



The Parent Leadership Project's *Parent Perspective*

Early Intervention Information and Resources

May/June 2003

New & Improved!

WWW.EIPLP.ORG Goes Online

The Parent Leadership Project has an exciting new presence in cyberspace, providing information and resources for families with children receiving Early Intervention services and interested others. The colorful and family-friendly website, www.eiplp.org, had its' debut at the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium Conference (MEIC) last month.

The site includes basic information on Early Intervention services, such as how to write an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) and resources for transition from Early Intervention. There is also a link for relevant federal and state laws relating to the Early Intervention system. Parents can learn about opportunities for involvement in the Early Intervention system, beyond the services their children receive, as well as workshops and conferences throughout Massachusetts. Links to other organizations for families who have children with special health needs and disability-specific organizations are also provided.


The current issue of the *Parent Perspective* newsletter is available online, and an archive of past issues will be available soon.

There is also a section for Parent Advisory Council (PAC) news and events.

We hope that you will bookmark this site or add it to your list of favorites and check back often for Early Intervention news and upcoming events. Let us know what you think — are there other features or information that would be helpful for families? Email us with your comments at eiplp@yahoo.com, or call us toll free at 877-35-EIPLP.



Contact Us :

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

 Visit www.eiplp.org

 Email eiplp@yahoo.com

Opportunity Knocks

Parents Invited to ICC "Retreat" June 12th

Would you like to learn more about Early Intervention issues and have a voice in future planning and policy decisions for the Early Intervention system?

The Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) is a statewide, interagency organization that advises the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on issues relating to the Early Intervention system. The ICC is comprised of representatives from state agencies, including the Office of Child Care Services, Departments of Education, Social Services and Mental Retardation, Head Start, other providers of services to young children and **parents**.

Much of the work of the ICC is accomplished by the six standing committees that meet to work on their "charges" or various issues relating to the Early Intervention system. The committees, which include Program Planning, Standards, Personnel, Low Incidence, Membership, and Fiscal meet on a monthly basis, with the entire body of the ICC meeting 4-5 times a year.

Parents are encouraged to participate as members of these committees to help ensure that Early Intervention services are family-centered. There are six **Parent Representatives** covering the regions of the state with one at-large parent representative, who are voting members of the

ICC. Stipends and mentoring support are available to **parents** who regularly attend ICC meetings.

If you would like to learn more about participating in ICC activities, here is a great opportunity! Parents are cordially invited to attend the ICC annual retreat on June 12th from 9:30am—4:00 pm at the Holiday Inn in Worcester. Each ICC committee will review its accomplishments during the past year and develop "charges" or goals for the next year.

For more information, please contact Darla Gundler, the ICC staff person, toll-free at (877)35-EI-PLP or email Darla.Gundler@state.ma.us

Resources:***Bits and Bytes — An Assortment of Websites of Interest***

Log on and check out these new or “newly discovered” websites.

The Asperger's Connection :

www.ddleadership.org/aspergers.

The Shriver Center at the University of Massachusetts developed this new interactive website for families, professionals and policy makers interested in the issues facing individuals with Asperger's Syndrome and High Functioning Autism.

There is a section to “Ask the Expert” about topics including education, therapies, sensory integration and social issues

The Spring 2003 Therapro Catalog: The Therapy Resource for Families and Professionals:

www.theraproducts.com.

This site includes all types of products designed to enhance fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, language and other areas of development. The publication section is noteworthy with disability specific books on topics such as toilet training for chil-

dren with Autism and parent guides for children with Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy.

Kids with Tubes:

www.kidswithtubes.org.

Parents and caregivers of children who are tube-fed will find a variety of supports and services on this site, including The Kids with Tubes News bi-annual newsletter, articles by experts and scheduled seminars.

The Massachusetts Heart Coalition, Inc.:

www.massachusettsheartcoalition.org.

This website was started by parents of children with congenital heart disease (CHD) and contains information on news, events and resources.

Do you have an interesting website to share with other parents? Let us know! Email us at eiplp@yahoo.com.

New Support Group for “Friends with Heart”

Friends With Heart is a new support group, sponsored by the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center, Pediatric Cardiology Group in Worcester. Friends With Heart offers information and family support for parents of children with heart disease.



Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month, with a Holiday party in December and a picnic in July. Speakers are scheduled on a quarterly basis to present lectures on topics of interest. In June, one of the top Pediatric Cardiac Surgeons will be the guest speaker. Richard A. Jonas, M.D., Cardiovascular Surgeon-in-Chief at Children's Hospital, Boston, will present a talk on “Advances in the Surgical Care of Children with Congenital Heart Disease.” The lecture is free of charge. For more information on attending this lecture, including date and location, please contact dawnking@townisp.com or call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP.

Opportunity Knocks:**Scholarships Available for Parents for studies in Early Intervention/related fields**

Do you like working with children? Have you ever thought about pursuing a career in Early Intervention or related fields? In order to address the shortage of qualified personnel who work with children who have disabilities, several area colleges are offering scholarships to underrepresented groups, including parents of children with disabilities.

The Graduate School at Bouve College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University is offering scholarships for its Certificate Program in Early Intervention. A notable new feature of the program is the increased emphasis on distance education. Much of the course content will be delivered through the Internet, and courses will meet on campus one day each month. For

more information, visit www.bouve.edu and their Internet Community at www.earlyintervention.org.

The Lynch School at Boston College also grants scholarships for parents who would like to pursue educational programs relating to autism and deafblindness. For more information, log on to www.bc.edu. The Graduate College of Education at UMass Boston offers grants for its program to teach students to work with the visually-impaired. For more information, see www.umb.edu and choose the special education link. In Northampton, Smith College offers full scholarships for students in its Masters of the Education of the Deaf program. Log on to www.smith.edu, for further details.

Profiles in Parent Leadership

In Her Own Words...Sammi Robertson on "Joining the Club" and Bailey's Team

I would like to introduce you to a club - although not new - a club in which we have recently become members.

The "autism" club or one may call it the "special needs" club is one that no one chooses to join. After receiving news of my son's condition, we felt alone. Shortly thereafter, we started meeting other individuals who belong to this new "club." We experienced many of the same feelings, the same moods, and the same anger. But, most importantly, we were searching for a way to survive - just like our fellow club members.

My second child, Bailey, was diagnosed with autism in June of 2001. He was twenty months old at the time. Autism is a neurological "spectrum" disorder that affects a child's ability to process sensory information, inhibiting his or her ability to communicate, understand language, play and relate to others; and the cause and cure remain unknown. Every child who receives an "autism spectrum disorder" diagnosis is different; however, many children possess a lot of the same behavioral symptoms. The simplest way to describe Bailey's functioning or lack thereof is that his brain does not know how to process the information that it receives as our brains do; whether it is environmental input such as noises or smells; or social input such as faces or voices.

When first diagnosed, I felt that Bailey was relatively healthy, just having very little social and or cognitive abilities. I was wrong. He not only has difficulty with language - having almost no ability to communicate conversationally; but he also has physical symptoms similar to a type of "irritable bowel syndrome" or gastritis. Bailey has food sensitivities and nutritional deficiencies. He has constant head congestion and allergy-induced asthma. Autism is not simply a psychiatric disorder, although its diagnostic code identifies it as such - it is a neurological disorder requiring various types of medical evaluation and attention.

The number of children diagnosed with

autism is increasing and no one is sure if it is due to the change in diagnostic guidelines, or if environmental with other factors are playing a larger part than we know. It has been reported that in parts of this country as many as 1 in 138 children are diagnosed with autism, with boys affected at four times the rate of girls. Although there are many theories for this increase, some of which are controversial or are in dispute, it is hoped that heightened awareness will result in much needed research.

The mission of the National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR) is to fund, promote and support biomedical research into the causes, prevention, effective treatment and, eventually, cure of autism spectrum disorders. NAAR's signature fundraising event is its "Walk F.A.R. [Family and Friends for Autism Research] for NAAR" program.

Only 2 months after receiving our son's autism diagnosis, I stumbled upon the walkathon brochure at a restaurant. I picked it up after recognizing the word "Autism". Feeling as though it was haunting me, I immediately threw down the brochure and proceeded to my table for dinner. As I made my way toward the restaurant door after having dinner, I took the brochure and revisited the information days later. The brochure contained information on a walk to take place in Boston with other families who have children with autism. I didn't know what to do or how I felt, but I poured my heart and soul into a letter and began to educate my family and friends about our new life.

