



The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

Early Intervention Information and Resources

January/February 2004

A Year of Family Participation in Early Intervention

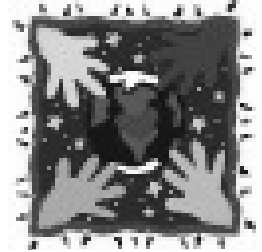
The ICC and YOU: Parents Voices Count!

Parents, would you like to have a voice in the future planning and policy decisions for the Early Intervention system? As a Parent Representative of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) or as a member of one of six committees of the ICC, you will learn how the Early Intervention system works and be in the forefront of receiving information that affects the EI system. Parents have the opportunity to "sit at the table" and voice their opinions with other key advisors to the Department of Public Health, lead agency for the Early Intervention program.

What is the ICC?

The Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) is

a statewide inter-agency group that advises and assists the Department of Public Health on Early Intervention issues. The ICC is comprised of **parents**, professionals and providers. Members of this dynamic group include representatives of state agencies (Department of Education, Office of Childcare Services, Department of Mental Retardation and Mental Health, and others), higher education, State legislators, medical professionals, EI providers, early childhood service providers, as well as **parents**. Staff



(Continued on page 3)

Public Hearings on January 30 and February 2, 2004

Parents Invited to Give Testimony on Early Intervention Funding Application

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health in cooperation with the Interagency Coordinating Council will hold two public hearings on the Commonwealth's proposed amendment of its Seventeenth year funding award and its Eighteenth Year Application for funding under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part C of IDEA (Public Law 105-17) is the federal law that provides funds to assist states in providing Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

As the lead agent for Early Intervention Services, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health encourages anyone with an interest in the Early Intervention system to testify in person at the hearings. Public comment on proposed changes in eligibility for Early Intervention Services and proposed changes to the fee structure for families and other issues is invited for inclusion in the state's funding application to the federal government.

Hearings will be held on **January 30, 2004 at 10 AM - 1 PM** at the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health**
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA
Public Health Council Room, 2nd floor

-and-

February 2, 2004 at 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM at the
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Western Regional Public Health Office
23 Service Center, Northampton, MA

Drafts may be reviewed at the Department of Public Health, Division of Perinatal and Childhood Health (DPECH). Requests for mailed copies may be addressed to Ron Benham, Director, DPECH, 250 Washington Street, 4th floor, Boston, MA 02108.

If you cannot testify in person, written testimony may be sent until March 4, 2004 to Ron Benham, Director, DPECH, 250 Washington Street, 4th floor, Boston, MA 02108.

The hearing sites are accessible and sign language interpreters will be available. For more information or to request other accommodations, please contact (617) 624-5962 (voice) and (617) 624-5992 (TTY).

Contact the Parent Leadership Project:

Call toll-free (877) 35-EI-PLP



Visit www.eiplp.org



Email eiplp@yahoo.com



Resources

Family Circle Supports Parents of Children with Neurological Impairments

Family Circle is a support and mentoring program for parents whose children have severe neurological impairments. With funding through the Help A Little One Foundation (H.A.L.O.) and Jewish Family and Children's services, Family Circle serves families throughout eastern Massachusetts. H.A.L.O.'s founders are parents of a child who was left totally debilitated by a sudden illness.

Recognizing that parents who have experienced raising children with neurological impairments can be great sources of information and mentoring support for others facing similar challenges, Family Circle offers a parent-to-parent directory to its members. If they choose, parents may share their names, their children's diagnosis, address, telephone and email address with each other, to use, respectfully, as needed for information and assistance.

Parents can receive a monthly newsletter with information and resources, including opportunities to attend social events, support groups and workshops. Family Circle has also established a resource directory with information about topics from advocacy to wheelchairs and everything in between.

The Family Circle program is free of charge to parents. For more information, please contact program coordinator Patty Reardon at (781) 551-0405.

Parent Participation Opportunity

Share Your Expertise as a Parent on a Family Advisory Council

Many hospitals and healthcare institutions throughout the country have formed Family Advisory Councils (FACS) to give patients and their families a voice in issues related to treatment, care and policy design.

