



In The News

A Commitment to Serving All Early Childhood Professionals

While CHILDSPAN has traditionally provided technical assistance, professional development and support to early childhood educators, the team has now expanded its scope to encompass all professionals working with young children. To meet this goal, CHILDSPAN is convening a committee of mental health professionals, educators and parents to develop a bilingual conference for infant and toddler practitioners and administrators. This half-day conference to be held on June 14, 2008 entitled, *The Delicate Balance Between Active Learning and Nurturing Relationships: The Role of Infant and Toddler Professionals*, will provide a wide array of professional development offerings including such topics as nutrition and obesity in young children, asthma in young children, infant and toddler brain development, designing the environment for active learners, and the importance of early intervention.

CHILDSPAN staff understand the importance of keeping abreast of current research in order to share the most recent information on social and emotional development and educational practices with other professionals throughout Rhode Island.

Spotlight On...

The most recent research on adult learning theory emphasizes that classroom-based academics is not enough to support adult learners' ability to translate theory into best practice. Researchers strongly recommend that a technical assistance component will provide adult students with the support they need to implement the ideas, concepts, and philosophies they have studied.

CHILDSPAN's new Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, Chris Salaun, will be putting this research into practice as an offering in the Spring Training Calendar. Chris will be presenting a three-part series focusing on early childhood leadership skills and will provide each participant with one free hour of technical assistance to help them implement some of the leadership theories into best practice in their specific professional environments.

While adult learning theory has always been the foundation for CHILDSPAN's delivery of professional development offerings, this component of the series is a new and exciting venture in our support of best practice for all professionals working with children and youth.



on the calendar

- **CHILDSPAN's Critical Issues in Child Care Conference**
Saturday, March 8, 2008, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Bryant University, Smithfield

THEME: Developing Infrastructures to Support Every Child
This annual, intermediate-to advanced-level conference, geared for professionals serving children ages birth to eight, will offer strategies to promote the mental health and success of each child in their care. Anchored by a keynote address by the dynamic Jeanine Fitzgerald, this conference promises to be an inspiring event!

- **CHILD Development Associate (CDA) mini-course**
Mondays, beginning March 17, 2008,
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. per session
CHILDSPAN, Pawtucket

Appropriate for entry-level educators caring for children ages birth to five, this mini-course is available in two languages: English or Spanish. Throughout the mini-course, participants will learn about social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development; multiple intelligence theory; professionalism and ethical conduct; curriculum creation; and other essential components of quality caregiving.

- **CHILDSPAN's Infant and Toddler Bilingual Institute**
Saturday, June 14, 2008, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Bryant University, Smithfield

THEME: The Delicate Balance Between Active Learning and Nurturing Relationships: The Role of Infant and Toddler Professionals. Presented in both English and Spanish, this new professional development opportunity is appropriate for infant and toddler professionals with varying levels of experience, including home visitors, teacher assistants, social workers, and parents. Workshop topics will include nutrition, social and emotional development, and creating environments that encourage exploration and active learning.

CHILDSPAN a program of Children's Friend
Rhode Island's Child Development and Education Training System
500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860
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email:childspan@childspan.net

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Your gift has a significant impact on Children's Friend's ability to support children and families in need. Here are just a few examples of how your donation can help:

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Every dollar contributed to Children's Friend goes directly towards helping children and families thanks to an endowment that covers administrative expenses.

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"The Project Connect Team of Workers Believed In Me At My Worst"

A Mother's Battle with Addiction

It has been a long road to recovery for Idalina. For the past two years, Idalina has been working very closely with the staff of Children's Friend in her life-long battle with drug addiction. "The incredible staff at Children's Friend made me see that just because I had made some mistakes in my life, it is not the total sum of who I am" stated Idalina, "and this gave me the strength and determination to want a better life for me and my children."



Idalina enjoys spending time with her young daughter Asia.

Idalina's story is not uncommon. At a very young age, she was introduced to alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine and also recalls a fair amount of sexual and emotional abuse. In her senior year in high school she became pregnant and delivered her first child, Shantee, the day after her graduation. A straight "A" student, Idalina had her eyes set on graduating college but just two weeks into her freshmen year at Rhode Island College, the arrangements she made for childcare for her daughter fell through and Idalina had to withdraw. A few years later, she graduated from Katherine Gibbs School with a 3.9 GPA and got a full time job. "I had my own apartment, a brand new car and life was pretty good, although I was still using drugs" recalls Idalina. One day at work she felt her head sway back and forth and was rushed to the hospital where they discovered a brain tumor, the size of a fist, resting on her optical nerve. They operated the very next day but she was left without a left eye. Idalina had five more surgeries as the tumor kept growing back. Traumatized and scared, she began using drugs more frequently. Shantee, at the age of

14, called DCYF on her mother and was immediately placed in foster care for the next four years. But it wasn't until after the birth of her second child, Asia, who was taken from her at age two, that she hit rock bottom. It was at this time that Idalina was introduced to Children's Friend and Kim Bennett, a Family Service Worker in Project Connect.

