



# Families First

Health and Support Center

Support for Families  
Health Care for All



### Our Mission:

Families First Health and Support Center is an independent nonprofit agency that provides a broad range of health and family support services to individuals and families, regardless of ability to pay.



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# Taking Care

Summer 2008

A NEWSLETTER FOR  
DONORS, FUNDERS  
AND FRIENDS OF  
FAMILIES FIRST

## Volunteer professionals donate time and expertise

Families First Health Center prides itself on being a true "medical home," where patients have continuity of care and a relationship with a consistent team of staff physicians, nurse practitioners, dentists and support staff. That's why paid staff, rather than volunteers, provide most patient care at Families First.

However, we are fortunate to have a small group of physicians and dentists who volunteer with us in some crucial roles: increasing access to care by making more appointments available, filling in during staff vacations or when we are between providers, providing specialty care, and lending valuable collegial support to our few staff providers.

"The level of expertise and experience that these volunteers bring to Families First is invaluable because we see the most vulnerable populations in the Seacoast," says Families First Executive Director Helen Taft. "Many have lacked access to care. They have acute needs, both in primary care and specialty care. It's a wonderful partnership when members of the medical community support their community health center."

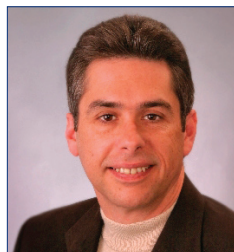
Last year, Families First received almost \$60,000 worth of donated services from physicians and dentists.

With experience both in private practice and at Families First, these volunteers are in a unique position to describe the challenges and rewards of community health center work.

### Why did you volunteer at Families First?

**Dr. Crowe:** When I came to Portsmouth in 1996, I was concerned that there seemed to be inadequate access to care for people who weren't insured or were underinsured. And when I developed the diabetes program at the hospital, I felt even more that we were missing part of the community. Volunteering at Families First was one way I could help to reach people outside of the confines of the usual third-party reimbursement plans. Once I did, I saw patients who had never come to the hospital diabetes clinic, perhaps due to lack of transportation, or inability to afford the co-pay, or an outstanding hospital bill.

**Dr. McArdle:** There is a whole access to care issue, and I thought, *how can we do something about this?* I had worked at a clinic at Concord Hospital, and I thought the Seacoast needed something similar. So I joined the Seacoast Dental Coalition and helped plan the Dental Center, and now I see patients there.



**Barry McArdle, DMD,** helped found the Dental Center at Families First as a member of the Seacoast Dental Coalition. Since the center opened in 2003, he has volunteered there for half a day every month. He has a private practice in Portsmouth.



**Skip Homicz, DDS,** not only volunteers as a dentist seeing patients, but donates many hours as our volunteer dental director. Before the center was open, he helped plan the rooms, hire staff and buy equipment. His role now includes hiring, supervising and mentoring dental staff and setting policies for the dental program, such as how dental care should be integrated into our well-child and prenatal programs. He is retired from private practice in Antrim, NH.

### How are patients here different from your other patients?

**Dr. Homicz:** Almost every patient here has multiple issues. It's not just their dental health. Here, we see and deal with more complicated clinical situations: social, psychological and, frequently, multiple medical issues. This population takes a lot more energy and, to some degree, knowledge. I need to use. You go home tired.

**Dr. Crowe:** The diabetic patients frequently have many challenges in their lives that affect the way they are able to care for themselves: Do they have their syringes and enough meds? Are they still smoking? Are they getting their dental abscesses cared for? Are they buying cheap food that is not highly nutritious? Families First support staff, physicians and nurse practitioners face these constraints every day and try to find the work-arounds in a system that doesn't necessarily make it easy. They are experts in that. It was seeing that resourcefulness, their never-give-up attitude, that was inspiring.

**Dr. Worrell:** I just referred a patient to Families First from my own practice because Families First is better able to meet all his needs. He has multiple medical problems, and his insurance coverage isn't enough to let him afford all his medications. He also needed help accessing mental health care. At Families First he has access to many resources that I don't have in my office. The Families First staff gave him information on financial aid for medications and will hook him up with social services for assistance with his psychological problems.

