



The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

Early Intervention Information and Resources

April 2003

Caring for the Caregivers — Resources for Families

Parenting a young child, although filled with many moments of joy and wonderment, may be stressful at times. Caring for a child with a developmental disability or chronic special health needs may be especially challenging, impacting every aspect of family life. Receiving a difficult diagnosis for your child may initially cause feelings of despair and isolation as the family comes to terms with the ramifications of such news. Parents, as their children's primary caregivers and advocates, may benefit from a number of supports and services. This article will detail some of these resources that are available on a statewide basis.



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Finding support - For some parents, finding support, whether it is on an individual basis or in a group, can help to overcome feelings of being alone. Most Early Intervention Programs have licensed social workers or other mental health professionals on staff who can provide individual counseling or support. They can also inform parents about ongoing parent groups at their Early Intervention Program.

Family TIES of Massachusetts (Together in Enhancing Support) is a statewide information, referral and parent support project for families of children with special needs and chronic illness. Family TIES coordinators are all parents of children with special needs and can provide information about disability specific support groups or one-to one support through the

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Public Hearing on April 22, 2003

Parents Invited to Give Testimony on Instituting Fee System for EI Services

On April 22nd, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Inter-agency Coordinating Council, will hold a second hearing on the Commonwealth's application for its seventeenth year of funding under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 105-17).

The hearing is being held for the specific purpose of discussing the Department of Public Health's instituting a fee system for Early Intervention services. Although testimony was previously offered for the 17th Year Application, this issue was not presented. During this hearing, the Department will gladly entertain any testimony regarding the incorporation of a co-payment system as well as any other aspects of the grant application.

Members of families with young children, professionals who serve young children and officials from all state agencies with responsibilities for services to children and families are encouraged to come and speak on the issues outlined in this notice or

on any other related concern. The hearing is scheduled on:

April 22, 2003

Hurley Building

19 Staniford Street-Minihan Hall

Boston, MA 02114

10:00 AM—12:00 PM

For more information or to request assistive devices, please call

Voice: (617) 624-5070

TTY: (617) 624-5992

If you cannot testify in person, written comments may be sent until May 23, 2003 to:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

250 Washington Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA 02108-4619

Attn: Ron Benham, Director

Division of Perinatal and Early Childhood Health

Contact the Parent Leadership Project:

Call toll- free (877) 35-EI-PLP  Visit www.eiplp.org  Email eiplp@yahoo.com 

Resources:***New Website for Military Families with Special Needs - www.EFMconnections.org***

Military families who have children with special needs have a new resource for information about a variety of military, local and federal programs. The Department of Defense recently launched a new website geared to the unique circumstances of military families with special needs who are in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and National Guard

The website contains information on the "Exceptional Family Member" Program, that provides guidance on obtaining Early Intervention services, special education and related family support programs. There is a section for family stories that illus-

trates the strength of families, as well as resources they have used to support their children. The site also provides an electronic bulletin board for families to connect and share ideas with each other. For more information, please visit www.EFMconnections.org.

**En Español****"Su Familia"-Toll-free Bilingual Telephone Help-line/
Websites translated in Spanish for Families of Children with Special Needs**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has announced the creation of "**Su Familia**" **National Hispanic Family Health Help-line**. This toll-free telephone help-line will assist Hispanic families to obtain basic health information and access to resources. By providing the callers' zip code, Su Familia bilingual information specialists can refer callers to local health providers, including community and migrant health centers. Callers can also request basic health information, referrals, information sources or receive consumer-friendly, bi-lingual Su Familia fact sheets. The toll-free number 866- SU-FAMILIA (866-783-2645) is available Monday through Friday from 9 am to 6 pm.

Spanish language websites:**The Federation for Children with Special Needs—www.fcsn.org**

The Federation for Children with Special Needs provides information, support and assistance to parents of children with disabilities. This website is available in English and Spanish.

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center— www.nectac.org

This center supports the implementation of the early childhood provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part C of this federal law provides for Early Intervention services. This website can be viewed in English and Spanish.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry— www.acap.org

Information on psychiatry. Fact sheets are available in English and Spanish.

The Arc—www.thearc.org

This national organization for people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities and their families has publications that are available in Spanish.

