Inside this Issue:
“Knowledge is Power!” 1
Program Highlight - MFOFC Western Region 1
Web Resources 2
Here’s Lucy! 2
Helpful Web Site 2
Conferences, Trainings & Workshops 3
Stone Soup Conference 3
More Conferences… 4
…and Even More Still! 4

Editor
Dana Dansereau

Columnist
Lucy Gabriela Beattie

Multicultural Community Services of the Pioneer Valley, Inc.
1000 Wilbraham Road
Springfield, MA 01109
413-782-2500

208 High Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
413-534-3299

3 State Street
Westfield, MA 01085
413-562-4885

MCS News & Views FALL 2008

“KNOWLEDGE is POWER”

English philosopher Sir Francis Bacon authored that quote back in 1597, and his words remain true to this day. The phrase implies that with knowledge or education one's potential or abilities in life will certainly increase. It is also used as a justification for a reluctance to share information, as some form of advantage might be gained through the use or manipulation of knowledge.

Having a family member with a disability can be a road filled with anxiety, indecision and uncertainty about both the present and the future. We sometimes feel that if we could only find the right doctor, the right medicine, the right program, or the right learning approach, then our family member could become normal and whole and overcome the disability. This search process can be very useful in the sense that it may help us locate resources and programs that might be helpful in our journey—and be shared with others walking in our shoes.

Samuel Johnson, another English author, wrote “Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.” To that end, this issue of the MCS News & Views is filled with information about upcoming conferences, workshops, trainings and web resources—powerful knowledge! And, as always, we mix in a little humor as well!

Program Highlight – MFOFC, Western Region

Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, Western Region (MFOFC) is one of five chapters of the statewide grassroots coalition dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities and their families. The mission of the organization is to provide sustained advocacy and leadership training in pursuit of high quality, individualized community support and service options, including family support, for people with disabilities and their families.

MFOFC has written and championed legislation to create statewide law for individual and family support. Every year, each MFOFC region provides a Family Leadership Series to help teach families about advocacy, services, local, state & Federal resources, and crafting a vision for their family member.

Hotel accommodations and meals are provided free of charge, and a stipend for respite/childcare and travel expenses is available. The western region series starts November 14 & 15—each of the four sessions will be held at the Yankee Inn on 461 Pittsfield Road in Lenox.

Participants for the Family Leadership Series can be single parents, couples, grandparents and mature siblings of the person with disabilities. An application is enclosed in this newsletter.
Web Resources

**communitygateway.org:** this site’s mission is to: (1) provide families, individuals and professionals with a gateway to quality local and worldwide disability resources and events; (2) assist in providing an Internet presence for local disability-related advocacy groups; and (3) promote a positive image for people with disabilities. Join community gateway’s Yahoo Groups listserv to connect with others who share your interests and passions. You send one email to the group and everyone will receive it. When someone replies, everyone gets the reply, too.

**www.nichcy.org:** NICHCY (which stands for the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities) offers a wealth of information on disabilities. The site serves the nation as a central source of information on: disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth; IDEA, which is the law authorizing special education; No Child Left Behind (as it relates to children with disabilities); and research-based information on effective educational practices.

**www.disabilityinfo.org:** Maintained by New England INDEX, this site is a wealth of information for people with disabilities, their friends, families and the people who serve them. Search the database for disability programs and services, view multicultural resources, locate emergency services, check out the fact sheet library, research physicians and dentists and learn about state agencies who serve individuals with disabilities, read disability news, or “ask” the index for specific information.

Here’s Lucy!

Lucy is the very magical cat who owns MCS Westfield Project Director Mary Beattie. Please send your serious or “whimsical” questions to the email address listed on the back page and Lucy will respond in the next issue. Below, Lucy describes cats & dogs...

**What is a Cat?**
Cats do what they want. They rarely listen to you and they’re totally unpredictable. They whine when they are not happy. When you want to play, they want to be alone. When you want to be alone, they want to play. Cats expect you to cater to their every whim. They’re moody. They leave hair everywhere. They drive you nuts and cost an arm and a leg. Conclusion: Cats are essentially women in little fur coats.

**What is a Dog?**
Dogs lie around all day sprawled on the most comfortable piece of furniture in the house. They come running like crazy if they hear a package of food opening from half a block away, but they don’t hear you when you’re in the same room. They can look dumb and lovable all at the same time. They growl when they are not happy. When you want to play, they want to play. When you want to be alone, they want to play. They are great at begging. They will love you forever if you rub their tummies. They leave their toys everywhere. They do disgusting things with their mouths and then they’ll try to give you a kiss. Conclusion: Dogs are essentially men in little fur coats.

Helpful Web Site:

SPEDWatch is a community of concerned citizens: a grassroots, nonprofit, social change movement working to eliminate the root causes of educational neglect of students with disabilities, ages 3-21. SPEDWatch members are working to eliminate the root causes of educational discrimination against Massachusetts students with disabilities, including: widespread noncompliance with, and poor enforcement of, special education laws; poor funding of education in general; a pervasive misunderstanding about who these students are and what they are capable of achieving; and a parent population which is isolated, unorganized, and often too afraid of retaliation to speak out publicly. Check out the Discussion link and lots of information can be found under the Resources link.
Conferences, Trainings and Workshops – Oh, my!

