



NURTURING

NETWORK

news

Spring 2007

A Note from Matt LiPuma, FNC Executive Director

It was a very exciting fall for Family Nurturing Center staff, programs, and partners! The Allston-Brighton Family Network received the 2006 **Mayor's Award for Excellence in Children's Health** (see below)—a real tribute to the staff, community partners, and families who have worked to sustain ABFN over the past 10 years. Sue Parker, FNC's Program Manager, received the **Leadership Award in Parent Education** from the Children's Trust Fund and Wheelock College at their annual, statewide View from All Sides conference in November. This award is given to an individual with at least 10 years of distinguished service in the field of parent education. Sue has spent the last 20 years of her working life educating and supporting parents and training others in the nurturing philosophy. (Haji Shearer, FNC alumnus, received the Emerging Leader award.)

In October, Countdown to Kindergarten, FNC, and its school and community partners launched "**Play to Learn Groups**" (page 6) at the Hennigan School in Jamaica Plain. This replication of FNC's successful model in Allston-Brighton has already registered 54 families. FNC had a very successful **Ride for Kids** event, doubling the number of riders, bringing on new corporate sponsors and doubling the amount of unrestricted funds raised in last year's Ride (see one rider's experience, page 4).

As this newsletter goes to print, FNC is wrapping up a year long **strategic planning process** that engaged the Board, staff, and over 20 stakeholders and community partners. The full report will be available on FNC's website in the next few months.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of **B Smart**, a group of community organizations, health centers, and residents in the Geneva/Bowdoin neighborhood who have been working with the police department and the Mayor's Office to address the violence that has claimed the lives of so many of the neighborhood's young people. During the last few months increased police presence has been obvious. Not as obvious are the numerous meetings that have been held to develop strategies to support families traumatized by violence and to implement programs that help neighborhood youth develop skills and alternatives to gang involvement. The depth of nurturing work and collaboration occurring in the neighborhood is impressive and worth noting as we begin this new year.

Read on to learn more of what's new! ■

Allston-Brighton Family Network Wins Mayor's Award

On November 27th, 2006, 70 people crowded into the lobby of the F. Lyman Winship School in Allston-Brighton to celebrate the Allston-Brighton Family Network for winning the 2006 Mayor's Award for Excellence in Children's Health. FNC's Executive

Director, Matt LiPuma, accepted the \$10,000 award from Mayor Thomas Menino on behalf of FNC's board, staff, and the families and community partners who work together to create a web of support for families with young children.

The Mayor's Award is an annual award given in partnership with the Office of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Children's Hospital Boston, and the Harvard School of Public Health, to the community-oriented program that "best improves the health of the children in the City of Boston". This year the award focused on programs that promote the healthy early development of children, particularly those in the 0-5 age group.

"Tending to the health and well being of our youngest Bostonians is so important," said the Mayor. "We know that a kid's best hope in reaching his or her full potential is to get the best possible start in the first five years of life. The Allston-Brighton Family Network

is a beacon of hope in a time when these types of programs never seem to get the support and recognition that they deserve. I am so pleased to join our partners in making this award."

ABFN, now in its tenth year, offers a continuum of services for families with young children that includes

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Mayor Thomas Menino speaks to a rapt audience at the presentation of the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Children's Health to the Allston-Brighton Family Network.

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Coming Together: The Birth & Foster Family Nurturing Program

Tensions are high on the first night of the Birth & Foster Family Nurturing program. After all, this is the when birth parents are meeting foster parents, in most cases, for the first time! With the help of amazing staff (all of whom are DSS workers) and lots of planning, we are able to make it through the night, and in each



Birth parents, foster parents, and the children they care for enjoy a meal and activities together during Family Nurturing Time.

ensuing week we have the privilege of witnessing lives transform.

When FNC first presented the idea of having birth and foster parents come together and form relationships during 12 weeks of Nurturing Parenting sessions at a DSS office, it was a hard concept to sell. After six years of offering this special program at the Dimock Street Area Office, we have what we originally envisioned: each birth parent attending is there with the foster parent caring for their children, and we are seeing trust and empathy develop with every session.