In September, 2001, "Bailey's Team" was formed. We raised over \$8,000 in the three weeks before the walkathon. That was just the beginning. In 2002, "Bailey's Team" raised \$18,650.00!

And, in New England, NAAR has raised over \$1,350,000 in 2001 & 2002 collectively as a result of this event. Due to our success, NAAR's New England Chapter has elected to hold four New England area walks. (See below for schedule).

I know Bailey will talk someday. I know he will have conversations with his friends. And, I know in my heart that he will achieve some milestones. I don't know, however, if he will ever be able to get a job, find a partner, have children or understand the concept of leading an adult life.

To those of you who are in "the club" or know someone who is... we all have our good days and bad days. By becoming involved in these or other fundraising events, you can help to provide more "good days" for a lot of special kids.

"Walk F.A.R. for NAAR":

As a community, there are many ways you can help! Volunteer can participate in "walk day" either by walking and raising money on behalf of your own family member or by helping at a registration table. Or, contribute to NAAR by sending a check or by soliciting friends and family members to support this important cause.

Schedule of events:

Western New England Walk F.A.R. for NAAR, Saturday, September 13th - Ashley Reservoir-Holyoke. Kick Off Luncheon-Thursdays, July 17th - The Log Cabin, Holyoke;

Greater Boston Walk F.A.R. for NAAR, Saturday, September 20th - Artesani Park-Brighton. Kick Off Luncheon-Wednesday, July 30th - The Westin Hotel, Waltham;

Southern New England Walk F.A.R. for NAAR, Saturday, October 4th - Roger Williams Park-Providence, RI. Kick Off Luncheon-Thursdays, August 7th - Providence Marriott, Providence, RI ;

Northern New England Walk F.A.R. for NAAR, Sunday, October 5th - Veterans Park-Manchester, NH Kick Off Luncheon-Thursdays, July 31st - Center of NH, Manchester, NH.

For more information, call toll-free (888) 627-NAAR or visit www.autismwalk.org.

Early Intervention News:***Proposed Fee System for Families in Early Intervention System***

As a result of the current fiscal crisis in Massachusetts, the Department of Public Health (DPH) proposed a new cost-participation plan at a public hearing in Boston on April 22nd. In an effort to help support Early Intervention services, the DPH will charge families an Annual Cost Participation Fee of \$25 or \$50, beginning on July 1, 2003.

Whether or not a family will need to pay a fee will be based on income. Specifically, families whose income is 200 percent to 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines will pay an annual fee of \$25 (\$20 for the 2nd child with a maximum contribution per family of \$45) while a family whose income is greater than 400 percent will pay an annual fee of \$50 (\$50 for the second child with the maximum contribution of \$100). Several other states currently support Early Intervention services through similar cost-participation programs or through the use of co-payments for services.

The DPH is currently in the process of receiving federal approval. While the DPH waits for approval, Early Intervention Programs will begin to collect information from all families about their income. As this information is sensitive, only a summary of each Early Intervention Program's information will be given to the DPH. Any information that could identify a family such as name or income will remain with the local Early

Intervention Program. These funds will be used to help support Early Intervention services.

If families have questions, they are encouraged to speak to their Early Intervention Program Director or contact Mary Dennehy-Colorusso, Early Intervention Due Process Coordinator for the Department of Public Health at (978) 851-7261 ext. 4016.

Do you have a question or comment to share with other Early Intervention families? Please let us know! Call the Parent Leadership Project toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP or email eiplp@yahoo.com.

**Hot Off the Presses****Two New Publications for Parents of Children with Special Health Needs**

Some 12.8 million children in the United States have some form of special health care needs. Health Care for All Children's Quality Initiative and the Federation for Children with Special Needs have developed a new guide designed to help health care providers to better care for their patients with special health care needs, through coordinating care and building effective relationships to achieve the best possible medical outcomes.

"Working with Children with Special Health Needs: what families want health care providers to know" grew out of information developed from parent focus groups. The guide includes sections on enhancing communication between parents and professionals, giving families the information they need, and making the relationship work. Copies of this

guide are available online at www.hcfma.org/acrobat/provider_guide.pdf or by calling (617) 350-7279.

