



## The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

(877) 35-EI-PLP ♦ [www.eiplp.org](http://www.eiplp.org) ♦ [eiplp@yahoo.com](mailto:eiplp@yahoo.com)

**Early Intervention Information and Resources**

**November/December 2006**

*Building Connections: Family-to-Family*

### **Parent Involvement on the ICC Helps Shape Future of Early Intervention**

Parents have the opportunity to help shape policy decisions and future planning of the Early Intervention system as Regional Representatives and Committee members on the Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). This year, five parents from across the state joined with state agency staff, community stakeholders, and Early Intervention program directors at the ICC Retreat held on October 11 and 12 at the Wachusett Village Inn in Westminster.

The ICC Retreat is a two day event that brings together all those interested in the future of the Early Intervention system in Massachusetts. A parent whose child has received Early Intervention services brings a unique and valuable perspective about how the system serves children and families. Parents are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas as they “sit at the table” with other key advisors to the Department of Public Health, lead agency for the Early Intervention system.

Ron Benham, Director for the Division of Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs at the Department of Public Health, spoke about the challenges and opportunities that face the Early Intervention system. Among the topics was a discussion of the potential for creation of a Part C Parent Organization. Part C refers to the section of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special educa-



*ICC Parent Representatives, Left to Right: Kimber O'Connell, Central Representative, Tanya Wheeler, Western Representative, Amy Young, ICC Co-Chair, Jack Harris, At-Large Representative, and Joann Williams, Boston Representative*

tion law, that specifically addresses infants, toddlers and Early Intervention. A national Part C parent organization would encourage interested families to have a more active voice at the national level and in policy-making decisions. Ron said the

*(Continued on page 4)*

### **Conference Opportunity**

#### **Joining Voices Conference — November 29**

The Massachusetts chapter of Family Voices, a national grassroots organization of families and friends speaking on behalf of children and youth with special health care needs, announces its sixth-annual *Joining Voices* conference on November 29 at the UCC Conference Center in Framingham. Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center, a project of Massachusetts Family Voices at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, will be hosting the conference.

*Joining Voices* is a **free** day long conference to support parents of children with special health care needs. The conference offers parents and family members the opportunity to share resources, exchange information and learn advocacy

skills to help improve health care services for all children and youth with special health care needs. Workshop topics include Future Planning, Legislative Advocacy, “Celebrate the Paperwork”, and “Kids, Mental Health, and What’s New” along with other topics of interest.

The full conference agenda and directions to the UCC Conference Center are available online at [www.massfamilyvoices.org](http://www.massfamilyvoices.org). For more information or to register, please contact Beth Dworetzky at 1-800-331-0688 ext. 210, register online at [www.massfamilyvoices.org/JV2006](http://www.massfamilyvoices.org/JV2006) or via email at [massfv@fcsn.org](mailto:massfv@fcsn.org).

## Resources

### Staying Healthy During Cold and Flu Season

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has developed a statewide educational campaign to inform the public about influenza “flu” and the importance of planning for a pandemic. With increasing concern surrounding the possibility of avian or worldwide pandemic flu, DPH wants to be sure that families have access to appropriate information regarding these issues.

In addition to statewide planning efforts, DPH has created guidelines for staying healthy during flu season and for preventing the spread of illness. These recommendations include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer, i.e. Purell

- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Talk with your doctor (or your child’s doctor) about getting a yearly flu vaccine
- Make a family emergency plan

More information about seasonal, avian and pandemic flu is available on the Massachusetts’ web site at [www.mass.gov/dph/flu](http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu) or by calling 1-877-MASS-FLU (1-877-627-7358)

Information and support to develop a Family Emergency Plan is available from Family TIES of Massachusetts at 1-800-905-TIES.



### Finding the Right Early Childhood Program Guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed ten standards for early childhood programs, which can help parents and families make the right choice when they are looking for a child care center, preschool or kindergarten program for their child. The new standards are based on the latest research on the development and education of young children and were created with input from thousands of educators and early childhood experts from around the country.