Parents Place—www.pplace.org

This website features information to help parents raise and educate their children who have special needs. This site can be viewed in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

Website for Rare Disorders (Sistema de Informacion Sobre Enfermedades Raras - www.cisat.isiii.es/er/)

(Courtesy of Family TIES of Massachusetts)

Special Education Conference**Enlist in Wrightslaw Special Education "Boot Camp" — May 2 & 3**

The Down Syndrome Resource Group of Greater Springfield is pleased to present the Wrightslaw Special Education "Boot Camp", featuring Special Education attorney Peter Wright and Pamela Wright, a psychotherapist who has worked with children and families for more than thirty years. Peter and Pamela are the authors of "Wrightslaw: Special Education Law" and "Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy- the Special Education Survival Guide".

Parents, educators, advocates and attorneys are invited to attend this two day conference that includes presentations on the Indi-

viduals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other relevant laws, Smart IEP's (Individualized Education Programs) and Tactics and Strategies for Effective Advocacy. Day one of the conference will be held at the Delaney House in Holyoke and day two will be held at the Mercy Medical Center in Springfield.

For more information, please call Laurie Houle Isham at (413) 566-3625 or by email LHI412@aol.com or Tanya Wheeler at (413) 562-7395.

Focus on Parent Participation:***Where Do EI Parents Go After their Children Leave Early Intervention? The Story of Laurie Houle Isham, Finding the Strength and Inspiration to be a Parent Leader***

According to Laurie Houle Isham, inspiration to make a positive contribution can be found even in life's most challenging circumstances.

Laurie's journey through the Early Intervention system began on the second day of her daughter, Adrianas' life. Adriana was born with Down Syndrome and had open heart surgery when she was just six months old. After the surgery, Adriana received services through the May Center. Because of Adriana's frail health in the post-operative period, the family kept a low profile, especially in the winter months. Laurie recalls receiving the *Parent Perspective* newsletter, sent to her by the May Center. Reading the newsletter helped her to feel "connected" to the outside world.

Laurie contacted the Parent Leadership Project to learn about opportunities for parent involvement in the Early Intervention system. According to Laurie, "Darla Gundler (Director of the Parent Leadership Project) and Martha deHahn (then, Western Region Coordinator, Parent Leadership Project, currently Parent Outreach Specialist, Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program, Department of Public Health) were a Godsend." Laurie felt that it was very helpful to talk with them as mothers who have "walked the road" and as professionals who could provide information and "steer her in directions" where she needed to go.

To address the lack of resources for fami-

lies who have children with Down Syndrome in their local area, Laurie and parent Sue Nardi, started the Down Syndrome Resource Group of Greater Springfield. They applied for and received a Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Award to help fund the launching of the group. (The Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Awards, named for influential parent leader Evelyn Hausslein, is an opportunity for families in Early Intervention to take leadership roles in creating new supports for their programs or communities. Through the generous support of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, parents can apply for funding up to \$1,000 to implement their proposals).

The Hausslein Award, provided funding for speakers to present workshops at the Down Syndrome Resource Group. These speakers included Dr. Ellen Elias from the Down Syndrome Clinic at Children's Hospital, Dr. Allen Crocker at a Grandparent Appreciation Dinner, and Dr. James McDonald, a communications specialist. Most recently, the Resource group received a Hausslein Award to help fund the Wrightslaw Special Education "Boot Camp", a conference featuring special education attorney Peter Wright on May 2nd and 3 (see details on page 2).

Laurie also represented the Western Region of Massachusetts on the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), an advisory body to the Department of Public Health. As an ICC representative, Laurie had the

opportunity to attend the National Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Conference, an annual special education conference in Washington, DC.

Continuing to serve as the President of the Down Syndrome Resource Group of Greater Springfield, Laurie believes that "nothing is more rewarding than to connect with a new family to let them know they are not alone on this newfound journey." Area medical centers have started referring new parents to the group. Laurie is thrilled that three families who are currently receiving Early Intervention services have become Officers for the Resource Group.

Laurie credits her involvement with the Parent Leadership Project with helping her learn about the Early Intervention system, to get connected with other parents and professionals and most importantly "to have a voice in the system." Expressing her gratitude to parent leaders, like Evelyn Hausslein, who "had the vision to promote family involvement" and paved the way for countless families who follow, Laurie is not resting on her laurels. Rather, Laurie prefers to "pick up the torch and continue on this journey as it benefits our children. What better legacy can we leave them?"

