



James B...Page 2



The McCabes ...Page 4



Dunkin' Donuts...Page 6

THE OPEN DOOR

The New England Center for Children, Inc.

Summer 2004 Volume 7, Number 2

Honored Visitors See NECC in Action

Every month, we're honored with visitors who come to see NECC in action. Many share our aspiration to find new and better ways to address autism and to "open doors" for our students – and for children with autism everywhere.

Recent visitors to NECC include Congressman James McGovern and Michael Brogioli, Executive Director of The Autism Coalition for Research and Education.

Congressman McGovern received a warm welcome from staff and students during his tour. Noting that approximately 25% of NECC students are from his district, the Congressman visited NECC's preschool, day school, academic, and residential classrooms. Following the tour, Congressman McGovern and

NECC administrators discussed state and federal funding for autism treatment and research.



Congressman James McGovern at NECC

Before leaving, Congressman McGovern expressed interest in helping NECC as we advance our mission to help children with autism throughout the U.S.

On his visit, Michael Brogioli heard a presentation on a new curriculum database being created at NECC as a tool to teach children with autism. The Coalition has provided NECC with a \$25,000 grant toward developing the database,

which, when completed, will be accessible in several languages from anywhere in the world via the Internet.

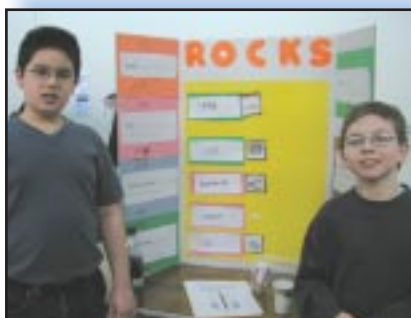
Lisa Borges, Executive Director of The Doug Flutie, Jr.



Michael Brogioli (r) with NECC Executive Director Vincent Strully

Foundation also visited NECC for a presentation about the database project. (The Flutie Foundation provided funding for the project in 2000.)

Thank you to all our visitors who are helping us "open doors!"



Young Scientists Explore

More than 30 budding scientists participated in NECC's third annual science fair March 3.



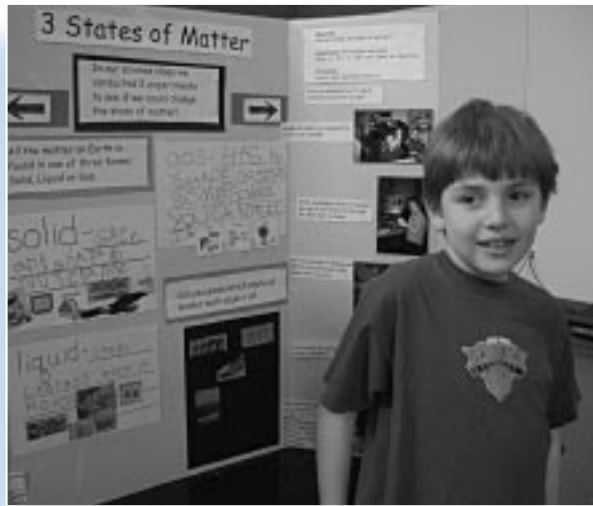
Student PROFILE James B.

It was nearly half a lifetime ago that James B. came to NECC. As a 4 ½ -year-old autistic boy, James arrived at NECC unable to control repetitive behaviors, he was restless and effectively non-verbal. James also had issues with food: He refused to eat anything other than yogurt and Cracklin' Oat Bran cereal.

But with the help of his dedicated teachers, Applied Behavior Analysis and special feeding therapies, James began to make progress.

Today, James is a very different child than the withdrawn little boy who came to NECC four years ago. Socially, he has grown by leaps and bounds and is especially fond of playing tag with the other children. He enjoys kicking a soccer ball, playing catch with a baseball and glove, and hitting golf balls at the driving range with his family. He also has become a charmer who enjoys a good laugh.