Family Voices, a national grass roots organization of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health care needs, produced a report for families titled "Bridges, Not Boundaries: the Value and Use of Telemedicine for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs". Telemedicine refers to the use of electronic communication and information technologies to provide or support clinical care at a distance. The report details the benefits and considerations in using electronic communication, in an emerging field known as telemedicine. According to the report, telemedicine is an exciting new way to achieve quality medical care through the use of video cameras, audio equipment and

other electronic media. Health care providers can provide services to patients at remote sites or between two or more sites, thus providing access to consultations by specialists without the need for families to travel long distances. The report contains a family checklist of questions to ask before deciding to use telemedicine, such as whether the telemedicine session is videotaped, how does it become part of the child's medical record, and how do you ensure privacy and confidentiality over the internet.

"Bridges, Not Boundaries..." will be available soon on the Family Voices website at www.familyvoices.org.



CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

May 27— **My Child Has Special Needs?** Presented by Roxanne Chandler, mother of two children with special needs. For more information or to register, please call Cara Casella, LCSW at Boston Early Intervention for Children and Families at (617) 254-1140 ext. 2078.

May 29 - **Basic Rights Workshop**, 7:30-9:30 pm, Newton. This free course presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs covers basic information about state and federal laws to assist **parents** in planning, decision-making and monitoring of their child's IEP. Materials are available in Spanish and Portuguese. To register, call (800) 331-0688 or online at register@fcsn.org.

May 29— **Special Friends Story Time**, 10:30 am, Barnes & Nobles Booksellers, Route 1, Saugus. Learn about sign language. Contact Kerry Mahoney at EMARC, (781)942-4888 ext. 14015.

May 31— **Turning 3 Workshop**, Worcester. This free course presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs addresses the issue of transition from Early Intervention services to the special education system and available community resources. For more information, call the Federation at (800) 331-0688 or visit their website at www.fcsn.org.

June 1— **Heart to Heart Fund Walk** Members of the Heart to Heart Fund will be walking to benefit Floating Hospital for Children, starting at the Bayside Expo Center and walking for six miles. For more information, visit www.massachusettsheartcoalition.org.

June 2- **Building a Community: An Orientation to Massachusetts Early Intervention**, Part 2, Dimock Community Health Center, Roxbury, 9 am - 3 pm. A required training for newly hired Early Intervention providers, open to family members of children who receive Early Intervention services. The workshop is free and a stipend is available for **parent** participants. For more informa-

tion call the EI Training Center at (800) 331-0688 or visit online at www.eitrainingcenter.org

June 5— **“This Child is Driving Me Crazy: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder”**, presented by the Boston Institute for Early Childhood Development, 6-8 pm, room L110, Boston University School of Medicine, 80 East Concord Street, Boston. For more information, call Kara Morgan at (617) 414 3826.

June 6- **Annual Regional Consultation Program Early Intervention Conference**, 12:00 pm-4:30 pm, Union Station Restaurant, Northampton. MA. The Thom/Western Regional Consultation Program hosts this conference about benefits and services for children with special needs. Speakers include representatives from the Department of Public Health, Family TIES, DMR Children's Services, MA Commission for the Blind, the Western Regional Consultation Program and the EI Parent Leadership Project. For more information, call Karen Cassidy at (413) 783-5500 or email kcassidy@thomchild.org.

June 7, **Happy Hands: American Sign Language for Families**, 9:30 and 10:30 am, Congregational Church, Great Plain Avenue, Needham, presented by Parent Talk, inc, a non-profit parent support network. For more information, call Christine Nigrin at (781) 444-5322 or visit www.parenttalk.info.

June 7, **Community Health & Resource Fair**, noon—5 pm, Madison Park High School, 75 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury. Learn about local and state resources for health care and screenings. For more information, call (617) 635-8040.

June 12— **ICC Retreat**, 9:30-4:00 pm, Holiday Inn, Worcester. The Massachusetts Interagency Coordinating Council, (ICC) an advisory group to the Department of Public Health, will hold it's annual retreat to review progress on projects to date and to determine goals for next

year. Parents are welcome to attend. Contact Darla Gundler, ICC Staff Person, for more information at (877)35-EI PLP or by email Darla.Gundler@state.ma.us.

