

NETWORK NEWS

A Newsletter from the Addison County Starting Points Networks
2nd Edition, Fall 2013

Welcome to the second edition of Network News. Summer is underway and we have all been challenged to keep children entertained and happy through a long rainy month and then very hot humid weather. Today is cool and breezy and it is just delightful to watch the children play outside with the wind rustling through the trees.

We come together in our networks to gain knowledge, celebrate successes, share ideas and help each other with problems and challenges. Consistency is an important component in developing secure relationships with children. Consistency is also important in forming close trusting relationships with adults. We encourage members to commit to coming to network meetings monthly.

Network Membership consists of attendance from centers and family child care programs. Our differences and commonalities increase our knowledge and appreciation of the work we do with children.

Each year the network has special events for active network members who demonstrate a commitment to the group through attendance.

- **Provider Appreciation Event** varies each year. We usually have a dinner out or a catered dinner in a child care program and honor the participating members of the networks for their commitment to each other and the work they do with children and families.

This year's Provider Appreciation Dinner took place at the Waybury Inn in East Middlebury. Sixteen providers indulged in a delicious meal. Jan Walker and Amethyst Peaslee were recognized for their devotion and dedication to Starting Points Groups and FCC providers who are committed to their profession. Each received a small gift of our appreciation.



Providers each receive gifts of a candle, padfolio and license plate frame which read, "Family child care Keeps America Working". It was a special day to recognize the providers in Addison County who loyally participate in their child care network support group.

- **Christmas party:** A party celebration in *December*, with fun games and program surprises' with monies left over from the year. Incentives are given based on attendance and commitment to attending monthly meetings.

- **Taking care of me event** provides pampering and support information about taking care of ourselves to relieve stress and prevent burnout.

As part of our book group study at the July provider network meeting, each provider was given a neck and back massage by Jen Brochu from Soul Soothing Massage in North Ferrisburg.

Throughout the year the networks also offers:

- **A book group:** The group reads and discusses a book chosen by the members. It generally runs through the summer months. Participants sign up in advance, commit to attending each discussion meeting and receive incentives and support related to the book.
- **Potluck dinner:** This takes place in the fall to share our ideas for goals and meeting activities. The results of this discussion provide the basis of the goals and objectives of the Starting Points grant for the next year.
- **Support meetings and trainings:** Throughout the year providers express their needs and challenges. They are given support and encouragement. Trainings are provided to meet these needs. Providers are given continual support through email, texting, phone and in person. Providers are given help and support with STARS, CDA, Accreditation and any professional development and program improvements they want to achieve. Providers are connected to their local VB3 mentor Gerri Barrows.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter contact editors - Muffy Kashkin Grollier at muffyvjk@yahoo.com or Gerri Barrows at kidsfirstdhcc@yahoo.com.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE COUNTY?

Middlebury, Vergennes, New Haven, Bristol and Orwell continue to meet monthly as a group in New Haven on the second Monday of the month. Orwell also provides a local meeting in Orwell on the third Monday of the month for the providers who cannot travel. On the first Monday a computer network is underway and on the last Monday a curriculum group is going strong. These two networks are a pilot series for future networks. The directors meet once a month in Middlebury.

The provider networks continue to read and reflect on "Finding Your Smile Again: a child care professional's guide to reducing stress and avoiding burnout," by Jeff A Johnson.

As part of the study on stress, Gerri and Muffy attended a weekend retreat on wellness presented by the Springfield Area Parent Child Center and hosted by the Springfield Area Starting Points Child Care Provider Networks. This retreat was made possible through the generous VB3 Starting Points Strengthening Grants. Saturday's speaker was Dr. Steven C. Atkins who discussed the impact of stress on each of us. We created our own stress profiles, learned what stress means, and discovered that some stress can be good. In addition, Dr. Atkins discussed the differences between males and females, ages and regions. Dr. Atkins facilitated discussion and the creation of individual self-care profiles.

One of his notable quotes is:

"It is not BELONGINGS that makes us happy but who we BELONG TO."

He pointed out that the objective is not to get rid of stress but learn how to cope with it constructively. We need to recognize how we deal with stress and find healthy way to manage it.

"When you are comfortable in your own skin it is almost impossible for someone to get under it!"