James also enjoys quiet time, and has learned to stay on task. His favorite indoor activities: computers – especially video games – and puzzles. He's also expanded his diet. In fact, these days, he'll try just about any food put in front of him.



Not even James' teacher, Michelle, can believe how far he's come. He is currently preparing to make a transition to 2nd grade in the Southborough public schools. He'll start by going to school for one hour three days a week and quickly work up to staying a whole day. Eventually, James will move back to New York to live with his family and attend public school. In short, he's come an incredibly long way in four years – and he's not finished going forward yet.



Blowin' in the Wind Kite Day Thrills

Kites and kids were out in force April 25 for the 4th annual Kite Day at Bose Mountain in Framingham.



Staff PROFILE Kristen Sidman



NECC's Occupational Therapy Department, a.k.a. "OT," does a lot of little things that, put together, make a big difference.

"We create individualized programs to develop the children's motor skills," says Kristen Sidman, NECC's Lead Occupational Therapist and creator of the OT program.

Kristen, who oversees a staff of five, has been lead therapist since 1997. But she's been helping children at NECC for much longer – 17 years, in fact!

"NECC was my first job out of college," says Kristen, who now holds a master's degree in severe special education from Fitchburg State and a master's in occupational therapy from Tufts University.

Her various roles over the years at NECC – entry-level teacher, case manager, residential coordinator, vocational

specialist, among others – have provided her with great insight into NECC's overarching goal to "open doors" for the children.

Even after working at NECC for so long, the challenges remain fresh. "NECC is on the cutting edge of everything that's happening in the field of autism," Kristen says. Hands down, "NECC is the best place to work if you want to help kids with autism. You stay current just by working here – not to mention the rewards of working with a young, motivated staff."

In fact, when Kristen likes something, she's bound to stick with it. She lives with her husband Adam, two-year-old Kelsey, and four-month-old Shayne, in Grafton – the very town where she grew up! NECC thanks Kristen and all her staff for their great efforts!

▶ Flower Power!



Celebrating Our Teachers

Members of NECC's student council surprised their teachers with potted flowers for Teacher Appreciation Week.

We Open Doors

Rob & Colleen McCabe



But it wasn't just Meaghan's comfort level, but the solidarity the McCabes' felt with other NECC families touched by autism. "Parents, grandparents and other family and friends here have been so inspirational to us with their openness, knowledge and experiences," Rob says. "It is rare to find a group of families connected to any school who are always willing to offer a smile or provide words of encouragement."

Finally, the staff and teachers make NECC an institution like no other, adds Rob. He is profoundly grateful for all the staff and teachers "that make it their daily ambition to work in this challenging field."

For Rob and Colleen McCabe, NECC was *the* answer to a long and frustrating search for help. The couple's journey began four years ago when their daughter Meaghan, then 18 months, was diagnosed with autism. For eight months, Rob and Colleen's frustration grew as they searched unsuccessfully for an effective way to help their daughter. When Meaghan entered NECC's Home - Based Program eight months later, their exasperation quickly gave way to relief.

When asked how NECC has changed Meaghan's life, Colleen seems lost for words. "Nothing I say will completely encompass a truly appropriate response. 'What *hasn't* NECC done?' is probably a more fitting question. I think NECC's slogan says a lot: The New England Center for Children opens doors."

Almost immediately, the McCabes knew NECC was *the* right answer. "First and foremost, Meaghan's comfort with the school gave us a good feeling," says Colleen. "She smiled more and cried less while gaining the ability to communicate."

For Colleen, Rob, and Robbie, 8 (Meaghan's big brother) NECC has done that and more for Meaghan.

'Come In, the Water's Fine'

For two glorious hours, 15 NECC students, and their parents and siblings had a heated six-lane pool all to themselves. The occasion? The Family Swim Event, held April 25 at the

Wayside Racquet and Swim Club in Marlborough, was a great time for all who showed up to take a dip.



Board Member
PROFILE

William Masiello

William (Bill) J. Masiello, The New England Center for Children's newest board member, has been involved with NECC since the summer of 1999, when his twin sons Billy and Jonathan joined the Early Learning Pre-School. Bill and his wife, Angela, also serve on the Parents and Friends Advisory Board of NECC.