### What are some other differences in Families First as a place to practice medicine or dentistry?

**Dr. Homicz:** In a private dental practice you are in a cottage. Here, you are part of a whole health-care delivery system. The ability to talk to a doctor or nurse practitioner about a problem or medications is a huge asset. And they do the same with us.

Continued on back page >



**Karen Worrell, DO,** has been involved with Families First since the 1980s. In the early days, she served on our Board of Directors, and when Families First was located near her former office she consulted and filled in occasionally. When she was between practices for a few years, she volunteered to do regular shifts as a physician at Families First. Now in private practice again, she still volunteers at our women's cancer-screening clinics and fills in for vacationing staff. Both she and her medical partner **Jim Bloomer, MD** (pictured with her here) serve on Families First's Advisory Board.

### They Help Us Help Others

In addition to the four dentists and physicians interviewed for this article, we would also like to recognize:

- The many providers who give our patients access to specialty care in their own offices by volunteering in the SeaCare Health Services network;
- Drs. Mark Chag and Al Lantinen of Harbour Women's Health, who have been discounting their practice's services to see our prenatal patients on-site two mornings a week since 1984!
- Several other dentists and physicians who volunteer on-site at Families First. (All our on-site volunteers are listed at right.)

Marc Brown, DDS,  
Daniel Crowe, MD, Ctr. for Diabetes/Endocrinology (formerly)  
Barbara Deuell, MD, Allergy Associates  
James Fishbein, DDS  
Robert Hickey, MD, Allergy Associates  
Neil Hiltunen, DMD  
A.J. "Skip" Homicz, DDS  
Barry McArdle, DMD, General Dentist, PA  
Ira Schwartz, MD, Portsmouth Internal Medicine  
Karen Worrell, DO, Your Medical Home

# Greetings

## Dear Supporters and Other Friends,

The list of Board members on the front of this newsletter contains two new names since the last issue: **Bruce Knox** and **Patricia Locuratolo**. Dr. Locuratolo is a neurologist practicing in Portsmouth.



Mr. Knox is a master carpenter who has been in the trade for 45 years, mainly doing custom work at hospitals. He is a client in our Health Care for the Homeless Program.

Having these two join our Board at the same time got me thinking about the true diversity we have on our Board of Directors and the different roles board members play.

Of course, we follow the best practice among nonprofit Boards of including members with a broad range of professional backgrounds, including financial, legal, health care and more. But we have other kinds of diversity as well: As a condition of the federal grant that provides most of the funding for our Health Care for the Homeless Program, more than half of our Board must be comprised of Families First Health Center patients, including at least one from the Homeless Program.

Families First truly benefits from this federal requirement. Consumers bring their experience with our services to the board level and help keep the Board connected to our mission. Some also help build community support for Families First by telling their stories and what Families First services have meant to them. For example, five-year Board member **Kimberly Yacobucci** generously shared her story with a large audience at a "thank you" party for major donors last fall. Her description of how she benefited from affordable health care and assistance parenting her son, who has autism and cerebral palsy, really brought home to the donors the value of what is accomplished with their support.

Physicians who serve on our Board or Directors and Advisory Board — including **Dr. Geoffrey Clark**, **Dr. Locuratolo** and others — may sit on the Board's Quality Improvement Committee or our Medical Advisory Committee, which provides mentorship and support to our primary care team.

Throughout this newsletter we see examples of the many other roles our Board members play. To the right of this article is one about our very energetic Development Committee, co-chaired by Board members **Donna Ryan** and **Kathleen MacLeod**. Raising money to sustain the agency's services is one of the main responsibilities of any Board, and these two have not only raised money themselves, but rallied the rest of the committee to go out and make the case for Families First in the community.

On the next page, you'll find an article about our new "Grandparenting" group, which was the brainchild of another consumer board member, **Jack Jamison**. He not only identified the need for a group like this, but also volunteered to co-facilitate it.