"Recovery is a slow process and relapse is part of the process" explains Kim who worked weekly with Idalina on intense home-based intervention and counseling. Eight months later, she tested clean for drugs and was reunited with Asia. But one evening her apartment caught fire. It was Asia who woke her up, and everyone from the house was evacuated safely. With the additional stress of being homeless, she relapsed into cocaine use, and Asia was taken from her for the second time. "I got scared. Nothing meant more to me than my girls" recalls Idalina. Kim then made all the necessary arrangements for Idalina to enroll in a three-month intensive residential treatment program which set her on the right path for a successful recovery. "If it weren't for the dedicated staff at Children's Friend who believed in me, I wouldn't be here today" continued Idalina. The law firm of Partridge Snow & Hahn donated their time to Children's Friend to prepare a living will for Idalina due to her serious medical condition. Idalina was reunited with Asia when she was four years old. It was the happiest day of her life because she had overcome so much adversity. "There are no words to describe how I feel about motherhood and now I know nothing will ever again get in the way of staying on the right track" stated Idalina.

For more information about Project Connect contact Valentina Laprade, Project Connect Manager, at 721-9237.



From David our executive director



I hope this newsletter finds you enjoying a healthy and happy New Year.

We just finished out a great 2007 here at Children's Friend. I can't believe that my first year as Executive Director has already gone by. What a rewarding and fast paced year it has been.

The *Spirit of Giving* Holiday Drive is an exciting and emotional way to end the year. The generosity of all of you allowed us to serve a record number of families. Thanks to you a total of 590 families were sponsored in the Holiday Drive this year.

We are also excited by a federal grant we recently secured. This grant allows us to expand our innovative, proven, and nationally recognized Project Connect program. We will be able to deliver services statewide instead of in just a few communities.

Unfortunately, the joy is short lived. We now enter what we all know will be a very difficult budget debate for our

State. We know how difficult it is to put together a balanced budget with limited resources. We do it every year here at Children's Friend.

The most important part of putting together a budget is to have priorities. I hope you will join me in making sure that our State leaders hear that young and vulnerable children and their families are a priority for you, and that you expect them to be a priority in the State budget.

Investing in our children is an investment in our future. Any plan, budget or other, which fails to invest in the future, is shortsighted and flawed. Even in difficult budget times, we need to continue making investments for our children and for the future of our State.

Thank you for your support of Children's Friend and for being a voice for poor and vulnerable children.

David

FRIENDS—Making a Difference

The mission of Children's Friend is to promote the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children by providing flexible, effective and culturally relevant services that support and strengthen families and communities.



Enjoying themselves at the Cornerstone Golf Tournament are Lindsey Sanford, Bob Sanford, Peter Travis and Bobby Celio.

Cornerstone Design Build Company selected Children's Friend as the beneficiary of their recent golf tournament. Many thanks to Robert Sanford, his employees, vendors and family members who organized a fabulous day of golf and fun and raised \$7,500 for Children's Friend.



Members of the Junior League were enthusiastic volunteers at this year's Harvestfest. Pictured from L-R were Liz Noren, Joan Khattab, Erin Herzog, Dana Bernsten, Beth Newberry (Cat in the Hat), Tori McNally, and Polly Talbott.

The Junior League of Rhode Island recently launched a new community partnership with Children's Friend focusing on improving children's literacy. They kicked off the partnership by co-hosting a Harvestfest where dozens of children from Central Falls and Providence enjoyed autumn-themed craft activities.



Stockamp employees presenting a \$6,000 check to Children's Friend are Amanda Watter, Mary Council, Elliot Skrinjar (Santa), Donna Carpenter (Children's Friend Education Services Manager), Charlie Siebert, Sylvie Kamlet and John Hataway.

A team of 15 employees from Stockamp & Associates held a holiday party for the children in our daycare center in the Family Support Center in Central Falls. Over 62 children were greeted by Santa and presented with incredible gifts and toys. Their families were then provided a warm meal and each received a Holiday Food Basket. Stockamp & Associates also made a generous donation of \$6,000 to Children's Friend.

Operation DOUGH-nation

Foster Care Recruitment Days At Panera Bread Cafes

In celebration of May being Foster Care Month, Children's Friend will be conducting information sessions at several Panera Bread Cafes throughout the state.



This is an excellent opportunity for people considering sharing their heart and home with young children in need to talk to a foster care recruiter.

Sessions are from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.:

Cranston	May 1
Smithfield	May 6
Warwick	May 15
Seekonk	May 20
North Attleboro	May 22
East Greenwich	May 29

For more information or to schedule a private interview, contact our Foster Care Recruiter, Joyce Tormey at 276-4318.

Panera Bread Assists With The Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive

Panera Bread's annual toy drive to benefit the Children's Friend Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive was another overwhelming success. Hundreds of toys were donated, and this year Panera Bread even helped sponsor 15 families. Our special thanks to all those Panera loyals who continue to embrace Children's commitment to the vulnerable children helped by Children's Friend each day.