Bill played a key role in launching – a “Night of Music” – a major annual event for NECC, which raised more than \$250,000 in three years. Bill serves as chairman of the “Night of Music,” and with Angela has been a driving force behind fundraising for this

successful event.

Bill attended Berklee College of Music, and graduated from Boston Architectural Center in Boston. A registered architect in the state of Massachusetts, Bill worked with Lamoureux-Pagano Associates Architects for almost 14 years, including four years as a partner.

Two years ago, he started his own company, William J. Masiello Architect, Inc., where he specializes in commercial and residential architecture.

A long-time resident of Worcester County, Bill is involved in many local projects, and designed many schools in Worcester County. Bill is deeply committed to NECC's mission. Over the past three years, Bill has helped NECC establish relationships with corporations and foundations in the Worcester area.



Honored

NECC has received the Western New England College Career Center's Employer Recognition Award for “active involvement in and dedication to the professional success of WNEC's students by providing them with employment and internship opportunities.” NECC, an Employers Advisory Council Charter Member, was presented with the award March 22 by WNEC's president Dr. Anthony Caprio (far right) and Gregory Michael, the college's Director of Career and Human Resources. Ellen Graham, NECC Administrative Specialist/School Psychologist (center, left), and Linda Beaulieu, NECC Staff Recruiter, accepted the award on behalf of the entire NECC staff.

Donor PROFILE John Duffy

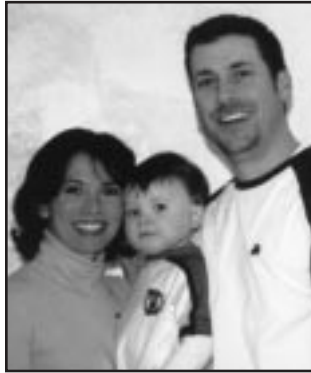
The Dunkin' Donuts connection strikes again. Include John Duffy on the growing list of NECC supporters affiliated with the donut giant.

John learned about NECC and its work through board member and Dunkin' Donuts Franchisee Neal Faulkner. At the time, John was looking for a way to help local children in need and was working with another local franchisee to launch a Dunkin' Donuts benefit golf tournament.

Then he learned about The New England Center for Children. NECC already had a tournament in place, but John knew he'd found an organization where his support would make a real difference.

"I get a great feeling from all of the people I've met who are involved with NECC," he says.

Rather than create a new benefit golf tournament, John decided to help take NECC's existing event to a new level.



\$195,000 to help the children.

John says Dunkin' Donuts support of NECC is only natural. "Many franchisees are extremely generous and philanthropic, but most people aren't aware of this. I'm hoping we'll raise awareness that these franchisees are always giving back to the community by supporting committed charities, such as NECC."

For John, that means giving back to children, especially. As proud father of 19-month-old Alex, John, and his wife, Karen, have a whole new perspective on that.

John's enthusiasm was contagious. Today, every one of the Dunkin' Donuts franchisees John manages support NECC through the Annual Golf Classic. Last year the tournament raised over

Leadership Annual Giving Program

The New England Center for Children depends on the generosity of individuals at all levels of giving. To appropriately recognize our leadership donors, we have created the Leadership Annual Giving Program, which includes the following members:

These committed donors receive special recognition, including invitations to special events and activities, gifts designed especially for members, and listing in *The Open Door* newsletter. *For more information, please contact Kim Todd, Director of Annual Giving 508-624-0518.*

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Leader | \$10,000+ |
| Benefactor | \$5,000 - \$9,999 |
| Partner | \$2,500 - \$4,999 |
| Associate | \$1,000 - \$2,499 |

NECC 'Made a Lasting Impression on Me'

The force behind NECC's new website

Lorraine Marino calls The New England Center for Children one of the area's "best-kept secrets." She remembers discovering NECC when her company helped launch the first Marino Lookout Farm 5K Road Race to benefit The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism.