The next meeting of the Children's Hospital Family Advisory Council is scheduled on February 5th, from 6 to 8 pm. The speaker will be Mary Hannisin of Carepoints, an organization that provides information and supports for families who have children with life-threatening challenges. Dinner and free parking will be provided. For more information, contact Meg Comeau, Family Initiative Program at Children's Hospital at (617) 355-2058, or visit www.childrenshospital.org/supportservices, click on Center for Families.

with doctors, nurses and administrators to ensure that the highest level of care is delivered, including providing information to hospital leaders and staff about patients' needs and concerns, planning new patient care areas and new programs and strengthening communication among patients, families and staff. The Patient and Family Advisory Council publishes "Side by Side," a quarterly newsletter for patients. For more information on how to get involved, please call (617) 632-4319 or email PFAC@partners.org.

Established in 1983, the Family Advisory Council at Children's Hospital in Boston, one of the oldest hospital-based councils in the nation, serves as an advisory board. Comprised of parents of children who received care at the hospital, staff, and physicians, the Council meets four times a year. It has been instrumental in advising the Hospital on various projects including design plans for new construction, signage, and reviewing written ma-

Dana Farber Cancer Institute launched its' Patient and Family Advisory Council in 1998. The Council works side-by-side

To learn if your hospital or health care institution has a Family Advisory Council, contact it directly.

Make a Resolution to Call the Parental Stress Line

As the new year begins, make a resolution to do something supportive of your children and yourself: call the Parental Stress Line in times of stress and crisis.

been nonjudgmental listeners for callers - offering empathy, support, problem solving assistance, and referrals to services in the caller's area. Any parent can call anytime. No problem is too big or small.

family service providers;

- leading stress management workshops for parents and caregivers.

A program of the Home for Little Wanderers, one of the oldest child welfare agencies in the nation and the largest in New England, the Parental Stress Line is a 24-hour, toll-free, anonymous, and confidential hotline for parents and child care providers in Massachusetts. For almost 25 years, trained volunteer counselors have

The Parental Stress Line staff and volunteers are available to support parents individually as well as in groups, in a variety of ways:

- providing free Parental Stress Line magnets and brochures;
- speaking to groups of parents and

For more information, please contact Katie Britton, the Parental Stress Line Outreach Coordinator, at (617) 927-0624, or email kbritton@thehome.org.

Remember that no one has to be alone in their situation. Call the Parental Stress Line at (800) 632-8188, or visit their website at www.thehome.org for more information.

Parent Participation Opportunity

The ICC and You: Parents Voices Count

(Continued from page 1)

from the Department of Public Health attends ICC Meetings on a regular basis. It is important that voices from all of these perspectives are shared and valued.

The Role of Parents

As a parent of a child who has received Early Intervention services, you have a unique perspective on how the Early Intervention system operates. Parents are encouraged to share their views and their opinions. There are several ways for parents to get involved in the ICC, as an ICC Parent Representative or as a member of one of six committees.

ICC Parent Representatives

Parent representatives are voting members of the ICC, and as such are required to attend meetings six times a year. There is one parent representative from each of the six regions of the state and one at-large parent representative. Regional representatives must live in the region and have a child who is receiving or has received Early Intervention services.

Join an ICC Committee

Parents are encouraged to join a committee of the ICC. There are six standing committees that meet monthly at various locations throughout the state. They include:

- **The Standards Committee** has worked to develop and revise the Operational Standards, which guide EI practices and are used to certify Early Intervention Programs. This year, the Committee will work on operational standards for supervision of EI program staff. The next meeting is February 26th in West Boylston.
- **The Personnel Committee** addresses issues of recruitment, retention and training of Early Intervention personnel. This Committee will work on developing a process and strategies for recruiting students to the field of Early Intervention, as well as research options for financial support of students. The next meeting is February 11th in Milford.
- **The Program Planning Committee** has recently completed the IFSP Guidance Document for providers and families. This year, the Committee will work on identifying demonstrated outcome measures for the Early Intervention system and will collect and review orientation/welcome packet materials for new families to recommend tools to enhance communication between providers and families. The next meeting is February 11 in Natick.
- **The Low Incidence Committee** works on issues related to low incidence conditions (including blindness, visual impairment, deafness, hearing loss, deafblindness, autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorders). The Committee will

work to identify gaps and recommend ways to provide equal access to specialty service providers across Massachusetts. Increasing public awareness of low incidence resources will also be part of the Committee's work. The next meeting is February 19th at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown.