Panera Bread's Warwick Store helps with this year's toy donations. Back row: Martha Mooney, Linda Landolfi, Children's Friend's ever colorful Transportation Specialist, and Jay Winthrop.

Front row: David Caprio, Executive Director of Children's Friend, Melissa Lauro and Bill Shea, District Manager of Panera Bread.



Linda Landolfi enjoys getting into character playing head sleigh driver. Many thanks Mrs. Claus!

Fifth Annual Investing In Our Children Luncheon

Rhode Island business leaders, elected officials, and other champions for children in the community joined together for the Children's Friend fifth annual Investing In Our Children Luncheon on September 24, 2007 at the Westin Hotel. Reverend Darrell Armstrong, a former foster child and Founder and Chair of the National Association of Foster Children Inc., delivered the keynote speech. Rev. Armstrong



Reverend Darrell Armstrong gives an inspiring and emotional keynote address on the importance of investing in our youngest and most vulnerable children.

is also the Director of the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships, for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, and Pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church, Trenton, New Jersey. Board member Allen A. Akinola also gave a riveting and personal account of how Children's Friend assisted him in his time of need. Joseph MarcAurele, President and CEO of Citizen's Bank, and his employees received the Friend of Children Award for their continued efforts and support of the

mission of Children's Friend. A Foster Care Town Meeting was also held just prior to the luncheon, which was attended by over 50 representatives from local agencies involved in Foster Care. Providence Journal writer Julia Steiny moderated the breakfast meeting which was a unique opportunity for everyone to share ideas, strategies,



Individuals involved with Foster Care in RI, at the Foster Care town meeting hosted by Children's Friend.

challenges, frustrations and successes. Many thanks to board members Mary Cram and Julie Casimiro for chairing the luncheon committee. Over \$60,000 was raised to support Children's Friend. Supporting corporations were Citizens

Bank Foundation, Amica, The Washington Trust Company Wealth Management, MetLife Auto & Home, Panera Bread, The Providence Journal and Coast to Coast Promotional Products.



United States Senator Jack Reed addresses attendees at this year's Investing In Our Children Luncheon.



Board Member Allen A. Akinola shares his personal story with attendees at this year's luncheon.



Children's Friend Board Members and Citizens Bank employees Kathy O'Donnell and Michael DiSandro, with Joseph A. MarcAurele (center), President and CEO of Citizens Bank, and 2007 recipient of the Friend of Children Award.

Children's Friend Secures 2.5 Million Dollar Federal Grant, Expands Project Connect Statewide

Children's Friend held a press conference on January 8 to announce it has secured a 5 year, 2.5 million dollar grant from the



Dignitaries attending the press conference were United States Senator Jack Reed, United States Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts, Attorney General Patrick Lynch, General Treasurer Frank Caprio, and DCYF Director Patricia Martinez.

Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive Growing Each Year!

The 2007 Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive was another overwhelming success. Over 590 families (2,000+ children) were sponsored and almost \$12,000 was raised for the Emergency Crisis Fund. New England Pest Control's Big Blue Bug helped us announce the drive this year. For the third year in a row, employees of Bank of America were the top corporate sponsor of families, sponsoring 111 families! Panera Bread, the University of Rhode Island Administration Department, Toys for Tots, and East Providence resident Joe Silva all conducted toy drives on our behalf, which resulted

in 1,000 extra toys and gifts for our many clients in need. Thank you one and all!



Bank of America employees Maryann Darling and Ed Pereira delivering their team's family gifts.



Senator Jack Reed, DCYF Director Patricia Martinez, Project Connect Manager Valentina Laprade, and former Project Connect parent Luciana Barr.

United States Department of Health and Human Services. This funding will expand the Project Connect program currently available in only six communities, to the entire State of Rhode Island and will increase the capacity of the program to serve 90 families affected by substance abuse.



Bank of America employees Maria Curvelo (front), Garrett Clegg, Sherin O'Brien, Michelle daCosta, Tamara Cap, Christina Brawner, Ruth Vasquez, and Kathy Glowacki delivering their bundles of toys and gifts.



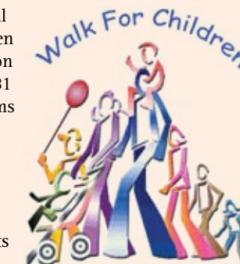
The University of Rhode Island's administrative employees collected and donated over 300 toys and gifts to this year's Holiday Drive.



Save the Date!

Saturday, May 31, 2008
Walk for Children

Our sixth annual Walk for Children will take place on Saturday, May 31 at Roger Williams Park. The 5 k fun run/walk will step off at 9 a.m. with fun activities, food and refreshments to follow at the carousel. A special kids race will also take place. Our loyal partner in philanthropy, Panera Bread, will once again sponsor this year's Walk. We are seeking walkers, teams, pledges, corporate sponsors and volunteers. Family pets are invited too! For more details, call Joyce Tormey in the Development Office at 276-4318.



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