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# Parent Connection

## Winter 2007 – Published Quarterly

### *Celebrating the Family Conference,* **A BIG SUCCESS!**



Maine Parent Federation held its first statewide conference, *Celebrating the Family*, on November 2nd and 3rd at the Samoset Resort in Rockport, Maine. Dr. Crystal Kuykendall delivered an excellent keynote address to a packed house on the importance of parent involvement Friday evening. Over two hundred people spent both days attending a variety of informative workshops and networking with one another in a relaxed setting.

99% of the conference evaluations scored the overall conference as either meeting or exceeding expectations. Many said they can't wait for the next one!

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## **SAVE THE DATE!**

**2-DAY WRIGHTSLAW CONFERENCE**  
**April 4 & 5, 2008**

***At Keeley the Katerer, 178 Warren Avenue in Portland***

Pete and Pam Wright are coming to Maine! Pete, an attorney who represents children in special education programs, and Pam, a psychotherapist with a unique perspective on parent-child-school relations, will give details on how to use the Wrightslaw texts "*From Emotions to Advocacy*" and "*Special Education Law*" to get the most appropriate education for our children.

For more information on the conference, call MPF at 1-800-870-7746 or check the website, [www.mpf.org](http://www.mpf.org), for updates.

## **Parent Support Available Through MPF's Family Support Program**

- Support Parents have children with a disability, complex health care diagnosis, or behavioral challenge.
- Support Parents are paired with parents whose children have similar disabilities or health care issues. They communicate via phone or email.
- The connection helps families by reducing isolation, allowing an opportunity to share experiences with a Support Parent, receiving resource referral, and more.
- Training is provided to those who are interested in becoming a Support Parent. Upon completion of the training, mileage reimbursement and a stipend are available.
- MPF staff use Statewide and National databases to find appropriate matches.

If you are interested in receiving support or becoming a Support Parent, contact MPF's central office or the Regional Coordinator for your region (see the following article).

***Celebrating the Family Conference:*** The Family Support Team would like to extend a special **thank you** to the Support Parents who were able to attend our conference, and to the wonderful array of speakers in the Family Support strand.

### ***Welcome New Family Support Staff!***

**Lori Jewell** has joined our team as Regional Coordinator for Region 4, which covers southern Aroostook, northern Penobscot and northern Washington counties. Lori comes to us with experience in multiple areas: parent, advocate, resource support, and educator. She has held several positions over the last few years centered on providing support to families. Having recently completed her Master's degree in Social Work, she received her license as a Mental Health Counselor in July. In her role as Regional Coordinator, Lori will focus on connecting parents through our Parent-to-Parent Program and will be delivering information to these communities on resources that are available in her region and through MPF.

**Susan Hillman Bourne** has joined us in the role of Program Assistant. She will be based in our central office and have a variety of duties in the Family Support Program including support to families, serving on committees as a parent and also a MPF representative, and provide outreach to providers and agencies. She comes to us with a lot of experience working with children and families. Most of Susan's working life has been spent in the role of educator and, most recently, as a community educator in a domestic violence agency.

### ***~ Family Support Regional Coordinators ~***

#### **Region 1: Cumberland, York, Androscoggin and Oxford Counties**

**Theresa D'Andrea - 1-800-515-2738, tdandrea@mpf.org**

- Are you a provider in Southern Maine who serves parents of children with disabilities? Call Theresa to learn how to help families find the resources they need. Theresa is available to attend staff meetings to share information on Maine Parent Federation projects. She also provides specific parent support to families.

**Region 2: Waldo, Lincoln, Knox and Sagadahoc Counties,  
and the Brunswick Area**  
**Beth Thomas - 1-866-639-2804, bthomas@mpf.org**

- A Support Parent training will be held on Saturday, Dec. 1 at Mobius in Damariscotta from 10-3. Lunch is provided, as well as travel reimbursement and a stipend. This is a great way to share your experiences raising a child with special needs and to connect with other parents. If you're interested in becoming a Support Parent volunteer in our network, please contact Beth for more information or to register.

**Region 3: Kennebec, Somerset, Piscataquis and Franklin Counties**  
**Veronica Currier-Boucher - 1-800-870-7746, vboucher@mpf.org**

- Support Parent training, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 12 noon at the MPF central office in Augusta

**Region 4: Northern Penobscot, Northern Washington and  
Southern Aroostook Counties**  
**Lori Jewell - 1-866-797-2500, ljewell@mpf.org**

- Contact Lori to learn more about what Maine Parent Federation has to offer in your region or to become a support parent in our Parent-to-Parent Program.

