



The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

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Early Intervention Information and Resources

August 2005

Hausslein Award Winners 2004-2005

Big Things Can Happen When Parents Put Their Ideas Into Action

Parents who received Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Awards (Hausslein Awards) prove that big things happen when they put their ideas into action. On June 1, these parent leaders joined with Evelyn Hausslein, Department of Public Health staff and other guests to describe how they implemented their projects at the sixth annual Hausslein Awards Ceremony at the Holiday Inn in Worcester.



Bob and Evelyn Hausslein with Darla Gundler

The Hausslein Awards are named in honor of Evelyn Hausslein, one of the most influential parent leaders in the Massachusetts Early Intervention system. When her son was diagnosed with a developmental disability over 30 years ago, the Early Intervention system did not exist in its present form. Evelyn's efforts as a parent pioneer and advocate for children with special needs were instrumental in the development of Early Intervention services as a family-centered system of care.

The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through the generous support of the Department of Public Health, created the Hausslein Awards to give families the opportunity to take leadership roles in creating supports at their Early Intervention programs and within their communities. Four of the main criteria of the award are as follows:

- they must be parent driven;
- they must meet the needs of families in EI;
- they must be a new program or a new component of an existing parent-initiated program;
- they must demonstrate collaborations between families and other members of the community.

This year seven parent teams from Early Intervention programs throughout Massachusetts received Hausslein Awards of up to \$ 1,000 to implement their projects.

Darla Gundler, Director of the Parent Leadership Project welcomed parents and DPH staff to the ceremony. Darla described Evelyn Hausslein as a friend and mentor who helped her learn about the Parent Leadership Project, which led to her current role as Director. Darla also recognized the parents who implemented projects sponsored by the Hausslein Awards as "ripplemakers", who through their actions caused a positive ripple effect for countless other families who have children with special needs.

Ron Benham, Director of the Division of Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs added that the Hausslein Awards are one of his favorite events because they are "parent-driven and initiated and big things can and do happen with impact beyond the money that DPH provides. The Hausslein

Free Workshop Opportunity

Evelyn Hausslein to Present

Grant-Writing Workshop – September 14

Would you like to learn the basics about how to write a grant? In preparation for the 2005-2006 Hausslein Awards Application, the Parent Leadership Project is pleased to offer parents the opportunity to attend "Kitchen-Table Grant-Writing". This **free** workshop will be presented by Evelyn Hausslein, for whom the Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Awards are named. Evelyn is the mother of three adult children, one of whom has special needs. She served as Dean of Wheelock College Graduate School and as Director of the Early Childhood Unit at the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Evelyn has written and reviewed grants for over twenty years.

Participants will learn about the essential elements of writing a grant. For more information on location and to RSVP, please call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 353-4757 or visit www.eiplp.org

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Resources

It's a New State Agency—The Department of Early Education and Care

The Office of Child Care Services and the Department of Education's Early Learning Services division have joined together to create the new Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).

The new agency will combine and coordinate information and resources for child care programs, including licensing for service providers and financial assistance for families. The Department will also oversee Early Childhood Learning programs, such as pre-school and Head Start, family support programs, including Massachusetts Family Networks, as well as the areas of adoption and residential care.

Early Childhood Special Education programs under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) will also be under the auspices of the new Department .

For more information, please visit, www.mass.gov/eec or call (617) 988-6600.



DMR Announces New Autism Spectrum Division



In a major step in coordinating information, services, and supports for families with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) has announced the formation of a new autism division. The state budget has appropriated \$1.2 million to fund the new division.

Children with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) who previously were ineligible for DMR services may elect to apply for services in the new division, beginning August 15. Families may contact their local Autism Center or area DMR office for more information about the Intake and Eligibility process.

The new Autism division will work to:

- Develop and enhance provider supports and staff capacity at Autism Centers across the state.
- Publish a statewide Autism Resource Guide
- Create a statewide First Responder Training.
- Develop a Pediatrician Awareness Campaign
- Establish new social skills programs and vacation camps for children with ASD.

For more information and to receive the quarterly newsletter, *DMR/ASD Updates*, please contact Cariann Harsh, Autism Spectrum Division at DMR at (617) 624-7769 or email Cariann.Harsh@state.ma.us

Massachusetts Consortium for Children With Special Health Needs Expands to Western Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Consortium for Children with Special Needs (The Consortium) is a state level forum for information exchange and collaboration among health care providers, families, health plans, the higher education community and policy-makers. Its members are working together to build high quality, family-centered systems of care for children with special care needs.

