



Independence Through Educational Excellence

The Children's Notebook

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NECC Student Council

The Student Council of The New England Center for Children was established in the fall of 2000. In its first year it organized a Valentine's Day party, a canned food and blanket drive, and a car wash to raise funds for the first-ever prom. The council also published a student newspaper. Its mission includes:

- Promoting a sense of student community at The Center
- Establishing a system of peer leadership in order to guide social interaction and student involvement across all teams through a wide variety of activities
- Encouraging the development of social and community involvement and
- Providing a forum for NECC students to learn leadership skills, grow socially, increase communication skills, and cultivate meaningful peer relationships.



The Student Council Officer Elections were held this year in June.

First Annual Staff Volleyball Tournament

Results are in from last spring's championship volleyball tournament. The team consisting of players from New Castle Road, Temple Street, and Ursula Drive claimed victory over the Staff Intensive Unit Apartments 1 and 3 with a final score of 16 to 14.

(Right) Callahan serves the ball.



(Left) Ursula Drive wins 16 to 14.

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Our Amazing Staff



I wanted to share some data about the fantastic people who dedicate their professional lives to our students.

NECC employs 550 full-time and 50 part-time employees. They come from all over North America and beyond – 35 from Canada alone, and over 25 from other foreign countries including Iceland, China, Ghana, Gambia, Greece, Guyana, the Netherlands, South Africa, Turkey, the West Indies, Brazil, England, Japan, Jamaica, Liberia, the Czech Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Our staff is very diverse and their ages range from 20 to age 63. There are 6 Ph.D.'s and 75 with Master's degrees. Our three on-site graduate programs have graduated more than 400 people with their MS degrees in the last seven years. Over 200 of our current staff are actively enrolled in these programs right now.

Our staff represents graduates of over 235 colleges and universities. The top 10 undergraduate programs include University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Hamilton College and University of Connecticut.

We are very proud of our staff and the work they do every day all year long. They are changing the future for our students in very profound ways. We feel grateful to have so many highly skilled and diverse professionals from around the world.

Vincent Strully

Vincent Strully, Jr.

Executive Director

Student Profile

Good Work Naomi!



Six-year-old Naomi reminds those in her life that even the simplest of tasks are often imbued with great meaning.

Since enrolling at NECC one year ago, she has made excellent progress in numerous academic and social activities. Twelve months earlier Naomi had difficulty making eye contact with others, particularly in academic situations. Today she sustains eye contact when her name is called; seeks out her teachers and says "Hi"; and initiates visual rapport with them. On a recent outing to the New England Aquarium, Naomi expressed her pleasure in seeing the penguins by making eye contact with her teacher, pointing to the birds, and exclaiming, "Look!"

Naomi's ability to communicate her needs has also grown in the past year. She has increased her expressive vocabulary by more than 30 words, and her receptive vocabulary by more than 40 words. Naomi has also retained many new words—including the names of toys, places, foods, and activities—through incidental learning. She now uses these words reliably in simple phrases such as "I want playground, please" to express her wishes. She can also respond to simple questions such as "How are you?" and "Where do you go to school?"

Recently, Naomi began having phone conversations with her family, conveying information such as her evening activities and the contents of her evening meal.

Once wary of departing in the school van, Naomi has participated in all ten school outings in the last year. She has also fortified her desire to join the school community and now participates in numerous ventures such as going to local restaurants, buying snacks in convenience stores, and visiting the park with her family. Recently, she independently asked to go to the store, saying, "I want store, please." According to her parents, this simple request speaks volumes about her growing social and cognitive development.

At school and in the student residence, Naomi undertakes a variety of activities, including looking at books, singing and dancing with teachers and friends, playing outdoors and in the gym, and even using a computer. She also prizes imaginative play such as dressing up with her twin sister Anne and making pretend meals with imitation food.

More and more, Naomi enjoys taking initiative on her own behalf before requesting assistance. She has made great strides in maintaining personal hygiene and has overcome earlier delays. She is now learning to prepare her own breakfast and snacks, making French toast and embellishing the dish with butter and syrup.

Bright-eyed and active, Naomi views life with a new perspective since enrolling at The New England Center for Children, one that includes others and the world around her.

Coming Events

September

- 19 NECC Night at the Red Sox

October

- Human Rights Committee
- 1 NECC Board of Directors meeting
- 11-12 BABAT (The Berkshire Association for Applied Behavior Analysis) 22nd Annual Conference at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- 15 NECC Parents and Friends meeting
- 17 Parents Night featuring Dr. Richard M. Foxx speaking on *Current issues in the behavioral treatment of Autism* and Dr. Anthony Costello on *Recent trends in medication and treatment of Autism*
- 24 NECC Student Council 1st Annual Prom

November

- 5 NECC Parents and Friends Meeting
- 5 NECC Board of Directors Meeting
- 10 "Night of Music," sponsored by the Parents and Friends Board (see page 5 for more information).

December

- 7 NECC Staff Holiday Party
- 10 NECC Parents and Friends meeting
- 11 NECC Board of Directors meeting

Staff and Students Out and About

Health Fair and Benefits Fair 2001

This past May, the NECC Human Resources Department hosted its annual Health and Benefits Fair. The event was a great success and we would like to extend a "Thank you" to everyone who attended.