- **The Membership Committee** supports full representation and membership on the ICC, and offers mentorship, as well as, orientations for new members. The Committee will work on developing an orientation outline and materials for new ICC members. This Committee meets in Lowell.

- **The Fiscal Committee** advises the ICC and DPH in planning and monitoring the efficient use of funds and in advocating for increased resources to support statewide Early Intervention services. This year, the Committee will work on initiating a strategy discussion in preparation for mounting a multi-year campaign to achieve long-term fiscal stability. The next meeting is February 26th in Milford.

ANNOUNCING THE FORMATION OF THE FISCAL ADVOCACY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Fiscal Advocacy Sub-committee will partner with existing state efforts related to funding and parity issues and will identify partners for advocacy at the Federal government level to bring greater attention to the needs of the EI system.

Parent Participation on the ICC is encouraged and supported

Stipends are available for parents who attend meetings on a regular basis and mentoring support is available. Orientation meetings for new members are provided.

Alternate Methods of Participation

For parents who cannot attend meetings, there are other ways to participate including correspondence by email, review of mailed materials, and through conference calls.

What to do next

In the near future, your Early Intervention program will receive an invitation for parents to participate in ICC activities. See what it's all about. Come and observe an ICC Meeting or a Committee Meeting. For more information on dates and locations, please call Darla Gundler, ICC Staff Person, toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email Darla.Gundler@state.ma.us.

Remember, your voice counts, so use it!

What's New with Family TIES by Mary Castro Aten

Family TIES of Massachusetts, the statewide parent-to-parent information and support network, is pleased to welcome Lisa Mayer as the Metrowest Regional Coordinator. Lisa is the mother of two children, a 4-year-old son who graduated from Early Intervention and a 9-year-old daughter. Some of you may know Lisa from her recent position as a Parent Leadership Project coordinator and her service as a parent presenter for the Early Intervention Training Center. She also is a volunteer for the Child Assault Prevention Program.

Family TIES says good-bye to Mary Lee Gupta, who supported the program as the Boston Regional Coordinator for several years before moving to New York. Mary Lee also served as the Parent-to-Parent Coordinator. Much gratitude for her efforts and best wishes are sent along to Mary Lee. We continue our efforts to fill vacancies in the Western and Southeast

regions. Contact Mary Castro Aten for more details.

Family TIES staff is busy making changes and submitting additions for the 2004 edition of the Family TIES of Massachusetts Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs. If you know of a program that should be included, please contact your regional coordinator. In addition, the Family TIES coordinators are organizing Next Steps presentations throughout the state. This workshop focuses on skill-building in the areas of organizational skills, advocacy and support, and building connections in your community. Please contact your regional coordinator or the director to schedule a workshop in your region. You may also call the toll-free line at (800) 905-TIES.

Joanne Spencer is the new coordinator for the Parent-to-Parent Program. Its mis-

sion is to match parents who have requested to talk to a more experienced parent based on diagnosis, age of child, region of state or other special needs, for information sharing and support. For more information call Joanne at (800) 905-TIES or (781) 774-6740 or email famtiesp2p@fcsn.org.

Family TIES Regional Coordinators:

Boston: Roxanne Hoke-Chandler
(617) 541-287

Southeast: Mary Castro Aten
(781) 774-6736

Metrowest: Lisa Mayer
(781) 774-6602

Northeast: Kathy Morin
(978) 851-7261 x4018

Central: Barbara Donati
(508) 792-7880 x2337

Western: Mary Castro Aten
(781) 774-6736

Federation for Children with Special Needs to hold Annual Conference on March 20th

The Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) will host its annual conference on March 20, 2004 at the World Trade Center in Boston.

"Visions of Community: A Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs and the Professionals Who Serve Them" will include workshops on developing an Individual Education Program (IEP), Challenging Behaviors: A Survival Guide for Parents, Medical Transitions, Promoting and Sustaining Networks of Friends, Accessing Recreation, among many others.

Jonathan Mooney, author of *Learning Outside the Lines* (Simon & Schuster: 2000) will deliver the keynote presentation. Born a dyslexic who did not learn to read until he was 12 years old, Mooney graduated from Brown University with an honors degree in English literature. Mooney will recount his experiences with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and as executive director of Project Eye-to Eye, a nationally acclaimed mentoring program for children with learning disabilities.