With the goal of expanding the reach of

the Consortium, Baystate Medical Center Children's Hospital, the Department of Public Health and parents from the western region of the state have joined to form the Western Massachusetts Consortium (WMC).

The WMC is in the process of establishing a list serv, *WMC Connect*, which will serve as a forum to promote communication and information sharing among families, providers and others who care for

children with special health care needs in western Massachusetts.

On October 27, the WMC will convene a meeting for interested members in the western region.

For more information this exciting initiative, please visit www.neserve.org or contact Faith Piaggi at (413) 663-3610 or email Faithp1@verizon.net

Taking Good Care...**WIC Works Wonders****by Karen Donovan, WIC Community Coordinator**

“Good food and a whole lot more” is the current motto of the Massachusetts Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program known as WIC. They are words the program strives to live up to.

Since its establishment in Massachusetts in 1975, research has shown WIC to be an effective program in the improvement of both immediate and long-term health outcomes. Pregnant women who participate in WIC get earlier prenatal care, have better diets and improved pregnancy outcomes. Infants born to WIC mothers have better birth weights and are less likely to be born premature. Children enrolled in WIC demonstrate better cognitive performance.

In Massachusetts, the WIC Program is administered by the Department of Public Health and studies have shown that each dollar spent on WIC saves three dollars in future health care costs. There are 36 individual WIC programs in the state and most have several satellite sites in an effort to make WIC services accessible to as many people as possible. There are also several WIC on Wheels mobile units that travel to a different location each day. These vans offer complete WIC nutrition services as well as free routine health care provided by an on-board family nurse practitioner. All WIC and health care services are provided **free of charge**.

A typical WIC appointment includes a nutritionist’s review of each applicant’s diet and counseling on their nutritional concerns. Each eligible person then receives monthly checks for free healthy foods including milk, eggs, fruit juice, cereal, cheese, beans or peanut butter. Fully breastfeeding women may also receive tuna and carrots. Non-breastfed infants may

be given formula. During the summer, participants may also receive coupons for fresh fruits and vegetables which can be purchased at Massachusetts Farmer’s Markets. Each food provided by WIC has been chosen to target particular nutrients known to be essential for healthy growth and development. WIC lactation consultants also provide breastfeeding classes and support. WIC also serves as a valuable referral source to many other programs that are helpful to families such as Early Intervention, Healthy Families, Food Stamps and health and dental care.

The WIC Program serves pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age five. Custodial fathers, grandparents and foster parents are also encouraged to enroll their children in WIC. Income guidelines are generous, up to 185 per cent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to \$35,798 per year for a family of four. For information on eligibility or for the WIC office nearest to you, call toll free: 1-800-942-1007.

Karen Donovan is a Community Coordinator at the South Central WIC Program, 29 Pine Street, in Southbridge. She can be reached at 508-634-8012

**Opportunity Knocks****Seeking Parent Participants for DPH Focused Monitoring Team**

The Department of Public Health (DPH), lead agency for the Massachusetts Early Intervention System will begin a new initiative for evaluating whether Early Intervention programs are providing services to families in compliance with state and federal laws. DPH will move from a process called Program Re-Certification to a new system to be known as Focused Monitoring. This is in accordance with recent changes under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), the federal law that authorizes Early Intervention services. In the new Focused Monitoring system, a team consisting a DPH Regional Specialist, and a parent will visit EI programs to look at key indicators of performance to determine

whether the program is performing as required.

DPH is seeking parents to be part of the Focus Monitoring team. This opportunity is open to parents of children who have transitioned out of Early Intervention, or who will be transitioning out before January 2006. Parents will receive training and compensation for their time.

For more information, please call Faith Piaggi at (413) 663-3610 or call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 353-4757.

Big Things Can Happen When Parents Put Their Ideas Into Action

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Awards are a wonderful opportunity to honor Evelyn Hausslein as a woman and a visionary and to thank her for the legacy that she leaves to us and to continue building our own," he said.

Then, Evelyn welcomed the parent leaders and spoke of her career which included many professional roles, as a child life specialist, a nursery school teacher, a college professor, a parent trainer. But, according to Evelyn, her most challenging role was being a parent of three children, one of whom has a disability. In her comments, Evelyn highlighted two recurring hot topics currently in Early Intervention, Service Coordination and Transition. Evelyn described how these areas had changed and improved since her son was young thirty years ago. Evelyn commented that she was "overwhelmed by the innovation and creativity" of the Hausslein Award winners this year.

