



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.

“KID’S COURIER”

Volume 7—Fall 2009



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
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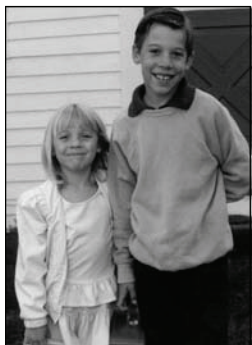
To receive our newsletter, learn more about CFO, or to support the services offered by Child and Family Opportunities, Inc., please contact:

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Carson Prout standing tall on the Flaherty Center’s new playground tires! These tires were installed by student volunteers on the UMM day of service.

REFLECTIONS ON 21 YEARS OF SERVICE AT CFO BY JEANIE MILLS



Sara and Ryan in 1988; new to the CFO family.

As CFO begins its 40th year of service and I end my tenure here after 21 years, it is a natural time to reflect on CFO’s impact on the lives of children and their parents. By my count CFO has directly provided Head Start and child care services to more than 10,000 children and has also provided support and training to child care providers who have cared for ten times that number. Over the years I have heard many testimonials on the effect CFO has had on families. As I prepare to leave for a new adventure, I can measure CFO’s success by looking at my own family.

My son Ryan was 8 and my daughter Sara was 5 - - well past their preschool years when I was hired in 1988. My husband and I had just moved our family from California to live closer to my parents and sister’s family who had chosen Maine after our “western” experience.

I’m not sure what possessed me to think I had the knowledge necessary to “counsel” parents who were looking for child care, but that was my first job at CFO- - a 20-hour-a-week position. I had been a newspaper reporter and editor in California, but more importantly, I had been a mother looking for child care so I figured I knew a little something about choosing that service. Whatever wisdom I had pales by comparison to that of the extraordinary CFO employees who surrounded me throughout my hands-on parenting years and informally guided me on becoming a better parent.

Having CFO experts to talk through the challenges of parenting has been an invaluable “work benefit” for my family. CFO was a safe place to share my insecurities as a parent - - was I too harsh or too lenient? Was I too involved and protective, or too laissez faire? Was I consistent? And how should I handle the differences in parenting styles between my husband and me? I recall the times a divorced colleague tearfully, but bravely sent her son to live with his father each week as they had shared custody. Although it was hard for her to give her son up each week to his father, she was steadfast in her belief that every child needs the influence of his or her father or another significant male. Having been raised without a father in my home I needed someone to tell me of the importance of fathers. This helped me appreciate what my own children were receiving from their father. I was a sponge around these experts.

Sometimes it was tough to balance the needs of the agency with those of my family. I remember arriving one time to my daughter’s school softball game just as it was ending and she greeted me in tears reporting that I had missed her homerun. I don’t think I’ll ever forget the guilt I had that my job had consumed me at the expense of my family. Even though CFO has always had a “family first” philosophy, I didn’t always get the balance of work and family right!

But I was not unlike other CFO staff who recognize that when a client needs you, you can’t just turn out the lights and go home at 5. I heard a story recently about a Mom who called our Bucksport cook at 6:30 a.m. to be assured that her child could have a “cheeseburger” without cheese. The child insisted she wouldn’t eat lunch if she had to eat the cheese. The cook assured not only the mother, but the child, that despite the fact that she was going to be making close to 100 cheeseburgers (CFO’s cook in Bucksport provides meals to public school kindergartners, too), she’d make this burger sans cheese! That is truly tuning in to the needs of your clients, and is just one example of CFO staff dedication. I will miss hearing these stories.



Sara and Ryan, all grown up and on their way.

I will miss the support CFO staff have given me as a co-worker and a mother. My children are fabulous young adults who are better for having had their Mom work where children and families are encouraged to grow. My family, like thousands of others influenced by CFO, is a testament to CFO’s incredible staff and to the important work they do. I thank the “village” that is CFO that helped my husband and I raise our children.

THE GIFT OF IN-KIND



Daryl and Marcia Worcester and the Big Excavator!

In August Daryl and Marcia Worcester of D+M Trucking in Columbia Falls, and Rob Worcester of County Concrete of Columbia Falls made an extraordinarily useful in-kind donation to CFO. When an old septic tank collapsed at CFO's Harrington Early Care and Education Center, Daryl and Marcia brought over their excavator to locate the new septic tank, and to remove the old tank so the hole could be safely filled. County Concrete was willing to donate a new septic tank if needed, and did donate sand to fill the old septic tank hole. Both of these companies gave their time, resources, and skill to ensure that much needed resources would go back to programming instead of being spent on emergency repairs. CFO extends a huge Thank You! to the Worcesters and to all of our in-kind donors who assist our programs in unique ways. For more information about in-kind and volunteer opportunities, please see our website Make a Donation and Volunteer sections.

