



from the Heart

Vermont Family Network's E-Newsletter June

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From VFN's President

As we head into the end of the school year and another glorious Vermont summer, I want to take a moment to tell you about some of the latest happenings here at Vermont Family Network. We are excited to welcome our new Board leadership, elected at our May 15th Annual Meeting, Chair Kristin Prior, Vice Chair Kay Van Woert, Secretary Ellen Zeman, and Treasurer Tom Stretton.

We bid a very grateful farewell to longtime Board member and Chair, John Koutras, and thank him for his wonderful service as he concludes his term June 30th. We welcome Shelly Waterman as our newest Board member, and look forward to a very productive year as our newly formed Board committees work to support VFN's important mission.

Family Support Associate Director Lisa Maynes and I have just returned from the Family Voices "Power of Partnerships" conference in Washington, DC, where we heard from leaders Dr. Michael Lu (Maternal Child Health Resources and Services Administration, US Dept. of Health and Human Services)) and Sharon Lewis (Administration for Community Living, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) about their visionary commitments to family leadership, family engagement, and person-centered care. Through our close partnerships with national, state, and local organizations and individuals, we are working to incorporate best practices in elevating youth and family voices in the many educational, health, and early childhood initiatives with which we are involved.

We invite you to join us in ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of children and young adults with special

Vermont Family Network. We appreciate your generosity!

needs and their families are well-represented as the state moves ahead with cutting-edge change in healthcare and education, change that will impact outcomes across the lifespan. Feel free to contact me if you'd like to get involved---VFN needs your vision, and your voices! Pam.Mccarthy@vtn.org or (802) 876-5315 ext. 207.

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy
President/CEO

Register Today For Our Annual Kickball Tournament to Benefit Children & Families

Our annual kickball tournament is almost here and we need your help! Now in its third year, we are extremely proud to partner with the Windjammer Hospitality Group on this great event. Our tournament will take place on Saturday, July 26th at the Essex Tree Farm Recreational Facility. The tournament begins at 8:30 a.m. and goes until 4:30 p.m.. All proceeds raised will benefit Vermont Family Network.

This year, our goal is to raise \$8,000 and have 15 teams participate. The cost to participate is \$30 per adult or \$15 for kids 15 years and younger. Teams may consist of between 15 and 26 players. If you are unable to sign up a full team, you may still register and elect to be placed on a team that we will put together for you. [To register online, click here!](#)

We are also in need of several volunteers throughout the day. To view a complete list of volunteer needs, time slots, and to sign up to help out, [click here](#). We're using VolunteerSpot, the leading online signup and reminder tool. Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

1. Click the link above to go to our invitation page on VolunteerSpot.
2. Enter your email address: (You will NOT need to register an account on VolunteerSpot)
3. Sign up! Choose your spots - VolunteerSpot will send you an automated confirmation and reminders.

If you have any questions, contact Jeff Morton at 876-5315, ext. 248 or email Jeff.Morton@vtn.org.

We would like to thank all of our event sponsors

including: FairPoint Communications, National Life of Vermont, New England Federal Credit Union, the Windjammer Hospitality Group, the Essex Tree Farm Recreational Facility, 99.9 The Buzz, WCAX-TV, TD Bank, the World Adult Kickball Association, The Vermont Lake Monsters, Moothies, Liquid Studio, and Select Design.

Summer Camp Opportunities

Are you still looking for summer camp opportunities for your child? [Click here](#) to check out our statewide camp list. If you know about other camps for children that are not on our list, send additions to Joanne.Wechsler@vtfn.org.

Check Your Mailbox for an Important Survey from The Agency of Education Regarding Your Child's IEP!

The Vermont Agency of Education has mailed parent involvement surveys to all families with children on IEPs. You should receive your survey by the end of this week. The input families provide is very important and helps inform the Agency's policies and practices around parent participation in special education. Please take the time to fill out your survey! If you have questions, please contact Vermont Family Network at 1-800-800-4005 to speak with someone on our helpline.

Assistive Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities

Assistive technology can help children with learning disabilities leverage their strengths and work around or compensate for specific learning problems. These supports can be key to helping users become more independent in school and throughout life---on the job and in activities for daily living. To learn more about helpful apps and other AT tools, [click here](#).

VFN is Re-designing Our Website and We Want Your Feedback!

Vermont Family Network is in the process of re-designing our website and we want to hear from you about what works well and what you'd like to see improved! Our goal is to launch a new site sometime this summer that will be more user friendly, have an updated look, and will incorporate many more accessibility features, including translation to different languages, talk-to-speech, and alt-text. Our new site will be mobile responsive and will

include more photos, multi-media, and less text but also be able to provide all of the important resources and information that you rely upon our site for! If you have feedback on our current site or suggestions as we build our new site, please email Jeff Morton at Jeff.Morton@vtfn.org.

Family Faculty: Making an Impact

This year, VFN saw 63 Family Faculty volunteer parents share their perspectives and family experiences with 887 undergraduate, graduate, and medical students. Reaching this many pre-service professionals is an important step towards making a long term difference, and our Family Faculty volunteers make it possible. Parents, students, and instructors all agree that these opportunities strengthen the commitment to family-centered care and partnerships in learning.

"Instead of being quick to judge and adding more stress to illness, we must strive to look deeper, listen more closely, and be a continual source of support for our patients and families." - Third-year medical student at the UVM College of Medicine.

If you would like more information about joining our Family Faculty team, please contact Jan.Hancock@vtfn.org or call 1-800-800-4005 ext. 215.

Vermont Reads Book Selection Brings Attention to Children with Special Needs

In his book *"Wonder,"* R.J. Palacio tells the story of a fifth grade student named Auggie Pullman as he enters middle school, after previously being homeschooled by his mother. Auggie was born with a genetic disorder that left him with severe facial deformities. On the inside, Auggie knows he's like any other kid, but due to a congenital birth defect, he stands out in ways nobody wants to. *"Wonder"* traces Auggie's journey through his first year in middle school, where he experiences the challenges of being shunned and the satisfactions of belonging in a world where differences can both set us apart and bring us together.

Each year, Vermont Public Radio (VPR) partners with the Vermont Humanities Council to present Vermont Reads, a state-wide community reading program. *"Wonder"* was

also featured in VPR's Dorothy's List series and won this year's Dorothy Canfield Fisher award.

Last week, VPR produced several segments about the book, including an interview with author, R.J. Palacio and interviews with real-life "Wonder" families. One of the families featured, the Sanborn family, is closely connected to Vermont Family Network. The Sanborns first used services provided by VFN and now Laurel Sanborn works in our Children's Integrated Services-Early Intervention program. To listen to the interviews on VPR, [click here](#).

Upcoming Workshops and Support Groups

Vermont Family Network has a wide range of workshops, webinars, and support groups that will be offered in June. All of our workshops are free to the public unless otherwise specified. These opportunities focus on a variety of topics such as special education, developmental services in Vermont, support for parents who have young children with autism, and support for children who have siblings with disabilities. For a complete list of workshops and support groups posted on our website, [click here](#).

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