



Family Nurturing Center
of Massachusetts

NURTURING

NETWORK

news

Fall 2007

A Note from Matt LiPuma, FNC Executive Director

It's fall. At Family Nurturing Center that means two things: our fall newsletter and our one big annual fundraising event—the **Rodman Ride for Kids** (see page 6). FNC joins 21 other non-profits in an annual bike ride sponsored and underwritten by Don Rodman, a Dorchester native, of Rodman Ford. This is a wonderful time to support FNC and its work!

FNC's Board, staff and community partners recently reviewed and re-affirmed the organization's mission and values and developed an aggressive strategic plan that will bring high quality family support programs to many more families and communities across the city and the Commonwealth over the next five years. The plan calls for an expansion of FNC's training and technical assistance; a stronger emphasis on outcome measurement; and an investment in FNC infrastructure and new program development. The plan sets clear goals and strategies for achieving the plan elements and commits FNC to developing the resources and partnerships necessary to ensure its success. The details of the plan can be found on FNC's website: www.familynurturing.org.

Looking at our work over the past year, we seem to be off to a great start on pursuing the goals of our strategic plan. FNC staff is working with DSS and community partners in Worcester, Lawrence, and Plymouth to train staff and bring Nurturing Programs to those communities. In Boston, FNC has been collaborating with Countdown to Kindergarten and the Boston Public Schools to expand the "Play to Learn" groups developed last year (see page 3). This past spring, city and community partners in Charlestown, with support from FNC, came together to deliver their first Nurturing Program.

As the city of Boston grapples with violence and an ever-present "achievement gap," the city's institutions, funders, and community agencies increasingly are looking for strategies that support families and address the learning and healthy development of children as early in their lives as possible. One

comprehensive effort, the **Mayor's Birth to Five Initiative**, is a citywide planning process that began in March, 2007. It brings together parents, child care providers, pediatricians, educators, and other experts to develop a comprehensive plan for early learning in the City of Boston. The goals of this initiative are to **prevent the achievement gap, promote school readiness, and ensure the healthy development of the city's youngest children (ages birth to five)**. Now, halfway through its planning phase, the initiative seems poised to make broad, sustainable recommendations for ensuring that the children of all Boston families enter Kindergarten ready to learn. These are likely to include **providing comprehensive support to families, improving the quality of the early care and education system, and creating a "supportive early learning environment" across the city**. Central to the planning process has been a review of the latest brain research, which is again confirming both the urgency and the cost benefit of supporting families as early in their child's development as possible.

This facilitated planning process has been led by the Mayor's Office and driven by a group of 60 early care and education experts from all sectors in the city. FNC is thrilled to be a key partner in this effort. The initiative also has a diverse group of more than 30 parents at the table, ensuring that parent voices are being heard and that parents' stated needs will drive the recommendations. Watch for a report of the initiative's work, which will be released soon and widely distributed. The first phase of the initiative is



Three generations of this family graduated together from the Allston-Brighton Nurturing Program in June, 2007.

scheduled to wrap up in December.

As the planning proceeds, the City of Boston is also making a large investment in family support and early literacy programming for families with young children. **Smart from the Start (S2)** is a family support and community engagement initiative that will promote low-income children entering school with the cognitive, language, physical, and social/emotional assets that facilitate school and life success. FNC is providing technical assistance in a collaboration that includes the **Mayor's Office, the Boston Housing Authority, Boston Centers for**

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A Tale of Two Nurturing Programs

Nurturing Parenting programs are designed to work with the entire family—ideally, everyone comes to the program together to learn nurturing strategies and techniques that will enhance family communication and create a more harmonious household where every member has their needs met. When FNC realized how many of its participants were families headed by mothers only, we began our Nurturing Fathers' Program to serve dads who wanted to improve their connections to their children, whatever their ages or circumstances. What follows is a story, told by two FNC staff members, of two Nurturing Programs and how they benefited one family.

John O'Neil, Nurturing Fathers' Program Director:

During one of the Nurturing Fathers' group sessions, "Mr. C" remarked that he wished there were "a group like this for mothers," so that his ex-wife could attend and learn the same nurturing concepts that he was learning. He and his ex-wife had been divorced for ten years. Since that time, he has had full custody of their three children, who are now teenagers. Mr. C stated that he and his ex-wife were constantly at odds, and he

felt that she tried to undermine his parenting efforts.