<http://www.childandfamilyopp.org>

FACING CHALLENGES WITH CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION— BY JEANIE MILLS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



2009 has been a great year to test the creative and collaborative abilities of our agency. As with the nation and the world, we have been presented with some very challenging situations that have demanded a different way of looking at our services.

This summer CFO received funding cuts in excess of \$260,000 annually as a result of a rollback of State Child Care reimbursements and a significant change in the Medicaid targeted case management program.

That will mean reducing services to 18 children enrolled in CFO's Head Start program later this year. But it could have been worse. By partnering with three new public schools (Bucksport, Schoodic Peninsula and Jonesport Elementary schools) we have shared in the costs of staffing classrooms. In these cases public schools are either sharing in the costs of CFO's teaching staff or bringing their own teachers to the partnerships, reducing the costs to CFO.

That said, in December we will be closing our preschool classroom at our Machias Valley Center in Marshfield and cutting part day Head Start services at the Flaherty Center in Machias. Earlier this fall, as a result of a new school partnership, we closed our Head Start/Child Care Center in Jonesport, laying off three staff. Eventually we'll sell our facility.

We are pleased, however, to retain the same level of quality in our services through such partnerships as a new one with the Washington County Community Caring Collaborative (CCC). CCC, the recipients of a \$5.5 million, five-year federal Project Launch grant from SAM-HSA which addresses the mental health of young children in Washington County, will be providing CFO with funds to retain our on-site mental health services in all our centers in Washington County. We are grateful for their support, and agree with CCC Director Marjorie Withers when she says, "CFO has provided the best, most comprehensive services to the most children and families, for the longest period of time, having the most long-lasting impact than any other service agency!"

Another challenge we face is preparing our staff and clients for the H1N1 flu epidemic. We stand ready to provide vaccine clinics in our centers, but haven't been tapped to do that for the state.

I am proud of all that CFO can accomplish, even during these tight times.



Jeanie Mills, Executive Director, addressing staff at the CFO All Staff In-Service October 23, 2009.

EXPANDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION SERVICES AVAILABLE TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Child Care Opportunities Resource Development Center (RDC) has hired a part-time Early Childhood Consultant. Megan London, who previously served for four years as one of CFO's Head Start Education/Disabilities Managers, will provide on-site technical assistance to child care providers in the two-county area. All child care providers can receive one on-site technical assistance visit and those who are enrolled in the State's Quality Rating system can receive multiple on-site visits. Megan works hand in hand with Faith Perkins, the RDC Education specialist, whose focus is on training and professional development of child care providers.



Welcome Megan London!

In addition to her experience with Head Start, Megan has expertise in the areas of literacy and language development, and physical activity and nutrition for children 0-5.

BUCKSPORT KINDERCAMP—A COOL COLLABORATION

Alisha Nevells (L)
Alexia Crane (R)
cool off in the pool.



Gage Worcester
(above) laughing
and splashing.



A group of kids test the
waters with their teacher
and family members .

Think back to your first day of Kindergarten...do you remember how you felt? Some of us may have felt excited, others may have felt shy, or scared, or lonely. We may have spent the first few weeks just trying to figure out what to do and how to do it!

For some children, the transition to school can be a time of stress and confusion. The time it takes to adjust to their new surroundings and routines may impact their ability to learn in those first few weeks. With this in mind, the Bucksport School System, CFO, and Hancock County CDS developed the Kindercamp program. The 5 week, small group summer program featured swimming, walking field trips, and learning activities; it was held in the Kindergarten classroom. The goal of Kindercamp was to help children become familiar with the Kindergarten environment and arrive ready to learn on the first day of school.

“The program brought him out of his shell because it was fun,” notes Mandy Worcester, whose son Gage attended the program. “It also helped him to get excited about going to Kindergarten, and he became familiar with the classroom. He was nervous at first but then really wanted to go.” Mandy also notes that Gage “wishes he could go back to Kindercamp! It is a good program to continue.”

The program will be offered again this summer for students entering the Bucksport Kindergarten program, and the collaborative is exploring the possibility of expanding the program to other areas in Hancock & Washington counties.