June 17— **Haussein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Awards Ceremony**, 10:00-1:00 pm, Holiday Inn, Worcester. Come celebrate the best in parent leadership as six parent teams discuss the projects they implemented at their Early Intervention programs through funding by the Department of Public Health. Questions? Call the Parent Leadership Project, toll-free at (877) 35-EI-PLP.

July 14— **Fourth Annual Kids with Tubes Picnic**, Beaverbrook Reservation, Come meet other families of tube-fed kids. Enjoy a sprinkler park, playground, ball fields and good company. For more information, visit www.kidswithtubes.org

September 18 & 19, **Workshops on-Communication Strategies for Children with Severe and Multiple Disabilities**, 8:30 am—4:30 pm, Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center. Parent Seminar September 20 from 9:00 am—1:00 pm. Learn how to help non-verbal children with severe disabilities communicate their needs to caregivers and teachers. This two-day workshop addresses Pre-symbolic Communication and Tangible Symbol Systems. A special half-day seminar for parents is also offered, free of charge. Strategies are especially appropriate for children with low-incidence disabilities including severe cognitive limitations, deafblindness, autism spectrum disorders and multiple disabilities. For more information, please contact Alexandra Dorinson at (800) 410-7069 ext. 102 or email dorinson@ohsu.edu. Visit their website at www.designtolearn.com.

*Happy Father's Day, to all the
dads, grandfathers,
uncles and friends who are
important in the
life of a child*



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

FAMILY PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES & EI PROGRAM NEWS

BOSTON NEWS by Hyacinth Irving

Bay Cove Early Intervention Program recently held a yard sale at the center with items donated by families. The sale raised funds that will be used for program needs.

Boston Early Intervention for Children & Families is working on enhancing the Parent Resource Center. Parent Sandra Kelly enjoyed attending the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference and thought that the workshop presenters were excellent. Sandra received a lot of information on available resources and would encourage other parents to attend in the future.

The **Boston Metro Early Intervention Program** will host an open house for Early Intervention families and the community on June 7th. Games, storytime, a reptile and animal show, food and other fun activities are planned at the center at 656 American Legion Highway in Roslindale. For more information, call (617)522-6000.

Children's Community Early Intervention Program has started a pilot program on Tuesdays at Children's Hospital in Boston, to provide information to families about Early Intervention Services.

Mud's the word at **Healthy Foundations Early Intervention Program**, where they recently started a playgroup using mud to improve motor skills and sensory issues. Best of all, the children are having fun making mud creations!

CENTRAL NEWS by Dawn King

Diane Leger, Parent Contact from **Lipton Early Intervention Program** attended the MEIC conference and thought the entire conference was WONDERFUL. She loved having the opportunity to meet other parents involved in EI. Her favorite was the workshop on the basics of Due Process and "she received a lot of information on understanding how everything works". Diane would like to see this workshop come out to individual programs.

Wachusett Child Development Center has a meeting for parents of children with Down Syndrome or other disabilities on the first Thursday of the month, at the Center from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. The May meeting is about organizing medical records.

The Parent Advisory Council at the **Massachusetts Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children Early Intervention Program-Worcester (MSPCC)** would like to thank many special people and companies for helping to make the First Annual Winter Family Fun Night a big success! The Worcester Elks donated use of their hall. Many thanks to Mikey from American Mobile Sound for keeping everyone up on the dance floor, and Ivy Kitchen, Creedon Company, Marie and Creative Catering, and Price Chopper. Thanks, as well, to Senator Guy Glo-

dius for his time. Families enjoyed an evening of games, food and dancing on a cold February night.

METROWEST NEWS by Lisa Mayer

The Early Intervention staff at **Jewish Family & Children's Services (J.F.C & S.)** is preparing for re-certification in CPR and First Aid on May 8th and 15th. A recent raffle earned \$3,500 to be used towards program needs. The luncheons arranged by **J.F.&C.S.** and **Riverside Early Intervention** for parents to meet special education staff from surrounding towns were very successful. Each town came out to visit on a separate day which allowed for an in-depth discussion about all of the programs their town offers. Families were very receptive and appreciative of the opportunity to meet with the school's representatives.

