

Kids & Philanthropy: A Winning Combination

At Families First we are privileged to witness many acts of generosity and kindness by people of all ages, but we are always moved a little bit more when children make a gift or volunteer their time to help others.

Parents, grandparents, teachers and coaches play an important role in teaching and modeling giving and volunteering as an important part of being a citizen and a responsibility we have to our community, our country and even our world.



Families First Program Director Keryn Kriegl (pictured above volunteering at our Feel-Good Festival with sons Josh and Spencer) offers these tips on encouraging charitable impulses in your children:

- Do your children know to whom you give? Involve them in decisions about family giving and volunteering, and do volunteer work that reflects their interests.
 - Discuss your children's concerns about the world, and identify organizations that are working on the problems about which your child is concerned. A national charity may come to mind first, but identifying a local organization working on similar issues allows your child to get more involved, perhaps by volunteering or participating in a fundraiser (such as Families First's Hunt for Health)!
 - When your children are old enough to have money of their own (whether from allowance or employment), encourage them to give regularly and generously to the projects that excite them.
 - Younger children like to see a direct connection between their money and giving to charity, such as putting coins in a Salvation Army kettle. At home, you can create this connection by setting up a jar labeled "My contribution money" or something else to reinforce the idea that the money in the jar is for a special purpose. When the money reaches a certain amount, or when you reach a set time interval (such as the end of each school year), make the donation to the charity your child has selected.
 - Prepare your kids before you take them to a volunteer activity or fundraiser—maybe with a relevant storybook or video—and reflect together after the activity. Intentional preparation and reflection help young people view the world from another perspective.
- People who contribute their time or money to help others often say, "I gained so much more from the experience than I gave." So following these steps is a win-win for your kids and their causes.

Make a Difference Today

We are grateful for all the financial and volunteer support we receive throughout the year from many individuals, businesses and organizations. Each contribution, large or small, allows us to continue offering our valuable services to thousands of individuals and families throughout the Seacoast.

There are many ways to help:

- Send a donation in the envelope that's tucked into this newsletter, or to the address at right.
- Consider putting a monthly or quarterly donation on your credit card.
- Give a gift of appreciated stock.
- Include Families First in your will.
- Volunteer on an ongoing basis, or sign up to receive e-mail notice of our once-in-awhile volunteer needs. For the most updated volunteer opportunities, visit our web site, click on Volunteer, and link to the United Way's Volunteer Action Center.

For more information on volunteering or donating, please contact Development Coordinator Laura Keller at 422-8208 ext. 132 or LKeller@FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Your gift of time or treasure will make a difference in the life of an individual or family and the community we live in.

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Calling All Would-Be Calendar Artists

March 30 and 31 are the days to submit artwork for display at The Children's Museum and possible reproduction in our 2008 *Artists of the Seacoast* calendar. For details, see our web site ("artwork" link near bottom of home page), or call Nancy Casco at 422-8208x126.



Board Changes

Attorney Dan Schwarz, shown here kissing a lobster for the Hunt for Health scavenger hunt, became Families First Board Chair this year after serving on the Board for many years. Also this fall, Linda Sanborn and Alicia Deane joined the Board.



Take a Chance on Beauty

Try your luck at winning this handmade, one-of-a-kind quilt created and donated by the PiscataQuilters of Portsmouth (approximately 5' x 6.5'). See the quilt in living color in our lobby, or view a photo on our web site. For tickets (\$1 each, with volume discounts), contact Laura Keller at Families First by April 30.



New Faces in our Health Center

We welcomed three new lead members to our medical staff last fall. Margery Prazer, RN, left, heads our prenatal program. Dr. Robert Slocum and nurse practitioner Lynne Henning are new primary care providers, joining longtime nurse practitioner Pam Hagan (not pictured).



Spring Art Sale Coming May 17

Board member Donna Ryan sets out food from her restaurant, Anneke Jans, at the Spring Art Sale last year. This year's sale will be May 17, once again at the Banks Gallery in Market Square. Please save the date.