Selected workshops will be available in Spanish and Portuguese and limited childcare is available.

Early bird registration (before February 27) is \$50 afterwards registration is \$65. Registration fee includes workshop materials, continental breakfast and lunch. The deadline for registration is March 12th.

For further information or to register, please call the Federation for Children with Special Needs at (800) 331-0688 or visit www.fcsn.org



Save the Date!

March 20, 2004
at the
World Trade Center
in
Boston,
Massachusetts

Check <http://fcsn.org>
for details!



The Federation for Children with Special Needs' Annual Conference
co-sponsored by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, Massachusetts Family TIES, Parents for Residential Reform, and the Parent/Professional Advocacy League.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

January 28 – **Turning 3 Workshop**, 216 N. King Street, Northampton. The Down Syndrome Resource Group in conjunction with the Service Net Reach Early Intervention program presents this free workshop that addresses the issue of transition from Early Intervention to the Special Education system when a child turns three. For more information call the Reach Program at (413) 585-1400 or email LHI412@aol.com.

January 30 & 31 February 27 & 28, April 2 & 3. **Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change Eleventh Family Leadership Series in the Northeast.** The series will feature state of the art information to assist families in creating a vision and method to achieve that vision. Families whose applications are accepted will be required to attend all three sessions. Session one will focus on family initiative and leadership. Session two will include presentations on inclusion in school, supported employment community living and family support. Session three will be policy-making at the local, state and federal levels. Respite/child care support, transportation and translation are available. For more information, contact Susan Nadworny at Northeast Families Organizing for Change at (781) 665-5179 or by email at snadw@aol.com.

January 31, **Feeding/Swallowing Disorders: an in-depth look at treatment options** 10 am-noon, Boston Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Avenue, Boston. Kids with Tubes, a support organization for parent and caregivers of tube-fed children presents this seminar. Pre-registration is required. Please call Amanda Loftus at (617) 825-6364 or visit www.kidswithtubes.org.

February 5, **Family Advisory Council Meeting**, 6-8 pm, Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Street, Boston. Guest speaker is Mary Hannisin of Carepoints, a Parent-Professional Partnership to Improve and Maximize Care for Medically-Complex Children and their Families. (see Resource section) Dinner and free

parking provided. For more information, call Meg Comeau, Family Initiatives Program, Children's Hospital, Boston at (617) 355-2058.

February 5, **Basic Rights Workshop**, 7-9 pm, Arlington. The Federation for Children with Special Needs presents this course that covers basic information about state and federal laws to assist parents in planning, decision-making and monitoring of their child's special education services. For more information on location or to register, call (800) 331-0688 or online at register@fcsn.org. Other dates and locations: 2/10 -West Warren, 6:30-8:30 pm; 2/24-Somerville, 7:00-9:00 pm; 3/4-Billerica, 7:00-9:00 pm.

February 8, **Accessible Winter Carnival**, 11 am-4 pm, Dunn Pond State Park, Gardner. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Universal Access Program will sponsor an Accessible Winter Carnival. This free event will feature a variety of games and recreation activities including cross country skiing, snow mobile rides, snow shoeing, snow sculpting, and a dog sled demonstration. Refreshments will be provided. For more information about this and other Universal Access Winter Programs call (617) 626-1294 or visit www.state.ma.us/dem/a_events.htm.

February 11, **Camp and Recreation Fair**, 7-9 pm at Wakefield High School. Learn about camp and recreation programs. Co-sponsored by local PAC's of Wakefield, Stoneham, Melrose and Reading.

March 20, 2004, "Believe" -The 21st Annual Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress Conference, Worcester Centrum Centre, Worcester. Experts from across the country will present workshops on over 15 topics geared for new parents, pre-school, elementary school age, middle and high school, and adults, as well as teachers and professionals. For more information, call (800)

664-mdsc, visit www.mdsc.org or email mdsc@mdsc.org.

What's Happening at the EI Training Center (EITC)

The EITC presents required trainings for Early Intervention personnel. Trainings are also open to family members of children who receive Early Intervention services. Trainings are free and a stipend is available for parent participants. Upcoming trainings include:

February 5– **Building a Community: An Orientation to Massachusetts Early Intervention**– Part 1, DPH, Northampton 9:30 am-3:30 pm. Other dates and locations: March 4- McCormack Building, One Ashburton Place, 21st floor, Boston. Learn about core values and the evolution of the EI system, operational standards, state and federal laws.