Friday, September 26  9:00am – 3:00pm
Sheraton Springfield Hotel  Springfield, MA
From School to Work and Independence
This free training about Transition Planning for students with disabilities age 14-22 and their families will be presented in English, Spanish and Russian. Participants will learn about: IEP transition services and planning requirements; MCAS, accessing state agency services and graduation readiness; how Mass Health and SSI benefits help in the transition from school to work; and the ABCs of employee and job applicant rights for people with disabilities. You may also sign up for individual sessions on your education, SSI, and work issues. Presented by Attorneys from the Disability Law Center and Benefits Specialists from Resource Partnership's BenePLAN program. You can register at http://www.dlcma.org/_conf/transition.asp; by phone at (800) 872-9992; by email at mail@dlc-ma.org; or by mail at DLC, 11 Beacon Street, Ste 925 Boston, MA 02108.

Saturday, September 27  10:00am – 3:00pm
Artesani Park  Boston, MA
Adaptive Recreation Fair  www.mass.gov/dcr/universal_access
Find out more about local and statewide adaptive recreation opportunities. The Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Universal Access Program (UAP) offers a free fun-filled day celebrating Accessible Outdoor Recreation available for individuals, families and friends of people with disabilities. Activities will include a cycling fair with an assortment of accessible cycles available for use, recreation activity demos, stretching for health, face painting, interpretive programs, a D.J. and more! Learn about DCR's inclusive, accessible programs and resources available to people of all abilities around the state.

Friday/Saturday, October 3 & 4  8:30am – 5:30pm
Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel  Marlborough, MA
Asperger Syndrome Connections
Sponsored by the Asperger’s Association of New England, this 2-day conference will feature more than 50 workshop choices.

Dr. Daniel Rossen, a pioneer in the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of Asperger Syndrome, will keynote on Friday and John Robison & his brother Augusten Burroughs will keynote on Saturday. More info can be found at www.aane.org.

Stone Soup - Bringing Together a Community (rescheduled from March 29)

Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC) will host a conference entitled Stone Soup – Bringing Together a Community on Saturday, October 4 from 8:30am to 3:30pm at the Holiday Inn at 265 Lakeside Drive in Marlborough, MA. The intent of this unique gathering is to assist individuals and their families to strengthen and utilize their communities for full membership and participation.

The name of the conference stems from “Stone Soup”, a children’s fable with a verse that states “What you’ve got, put it in the pot. Every bit counts, from the largest to the least-together we can celebrate.” The theme of this forum is that each of us has something to contribute that makes our lives richer and enriches our communities as well. Our abilities, passions, interests, skills and desires are all based upon this premise. Participants and presenters will discuss, brainstorm, listen and question all of the wonderful ways that people create opportunities to contribute and share in their communities.

Keynote speaker Kathie Snow has authored Disability is Natural Revolutionary Common Sense for Raising Successful Children with Disabilities. Kathy has written numerous articles about disability issues and gets rave reviews from her speaking engagements — visit her website at disabilityisnatural.com

The registration fee is $30 and scholarships are available from the MDDC (617-770-7676 ex. 115). Go to www.mfofc.org and click on Events for more info. You may also email Dianne Huggon at mfofc@comcast.net •
We Want Your Input!

Got an interesting story to submit or a topic of interest to suggest? Want to express your opinion about anything in this newsletter or discuss any thoughts or concerns you may have about disability related issues? Contact MCS News & Views editor Dana Dansereau at:

Phone: 413-562-4885, ext. 11
Fax: 413-572-9707
Email: danadansereau@mcsnet.org

Too Punny…

The price of the big fan simply blew me away.

“To be is to do.” Socrates
“To do is to be.” Plato
“Do be do be do” Sinatra

The Pope, on his 2008 tour across the United States, skipped Mass.

The old calendars I found are SO outdated.

The man put his name on the neck of his shirt so he could have collar ID.

The number of kangaroos and wallabies meant for the new wildlife enclosure grew by leaps and bounds.

More Conferences, Trainings and Workshops…

Wednesday, October 15  8:00am – 4:00pm
Hogan Center @ Holy Cross College
Worcester, MA
15th Annual Shared Living Conference
Massachusetts pioneered the Shared Living model over 30 years ago, having realized that people with developmental disabilities truly benefit from strong, lasting relationships in a family-like setting and real involvement with their community. For more information, go to www.sharedlivingconference.com.

Wednesday, October 29  8:30am – 3:30pm
Sheraton Four Points Hotel
Leominster, MA
Assistive Technology Expo
Hosted by Easter Seals of Massachusetts, the Assistive Technology Expo is a one-day seminar designed to provide awareness of assistive technology through workshops and exhibitors. For more info, call 508-751-6309 or go to www.eastersealsma.org and click on Assistive Technology.

… and Even More Still!

Wednesday, Nov. 5  8:30am – 3:00pm
Indian Meadows  Westborough, MA
Joining Voices
Joining Voices is an opportunity for families with children & youth with special healthcare needs to learn specific skills to advocate effectively for their children, make informed decisions about healthcare services & supports, and ultimately be better partners in decision-making with health care providers, other providers, systems of care, and with policymakers. The event is hosted by the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center, a project of Mass Family Voices @ Federation for Children with Special Needs. This is a free day of learning and networking for families with children and youth who have special healthcare needs (including mental, behavioral and emotional needs). Space is limited and priority iwll be given to family members of children and youth with special healthcare needs. For more information, visit massfamilyvoices.org to see the conference brochure and to register online, or you may phone Beth Dworetzky at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210.

About Our Organization…

Multicultural Community Services of the Pioneer Valley (MCS) is committed to providing culturally and ethnically responsive supports that enhance the capacities of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to maximize their quality of life as individuals and as members of the larger community.

MCS is committed to: excellence in the provision of individualized services by promoting individual control, choice and independence; promoting the human rights and dignity of all people; being a responsive, accessible and flexible resource for individuals and families; and enhancing communities by supporting inclusion of all its members.

MCS – West
3 State Street
Westfield, MA 01085