When the families come together weekly they share their stories and their histories, many of which are very personal and painful. Parents listen to each other, laugh, cry, and then even have the chance to share a meal, play, and sing together. Through all of these interactions, families and staff begin to have compas-

sion for each other and connect to one another in powerful ways. It all results in tremendous benefits to the children, seeing both of their families sharing and having fun together.

The dynamics of an otherwise tense relationship are changed when a foster parent and a birth mother develop empathy for each other. Walls come down when a family is able to sit and have dinner with their DSS worker. Progress is made when a birth parent turns to a foster parent and asks her what techniques are best to use with her children. We know we're onto something when a parent who sat with arms folded through the whole first session says, "What do you mean there are only six weeks left?" For more information regarding the Birth and Foster Program, please contact Alice Gomes at 617.474.1143 x238. ■

New Partners, New Program—Nurturing Program Comes to Charlestown

FNC is working with Boston Housing Authority, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, and a number community partners to bring the Nurturing Program to Charlestown. As part of Mayor Menino's new initiative, Charlestown Connects, the program will be offered to families who have at least one child age 0–5. Special efforts are being made to reach out to families in the Bunker Hill Housing Development.

FNC's Sue Parker began organizing the program in August by facilitating planning meetings, and working with community partners to get the word out, secure space, and identify facilitators and families. Enthusiasm is growing, and training for prospective facilitators is planned for early February. The program will start on Monday, March 12, and the graduation will be a real celebration taking place during Charlestown Pride week. ■

Nurturing Fathers Share Their Stories

The Nurturing Fathers' Program has had a successful Fall/Winter season, running three programs simultaneously at the Boston Pre-Release Center, Hyde Park DSS, and the Suffolk County House of Correction. Thirty-nine fathers graduated from these programs, and each one deserves recognition for his commitment to becoming a more nurturing father. They all bring memorable stories of the challenges they face as parents.

Incarcerated fathers often face the difficult situation of having little contact with their children to practice the new skills they are learning, but the program still can have an important impact. One father, a 65 year old man incarcerated for most of his adult life, told of

last seeing his young son crying with his mother after a prison visit in 1973. As an adult, the son found his father via the internet and briefly made contact, but the father's transfers to various penal institutions separated them again. Through the encouragement of the group and program facilitator, this father was able to reconnect to his son and they now communicate regularly.

A father in the DSS program struggled with understanding appropriate ways to interact with his children, ages 7 and 14. This African father wanted to show affection to his children but was uncertain how that would be perceived in the American culture. He was also afraid of his family's involvement with DSS and wanted to be

sure he was following their rules. The group helped him explore his feelings, understand appropriate behavior, and realize his children's need for nurturing parental affection. In turn, all the fathers in the group benefited from a rich discussion about their own feelings and the emotional needs of their children.

The Nurturing Fathers' Program provides support and encouragement to fathers and recognizes the unique circumstances of each one. It gives them a safe, supportive place to deal with their emotions and to understand their importance in the lives of their children. Here, nurturing families are created one father at a time. ■

Allston-Brighton

Newborn Welcoming Program is "Born" at Joseph Smith Community Health Center

When Francisca Guevara was working at Crittenton Women's Union, she was involved as a partner with FNC's Welcome Baby Program. Home visitors in Crittenton's Healthy Families program were doing Welcome Baby visits to teen parent moms in Allston-Brighton and Roslindale. Francisca saw first-hand the benefits of the program and how special it made the young moms feel to receive the basket and all the information that came with it.

Recently, Francisca joined the staff at Joseph Smith Community Health Center as the Community Outreach Coordinator. JSCHC was already a Welcome Baby partner; outreach workers (with language capacity in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Thai) made visits to Joseph Smith patients with newborns who lived in Allston-Brighton. Two staff members making most of the visits found that families felt much more comfortable talking with them in their homes than at the health center. Because most of the families were immigrants, they needed help to learn about and access resources such as WIC, food pantries, clothes closets, and ESOL classes.



Kerly Santos and Francisca Guevara are excited about Joseph Smith Health Center's Newborn Welcoming Program, for patients at both the Waltham and Allston sites!