There are many opportunities to become involved in the Early Intervention system, where parents can learn and develop lifelong advocacy skills. For more information, call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email eiplp@yahoo.com.

Save the date...Save the date...Save the date...Save the date...Save the date...Save the date...Save the date...

**The 20th Annual New England Seminar:
"Taking Care of Our Children...Taking Care of Ourselves, May 3"**

Families with young children, from birth to seven years of age, with visual impairments and professionals throughout New England are invited to the 20th Annual New England Seminar: "Taking Care of Children, Taking Care of Ourselves" on May 3rd from 8:15 am to 3:00 pm. Hosted by the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, the conference includes workshops on assistive technology and transition, as well as opportunities for parents and professionals to share ideas. Activities and childcare will be provided by counselors, who will be assigned according to your child's age, disability and special considerations. For more information, please call Linda Cummings at (617) 972-7393 or email PreschoolServices@Perkins.org.

Caring for the Caregivers — Resources for Families

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Parent-to-Parent Program. In this program, parents who have requested to talk to a more experienced parent are matched by diagnosis, age of child, region of the state or other special needs. Parent-to-parent support is provided by a trained, experienced parent, who will share his or her story, listen and offer information and support while respecting confidentiality, cultural and individual differences. If you would like to be matched with a parent of a child with the same diagnosis or health concern, or for ongoing support group information, please call Family TIES at (800) 905-TIES or visit their website at www.massfamilyties.org.



Taking a Break - Respite Services—For families who are caring for children who have intensive special needs or chronic illness, respite services may provide a much needed break from the daily routines. Although state funding for respite programs has been reduced as a result of the state's current fiscal crisis, respite care is available from several organizations. Arc Massachusetts is a statewide organization that provides advocacy, education and outreach for families with children who have mental retardation and related developmental delays. Respite services are offered by many of its local affiliate chapters. To find the local or regional Arc chapter in your area, visit the Arc Massachusetts website at www.arcmass.org or call (781) 891-6270. The Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton is piloting a

weekend respite care program for families with children who are physically-challenged. For details, please call Karen Madden at (781) 830-8419, email Karen.Madden@state.ma.us or visit www.geocities.com/mhsfamilyoutreach.

Families caring for children with special needs can find information on a variety of topics, including respite programs through the Family Resource Database, housed at the website for the Federation for Children with Special Needs. The Federation is a center for parents and parent organizations representing a variety of disabilities, that provides information, support and assistance. The database can be accessed by a key word search including specific conditions and geographic areas. For more information, visit www.fcsn.org or call the Federation toll-free at (800) 331-0688.

The New England INDEX, a project of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, addresses the information needs of people with disabilities. The INDEX maintains information databases on programs and agencies in Massachusetts and New England, including a section on respite services. For more information, visit www.disabilityinfo.org.

Taking the time to care for yourself can revitalize energy and improve outlook for the journey ahead.



Family TIES News:

Updated 2003 Family TIES Directory of Resources Available/ Workshop Opportunity - Parents invited to take "Next Steps"

Family TIES of Massachusetts, is a statewide information and referral network for families of children with special needs, that is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Each year, Family TIES produces a Resource Directory that contains useful information about many topics including accessibility and travel, camps, community support groups, Early Intervention programs, resources for specific conditions and disabilities and web resources. The 6th edition Resource Directory, which has been updated for 2003, is available online at www.massfamilyties.org or call toll-free at (800) 905-TIES.

"NEXT STEPS" Workshops Offered

Family TIES is pleased to present "Next Steps", a series of three skill building workshops for families of children who are in Early Intervention or have recently transitioned into the school system. Part I of this series, "Let's Get Organized", focuses on organizational skills. With so much paperwork, doctors



reports, and school records, how do we keep it all straight? Learn ways to organize, keep track of appointments, and general ideas on keeping it all together. Part II, "Parents You're the Experts", focuses on effective ways to advocate and support your child. In Part III, "Building Your Community", parents learn how to build community supports and how relevant laws can help.

The "Next Steps" series is offered free of charge, but parents are asked to commit to attending all three as they build on one another.

