

# The Surrogate Source

Newsletter of the  
Special Education Surrogate Parent Program

Spring 2010

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## Program Update:

Communication, communication, communication...It's what makes the world go 'round!

I would like to thank all of our volunteers who regularly return the End Appointment Reports to the program. Though I like to think we have a good handle on the challenges and triumphs of the volunteers in the field, it is helpful to get the written reports. It allows us to examine the information and look for trends where the SESP Program can make improvements and assist the volunteers in their work.

Some common threads:

- It is wonderful when you see that what you have done has made a difference, and it is terribly disheartening when too many obstacles and roadblocks stand in the way of progress and success.
- Communication with DCF can be difficult.
- Communication with school district personnel can be difficult.
- Students move frequently, often without notice.
- Reports and meeting invitations don't always reach you.

Accessing the supports of the SESP Program has assisted many volunteers in making the SESP experience more successful. The program staff can give advice on how to get in touch with people and can facilitate contact. The first thing we always ask you to consider is that though you may be working with one or two students, the DCF Social Worker and special education coordinators have much higher caseloads and may not be in their offices as often as they would like. Not an excuse...but definitely something to consider. It may be easier for you to check in with them on a monthly basis to get updates, than for them to follow up with you.

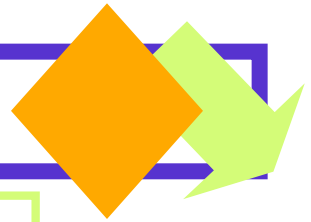
We also encourage all our volunteers to take advantage of our free Orientation Trainings, Quarterly Training Opportunities, and Annual Conference. There is information on all of these events in the newsletter, and we look forward to these opportunities to meet with you, speak to you, gather your opinions and concerns, and share knowledge and resources.

"Communication works for those who work at it." John Powell



**"Help Solve the Puzzle"**

P.O. Box 1184, Westboro, MA 01581 508-792-7679  
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## Mentor Voice

(In past publications we have had "Volunteer Voice", an opportunity for our volunteers to express their opinions and share their point of view. In this issue we have the voice of one of our Mentors. We respect that every volunteer/mentor and student situation is different and must be evaluated on an individual basis. Thank you to all for your contributions!)

I have been a Special Education Surrogate Parent for 7 years, and a Mentor since the spring of 2009. I've been assigned 2 Mentees, which has so far involved only a small investment of time exclusively through phone calls. In the first case, the Mentee called shortly after his first Team meeting. He had signed the IEP, which he clearly felt provided appropriate services for the student. I heartily agreed, based on the information he gave me. His question for me was around what his role should be in following up with the student and the many collaterals involved in the case. We had an enjoyable discussion. He called a few months later, at the beginning of the next academic year, again with a question about contact with collaterals. How long, he wondered, should he wait before contacting the school and getting an update on his student's progress? He also mentioned the fact that the student would be

turning 17 soon, which led us to a discussion of what happens when our students turn 18.

The second Mentee also called shortly after the first Team meeting. She had not signed the IEP, though she felt strongly inclined to do so. As she discussed the case with me, she seemed to become increasingly confident of her opinion that the services outlined in the IEP were appropriate.

In both cases, the Mentees seemed to have a good understanding of the educational needs of and their student realized the importance of the decisions they were being asked to make. I'm sure that we can all recall an experience of beginning something new. Even though we may have felt fairly confident that we knew what we were doing, I know that I always appreciated the opportunity to discuss what I was doing with someone who had "been there before". For experienced Mentors, it's a small investment of time with the potential for big dividends.

~Laura Maltby

### Intrigued???

Are you an experienced volunteer?  
Do you feel that you can offer this kind of support and your expertise to others?

Are you a new volunteer?  
Would this kind of support give you more confidence in yourself and your role as an SESPP?

**If you answered YES!  
Call the SESP Program and become involved in our Mentor program!**

### QTO- Quarterly Training Opportunity

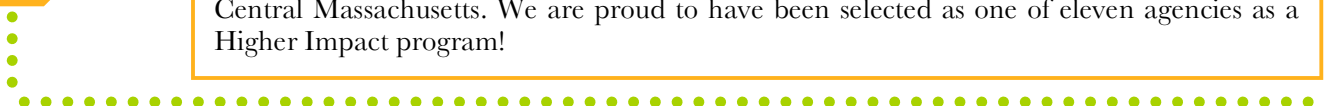
Thank you to all those who have participated in the QTOs offered in Western and South Eastern Massachusetts. Special thanks to attorney Amy DiDonna who generously donated her time and talent to present outstanding workshops on 504 vs. the IEP and discipline. Stay tuned for information on our next QTO: May 12, 2010 at the EDCO offices in Waltham. Save the Date!