I informed Mr. C about the Nurturing Parenting Program for Families & Children, where he, his ex-wife, and his children could all attend together. He contacted Maxine at Stony Brook CARES in Roslindale and registered his family for the fifteen-week program.

Maxine Hall, Neighborhood Development Coordinator, Roslindale:

The first week they came, none of the family members, except Mr. C, knew what to expect. It was obvious that mom and the kids didn't really want to be there.

"I have been so inspired by the fathers' group and the family program that I really want my family to be enrolled."

—Father's Group participant

As the weeks passed and the parent group bonded with trust, empathy, and the power of communication,

we found out that dad and mom were having difficulty co-parenting and disagreed with each others' parenting styles. We were able to get them both to re-examine their role as parents and caretakers, using the concepts and ideas outlined in the Nurturing Program curriculum. Soon they were able to improve their communication skills and come to a clearer understanding of how best to relate to each other and to their children.

It was also amazing how the three teens came to accept the program. The first couple of weeks they participated reluctantly. Towards the end, they were eagerly participating in all aspects of the group, which included their performance of the "Hokey Pokey" in front of the whole group. They were laughing and joking and generally enjoying themselves and each other.

Upon completion of the program, mother, father, and the children thanked the facilitator for "saving" their family. The relationship between the parents had dramatically improved—so much that other members of the group would jokingly say, "Tell us again why you are divorced?" *They couldn't help but appear closer, because they were finally parenting together.* ■

The Golden Rule

By Eileen McKeown, volunteer facilitator

I became involved with the Charlestown Nurturing Program shortly after my return from a two month volunteer trip to New Orleans last year. I was looking for a way to connect with my Boston community the way that I had connected to the people and the service work in New Orleans.

As a first time facilitator, I had reservations about whether I was a good fit, or if I was going to be able to effectively communicate the curriculum each week so that it would resonate with the kids and help them to make good decisions. All of those fears were put to rest by the second or third week, when an 8 year old boy from my group exclaimed, "I remember what you were teaching us last week!" I asked what it was that had stuck with him. He looked shyly around the room and then whispered in my ear, "I keep thinking about the Golden Rule!"

This pleased me to no end! We had been discussing the power of good decision making the previous week, and I felt that I was not getting through. So I simplified the message: what would happen if we all treated each other the way we would



A father, mother, and a great aunt learn more about nurturing each other and their little one in the Charlestown program.

want to be treated? That propelled us into a child-driven discussion on how things during their day would have been different if they, or others around them, had made their choices with that message in mind. The fact that a full week later this boy was still processing and (hopefully) utilizing that message made all my apprehensions disappear. We referred to "The Golden Rule" throughout the program. I think it helped to have a central message that could be applied to most lessons in our curriculum. Sometimes it is the simplest of words and actions that have the greatest impact.

The Charlestown Nurturing Program was developed through a collaboration including FNC, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF), and the following community partners: Mission Safe, The John F. Kennedy Center, MGH, Kennedy Center Head Start, the Charlestown Boys and Girls Club, and the Charlestown Substance Abuse Coalition. Funding was provided by BHA, BCYF, and the Children's Trust Fund. Thank you all for making this program possible! ■

Jamaica Plain/Allston-Brighton

FNC Playgroup Model Expands Across Boston!

In 2006, FNC collaborated with Boston Public School's Countdown to Kindergarten program to establish a new Playgroup site at the Early Learning Center West (housed in the Hennigan School) in Jamaica Plain. Due to the success of this "Play to Learn" Group, modeled after FNC's Allston-Brighton Playgroups held at the Winship School, the project will expand to four new sites, beginning this fall! Four new Boston Public Schools (BPS) have decided to open their doors to welcome Boston's families with toddlers and preschool-aged children. The schools (Holmes Elementary, Kenny Elementary, Lee Academy/Lee Elementary, and Tobin Community Center/Tobin Elementary) will each hold four Playgroups per week. BPS has made a commitment to bring Playgroups to more families over the next few years; the goal is to have them in 20 schools across Boston.