Then, it was time to hear about the projects from the seven teams who received Hausslein Awards:

1. **Big Things Can Happen - The Down Syndrome Resource Group of Western Massachusetts** -

This parent team led by Evie Hawley produced a film titled *Big Things Can Happen*. The film celebrates the hopes and dreams of families who have children with Down Syndrome. In this two year project, Evie filmed children doing what they loved best, including horse-back riding and dancing. The Hausslein Award helped to fund the purchase of materials such as film and DVD's. When completed, the DVD will be given to new parents and through the First Call Program at the Down Syndrome Resource Group of Western Massachusetts, with 1,000 more DVDs to be distributed at the Special Olympics.

2. **Parents Reaching Out - REACH Early Intervention Program** -

This project grew out of the positive experiences of the parent teams who participated in a play group at REACH Early Intervention. The parents appreciated the opportunity to connect with other parents and talk about their concerns while their children played with each other. The parent team, represented by Karen Keyser and Erin Robson, wanted to offer this supportive experience to other families at REACH. The Hausslein Award was used to fund three activities: welcome baskets of treats were assembled and distributed to new families, consisting of bubbles, a board book, a ball and other fun items; a parent contact resource list was assembled so that parents could call others whose children have a similar diagnosis, and a Parent Reaching Out handbook is in the process of being compiled with personal stories, recipes and tips from parents. Additional support was also provided by Brueggers Bagels, CopyCat Printers and other private donations.

3. **Yoga For Me and My Little One - Worcester Early Intervention Program** -

Parent Team Members Monique Ake-man, Mandie Harris and Ana Flores-Perez wanted to provide the opportunity for families who have children of various developmental abilities to learn yoga techniques. In this eight week workshop, a yoga instructor taught parents and children how to

use yoga to increase flexibility, to focus on breathing and to promote relaxation. Each family received a child's t-shirt and sweat pants for their children to wear, a yoga mat and an instructional DVD to reinforce the lessons at home.

4. **Parent-Driven Outreach to Increase Community Participation** -

A Hausslein Award winner from 2003-2004, the parent team led by Liliana Clement initiated this project to reach out to the Latino population in Jamaica Plain and to distribute information about child development and Early Intervention. They hosted a booth at the Martha Elliott Health Center in Jamaica Plain, where they distributed information and a questionnaire to assess family's needs. Subsequently, it was learned that parents wanted information about basic child development.

5. **Music is Magic- Springfield Infant Toddler Program** -

Music is the universal language, enjoyed by people of all cultures, backgrounds and developmental abilities. The parent team, represented by Darlene Moser initiated a music group for children of all abilities at the Community Music School in Springfield. Parents and children who are enrolled in Early Intervention and from the community enjoyed the series of classes, where they had an opportunity to sing, dance, and socialize. During the last class, participants received shaker eggs, rhythm sticks and a CD of music to enjoy at home.

6. **Trach Care- The Birth of a New Support Organization for Caregivers of Children Who Have Tracheostomies** -

When Julie Leahy attended the MEIC Conference in 2004 as Parent Contact for her Early Intervention program, she was hoping that someone would have the answer to the question that was foremost on her mind—was there a support group for caregivers of children who have tracheostomies? Julie wanted to meet another family whose child had a trach. As fate would have it, a member of the Parent Leadership Project team shared similar concerns and the idea for Trach Care, a support group for caregivers of children with tracheostomies was born. Parent team members Julie Leahy and Erin Ward, joined with Josephine Cheung, Sue Wachta, Norma Casaya and Tarshia Jefferson to apply for the Hausslein Award. They developed a mission statement, core values, incorporated as a non-profit organization for fundraising purposes, and created a logo. An information packet with resources for caregivers was compiled. They also launched a website, www.trachcare.org. The first meeting of Trach Care was held in May with ten families in attendance including a nurse from a trach team at a local hospital. The parent team plans to expand distribution of information packages while continuing to build parent-professional relationships, with more support group meetings and fundraising events in the future.



TrachCare (Continued on page 5)



Darlene Moser presents "Music is Magic"

Two other Parent Teams were unable to attend the Hausslein Awards ceremony. A training in the Reiki Method was presented for parents at Bay Cove Early Intervention. The parent team from Westfield Infant Toddler held an Autism Awareness Night and a Spring Fling for children with autism and their siblings as part of the Greater Westfield Autism Project .