The only challenge was that this program was not available to Joseph Smith patients in their Waltham site, which had opened in 2004 and served many families. After four years of working in partnership with FNC and seeing the real value of Welcome Baby, Joseph Smith staff decided to apply for funding so that they could start their own program. Funding came through from the Department of Public Health Prenatal Support Program, and JSCHC's "Newborn Welcoming Program" was started last fall. The model will be different from FNC's since it is at a health care site: families will receive the first visit at the hospital when the baby is born, the next visit will be at the family's home, and then a Prenatal Outreach Worker/Home

Visitor will do case management to make sure that families are able to access needed resources.

Francisca reports that they hope to visit about 116 families this year, across both the Allston and Waltham sites. "One of the reasons I took this position at Joseph Smith was so that I would be able to be involved in such a wonderful community program as this. We learned how well the Welcome Baby program can work, and now we can offer these services to more families!" ■

Roslindale

New Name, Same Great Programs

High Point Village in Roslindale has undergone lots of reconstruction in the past few months, and along with its facelift comes a new name: Stony Brook Commons. Our High Point CARES program is now, of course, Stony Brook CARES, but it will offer the same great programming, including this winter's Nurturing Program for Families and Children. With an enrollment of 15 families (many of which have up to six children!), the program will fill the Stony Brook community buildings with life every Thursday evening until early May. To get a schedule of all other programs and events, please call Maxine or Dianna at 617.325.6732.

New Entrance & Exit to Stony Brook Commons

The entrance to Stony Brook Commons is now on Enneking Parkway. The exit is on Enneking Parkway or Blue Ledge Drive to Washington Street, which is one way with a right turn only. ■

FNC on the Web

Donate On-Line at
www.familynurturing.org

Please visit us on-line to:

- Find out more about Nurturing Programs
- Learn about getting involved with FNC and
- Make a financial contribution

Award from page 1

Welcome Baby home visits, adult/child playgroups, infant massage classes, nurturing programs, family literacy classes (in partnership with Jackson Mann Community Center), information and referral, and a monthly newsletter that reaches over 650 Allston-Brighton homes and community organizations.

ABFN's work is partially funded by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, the Mabel Louse Riley Foundation, Cabot Family Charitable Trust, the

New Balance Foundation, and the State Street Foundation.

Twenty-three ABFN parents and their young children reminded us that healthy child development is mostly about having fun, as they closed the award ceremony by leading the crowd in a wonderful rendition of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". Congratulations to ABFN program staff, community partners, and families! ■

Thanks for Your Help

Thanks to all of our current funders...

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***Thanks to all of our riders!**

The Rodman Ride for Kids—One Rider's Story

I could see the spirit of FNC as soon as I rode my bike up to Ride Headquarters on that chilly autumn morning, September 30. Right there at the hospitality tent were FNC staff members, cheerily directing the sleepy riders to the registration area.

There I met Christine, one of the four riders on our 100 mile FNC team. On a recent training ride in Concord she was stymied by a never ending series of flat tires, but today her bike seemed to be in tip-top shape. Robyn was there too, looking fit, well clothed, and eager to get started.

At the registration table, echoes of "Thank You" rang out from the volunteers to the riders and back. People who are dedicated to kids are very thankful people.

The 100 mile ride began at 7^{AM}. At the starting line we joined Jessica, the fourth member of our century team, and lined up with 100 or so others who had decided to sit on a little-bitty piece of plastic or leather for the next 5–7 hours, all in the name of better lives for kids. Off we went!

I was feeling good (and full of strong Kenyan coffee!) on this morning, so I fell in with a line of riders who were hitting it pretty hard. We stopped at the first rest stop, at twenty miles. I ate what I used to eat as a kid—white bread, peanut butter, and gobs of jelly. I was

ready to go and followed a large, strong rider out of the transition area. We began to talk (he was doing his fourth Ride for Kids), and we agreed to take turns leading.

Despite our best efforts to navigate the many signs and markers, at about 35 miles, we realized we had somehow strayed off of the 100 mile route and onto where the 25 and 50 mile routes merged. Though we had truly wanted to finish the full 3-digit ride, we continued on the shorter route, meeting up with a group of fast riders. We'd put in 30 more miles than they had, but we couldn't complain: the route was mainly flat, and the day was mild and sunny—perfect for riding. After another stop, lots of fluids, and two energy bars, I cruised in to the finish line—having ridden a total of 87 miles. I considered riding around the parking until I reached 100, but thought better of it.