The standards apply to programs serving children of all abilities and are also the foundation of the NAEYC Accreditation system for early childhood programs. To earn NAEYC Accreditation, programs must meet all ten standards. The standards address the following areas: Relationships, Curriculum, Teaching, Assess-

ment of Child Progress, Health, Teachers, Families, Community Relationships, Physical Environment, and Leadership and Management. Each of the standards encourages family participation in all aspects of the early childhood program.

The NAEYC’s “Guide for Families: Using NAEYC Standards to Find Quality Programs for Young Children” provides parents with a checklist of things to look for when searching for a program for their child. It addresses each of the ten standards and discusses ways in which programs can meet these standards when working with young children.

A copy of the NAEYC Standards, along with other information about finding quality childcare and early childhood programs for your child are available on the web at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) and at [www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org).

## Outdoor Adventures

### Opportunities for Families to Explore the Great Outdoors



Fall and winter in New England offer many opportunities for families to enjoy outdoor activities. Whether its an evening walk listening to the sounds of crunching leaves and geese flying south or a snowman-building marathon followed by a cup of cocoa on a chilly winter afternoon, families can find numerous ways to enjoy their natural surroundings.

Families of children with special needs may experience challenges in finding outdoor activities that are appealing and accessible to all family members. **All Out Adventures** is an organization committed to providing inclusive outdoor recreation

to people of all ages, abilities and experience levels. Over the past five years, they have worked to fulfill their mission of “providing individuals of all abilities unlimited opportunities to build confidence, foster independence and promote wellness” through outdoor recreation. Fall programs include kayaking, camping and hiking. Winter activities, held throughout Massachusetts, include accessible ice skating, snowshoeing, sled skating and others.

Information about the program is available on their website at [www.alloutadventures.com](http://www.alloutadventures.com) or by calling Sue Tracy at 413-527-8980.

**Family-to-Family Connections****Morning Travelers Create Friendship, Fun***By Sharon Randall*

I'm not sure with whom my son Davis will go to the prom. He's known Amanda since the beginning and she's wonderful, but Ashley, Meg, Lindsey and Abby have recently come onto the scene, and boy are they cute! Maybe they'll just all go as a group, and Matt, Jacob, Tommy, Will, Jack and Deven will join. What a handsome crowd that will be.

Does this seem silly, this type of speculation? Does it seem even sillier if I tell you that Davis is only three years old? Perhaps, but all of these children are friends, and they just played together a couple of weeks ago.

*MorningTravelers*, a playgroup started by Maura Russo, Charlotte Gray and myself, came out of our desire to provide friendships for our children. We had been to support group meetings and wanted something different. Here's what we started, how it's different from what you may have experienced, and how you might get started creating a group of your own.

What We Started

*MorningTravelers* is a group of infants and toddlers who meet monthly for play time together. On a rare occasion, we will have an older child or two (they are always welcome), but for the most part, children are three years old and younger. We have sixty families on our email list. Families come from all over to join us. In addition to monthly meetings, we have occasional group outings.

How It's Different

*MorningTravelers* is primarily a playgroup, rather than a support group. This is what we see as the differences:

**We are focused on the children.** Our times together are for the kids, often including siblings. This is about forming friendships that we hope will last a lifetime.

**We restore normalcy.** Telling a friend that you have a support group meeting suggests something different...something different that you do because your child has Down Syndrome. Telling a friend that you have a playgroup for your child suggests normalcy. We are robbed of so many "normal" experiences when we have a child born with Down Syndrome that the gift of "normalcy" that our playgroup gives to our families is truly wonderful, reassuring for us, for our families and our friends. And when you walk into a room full of families where having a child with Down Syndrome is the norm, you can take a deep breath, relax and know that you belong.

**We defeat our common fears together.** Many thoughts go through our minds when we have babies with Down Syndrome, and I have heard many say one of the first random thoughts to worry a mother's mind is the possibility (aren't we imagining the certainty?) of adolescent loneliness. In this small example of the prom, we can envision a happy event together, and the vision is possible because we are putting friendships into place

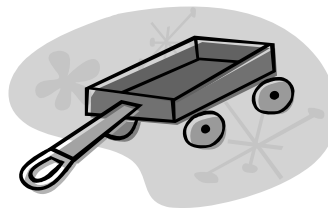
for our children now. Part of the wonderful thing about our group is that we get to walk with each other at the same point in the journey. This is unfolding for us together.