Dr. Atkins finished with, " May you always remember to:

Breathe - Laugh - Love - Sleep - Eat Healthy - Take Time For You

Sunday's workshop was "Making the Shift to Harmonious Living at work and at Home" presented by Robin LaRue. She explained that each of us has a unique blend of strengths, personal drives and desires. Our uniqueness radiates from the core of who we are and has a powerful impact on others. In a society filled with many critical messages, some of which are intentionally designed to convince us that we are not quite "good enough", how do we strengthen and hold on to a positive sense of ourselves? In a profession where children and families look to us for leadership, how do we access our true inner brilliance to guide us in this roll? Robin explored practical ways to reflect on opportunities to move beyond stress, conflict and self-doubt to joy, harmony and the celebration of who we are and what we have to offer the children in our care.

We explored the different components of temperament: outgoing versus reserved and task oriented versus people oriented. We used the "DISC" model to determine our own temperaments. By recognizing the different temperaments in others we are better able to recognize why different people (children) cause us stress and how we can respect and work with our differences for more harmonious and productive relationships.

Gerri and Muffy will continue to share this information with the providers in the networks. Each member of the network was given a journal. Providers were asked to write in their journal three positive things each day. When you look for positive things each day, it helps to change the focus on even the most stressful day. Providers were also given a calendar and three different colored highlighters. One color represented work, one color represented family and one highlighter represented yourself. Each day they were asked to color in the space of the day according to how they spent the day: at work, taking care of family, or doing something just for yourself. Many providers came to realize with this visual aid that they didn't do a lot to take care of themselves. Networks we will explore activities and hobbies we do for relaxation, pleasure and stress relief. At our July network meeting we had Heather Freidrichsen demonstrate felting and we all worked on making needlefelted covers for our journal. While providers played with felting wool, each provider took turns to go in a private room and have a neck and back massage with Jen Brochu. Taking care of oneself is critical to coping with stress and a relaxing massage is an excellent way to do this.



Network leaders continue to explore and support the efforts of network members to provide a natural outdoor playspace that encourages exploration, creativity and learning experiences. In June, Muffy and Gerri went to Massachusetts to attend the workshop, "We Dig Dirt: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Outdoor Classrooms", with Tobey Eugenio. The workshop explored effective

ways to facilitate meaningful infant and toddler learning experiences in well-designed outdoor spaces. They learned practical strategies for addressing some of the challenges of working with very young children outdoors. They gained ideas for helping infants and toddlers explore the natural world and grow up with a sense of wonder.

The workshop took place at the Heritage Museum and Gardens where Tobey created Hidden Hollows, a certified Nature Explore Classroom. Hidden Hollows is one of New England's first certified Nature Explore Classrooms, a joint program of the National Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research

Foundation. Hidden Hollow is a place for families to play in and explore the natural world.

Lots of photographs were taken and will be shared along with the information learned with the networks.

Providers are encouraged to attend workshops and conferences and bring back what they have learned and to share with the networks.

In July, Gerri and Sue Owen-Jankowski attended the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Annual Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. The theme of this year's conference was, "Building Relationships That Last a Lifetime". Some of the training taken at the Conference included:

- Opportunity and Impact of a Child Care Provider
- 7 Essential Skills Children Need to Succeed,
- Creating Free Websites
- Developing Job Specific Skills to enhance your effectiveness in the field,
- The evolving field of Family Child Care
- Using Minute Menu Kids to manage your business

Information from these trainings will be shared at Network meetings!

NEW NETWORKS

This May we began two new networks. Through another generous grant from the VT Birth to Three Project we are able to offer two new networks which will continue through November: Computer Comfort Network and Infant / Toddler Curriculum Support Network.

COMPUTER COMFORT NETWORK

The Computer Comfort Network continues to be full with 20 participants.

Nancy Sugarman returned in July to help providers to write an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP). Many of the providers were able to refine, renew or complete a new IPDP during class.

Providers are taking online classes independently and time at the network meeting is set aside to share what they have learned and to give a critique of the variety of classes that providers have completed

Funding for this Network has given 20 participants a year-long membership in the Child Care Education Institute (CCEI), an online professional development site

approved by Northern Lights and Child Care Licensing. Membership in the CCEI will give each participant the opportunity to take an unlimited number of online workshops for a year.

INFANT and TODDLER CURRICULUM NETWORK

The purpose of this Network is to support the needs and challenges of working with infants and toddlers as well as provide support for developing high quality infant/toddler curriculum.