For the past six months, five of our Board members — **John Freear**, **Faith Harrington**, **Jack Jamison**, **Kathleen MacLeod** and **Tom Newbold** — have taken on the added responsibility of serving on our Strategic Planning Committee, which is in the process of setting the agency's goals and objectives for the next three years. (More about this next time!)

These are just a small sample of the contributions made by our committed and supportive volunteer Board of Directors, whose members represent the many facets of the agency and contribute to meeting its many needs. I wish I had room to tell you more about all fifteen of them. I am grateful for each one.

*Helen B. Taft*

Helen B. Taft  
Executive Director

# Fund-Raising & Friend-Raising

## 2009 Calendar Artwork Preview

The 13 works chosen for our 2009 "Artists of the Seacoast" calendar were announced at the opening of the last exhibit at the Children's Museum's Portsmouth location. "Nubble Lighthouse," by frequent calendar contributor **Dean Diggins**, was chosen for the 2009 cover, while "Apple Blossoms," by first-time contributor **Elsa Brodie**, will represent May. Ms. Brodie, age 94, created the painting more than 40 years ago. For more information, contact Nancy Casco at 422-8208 x126 or [ncasko@familiesfirstseacoast.org](mailto:ncasko@familiesfirstseacoast.org).



## Sex and the City Bash

What do Sarah Jessica Parker, pink high heels and Families First have in common? They were all part of the *Sex and the City* cocktail party and private movie screening on June 4, a women-only fundraiser for Families First and Madam Ovary. Development Committee members **Barbara Franzoso** (pictured) and **Donna Ryan** quickly organized an over-the-top evening of fun, glam and gals to benefit these two agencies. More than 180 women attended the sold-out event.



## Want to 'De-Clutter' and Help Families First?

If so, bring your lightly used furniture, appliances, toys, books, and knick-knacks to Atrio Properties GMAC Real Estate at 725 Portsmouth Avenue in Greenland. Donations may be dropped off Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, before July 16. (No clothing, please.) Atrio will hold a yard sale on Saturday, July 19, from 7 to 3, with all proceeds given to Families First. For more information, call Atrio at (603) 433-1555.

## School Supports Clothing Drive



Each month Families First holds a drive to collect items that Families First consumers need. In March, local businesses, schools and community members kindly donated professional clothing for our clients. **Reed Spiller**, a senior at Portsmouth High School, is shown here donating clothing collected by PHS students. We thank everyone who donated to this drive to help our neighbors.

## Partners in Play



As part of its 30th anniversary celebration, G. Willikers Toy Shop honored Families First as one of its "Partners in Play" for the year. During April, G. Willikers held a benefit sale for Families First, volunteered at our Family Fun Night for families under stress, and put this display about Families First in their window. We thank **Jody Breneman** and **Bob Breneman** and the entire staff of G. Willikers for their generosity and kindness.

## Recognizing our Development Committee

For the past year and a half, ten people have tirelessly dedicated their time and energy to ramping up the fundraising efforts for Families First. These volunteers understand the importance of sustaining a non-profit from a financial standpoint and bring their passion, talent and commitment to creating awareness and educating the community. Not only do they take time out of their busy schedules to attend meetings, give tours and hold cultivation events, but they also serve on subcommittees — such as House Parties and Corporate — that support development goals. Families First would like to recognize and thank each committee member for all his or her efforts, and the committee as a whole for being such a cohesive, driving force for this agency.



Development Committee members, from left to right, are **Faith Harrington** of Wachovia Securities, **Kathleen MacLeod**, **Mary Ellen Morse** of Liberty Mutual, **Karin Nelson** of The Banks Gallery, **Donna Ryan** of Anneke Jans restaurant, **Barbara Franzoso** of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, and **Jenn Madden** of The Bean Group. Other committee members, not pictured, are **Karin Bardollar** of Seatrade, **Mitch Sevigny** of ReMax, and **Georgette Shapiro** of Portsmouth Regional Hospital.

# Grandparenting 101

How does one learn how to be a good grandparent? Several participants in Families First's new grandparenting group say they started by asking their own children what their role as a new grandparent should be, only to hear: "Be involved with their lives." But what does that really mean?