### We are excited to let you know!

The SESP Program has been recognized as a Higher Impact program by the ACT Volunteer Center of Greenfield and the Massachusetts Service Alliance. This partnership's aim is to generate Baby Boomer volunteers to serve at-risk youth in Western and North Central Massachusetts. We are proud to have been selected as one of eleven agencies as a Higher Impact program!



**Mentors!  
Working  
together to  
help our  
students reach  
the stars.**



## Clarification of Signing Rights

We frequently get questions regarding exactly which documents the Special Education Surrogate Parent is responsible for signing. There are often multiple consent forms, permission slips, and authorizations involved with each student's educational experience, and not all of them fall under the authority of the SESP.

### These are the ones that do:

- # Signing consent for initial evaluations, re-evaluations, and/or independent evaluations.
- # Signing (accepting or rejecting) the IEP, including amendments and placement pages.
- # Signing permission forms allowing a Team member to be absent from a Team meeting.

**All** other forms should be directed to the student's social worker.

### This includes:

- # Enrollment forms
- # School related consent forms (i.e. field trips, pictures)
- # Consent for referral packets to be sent to collaboratives or day schools
- # Medicaid or MassHealth authorizations
- # Chapter 688 referrals
- # Forms related to regular education and 504 plans.



So many forms  
are passed my  
way.

What can I  
sign?

## Clarification of Signing Rights for Students Who are 18 and Over

Massachusetts has very strong Age of Majority laws. Once a student turns 18, they are considered an adult and have all the rights of an adult, including making their own decisions about their education and special education.

It is important to be aware of the different circumstances that may arise after a student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday:

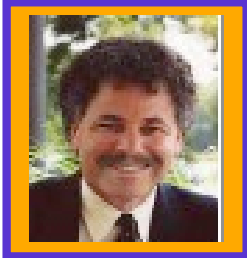
- # If a student signs out of DCF care, the SESP appointment is ended even if the student remains in school.
- # If the student has voluntarily signed into DCF care, the student and his or her social worker must notify the SESP Program that they would like the SESP to continue in an advisory capacity. The SESP appointment will be formally transitioned to Advisor after the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and the SESP will continue to have all the same rights, *except signatory rights*, which now belong to the student.
- # Some school districts may ask that an SESP sign district-based documentation agreeing to shared decision-making authority. Remember that unless your appointment has been officially transferred by the SESP Program, with the supporting appointment letter, your advisory role will not be recognized by the program and you will therefore not be able to access program support in regards to this student.
- # Students who are over 18 and are found incompetent by the court and placed under DCF guardianship, continue to be eligible for an SESP appointment.

For more information, or if you are appointed to a student who is about to turn 18 and you feel they may be eligible for an SESP Advisor, please call the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program.



# SESP Program Annual Day Conference

Tuesday, April 6, 2010  
Hoagland~Pincus Conference Center, Shrewsbury  
9:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.



*Keynote speaker*

*Charlie Appelstein, M.S.W*

*President Appelstein Training Resources, LLC*

Charlie Appelstein, whose motto is "There's no such thing as a bad kid", has worked in child welfare for over 25 years. As president of Appelstein Training Resources, he provides original, strength based training, consultation, and youth care literature to individuals and groups seeking to better understand and respond to troubled children and youth. He works primarily with residential and foster care programs; children's and adolescent psychiatric facilities; public, private, and special education schools; parent groups; and detention centers.

Charlie has devoted his entire adult career to helping at-risk kids and those who care for them. An engaging, upbeat, and humorous speaker, he is also the author of three critically acclaimed books, including *the Gus Chronicles* and a new, innovative CD that helps kids self-manage their behaviors. Charlie's strength-based approach delivers a message of hope and possibility to our most vulnerable youth and those who care for them. For more information on Charlie and Appelstein Training Resources, you can visit his website at [www.charliea.com](http://www.charliea.com).