Part I, "Let's Get Organized" is scheduled on May 1 at the Wachusetts Child Development Center, Gardner from 6:30 - 8:30 pm. For more information, please contact Barbara Donati, Family TIES Central Regional Coordinator at (508) 792-7880 or email barbara.donati@state.ma.us. Part I is also offered on May 6 at the Department of Public Health in Lakeville. Please call Nancy Barrett at (508) 947-1231 or visit the Family TIES website at www.massfamilyties.org.

CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

April 10- **Building a Community: An Orientation to Massachusetts Early Intervention**, Part 1, Merrimack College, North Andover, 9 am - 3 pm. A required training for newly hired Early Intervention providers, open to family members of children who receive Early Intervention services. The workshop is free and a stipend is available for **parent** participants. Part 2 of this workshop is scheduled on May 7, Massasoit Community College, Brockton. For more information call the EI Training Center at (800) 331-0688 or visit online at www.eitrainingcenter.org

April 10- 2nd New England Regional Consortium Conference, **“Next Steps in Providing Effective Family-Centered Intervention with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants”**, Holiday Inn, Boxborough. Presented by the Boston Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Children’s Hospital and Gallaudet University Regional Center at Northern Essex Community College, this conference will feature presentations and skills workshops, addressing recent technological advances, programs, practices, policies and products related to effective family-centered intervention with deaf and hard of hearing infants. For more information, call the Boston Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children at (617)-355-4539 or visit www.geocities.com/nextsteps_2003.

April 17- **“Health Care Coverage and Food Allergies”**, 7-9 pm, Foxboro. For more information contact the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, New England Chapter at (617) 965-8886, or online at www.asthmaandallergies.org.

April 17- **Basic Rights Workshop**. Somerville, 7-9 pm. This free course presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs covers basic information about state and federal laws to assist **parents** in planning, decision-making and monitoring of their child’s IEP. Materials are available in Spanish and Portuguese. To register, call (800) 331-0688 or online at register@fcsn.org. Other dates and locations: May 1- Dorchester; May 7- Pittsfield; May 15- Foxboro, Arlington, Hyde Park.

April 24—**Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) Fiscal Committee Meeting**, 9:30-11:30 am, Milford Marriott, Milford. The Fiscal Committee advises the ICC and DPH in planning and monitoring for the efficient use of funds in the Early Intervention system. Stipends are available for **parents** who regularly attend. For more information, call Darla Gundler at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email Darla.Gundler@state.ma.us.

April 30th and May 1—**24th Annual Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference**, Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough. The MEIC Conference is an educational event for Early Intervention Providers, early childhood professional and **parents**. The theme this year is “Celebrating Diversity: Exploring Infant, Toddler and Family Development” and will focus on the broad spectrum of issues that infants, toddlers, and families may face in their development. Through the generous support of the Department of Public Health, the Parent Leadership Project will sponsor a Parent Contact from each of the 64 Early Intervention program to attend with expenses paid, including registration fee, overnight accommodations (double occupancy) and a parent networking dinner. For more information, call the Parent Leadership Project, toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email eiplp@yahoo.com.

May 1— **Next Steps “Let’s Get Organized”**, Wachusett Child development Center, Gardner. Family TIES of Massachusetts presents the Next Steps a series of three skill building workshops for families of children who are in Early Intervention or just transitioned into the school system. Part I of this series, “Let’s Get Organized” focuses on organizational skills; Part II- “Parents, You’re the Experts” focuses on effective ways to advocate for and support your child; Part III- “Building Your Community” focuses on building community supports. These workshops are free. For more information, call Barbara Donati, Family TIES Central Regional Coordinator at (508) 792-7880 or email barbara.donati@state.ma.us. Other dates: May 6, Lakeville, Department of Public Health. Call Nancy Barrett at (508) 947-1231 or visit their website at www.massfamilyties.org.

May 2,- **Carepoints 1st Annual Conference**, Holiday Inn, Brookline. Carepoints, a parent-professional partnership to improve and maximize care for medically complex children and their families, will hold their first Annual

Conference. For more information, visit www.carepoints.org or call (617) 521-2908.