AUTUMN UPDATE FROM HEALTHY PENINSULA

CFO is the sponsor of Healthy Peninsula, a Healthy Maine Partnership that brings people and resources together to improve the health and well being of the communities of Blue Hill, Brooklin, Sedgwick, Brooksville, Surry, Castine, Deer Isle, Stonington, and Isle au Haut. This prevention, education, and advocacy work helps people become healthier, and increases local access to the state’s public health resources. Current 2009-2010 projects include initiatives in the areas of community development, tobacco, substance abuse, physical activity, nutrition, and of chronic disease prevention and management.



L to R Sally Christ, Regional Tobacco Coordinator; Denise Black, Assistant Program Manager; Hadley Friedman, HP contractor, and Amy Vaughn, HP Director.

Having a home within CFO allows HP to work effectively on issues surrounding early childhood. Children’s early years can set them on a path towards or away from good health. HP works with Head Start centers and home daycare providers to educate families about the dangers of secondhand smoke and to help parents who are smokers assess their readiness to quit. This year HP also partnered with the RDC at CFO to offer Eco-Healthy Childcare trainings throughout Hancock and Washington county, helping to reduce children’s exposure to environmental health hazards. HP is a finalist for a grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation that would provide funds for expanded nutrition education and take-home activity kits for families at the Peninsula Early Childhood and Education Center in Sedgwick. We are looking forward to hearing the results of this grant application.

Over the summer HP published a trail map and started a letterboxing program to encourage families to hike together on area trails. Children look for “letterboxes” on selected trails and use the stamp and inkpad inside the box to note which trails they have walked. HP also is working with local food pantries and the Hancock County Farm to School movement to increase access to healthy food for area families. HP looks forward to further collaborations with CFO’s programs to ensure the best possible environment for young children in our service area.

MEET A CFO BOARD MEMBER— JACK FROST



Abigail, Jack, and Brenda Frost

For the past decade, Jack Frost, Executive Director of Maine Coast Memorial Hospital’s Foundation, has been a familiar face on CFO’s board. Becoming interested in early education with the arrival of his daughter Abigail 11 years ago, Jack accepted a position on CFO’s board because he knew CFO was committed to the development and support of young children and their families.

Jack recognized early education to be one of the most influential factors in the growth and health of a young child, an idea that has been strongly supported by research on brain development. In fact, it is now known that 85% of brain development occurs by age 3, and 90% of brain growth occurs before kindergarten. The comprehension of the importance of these figures helped inspire Jack in his role as a strong leader in on the Board’s Investment and Financial Committees. 2009 marks the end of Jack’s term. As with children and agencies, he is ready to grow and explore new opportunities before him. It is with great appreciation that we say Goodbye, Good Luck, and Thank You to Jack Frost.



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CFO CELEBRATES 40 YEARS!

October 2009 marks the start of CFO's 40th year of operations. It also begins another year of change for the agency. In addition to the guidance and leadership of a new Executive Director, the agency will see the blossoming of three new school collaborations in Jonesport, Bucksport and the Schoodic Peninsula. While considering CFO's future, this anniversary provides us an opportunity to reflect on all of our past changes. Below are a few of the highlights of our remarkable journey:

- 1970** - Agency founded under the name of Action Opportunities as the Head Start grantee for Hancock County.
- 1976** Agency opens first group child care center in Hancock County in Bar Harbor.
- 1980** Agency named Head Start grantee of Washington County.
- 1985**— Agency expands services to four new centers with use of new allocation of state-funded Head Start.
- 1988** - Agency expands to include Child Care Opportunities Resource Development Center (RDC)
- 1990**—Agency begins Migrant Head Start services in Harrington to migrant families working in the blueberry harvest.
- 1998** - Agency name officially changed to Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
- 2006** - CFO becomes sponsor of Healthy Peninsula (HP)
- Currently** - CFO operates 14 centers in 12 towns and has collaborative agreements with 6 public schools, 2 colleges, and 2 child care partners. The RDC and HP serve hundreds of people in Washington and Hancock counties, and the Blue Hill Peninsula, with early education, healthy families, and healthy communities resources.

**OUR WEBSITE HAS PROGRAM NEWS,
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND MORE.**

**CHECK US OUT AT:
www.childandfamilyopp.org**



See us grow! Thomas Fowler at the Sedgwick Peninsula Early Care and Education Center measures a young tree growing at his school.

Happy Birthday CFO!

Please stay tuned for more information about our 40th year plans and celebrations in the spring Kids Courier and on the web at www.childandfamilyopp.org.