

# Family Connections Center

## From the State House! Conference Committee Budget ~ Favorable Results!

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A big Thank You to Legislative conference committee members -- Chairs Brian Dempsey and Steve Brewer, Speaker Bob DeLeo and Senate President Therese Murray, Leadership as well as rank n' file members!!

The six person conference committee in charge of reconciling the differences between the Governor, House, and Senate proposed budgets released its

Fiscal year 2013 compromise report on the evening of June 27, 2012. The report is very positive for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities – with Family Support at \$49.5 Million and Salary Reserve at \$20 Million being included. The MassHealth line item where day habilitation and other supports are funded is adequately funded as well. The total is higher than both Senate and

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### **Family Connections Staff**

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Program Director / Associate Executive Director

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Family Advisor

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Family Advisor

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Family Advisor

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Family Advisor

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Executive Director

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House versions so it's very positive.

Conference funded:

- DDS Respite and Family Support at \$49.5 Million
- MassHealth Day Habilitation has more \$\$ than either House or Senate version (4000-7000)
- EOHHS Salary Reserve at \$20 Million
- DDS Day and Employment Services is at \$133.5 Million
- DDS Transportation at \$12.5 Million (shy of goal but positive)

In other accounts:

- Turning 22 remained the same figure as requested by both branches at \$6 Million (up \$1 Million)
- DESE/DDS Family Preservation both versions have language and funded at \$6.5 Million
- Early Intervention got close to the Senate figure with a little more than \$28 Million
- Autism services for children are level funded
- Community Residential –both POS-Community and State-operated received slightly higher amounts than branch levels accounting for needs – at 788.5 Million and \$180.8 Million respectively
- DDS admin and service coordination account funded at \$63 Million and includes language for a Prader-Willi study

When the Budget was sent to Governor Patrick for his signature, he vetoed the \$20 Million annualized Salary Reserve for Human Service workers. The Governor vetoed half of the reserve, adding it to chapter 257 funds which address underfunding of community programs. He then converted the other half of the reserve into a bonus.

We are very grateful that the House of Representatives voted to override the Governor's veto of the Salary Reserve! Special thanks to Representative David Linsky for spearheading the override in the House!

Advocacy groups around the state worked hard to insure this veto so that those who work in the field of Human Services would get a much needed salary increase this year. Thank you to Speaker Bob DeLeo, the House leadership team and rank and file members for sticking with their commitment to disability and human services support staff. 108 House members signed a letter supporting the override recognizing the essential contributions of those who work with individuals with disabilities and families!

“Never doubt that a small group  
of committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

~Margaret Mead

# *The Results Are In!*

## **Family Connections Center Satisfaction Survey 2012 results**

	YES, OR MOST OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	NO, OR NOT AT ALL	DON'T KNOW	DOES NOT APPLY
1. Are the supports and services you receive centered on your family and the person needing supports?	34	2	1	1	1
2. Has Family Connections staff helped you to find or access community resources?	39	10	2	1	2
3. Does staff help you figure out what you need as a family to support your family member with a disability?	44	5	3	1	1
4. Does the program staff recognize that you know your child best, acknowledge your strengths and respect your choices and opinions?	45	3	1	1	2
5. Do the supports offered meet your family's needs?	41	8	1	1	2
6. Are supports available to your family in a timely manner?	42	4	1	1	2
7. Has Family Connections staff helped you to access and use the health care system?	33	5	5	1	6
8. Are you satisfied with the cash assistance you receive?	36	6	3	1	8
9. Do you feel less isolated since your involvement with Family Connections?	39	6	6	2	3
10. Have you learned new information as a result of working with people from Family Connections?	41	7	1	2	2

Training topics you think would benefit your family:

- 12 interests for PDD/Autism support group
- 7 interests in sibshops,
- 4 interested in turning 22,
- 7 interested in futures planning,
- 2 in CPR,
- 2 in Sexuality/dating,
- 2 interested in help with vocational training



# Food for *Thought*

## Summer Vacation Time for Fun and Time to Plan

Revolutionary Common Sense  
By Kathie Snow

Ahhhh, summertime – vacations, swimming, camping, family time, lazy days, and more. Make this your **family's best summer ever**, and at the same time, lay the groundwork for a successful school year when September rolls around.