Playgroup Outcomes

A Parent Survey was administered to all families at the end of the year. 96 families (about 50%) responded to the survey. Some of the significant findings were as follows:

Parents report that they attend Playgroup for a variety of reasons: social activity for child (94%), the structured activities (73%), learning op-

portunities for child (64%), social opportunity for parent (54%), learning about community resources (36%), and learning new parenting ideas (34%).

100% of parents report that attending Playgroup has been helpful to their children: socialization (90%), participating in structured activities (79%), exposure to diversity (61%), developing more independence (55%), and getting prepared for school (46%).

78% of parents reported that their child changed as a result of attending the Playgroup: child grew socially (68%); child developed new interests (42%); improved behavior at home (23%); child's language improved (23%).

99% of parents said that attending Playgroup was helpful to them as parents: it provided something to do with their child (78%); it was a social opportunity for parents (77%); parents learned activity ideas (75%) and parenting ideas (51%); parents learned about community resources (51%) and child development (45%).

Parents gained parenting skills: 54% of parents said that they changed as a parent; Parents report having more patience (15%); gained confidence in their parenting role (15%); learned to implement structure



A little girl and her father put a puzzle together at the Allston-Brighton Playgroup held in the Winship School.

and routines (8%); gained better listening and communication skills (8%).

The survey results show great diversity among the families! There are families from 24 countries represented, speaking 13 languages at home. A few highlights of the demographics are*:

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The Allston-Brighton Even Start Family Literacy Program

Thirteen families and 22 children graduated on August 1 from this 17 month Family Literacy Program funded through the Massachusetts Department of Education. An energetic team of Jackson Mann Community Center (JMCC) ESOL teachers, child care staff, program coordinator, adult education director and two FNC Family Support Specialists met weekly to plan and provide English, parenting skills, and early childhood classes. Spanish and Portuguese speaking parents and their preschoolers living in Allston or Brighton participated in Even Start three afternoons each week and received monthly home visits.

Over this summer, we supported the expansion of children's and parents' vocabulary and book reading through field trips to the Roger Williams Zoo, a Duck Tour, a visit to the "Make Way for Ducklings" sculptures in the Boston Public Garden, and a trip to Drumlin Farm. At the Zoo, one BPS K-1 student-to-be told his mother, "When I'm bigger, I am going to ride that camel!" We celebrated on August 1st with African drumming, a delicious pot luck dinner, and cake. Parents and children

received certificates and "Family Activity Boxes" of school readiness materials and instructions and many books!

All "graduating" adults and children progressed on their evaluated English skills and concepts and all of the children will attend early childhood programs this fall in a Boston Public School, Head Start, or in quality child care. In all, 18 families and 31 children participated over the 17 months.

In August, DOE funding ended for 18 of the 22 statewide Even Start Programs. Moving forward, our collaborating organizations, JMCC, FNC, and the Jackson Mann Elementary School, hope to continue a smaller version of this much needed and appreciated Family Literacy program and are actively looking for funding. Congratulations to all of the families, children, and staff who worked closely together, learned so much from each other, and built a supportive and interactive community. ■

Thanks for Your Help

Thanks to all of our current funders...

Boston Centers for Youth & Families	First Realty Management	MA Department of Social Services	Paul & Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation
The Boston Foundation	John Hancock	Mabel Louise Riley Foundation	Remmer/Fox Family Fund
BPS/Community Partnerships for Children	Kargman Charitable & Educational Foundation	New Balance Foundation	Rodman Ride for Kids
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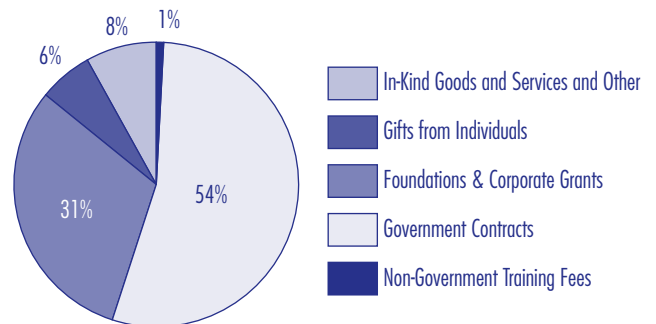
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FNC By the Numbers