February 12, **Building a Community: An Orientation to Massachusetts Early Intervention**– Part 2, Pollard Memorial Library, Lowell, pm. Other dates and locations: March 18, 9:30 am-3:30 DPH, Central Office, West Boylston. (See description above)

February 24, **Family-Centered Services: Supporting Families in the Real World**, 9:30-3:30 pm, DPH Central Office, West Boylston. Learn about developing service delivery plans that respect cultural, familial, and ethnic diversity and supports the needs and interests of families.

March 23, **Assessment: Taking a Closer Look**, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm, DPH Central Office, West Boylston. Learn about the assessment process including tools and methods.

For more information, call the EI Training Center at (800) 331-0688 or visit www.eitrainingcenter.org.

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

WORKING TOGETHER

BOSTON NEWS by Hyacinth Irving

Boston Metro Early Intervention Program (Boston Metro EIP) will be resuming parent-child groups including a Feeding Group and a Parent/Child Spanish-speaking group. For more information, please call (617) 522-6000.

A beautifully decorated gingerbread house that was donated to the **Bay Cove Early Intervention Program (Bay Cove EIP)** was the centerpiece for a holiday party on December 17th. Families enjoyed music, arts and crafts projects and everyone had a chance to have their pictures taken with Santa. Thanks to a generous grant from the Putnam Senior Executives Fund, children at Bay Cove EIP have the opportunity to attend play groups twice a week.

At **Boston Early Intervention for Children & Families (BEI)**, a new series of parent/education groups will begin in February.

The **Boston Regional Child Development Program** has recently changed its name to **Criterion-Mattapan**. On November 24th, families from **Criterion-Mattapan** and the Rise and Shine Daycare Program enjoyed a Thanksgiving luncheon, co-sponsored by the program. Staff helped in preparing the feast and some parents brought desserts for a sweet ending to the event.

Harbor Area Early Intervention Program (Harbor Area EIP) recently hired a parent who is bi-lingual to help facilitate community playgroups. Over 70 **Harbor Area EIP** families enjoyed a Winterfest Party in December. Children received books, staff donated trees to give to families and raffles were held for other donated items.

At **Healthy Foundations Early Intervention Program (Healthy Foundations EIP)**, parent-child groups will begin in February with a parent-child cooking class and the very popular "mudworks" programs (one held in English and one in Spanish). **Healthy Foundations EIP** hosted a holiday party at the Revere Park and Recreation facility. Over 100 families attended, including a visit from the jolly one himself. The children received books and families received gift certificates and other items through a raffle.

CENTRAL NEWS by Tammy Bedard

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) at **UMass EI and Family Services** will present an Internet Information Training on January 21st from 6:30-7:30 pm at the UMASS Library. Parents will learn how to search for information pertaining to their children. Space are limited so call soon to save a seat! On February 11th from 6:30 - 8:30 pm, don't miss the **UMass EI and Family Services** Presentation of Resources from Family TIES and Department of Mental Retardation. Please call Ana or Carrie at (508) 856-4202 for further information and to register.

METROWEST NEWS by Cindy Kaplan

The PAC at **Step One Early Intervention Program (Step One EIP)** will host a brunch for members of the Hirshberg Foundation Board of Directors. The Hirshberg Foundation gave a generous grant to **Step One EIP** to purchase holiday books for each child in the program and to purchase assessment kits to administer the Early Intervention Developmental Profile.

With funding through a Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Award, **Cambridge/Somerville Early Intervention Program (CSEI)** is pleased to offer a series of two six-week sessions, educating parents and their children in the practice of Yoga for children with special needs. The class will be taught by Laura Douglass, a certified instructor of Yoga for the Special Needs Child.

Families and staff of the **Thom/Mystic Valley Early Intervention Program (Thom/Mystic Valley EIP)** enjoyed the chance to get together at the annual holiday family party. Food was provided by the families and attendance was at a record high. A group for families of children with Down Syndrome recently concluded. The idea for the group came from the families and it provided a great way for them to link with each other.