**We celebrate.** On occasion we have dinner out. Across an evening's conversation, there is both shared laughter and shared heartache. We have found adult dinners to be appropriate places for those types of conversations. However, we have decided it is impossible to not rejoice together when we are around our children. We see their development, we see their beauty, we even see their misbehavior on occasion, but mostly we see our children interacting with their friends....who would not celebrate in that environment?

How To Get Started

There are many ways to get started. I can just tell you how this formed for us. A couple of us became friends, and found that our friendship was a tremendous joy and comfort. As we met others with children the same age as ours, we invited them into this circle of friendship. Massachusetts' Down Syndrome Congress (MSDC) was kind enough to let us put postcards at a conference to reach out to new friends there. We've printed cards and carry those for random meetings in grocery stores with new friends. We also placed an article about *MorningTravelers* in a local newspaper with an invitation to join the group. Email has been a tremendous tool for us as well. No cost, easy, and accessible 24 hours a day...what a perfect way to reach parents!

Through *MorningTravelers*, we have made wonderful friendships for our children, and for ourselves. We have been given the gift to take something that was painful and turn it into an opportunity to provide comfort and reassurance to others. And we have more hope for our future because of our playgroup. That is a recurrent theme in our email traffic. What reassurance and hope comes out of our little Saturday morning playgroups!



*Sharon Randall is the mother of three active boys. Her son Davis has Down syndrome and is a graduate of the Professional Center for Child Development Early Intervention Program in Andover. Now 3 years old, Davis attends Franklin School in North Andover. His mom says, "He enjoys seeing his friends every month at our Morning Travelers playgroup and invites everyone to come out and have fun with us!"*

*For more information about the playgroups, please contact Morning-Travelers at [morningtravelers@yahoo.com](mailto:morningtravelers@yahoo.com).*

## Parent Involvement on ICC Helps Shape Future of Early Intervention

*(Continued from page 1)*

ICC Retreat is a “commitment to highlight early childhood issues and bring them to a larger stage”. Of parent involvement, Ron said he has “enormous respect for what families bring to the table” as representatives on the ICC.

Sharon Walsh, a National Early Childhood Consultant and co-chair of the Legislative Committee of the Infant/Toddler Coordinators Association, joined the retreat as a facilitator. Over the past year, Sharon has also helped facilitate the launching of the Focused Monitoring system in Massachusetts. In addition, Sharon shared information about federal trends in early childhood and special education that have the potential to impact the Early Intervention system.

### What is the ICC?

The Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council is a statewide inter-agency group that advises and assists the Department of Public Health on issues relating to Early Intervention. The ICC is made up of parents, providers, and other professionals. Members include representatives of state agencies (the Department of Mental Retardation, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and others), higher education, medical professionals, and Early Intervention providers.

Parents are also a vital part of the ICC. Parents who serve on the ICC have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills

while also helping to ensure that the parent perspective is considered on all policy issues. There are six Parent Representatives to the ICC, one for each region of the state (Boston, Central, Metrowest, Northeast, Southeast and West) as well as an At-Large Parent Representative. They are voting members of the ICC. The co-chair is also a parent, and family members are encouraged to join in any of the six standing committees of the ICC, which include Standards, Personnel Prep, Program Planning, Specialty Services, Membership and Fiscal Committees.

**To learn more about opportunities for involvement on the ICC and how you can participate**, please visit [www.eiplp.org](http://www.eiplp.org) and click on the link for the ICC or contact Darla Gundler, ICC staff, toll-free at 1-877-353-4757.

### *ICC Parent Representative Needed*

The Massachusetts ICC is looking for a **Northeast Regional Parent Representative**. If you are a parent of a child currently enrolled in Early Intervention, and you live in the Northeast Region of the state, you are eligible to serve as the Parent Representative.