Vendors represented at this spring's fair included AAA, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Citizens Bank, Family Fitness, Metropolitan Credit Union, SAM'S Club, Small Business Insurance Agency, Sovereign Bank, UNUM Life, and VIP Chair Massage.

NECC employee groups also participated in the Health Fair, including the Safety Committee, the Diversity Council, and the Employee Assistance Program. Staff perused materials provided by these groups and savored the chocolate roses sold by the Day Care to raise funds. The Staff Activities Committee used the day to inform employees about current and upcoming events, and solicited suggestions for future activities.

In addition to the Health Fair, NECC hosted MetroWest Medical Center, which sponsored its annual Blood Drive. This year, 51 individuals donated blood, setting a new record at NECC while "Giving the Gift of Life." Thank you for your generosity of this vital resource.



(Left) Nathalie Degenhardt, who is on the staff at NECC, learns about the importance of body composition from Family Fitness at this year's health fair.



(Right) Sue Bouvier, NECC staff member, enjoys an afternoon snack of popcorn being served by Carol Benoit.

Walk for Hunger

Once again The Center supported Project Bread by participating in the annual "Walk for Hunger." On May 6, approximately 40 employees, students/consumers, parents, and friends joined the Walk, which benefits food pantries and emergency food programs across the state.



Left to right: Sharon Viera, Alyssa Fay, Leigh Hoenig, and Sarah Begley.



Left to right: Kelly Ingram, Utah Nickel, Jenn Fleishman, a friend of NECC, Sasha Delgato, and Barb Sheehan.



Left to right: Debbie Berry, Jenn Acosta, Shannon Pennington, and Jill Kroeker.

Staff and Students Out and About

Marino Lookout Farm 5K Run

Last May, more than 20 NECC employees, students, and family members joined the Marino Lookout Farm 5K Road Race to benefit the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism. This year's road race raised more than \$30,000 for the Foundation. Since 1999, the Flutie Foundation has generously awarded grants totaling \$30,000 to The Center.



T. Moore crosses the finish line at the Marino Lookout Farm 5K Road Race.



And the race begins...NECC students and staff participate in the Marino Lookout Farm 5K Road Race to benefit the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism.



NECC Staffers rest after the 5K race.

An Evening of Dinner and Dance

Dinner and dancing will highlight a "Night of Music" at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, on Saturday, November 10, 2001. Sponsored by the Parents and Friends Board of The New England Center for Children, the event will also include a silent auction to raise resources for The Center's capital campaign. Entertainment will be provided by Worcester Polytechnic Institute's Swing Band as well as by a string quartet.

"This event represents a major undertaking on the part of parents," comments NECC parent and event coordinator Tracy Sweeney. "Our goal is not only to raise support for The Center, but to inform the public about autism and the success The Center has achieved." The board will also seek corporate sponsorship from Worcester-area businesses. Currently, 50 NECC students hail from Worcester County.

Sweeney is currently recruiting a volunteer cohort to help achieve this ambitious goal. She reports that information packets with additional details about the evening will be mailed to all NECC families. "Parents will be able to help in a variety of ways and will be essential to our success." A "Night of Music" promises to be a memorable evening and will have a lasting impact on NECC students, insists Sweeney.

For more information, please contact Tracey Sweeney via email: tasweeney@necc.org.

Staff Profile

Supported Employer Month

The month of April is recognized as Massachusetts Supported Employer Month.

We would like to thank the following organizations for their commitment to providing opportunities for our students and adults who perform meaningful work in the community.

Paid Community Work Settings

The Buffet Way
Applebee's
City Square Shell
Dunkin' Donuts
Gravity Rock Gym
Holiday Inn
The Home Depot
Massachusetts State Police
Panna Photo
Pea Pod
Poland Spring Bottling Corp.
Price Chopper
ReMax Realty
Sir Speedy
Sun Life Financial

Volunteer Work Settings

American Cancer Society
Beaumont Skilled Nursing Center
Framingham Public Library
Marlboro Hospital
Massachusetts State Police Barracks – Framingham
Shrewsbury Nursing & Rehab Center
Women's Health Initiative of UMA/Fallon
University Commons
Worcester County Food Bank

Thank You
for your Support!

George Boahen



George Boahen fills one of the most important positions in the NECC residential program—that of overnight floater. In this role, he substitutes for staff when a team member is absent because of illness or vacation.

Since joining the NECC staff two years ago, he has diligently worked from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. four nights a week, monitoring students' safety while they sleep and intervening if they happen to wake. A true professional, Boahen is thoroughly trained in working with students who have developmental disabilities. He reports that he "loves the challenge of 'floating'" and feels that he would miss seeing the wide range of NECC students were he to accept a more permanent assignment. "I value my experiences at The Center because I learn from the students every day," he says. Deservedly, Boahen was "Employee of the Month" last August.