If your child is included in typical, inclusive community activities this summer, not only will she have a wonderful time and **make new friends**, she'll also demonstrate that she can be included in "regular" activities. **This can be a very important piece of "evidene" at her next IEP meeting!** And while your child is having fun, you'll be creating new friends who can be valuable allies in your efforts to ensure your child is in an inclusive classroom at school!

You may be thinking, "My child can't participate in 'normal' activities – there's no way all this will work for us." But your child can be successful in inclusive community activities! Read on-

Begin by checking out all the organized activities in your community that your child might enjoy, such as YMCA or Park and Recreation classes/sports; library/museum classes; and Scouts, Campfire, 4-H, etc. Look for activities that will enable your child to be with similar-aged children without disabilities who may be classmates during the next school year.

In addition, put your thinking cap on and consider what activities you could orchestrate: a neighborhood play date every Friday, a field trip to community activities (zoo, park, etc.) once a week, or anything else that will enable you and your child to make new connections in inclusive settings.

As you check out organized activities, learn as much as you can about them ahead of time: ask **other parents; observe the activity, if that's possible; and/or call the sponsor and ask lots of questions (but don't mention your child's disability at this point).**

**While you're doing this "reconnaissance,"** think about what your child will need to be successful: physical or environmental modifications, assistive technology devices, support from other children or an adult leader, and so forth. Your **child doesn't need a one-to-one aide;** that person will get in the way of your child making real connections. Instead, teach your child how to ask for help from whoever is closest – another child or the adult leader or volunteer. (My articles, "Ask and You Shall Receive" and "When Less is More" might be helpful.)

Next, talk to your child and enthusiastically **share what you've learned!** Describe the activities, share your ideas about supports and modification he might need, get his input, listen to his concerns, and let him make the final decision about which activities he might want to try. It might even be possible for your child and another family member to participate together. When my then nine-year-old son, Benjamin, took karate classes, his dad took the class with him! This class was for all ages, **and my husband knew to "back off" and allow Benjamin to make friends, instead of sticking to him like glue!**

**Next, enroll your child and don't say one** work about his disability at that time. At enrollment time, try to learn more about the

activity, the other participants, and so forth, and then modify, as necessary, your ideas about supports, accommodations, etc. A few days before the activity starts, call the leader and, in a positive, helpful manner, describe what your child will need and describe how it can be done. You do not need **to disclose your child's** diagnosis (that can be scary for some people to hear) – you only need to share what your child needs!

Say something like, "Since my son uses a wheelchair, he'll need some assistance with..." or "My daughter will do best if she has a couple of peer helpers." Don't ask permission for these things and don't whine or get angry! Simply state what your child will need and describe how to provide it. If you tell people what your child needs, without describing how to provide the help, they may not know what to do and failure is likely. And, of course, do all this with excitement, good manners, kindness, and patience, developing allies in the process! If the leader of the activity demonstrates any concerns or resistance, stay **positive and ask, "What will it take for you to feel more comfortable," and assure the person that this** will be a successful adventure if the lines of communication remain open!

You may not think you know what supports and accommodations your child needs, but you really do – **you're an expert on your child!** Sit and ponder, talk with others, brainstorm with family members, and ask your child. Your first ideas may **not be perfect, and that's OK. After the activity** begins, you and your child, along with the activity leader, might need to fine-tune things. And this is great – everyone can learn together!

Now, onto the next phase: developing allies! Contrary to popular opinion, the best people to assist parents in achieving school inclusion are not other parents of kids with disabilities or professional advocates. **Bringing "big guns" to the IEP can inflame an already heated situation. The best helpers are those who do not bring "special ed expertise" to the meeting – like the new friends you'll be making over the summer – who can bring common sense and cool heads to IEP meetings.**

Once your child is involved in inclusive summer activities, your job is to become friends **with the other kids' parents, the activity leaders,** and/or volunteers. Reach out to them: invite their children over to play, offer to carpool, organize a pot luck supper after a big game, volunteer to help **with the activity (but not as your child's aide – help**

all the kids), or do whatever it takes to create and maintain new friendships.