For more information, contact Darla Gundler, ICC staff, at 1-877-353-4757.

## CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

**“Planning for the Future of Your Child with Special Needs”** — Step One Regional Consultation Program is sponsoring this workshop on Nov. 8 from 12-1:30pm at AXA Advisors, 40 Williams St. Suite 200, Wellesley. Presented by AXA Advisor Financial Consultant Dave Harmon, MBA, CLU, ChFC, the workshop will focus on discussion of benefit eligibility, special needs trusts, community-based resources and providing life time care. For more information or to register, please contact Kathy Haran-Kovacs at 617-774-1048.

**Let's Get Organized** — This free workshop will help families develop their own record keeping system for the information they collect about their child. Family TIES will be presenting this workshop at various locations throughout the state during the fall and winter months. For more information, contact Family TIES at 1-800-905-TIES.

**Navigating the Maze: Parent and Provider Perspective on Public Benefits and Services** — Join other families of children with special health care needs on November 16 at the Summit View Meeting House, 555 Northampton St., Holyoke to learn about the many program activities and public benefits available. Registration is FREE and informational packets will be distributed to participants. Light lunch will be provided. For more information or to register, contact Karen Cassidy at 413-483-5500.

**Basic Rights Training** — The Federation for Children with Special Needs will present this training, which provides parents with information about their rights under state and federal special education law, on Nov. 14 at JFK Middle School in Florence from 7-9pm. The training will also be held at other locations throughout the state. Dates are available on the Federation website at [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org). For more information or to register, call 1-800-331-0688.

**An IEP For My Child (Portuguese)** — To help parents better understand the IEP Process, the Federation for Children with Special Needs will present this training on Dec. 4 from 7-9pm at the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham. This workshop will be presented in Portuguese and English. The training will also be held on Dec. 6 from 6-8pm at the Boston Metro Early Intervention Center in Jamaica Plain. To register for either training, contact the Federation for Children with Special Needs at 1-800-331-0688.

**Building A Community, Part 1** — The Early Intervention Training Center presents this workshop where participants learn about EI core values and the evolution of the EI system, operational standards, and state and federal laws. Families whose children are receiving EI services are welcome to attend. For more information or to register, visit [www.eitrainingcenter.org](http://www.eitrainingcenter.org)

## What's New with Family TIES of Massachusetts?

By Mary Castro Summers

**F**amily TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide network for families of children with special needs or chronic illness. Parent coordinators work in the state regional health offices providing assistance to families in their regions. Through a toll-free line (800-905-TIES, 8437), families can receive assistance in finding resources, support groups and community programs to support their children with special needs.

### Information and Referrals

Information is shared with families on a wide variety of topics, including diagnoses, community resources and services, and support groups. Family TIES of Massachusetts is able to support families whose primary language is Spanish or Portuguese, with the help of the staff of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. It is necessary for callers to leave a message for this purpose, but return calls are made promptly. Families seeking support in Spanish can call 800-331-0688, Ext. 328 and leave a message for Sara. Those seeking support in Portuguese can call 800-331-0688, Ext. 195 and leave a message for Renata. Sara and Renata can also share translated versions of our program brochures.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of our Resource Directory for Families of Children with Special Needs is currently available. Please call your regional coordinator to get your copy! The Directory is also available on the website, and we are always looking for information about new resources to include in our next edition of the Directory.

### Parent-to-Parent Program

The Family TIES Parent-to-Parent Program offers parents an opportunity to speak with another parent who faces similar challenges in raising their child with special needs. Matches can be made based on health concern, special need, or other area of interest. Our Parent-to-Parent Program offers its "Listening and Learning" training for parents who would like to offer support to others. All families are welcome to join in this program. For

### LET'S GET ORGANIZED!



"Let's Get Organized" is a Family TIES workshop that helps parents to organize information and manage paperwork, and offers general ideas on "keeping it together" and tips to develop community connections for their child that can help during the transition process and beyond. Trainings can be scheduled for groups of 6-15. We currently have workshops scheduled as follows:

November: Taunton, Braintree

December: Salem

January, Sturbridge, Fitchburg

To learn more about the workshop, to register for one of these locations, or to arrange for a presentation in your local EI program, contact your Regional Coordinator or call toll-free at 1-800-905-TIES

more information about becoming a Support Parent or to have an opportunity to be matched with an experienced parent, please contact the Family TIES Parent-to-Parent Coordinator, Linea Luck Pearson, at 508-792-7880, or via e-mail:

[linea.pearson@state.ma.us](mailto:linea.pearson@state.ma.us).