At the end of each presentation, Evelyn congratulated the team members for their passion and creativity in turning their dreams into a reality.

The Hausslein Awards ceremony ended with a reading of the poem "Ripplemakers"

Ripplemakers

*If you cast a pebble onto the surface of a glassy calm pond,
ripples form and move outward across the water.
Each ripple causes another, and another and so on.
A very small act can make a significant difference.
Ripplemakers are those people who perform acts of kindness,
thereby making a difference to someone.
When a person reaches out to another, he creates a ripple.
Often the benefactor, in turn, reaches out to someone else
and the ripple continues.*

*I encourage you to be a ripplemaker.
Ripplemakers come in all sizes and shapes,
all colors and creeds.
Anyone can be a ripplemakers, even children.*



CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

August 27– **TOPSoccer Jamboree**, 10 am-10 pm, Gillette Stadium, Foxborough. Presented by the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, this inaugural event is for families with children who have special needs or disabilities. The event is free and tickets may be reserved in advance. For more information, please call (978) 466-8812 or visit www.mayouthsoccer.org.

September 19 - **Carol Gray on Friendship, Bullying and Aspergers Syndrome**, Dedham. Friendship, Bullying, and Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This conference is for professionals, parents and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. For more information on registration, please call (802) 446-3601.

September 20– **Basic Rights Workshop**, Nessacus Middle School, Dalton, 5:30– 7:30 pm, 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/locations: 9/20-Tewksbury; 9/21-Foxborough; 9/29-Easton;

September 24– **Family Fun Walk & Auction hosted by the Mitochondrial Disease Action Committee**, Cambridge.. Honorary Walk Marshall Mayor Thomas Menino will lead this two-mile walk to raise awareness and funds. For more information, please visit www.mitoaction.org.

September 30– **Special Needs Resource Fair**, 11:00 am-6:00 pm, St. Coletta & Cardinal Cushing Schools, 400 Washington Street, Hanover. For more information, please call (781) 329-1272.

Looking Ahead:

October 28– **11th Annual Current Trends in Autism Conference**, Dedham Hilton. Please call (781) 449-6074 or visit www.ladders.org

October 28-29, 2005-**Learning Disabilities Worldwide Presents the 14th Annual World Congress on Learning Disabilities**, "A Multidisciplinary Approach to Learning Disabilities, Integrating Education, Motivation and Emotions". Marriott Hotel, Burlington. The keynote speaker is Robert Brooks, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School. For more information, please call (781) 890-5399 or visit www.ldam.org.

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

WORKING TOGETHER

CENTRAL NEWS

Kennedy Donovan Center South Central Early Intervention (KDC South Central) and the Early Intervention Partnership Program is pleased to introduce Ivette Alvarado, the new Family Resource staff person. Ivette is fluent in Spanish and works with families in Early Intervention and helps them find resources in the community.

KDC South Central recently launched a new Preschool Enrichment Program (P.E.P.) which is modeled after the highly successful developmental play groups at the Early Intervention program. P.E.P will offer a transition alternative for families in the area.

Thank you to the **Lipton Center** for hosting the Parent Leadership Project Central Regional Parent Meeting in Fitchburg on June 16. It was great to meet the families and to hear about what types of resources and programming they would find helpful. Another regional meeting will be held in the fall - stay tuned for details about the date and location.

METROWEST NEWS

The Parent Leadership Project wishes to thank Patty Reardon Starr at **Jewish Family & Children's Services Early Intervention Program (JF&CS)** in Norwood for hosting the Metrowest Regional Parent Networking Meeting in June. Patty is also the Program Coordinator for Family Circle at JF&CS, a support and mentoring program for parents of children with severe neurological impairments. Family Circle serves as a resource for information, offers a parent-to-parent directory program, sponsors a variety of self-help and networking workshops and produces a monthly newsletter. For more information, please contact Patty Reardon Starr at (781) 551-0405 or email preardon@jfcsboston.org. Thank you, as well to Mary Aten, Director of Family TIES for attending the meeting and adding so much to the lively conversation. Each parent left with a 2005 Family TIES Resource Directory. Look for another Parent Networking opportunity in the Metrowest region in the fall.