Riverside Early Intervention Program at Dedham

(Riverside-Dedham) is starting a playground group in June. **Riverside** would like to welcome Diana Faust, a new Physical Therapist, who will be starting in June.

NORTHEAST NEWS by Wendy Lemire

On a personal note, I really enjoyed the MEIC conference. I found the seminar on the traumatized child particularly informative as it presented new information, not just from the "textbook". I loved being able to meet and socialize with parents from my own and other regions. It was great to network and brainstorm regarding solutions to our mutual challenges personally and professionally. Presenting a workshop on "Parenting while Depressed" for the first time was an excellent experience. I felt well-received and it was a boost to my confidence. In addition, I achieved my personal goal of getting the issue of parenting with depression more out in the open and more visible while sharing my personal experiences as well as professional training as a nurse and experience with other parents and people with depression. I'd like to thank the MEIC committee for the opportunity, and would like to do this seminar again

At Boston Regional Child Development Center—Stoneham (BRCDC-Stoneham), the three-night nutrition series for children with feeding problems wrapped up on May 20th.

BRCDC-Stoneham held two Turning Three workshops in March and the annual summer picnic is being planned with the Parent Advisory Council. Parent Contact Lisa Gibbs really enjoyed the MEIC conference and wants to go again! She attended the literacy workshop and learned how to get her children ready for reading with various fun-filled strategies. Applied Behavior Analysis taught her that children with autism can be taught to use their imaginations. It was very inspiring and positive. The Buddhist Approach to Early Intervention helped Lisa to become more aware of the moment and things around her.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES & EI PROGRAM NEWS (continued)

Zhenobia Henderson, Parent Contact from **North Shore Early Intervention at Cape Ann**, enjoyed the conference and meeting parents from the region. She found many resources available to her and is also looking into being a Parent Presenter for the Early Intervention Training Center.

The Professional Center for Child Development (PCCD) will present a Northeast Regional Parent Meeting on Tuesday, May 20th from 7 to 8 p.m. **PCCD** will run a four-week parent child group for young mothers at the Lawrence site. Dinner will be provided and there will be opportunities for networking. An IEP workshop will be held on June 10th at **PCCD**, from 7 to 9 p.m. and is free and open to the community.

Erin Ward, Parent Contact for **PCCD**, gained a lot of insight and came away from MEIC feeling enthusiastic. The Parent Dinner was a great opportunity to network with folks from the region. Erin enjoyed learning about opportunities for participating in the Early Intervention system.

South Bay Early Intervention (SBEI) will hold a series of birthing classes for parents who are expecting on May 21st, 28th, June 4th and 11th from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Space is limited and classes are free and open to the public.

Michelle Carter, Parent Contact at **SBEI**, felt the atmosphere at the conference was very professional and friendly. She was inspired by other parents of children with disabilities that she met and their positive, upbeat attitudes. It was nice to stay over at the hotel and she enjoyed the Parent Dinner. In the public benefits seminar, Michelle was pleased to learn of alternatives to MassHealth.

SOUTHEAST NEWS by Timothy Pelletier

Taunton Area Early Intervention Program (Taunton EIP) recently held its annual Legislative Breakfast with 65 adults and 20 children in attendance, including Representative Jim Fagan, and aides from Representative Barney Frank and Senator Marc Pacheco offices. Parents and staff had the chance to have discussions with the legislators in a relaxed environment.

Taunton EIP is having their Annual Graduation on May 14th for children who have transitioned from Early Intervention in the past year. Over 150 children are invited. The event will be held at St. Joseph's Hall in Dighton.

The Regional Consultation Program (RCP) at the **I.H. Schwartz Center for Children Early Intervention Program**, in cooperation with the other 6 RCP's throughout the state, is sponsoring a conference for families of children with complex developmental and medical needs. "Together in Learning and Caring: 3rd Annual Conference" will be held on May 31, 2003 at the Holiday Inn in Worcester and is free to families. Children are welcome. For more information contact JoAnne Vital Bernier at the Schwartz Center at (508)996-3391.