It was questions like this that inspired **Jack Jamison**, a longtime Families First volunteer and current Board member, to suggest that Families First create a class for grandparents. A grandfather of six, he knows how complicated grandparenting can be. He thought a class on the subject might be a good service for Families First to add, given the graying demographics of the Seacoast.

Jack volunteered to co-facilitate the group along with **Jillian Killeen**, a young mother with a three-year-old daughter. Participants were delighted to have a young mom in the class, not only for her youthful perspective but also because they could ask Jillian questions they could not ask their own children.

"Grandparenting," originally scheduled as a four-session class this spring, was so popular that it has been kept on the schedule as a weekly support group. Several participants interviewed for this article said they felt relieved to learn they were not alone in struggling to be good grandparents. "There were different stories, but the issues were the same," said **Margie O'Donnell**. "Confidentiality and trust really helped us open up. Someone brings up an issue and everyone discusses it. There is a lot of sharing, and you leave with ideas and suggestions about what to do."

## Long-distance grandparenting

A common question for many grandparents today is, "How do I bond long-distance with my grandchildren?" Margie and **Jim O'Donnell's** three grandchildren live in California and Georgia. The distance was particularly difficult when the children were very young.

"They forget who you are," Margie says. "Although Jim and I send a lot of books and toys, we discovered the children *loved the mailman* because they thought the gifts came from him!"

Three of **Connie Williams'** four grandchildren



Grandparenting Group facilitator and Families First Board member Jack Jamison, with grandson Zachary.

## The generation gap

Many grandparents who attended our group grew up right after World War II, and as a result take few things for granted. For example, **Heidemarie Baker** was four years old in Germany at the close of the war. There was little food, and many villages were bombed out. Her grandchildren have grown up in relative abundance. "We are the after-war generation," she says. "Things our grandchildren take for granted didn't even exist for us!"

Jack Jamison shared a story with the group of an acquaintance who said, "When I was a child, we didn't have many things, and we took good care of what we had because it wouldn't be replaced." In contrast, this man's grandson would ignore his grandfather's repeated reminders to move his bike from behind his mother's car so it wouldn't accidentally be run over.

This story resonated with Jim O'Donnell because he and Margie have experienced similar issues. "Kids have so much these days that perhaps gifts may not have the same sense of value," he says. "So Margie and I have tried to relax, and when we give gifts we try to have no strings attached. Even though I think something is important, the kids may not." For Jim, having realistic expectations of his grandchildren has been important.

## The grandparent-parent relationship

Group members generally agreed that boundaries with their own children are the hardest issue grandparents deal with: when to step in or not, when to advise or stand back. Many also talked about how the unresolved issues with one's own children come up now with the grandchildren.

Jillian Killeen, the young mother who co-facilitated the class, agrees that any lack of communication between parents and adult children can worsen once they have grandkids. "No one wants to make the wrong move. Everyone wants to be the best for their grandchildren but finds themselves tiptoeing around, so no one is talking about the real issues," she says. "But in the end, everyone wants the same thing. We owe it to our kids to create something with their grandparents. It takes work from both sides. If you don't make an effort it won't happen."



Left to Right: Connie Williams, Jim and Margie O'Donnell, Heidemarie Baker

live in Hong Kong, and she hasn't seen them in seven years. Two of the grandsons are coming this summer for an extended visit. "I feel excitement as I think about their visit," says Connie. "But I have not had the opportunity to 'grow up' with the boys. Aside from wanting to kayak with me, I lack their input regarding the many activities available to entertain them. I really want to connect and build a relationship with them, so I want to do everything I can to prepare for their visit."

Thanks to support from the grandparenting group, Connie is now loaded with a list of ideas of how to entertain the boys and how to deal with some of the issues that might come up.

"Grandparenting" meets Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. at the Community Campus, but is taking a vacation in July and August. For more information or to sign up, please call 603-422-8208 (press 2). To receive a listing of all parenting and family programs by e-mail each month, visit [www.FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org](http://www.FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org) and click on the "Read/subscribe" link at the bottom of the home page.