## ☞ Day Conference Agenda ☞

**Hoagland~Pincus Conference Center, Shrewsbury, MA**

Registration: 9:30 am – 10:00 am

Welcome: 10:00 am – 10:15 am

Keynote Speaker: 10:15 am – 11:45 am

Workshop Session I: 12:00 pm – 1:15 pm  
(workshop selections/descriptions on the next page)

Lunch (Provided by SESPP): 1:15 pm – 2:00 pm

Workshop Session II: 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

**~ Please take a moment to complete and return the registration on the insert ~**

We would like to thank the companies that have helped make this years conference sparkle.

It is through their generosity that we will be able to offer some fantastic door prizes.

*Come try your chances at some Door Prizes from these generous donors!!!*



Old Sturbridge Village

ROX  
BOCKE



PLIMOTH  
PLANTATION

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM



THE  
CLARK



# *SESP Program Annual Day Conference*

*Tuesday, April 6, 2010*

Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center, Shrewsbury, MA

**“Help Solve  
the Puzzle”**

**Registration: 9:30 am – 10:00 am**

**Conference: 10:00 am – 3:15 pm**

## *Featuring Keynote Speaker:*

**MR. CHARLIE APPELSTEIN, M.S.W.**

President of Appelstein Training Resources, LLC

### *“The Glass Ain’t Half-Full; Heck, It’s Overflowing!” Creating a Strength-Based Culture in Your Setting*

Strength-based practice is an emerging approach to helping at-risk children, youth, and families that is exceptionally positive and hope-inspiring. The focus is on strength building rather than flaw-fixing. It begins with the belief that all individuals have strengths and past successes that can be utilized to stop problem behavior and enhance decision-making. This presentation will highlight many of the key principles and techniques of this life changing, inspiring approach to guiding high-risk young people.

## **☞ Break Out Sessions ☞**

### *“Questions and Answers on Special Education in Massachusetts”*

WORKSHOP FOCUS: Marty Mittnacht, State Director of Special Education, will answer questions submitted by volunteers from across the state. Questions on transition, transportation, evaluation, placement, and discipline are all on the table. This workshop will provide an opportunity to hear some answers, and perhaps ask a few questions of your own!

### *“BSEA Updates”*

WORKSHOP FOCUS: Attorney Dan Ahearn will provide information on recent BSEA decisions and current trends relevant to SESP Program volunteers. Atty. Ahearn will highlight issues related to evaluation, eligibility, placement and discipline.

### *“Mock IEP”*

WORKSHOP FOCUS: Carla Binswanger is a founding partner of Organized4kids.com, a professional organizer, a former writer/editor for *Newsweek* magazine, and a mother of a child with special needs. She will facilitate a mock IEP skit specifically for our volunteers to participate in.

### *“Advocating for a Child with an Emotional Disability”*

WORKSHOP FOCUS: In this session, Lynne Rachlis will provide an overview of advocacy approaches and strategies for students whose mental health disabilities and/or psychiatric hospitalization have resulted in social, emotional, behavioral or academic difficulties in school, at home, or in the community at large.

### *“From School to Work and Independence:*

### *Practical and Legal Information on Effective Transition Planning”*

WORKSHOP FOCUS: Attorney Matthew Engel from the Disability Law Center will provide information on federal & state laws, transition planning and services, IEP development, MCAS and graduation requirements, and the role of state agencies.

**☞ Lunch will be provided by the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program ☞**

*Prior Registration by mail, email or fax is required to attend.*

*P.O. Box 1184, Westboro, MA 01581 Fax: 508-616-0318 Email: [sespp@earthlink.net](mailto:sespp@earthlink.net)*

*Registration Deadline is March 31st.*

## Consultant On-Call Schedule Spring/Summer 2010

The Consultant On-Call Program is a support that is available to you through the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program. The consultants with our program have volunteered to be available to you, to offer their support and expertise, and to answer questions you may have regarding the student(s) you have been appointed. This program is one of several that we have available to support you in your role. Please call us if you need our support.