**Region 5: Southern Washington and Hancock Counties  
and the Bangor Area**  
**Jackie Stanley - 1-877-963-2588, jstanley@mpf.org**

- **Regional monthly Family Support/Advisory meetings:**
  - \* Hancock: last Wednesday of the month in Ellsworth; 6-8 pm
  - \* Bucksport: first Thursday of the month at Jewett Elementary School; 6-8 pm
  - \* Bangor/Hermon: date and location varies; 6-8 pm
  - \* Calais NADA office: first or second Monday of the month; 6-8 pm
  - \* Jonesport/Beals: A new group recently started; call Jackie for time and location
  - \* Washington County: time/date/location announced monthly
  - \* Wabanaki Mental Health: third Weds. of the month, Exchange St. in Bangor; 2-4 pm
- Please contact Jackie for updates of these monthly meetings or to be added to her listserve for information on meetings.

**Region 6: Northern and Central Aroostook County**  
**Catherine Jandreau - 1-877- 848-1253, cjandreau@mpf.org**

- Catherine is designing a workshop on sexual health for the Presque Isle area
- Workshops on our Building Partnership series and the Support Parent training are available throughout the region. Please call to schedule a training or to find out about one near you.

## **Seasonal Affective Disorder**

Adapted from *Seasonal Affective Disorder*, National Alliance on Mental Illness, [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

If you notice periods of depression that seem to accompany seasonal changes during the year, you may suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This condition is characterized by recurrent episodes of depression – usually in late fall and winter – alternating with periods of normal or high mood the rest of the year. Most people with SAD are women whose illness typically begins in their twenties, although men also report SAD of similar severity and have increasingly sought treatment. SAD can also occur in children and adolescents, in which case the syndrome is first suspected by parents and teachers.

### **What are the patterns of SAD?**

Symptoms of winter SAD usually begin in October or November and subside in March or April. Most patients don't feel fully back to normal until early May. Times of depression are usually mild to moderate, but they can be severe. The usual characteristics include oversleeping, daytime fatigue, carbohydrate craving and weight gain. Additionally, there are the usual features of depression: especially decreased sexual interest, lethargy, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, lack of interest in normal activities, and social withdrawal. Light Therapy is now considered the first-line treatment intervention and, if properly dosed, can produce relief within days. Antidepressants also may help, and can be used with Light Therapy.

The most common characteristic of people with winter SAD is their reaction to changes in environmental light. Patients living at different latitudes note that their winter depressions are longer and more profound the farther north they live. Patients with SAD also report that their depression worsens or reappears whenever the weather is overcast at any time of the year, or if their indoor lighting is decreased.

### **How is winter SAD treated with light?**

Bright white fluorescent light has been shown to reverse the winter depressive symptoms of SAD. Bulbs with color temperatures between 3000 and 6500 degrees Kelvin have all been shown to be effective. The lower color temperatures produce "softer" white light with less visual glare, while the higher color temperatures produce a "colder" skylight hue. The lamps are encased in a box with a diffusing lens, which also filters out ultraviolet radiation. The box sits on a tabletop, preferably on a stand that raises it to eye level and above. Such an arrangement further reduces glare sensations at high intensity, and preferentially illuminates the lower half of the retina, which is rich in photoreceptors that are thought to mediate the antidepressant response. Studies provide evidence that between 50% and 80% of Light Therapy users experience essentially complete remission of symptoms, although the treatment needs to continue throughout the difficult season in order to maintain this benefit. There are three major dosing dimensions of Light Therapy - light intensity, light duration, and time of day exposure. Optimum effect requires that the dosage be individualized, as with medications. Side effects of Light Therapy are uncommon.

As an important precaution, patients with Bipolar I disorder – who are at risk for switching into full-blown manic episodes – need to be on a mood-stabilizing drug while using Light Therapy. Those who have histories of hypomania in the spring or summer are at risk for exhibiting symptoms of hypomania while participating in Light Therapy and the light dosage may need to be reduced.

### **What should I do if I think I have SAD?**

If your symptoms are mild - that is, if they don't interfere too much with your daily living - you may want to try Light Therapy or experiment with the lighting in your surroundings, using bright lamps, and schedule more time outdoors in winter. If your depressive symptoms are severe enough to significantly affect your daily living, consult a mental health professional qualified to treat SAD. To help you decide whether a clinical consultation is necessary, you can use the feedback on the Personalized Inventory for Depression and SAD at [www.cet.org](http://www.cet.org).