Time for food! The barbecued ribs lived up to my southern expectations, so I enjoyed my reward beneath the FNC banner in the giant tent and chatted with a female rider and avid Boston sports fan. Once she had convinced me that Theo was overrated and Francona was underrated, I made my way home, tired and full, and checked in with Matt by phone after he finished his 50 mile trek.



Executive Director Matt LiPuma joins riders Jessica Goldhirsch and Robyn Souza for a post-Ride photo.

Overall, the Ride was a fabulous success. Our teammates were great, Matt and the staff and the Rodman Team did a wonderful job with the details, and the project was done with that caring and fun FNC attitude. Let's do it again next year!—Rider Jay Youngdahl

If you'd like to ride (any distance!), we'll be having a kick-off event on Saturday, May 12th. If you'd like to sponsor FNC, send your check made out to the Rodman Ride for Kids/FNC in the enclosed envelope, and your full amount plus an additional match will support FNC's programming! Contact Valerie Bean with any questions: 617.474.1143 x224.

“Playing to Learn” in Jamaica Plain

In October, Boston Public Schools’ Countdown to Kindergarten program and FNC began a new Parent-Child Playgroup program for families with young children. Four Playgroups are held each week, including one evening session. As of February, 54 families and 67 children have registered!

These new Playgroups are held at the Early Learning Center West, housed in the Hennigan Elementary School in Jamaica Plain. Because these groups are held on site at an elementary school, families become accustomed to coming into a school and seeing it as part of their community. This helps parents to be better prepared to support their children’s schooling.

The Playgroups have attracted a diverse group of families. About ¼ of families identify as Latino, 42% as Caucasian, 17% as African-American, and 7% as Asian. Spanish is spoken by many families attending the groups. The Playgroup leader is fluent in Spanish,



Both mom and child’s creativity is sparked during Art Time.

helping families feel comfortable.

Playgroups provide opportunities for parents to learn about children’s ages and stages, learn about the importance of play, promote social skills necessary for school readiness, discover the value of reading to their children, exchange parenting tips, and enjoy books, songs, games, and sensory play. Sessions include welcoming activities that promote relationships and a

“When I saw the flyer at Bromley-Heath about the playgroup, it was a blessing. We cannot afford daycare and this gives me and my child a place to go and be with other families.”

circle time with activities that reinforce vocabulary for both native and non-native English speakers. Free play includes small and large motor skills refinement, as well as science, math, and language arts learning.

A key goal is to increase the level of school readiness for each child enrolled. Playgroups offer an enriching early learning environment, provide a positive “first school” experience, empower parents to be teachers, and foster relationships that build community.

A team of evaluators from Cornell and Tufts University is evaluating the effectiveness of both the JP and



Children enjoy playing under the parachute during Circle Time.

the Allston-Brighton playgroups. When asked how the playgroup is helpful to her, a mother said: “I am learning to play with him. I never used to do that. He is starting to play with me too. He never did that before.” She also remarked, “I had never been inside a public school in this country before. I love it.”

The “Play to Learn” Group is a collaboration among Countdown to Kindergarten, the Boston Public Schools, the Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts, and ReadBoston and is funded by Children’s Hospital Boston.

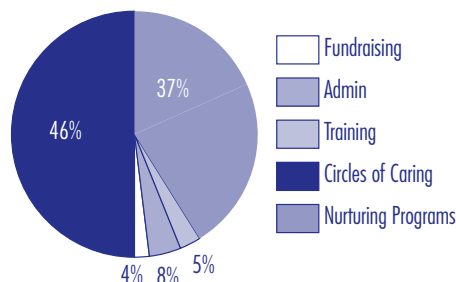
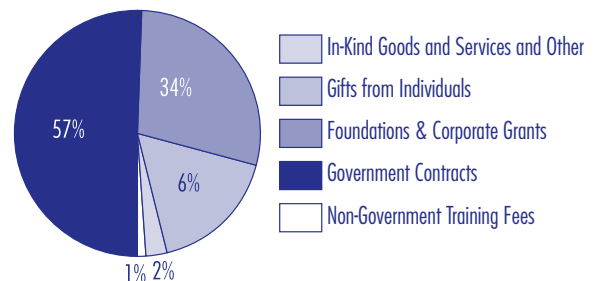
One parent who attends the playgroup said “I have only been in this country for 6 months — when I saw the flyer at Bromley-Heath about the playgroup, it was a blessing. We cannot afford daycare and this gives me and my child a place to go and be with other families.” ■