Other details of George Boahen's life include the following highlights:

- A native of Ghana, Boahen was inspired by the promise of economic opportunity in the United States and immigrated in 1998 after being selected in a visa lottery in his native country. His wife and three children still remain in Ghana but will join him after his oldest daughter completes her final two years of high school. The family dreams that she will attend an American college or university.
- Boahen was trained as a teacher of primary grade students—ages 6 to 15 years old—in Ghana. On arriving in the U.S. he was offered a teaching position in an urban public school but decided that it was not the right opportunity for him.
- His generous spirit extends beyond NECC to his local community. As a member of St. Catherine of Sweden Catholic Church in Worcester, Boahen is active in volunteer activities. He works with parish staff to assist new African members with adjustment to life in America.

When asked how he manages his busy schedule, the challenges of his job, and the separation from his family, Boahen remarks that he is motivated by the desire to reunite his family and build a life together in America. Challenges are "to be expected," he notes. "Life can't only be smooth. In Ghana they say, 'The kite rises stronger against the wind.'"

Students In The Community



NECC student, Laura, is employed at Price Chopper, a company along with many others committed to providing employment opportunities for our students and adults. Laura is employed as a grocery bagger.

See the column to the left for a complete list of organizations involved in expanding our students' and adults' horizons. If your company or organization would like to participate, please contact us at 508-481-1015.

Parent Profile

Tracey Sweeney



Tracey Sweeney, the current president of the Parents and Friends Board of NECC, is also the mother of Sean, a ten-year-old boy who has attended the Day School for five years. Although Sean's diagnosis and disabilities fall under the autism spectrum, they resulted from a complicated birth. Tracey has been an advocate for Sean since his birth and has remained a stay-at-home mother for ten years.

Her commitment to NECC is equally focused. She has served on the Parents and Friends Board since Sean's matriculation at The Center and has also represented the Day School. Her favorite volunteer activities include participating in Staff Appreciation Day and recruiting corporate sponsorship for NECC events such as the annual golf tournament. Tracey also acknowledges that she enjoys networking with parents and looks forward to continuing in her role as liaison to administrators in upcoming years.

In addition to Sean, other family members include Tracey's five-year-old daughter Kara and her husband Dan, who works for long-time NECC corporate supporter, Coca-Cola.

Tracey welcomes input from all NECC families and looks forward to their feedback and working together on volunteer efforts.

Kite Day On The Mountain A Success



Bose Corporation and the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation Inc. along with Autism Alliance of MetroWest put on their Kite Day on the Mountain on April 22, 2001.

Many NECC families and friends were there to help celebrate Autism Awareness Month in April. All enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon with the professional kite flyers. Free bottled water and Kite Kits were awarded to the first 100 children attendees.

Thank You!

"In every student's achievement and in every parent's heart, a truly caring teacher plays a very special part."

Dear Teachers and Staff,

We wanted to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation for your hard work on behalf of our children and adults.

Because of your dedication we are secure in the knowledge they are being challenged to do their best. That is what every parent dreams of for their child — a learning environment filled with caring, competent people devoted to the well-being of their students. That is what you are to us. You are the people who remind us daily that our children are valuable people, worthy of a safe, caring place where they can learn to live a happy and productive life. We don't tell you often enough how much we value your place in the lives of our children and adults. You are doing a terrific job and your efforts are reflected in the progress of each student, however large or small. Without you, there is no achievement. Please be aware, especially this week, of our gratitude to you.

Parents and Friends of NECC

Teacher Appreciation Week 5/2001

Congratulations NECC Special Olympics Team

Congratulations to the students who competed in the Special Olympics state competition, June 16 and 17, 2001.

During the two-day event NECC Panthers Aaron took a silver and Mark the bronze in the 25m freestyle, in the 50m run Nik ran for a gold medal, Rick won 4th place in shot put, and a gold medal went to Jason in the softball throw.

NECC Welcomes Neal J. Faulkner



The New England Center for Children welcomes local businessman and entrepreneur Neal Faulkner to its Board of Directors. Currently, Mr. Faulkner is the franchisee of eight Dunkin' Donuts sites throughout the MetroWest Region of Boston. From his start with the company as a Consulting Intern, he rose through the ranks of the 50-year-old business to attain positions as Strategic Information

Analyst and Business Consultant.

Mr. Faulkner attributes his passion for business to the experience he gained at his family's agricultural business. He later augmented his professional skills by earning an M.B.A. at Babson Graduate School of Business Administration. Afterward, companies such as investment firm Merrill Lynch and the law firm of Thompson & Knight benefited from his talent.

A wide array of interests claim Mr. Faulkner's time and energy. In addition to his role with NECC, he maintains

an active relationship with the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternal organization and also sits on the Alumni Association Executive Board of Southern Methodist University, where he earned his B.A.

An avid golfer and tennis player, he is also a loyal fan of football and baseball—so much so that he hopes to coach football or tennis when he retires. Other leisure activities include cooking Mexican food and staying current with contemporary music.

NECC celebrates Neal Faulkner's membership on the Board and looks forward to working closely with him in the upcoming years.



The New England Center
FOR CHILDREN

Independence through Educational Excellence

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