Support for Families...
Health Care for All

3 Ways to Help While Dining, Shopping

BLUE MERMAID island grill

The Blue Mermaid Island Grill, on The Hill in Portsmouth, will be donating a portion of food sales on the third Thursday of each month to Families First, beginning March 15 and continuing for several months. Enjoy "an oasis of Caribbean-inspired cuisine" and a special family menu on these benefit days.



Have you dined with an ocean view lately? Each Friday night through the end of May, Saunders at Rye Harbor will donate a portion of proceeds from food sales to Families First! Saunders will also feature live entertainment these evenings. (Details at www.saundersatryeharbor.com)



Whenever you shop, book travel, order photos, buy tickets or send flowers online, stop first at www.CharityBlast.com to be linked to your favorite site. Families First will receive a donation equal to a portion of your purchases.



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

Winter/Spring 2007

A NEWSLETTER FOR
DONORS, FUNDERS
AND FRIENDS OF
FAMILIES FIRST

'This Place is a School for Parents'

Between them, Kate Abbott and Marco Menendez have participated in every kind of program the Families First Family Center has to offer, from parenting classes and support groups, to family programs, to home visiting.

Kate almost never misses a Tuesday parenting class. "Even if I don't know what class is being offered that night, I know it will pertain to one of my kids. The '1-2-3 Magic' class worked wonders for Madison," she says of her seven-year-old daughter. Based on the book by the same name, the class teaches parents to stop unwanted behaviors by giving two warnings, followed by a consequence such as a time out if needed. "It works *not* because she is so afraid of getting a time out," says Kate, "but because I learned to leave emotion and discussion out of it."

Kate also attends our Single Parents group, and appreciates that Families First provides free child care and dinner for kids during evening classes and groups.

Besides taking care of Madison and her brother, Joshua, age two, and working toward a bachelor's degree in psychology at Hesser College, Kate spends a lot of time helping her mother. When Josh was diagnosed with health problems last August, Family Programs Coordinator Pam Mattingly realized Kate needed some extra support and referred her to our home visiting program.

Kate says her home visitor, Becca Neault, "is down-to-earth, supportive, and suggests wonderful resources. For instance, I spend a lot of time helping my mother and taking care of my kids. We came to the conclusion that a gym membership would be helpful so I could have some 'me' time. Becca thought of the YMCA because they provide child care. She even looked into a Y scholarship for me. It is nice that I don't always



Joshua, Kate and Madison Abbott

have to do *all* of it by myself."

Kate and Becca also have been troubleshooting how to get Josh to sleep in his own bed. Becca explains: "A lot of it is Kate doing the work. I just ask her questions, like



Marco, Mary and Marco Menendez

What's the hardest part? I also went back to the office and got some tips for her from our parent educators — such as the importance of keeping the same routine each night — and some donated books to help with the bedtime routine."

Meanwhile, Marco and his two-year-old son (also named Marco) are working their way through our playgroups for parents and children. After graduating from Babytime, they now enjoy Terrific Toddlers whenever Marco has a day off from his job running a biomanufacturing unit at Lonza.

What Marco got from Babytime, he says, was "a lot of answers, and finding out that I have the same concerns that many parents have. For example, I was worried that my son was so shy and didn't want to interact with anyone but his parents. I come here, and I find seven other babies doing exactly the same thing! I said to myself, 'Alright, I am just going to support him in whatever his moment is.'"

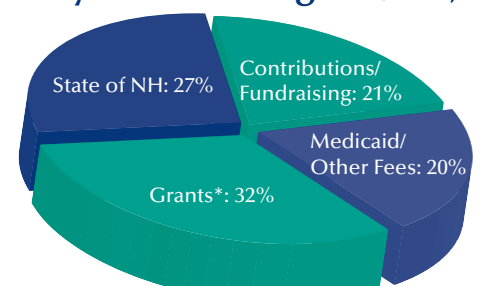
Marco says his wife, Mary, noticed the difference. "I used to be more worried. She sees that I have learned to go with the flow with him. The last two years have been more enjoyable." As Marco once said in a group, "The best thing that could have happened to my son was my coming to Babytime. The person who had to learn was me. *He* was fine. I learned to back off.

"They say there isn't a school for parents," Marco adds. "This place is a school for parents." For a schedule of Family Center programs, visit our web site or call 422-8208 (press 2).