NORTHEAST REGION

Parents at the **Criterion-Stoneham Early Intervention Program (Criterion-Stoneham EIP)** enjoyed a presentation and discussion session about Infant Massage. Thank you to Ellen Chen for leading the group! On July 14, Kathy Morin from Family TIES presented the "Let's Get Organized" workshop at the **Criterion-Stoneham EIP**. The workshop was well attended, very informative and full of great resources. Thanks to Kathy for an excellent presentation! Criterion-Stoneham EIP will hold its annual Family Picnic on August 23 at the Ipswich Park in North Reading. Entertainment will be provided.

Christeen Brown, MS Ed., Certified Early Intervention Specialist is the new Regional Consultation Program Director for Northeastern Massachusetts. The **Northeast Regional Consultation Program (RCP)** provides enhanced service to children with multiple disabilities or complex medical needs through

consultation, training, and support to families, EI programs, and child care providers in community settings to promote successful inclusion in community settings and activities. RCP services also include technical assistance for positioning, feeding, adaptive equipment, and augmentative communication, access to equipment through a loan program, and providing strategies to promote successful inclusion. The RCP also provides respite care funding, workshops, networking, parent support and education groups, as well as resource and referral information. For more information, please contact Christeen Brown at **The Professional Center for Child Development** at (978)475-3806 or email pcrpc@theprofessionalcenter.org;

On September 29, the **Professional Center for Child Development (PCCD)** will present "Planning for the Financial Future of Your Child with Special Needs", 7-9 PM. Participants will learn about eligibility for public benefits programs, the different types of special needs trusts, maximizing community based resources, and providing lifetime care and quality of life. This workshop was rescheduled from June when there was a power outage at the **PCCD**, 32 Osgood Street, Andover. Please RSVP to Ellen Waddill (978) 475-3806 ext. 217

SOUTHEAST NEWS

Thanks to the **Taunton Area Early Intervention Program (Taunton Area EIP)** for hosting the Southeast Regional Networking Meeting in June. Parents learned about available statewide resources for children with special needs and opportunities for involvement in the Early Intervention system through the Parent Leadership Project.

What's summer without a cook out? **Taunton Area EIP** and its parent organization, Associates for Human Services (AHS) is planning its 3rd Annual Chicken Barbecue on Friday, August 5 from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Portuguese-American Civic Club, 175 School Street, Taunton. Musical entertainment will also be provided. All proceeds from tickets sales will benefit AHS programs. For more information on purchasing tickets, please call (508) 880-0202.

Families at **Kennedy Donovan Center in Attleboro (KDC Attleboro)** enjoyed some cool treats at the Annual Ice Cream Social on June 12. The children and adults made their own sundaes with all the toppings. The children enjoyed playing in the water table, making bubbles provided by **KDC Attleboro**, and playing on the playground equipment.

WESTERN NEWS

The four Springfield EI programs, **Thom Springfield Infant Toddler Services, Child Guidance Early Intervention Program, Valley Infant Development Services, and Springfield MSPCC Good Start Early Intervention** collaborated to present a three-part transition series for families at the programs. The **Springfield MSPCC** hosted the series which included Continuing the Journey, Turning Three, and Let's Get Organ-

FAMILY & EI PROGRAM COLLABORATION

ized in May. The Springfield EI Programs plan to continue collaborating to present these workshop together annually.

The **REACH Early Intervention Program (REACH EIP)** will hold its Annual Family Picnic at Look Park on August 17 from 4-7 pm. Families can meet, have some fun and eat some good food. For more information please contact Darleen Corbett at (413)585-1400.

On July 1, the **Pediatric Development Center's Specialty Service Program (PDC SSP)** celebrated its two year anniversary. During that time, services were provided to ten children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. A highlight has been working in collaboration with the First Steps Program. Parent participation is an important focus of the program. Parents attend monthly meetings with the EI service coordinator and the SSP coordinator and make decisions about the treatment modality specific outcomes they would like to see for their child. **PDC SSP** will hold a training session in the fall for those who are interested in becoming home-based therapists, particularly in

the Southern Berkshire area. If interested, please contact Kim Bridgham, SSP Coordinator, at (413) 499-4537 ext. 120.

Criterion Heritage Early Intervention Program (Criterion Heritage) is hosting an "All About Me" Bookmaking Workshop for parents in the program. Parents meet every Monday afternoon throughout the summer to create memory books for their children. The group has been a great support and networking opportunity for the parents, and has helped them to focus on their children's strengths. On August 2, **Criterion Heritage** is holding a "123 Magic" Workshop in the Palmer Center, 5:30 - 7:00 pm. "123 Magic" is a popular discipline strategy for parents of children from two to twelve years old. For more information, contact Sarah Aashiem at (413) 533-7140 ext.242.