NORTHEAST NEWS by Wendy Lemire

At **South Bay Early Intervention Program (South Bay EIP) in Lowell**, a support group for Single Moms will begin meeting on Tuesday nights, starting January 13th. The Parenting with Depression support group continues on Tuesday mornings. Both groups are led by Andrea Zenga. Please call (978) 452-1736 for further details. **South Bay EIP** welcomes back Kerrie Green, now as Program director.

The **Professional Center for Child Development (PCCD)** will be celebrating its 30th anniversary at the Andover Country Club on April 30th. Jack Williams will be recognized for his work with Wednesday's Child on television, as **PCCD** has had the opportunity to serve many of these adopted children. Future **PCCD** programs include Planning for the Financial Future of Your Special Needs Child on February 10th and an IEP Workshop through the Federation for Children with Special Needs on March 23rd from 7-9 pm. For more information, please call Ellen Waddill at (978) 688-5070.

SOUTHEAST NEWS by Timothy Pelletier

The staff of **Kennedy Donovan Center Early Intervention Program -Attleboro (KDC-Attleboro)** were treated to a luncheon given by the PAC on December 16th. The staff enjoyed the luncheon and greatly appreciated the gesture. PAC members also collected and distributed children's hats and mittens for program families in need and for a nearby area shelter.

Upcoming events include a CPR certification class by Red Cross staff to be held at the center on January 28th. On Febru-

FAMILY & EI PROGRAM COLLABORATION

ary 11th, a representative from The Traveling Vineyard, (who is also a PAC member) will present a Wine Tasting Evening at the Center. Prior to the event, plans for the 16th Annual Spaghetti Supper in March will be discussed. The Spaghetti Supper is sponsored by the North Attleboro Knights of Columbus, the program and the PAC. Proceeds from ticket sales benefit the **KDC-Attleboro EIP**. For information on upcoming events, call (508) 226-6035.

The holiday season was brighter for 10 families from the **Kennedy Donovan Center- New Bedford Early Intervention Program (KDC-New Bedford)**, who received holiday gifts and food baskets from the St. John Newmann Center Youth Ministry in Freetown. **KDC –New Bedford** provided gifts for an additional 3 families and staff also collected and distributed food to several families.

The **Schwartz Center for Children (Schwartz Center)** held its annual Holiday party on December 17th. Children and their families were invited to take part in a winter wonderland, which included a trip to the north pole to see Santa, a visit to a "talking" Christmas tree, a hot breakfast and lunch. During the week before Christmas, families in need from the **Schwartz Center** were invited to select donated presents and clothing for their children, complete with wrapping paper. Staff and children were treated to homemade latkes for Hanukkah, and heard stories in celebration of Feliz Navidad and Kwanzaa.

The **Cape & Islands Program (Cape & Islands ECIP)** had an outpouring of generous donations from two banks, a bookstore, a nursing home, staff and parents, which allowed the program to provide holiday toys, clothing, books and food gift certificates to families identified by the Service Coordinators. One bank asked each of their branches to sponsor 1 or 2 families. Another bank chain allowed each branch \$250 of donated funds for use at the program's discretion. A local bookstore hung names and ages of children and encouraged customers to buy a book at 20 per cent off. Every child named received a developmentally appropriate book. At the nursing home, ornaments were hung with a child's name and special request or suggestion. In total, approximately 100 children of all ages received gifts. Kudos to Kara and Linda on the **Cape & Islands** EI staff who coordinated the whole project this year!

At **Taunton Area Early Intervention Program (Taunton Area EIP)**, over 200 children and family members attended the annual holiday party on December 6th. Children and families enjoyed mingling, coloring pictures and having snacks. Developmental Specialist Donna Kjellman led the group in holiday songs with her guitar. Afterwards, Santa surprised the children with his appearance. He had a gift for every child and then stayed to take pictures with everyone as well. It was a great success as always!

On December 17, the **Greater Fall River Early Intervention**

program (Greater Fall River EIP) held its annual Christmas party. Families were treated to great music, snacks and some holiday decorating crafts. Thanks to all those who participated in this year's candle sale, which yielded over \$800, to be used to fund PAC activities. On February 7th, the **Greater Fall River EIP**, in collaboration with the local Knights of Columbus, will hold its annual Valentines Day Dance. For event information, please contact the **Greater Fall River EIP** at (508) 675-5778.