May 2 & 3 – **Wrightslaw Special Education “Boot Camp”** The Down Syndrome Resource Group of Greater Springfield is pleased to present the Wrightslaw Special Education “Boot Camp”, featuring attorney Peter Wright and Pamela Wright, a psychotherapist who has worked with children and families for more than thirty years. Topics include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other relevant laws, Smart IEP’s (Individualized Education Programs) and Tactics and Strategies for Effective Advocacy. Day one of the conference will be held at the Delaney House in Holyoke and day two will be held at the Mercy Medical Center in Springfield. For more information, please call Laurie Houle Isham at (413) 566-3625, email LHI412@aol.com or Tanya Wheeler at (413) 562-7395.

May 5, **“Teaching Social Understanding & Enhancing Peer Friendships”**, a **Carol Gray One Day Workshop**, Sheraton Framingham Hotel, Framingham. Presented by Children Making Strides, this seminar will focus on teaching children on the autism spectrum ways to increase their social skills and their ability to relate with peers. For more information, call Children making Strides at (508) 759-6754 or visit their website at www.childrenmakingstrides.com

May 15-**“Do Parents Shape Their Children”**, 6:00 pm, Lesley University, Cambridge. To celebrate the Ninth International Day of Families, PARENTS FORUM presents this benefit lecture, hosted by the Center for Children, Families & Public Policy at Lesley University. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter service is available. For more information, contact Allison Bell at (671) 739-3669 or by email allisonbell@aol.com.

Do you have a calendar event, concern or idea to share with other Early Intervention families? Please tell us about it! Call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877)35-EI-PLP or email eiplp@yahoo.com.



For on-going support group information in your area call Family TIES at 1-800-905-TIES

FAMILY PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES & EI PROGRAM NEWS

BOSTON NEWS by Hyacinth Irving

Boston Early Intervention for Children and families (BEI) begins the spring by offering parents a variety of support groups, starting on Monday, April 14th. Topic specific groups will meet Monday from 9:30 to 11:00 am, Tuesday from 6:00 to 7:30 pm, and Fridays from 9:30 to 11:00 am. On Wednesdays from 12:30 to 2:00 pm, **BEI** will hold a "drop-in" group for parents. Upcoming topics for the Tuesday group include "A Multidisciplinary Approach to Feeding" on April 15th, "What Toys are Best for My Child" on April 22nd, "Nurturing Discipline" on April 29th and "An Introduction to Sign Language" on May 6th. Refreshments, parking, babysitting and transportation are available. (Please call in advance for transportation). To register, call Cara Cassella, LSCW at **BEI** at (617) 254-1140 ext. 2078 or email ccassella@thehome.org.

The Family Nurturing Center in Boston, is offering a 12 week parenting course "Nurturing Our Babies". This free course is offered to families who reside in Mattapan and Hyde Park and Roslindale. For more information, please call Sandy Sachs at the Family Nurturing Center at (617) 474-1143.

CENTRAL NEWS by Dawn King

As the change of seasons arrives (finally!), so do changes in Parent Leadership at Early Intervention Programs. Farewell and thanks to former Parent Contacts whose children have transitioned out of Early Intervention; Mithu Banerjee, Carrie Gallagher, Lisa Besse and Sheri Clyde.

Welcome to Korine Stephens and Jill Ostrowski, new Parent Contacts for **Minute Man EIP** and **Valley Child Development Center**. Korine and Jill are enthusiastic about their new roles at their children's early intervention program and look forward to sharing resources and information with parents.

Minute Man EIP in conjunction with Minute Man Arc will be starting a new group in May, for 2 to 5 year olds that will meet one Saturday per month (TBD). Some of the planned activities include art therapy and music therapy. No registration is required and a small fee will be charged. For more information please contact Susan Mayer at the Minute Man Arc (978) 371-1543 ext. 22.

A few alumni and current parents whose children receive(d) services at **UMass EI and Family Support Program** attended the Federation for Children with Special Needs conference, "Strong Families in a Changing World" on March 1, 2003 at the World Trade Center in Boston. The parents attended workshops, including one about the process of transitioning from Early Intervention and looked forward to sharing information with other families. They also enjoyed visiting the vendor displays, meeting other families and learning how to advocate effectively.

METROWEST NEWS by Lisa Mayer

Jewish Family & Children's Services (JF&CS) and the **Riverside Early Intervention Programs** teamed up recently to offer families who are transitioning to the public school system, an opportunity to talk with school system representatives. Each town had their own day and families enjoyed the chance to begin the communication process with their school system.