Month	Consultant	Contact Information
March 2010	Victoria Lia	Phone: 508-660-1053 Cell: 508-272-4991 Email: <a href="mailto:gvlia@msn.com">gvlia@msn.com</a>
April 2010	Diane Fischer	Phone: 781-337-2356 Cell: 617-842-6536 Email: <a href="mailto:fischer16@comcast.net">fischer16@comcast.net</a>
May 2010	Sal Albano	Phone: 978-691-4366 Cell: 978-397-4876 Email: <a href="mailto:gas7474@comcast.net">gas7474@comcast.net</a>
June 2010	Lynn Powers	Phone: 781-480-4788 Cell: 617-538-0736 Email: <a href="mailto:grapeadv@comcast.net">grapeadv@comcast.net</a>
July 2010	Carole Cleveland (West Mass.)	Phone: 413-323-6050 Cell: 413-221-0672 Email: <a href="mailto:carolecleveland@aol.com">carolecleveland@aol.com</a>
	Heidi Haughey (East Mass.)	Phone: 617-895-9304
August 2010	Robert Barba (West Mass.)	Phone: 413-567-0430
	Janet Duncan (East Mass.)	Phone: 508-540-2852 Cell: 508-524-4468 Email: <a href="mailto:janetduncan@comcast.net">janetduncan@comcast.net</a>

Many of our consultants have volunteered to offer their support and expertise to the people that work with the children we serve.



Whether your feeling confused or in need of someone to guide your next steps, our consultants are there to help!

**On-Call availability is Monday through Friday, from 9am to 8pm.**

If you leave a message, your call will be returned in a timely manner.

**Each Consultant is On-Call for one month.**

If you contact a consultant in one month, and want to touch base or ask a follow-up question in a succeeding month, please feel free to keep in touch with the same consultant instead of calling a new consultant who is not familiar with the case.

# "Help Solve The Puzzle"

## The Special Education Surrogate Parent Program needs you!

Help a child in State custody to work towards a brighter future by volunteering to become an important member of their Special Education Team. A solid education opens the door to their future!

Help the children we serve reach their potential

### Volunteer Orientation Training Schedule

## Spring 2010

<b>Natick</b>	Brandon School	Mon. April 12 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 - 2:00
<b>Springfield</b>	Sixteen Acres Library	Thurs. April 29 <sup>th</sup>	11:00 - 3:00
<b>Reading</b>	Public Library	Tues. May 4 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 - 2:00
<b>Lancaster</b>	RFK School	Tues. May 4 <sup>th</sup>	4:30 - 8:30
<b>Lee</b>	Lee Library	Fri. May 14 <sup>th</sup>	11:00 - 3:00
<b>Boston</b>	Central Library	Tues. May 18 <sup>th</sup>	4:30 - 8:30
<b>Newburyport</b>	Public Library	Thurs. May 20 <sup>th</sup>	4:30 - 8:30
<b>Dartmouth</b>	UMass School of Law	Tues. May 25 <sup>th</sup>	4:30 - 8:30

Register today!

Call 508-792-7679/Email [sespp@earthlink.net](mailto:sespp@earthlink.net)

[www.sespprogram.org](http://www.sespprogram.org)



Special Education  
Surrogate Parent Program



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**We're on the Web!**

See us at  
[www.sespprogram.org](http://www.sespprogram.org)



## Community Corner

We continue to strengthen our connections with the larger community. We would like to share with you some of the individuals and programs that we have connected with recently, and some of the things they have helped us to accomplish. We also want to offer them our sincere gratitude and thanks.

**Diane Gouveia**, Director of Parent/Family Support for the Fall River Public Schools. Diane has been instrumental in supporting our work in Fall River! She has promoted the program to many within the school system to include: the Special Needs Parent Advisory Council, Building Principals, Title I Coordinators, and the Retired Teachers Association.

**Jo-Anne Spence**, Lowell Community Partnerships for Children. SESP Program staff made a presentation about our Program in December 2009. This partnership will assist us in community awareness in Lowell.

**Al Bashevkin**, Director of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition in North Adams, invited SESP Program staff to make a presentation to this active and engaged coalition in Western MA. Additionally, their January 2010 Newsletter highlighted the SESP Program!

**Mali Lim**, Volunteer Coordinator in the Department of Community Services for the City of New Bedford, has assisted us in identifying community partners and resources in the city of New Bedford. Additionally, Mali highlighted the SESP Program last year in the *Volunteer New Bedford* website.

**Peter Domanico**, AmeriCorps Member from Social Capital Incorporated (SCI) Lynn. SCI Lynn works to strengthen communities by connecting individuals and organizations through civic engagement initiatives. Peter assisted the SESP Program by highlighting us in a recent E-blast to some 400+ community members and partners in the city of Lynn. Additionally, we participated in a Volunteer Recruitment & Resource Fair in Lynn.

We can't stress enough the importance of these community relationships! It is because of you that we have been able to recruit the wonderful volunteers that we have, and know that the children we serve are in capable hands.

Thanks!