For more information on SAD, please contact Maine Parent Federation at 1-800-870-7746.

**G.E.A.R. Parent Network**  
*Workshops for Parents*

***Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)***

This workshop is being offered in three locations during January:

Wednesday, January 2, 2008

6:30 – 8:30 in S. Portland at the Family Center

Wednesday, January 9, 2008

6:30 – 8:30 in Lewiston at CMMC

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

6:30 – 8:30 in Norway at Stephens Memorial

FMI or to register, call Laurie Cavanaugh at 800-264-9224, or email: gearregionone@aol.com.

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**Project PRIME**

Maine Parent Federation is proud to introduce Project PRIME (*Partners in Rehabilitation and Independence in Maine*). MPF is one of only seven states to be awarded this significant grant.

The project is a 5-year initiative to provide assistance to parents of youth and young adults (ages 14-26), and youth who are in transition from school to the adult world of community living and vocational aspirations. Some of the workshops and informational topics that will be covered by Project PRIME are:

- transition planning in the Special Education Process
- resources and services that offer support for work and/or secondary education
- independent living options that may be available
- self-advocacy skills for youth and young adults

Feel free to check our website, [www.mpf.org](http://www.mpf.org), or to call our office at 1-800-870-7746 for further information and updates on Project PRIME.

**FIRST DAY CELEBRATION!**

Maine State PIRC project congratulates the following schools for participating in a *First Day Celebration*:

MSAD 70 Hodgdon Middle School

MSAD 74

Benton Elementary School

Mapleton Elementary School

Milo Elementary School

Marion C. Cook

Brownville Elementary School

Great Portland Christian School

North Elementary School

Paris Elementary School

Stillwater Academy

Bristol Consolidated School

Nobleboro Central School

Great Salt Bay Community School

South Bristol Elementary School

Androscoggin Head Start & Childcare:

Coburn School

Washburn Head Start

B-Street Head Start

Family Development Center

Early Head Start

Hillview Head Start

Walton Head Start

Home Base

Lisbon Head Start Center

Multi Purpose Center

River Valley Head Start

Tri Town Center

Livermore Falls Head Start

These schools across the state showed their support for students and parents in a variety of celebrations on the first day of school. Activities included a student/parent breakfast, barbecues, ribbon cutting ceremonies and much more! Parent involvement in education is so very important to the success of all students and can happen in many ways. Thank you for showing your support for parent involvement in your schools. Your dedication and hard work is well worth it!

## **Governor Baldacci Proclaims October as Parent Involvement Month for Maine!**



(Front row: Governor Baldacci. Back row from left to right: Jenn Day, Casey Kimball, Angela Burgess, Judy Simonson, and Cynthia Sproul.)

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, Governor Baldacci was joined by the Maine State PIRC (Parent Information & Resource Center) to officially acknowledge October as *Parent Involvement Month* throughout the state.

The proclamation (in recognition of the importance parents have in their children's life, education, and school community) urges schools, parents, and communities to work together toward a common betterment of children and their educational success. Schools are encouraged to recognize the outstanding contributions parents make in fostering their children's love of learning and for the commitment parents make to be involved by becoming an intricate part of their child's school community.

The Parent Involvement Coordinators of PIRC provide statewide workshops, resource centers, and technical support for all schools and parents, helping the partnership of school, community and family to grow.

For additional information about the Maine State PIRC, or to inquire about other projects of Maine Parent Federation, please call 1-800-870-7746 or visit [www.mpf.org](http://www.mpf.org).

## **Specialized Training of Military Parents**

*(STOMP)*

Did you know that *STOMP* is a federally-funded Parent Training and Information Center established to assist military families who have children with special education or health care needs?

Maine Parent Federation (MPF) is excited to join forces with *STOMP* to assist Maine's military families facing the challenges of parenting children with special needs - a role made even more challenging now, with frequent activations and deployments.

MPF is reaching out and offering its services to military installations and Family Assistance Centers throughout Maine. Some of the services MPF provides to parents are free workshops, information and referral on special education and related topics. The full list of workshops is available on our website, [www.mpf.org](http://www.mpf.org), or by calling MPF at 1-800-870-7746.