As the relationships develop, brag about your child's **gifts (has a great memory, is happy, is trying really hard to talk, collects baseball cards, etc.). After you've detailed positive characteristics – and only then – share more about your child's** needs related to his disability, and do this in a way that generates a positive, respectful, and accurate **portrayal of your child. Say, "My son needs behavior supports," instead of, "He has behavior problems." Say, "My daughter uses a communication device," instead of, "My daughter is non-verbal."**

As you get to know these new friends, tell **them you'd like your child to be included in a** regular ed class in the neighborhood school with supports and accommodations. At the same time, do not tell all your war stories about educators you **don't like! You want to build bridges and create allies, and slamming others (even if they deserve it) doesn't help! You can, however, share general** information about how schools have traditionally undereducated students with disabilities in segregated classrooms, and how harmful this practice has been (like contributing to the 75 percent unemployment rate of people with disabilities). Your new friends will see that since your child is experiencing success in typical summer activities with supports and/or accommodations, he could also be successful in regular ed classroom with curriculum modifications, supports, and so forth.

As the lazy days of summer pass and your friendships deepen, ask your new allies for help with school inclusion. They may be able to recommend general ed teachers, get you connected to educators who can become allies, and/or use their influence on behalf of your child! They can attend the IEP meeting and provide **"testimony" about your child's inclusion in summer** activities.

Resolve to enjoy precious moment of summer vacation! Have fun as you get your child involved in inclusive community activities, make new friends, and begin a journey that can lead to inclusive education! With the appropriate supports, accommodations, assistive technology, and/or modifications, every child can be successful in inclusive settings – in the community and at school! Success in these settings will put your child on a path to success as an adult – in a job, at college, and for the rest of his life!

# Available *Resources*

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## **The SHARE Foundation, Inc.**

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Founded in 1981, the Society for Human Advancement through Rehabilitation Engineering (SHARE) Foundation, Inc., is a non-profit foundation that supports the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Rehabilitation Engineering. The Center's engineers develop, build and provide computer-enhanced adaptive equipment for children and adults with disabilities.

The SHARE Foundation's mission is to empower physically challenged, non-speaking children and adults to express their basic wants and needs, communicate with others, control their immediate environments and achieve the greatest practical level of independence. SHARE succeeds in its mission by directing resources that enable the design, adaptation and fabrication of high technology equipment tailored specifically to the unique abilities of every individual who seeks help.

SHARE provides the revenue necessary to ensure that the Center's clients are provided with the highest quality of service available. The Board of Directors and friends of the SHARE Foundation also have well-defined visions for the Center's expansion plans. In 1982, the Center served three clients. By 1990, it had served 800 and by 2000, it had provided services for nearly 2,000 people. It is the Center's goal to substantially increase the number of clients it serves each year and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. As more and more people with disabilities learn about SHARE, the organization expects to grow not only in numbers, but also in quality.

Since 1981, SHARE has experienced great successes. The organization has helped to enrich the lives of more than 2,000 individuals with disabilities by enabling them to communicate through the use of computers and technology. SHARE has also enjoyed national recognition, earning the prestigious President's Volunteer Action Award and the American Institute for Public Service's National Jefferson Award. In honor of their contributions, SHARE and its volunteers have received citations and awards from state legislatures, AMVETS, Yankee Magazine, the Salvation Army and numerous other local and national organizations.

To apply for assistance through SHARE, please call or fax: telephone: (508) 999-8482  
Fax: (508) 999-8489 or visit <http://www.umassd.edu/cre/gethelp>

# HOME MODIFICATION LOAN PROGRAM

## Funds Available – Seeking Applicants!

This is a state loan program that could help you or a loved one live more independently at home. The state-funded Home Modification Loan Program provides loans to make modifications to the primary, permanent residence of elders, adults with disabilities, and families with children with disabilities. The modifications to be made to the residence must be necessary to allow the beneficiary to remain in the home and must specifically relate to their ability to function on a daily basis.

Any homeowner who is a frail elder, has a disability or has a household member who is an elder or has a disability is eligible. Landlords with fewer than 10 units may be eligible for a 3% loan for a tenant. The proposed modifications must relate to the functional limitation of the beneficiary as documented by a professional with whom there is a client history. This program is not a home repair program. Some examples of projects funded through this program include ramps, hardwired alarm systems and other safety modifications, as well as accessible bathrooms and kitchens.