"I was invited for a tour and was very impressed by NECC's students, teachers, and administrators, and by the beautiful facility," she says. "The school made a lasting impression on me."

The 5K race is now going into its sixth year, and Marino's admiration for NECC has only grown over the years. "NECC prepares the students for their future by giving them a strong foundation on which they can build toward independence," she says. "It provides students with a loving and nurturing environment where they can thrive."

And what accounts for that super caring environment? "I think it's about the people – both the students and staff," Marino explains. "It's always a treat to interact with students or hear stories of their successes, both large and small."

Marino's Cambridge - based company, Modern Creative, a marketing and design agency, has helped NECC in numerous ways, most recently by developing NECC's new website at www.necc.org.



In addition to helping NECC, Marino is involved with a number of other charitable organizations. Even with her busy schedule Marino makes plenty of time for family. "I come from a close-knit family," says Marino, whose parents both emigrated from Italy.

Marino's special appreciation for family heightens her understanding of how autism reaches well beyond the individual. "Autism affects every member of each family it touches," she says. NECC understands this reality and incorporates it into its response to autism. That, says Marino, is an idea she can get behind.

NECC Staffers Contribute to Key Journal

The winter issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* contains two important research articles by NECC senior staff.

The lead research article, *Persistence of stereotypic behavior: Examining the Effects of External Reinforcers*, was co-authored by Bill Ahearn, Director of Research, and Program Director, Kathy Clark, Research Coordinator, and Nicole Gardenier, Specialist in our Consulting Department, along with Bill Dube of the Shriver Center.

Eileen Roscoe, Assistant Director of Research in the Staff Intensive Unit, has an article on *Effect of reinforcers consumption and magnitude on response rates during non-compliant reinforcement*, written with Brian Iwata, Psychology Professor at the University of Florida and NECC Senior Research Scientist.

Congratulations to our NECC researchers for completing these important studies published in one of the most important journals in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis!

Board Certified!



Twelve NECC staff members recently received their Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) certificates from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Among other requirements, candidates must have a master's degree, and at least 180 hours of graduate instruction in behavior analysis. Congratulations to NECC's recent certificate recipients: (Front row, l to r:) Kirti Withrow, Nancy Perhot, Maria Felix, Kara Pascucci. (Back row, l to r:) Shelly Cota, Amanda Bargas, Heather Morrison, Chata Dickson, Shawn Bryant, Kristine Wiltz, Cheryl Davis, Janet Murphy.

▶ Congratulations

New England Brokerage Donates Computers

Marsh New England, the regional office of Marsh, Inc., has generously donated 25 computers to NECC. Thanks to Mark Adams, a NECC parent and Senior Vice President of New England Operations who arranged the donation. Marsh New England is the largest insurance brokerage and risk services firm in New England, and is headquartered in Boston with additional offices in Portland, ME and Providence, RI. The computers will be a great aid to NECC students.



In Memoriam

NECC lost a dear friend in Peter Grinnell Gombosi, Ph.D., who died April 14 after a brief and courageous struggle with cholangio-carcinoma.

Peter, the father of NECC student Andrew, served as president of the NECC Parents' Board from 1998-2000. He was devoted to Andrew and a great supporter of NECC.

From his perspective as a psychoanalyst and father of a child with severe autism, Peter published a well-received paper on working with parents of autistic children, published in the journal *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*.

Peter's great hobbies were sailing and music. He even commissioned four original chamber works from Boston composer Peter Child to mark significant events in his family's life.

In addition to Andrew, Peter is survived by his wife, Carolyn, and daughter, Anne Kathryn, as well as a sister and two brothers. He will be missed.



Memorial Gifts to Help the Children

NECC has recently received donations in memory of the following individuals:

Norman Levinsky, M.D.
L.V. Strully Sr., M.D.
Fanny Loperfido

Lucille M. Mercurio
Agostino Petricone
Mary Kelly Roback

If you are interested in making a memorial donation, please contact Kim Todd, Director of Annual Giving 508-624-0518. Thank you!