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. All of our services are offered free of charge. Visit our website for more information: [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org).

### Parent Opportunity

## Public Hearing on Early Intervention Program Services

**T**his year, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to increase the Early Intervention payment rates. The 3% increase is in rates that the state, through MassHealth and Early Intervention Lead Agency Department of Public Health, will pay to EI providers. The legislation is designed to help increase recruitment and retention among Early Intervention staff and maintain a quality EI system. The Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, through their Quality Workforce Initiative, was instrumental in effecting this legislation. The rate increase does not have any direct financial impact on families who have children enrolled in Early Intervention programs.

A Public Hearing is being held on Thursday, November 16, 2006 at 10am at the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, 2 Boylston Street, 5th Floor, Boston MA. Any family member who wishes to comment may attend this public hearing. Written comments will also be accepted and may be sent to the Division at Two Boylston Street, 5th Floor, Boston MA 02116.

Information about the regulations are available on the Division's web site at [www.mass.gov/dhcfp](http://www.mass.gov/dhcfp). More information about the Quality Workforce Initiative is available on the web at [www.maeic.org](http://www.maeic.org).

## WORKING TOGETHER

### **BOSTON REGION**

**Thom Boston Metro Early Intervention** hosted a "Family Fun Day" at their Jamaica Plain location on September 30. Families enjoyed an afternoon of music, face painting, sensory play tables and were able to contribute to an autumn mural for the center. Children and families also enjoyed an "Animal Adventure" presentation by a local professional Herpetologist, complete with a lizard, a skunk and a boa constrictor! Given the smiles of the children and the opportunity for parents to connect with the EI community, this Family Day will surely become a Thom Boston Metro annual event!

### **CENTRAL REGION**

The most popular event sponsored by the **Central Regional Consultation Program (CRCP)** is the annual Davis Farmland trip. Prepaid tickets allow families the flexibility to explore the farm at their convenience. Some families chose to go during vacation time, while others waited for the cooler fall weather. This year the CRCP was able to expand this opportunity and offer tickets to Southwick's Zoo as well. Over 200 people were able to enjoy the outings!

A Community Baby Shower, hosted by **Kennedy Donovan South Central Early Intervention (KDC South Central)** in collaboration with the Southern Worcester County Parent Support Network, was enjoyed by over 60 families. Families in attendance received gifts, resource information and the opportunity to network with other parents.

Upcoming events at **KDC South Central** include "Transition Night", an informational parent program for families whose children will turn three between January and June 2007, being held November 14 from 6:30 to 8pm. Child care will be provided. A Winter Holiday Party for families of children enrolled in the EI program will be held on December 14. More information about these events is available by calling the program at 508-765-0292.

On October 11, the **Minute Man Arc Early Intervention Program** in Concord held one of its regular educational workshops for parents entitled "From Early Intervention to Preschool: Preparing for the Transition." Parents of children ages 2 years and older who are enrolled in the program were invited to attend. Guest speaker was Dr. Sandra Daigneault, the special education preschool coordinator for the Town of Boxborough. Panel discussion included Alex Chatfield, program director of the Minute Man EI program, Liza Maugham, transition coordinator, and other EI staff members. Topics included timeline for transitioning from EI, the role of the service coordinator in helping families with the transition process, and the intake and eligibility process at the preschool level. These workshops are held twice a year at the Damon Family Resource Center at the Minute Man Arc.

