

Maine Parent Federation, Inc.
PO Box 2067, Augusta, ME 04338-2067

(800) 870-7746 - (207) 588-1933

E-mail: parentconnect@mpf.org
Web: www.startingpointsforme.org

Central Office:
484 Maine Avenue, Suite 2D
Farmingdale, ME 04344



Maine Parent Federation
Since 1984 . . . because every family matters

Parent Connection

Published Quarterly

Winter 2015



Thank You!
😊

Thank you to all who participated in Maine Parent Federation's October 24th **Family Walk 2015**. Your donations are greatly appreciated. MPF sends special thanks to *Winthrop Veterinary Hospital, Loyal Biscuit Company, and Senator Inn & Spa* for donating prizes for best costumes and to *Don Hipkins* for supplying the snacks! We look forward to seeing you all again next year at Family Walk 2016!

Transition Conference a Huge Success!

On November 14, 2015 approximately 150 families, youth, and others attended the Transition Planning: The Parent's Role "*Let's Think Outside the Box*" Conference at Jeff's Catering in Brewer sponsored by Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Autism Society of Maine, GEAR Parent Network, and Maine Parent Federation, Inc. with support from the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council and Thrive.

The attendees heard a wonderful keynote address from Jane and Jesse Bell, a mother and son who discussed Jesse's transition process and shared the on-going results. The keynote was followed by a panel presentation. Panel representatives included Disability Rights Maine, Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of Child and Family Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services, Alpha One, Speaking Up For Us, Youth MOVE, the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, and Jane Bell.

Afternoon workshops focused on Section 21 and 29, Employment for All, Guardianship, and Housing Options.

Thank you to all who attended, presented at the conference, and provided sponsorship!



What's New in the Information Center at MPF?

Maine Parent Federation has informational packets available on more than 200 topics. These packets contain researched information, tips, local and national resources, and a list of related lending library material available here at MPF. The following information packets have recently been updated:

Disability/Disorder Related Topics:

- HiSET (GED Replacement)
- Response to Intervention
- Substance Abuse
- Vocational Rehabilitation

.... and many more!

We have also updated our packets and related resources for Transition planning.

If you would like to receive any of our information packets, or would like information on another topic, please contact MPF by:

- Phone: **(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!*



Check it out!

We now have some of our Information Packets available on our

Website at www.startingpointsforme.org

(Information packets are located under publications!)

The contents of this newsletter were developed, in part, under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H328M110002. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Information contained in this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the views of Maine Parent Federation, nor does it imply endorsement of a product or service.

NEWS . . .

from our Regional Coordinators

Region 1: (Androscoggin, Cumberland, Oxford, and York Counties)

Carrie Woodcock – (207) 229-2006

E-Mail: cwoodcock@mpf.org

Southern Maine Parent Support Group

If you are a parent of a child with *any* disability and would like to meet other parents that have experienced the same struggles and joys that go along with raising a child with special needs then this is the group for you!

Meetings are held at Saco Parks and Recreation Department, 75 Franklin Street in Saco. Snacks and childcare will be provided by a certified BHP through Living Innovations.

For meeting dates and times, contact Carrie.

Region 3: (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington Counties)

Robin Levesque – (207) 538-0866

E-Mail: rlevesque@mpf.org

SUPPORT GROUPS

Raising a child is a rewarding but demanding job! Maine Parent Federation and G.E.A.R. Parent Network are currently offering a Parent Support Group for parents in southern Aroostook County. Come join in the conversation with other parents who share similar life experiences. If you are a parent or caregiver to a child with behavioral, emotional, or developmental health needs, please consider joining us. Enjoy the opportunity to meet and compare notes with other parents who truly understand the journey you are on.

All parents, stepparents, grandparents, and adoptive and foster parents are welcome! The group meets on the second Friday of every month at the Cary Library Meeting Room, 107 Main Street in Houlton from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM. For more information or to register, contact Robin Levesque at (207) 538-0866, rlevesque@mpf.org or Nikki Jackson at (800) 264-9334, njackson@crisisandcounseling.org.

Aroostook Autism Support Group

The goal of this group is to not only provide support for parents and families touched by Autism, but to provide tools, resources, and education to everyone in the community. For a list of support group meetings and other monthly events, contact Lisa Brewer at (207) 227-0601 or Meaghan Swanson at (207) 554-0482. You can also find the group on Facebook, "Aroostook Autism Support Group".

Family Support Navigator Program

MPF is accepting referrals to our Family Support Navigator (FSN) program. If you are a parent that needs help or knows of a family that needs help, FSN's can:

- Help organize and fill out paperwork
- Provide information and help locate resources and services
- Lend a confidential ear to listen to you and your family
- Attend meetings with you at your school, doctor, or service provider to offer support

MPF offers trained Family Support Navigators (FSN) at **no cost** to you. Contact the Regional Coordinator in your county to receive an application to be matched with a FSN in your area:

Carrie Woodcock (207) 229-2006
E-Mail: cwoodcock@mpf.org
Androscoggin, Cumberland, Oxford, and York Counties

Veronica Boucher (800) 870-7746
E-Mail: vboucher@mpf.org
Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, and Waldo Counties

Robin Levesque (207) 538-0866
E-Mail: rlevesque@mpf.org
Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington Counties



Spurwink on the Slopes is about to begin its 5th year at Sugarloaf, providing FREE 1:1 support for children with Autism, ages 4-14, who are enrolled in ski school lessons at Sugarloaf. The program operates on Saturdays and Sundays from January 9 through March 20 (excluding the weekend of Feb 13).

