

Natick Early Childhood Network

...putting Children First



Connections

What's In a Name?

Along with the new look of our *Connections* newsletter this issue, you'll note that our organization also has a new name! We are now the **Natick Early Childhood Network**. This name seeks to convey the inclusion of children, families, providers of early education and care, AND the full array of supportive and educational programs and agencies which support them in our community. We also pay homage to our past by adding the tag line "...putting Children First" whenever we can. We hope that by using language we are all familiar with ("Natick", "Network", "Children First") we can build upon our past, but separate, identities while building for a strong collaborative future. Note: For the time being, we continue to use the web address www.natickfamilynetwork.org.

NECN Community Celebration! Saturday, November 7, 10-12

Celebrate our community! Join us for this family event. held at the **Salmon Center/ Whitney Place**, 3 Vision Drive in Natick. A performance featuring Mary Wilson of Pitter Patter Puppets will consist of developmentally-appropriate interactive puppet play activities specifically designed to stimulate language, literacy, sensory awareness, problem solving, self-expression, phonemic awareness, and story creation. We'll round out the event with community-minded craft activities and a healthy snack. An optional donation of \$5/family will support the **MetroWest Interfaith Hospitality Network**.

November/December 2009

Volume 10 Issue 2

Community Happenings for Parents

Criterion-Middlesex Early Intervention

Transition Night

Tuesday, November 10, 6 - 8 p.m.

651 Franklin Street, Framingham

508-875-0806

For families who are already involved with Early Intervention and who are looking ahead at the services which may be provided to their children at age 3 through the Natick Public Schools.

Natick SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council)

Navigating Special Education in Natick

Thursday, November 19, 7 - 9 p.m.

Natick Town Hall

13 East Central Street, 3rd Floor, Natick

www.naticksepac.org

For families with a child with special needs who is receiving or may be receiving Special Education services through the Natick Public Schools.

Me & My Dad Weekday Play!

Due to the popularity of our Saturday Me and My Dad playgroup, we've now set aside a special weekday Drop-In time just for dads and their children, birth to PreK. While the kids play, visit with other dads and male caregivers (grandfathers welcome!) of Natick families. For November/ December, come on Thursdays from 12 noon - 2 pm!

November/December Drop-In & Open Gym

NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED!

Drop-In provides the opportunity to come with your child for free play in the NECN Playroom at the Cole Center and to meet other Natick families with young children.

Pre-Walkers Drop-In:

(Just for children birth - pre-walkers)

Monday 12 noon - 2 pm

Me & My Dad Drop-In:

(Especially for dads with children birth - PreK)

Thursday 12 noon - 2 pm

General Drop-In:

(Children birth - PreK)

Wednesday 11 am - 1 pm

Friday 11 am - 1 pm

Open Gym Hours

A drop-in opportunity for unstructured physical play inside the Cole Center Gym; **for competent walkers!**

Wednesdays 8:30 - 10:30 am

Fridays 8:30 - 10:30 am

Help Wanted! 508-655-2557 Volunteer Playgroup Facilitators

In these lean economic times, much of our ability to support parents and connect families with each other stems from the work of our volunteer Playgroup Facilitators, who come in weekly with their children to run groups in our playroom. Please let us know if you would like to participate in a training to support NECN in this way. Each two-month session we strive to offer 2-3 play-to-learn groups to bring parents and children of similar developmental stages together for multi-session groups. The children generally enjoy free play, craft or sensory activities, stories and songs, and physical play. Parents participate in relevant discussions and share resources and parenting tips. Typically our facilitators enjoy as many, if not more, rewards of participation as the other group participants.

Welcome Baby Bag Deliveries

The single best way that families learn about all of the information, referrals and services that await them at **Natick Early Childhood Network** is word-of-mouth. With that in mind, we continue to prepare Welcome Baby Bags to extend a special welcome to new arrivals and their families. The bags contain fun things for baby (music, book), useful things for new parents (sun shade, medicine dropper) and LOTS of information about local resources which support families. Please call our office to arrange for delivery of a Welcome Baby Bag for your Natick friend or neighbor, or add that personal touch by delivering it on our behalf!

Resource Guides Available at NECN Office

This year we have two resource guides available to support and inform our families. The first is the 5th edition of our *Parent-to-Parent Community Resource Booklet*: where to go and what to do with young children in and around Natick. It lists everything from Special Needs Services to kid-friendly Restaurants, with some coupons in the back just for NECN families from some of our generous community supporters.

The second guide, *A Resource Guide to Choosing Child Care*, has been adapted from our sister organization Children First Natick. It is a fairly comprehensive list of all Natick providers of child care and preschool education. Whether you're looking for a daycare setting for your infant or hope to enroll your early learner in a quality preschool program, this booklet can provide all the contact information you need. **Both guides are available to pick up at our family center at the Cole Center (179 Boden Lane, Natick) between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. weekdays.** Can't make it in then? Call us at 508-655-2557 to make arrangements for alternative pick-up or delivery.