The **Community Healthlink Lipton Early Intervention PAC** sponsored its annual outing to Davis Farmland for children and their families on September 15. 34 families took part in this fun day, which was funded in part by a donation from Digital Credit Union. On October 7, the PAC also sponsored a trip for apple picking at Sholan Farms in Leominster. The 40 children who participated enjoyed a hayride as well as picking apples. In addition to outings, the PAC recently purchased several items from the Lipton EI staff's "wish list", including therapy balls, mini massagers, theraputty, whistles and more. The January 18, 2007 PAC meeting will feature Barbara Donati from Family TIES presenting the "Let's Get Organized Workshop", a skill building workshop for families of children with special needs.

### **NORTHEAST REGION**

**South Bay Lowell Early Intervention Center's PAC** (Parent Advisory Council) sponsored a free "Infant Massage Training and Hands-On Workshop". Participants learned about the benefits of infant massage and specific techniques to promote bonding and attachment, reduce stress for both parent and child, promote healthy sleep-wake cycles, absorption, digestion and elimination. Three staff at the program are certified in Infant Massage and were available for individual questions.

**South Bay Lowell EI** hosted their Annual Halloween party on October 20. The party, which was open to parents and children enrolled in the program, offered age-appropriate games, treats, and "ghostly fun" for all!

The **Professional Center for Child Development (PCCD) Northeast Regional Consultation Program** continues to work with families who have children with complex developmental and health care needs, Early Intervention professionals and the community. Some of the services that the RCP offers are Alternative and Augmentative Communication Team, Trainings and Workshops, Equipment Loan Program, Family Support Services and Consultation and support. For more information about the program, please contact Christy Murray at 978-475-3806 x242 or [rcp@theprofessionalcenter.org](mailto:rcp@theprofessionalcenter.org).

Fall has arrived marking the start up of **Criterion-Stoneham's** monthly discussions and workshops. These informal sessions are free to parents and caregivers. Complimentary childcare is available with advance registration. Upcoming discussions include: "Reflexology" presented by the Barefoot Dragonfly on November 15 and "Stress Management" on December 5. Criterion-Stoneham will also host its semi-annual Turning Three Workshop from 7-9pm on November 9. Early Intervention families are invited to come learn the process of transitioning from EI services to early childhood special education programs for children, and the role of the parent in this process. For more information about these trainings, please call 781-935-3855.

## FAMILY & EI PROGRAM COLLABORATION

### METROWEST REGION

The **Step One Regional Consultation Program** has an ongoing parent support group that is held two evenings a month at the Riverside Early Intervention Program. This parent group is for parents in the Metrowest Region whose children are enrolled in Early Intervention and have complex medical needs and/or multiple disabilities. Parents looking for more information about the program can contact Kathy Haran-Kovacs at 617-774-1048.

**Jewish Family & Children's Services (J.F. & C.S.) Early Intervention** arranged an October meeting with the pediatricians from Norwood Caritas Hospital. Representatives from J.F. & C.S. EI, Family Circle, Riverside Early Intervention and local school districts jointly presented information about their respective programs at the hospital's Pediatric Ground Rounds.

It was a wonderful way to show the medical staff the importance of the programs, to encourage early referrals and to clarify the differences between medical and educational models. The hospital staff was very impressed with the level of communication that these two Early Intervention programs have been able to establish with their local school systems. It is hoped that in the future, J.F. & C.S. may continue to include the medical professionals in this openly communicative fashion.

### WESTERN REGION

The **Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP)** has been keeping busy with a variety of activities for families. The program hosted Sign Language classes in September for interested families, and many took advantage of this wonderful program. The Drop-In Skating Group, held every Tuesday morning from 10 to 11:30am at the Interskate 91 in Wilbraham, also resumed in September. The **WRCP** will host its annual Holiday Festival for children and families on December 13 from 3 to 5:30pm at the Cottage Hill Banquet House. Children's activities will include pictures with Frosty the Snowman and a holiday sing-a-long. For more information about these events, please contact Karen Cassidy at 413-783-5500.