The Addison County Infant Toddler Curriculum Network hosted an evening with Dr. Jody Brakeley on Monday July 29th. We met at Porter Hospital, in Collins Conference room A. We explored the Harvard Child Development website, which has wonderful resources regarding brain development, and we learned more about the Child Development Clinic in Burlington, where Dr. Brakeley works. We learned more about:

- Real foundations for what family child care does
- Basics of Brain Development
- What developing minds need to develop well
- Executive Brain Function and
- Stress and why it can be good

Dr. Brakeley reinforced that providers are the foundation; they are the Learners, Doers and Teachers.

Learning is finding out what you already know, **Doing** demonstrates that you now it, and **Teaching** reminds others that they already know it just as well as you!

Dr. Brakeley's favorite quotes are:

- Anything worth doing is worth doing right or it is not worth doing
- Children remember "how" you say something not "what" you said
- Children do well if they can, not if they want to
- Aim for the moon because even if you fall you will land in the stars

Providers were interested in sharing nature with infants and toddlers and bringing nature into our inside environments. In August, Gerri and Muffy will share the information and resources they received from the workshop they attended at Hidden Hollows Nature Explore Classroom in Massachusetts. We are encouraging providers who also participate in the Computer Comfort Network to take the CCEI

online class: CUR103- Outdoor Learning which has a great deal of information and resources that can be shared with the I/T Curriculum Support Network.

The network continues to provide a variety of snack and recipes for providers to share and enjoy. The theme for August was berries and September is garden harvest.

TRAVELING NETWORK

The network leaders are offering to come to your town and have a network meeting to get local providers together who can't make other meeting. We are looking for providers who are willing to host a meeting in their home or find a local place to host a meeting. The hostess will also be asked to contact their local providers and invite them to that local network gathering. A hostess gift, refreshments and a discussion topic will be provided by the network leaders. Please contact Gerri Barrows 453-3707, or Michelle Sherwin 623-6476 if you are interested.

In June all network members were invited to visit the home of Family Child Care provider Cookie Cummings who owns Mountain Road Preschool in Addison. Cookie has implemented the first certified natural playground in Vermont.

When we arrived we went outside and viewed her natural playground. Cookie explained the process she went through to create her playspace and the many, many hours of work it took to put together. As providers walked around, Cookie explained how the different learning areas met the criteria for certification. As we explored the playground, many providers imagined what they could do to enhance their own playground space.

After exploring outside, we went inside where Cookie gave a Power Point presentation on the benefits of a natural outdoor classroom, the criteria for certification and how she created her space. Everyone went home inspired and ready to grab a shovel and rake and work on their own play yards.

NEWS FROM THE DIRECTORS NETWORK

The Directors' Network will meet for the first meeting of the year on Wednesday September 11th at 3:30 at the Parent Child Center in Middlebury. We will pick up where we left off in the spring- working on the local business partnership and continuing our Reflective Supervision practice with Howdy Russell facilitating. Reflective Supervision will be the focus every other month, leaving the agenda clear for other business on the other months.

We welcome the new directors in the area to join us.

If you would like more information about the Director's Network or would like to be included on our mailing list, please contact Su White - 388-7297 or quarryhillschool@gmail.com

STARTING POINTS NETWORK SCHEDULE

Bristol/New Haven/Middlebury/Vergennes Network: 2nd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM
Provider Leaders: Gerri Barrows 453-3707 and Michelle Sherwin 623-6476
Meets at Discovery Hill Child Care in New Haven
Continuing Book Group ô Finding Your Smile Again: A Guide to Reducing Stress and Avoiding Burnout! By Jeff Johnson

Orwell Network: 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30
Meets at the home of Muffy Kashkin-Grollier: 948-2561 or muffyvjkg@yahoo.com
Continuing Book Group ô Finding Your Smile Again: A Guide to Reducing Stress and Avoiding Burnout! By Jeff Johnson.

Addison County Directors' Network: 2nd Wed. of the month - 3:30ô 5 PM - P/CC
Coordinator: Sue White, Quarry Hill School 388-7297 or quarryhillschool@gmail.com

Brandon: Last Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM @ the Brandon Fire Department Provider Leader: Tracy Bruce 247-5427 Call for details

All Child Care Providers (Home and Center) are invited to Starting Points Network meetings. Network meetings offer time to share the challenges and joys of providing early care and education with others who truly understand.

Each group is free to pursue its own definition of support. Newcomers are always welcome!

Sponsored by a Starting Points grant from Child Care Services Division in Waterbury