Based on the income guidelines, you may qualify for a loan of \$1,000 up to \$30,000 which is secured by a promissory note and a mortgage lien. This program offers 0% or 3% deferred payment loans and 3% amortizing loans depending on the total gross household income. Please see the Frequently Asked Questions sheet for the income limits.

Homeowners eligible for a 0% loan do not make any monthly payments and no interest accrues, repayment is required when the property is sold or has its title transferred. 3% loans require monthly payments and must be paid back in 5–15 years, depending on the total amount borrowed. The program only allows for one loan per property, making it important to think about all necessary home modifications, present and future.

If you think you might be eligible, contact the provider agency below to start the application process. More information can be found on MRC's website, [www.mass.gov/mrc/hmlp](http://www.mass.gov/mrc/hmlp) or contact MRC directly, Susan Gillam 617-204-3739 or [susan.gillam@state.ma.us](mailto:susan.gillam@state.ma.us) for more information.

## Provider Agencies

### Southeastern MA/Cape/Islands

South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc.

Mary Ann Walsh [mwalsh@smoc.org](mailto:mwalsh@smoc.org)

508-202-5919

[www.smoc.org](http://www.smoc.org)

TTY/TDD: 508-872-4853





## Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change – SE Region

A statewide, grassroots coalition dedicated to individual and family support

**The 21st Family Leadership Series** is about to begin! The Series focuses on supporting families and individuals to live in their communities as naturally and typically as desired. Applications from families with children or adult family members **of any age who are Department of Developmental Services eligible** are encouraged.

The **Family Leadership Series** has a two fold purpose. The first is to offer information about “best practices” for people with disabilities. The second is to assist families in creating a vision for their family member and a process to achieve the vision through leadership and advocacy. The dates of the **SE Family Leadership Series 21** are: **November 2 & 3, 2012, January 25 & 26, March 1 & 2, and April 5 & 6, 2013**. Each session is two days in length. Participants are required to attend all four sessions.

### **The Series focuses on:**

**Initiative and Leadership** – family members are given information on the background of the family support movement, leadership, advocacy and the significance of self-advocacy, how to effectively advocate for change and ways to influence funding and delivery systems.

**Creative, Progressive and Innovative Ways to Provide Support** – how to help our family members and our families to live quality lives. A number of presenters offer their perspectives on a broad range of topics: Inclusion in schools; supported employment; positive practices; community living and family support.

**Creating A Vision** – families are supported to “imagine better” and to create a vision, with and for their family members, that guides their leadership and advocacy. What advocacy is necessary to ensure the visions that are developed and what is effective advocacy?

**Policy Making at the Local, State and Federal Level** – family members receive information on how to develop networks with professionals and families, how to access and control resources that affect family stress and satisfaction and how to use legislative change to procure resources.

**Food and overnight lodging for each family at the Holiday Inn/Taunton is paid for by the Department of Developmental Services.** Respite/child care/nursing for family members is also funded.

Families who have completed the Series have had a tremendous impact on systems change for families and individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts. Family members have been active in policy and decision making locally, regionally and statewide and some have decided to do legislative advocacy work. Some families have been involved in community organizing and advocacy on a local level. Others have used their talents and skills to create change for their child with a disability and/or their families.

**If you have any questions or would like an application, please call or email Emily Murgo Nisenbaum at the Nemasket Group, 508-999-4436, email: [emilynisenbaum@nemasketgroup.org](mailto:emilynisenbaum@nemasketgroup.org) or Dianne Huggon at 508-823-3529, email: [mfofc@mfofc.org](mailto:mfofc@mfofc.org).**

***“The Leadership Series not only educated me, it made me think differently. It was great to leave with our visions – I am convinced that there will be a better future!”***

**FLS Graduate**

# Information to *Share*

## Hearts and Hands Walk for Autism and Family Fun Day



Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012  
9:00 am – 1:00 pm

*Join Community Autism Resources for the  
9th Annual Hearts & Hands Walk for Autism*

The FAMILY FUN DAY offers families of those with Autism Spectrum Disorders, enjoyable activities in a comfortable environment. Visual schedules of the day's events and choice boards of activities are available to help support understanding for individuals on the autism spectrum.