**Thom Westfield Infant Toddler Services** wrapped up the summer in style with their Annual Picnic and Reunion held in August. Many current and former families attended the event, and staff enjoyed seeing the EI graduates. In September, many of the staff and parents from the program's Autism Education and Support Group ventured out for the "Autism Walk". The program also held their 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Mellaine Blair Golf Tournament, where 180 golfers enjoyed a great day of golfing, eating and fun!

A holiday party is being planned for the families of children enrolled in the **Thom Westfield Infant Toddler Services** program. In keeping with tradition, Mrs. Claus and a favorite elf will make an appearance at the event, which is planned for early December.

The **REACH Early Intervention Program** recently invited Brenda Allair from the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project to a "Parent Perspective" staff meeting. Staff members discussed the importance of parent and family involvement and talked about ways to make families feel more involved in the Early Intervention services and system.

**MSPCC Holyoke EI**, in collaboration with the Holyoke Parks and Recreation Staff, held a Community Picnic at the end of summer. Families from the Parent Center and GED programs also attended the fun-filled day, which included activities such as water sprinklers, bubbles, arts and crafts, parachutes and other games. All the 2006 graduates of the MSPCC program were honored with a graduation ceremony, and each received a graduation certificate.

**Thom Springfield Infant Toddler Services** is hosting a Turning Three workshop on November 6 from 6-7:30pm. All Early Intervention families are invited to attend. A panel of representatives, including representatives from local public preschools, the Preschool Enrichment Team, the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project and Community Partnerships, will offer a brief overview of their programs.

**Thom Springfield Infant Toddler Services** is busy planning their Annual Holiday Party for Wednesday, December 13 at the Cottage Hill Banquet House in Springfield. A pizza and pasta dinner will be followed by children's activities and a visit from Frosty the Snowman.

### SOUTHEAST REGION

**Kennedy Donovan Center Attleboro Early Intervention (KDC Attleboro)**, in collaboration with Self Help Inc. Community Partnerships for Children, held a Buddy Night at the Early Intervention program. This hour long playgroup was open to children ages 2.5 to 4.5 years and their fathers, grandfathers, uncles or other significant male in their life. The playgroup offered free play, craft activity and an educational activity.

On September 20, **KDC Attleboro** participated in the Annual Rodman Ride for Kids. This ride is a one-day cycling tour that raises money for many non-profit organizations, including KDC. Three fathers of EI alumni, as well as several friends of staff members, participated in the ride. The event raised \$11,000. KDC extends their thanks to all the riders, families, friends, staff and corporate sponsors who helped raise money for the ride. A special thank you is sent to Sean and Sandra Buckley, parents of CJ Buckley, a graduate of KDC's EI program, for their generous donation. The Buckley's donated partial proceeds from their "CJ's 3rd Annual Spring Swing Golf Tournament".

## 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, a Focused Monitoring 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.

### STATEWIDE DIRECTOR

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### TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATOR

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**[www.eiplp.org](http://www.eiplp.org)**

## The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project

### NEWS

### Building Connections: It's All About You!

#### Share *Your* "Parent Perspective"!

The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project was created to support parents whose children receive Early Intervention services. The Parent Perspective newsletter grew out of that idea, and its focus is on ensuring that families are knowledgeable about state programs and resources, encouraging family involvement in the Early Intervention system, and giving families the opportunity to have their voices heard. The Parent Perspective is written by and for parents — and we want to hear from you! So . . .

- ⇒ Write an article about an event you've attended (conference, workshop, or community event)
- ⇒ Share your favorite quote, book, website or community resource
- ⇒ Tell us how you have been involved in your Early Intervention program
- ⇒ Send us a poem about your child
- ⇒ Let us know what YOU want to see in the Parent Perspective because . . .

*It's All About You!*

Submissions can be sent to Brenda Allair at [Brenda.allair@state.ma.us](mailto:Brenda.allair@state.ma.us) or to the Parent Leadership Project's email at [eiplp@yahoo.com](mailto:eiplp@yahoo.com). Articles can also be sent by mail to: Brenda Allair, DPH Western Regional Office, 23 Service Center, Northampton MA 01060.

### NEXT DEADLINE: November 30, 2006

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