



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.

“KID’S COURIER”

Volume 5—Fall 2008



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
(CFO) Administrative Offices and
Ellsworth Early Care and
Education Center
18 Avery Lane Ellsworth, ME 04605
207-667-2995 or 1-800-834-4378
www.childandfamilyopp.org

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Did You Know That...

85% of human brain development occurs before age 3?

Investing in early childhood education is one of the best investments that can be made, with a return of up to \$16 for every \$1 invested?

For every public \$1 invested in public school education, we only invest \$0.089 in infant/toddler education and \$0.213 in preschool education?

Failure to invest in high quality early care and education results in:

- \$300 million in increased costs for special education;
- \$800 million in substance abuse costs;
- \$1.2 billion in domestic violence costs?

By the year 2010, 85% of the workforce will be working parents?

From Invest Early in Maine’s Future

A Community Leader (Marcia Rogers)

Marcia Rogers, Site Manager for the St. Croix Early Care and Education Center and the Calais Pre-K/Head Start program, always has an idea for how to improve her community and she won’t give up until she’s made a difference . . . one way or another. A 19-year CFO employee, Marcia lives and works her passions - - most of them having to do with children, although she’s been known to add animals into her advocacy sphere. Whether she’s improving access to health or mental health care or modeling how to use positive discipline with young children to local school teachers, Marcia is always looking out for children. This quest has even taken her down the path of adopting six former Head Start students when it was clear that their parents couldn’t care for them. “It is not something that my husband and I ever planned on, the circumstances just came up and it was the right thing to do.” She and husband John, the Recreation Director for the City of Calais have seven children, four horses, four dogs and four cats. Their youngest child is a senior in high school, soon joining three other siblings in college.



From left, Benjamin Savage, Christian Fowler, Marcia Rogers, and Cameron Kelly

“Marcia truly understands the Head Start philosophy that in order to fully help a child, you need to support and respect the family as well. She is a person whose job does not stop when she walks out the door; rather she lives her passion for bettering the lives of children and families,” said Britt Urh-Morse, CFO’s Associate Director of Program Operations.

Recently Marcia reflected on a young single mother who returned home to live with her father, working to rebuild her life after experiencing domestic violence. The mother came back to the very same home that Marcia Rogers visited her at when she was just a small, “at-risk” preschooler. Through family visits and support Marcia was able to help the little girl overcome some of her obstacles. While some might not see success when a mother moves home to live with her father, Marcia sees it differently. “This is a young woman who found herself in a dangerous situation and used the skills she received as a little girl in Head Start to get out of an abusive situation. She recognized that at home with her Father, she could provide a safe environment for herself and her child, knowing that she deserved to feel valued and respected,” Marcia said.

Value and respect is the essence of what has made Marcia Rogers a power house of community involvement and leadership.

As a school board member in Calais, Marcia and then Superintendent Peter Harvey saw a need to link preschoolers and their families with school life, so she was instrumental in starting the Head Start/Pre-K collaboration at the Calais School nearly 10 years ago - - one of the first in the state. A few years later she was supporting the agency’s bid to work in collaboration with the Washington County Community College to establish an early care and education center on the college campus that includes services to infants and toddlers.

Marcia is also a dedicated community leader and volunteer. For the past several years she has been assistant boys varsity coach to the State-Champion Calais Blue Devils basketball team. She is a Court Appointed Special Advocate and has served for 15 years on the Board of the local Animal Shelter, noting there is often a correlation between animal and child abuse.

For Marcia it has been a true blessing being involved in so many children’s lives. By all accounts that number reaches into the hundreds through her work at CFO, but in the thousands when you consider all she has done in her community.

A New Collaboration, new roles, but same teachers

Co-teaching is kind of like co-parenting. You each are there to support the other when the going gets tough. You each bring your special strengths to the work at hand complementing one another. One of you may be more effective dealing with one child, the other with another. You may have different approaches, but you value the role of the other. And so it goes with Mt. View Pre-K teacher Sally Stanley and Head



From left: Vicki Burchell, CFO Lead Teacher and Sally Stanley, Mt. View School Lead Teacher.

Start teacher Vicki Burtchell. For eight years the two worked side by side caring for and educating young preschoolers at the Sullivan Head Start. But then Sally was hired by the Mt. View Elementary School in Sullivan as their Pre-K teacher and Vicki became the co-teacher in a Head Start-Public School collaboration. Different organizations, but the same roles. "It was a mixed blessing for CFO to lose a good teacher to the public school, but we didn't really lose Sally, we are just sharing her now," Mills noted. The teachers are joined in the classroom by assistant teacher Michelle Rotta. And another CFO staff alum - - Cheryl Young - - just so happens to be the school's cook so welcomed the opportunity to cook for the "little ones" again.