A special thanks to the **Pediatric Development Center** and **Thom Springfield Infant Toddler** for hosting the PLP Western Regional Meetings in May and June. Stay tuned for more Regional Networking Meetings this fall.

In Her Own Words...

A New Parent's Perspective by Julie Lim Messina

As a parent contact for Cambridge-Somerville Early Intervention (CSEI), I was offered the opportunity to attend the Massachusetts Early Intervention Conference (MEIC) this past May. As a new parent of a child with special needs, I was initially a little apprehensive. Evan was 5 months old at that time; I was adjusting to being a first-time Mom and we had just started receiving EI services. Prior to Evan's diagnosis, I had no experience with the special needs world and this conference would be one of my first forays. I was afraid of what I would learn, but also afraid of what I would miss out on if I didn't go. Ultimately, my motivation for attending was the same as that for deciding to become a parent contact - to learn how to be a better advocate for Evan.

Reflecting back now, the conference was an overwhelmingly positive experience. Through my involvement, I was able to meet the Program Director of my local EI program and many other EI professionals and clinicians. As a "newbie", it was interesting and very useful to learn how EI was organized and how services for families are determined. I received innumerable ideas and information about valuable resources to help me optimize Evan's development. I had the chance to interact with Robin McWilliam, the keynote speaker at a very personal level and was afforded a new perspective: that the quantity of EI service is not as important as receiving the *appropriate* EI service tailored to *outcomes-based objectives*. I also learned how to best utilize my precious time during Evan's EI sessions - that each session is actually a learning time for the *parent* to be instructed on what therapies or strategies to apply with their child the remainder of the week. Having these new perspectives has strengthened my relationship with Evan's EI providers.

I had the opportunity to participate in a sign-language class and the good fortune to win several children's sign language books at the parent dinner & raffle hosted by the Parent Leadership Project. (I found out later that every parent is a winner and others got to go home with Godiva chocolates and scented candles!) The highlight of the conference though, was having the chance to meet other parents from other parts of Massachusetts and being able to share in their challenges and triumphs. It felt wonderful to be able to connect with others that could identify with my experience of raising a child with special needs. Personal stories were exchanged and I was energized by what I saw to be a common thread amongst the parents: a desire to make a difference for *all* children.

The Parent Leadership Project made it easy for me to attend; as I was still nursing Evan exclusively I decided to bring him along and everyone was most accommodating. My conference registration fee was sponsored by the Dept. of Public Health, and a hotel room was provided for so I wouldn't have to commute over both days of the conference. There was even a special hospitality room set aside for Moms to nurse with lots of refreshments & goodies! The conference was an invigorating experience - I left feeling encouraged and hopeful for Evan's future.

Julie Messina is a Parent Contact at Cambridge-Somerville Early Intervention. For more information about serving as a Parent Contact for your Early Intervention Program or other opportunities for involvement, please call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 353-4757 or visit www.eiplt.org and click on Parent Participation Opportunities.

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 coordinator, an EI program re-certification parent coordinator, a training coordinator and a collaboration and outreach coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

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The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project NEWS

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Erin Ward, who served as the Collaboration and Outreach Coordinator for the Parent Leadership Project over the last year. In that time, Erin made many important contributions for the benefit of families with children who have complex medical needs. She was instrumental in founding Trach Care, a support organization for caregivers of children with tracheostomies (See story on page 4). Erin will continue her work on behalf of children with special needs as a Parent Representative for the Northeast region and as co-chair of the Program Planning Committee of the ICC. We wish you well, Erin.

Opportunity Knocks

We Are Hiring

The EI Parent Leadership Project is hiring a Collaboration & Outreach Coordinator

- An opportunity to work with the EI Parent Leadership Project Team,
- 25 hours per week, office space in a regional health office,
- Collaborate with family organizations in Massachusetts,
- Participate on Conference Planning Committees,
- Outreach to families within the early intervention system.

If this sounds interesting, we would love to hear from you. For more information about this position, please contact us toll-free at (877) 353-4757, by e-mail at eiplp@yahoo.com or watch for the posting on the www.eiplp.org website.

To receive the *Parent Perspective Newsletter*, a free publication, published six 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@yahoo.com.

NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is **September 20**. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or the 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.

