn.org).



# CULTURE

## Cont'd ... The Importance of Cultural Responsiveness in Social Emotional Learning

**BY EMMA GREGORY, STATEWIDE TRAINER, PTIC**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) defines [Culturally Responsive and Sustaining SEL](#), as "practices that actively draw upon (responsive) and explicitly support (sustaining) students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges as a strategy to deepen learning. These practices must be interwoven with efforts that seek to address systemic inequalities and advance equity goals, including racial equity goals and more." Educators and practitioners can intentionally learn about and integrate the knowledge of their student's culture and identity into their teaching. Strategically reading books with authors or characters representing children's backgrounds and languages, recognizing bilingualism as a strength, having high expectations for every child, and respecting students' cultural expression can ignite a sense of belonging in their students.

Cultural responsiveness is one critical aspect of SEL, and there is much more to learn! The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Workshop at the Federation will touch on necessary social-emotional skills, how to foster these skills at home and school, how to write social-emotional goals on the IEP, why SEL is important for all stakeholders, and so much more! Keep an eye out on our website for this new workshop starting in November.

*Emma Gregory is the Statewide Trainer for FCSN's Parent Training & Information Center (PTIC). Contact Emma at [egregory@fcsn.org](mailto:egregory@fcsn.org).*





# Did you turn 22 during Covid?



## If you:

- Turned 22 after March 10th, 2022
- Remained enrolled in school until you turned 22 and have completed school

**Then you may be eligible for services now.**

Participating state agencies: Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

**To find out more about extra services available to you, call 800-333-0688 or go to [www.fcsn.org/transition-support](http://www.fcsn.org/transition-support)**



## **Coordinated Pandemic Transition Services for Transition Youth** **The Federation is your first stop to help you learn more about extra services**

The Federation has partnered with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to provide families, providers, and transitioning youth with information regarding eligibility to receive extra Coordinated Pandemic Transition Services.

Submit your intake form today! Go to: <https://fcsn.org/fcsn-intake-form/>.





Federation for Children  
with Special Needs

## Thank You to Our Sponsors



Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission



## The Federation's 2023 Visions of Community Conference 50 Years of Special Education

Fifty years ago, Massachusetts passed Chapter 766, guaranteeing the right to an education for children with disabilities. This placed it at the forefront of civil rights for all children with disabilities. This law became the blueprint for the nationwide IDEA. Thank you for joining us this year to celebrate the anniversary of this historic victory!

Your support continues to help families across Massachusetts.





# WE ARE HIRING



## Join the Federation!!!

### EXPLORE THE EXCITING JOB OPPORTUNITIES LISTED BELOW

Are you enthusiastic, passionate, and knowledgeable of special education? Do you work well with others, independently and in a group? **Then FCSN is looking for you!**

Apply to one of these positions:

- [Next-Gen Transition Coordinator](#)
- [School Navigation Specialist](#)

The Federation for Children with Special Needs provides information, support, and assistance to all families, especially those with 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.

We look forward to hearing from you.