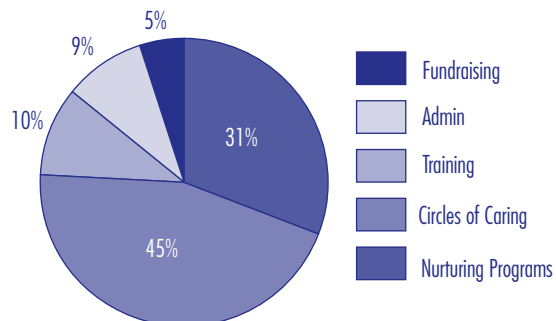
A sampling of FNC team accomplishments during FY 2007

- :: Served 153 families in Nurturing Programs
- :: Trained 501 participants in skill-based, interactive trainings
- :: Worked with strategic partners to deliver 529 Welcome Baby baskets to Boston families with newborns
- :: Coordinated and participated in more than 10 community-building events that engaged more than 299 volunteers
- :: Supported over 675 families through advocacy efforts and program activities in Roslindale, Allston-Brighton and Jamaica Plain

FNC FY '07 Support



FNC FY '07 Expenses



FNC RIDES AGAIN!

With a fundraising goal of \$125,000 and a growing biking team of new and veteran riders, FNC is poised for its most successful year ever with the **Rodman Ride for Kids!** On **Saturday, September 29th**, Team FNC will participate for its third year in this phenomenal event, which benefits 22 non-profit agencies across the state and will raise \$5 million this year for the children they serve. 100% of your donation to the Family Nurturing Center through the Ride will support our programs—plus, we'll receive a 15% match! If you've been an ongoing supporter of FNC, you know that now is the best time to make your donation (and we've even provided a handy envelope!). If you've been reading about what FNC has been doing and

learning what big things are ahead in our work with families and children, why not become a supporter for the first time and make your contribution go even further?



Donating is easy: make a check out to **Rodman Ride for Kids/FNC** and mail it to us in the enclosed envelope. OR, to donate online, go to **www.rodmanrideforkids.org**, click on the Donate to Agency tab, choose Family Nurturing Center, and enter your General Donation amount (to sponsor a specific Team FNC rider, click Sponsor a Rider on the left). Any amount is welcome and appreciated—keep in mind that with the 15% match a \$100 donation will turn into \$115 when it reaches us after the event! Though the Ride takes place at the end of September, **we can still accept donations through November 30. Thanks for your support! ■**

Matt LiPuma from page 1



Matt LiPuma and Keith Williams are still smiling after completing the 50 mile route in last year's Rodman Ride for Kids.

Youth and Families, the BPS, and community partners in Mattapan, Roslindale, and Charlestown. The partner organizations will introduce a comprehensive, community-based S2 family support system for children ages birth to five and their families living in or near a BHA housing development co-located with a BCYF community center. The S2 family support system will include multiple programming options that build on neighborhood strengths and interests and are integrated into (and sustained by) local neighborhood resources and institutions. Smart from the Start is in its early stages but already has significant funding commitments, some multi-year, from the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Family Foundation, The Boston Foundation, John Hancock, Children's Hospital, and the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation.

To drive FNC's participation in these new family support initiatives, we are raising our fundraising profile. Our focus at this time of the year is on September 29 in Foxboro, when Team FNC will pedal for kids and families. We hope you'll support us for that event, and we offer many thanks to all our riders and donors so far! ■

Playgroups from page 3

Ethnicity: 48% Caucasian, 19% Asian, 14% Black/African-American, 10% Latino, 8% Brazilian, 6% Multi-racial.

Country of origin: 50% United States, 17% Asian countries, 9% European (both Western and Eastern), 7% South American countries, 5% Central American or Caribbean countries, and 3% Middle Eastern countries.

Language spoken at home: 71% speak English; 7% speak Chinese. Other languages include Japanese, Hebrew, Arabic, Korean, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Bulgarian, German, and American Sign Language.

Family Income: 40% of families have a family income of under \$50,000 per year.