# Profile



Kelly and John Habig came from very different hometowns but, as chance would have it, both fell in love with the Portsmouth area more than twenty years ago and independently moved here. Kelly grew up in Western Maine. John grew up in the foothills in New Jersey. Both worked hard to put themselves through college.

John began his career working with a Wall Street firm in 1973. After two years commuting an hour and a half each way into the city, he was invited to advance his career with a move to the New Hampshire. Arriving in Portsmouth during a blizzard in 1975, John admits, "There was a bit of a transition. I grew up in suburbia but quickly came to love the Seacoast area."

John and Kelly's three children range in age from 21 to 26. "I can't imagine a more wonderful community to raise one's children in" says Kelly. "We were so impressed with the support, encouragement, and nurturing environment that the community provided to our children. John and I are now in a position to give back to the community that was so good to our children."

Over the last twenty years, Kelly and John have worked with a number of non-profits serving the Seacoast area. They are particularly committed to the organizations that address the community's health and human services needs.

*"It is so important to give children a good start. Basic care is not always available to families, and our hearts go out to these children." — Kelly Habig*

The Habigs' involvement with Families First began initially through John's role as Senior Vice-President for Wealth Management at Smith Barney in Portsmouth, which allows him to invite local organizations to apply for funding from the CitiFoundation. Since 2004, John's invitations have led to Families First receiving three grants from the foundation to support dental care for children.

The couple became involved with Families First on a more personal level in 2005, when they contacted the United Way asking for information about local nonprofits through which they could directly help families who were going through tough times.

They learned that Families First provides prenatal, primary, and dental care to children, and Kelly was very impressed with their dental program. "It is so important to give children a good start," she says. "Basic care is not always available to families, and our hearts go out to these children."

For four years now, the Habigs have been making major gifts to Families First, which the agency uses to support parenting and family programs such as home visiting, care coordination and parenting classes.

Kelly summarizes their experience: "John and I are always appreciative of the thoughtful ways Helen Taft and the Families First staff direct our donation. Each year we receive a letter describing how the gift was used and how it touched a family in need."

> continued from front page

The Electronic Health Record also helps because as a dentist I can easily see what other health conditions a patient has. It's a much more whole-person approach. With the multifaceted problems that Families First patients have, this is a great place to be dealing with them. **Dr. Crowe:** I think people who work at community health centers feel like they are serving a greater need than you might in private practice or in a hospital practice. I can't say enough good things about Jane Cummings [the nurse who works intensively with diabetic patients at Families First]. She is one of the top-notch people I have ever worked with: dedicated, committed and knows her patients so well.

Also, community health centers were far ahead of everyone else in terms of having the Electronic Health Record. It was astounding and wonderful to see that Families First had that. And they had already tried cutting-edge things, like group visits, that other practices were just starting to think about.



During his last two years at the Center for Diabetes and Endocrinology in Portsmouth, **Dan Crowe, MD**, spent one day a month seeing complicated

diabetic patients at Families First. He is now chair of adult medicine and director of diabetes care with a medical group in Massachusetts.

#### What rewards do you get through volunteering at Families First?

**Dr. Worrell:** The fact that you are just here and doing something is rewarding. It's important because this facility has such a huge background of support in place. It's a great place for patients to be able to come and get that. It's been fun watching Families First grow. It started out in one small room — now look at it! It certainly has filled a need in the community.

**Dr. McArdle:** You see some people whom you just know that if they weren't being helped in the dental clinic they wouldn't get help anywhere. Most of the patients are very appreciative. When you are done with your work you feel good. You feel like you did something more than you had to, and it was worth it.

**Dr. Homicz:** There is a great satisfaction in being able to put a smile on someone's face. Sometimes it's not a dramatic change, but making a small change and treating the person right makes a big difference. We do that all the time. Of all the things I do now, this is where I like to hang my hat. Dealing with the population, dealing with the rest of the staff, is rewarding in and of itself. I'm grateful to be a part of it.