WESTERN NEWS by Faith Piaggi

The **Thom/Western Regional Consultation Program (Thom/WRCP)** had their third annual skating party on November 9th and over 175 people attended. Children in strollers, some in wheelchairs, others using walkers and siblings had a wonderful time on the skate floor. Families enjoyed the opportunity to meet others and everyone enjoyed the pizza dinner.

The annual holiday party at **Thom/Springfield Infant Toddler Services** was a big hit with over 200 people in attendance. Dinner was served as the staff played holiday music. Children enjoyed having their pictures taken with Santa, face painting and making ornaments.

On March 8th, the Coalition for Respite Across the Lifespan will present "How Do You Spell Relief?", a parent panel discussion on finding resources. The program will be held from 11 am to 2 pm at the Department of Public Health Western Regional Office, 23 Service Center, Northampton. For more information, please call Karen Cassidy at (413) 783-5500 ext.16.

On December 8th and 16th, the **Pediatric Development Center (PDC)** held a training on Autism Spectrum Disorders, for those interested in being home-based therapists for **PDC's** Specialty Service Providers program.

The **May Center for Early Intervention (May Center)** once again teamed up with Bertera Lincoln-Mercury (a local car dealership) and the James Clark Elementary School to hold a toy drive for children who receive services and their siblings. In addition, the **May Center** donated toys to the Bridge Home, a local transition foster home. In total, gifts were provided to over 100 children.

Valley Infant Development Service has a new home. Its new address is 160 High Street, Springfield 01105. The phone number and fax number remain the same.

Criterion-Heritage Early Intervention Program (Criterion-Heritage) held an Open House in November. Families came to see the new rooms where **Criterion-Heritage** offers community parent/child community playgroups. The PAC also held a fund-raiser-- a clothing and toy swap in the afternoon.

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 families enrolled in Early Intervention 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

Toll-free (877) 35-EI-PLP
(800) 445-1255, Ext. 1157
Darla.Gundler@state.ma.us

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Jocelyn R. Woog

(781) 774-6627
Jocelyn.Woog@state.ma.us

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Boston

Hyacinth Irving
(617) 436-4037

Central

Tammy Bedard
(508) 799-4245
mom2winningboys@yahoo.com

Metrowest

Cindy Kaplan
(617) 547-8070
ckapweiss@yahoo.com

Northeast

Wendy Lemire
(617) 470-0760
WendyLemire912@hotmail.com

Southeast

Tim Pelletier
(508) 673-5814
tpellet23@hotmail.com

West

Faith Piaggi
(413) 663-3610
faithpl@verizon.net

EI PROGRAM RE-CERTIFICATION PARENT COORDINATOR

Faith Piaggi
(413) 663-3610
faithpl@verizon.net

The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project NEWS

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORIES ABOUT TRANSITION FROM EARLY INTERVENTION...

the next issue of the Parent Perspective Newsletter will feature tips for families who will be transitioning from Early Intervention services to services in the community and to the special education system. Tell us about what worked well for your children, helpful resources, what you wish you had known earlier, and any questions that you may still have about transition. We'll put it all together to help families ensure a smooth and seamless transition for their children. Please send your transition stories to Jocelyn.Woog@state.ma.us by March 11th or call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP. We look forward to hearing from you!

Save the Date-May 12 & 13, 2004

Parent Contacts Invited to MEIC Conference

The Parent Leadership Project invites Parent Contacts for Early Intervention programs to attend the 25th Annual Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium Conference (MEIC), "Resiliency: Children, Families and Early Intervention", May 12th and 13th at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough, Massachusetts. Robert Brooks, PhD, will deliver the keynote address entitled "Nurturing Resilience in Our Children and Ourselves: The Power of Mindsets".

Parent Contacts have the opportunity to attend this conference for free. The Parent Leadership Project, through generous support from the Massachusetts Department

of Public Health will sponsor one Parent Contact from each Early Intervention program. To be a Parent Contact, your child must currently be receiving Early Intervention services. Parent Contacts serve as a link between parents in their Early Intervention program and the Parent Leadership Project, to share news and information about this conference and other opportunities with parents and to share EI program news with the Parent Leadership Project.

To learn if your Early Intervention Program has a Parent Contact, call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP.

NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is **March 11th**. Please contact your regional coordinator or email the newsletter editor at Jocelyn.Woog@state.ma.us.

The *Parent Perspective* newsletter is produced six times a year by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

