As I walked into the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Visions of Community Conference (which is 'A Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs and the Professionals Who Serve Them'), I began chatting with a woman. We checked in and wandered around, looking at all the vendors. Our conversation began on the light side, we were both educators and mothers. We discussed classroom sizes and homework volume before we dug deeper and talked about our children. Then more specifically, our children with special needs.

A group of my co-workers were saving me a seat for the greeting and keynote speaker so I invited her to sit with us. We continued to discuss our children's special education programs for a bit and then she got up for some coffee. My co-worker asked me how I knew her and I explained that we had just met while walking in. She couldn't believe it, from her view it seemed like we had known each other for a long time.

The bond created between parents of children with special needs is truly amazing. Our children have different struggles and different diagnoses, but our lives followed similar paths. Hours of driving our children to therapy or doctor appointments. Hours of phone calls to insurance companies, doctors, or teachers. Hours of planning IEP meeting notes or making lists of questions to ask. Hours of worrying about our kids' future. We talked, laughed, listened to each other's war stories, and discovered we had a workshop together at the end of the day and we would save a seat for each other.

I love gaining insight while listening to great presenters and hearing inspirational stories but my very favorite part of these workshops is the connection with other families like my own. Feeling like you aren't the only one living this amazing but stressful life. I am always very thankful for moments like these and the conferences that allow them to happen.
**Got Too Much Fruits and Vegetables?**

Julie Schaffer, WIC Nutritionist, MA DPH Blog (Reprint)

How much food do you waste? Sadly, there are times when I throw fresh fruits and vegetables away because life gets too busy. I want to share some of my tips for minimizing this drain on your food dollars.

- **Make soup** – I make soup at least once a week and I throw in whatever leftovers I may have. This is a great way to use leftover vegetables and meat. If you have family members who refuse to eat “leftovers”, this may be an excellent way for you to “repurpose” your meals.

- **Make sauce** – Apples or pears getting too soft? Make a sauce by coring, peeling and slicing the fruit, then sauté in a pan with a bit of butter. Try adding cinnamon to taste and enjoy it hot or cold. I like to add this fruit sauce to my morning yogurt or oatmeal.

- **Freeze it**: Banana turning brown turning soft? Simply peel, slice, and freeze on a cookie sheet. After it freezes, store it in a freezer bag or container. Are your berries getting old? Rinse them and shake out the moisture and freeze on cookie sheet (or you will get a big clump of frozen berries!). Frozen fruits are perfect to add to oatmeal and pancakes. You can also try puréeing the frozen banana with a little milk for a frozen treat that rivals ice cream!

If I purchase “too much” spinach and kale, I freeze it on a cookie tray, too. These are very tasty in soups, omelets, quiche, and even in grilled cheese sandwiches.

**Summer Resources**

Free Fun Fridays offer visitors no-cost admission to many of the most treasured cultural venues in Massachusetts. Every Friday, from the end of June through the end of August, multiple sites are open for free. We reach out to schools, veterans groups, libraries, senior centers, and many other community organizations to ensure that everyone knows that they are also welcome. (Click on sandals for link)

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Looking for things to do, day trips...in and around the Boston area? Check out...

**Boston Central**

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Another resource with events for parents/caregivers and families... [www.spedchildmass.com](http://www.spedchildmass.com)

**What EI Has Meant to My Family**

By Anonymous

I am the mom of two boys, ages 4 and 2, who have both received early intervention (EI) services. My boys are not in my custody today, but I hope that they will be very soon. They are very happy and busy; I miss them very much.

Early intervention has played a big role in helping me to be a better mom. I have not always made the best choices and because of that, I have paid a huge price. When my older son was in EI, we had a social worker assigned to our family. She was great and helped me by providing parental support. My second son was also eligible for EI and my experience with the second social worker, who worked with my family, was not as positive. Our services stopped abruptly and I did not know why.

EI showed me how to help my sons and how to be more patient with them. I received parental support, learned baby massage and baby sign language. I felt very grateful when they helped my younger son learn to talk so that he could put his wants and needs into words. EI provided consistency when I was not able to care for my sons. They had the same providers whether they were with me or in the Department of Children and Families’ (DCF) care. This provided them with some stability.
The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to better understand human exposure to environmental chemicals such as lead, mercury, cadmium and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

For general information purposes, this environmental health study is broadly focused on understanding how individuals are exposed to toxic chemicals, and improving the ability of MDPH to identify and prevent any adverse health effects. **We are particularly interested in educating women of childbearing age and the parents of children (aged 5-12 years old) about some preventative measures to reduce exposure to environmental chemicals.**

**Biomonitoring Massachusetts Study**
- Biomonitoring is the measurement of chemicals (or their metabolites) in a person’s body fluids or tissues, such as blood or urine. These measurements provide valuable information on levels of exposure to environmental chemicals from all sources such as: air, soil, water, dust, and food. This information can be essential when addressing community concerns related environmental chemical exposure and the potential for adverse health effects for exposed individuals.

- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is conducting an environmental health study as part of a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The resources for the evaluation of clinical samples have been made available through a State-Based Biomonitoring Cooperative Agreement with CDC (Number 5 U88 EH 001144).

- All study participants will receive a confidential report describing the levels of environmental chemicals in their body and how their results relate to their own health. There is no cost to any participants who enroll.

- The protection of human participants in the Biomonitoring Massachusetts Study has been reviewed and approved by the MDPH Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Commissioner of Public Health pursuant to M.G.L. c.111, § 24A. For additional information contact Marc A. Nascarella, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, Biomonitoring Massachusetts Study (MDPH IRB# 802071-2) at 617-624-5757 or DPHbiomonitoring@state.ma.us.

- Additional details about the Biomonitoring Massachusetts Study are also available on our website: www.mass.gov/dph/biomonitoring

**WHAT DO BIOMONITORING RESULTS TELL US?**
- Individual results determine if a person has been exposed to a certain chemical at a level above what is considered a normal level. Biomonitoring provides an estimate of actual exposure to environmental chemicals, to help determine if lifestyle changes are needed to reduce exposure.

**IF CHEMICALS ARE DETECTED IS THAT UNUSUAL?**
- No, it is usual that individuals will have measurable levels of chemicals in their bodies. The presence of an environmental chemical in blood or urine does not necessarily mean that the chemical exposure will result in an adverse health impact. The potential health impacts of chemical exposure are dependent on a person’s susceptibility, the amount of chemical, and length of time over which the exposure occurred.

**WHO IS MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMICAL EXPOSURES?**
- People with pre-existing medical conditions, the elderly, pregnant women, woman who may become pregnant, and children may be more susceptible. The may be due to chemical exposure during a sensitive stage of development, or the decreased ability to eliminate chemicals.

**WHEN IS BIOMONITORING CONDUCTED?**
- In Massachusetts, young children are routinely screened for lead exposure using a blood lead test. Biomonitoring may be offered as a public service to residents unintentionally exposed to an environmental chemical such as mercury following an accidental spill. Biomonitoring can also be used to evaluate suspected exposure to chemicals from living near a contaminated waste site, or from consuming contaminants in drinking water.

**WHAT CHEMICALS CAN BE MEASURED?**
- Samples collected for biomonitoring may be analyzed for metals such as lead and mercury, or for other environmental chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

**HOW ARE BIOMONITORING SAMPLES EVALUATED?**
- Blood and urine samples are analyzed at the MDPH State Public Health Laboratory and results are communicated to the MDPH Environmental Toxicology Program for analysis and interpretation.
“Like” Us on FaceBook
“Follow Us” on Twitter
A Sampling of our FaceBook & Twitter Posts

#MotivationalMonday

Links, including...

ZERO TO THREE Did you know that play is how children learn to communicate, problem solve and get along with others? Learn more about the importance of play in this video from our new "Magic of Everyday Moments" video series: www.zerotothree.org/ MOEM

ZERO TO THREE When we recognize kids' tough behaviors as reactions to environmental conditions, developmental phases, or our own actions, it lets us respond proactively. 10 ways kids may appear to be acting bad but aren't: http://bddy.me/2qCvTZX

Links, about...

Sleep
Brain Development
Toddler Tantrums

Event photos...
Photos from the Central Regional Consultation Programs’ The Discovery Museums CRCP Discovery Museum Photos
Photos from the 2017 Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference MEIC Conference Photos

And, resources!
(click on photo)

“They’re not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It’s our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless.”

—L.R. Knost
THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The EI Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) strives to develop an informed parent constituency, promote leadership and lifelong advocacy skills for parents and family members, facilitate family participation to ensure that Early Intervention Services are family-centered and support EI programs to identify, train and mentor families to take on roles across the EI and Early Childhood system. 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 staffed by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a Director, a Media Coordinator, a Statewide Monitoring Coordinator and a Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

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Receive up to the minute information and opportunities. E-mail your name and e-mail address to: eiplp@live.com. Thanks!

To receive the Parent Perspective Newsletter, a free publication, published four times a year or the Parent E-Perspective published at least two times a year, by the Parent Leadership Project, call us toll-free at (877) 353-4757 and ask to be added to the PLP mailing list or email eiplp@live.com

NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is July 31, 2017. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or email the newsletter editor at kris.levine@state.ma.us.

The Parent Perspective newsletter is published by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, please contact eiplp@live.com