JF&CS says thank you and good-bye to Parent Contact, Gail Grammatica Blushi and welcomes new Parent Contact, Kathy Gordon.

Wayside/Beaverbrook Early Intervention Program

(Wayside) recently held a workshop for families whose children are transitioning to the public school system. **Wayside** is also providing workshops for childcare providers.

Cambridge-Somerville Early Intervention Program will begin a Parent Support Group on Monday nights, with educational topics (TBD), as well as time for parents to meet and socialize. **Cambridge-Somerville** recently instituted a website for parents for online support.

Parents and children from **Step 1 Early Intervention Program (Step 1)** will be wearing their "Sunday Best" as they enjoy a luncheon with Mother Goose, at a local restaurant in May. **Step 1** will also be starting an infant massage class. On May 19th, golfers will have the chance to tee up for a good cause — the Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser for **Step 1**. For more information on any of these event, please call Cindy Warren, Program Director at (617) 774-1040.

Riverside Early Intervention Program at Needham

(Riverside-Needham) Parent Contact, Deborah Marcus, has received a Haussein Award to fund a two-part workshop, "Building Bridges for Communication" in early April. The workshop will focus on ways to help children, who are non-verbal, to communicate through basic sign language or gestures so they may participate in activities in community settings. **Riverside-Dedham** has starting to provide in-service training for local area pediatricians.

NORTHEAST NEWS by Wendy Lemire

The Professional Center for Child Development in Andover (PCCD) is hosting an IEP (Individualized Education Program) workshop on June 10, 2003. To register, call Ellen Stevens at (978)475-3806 or mytiman@juno.com

The **PCCD** Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is planning a family hike and picnic at the Old North Bridge in Concord in June. Families and staff are invited to join in the fun.

The **Northeast Regional Consultation Program (RCP)** has

FAMILY PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES & EI PROGRAM NEWS (continued)

scheduled a CPR class that addresses the special needs of infants and children with developmental disabilities and special medical or health conditions on April 29, from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Registration is required. Please call Jane Howe, RN at (978)475-3806.

The **Boston Regional Child Development Center-Stoneham (BRCDC-Stoneham)** recently held a Turning Three Workshop series for parents. In May, **BRCDC-Stoneham** will host a series of workshops on Nutrition, from feeding issues to food allergies.

Family fun night on March 24th was a big success at **South Bay Early Intervention Program (SBEIP) - Lowell**. Parents and children enjoyed the opportunity to “jump, shout and boogie”. **South Bay** will host a three part series, “Baby Basics”, for parents with newborns (0 to 3 months) on April 2, 9 and 16 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. This series is open to EI families, as well as families in the community. Two “Positive Parenting” Groups for parents with babies up to the age of 6 months will begin to meet on a weekly basis. One group will meet at 10:00 to 11:00 am, from April 3rd until May 22nd and the other group will meet from 6:00 to 7:00 pm on April 7th until June 2d.

The Parenting with Depression Support Group, led by Andrea Zenga, LCSW, meets Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 am. Andrea and I will be presenting a workshop on “Parenting When You’re Depressed” at the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium Conference (MEIC), on May 1st. Hope to see you there!

SOUTHEAST NEWS by Timothy Pelletier

The **Taunton Area EIP (Taunton EIP)** held a Transition Resource Night on March 19 for parents in Early Intervention and Early Head Start. The agenda for the meeting was developed to give parents the opportunity to learn about options after their children turn three. After an introduction by **Taunton EIP** and Early Head Start, representatives from local school systems, agencies and parents broke into groups so that agencies and towns discuss their specific programs. According to Zulmira Allcock, Director of the **Taunton Area EIP**, the meeting was a great success and there are plans to repeat the program in the future.

Kennedy Donovan Center-Attleboro Early Intervention Program (KDC-Attleboro) held an Introduction to Sensory Integration workshop presented by Occupational Therapists Anne Seiden, Shannon Fontaine and Edith Benisty.

The 15th Annual Spaghetti Dinner sponsored by the Knights of Columbus was held Saturday, March 29th. Families from **KDC-Attleboro** gathered at the North Attleboro Knights of Columbus hall for pasta and entertainment. To commemorate and to thank them for 15 years of commitment, **KDC-Attleboro** presented the Knights with hand-printed framed artwork created by

children in the program. Cindy Tuminelli, a local children's entertainer, also be performed for the children.