Have a look at the *STOMP* website: [www.stompproject.org](http://www.stompproject.org), or for more information, call and ask to speak with Elizabeth Collins, *STOMP* Liaison for MPF. MPF would appreciate your ideas on how we can help support military families.

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THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING  
BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS TO THE  
"CELEBRATING THE FAMILY"  
CONFERENCE!

**Camera Ready Printing – Augusta**  
**Cotton Garden – Camden**  
**Domino's Pizza – Rockland**  
**Dunkin' Donuts – Rockport/Rockland**  
**Recycled Birdhouse Company – Sidney**  
**Reny's Department Stores**  
**Samoset Resort – Rockport**  
**Shaw's Supermarket**  
**Staples Office Supply**

## **Integrated Community Systems for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities in Maine**



## ***New & Updated Information Packets***

Maine's Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSNC) program in the Maine DHHS and the Maine Support Network are partnering to improve services in Maine for children and families. This project is working closely with Maine's Family-to-Family Health Information Center project based at Maine Parent Federation.

These initiatives, funded by the US DHHS, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, are designed to assure that Maine's children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHN) and disabilities and their families have access to an integrated, community-based system of care that works to achieve the goals of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's six National Performance Measures.

The project is using family and youth versions of "report cards," to be completed by family members and youth from across the state to assist in finding out what is working and what areas still need attention. Project staff will use the information from the report cards to focus resources on the areas that need attention, schedule workshops and informational forums, and work to make needed changes in policies.

We are hopeful that the report card, (the family version was piloted last spring) will assist us in identifying areas of need and topics for regional workshops and conferences. The new report cards were unveiled at the recent Maine Parent Federation conference at the Samoset Resort in November, and can be obtained from the project website at [www.servicesforme.org](http://www.servicesforme.org).

For more information about the project, please contact Toni ([toni.g.wall@maine.gov](mailto:toni.g.wall@maine.gov)), Debbie ([gilmer@maine.edu](mailto:gilmer@maine.edu)), or Mal ([mallorycyr@hrtw.org](mailto:mallorycyr@hrtw.org)).

Maine Parent Federation has over 200 topical information packets available. These packets contain researched information, tips, local and national resources, and lending library material available at Maine Parent Federation. The following is a partial list of recently updated informational packets:

### **Education-Related Topics:**

- Charter Schools
- Letter Writing
- Committees – A Parent's Guide to Serving on Boards

### **Disability/Disorder-Related Topics:**

- AD/HD
- Diabetes
- Hearing Impairment
- Sensory Integration

### **Laws, Rules, and Regulation-Related Topics**

- Emancipation of Juveniles
- Guardianship
- Legislative Advocacy
- Section 504

**.... and many more!!!!**

If you would like to receive one of these information packets or would like to receive information on another topic, please contact Maine Parent Federation by:

- Phone: **1-800-870-7746** (ask to speak with a Parent Information Specialist)
- E-Mail: **parentconnect@mpf.org** (please provide mailing information)

**These materials are offered  
free of charge!**

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**~ SAVE THE DATES! ~**

*Maine Parent Federation & the G.E.A.R. Parent Network are collaborating to provide:*

**“An Update on The New Special Education Regulations”**

December 18, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.- WINGS Office, 900 Hammond St., Bangor  
January 17, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Mayo Regional Hospital, Boarstone Conference Rm., Dover Foxcroft  
February 13, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Central Maine Medical Center, Lewiston  
March 5, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Youth Alternatives, South Portland  
March 19, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Stevens Memorial Hospital, Norway

**To register or for more information, call GEAR at 1-800-264-9224**

**“Team Building IV: Special Education: Understanding Your Rights & Getting Results”**

A day-long workshop for Foster and Surrogate Parents.

These workshops are partnerships between Maine Parent Federation, The Maine Department of Education - Special Services, the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion & Disability Studies (UCEDD), Muskie School CWTI & Kids Legal.

February 26, 2008, 8:30-3:00 p.m. – Casey Family Services, Portland (snow date: 2/28/08)  
March 4, 2008, 8:30-3:00 p.m. – Regional Vocational School, Bangor (snow date: 3/6/08)  
March 11, 2008, 8:30-3:00 p.m. – University of Maine at Machias (snow date: 3/13/08)  
March 18, 2008, 8:30-3:00 p.m. – University of Maine at Presque Isle (snow date: 3/20/08)

**For more information, call MPF at 1-800-870-7746.**