**For the Kids** There are free activities for the whole family including our Bubble Creation Station, Bounce House, Sensory Treasure Hunt, Carnival Style Games, a Balloon Artist, Face Painting, Temporary Tattoos and so much more! Don't miss out on a meet and greet with Buzz Light Year and Snow White!

**For the Adults** The Autism Awareness Store is back with a wide variety of items including: the locally created Glimmers of Hope Autism Awareness Bracelets, Autism Awareness pins, key chains, car magnets, T-shirts and much more! An exciting raffle will be held and there will be free refreshments as well.

**Walkers** Walkers who raise a minimum of \$60.00 in donations, and who have registered by August 17, 2012, will receive an official Hearts & Hands Walk for Autism T-shirt, Tote bag or a 16 oz. BPA Free Tumbler with a lid and straw!

**iPAD Challenge** CAR is excited to bring back the iPad Challenge this year...with a twist! Individual walkers or teams who raise a minimum of \$5,000, will receive an iPad 3 or \$500 in iTunes and/or Apple Store gift cards! Winners can chose one or a combination of both gift cards, in any denomination, but not to exceed \$500.

For more information about the walk call/email Crystal Medeiros at [508-379-0371](tel:508-379-0371) ext. 22: [cmedeiros@community-autism-resources.com](mailto:cmedeiros@community-autism-resources.com) or go to <http://www.community-autism-resources.com/events/walk-a-thon.php>



*Sibshops is a program for brothers and sisters of kids with special needs*



Our 2012 Sibshops schedule:

July 26<sup>th</sup>  
August 23<sup>rd</sup>  
September 27<sup>th</sup>  
October 25<sup>th</sup>  
November 29<sup>th</sup>  
December 27<sup>th</sup>

They are held from 5-7pm

At the Nemasket Group  
56 Bridge Street  
Fairhaven, MA 02719

Our Sibshop program is for children ages 8-13  
Who have siblings with special needs. Sibshops are a great place to meet other children  
with similar life situations and play fun games!

For more information and to sign up  
Contact: 508-999-4436  
Kathleen Amaral x133  
Jennifer Newcomer x118

*\*space is limited and registration required\**

## Parents Supporting Parents

August 29<sup>th</sup> from 5~7pm

Parent/Caregiver Support Group

Join us here at The Nemasket Group.



Our goal is to create a safe & welcoming place  
for parents/caregivers of individuals with special needs to:

- Provide emotional and practical support
- Offer encouragement
- Reduce stress
- Develop friendships

Light refreshments will be served.

“You alone can do it-but you can’t do it alone”

# SAVE THE DATE

The Nemasket Group’s 21st Annual

# HOLIDAY BAZAAR

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012



**Our Holiday Bazaar, located at 56 Bridge Street in Fairhaven, features some of the finest artisans in Southeastern MA, delicious food available for breakfast & lunch, 100+ Item Chinese Auction, Silent Auctions, 50/50 Raffle & large ticket Raffle Baskets at the Nemasket Table.**

Email [HolidayBazaar@NemasketGroup.org](mailto:HolidayBazaar@NemasketGroup.org) for more info Visit us at [www.NemasketGroup.org](http://www.NemasketGroup.org)

The Nemasket Group's

# 2012 Summer Sizzler



DATE: August 16, 2012  
(rain or shine)

TIME: 4:00 - 7:00 pm

LOCATION: The Nemasket Group  
56 Bridge Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719

Come celebrate summer with the staff and families of The Nemasket Group and the Family Connections Center. Join us for a cook-out and lots of fun!



Food and drinks will be provided by The Nemasket Group.  
Families are asked to bring dessert and lawn chairs.



We hope you can join us!

the  
nemasket  
group

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
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## Family Connections Center

Joint Project of The Nemasket Group and  
DDS (*Greater New Bedford Department of Developmental Services*)  
56 Bridge Street  
Fairhaven, MA 02719  
Phone: 508-999-0077  
Fax: 508-997-9239



United Way  
of Greater New Bedford

Creating a network of family support  
for individuals with developmental  
disabilities and their families