Who Pays for All This?

To sustain our parenting and family programs and make sure cost is never a barrier, we rely on diversified revenue streams, including individual donations from people like John and Kelly Habig. The Habigs have designated generous contributions specifically to the Family Center for the past few years. They explain: "There are many wonderful charitable organizations here, but we have always felt passionate toward the ones that help children and their parents with basic needs. We are very proud to support and be involved in this much-needed effort."

Family Center Budget: \$660,000



*The Grants category includes these funders (in order of grant size): Foundation for Seacoast Health, United Way of the Greater Seacoast, Rockingham County Incentive Funds, Portsmouth Regional Hospital, Elkin Charitable Trust, NH Children's Trust Fund, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, Wheelabrator Technologies, Portsmouth Community Development Block Grants, International Women's Club of New England, Fuller Foundation, Provident Bank, Town of Seabrook, American Culinary Federation, Healthy NH Foundation, Town of North Hampton, Town of Hampton Falls.

Greetings

Dear Supporters and Other Friends,



In our cover story this month, you can read about how Families First's parenting and family programs benefited a new father who felt like he needed "a school for parents" and a single mother who needed extra support to cope with a child's illness and other challenges. Whether it is providing a parenting class, a home visit for one-on-one support or just a place to catch one's breath, Families First has been here to strengthen all types of families and teach them the skills to successfully navigate everyday parenting challenges and truly tough times.

We believe our parenting and family programs are an essential component of the overall health of our clients. Many of them initially come to us for medical or dental care but stay because of the compassionate and judgment-free assistance given by our Family Center home visitors, parent educators, family program leaders, support group facilitators, care coordinators, and child care providers.

Unlike our medical and dental services, most of our parenting and family programs are not reimbursed by Medicare, Medicaid or any type of insurance. Occasionally we are asked why we don't charge fees for most of these classes and programs, but we believe fees could deter people who most need these services from participating. Instead, we rely on the generosity of the foundations, governments, businesses and community organizations named on page 1, as well as the many individuals who give to our appeals throughout the year.

In a very real way, *you* are the family support system for Families First—holding us up in challenging times, being that extra hand when it is needed, and allowing us to move forward and continue to provide these life-changing programs.

When it comes to family matters it is often hard to turn to someone and ask for support, but when you feel like that person is family it becomes a



little easier. We will continue to look to you, as part of our family, for support so we can always say, "Yes, we can help," to someone who reaches out to us.

On behalf of many grateful Families First individuals and families, thank you for your generosity!

Helen B. Taft

Helen B. Taft
Executive Director

Fund-Raising & Friend-Raising

'The Most Fun I've Had Since I Was a 12-Year-Old Kid'

If you were in downtown Portsmouth on Saturday, September 30, you may have seen groups dressed in matching white T-shirts posing for photos with mannequins or seeking out strange items. No, they weren't confused tourists but participants in the first annual Hunt for Health fundraiser. Seventeen teams competed in a Seacoast-wide scavenger hunt, raising more than \$14,000 for Families First. Teams had three hours to complete as many of the 100 questions on the clue list as they could.

"You provided me with the most fun I've had since I was a 12-year-old kid—and I've led an adventurous life!" said one participant. "I can't stop smiling as I re-live the excitement of chasing down objects and answers from the clue list. The opportunity to live in the moment was priceless."

"My friends and I had a great time," said another. "If you have it again next year, you can count us in."

The day ended at the Community Campus with

the Feel-Good Festival, featuring food, music by Larry Simon and Groove Bacteria and The Serfs, games, and the Hunt awards ceremony.

We thank the many individuals and business that made the 2006 Hunt for Health a success! Names of sponsors, more photos, and the 2006 Hunt for Health clue list with answers can be found at www.FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org/HH/.

To reserve your team's spot in the 2007 Hunt this fall, or be part of the planning process, contact Laura Keller (422-8208x132) or lkeller@FamiliesFirstSeacoast.org.