### Make a Difference Today

We are grateful for all the financial support we receive throughout the year. Each contribution, large or small, allows us to continue offering our valuable services to thousands of individuals and families. Some ways you can help:

#### DONATE

- Donate at [www.familiesfirstseacoast.org/donate.html](http://www.familiesfirstseacoast.org/donate.html)
- Give a gift of appreciated stock.
- Make a gift to our endowment fund to help ensure we will be able to permanently meet our clients' needs.
- Consider planned-giving vehicles that confer considerable tax advantages while meeting your philanthropic goals.
- Celebrate any occasion by making a gift in the name of someone who has made a difference in your life, or donate in memory of a loved one.

#### EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Host a house party to help us educate the community about the important work we do.
- Come visit Families First for a tour of our facility. Bring friends, family or coworkers.

For more about making a donation, hosting a house party or scheduling a tour, please contact Martha Cunningham at 422-8208 x144 or [MCunningham@FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org](mailto:MCunningham@FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org).

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## In the News

### A 'SNAPSHOT' OF HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The following are excerpts from media coverage of Families First.

For links to the complete stories, visit [www.FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org/inthenews.html](http://www.FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org/inthenews.html).

#### Vote 'yes' to support Families First

*Vickie Sawyer, Hampton Union and Atlantic News (letter to the editor), February 2008*

As a full-time college student and part-time nanny without health or dental insurance, Families First Health and Support Center in Portsmouth has been a lifesaver.

My first experience with Families First was attending one of its many helpful parenting classes to hone my child-care skills. The teachers were superb. Shortly thereafter, I became a patient of its health center for an affordable annual physical and flu shot. Most recently, its dental center prepared my teeth for surgery by a local private dentist, which saved me hundreds of dollars. I am so thankful for Families First that I have been volunteering on its Consumer Advisory Committee for five years.

Families First provides important services to area residents who cannot afford market rates for these services. Please consider voting "yes" on the Families First article on March 11.

*Note: With the help of Vickie and many other Hampton residents, Families First did receive \$10,000 in funding from the Town of Hampton this year for the first time!*

#### Are you stealing crucial life lessons from your teen?

*Joanna Wicklein, Families First Parent Educator, SeacoastParentsConnect.com, January 2008*

Which of these have you done for your teen: Paid a bill that they rang up? Gone to school to explain them to their teacher? Argued for a better grade or treatment? Called in sick for them when they weren't sick? Done part of their homework for them? Gotten them a job? Done their chores? Made an excuse for them? Made calls for them that they didn't want to make?

We all have done some of these. And all of us should do some of these at times — to teach kindness, to save up for the bigger battles, because it's nice to do things for your kids. Teens still need guidance, encouragement and the benefit of a more experienced person. They also need to feel that their parent has faith in them.

So when and how often should we fill in for our teens?

Every time you are about to do something for your teen ask yourself:

1. Is my teen capable of doing this by themselves? If yes expect her to do it. If not, at the very least try to involve her in some way so she can begin to become capable.
2. Is this a skill or lesson my child should learn before becoming an adult? If yes, let him do it himself. Step in only to provide enough guidance and help so that you can then step out again.
3. What behavior of my teens leads to me to fill in for them here? Is it one I want to change? The more you fill in, the less likely you will see a change in the behavior. Period.

Then, steel yourself to not steal the lessons from your kid. This is usually hard. The "Living With Teens" program at Families First Health & Support Center on January 9th will be your chance to explore whether you are "rescuing" your teen, and your opportunity to get some strategies for keeping firm and consistent in your specific situation.

Support for Families ...  
Health Care for All

#### New grants

Families First thanks the following organizations for awarding grant support of at least \$2,500 to support Families First programs between January and June: Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Citizens Bank Foundation, Seacoast Women's Giving Circle, Endowment for Health, Northeast Delta Dental Foundation, Piscataqua Savings Bank and CVS Caremark.



On behalf of her employer, Bank of America, Families First Board member **Kristen Hanley**, left, presented Families First with a \$12,000 grant to support health care for the uninsured.



The Citizens Bank Foundation, represented by Seacoast Regional Manager **Kate Burns**, recently donated \$10,000 to support translation, transportation and other services that remove barriers to accessing care at Families First.