Lessons are **free**, equipment is **free**, lift tickets are **free**, and experienced volunteers who understand Autism provide 1:1 support.

Slots are limited, and are available on a first come / first served basis.

Interested parties can email Sue Murphy for more information at: smurphy@spurwink.org.

SUE MURPHY, BS
Adult Program Senior Program Director
(207) 797-2512 Extension 3417
50 Park Road, Suite 4
Westbrook, ME 04092
www.spurwink.org

Do you know of a special needs child that would benefit from therapies or equipment not covered by insurance?

The Robbie Foundation funds items that help maximize a child's growth and development, and improve their lives. For more information, contact:

The Robbie Foundation
PO Box 1534
Scarborough Maine 04070
robbiefoundation@gmail.com
<http://robbiefoundation.com>

Talking with Kids about Tragedies in the Media

Children, teens, and young adults may get upset about images and stories on television regarding people getting hurt. Children may get anxious and fearful about something possibly happening where they live and/or places further away. It is important to keep an eye on your television or media device and be aware of what is broadcast during your child's viewing time.

Try to watch with your kids, especially during the news. Listen to their questions and try to answer them as honestly as you can. Tragedies can affect everyone, children and adults. Children need to talk about their fears and worries. It is important to be watchful for their reactions and encourage discussions.

Children might worry:

that the event could happen to them or someone they care about,

that they could be separated from someone they love or be left alone,
about their loved ones being safe, as well as themselves.

Children will perceive things differently than adults, depending on their age and maturity. When you are talking with children, remember to:

keep your explanations simple, especially with young children. Older children will be able to handle more information, be supportive and reassuring be truthful, encourage any questions, and remember that feelings are normal.

Over the past few years we have had numerous things happen in our country and the world that have been disturbing for all of us. Images in the media can be unsettling for our kids. It is important that we recognize this and try to explain what has happened.

When talking with children, help them to feel safe. Stay close by and show affection. Allow children to talk about the event and how it makes them feel. Watch for behavior changes.

*The above is adapted from childdevelopmentinfo.com, *How to Talk to Kids About Tragedies in the Media**

You might want to check the following websites for more information on talking with children about events in the media:

www.healthychildren.org
www.commonssensemedia.org



Tips for Happy Holidays

The holidays while exciting can often be challenging and overwhelming for most kids, but for kids with special needs it can be a stressful, overly stimulating time of the year. With all the schedule changes, sights, sounds, and smells of the holidays this can be a very difficult time for many families.

Some simple tips that may help make your holidays happier are:

- A stressed out parent, creates a stressed out child. Try to stay calm by not taking on more than you can handle. Schedule quiet times to decompress for both yourself and your child.
Choose a designated quiet space where you or your child can get away from all the holiday commotion, while enjoying a preferred activity.
- Prep your child and your family and friends. Holiday festivities can be overwhelming. This is especially true for a child with Autism or sensory difficulties. Prepare your child for what to expect through pictures, discussions, online sites, or create a picture calendar/schedule.
Another great idea is to make your own version of a social story highlighting the upcoming festivities. The more you prepare the better.
Preparing your family and friends is equally important. Family and friends may not be aware of your child's needs or what may be difficult for him/her. They should be made aware of challenges that may occur, and what they can do to help make your child more comfortable.
- Let go of your expectations, and be flexible. Understand that your child may not be able to participate in the holidays the way others would like. You may need to be flexible around your child's needs and your schedules and expectations.
Celebrate what he/she can do and enjoy that.
By reducing your expectations and your family's expectations you will be able to enjoy a happier holiday season.

We all have expectations and dreams of what we hope or want our holidays to be like, and this is often difficult. Reflect and celebrate progress and be thankful for the little things. Remember every year is a learning experience, be proud of your child, find a reason to smile and enjoy the holiday season.



LITTLE LEAGUE® CHALLENGER PROGRAM

**WOULD YOUR YOUTH LIKE
TO PLAY IN LITTLE LEAGUE?**



“ EVERY LEAGUE NEEDS A CHALLENGER DIVISION. THE CHALLENGER PLAYERS TAUGHT THEIR “BUDDIES” LIFE LESSONS THAT NO OTHER COULD. THE CHALLENGER GAMES REMINDED US THAT IT IS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT THE SCOREBOARD. ”



MISSION

To provide an opportunity for individuals with intellectual and physical challenges to enjoy the benefits of Little League participation in an environment structured to their abilities.

Does this sound like a program that would benefit your youth?

For more information contact:

Lincoln Little League

Damariscotta, Maine

Paul J. Miner - President

207-837-9703

lincolnlittleleaguemaine@gmail.com

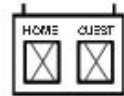


GAME PLAY



- A time limit of between 1 and 1 ½ hours per game is recommended

- No score is kept



- Buddies assist players, but only as needed
- All players bat and play defensively every inning

- Games can be played on a traditional field



BUDDIES

- Using other Little Leaguers is strongly recommended
- Assists players with batting, fielding and running the bases
- Buddies should be at least 9 years of age
- High school students, Boy/Girl Scouts and other sports teams also make great buddies
- Use family members as a last resort



EVERYONE PLAYS

The Challenger program was expanded in 2015 with the introduction of the Senior League Challenger Division. Individuals ages 4-18 can participate in the Little League Challenger Division while individuals ages 15 and above (no maximum age) may participate in the Senior League Challenger Division.

LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL – WHERE THE DREAM BEGINS