



THE PIRC'OLATOR

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with your
favorite brews

FACTS, TIPS
INFO & EVENTS
for parents and
educators

OCTOBER
2010



A Monthly Newsletter of the Parent Information & Resource Center - PIRC Vermont

Upcoming Events

- OCT 12** **New Neighbors Victim Outreach Project**
St. Michaels College
9am-4pm
- OCT 21 & 22** **Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children UVM, 7:30-4:30pm**
- OCT 22** **Vermont After School Conference 7:30am-2pm**
Killington Grand Resort, Killington
- OCT 26** **Making Communication Happen Conference**
Hilton Hotel, Burlington, 8am-3pm
- OCT 28 & 29** **Vermont School Boards Association Conference**
Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee
- NOV 6** **Burlington Ensemble Performance College St. Congregational Church 7:30pm,**
Contact: Vermont Children's Trust Fund (802) 951-8604
- NOV 9** **Vermont School Boards Association St. Michaels College, 4pm**
Reading & Discussion with Diane Ravitch, author of "The Death and Life of the Great American School System".

Join Us On Facebook!

Click the link at www.pircvermont.org



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PIRC Vermont is a project of the Vermont Family Network in partnership with the Parent Child Center Network of Vermont

A Message from your PIRC Director

PIRC Vermont welcomes Bob DiMasi to the team! We are delighted to announce that Bob will fill the Community Based Parent Involvement Coordinator position. Our team is again complete! Bob will be looking to expand our community partners, both here in Chittenden County, and State-wide. As with each of the specialists on the PIRC team, if you need expertise in helping you make community connections, Bob is the guy to call! Bob comes to us with experience in food service administration, hockey and soccer coaching experience, and most recently as Director of Winooski Parks & Recreation. We believe his skills and experiences will make him a great addition. He can be reached at bobd@pircvermont.org or by phone at 800-800-4005 ext. 243.



PIRC Staff to Attend National Conference

As this edition of the PIRC o'lator is being released, many of the PIRC Vermont staff is attending the national conference of Family Friendly Schools (<http://www.familyfriendlyschools.com>), an organization founded by Dr. Steve Constantino. Dr. Constantino is the author of 101 Ways to Create Real Family Engagement, a book we use almost every day in our work with schools. We learned of Steve when many of us saw him speak at the 2009 conference of the NH PIRC. From that day forward, we have been inspired by his work. His organization provides training and resources for school officials (and organizations working with schools) to promote a school environment where all are welcome. Family Friendly Schools is dedicated to helping schools and districts around the country to increase student achievement by developing networks of integrated relationships between leadership, staff, and families that creates a culture of high performance and learning outcomes. We hope to come back with new ideas to help us in our work here in Vermont.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

Bullying is a problem in schools all across Vermont, and all across the country. We have resources on our website for schools and parents. One of our sister organizations, the Minnesota PIRC (housed at PACER), has great online resources for you to use. Visit both websites for information on how to help combat this in your community. <http://www.pircvermont.org> and <http://www.pacer.org>.

Vermont Family Network's new logo! Same programs, different look! Please visit us at



www.VermontFamilyNetwork.org

New Relationships at PIRC Vermont

By Lindsay DesLauriers
School-Based Parent Involvement Coordinator

My first full month at PIRC Vermont has been very busy. I am proud to announce that, in that time, we have established new and promising relationships with five new schools! I would like to welcome Bakersfield Elementary – Middle School, Berlin Elementary, Brewster Pierce Elementary, Castleton Elementary, and Newport City Elementary to the PIRC family. I am very excited to work with all of you.

Already it's clear to me that the extended grant program we instituted this year is going to be instrumental in expanding PIRC's ability to facilitate increased parent involvement in schools around our state. At Berlin Elementary School, for example, first-year principal Chris Dodge saw the potential and is taking the bull by the horns. He is enthusiastically assembling a diverse committee to conduct a Family Friendly Walkthrough, which will study the perceived friendliness of Berlin Elementary School with regard to families and the broader community. In order to attract some people for whom evening meetings present a challenge, Chris is taking advantage of PIRC's funding potentials to offer dinner, child care, and even gas cards to those who attend the meetings! Thanks for taking advantage of us, Chris!

I would also like to applaud Principal Dodge for coming up with an innovative way to include community members who don't have children in his school. Because a school is an important community center for everyone, not just those with school age children, we are always working on ways to involve the broader community in the school and to get their feedback as we work to improve the school itself. This can present a challenge. Principal Dodge, who plans to implement a number of initiatives with PIRC throughout the upcoming school year, put out an ad in the community paper inviting anyone interested in working with the school to send him their contact information. His plan is to draw a new name out of a hat for each new project throughout the year. What a great way to get in touch with the community and benefit from multiple perspectives!

As we move deeper into the school year, I am really looking forward to beginning relationships with more Vermont Schools, while continuing our relationships with our existing partner schools. I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who has met with me so far and, if you know of a school that could benefit from a relationship with PIRC Vermont (couldn't they all?), please get in touch with me. I look forward to hearing from you.

LindsayD@PIRCVermont.org (800) 800-4005, ext 246

In Gratitude and Recognition 25 Years of Service to the Community

By MaryBeth Pinard-Brace
Family-Focused Parent Involvement Coordinator

I am frequently asked how I came to be on a pathway of youth service and family engagement. There are many stories to choose from, the combination of which have brought me here, to this point in time. Years ago, I came to a realization that all of my life events ~ big and small, good and bad ~ have led me to the place I am and molded me into the person I have become. At a meeting in September, I made yet another "re"-connection that showed me just how far back the story goes.

I attended the annual meeting for Milton Family Community Center. Milton is a community near to my heart as it was my home for 14 years, but I never expected, when I arrived for the meeting, that I would see a number of friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who I hadn't seen for years, individuals who have guided and mentored me at varying times. I also learned that Milton Family Community Center was celebrating its 25th anniversary. All the meeting participants were asked to sign a photo commemorating the event. As the Board President reflected on the center's history, I started doing the math in my head and realized that my daughters and I had been one of the very first families served by the center.

My marriage had ended and I was left to raise my girls on my own. I learned very quickly that the part-time business I operated out of my home was not going to be enough to support a family of three. I needed a career, but I didn't even know where to begin. My closest family was 350 miles away. My car was unreliable. I needed to learn to navigate life as a single mom and how to effectively balance home and work.

Milton Family Community Center was there to help with support services from Head Start and VNA as well as parenting groups, transportation to appointments, and fun, family events. Through this connection, I was able to identify career goals and access resources that I didn't know existed. Milton Family Community Center helped me get back on my feet and was instrumental to my successful transition from wife and mother to business woman and single parent. It is no surprise, then, that here I am 25 years later giving back to children and families. I am pleased and proud that my signature appears on the commemorative photo that will hang at the center and that my family is part of Milton Family Community Center's rich legacy. How wonderful that families are still benefiting from the support and services they provide! Congratulations Milton Family Community Center!