Photos, clockwise from left: Arlon Chaffee's answer to the clue "Picture of a team member in a wedding gown or with a wedding party"; Development Coordinator Laura Keller, left, with Mayor Steve Marchand and his wife, Sandi Hennequin, event chair; Another wedding crasher: Board member Kathleen MacLeod; The Anneke Jans team, winning points by wearing their clothes backwards.



Members of Philoptochos, a Ladies Philanthropic Society of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, donated gift bags full of toiletries for Families First to distribute during the holiday season. From left to right are Philoptochos members Kiki Soris, Marsha Schofield and Bess Jack with Families First Program Director Keryn Kriegl.



The Portsmouth Clipper Girls Volleyball Teams shared their skills and talents with younger students at their second annual Raising the Net Volleyball Clinic, and donated \$1,225 in proceeds to Families First. Great work, girls, and Go Clippers! Above, Families First Executive Director Helen Taft poses with the team co-captains Anna Nocas, Amy Warren and the rest of the Clipper Volleyball teams.

2006 Holiday Appreciation

A huge thank you to the many companies and individuals who supported our 2006 Holiday Family Sponsor Program by fulfilling wish lists or donating other items, allowing disadvantaged families to have a brighter holiday season. These families received thousands of dollars worth of new toys, clothing and household items. Some of the companies who donated and/or organized donation drives among employees were Sprague Energy, New Castle Volunteer Fire Department, Portsmouth Regional Hospital, Northeast Credit Union, Sheds USA, Thermo Fisher Scientific, North Hampton Professional Firefighters Association, Elysium Arts, and Community Developmental Services.

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.

Families First Fun Night a treat in Portsmouth

Daymond Steer, *Foster's Daily Democrat*, August 3, 2006

PORTSMOUTH - For Kim Yacobucci, any chance to rest her eyes is priceless.

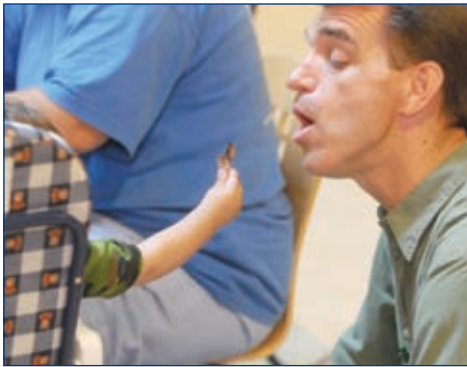
She is always busy because her son, C.J., is autistic and has cerebral palsy, making her respite Mondays at the Families First Fun Night special.

"I can't describe how it feels to sit back and not have to take on one crisis or another," she says.

Every Monday, Families First offers a "Family Fun Night" dinner at the Community Campus. Volunteers and staff serve a meal so family members can eat together. Then children have free time to play outside or in the New Heights gym while the parents get a 45-minute chance to rest.

On Monday, Portsmouth Mayor Steve Marchand, City Council members and City Manager John Bohenko visited family night to serve hamburgers, hotdogs and steak tips to the families.

Marchand said his mission was twofold: "What we are trying to do is spotlight Families First and the Community Campus in hopes of increasing volunteerism and to help people who need the services," he said.



Reprinted courtesy of Foster's Daily Democrat

City Councilor Ned Reynolds got playful with a guest at Family Fun Night when he and other City officials visited the program last summer.

Families First is vital link in children's health

Editorial, *Portsmouth Herald*, August 22, 2006



In New Hampshire right now there are approximately 17,000 children without health insurance.

Here in Portsmouth we are blessed to have the extraordinary Families First Health and Support Center that is working mightily to provide health care to every child in the region regardless of family income. No child or adult is ever turned away from Families First due to lack of insurance or ability to pay.

We think it is important for the community to know about this agency because there can be no more desperate feeling than to have a sick child at home while thinking you are unable to get medical help. Children who receive good health care and nutrition are less likely to become obese with all its attendant health risks, or develop diabetes or mental health problems. Healthy children have a better chance of success in school. Thanks to Families First and the NH Healthy Kids program, every boy and girl can receive the medical care they need regardless of

their parents' finances. No one will be turned away.

Families First, recognizing that [application paperwork] was standing between some community members and their primary care, has designed a new, much simpler application process.