The **Kennedy-Donovan Center- New Bedford (KDC-New Bedford)** evening story hour with the Wareham Library that started in January, is now in its second session. It meets on Wednesday evenings at the library. **KDC-New Bedford** has also started a Spanish-language child and parent group with the Massachusetts Family Network. The group will be held at the Family Center in New Bedford and run for 6 weeks. For additional information contact the center at (508)997-1570.

Last month, **Kennedy-Donovan Center –Attleboro Early Intervention Program (KDC-Attleboro)** hosted the "Parenting in 2000" workshop, presented by Gina Mcarrigle and Karen Mitchell, Parent Specialists from the Hockomock Community Partnerships for Children. Gina and Karen presented helpful information for parents on the topic of positive discipline. Each participant received a packet full of information and resources. Feedback from parents was very positive, finding the workshop to be helpful and they thanked Gina and Karen for their presentation.

On May 8th, **KDC-Attleboro** held a Child and Passenger Safety Presentation by Lieutenant Wayne Sargo from Brockton Police Department. Lt. Sargo is a member of the Speaker's Bureau and is a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician and Instructor. Parents thank Mr. Sargo for presenting this workshop.

With summer on the way, it's time to enjoy some ice-cream! **KDC-Attleboro** will host their Annual Family Ice Cream Social on June 8th at the North Attleboro Mason Field Playground. The event is in the final stages of planning and anybody interested in participating is encouraged to contact the program at (508)226-6035.

For a sixth year, the **Greater Fall River Early Intervention Program (Greater Fall River EIP)** "assisted" the Easter Bunny in its annual campaign to bring smiles to the faces of children in the community. Greater Fall River EIP is proud to report that they assembled and distributed 130 Easter Baskets to families in the program, with help from staff, families and members of the community. The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) has two upcoming events. On May 21st, the PAC will host an infant CPR class and a Behavior Management overview is scheduled on June 11. For additional information contact Maria Sousa at (508)675-5778.

WESTERN NEWS by Faith Piaggi

The **Thom/Western Regional Consultation Program (WRCP)** will hold their Annual Regional Consultation Program Early Intervention Conference on June 6th at Union Station Restaurant in Northampton from 12 noon to 4:30 pm. WRCP serves families with children who have multiple disabilities or are medically complex. The Conference will feature information on benefits and services. For more information, call Karen Cassidy at (413)783-5500.

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.

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PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT NEWS

Parents out in force at MEIC Conference, April 30 & May 1st

The Parent Leadership Project, through the generous support of the Department of Public Health, was pleased to host more than fifty-seven Parent Contacts at the 24th Annual Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium Conference (MEIC) at the Best Western Hotel in Marlborough. Parent Contacts had the opportunity to attend workshops relating to the theme of the conference, "Celebrating Diversity: Exploring Infant, Toddler and Family Development." This year, the Parent Leadership Project hosted a hospitality suite, where parents learned about opportunities for involvement in the Parent Leadership Project, the Early Intervention Training Center, in Early Intervention Program Re-certification, and the Medical Home Initiative. Parents from different Early Intervention programs in the same region had the chance to connect and share information about activities at their programs at the Parent Dinner. After dinner, a brainstorming session about how to reach out to other families whose children are receiving Early Intervention services netted many good ideas. We enjoyed meeting you all and we thank the participants for their energy and input.

Celebrate the Best in Parent Leadership:

The Hausslein Parent Leadership Awards, June 17th

The Hausslein Early Intervention Parent Leadership Awards (Hausslein Awards), named for influential parent leader Evelyn Hausslein, was created four years ago as a way for families to take a leadership role in identifying new supports for their Early Intervention programs and communities. Parent teams submitted proposals and if accepted, they received up to \$1,000 to implement their ideas, through funding by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This year, six parent teams received Hausslein Awards. On June 17th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Holiday Inn in Worcester, the Parent Leadership Project and Department of Public Health staff will host the Hausslein Parent Leadership Awards ceremony. The Parent Teams will talk about their projects and Evelyn Hausslein will be in attendance to give a little history of the award and to congratulate the award winners. Refreshments will be served. Parents and interested others are invited to attend.

NEXT DEADLINE: The next deadline is **July 11th**. We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles.

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

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