The seeds for this collaboration were planted last year at the Governor's Economic Summit on Early Childhood, when CFO Executive Director Jeanie Mills invited Schoodic CSD Superintendent Bill Webster to attend the conference devoted to the importance of quality early childhood education. Shortly thereafter Webster contacted Mills proposing the collaborative preschool program. After working out the details, Principal Bill Dove and CFO Associate Director of Program Operations Britt Urh-Morse, opened the program this fall to 34 three and four-year-old Schoodic Peninsula residents. Using both Head Start Performance Standards and the state's Early Childhood Learning Guidelines, the program is comprehensive, providing education, nutrition and health services to all children. It is housed in the school's primary grade wing.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEANIE MILLS



Those of us in the "helping" professions are gearing up for what could be a rough winter for our clients and, for that matter, all of us. We are already seeing signs. A family with three children under age seven recently was evicted from their home and couldn't get into any local homeless shelters because they were all full. With nowhere to turn, they asked their child's preschool teacher for help. CFO's teachers are trained family advocates who know the community's resources. But in this case, there weren't any resources available to this family. After brainstorming with CFO staff, the resourceful parents found a small cellar apartment they could use temporarily. This isn't a long term solution, but it is providing them shelter. Meanwhile, the unemployed father is looking for work, the Mom is working part time at a local market and the children are in care at CFO. But what will their future hold?

Whether it's the soaring price of fuel for our cars or our homes, the increasing cost of food, the high cost of health care, mortgage foreclosures and the doom and gloom news of Wall Street, we all are feeling under siege. Yet there are glimmers of hope (things just have to get better)!

Here are a few things to hang onto that could provide hope:

- It's becoming vogue to conserve and all of us are questioning the wisdom of our past unbridled consumerism. (This offers a good lesson for our children and puts all of us on a more even playing field.)
- Speaking of conservation . . . some people are talking about a two-pronged approach to our economy - - rolling a stimulus initiative in with a "green" initiative - - something that could solve our dependence on oil and create jobs. Now there's looking at our glass half full!
- When the going gets tough, we still have each other as resources. We can help our neighbor and by doing so, we help ourselves.

We have the opportunity to prioritize what really makes us happy and I can bet that isn't a bunch of things!

Meanwhile, it's important for our children's sake to provide rays of hope during these stressful times. I know that is easier said than done, but we've gotten through tough times before and we'll do it again.

Federal Review translates into child care savings for parents

In April 2008 Child and Family Opportunities, Inc. successfully completed a Federal Head Start Review. These reviews occur every three years and are conducted by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families. "Successfully completed" does not adequately describe the Agency's achievement in being found compliant with Federal Head Start education, health, nutrition, parent involvement and program design and management standards.

The finding is a result of a weeklong, onsite visit by a team of ten people made up of National experts in Early Childhood, Health, Nutrition and Financial management. The team reviewed records, interviewed parents, staff and governing bodies and visited all locations.

Upon completing the Federal Head Start Review, the Team Leader reported that team members were impressed with how CFO tailored services in unique, creative and effective ways to meet the needs of the diverse communities of Hancock and Washington counties.

This favorable Head Start Review translates into big savings for families paying for child care services at CFO's Early Care and Education Centers. Parents are eligible for double their Maine State tax break for the child care fees they pay because CFO is deemed as operating a Program of Quality by the State of Maine.

For enrollment information for any of Child and Family Opportunities, Inc. centers call CFO's Enrollment Specialist

1-800-834-4378

207-667-2995 x237



Peninsula ECEC in Sedgwick and Healthy Peninsula in Blue Hill, along with volunteers from The St. Francis by the Sea Church are raising veggies to the delight of our children at the center. The kids enjoyed the radishes and a few tomatoes ; they just love checking out the pumpkin patch! What else is growing in their garden? Corn, carrots, sunflowers, and potatoes!



Blake Dow, Colby Schneider and Bryce Schneider checking pumpkins, pictured from left.



In 2003 as infants, Kerrigan Andrews, Benton Bird, and Camille Michaud (from left) all began their education at the Ellsworth ECEC. Finally five years later, the three children graduated and headed off to kindergarten. Some would say their education is just beginning. But we know otherwise!



Families enjoying the open house at Mt. View Early Care and Education Center.

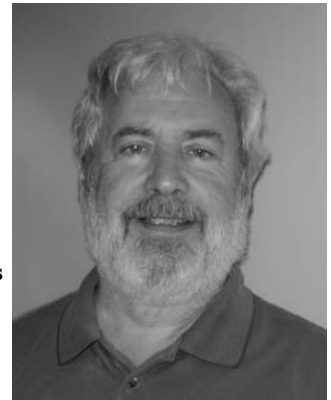
Something for Everyone

Child Care Opportunities Resource Development Center (RDC) offers a little something for everyone. RDC Director Charlie Zeph leads a team of experts -- Judy Nevells, Joy Crockett and Faith Perkins -- in providing all kinds of services to all kinds of people.