This simple change in procedure has gotten 121 local children the health care they were entitled to in just the last six months. Other agencies around the state have seen the success of this change at Families First and have begun to implement it.

New Hampshire is often voted tops when it comes to taking care of its children. Agencies like Families First and programs like New Hampshire Healthy Kids contribute greatly to the quality of life for all our children.

Mixed signals: Medication alone won't solve mental health problems for adults

Colleen Lent, *Portsmouth Herald*, Oct. 19, 2006

People without homes face a distinct set of stressors. When survival is the primary goal, physical and mental health needs are secondary concerns, according to Maureen Keating, a registered nurse and coordinator of the Health Care for the Homeless Project at Families First in Portsmouth. Keating says the anxiety and fear connected with trying to find food, shelter, and safety deteriorates a homeless person's mental stability, which is already fragile.

Keating says individuals with homes tend to have a stronger support network of friends, relatives, and resources, easing mental health recovery. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration says the support networks of homeless individuals are often unraveled. Families First and other outreach organizations strive to mend the frayed fabric.

Check bad holiday habits

Maureen Reilly, *The Wire*, November 22, 2006

For many people, the holiday season is more about stress and pressure than it is about happiness and joy.

Joanna Wicklein, director of parent programming for Families First, spoke during a panel discussion about ways to reverse that trend and create meaningful holiday traditions. "Once again, Christmas has us firmly by the throat," Wicklein said, quoting P.G. Wodehouse, "and we must begin to peel those fingers away and make the holidays resonate with what you want — not what popular culture and other people tell you you want."

Wicklein said that with parental leadership, the holidays can provide an opportunity to teach children about the consumer culture they are exposed to year round, and kids can learn what is really important, beyond the gifts, through relaxed and loving time with family. It is this [time with family], Wicklein said, that children and adults will remember best next year and for years to come. "You feel like you're a part of something, and the traditions you create give kids a sense of pride and uniqueness," she said.

Profile



Piscataqua Savings Bank president Jay Gibson sets the tone for a culture of giving back to the community that permeates the entire staff, including Christine Fabisak, left, an assistant in the Loan Department, and Kathleen Donovan, assistant vice president and trust officer, who worked hard on the Holiday Giving Campaign.

"We've found our niche and we like it here" is a phrase that appears on materials at Piscataqua Savings Bank in downtown Portsmouth. Founded by Portsmouth locals in 1877, the one-branch mutual savings bank has kept strong local ties, making Seacoast customers and community top priority.

Piscataqua made one of the largest single donations in its history to help launch the Families First Dental Center in 2003. Bank president Jay Gibson explains: "Sandy Sherman, the former president of the bank, was very impressed, as we all were, with how well-organized and well-run Families First is. We felt the opportunity to bring a service like dental to the area was very important." The bank followed that grant with three more, for a total of \$55,000 given to Families First dental programs to date.

Piscataqua also sponsored our Mark Goodman Tap Co. fundraiser at the Music Hall in 2005, and chose us to benefit from their Holiday Giving Campaign this winter.

During the campaign, the bank collected winter clothing, toys and books for Families First clients, sold our *Artists of the Seacoast* calendars, collected monetary donations, and enclosed information about Families First with bank statements. "The holiday campaign touched people in ways we never thought possible," says campaign organizer Kathleen Donovan, an assistant vice president and trust officer. "Support was broad—it came from customers, corporators, trustees and others who weren't even bank customers." In all, an estimated \$2,500 worth of goods was collected, along with several hundred dollars in donations and calendar sales.

Families First is fortunate, but not unique, in benefiting from Piscataqua's community spirit. The bank contributes to a wide variety of youth, cultural, arts and historic preservation efforts, currently playing a major financial role in the restoration of the North Church Steeple. "The history of Portsmouth is important to us because we are part of it," Jay says. In addition, many bank officers and trustees serve as board members or volunteers for a variety of Seacoast organizations such as Prescott Park Arts Festival and Habitat for Humanity. "The value of giving back to the community is strongly upheld by our staff," says Jay. There may be a trickle-down effect at work here: Kathy says, "Jay leads the way for all our involvement in nonprofits."