

Natick Early Childhood Network

...putting Children First

Connections



www.natickearlychildhood.org

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A Fond Farewell...

I am writing to inform you all officially that I will be leaving my position as Program Coordinator of Natick Early Childhood Network effective July 1 in order to explore new professional opportunities and free up more time to spend with my family. Many of you already know of this change, and your kind words, cards, children's artwork, flowers, etc. during the past several weeks have been so appreciated as I struggle to remind myself that this is the right decision for me at this time. The NECN Council is engaged in the process of identifying and hiring a new Program Coordinator, and I trust that someone will be in the playroom when it reopens in September ready to launch the fall program line-up.

I have been the Coordinator of NECN for the past six years, and for the four years before that, I was an active Network parent and served as Co-Chair of our governing Council, so leaving will be a huge transition for me (and absolute proof that I am no longer a parent of young children)! This position has afforded me so many benefits beyond my salary--the opportunity to learn about all of the supportive and enriching resources available in our community; the opportunity to play and read and sing with a rich variety of wonderful families; and the opportunity to learn that the words "family" and "community" are truly interchangeable here in Natick. I will leave full of gratitude, memories to last a lifetime and a repertoire of circle-time songs to fit every occasion! Thanks to all of you for making this such a wonderful place to work and to live.

Best Wishes,
Judy Dixon



NECN to Serve Families with Children Thru Age 8 !

Natick Early Childhood Network is growing again! While at one time, families of the former Natick Family Network "aged out" of our program upon their youngest child's 4th birthday, the Dept. of Early Education and Care, which funds our organization, now asks that we provide support, activities and information for all families in Natick with children *through age 8*. Our budget will limit the direct service activities we can provide for our "older kids," but parents can expect NECN to expand its information and referral services to support them in parenting grade-school-age children in our community. Feel free to call our office in the fall with your questions about meeting basic needs, after school care, academic supports, enrichment activities and more! Also watch for special parenting workshops and series where parents can learn about the special developmental characteristics of their "big kids" and strategies to help them thrive.

NECN is CLOSED for the Summer

Due to budget constraints Natick Early Childhood Network will be CLOSED July 1 through August 31. There will be no drop-in or scheduled activities held during that period (**except** for families already enrolled in the Summer Integrated Playgroups on Mondays and Thursdays that began in June). See page 2 for a list of suggested summer adventures and resources you may need.

Did this newsletter arrive in the mail?

If you are reading a newsletter sent to you by U.S. mail, we urge you to visit our website (www.natickearlychildhood.org) and "Register to Receive Email Updates" (see the "button" on the right of your screen). This will allow you to get our newsletters and activities descriptions more quickly, receive program information from us between mailings AND save us the cost of printing and postage. After you're registered, please call our office, so we can remove you from our paper mailing list: 508-655-2557.

Oh, The Places You'll Go! Hot Tips for Summer Fun in Natick

NECN may be closed, but there's lots to do in town!

1. Get Beach Tags for Memorial Beach at Dug Pond. Right next to Natick High, this town beach is the place to meet and greet, cool off, dig in the sand and enjoy a slush with your kids. Swim lessons for kids 3 years and older are too cheap to pass up AND so important. The beach is open for business through August 15.
2. Attend the Family Performing Arts Series on the Common. These free performances for kids held in the heart of Natick run on seven consecutive Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. beginning July 1. Plan to get take-out from one of the restaurants in the nearby area or bring a picnic dinner. Ice cream from one of the local shops will top off your evening! (A Concert Series for grown-ups and kids runs on Mondays starting June 28 for nine weeks, same time, same place.)
3. Check out Family Night on the Common on Wednesday, June 30. Coordinated by Natick Friends of the 4th, this event features food, activities and hometown fun leading into the Independence Day weekend. Event runs 4 - 8 p.m. with a Children's Parade at 6 p.m. (The website www.natick4th.org provides a complete list of the weekend's celebratory activities.)
4. Don't miss the July 4th Parade on Monday, July 5, at 9 a.m.! Full of fire trucks from the region, marching bands, floats and community groups, this annual tradition down Main Street will not disappoint. Wear red, white and blue, and bring chairs. (Many in the town put chairs out the night before to save an ideal viewing spot.) Make your way to Natick Common before, during or after the parade and score some deals at the Flea Market.
5. Visit Weezie's Garden for Children at Elm Bank Reservation (off Route 16 just over the Wellesley line). This whimsical kid-sized garden features a tree house, giant-sized Adirondack chairs, fish pond, large sand play space, water pumpers and more. Bring bikes or ride-on toys and a picnic. For extra fun, roll down the giant grassy hill.
6. Stop in at the Natick Community Organic Farm. Located off Route 16 next to Memorial Elementary School, the NCOF offers a hassle-free way to introduce young children to a real working farm. Stop in for a self-guided stroll around to see what's growing in the gardens and the barns! Animals are sure to delight. A farmstand on Rt. 16 offers edible souvenirs from your excursion.
7. Enjoy the peace, quiet and cool air of the Morse Institute Library. Their summer line-up continues to offer story times for children of a variety of ages and stages, the popular Preschool Filmfest, Lego Club, crafting sessions and *Sing Me a Song* with Fran Friedman. Older kids can join Summer Reading Clubs focused on "just right" books. Plus, Morse is featuring free Infant Sign Language and Baby Massage sessions with Sheryl White of Baby Kneads. Go to www.morseinstitute.org or visit the Children's Room to get details and registration dates for programs.
8. Enrich your summer table with locally grown produce from the Farmers' Market on Natick Common. Visit weekly on Saturdays from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. through October 30. Make it a family goal to try one new healthy food a week!

Fundraising Update: Moms' Night Out & Restaurant of the Month

Thanks to the hard work of organizers and the participation of so many of our families NECN has been able to increase the funds it has available to provide supportive, educational and FUN activities for the families in our community.

Moms' Night Out on Thursday, May 13, was attended by over 75 Natick moms and earned over \$1,100 for NECN.

Thanks to event Co-Chairs Krissy Fernandes and Kristine Weddle!

Restaurant of the Month, which invited us to dine at 5 different local restaurants from January through May, earned over \$500. Thanks to Co-Organizers Shoshana Savitz and Amy Siegel Wood!

Because of fundraising activities like these and financial contributions made directly to NECN by our families, our Family Appreciation Night Event on June 16 was supported entirely through private funds!

Numbers You Could Use

Need resources or assistance during the summer?

Here are a few places that can help...

A Place to Turn: 508-655-8868

(food pantry)

Child Care Resource Center: www.ccrinc.org

(linkage to state financial assistance for child care)

Criterion-Middlesex Early Intervention: 508-6201442

(for developmental evaluation and therapies)

Morse Institute Library: 508-647-6521

(literacy activities for all generations, ESL learning/basic computer classes for adults)

Natick Board of Health: 508-647-6460

(information or referrals related to your family's health)

Natick Human Services: 508-647-6540

(for crisis intervention and referrals)

Natick Public Schools: 508-647-6500

(serves children with special needs beginning at age 3 and all Natick children beginning at kindergarten)

Natick Service Council: 508-655-1791

(food pantry, emergency assistance, free backpacks for school-age kids)