If you are a **parent**, the RDC can help you find child care by giving you a list of all child care providers meeting your criteria and they can advise you on how to select quality child care. Information on child care subsidies and other resources that can support you or your young child are also available. The RDC maintains a database of 198 child care providers throughout Hancock and Washington counties and this past year gave child care referrals to 335 parents.

If you are a **child care provider** or if you are thinking about becoming one, the RDC can help you establish or maintain your business, navigate licensing and regulatory requirements, and enhance your services. The RDC provides free technical assistance to providers both over the telephone and on site. Professional development including child care trainings and career counseling are offered. During this past year, the RDC delivered 41 trainings to 441 practitioners equaling more than 420 hours of training.

As employers realize that availability of quality child care is good for business, the RDC can work with local **businesses** to assess the child care needs of employees and consult with you on child care benefits. **Community groups**, including public schools, municipalities, civic groups and social service consortiums can turn to the RDC for data on child care needs and community solutions. Recently, the RDC received a United Way Born Learning grant on behalf of the Bucksport Bay Early Childhood Network, a group made up of about 10 community representatives who have been planning and coordinating services for young children and their families in the Bucksport Bay area.



RDC Director Charlie Zeph

A kind voice, listening ear, and professional attitude can be just the thing a stressed parent needs when they call looking for help. On the surface the call might appear to be about locating names of child care providers. But often the call ends up being so much more. A parent who has struggled years to conceive a baby and who has finally given birth, discovers that she now must go back to work when her husband loses his job. Yes, she needs names. But she also needs assurance that she's not a bad mother because she is going to leave her child in the care of others. Another parent who has a hyper-allergic child decides she needs to find in-home care. How does she go about advertising, recruiting and interviewing an in-home provider? The RDC can provide that information, along with how to conduct background checks of the in-home provider. A single father calls looking for child care, but upon talking to the referral counselor, he acknowledges that he is being evicted from his home, can't get into the homeless shelter and may be living in his car with his child for a couple of weeks. He is linked to other community resources. Linking people to the resources they need is a hallmark of the nationally accredited RDC.



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
 18 Avery Lane P.O. Box 648
 Ellsworth, Maine 04605
 Phone: 207-667-2995
 Fax: 207-667-2212
 www.childandfamilyopp.org

CHILD AND FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES, INC.
CENTER AND OFFICE DIRECTORY
www.childandfamilyopp.org

Bucksport Early Care and Education Center
 207-469-2755; Bucksportctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Ellsworth Early Care and Education Center
 207-667-9005; EllsworthTeachers@childandfamilyopp.com
Elizabeth Clark Flaherty Early Care & Education Center
 207-255-1441; Flahertyctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Harrington Early Care and Education Center
 207-483-2212; Harringtonctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Lubec Preschool Learning Center
 207-733-4928; Lubecctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Machias Valley Early Care and Education Center
 207-255-4972; Machiascenter@childandfamilyopp.com
Moose-A-Bec Early Care and Education Center
 207-497-2888; Mooseabecctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Mt. View Early Care and Education Center
 207-422-6490; sullivanctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Peninsula Early Care and Education Center
 207-359-2464; Sedgwickctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Calais Early Kindergarten/Head Start
 207-454-0131; Calaisheadstart@childandfamilyopp.com
St. Croix Early Care and Education Center
 207-454-3212; Steroix.ecec@verizon.net
Stonington Early Care and Education Center
 207-367-5179; Stoningtonctr@childandfamilyopp.com
Ellsworth Administrative Offices
 207-667-2995 /1-800-834-4378
Calais Office - 207-454-2997
Healthy Peninsula - 207-374-3257
www.healthypeninsula.org
Child Care Opportunities,
Resource Development Center - 207-667-2467;
www.childcareopportunities.org

Child Care Costs Are No Laughing Matter

The cost of child care isn't something families used to factor into their family budgets. But with national costs of center-based care averaging as much as \$14,600 a year, child care may be the most expensive cost in a family's budget.

CFO tries to cushion that blow to the family budget by subsidizing the cost of child care for family's who are not eligible for or who don't receive a state child care subsidy. Currently, CFO is subsidizing the cost of child care for nearly 20 families who are charged on a sliding scale. This subsidy averages about \$20,000/year.

Every two years, Maine, like all states that receive Federal Child Care Development Funds, must conduct a market rate study of regulated child care providers. The study sets the state's rates for reimbursing child care providers for subsidized clients. The Market Rate is set at the 75th percentile of all child care providers who return a survey. CFO's charge to parents for child care is below the market rate for all ages and is compared below to Maine's 2008 Market Rate study:

	Hancock County	CFO	Washington County	CFO
Infants	\$200/week	\$166	\$175	\$161
Toddlers	\$175	\$166	\$165	\$161
Preschoolers	\$149	\$133	\$135	\$127

To receive our newsletter, learn more about CFO, or to support the services offered by Child and Family Opportunities, Inc., please contact *Timothy Hilton* at 1-207-667-2995 ext. #221; timothyh@childandfamilyopp.com