It's clear that both parents and children love coming to Playgroup! Some parent comments from the recent survey speak to this:

"This is a great program with a lot of benefits for all types of kids. I love the racial/socio-economic/ethnic diversity as well. It's amazing that it's free!"

"Thanks for helping and teaching me... (my) child is happy and social as a result of the Playgroup. I'm sorry I don't write English very well but my heart smiles."

"I think the playgroups are a great way for children and families to get together. Both my daughter and I look forward to it every week. To me, it is a great preparation for school."

Look on the FNC website to see a short documentary about the Playgroups! The link is <http://jeffreychong.net/PTLedit/PTL004.html>

*Note: this represents the number of families who filled out the Year-End Survey, not all the families who attended Playgroups. ■

Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts

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(617) 474-1143 Fax: (617) 474-1261 • www.familynurturing.org

A variety of neighborhood based Nurturing Programs for Families are now available, each specially designed for the parents and children they serve. Programs range in length, are free, include a meal, and are offered at various times and locations. To learn more about referring families to a program or about joining a Nurturing Team of facilitators, please contact the person listed beside the program.

Boston Area Nurturing Program Calendar: Fall 2007

LOCATION	PROGRAM TYPE	COMMUNITY PARTNER	DAY/TIME	OTHER INFO	CONTACT
Hyde Park	Nurturing Fathers' Program	FNC, Hyde Park Area DSS Office	Tuesdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: October 16	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	John O'Neil 617.474.1143 x251
Jamaica Plain	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children (Spanish)	Jamaica Plain Tree of Life/Arbol de Vida	Fridays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: October 12	Referral: open Transportation: provided	Wanda Guzman 617.777.7005
Lynn	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	Lynn Community Connections	Wednesdays, 4–8 ^{PM} Start date: October	Referral: closed Transportation: provided	Sarah Leanman 781.477.2902
Roslindale	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	FNC Stony Brook CARES	Thursdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: November	Referral: open Transportation: provided	Maxine Hall 617.325.6732
Roxbury	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children (Spanish)	Elizabeth Stone House	Wednesdays, 4:30–7:30 ^{PM} Start date: November 8	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	Alicia Settles 617.427.9801 x413
Roxbury	Nurturing Program for Parents and Children	Elizabeth Stone House	Tuesdays, 4:30–7:30 ^{PM} Start date: November 6	Referral: open Transportation: not provided	Alicia Settles 617.427.9801 x413
Roxbury	Nurturing Program for Birth & Foster Families	FNC, Dimock Street Area DSS Office	Wednesdays, 6–8:30 ^{PM} Start date: October 24	Referral: open Transportation: provided	Sue Parker 617.474.1143 x236

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

LOCATION	TRAINING	SPONSOR	DAY/TIME	OTHER INFO	CONTACT
Dorchester Bay Cove Early Intervention 105 Victory Road	Developing Nurturing Families and Communities (NP Facilitator training)	FNC & Boston Regional DSS	Tuesday & Wednesday, September 25 & 26 9–4 ^{PM}	Approved for 12 Category 1 CEUs	Sue Parker 617.474.1143 x236
Jamaica Plain	Developing Nurturing Families and Communities (NP Facilitator training)	Jamaica Plain Tree of Life/ Arbol de Vida	Saturday, September 15 Saturday, September 22 9 ^{AM} –4 ^{PM} (2 day training)		Wanda Guzman 617.777.7005



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Mission Statement

To work with others to build nurturing communities where children are cherished, families are supported, and healthy human development is promoted by all.

Staff

Matthew LiPuma, Executive Director

Mary Elaine Anderson, Playgroup Coordinator

Elayne Baskin, ABFN Playroom Coordinator

Valerie May Bean, Business Manager

Andréa deSousa, Family Support Specialist

Randi Freundlich, Director of Community Programs

Alice Gomes, Family Development Specialist

Maxine Hall, Neighborhood Development Coordinator

Colleen McGuire, Allston-Brighton Welcome Baby Coordinator

John O'Neil, Nurturing Fathers' Program Specialist

Sue Parker, Program Manager

Sandy Sachs, Child Development Specialist

Dianna Wayne, Stony Brook CARES Program Assistant

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