On April 14, Gina Mcarrigle, a Parent Specialist from the Hockomock Community Partnership for Children, will present a workshop; "Parenting for Today" that will include topics, such as effective discipline strategies, how to handle the terrible two's and more.

For the past six years, the **Greater Fall River Early Intervention Program (Greater Fall River)** has assembled and presented Easter Baskets to families in the program. On April 8, the staff of People, Inc., Ship's Watch, and parents will meet to assemble baskets that will be delivered in time for the Easter Bunny's arrival on April 20.

In March, the **Greater Fall River** Parent Advisory Council (PAC) hosted a Parent/Child reading hour presented by David Mello, Director of Children's Service at the Fall River Library. The presentation focused on providing tips and story-telling ideas for parents. The children also enjoyed entertainment. Stacy Ferreira, PAC Chairperson and Parent Contact, is excited about the PAC's upcoming events, including a Water Safety presentation on April 9, Infant CPR on May 21 and an overview of Behavior Management on June 11. All events will be held at the center from 10 to 11:30 am. Transportation and childcare are available. Please contact Maria Sousa, Parent Liaison, at (508)675-5778 for additional information.

WESTERN NEWS by Faith Piaggi

Butterflies are a sign of spring. **Reach Early Intervention Program (Reach)** is celebrating spring with a field trip to “Magic Wings”, a butterfly conservatory in Deerfield on April 18th.

Reach has an ongoing support group for parents of children with complex medical needs or severe developmental delays. **Reach** will offer a sign-language class for parents beginning in May and will continue to offer a swimming program with the Hampshire County YMCA. Through funding from “Project Playgroup”, the Franklin County Family Network, in collaboration with the Greenfield Schools will present a three -part series on transition from Early Intervention. For more information, please call Micahl Goldstein at (413)585-1400.

The **Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP)** recently held a workshop on cranial-sacral therapy and safe lifting techniques for parents. **WRCP** will offer a CPR training for parents of children with complex medical needs on April 28th. Please call Karen Cassidy at (413) 783-5500.

The **Pediatric Development Center-Pittsfield (PDC-Pittsfield)** is expanding, creating a new community center for families with young children. **PDC-Pittsfield** will also assume the role of specialty-service provider for children with autism spectrum disorders.

THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Parent Leadership Project was created to support parents whose children receive early intervention services. The Project's main goal is to promote lifetime advocacy, leadership skills and the development of an informed parent constituency, which will encourage early intervention services to be increasingly family centered. The Project is a parent driven endeavor, which continually seeks family involvement and input regarding the needs of EI families in our state, and is implemented by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a statewide director, a communications specialist, an EI program re-certification parent coordinator and six regional coordinators. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

STATEWIDE DIRECTOR

Darla Gundler

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PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT NEWS

Come Meet Us at MEIC!

The 24th Annual Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium Conference (MEIC) will be held on April 30th and May 1 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough, Massachusetts. The theme of this year's meeting is "Celebrating Diversity: Exploring Infant, Toddler and Family Development." Parents, Early Intervention providers and early childhood professionals will have the opportunity to attend workshops on a variety of topics including sensory integration, brain development in young children, a "Buddhist" approach to Early Intervention, and parent participation in the Early Intervention system.

The Parent Leadership Project staff will be out in force. Come visit our exhibit table, (enjoy eating some candy) and learn about opportunities for parent involvement in the Early Intervention system. The Parent Leadership Project will be sponsoring a Parent Dinner on April 30th. This is an opportunity for parents from many Early Intervention Programs to meet each other and to share information with Project staff. We hope to see you there!

For more information about conference workshops, visit the Early Intervention Training Center website at www.eitrainingcenter.org or contact the Parent Leadership Project, toll-free at (877)35-EI-PLP.

NEXT DEADLINE: The next deadline is May 9th. We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles.

To contribute calendar listings, program news or any other information, please contact your regional coordinator or the newsletter editor, Jocelyn Woog. Contact information for the staff of Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project as listed in the left hand column.

The *Parent Perspective* newsletter is produced by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This **free** publication, written by parents, is for parents of children who are or have been enrolled in Early Intervention, EI staff and interested others. **To be added to our mailing list**, call the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email Jocelyn.Woog@state.ma.us or eiplp@yahoo.com.