FNC By the Numbers

A sampling of FNC team accomplishments during FY 2006

- Mentored 86 staff in Nurturing Parenting Programs
- Served 109 families in Nurturing Programs including 116 parents and 108 children, ages infant to teens
- Trained 546 participants in skill-based, interactive trainings
- Worked with strategic partners to deliver more than 659 Welcome Baby baskets to Boston families with newborns.
- Engaged 650 volunteers in program and community building events
- Supported over 744 families through advocacy efforts and program activities in Roslindale and Allston-Brighton

FNC Support



FNC Expenses

Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts

200 Bowdoin Street, Dorchester, MA 02122

(617) 474-1143 Fax: (617) 474-1261 • www.familynurturing.org

A variety of neighborhood based Nurturing Programs for Families are now available, each specially designed for the parents and children they serve. Programs range in length, are free, include a meal, and are offered at various times and locations. To learn more about referring families to a program or about joining a Nurturing Team of facilitators, please contact the person listed beside the program.

Boston Area Nurturing Program Calendar: Winter/Spring 2007

LOCATION	PROGRAM TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNER	DAY/TIME	OTHER INFO	CONTACT
Allston-Brighton	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	FNC, Community Partnerships	Tuesdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: March	Referral: local families with at least one child age 3–4/ Transportation: provided (local)	Randi Freundlich 617.474.1143 x228
Charlestown	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	FNC, City of Boston, Boston Housing Authority, Boston Center for Youth & Families	Monday, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: March 12	Referral: local families with at least one child age 0–5/ Transportation: provided	Sue Parker 617.474.1143 x236
Chelsea	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	Chelsea Community Connections Coalition	Sundays, 3–5 ^{PM} Start date: February 4	Referral: open Transportation: provided (local)	Sheila McMahon 617.889.7100
Dorchester	Cape Verdean Family Nurturing Program	FNC, Park Street Area DSS Office	Sundays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: March 4	Referral: open Transportation: provided	Alice Gomes 617.474.1143 x238
Dorchester	Nurturing Fathers' Program	FNC, Park Street Area DSS Office	Tuesdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: March 13	Referral: open Transportation: TBA	John O'Neil 617.474.1143 x251
Dorchester	Nurturing Program for Parents & Children and/or Parenting Support Group	Dorchester CARES	Start date: March	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	Noemia Monteiro-DoCanto 617.474.1256 x252
Lynn	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	Catholic Charities North	TBA	Referral: closed Transportation: provided	Pam Freeman 781.477.2902
Rosindale	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	FNC Stonybrook	Thursdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: January 25	Referral: open Transportation: provided	Maxine Hall 617.325.6732
Roxbury	Roxbury Prenatal Nurturing Program	Dimock Early Head Start	TBA	Referral: open to Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Dorchester residents Transportation: provided home	Nidia Diaz 617.442.8800 x1461
Roxbury	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children (SPANISH)	Elizabeth Stone House	Wednesdays, 4:30–7:30 ^{PM} Start date: February 28	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	Medie Medina 617.427.9801 x402
Roxbury	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children (ENGLISH)	Elizabeth Stone House	Thursdays, 4:30–7:30 ^{PM} Start date: March 1	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	Anna Faria 617.427.9801 x409
South Boston	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	South Boston FANS	Tuesdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: February 27	Referral: open Transportation provided for South Boston families	Anne Buchs 617.269.9331
TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES					
LOCATION	TRAINING	SPONSOR	DAY/TIME	OTHER INFO	CONTACT
Dorchester Bay Cove Early Intervention 105 Victory Road	Developing Nurturing Families and Communities (NP Facilitator training)	FNC & Boston Regional DSS	Monday & Tuesday, March 5 & 6, 9 ^{AM} –4 ^{PM}	Approved for 12 Category 1 CEUs	Sue Parker 617.474.1143 x236

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Mission Statement

To work with others to build nurturing communities where children are cherished, families are supported, and healthy human development is promoted by all.

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