

Network News



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Spring 2006

Playspace Programs Across Massachusetts!

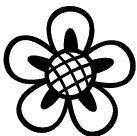
Happy Spring to all of our PALs! Did you know that Horizons for Homeless Children's Playspace Programs are growing rapidly across Massachusetts?

As of April 1st, 2006, we have **115** Playspaces in our 5 regions (Greater Boston, Central, Northeast, Southeast and West).

And currently, each week **over 700** PALs play with children living in family shelters across the state.

Since the last Newsletter, we have welcomed several new staff members to the Playspace Programs. Please join us in giving them a warm welcome!

- The Greater Boston Region welcomed **Matthew Hennessey**, as the AmeriCorps*VISTA Programs Coordinator, and **Lisa Fishlin**, as a Playspace Programs Manager.
- The West Region welcomed **Jody Carey**, as the Playspace Programs West Region Director.
- And the Southeast welcomed **Margaret Merfeld**, as the Playspace Programs Southeast Region Director.



PALS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

For over two years, **Central Region** PALs **Michelle Frasca**, **Serafina Quinn** and **Lynne Lockhart** have been bringing their wonderful energy and smiles to the children at **YOU, Inc.**'s Teen Living Program. The children love having them come every Monday; 2 year old Amari said "PALs are friends," and 9 year old Kanysa added "They are fun. Serafina likes to dance, Michelle loves to play Candyland, Lynne is very responsible for the kids." Shelter Director Kelly Sullivan agrees, "We appreciate so much the time, energy and genuine caring that Serafina, Michelle and Lynne give to the children. It is also reassuring for the moms to know that their children are well cared for by three lovely, dedicated women who are sharing themselves with our program! Thank you for the great work you do!"

The **Northeast Region** would like to thank **Kurt Mittelstaedt** for his 7 years of dedication to the Playspace Programs by awarding him the "IronPAL" award. This award is given to a PAL who has demonstrated remarkable amounts of energy and endurance over the course of their PAL career. Kurt certainly meets these criteria—and then some! Until the Northeast Region opened in 2004, Kurt's weekly commute to a Playspace was sometimes an hour or more. The fact that Kurt has been able to keep up this pace since 1998 and also found time to help renovate Playspaces and participate in PAL trainings is a true testament to his commitment—not to mention his stamina! Kurt is currently a PAL at **Merrimack House** in Lowell and the kids really love having him there. Thank you for your many years of volunteering, Kurt. You're a real Champ!

The **Southeast Region** is proud to have **Katie Zeigler** as a PAL. She has been a volunteer with Horizons for Homeless Children since September of 2005 at **Ruth House** in Brockton. For Katie, the best part of volunteering there is watching the children grow and reach new milestones each week. As part of an activism project at Stonehill College, Katie is organizing a donation drive for Ruth House. As soon as she heard about the project, Ruth House and its residents came to mind. Katie says that this donation drive is a way for her to show Ruth House how much she loves volunteering there. Horizons for Homeless Children is grateful to have such a dedicated PAL in the Southeast Region. Thanks Katie!

Western Region PAL Buddies **Ojae Beale** and **Natalya Lawor** have been volunteering at the **Main St. Shelter** in Holyoke since February of this year. When asked how the Playspace and the PAL Programs were working out, Shelter Director Bob Phelps states "After thinking about the PALs, the best endorsement I can give is the fact that a couple of our children cried when they found out they had returned to the shelter too late and couldn't participate in the session for that night. Those children's actions speak louder than any words I could add." And to Ojae and Natalya, Bob sends this message: "Thanks so much for your efforts and those of Horizons for Homeless Children. There is no better sight than to see the kids laughing and playing and being themselves."

The **Greater Boston Region** is delighted to have PAL, **Margaret Merfeld**, as a new HHC staff member. Margaret is currently a PAL at **Re-vision/Miller House**! Margaret is a wonderful role model for the children of Re-Vision/Miller House with her creative spirit, can-do attitude, and flexibility. Margaret was also one of several PALs who volunteered in the fall to help out at the Camp Edwards Playspace for the children affected Hurricane Katrina. In February, she also began volunteering as a PAL once a month for Homes for Families. To top it all off, she still finds time to be a frequent PAL panelist at our trainings and recruitment events. Thank you, Margaret!!

THANK YOU to panelists who spoke at our Late Winter and Spring Trainings!

PAL PANELS

Central

Ron Jarret, *Friendly House*
Angela Bean, *Shepherd's Place II*
Jonathan Bassett, *Maranda's House*
Christana Abe, *Sage House*
Liza Casey-Johnson, *YOU, Inc.*
Sonia Nunez, *Maranda's House*

Greater Boston

Laurie Anderson, *Hildebrand*
Asia Bento, *Project Hope*
Patrick Berzai, *Mary Eliza Mahoney House (Dimock)*
Amy Bogen, *Project Family Independence II*
Scot Durkin, *Olivia's Place*
Nathan Hutto, *Horizons II*
Margaret Merfeld, *Re-vision/Miller House*
Lisa Tucker, *Putnam Investments CCC*
David Turner, *Horizons II*
Marty Wrin, *Putnam Investments CCC*

Northeast

Alexandra Lewis, *The Inn Between*
Jennifer Messina, *House of Hope*
Kurt Mittelstaedt, *Merrimack House*
Matt Skavenski, *House of Hope*

Southeast

Christina Laverentz, *Housing Families, Inc. – Broadway*
Tom Treat, *Second Step*

West

Natalya Lawor, *Main St. Shelter*
Ojae Beale, *Main St. Shelter*
Sue Scully, *St. Mary's Home for Women and Children, Dorchester*

SHELTER STAFF PANELS

Central

Shirley Williams, *Patricia Mays House*
Sharon Donahue, *New Hope Southeast*
Evelyn Trepanier, *The Village at Cambridge St.*
Deniz Karakoyunlu, *The Village at Cambridge St*
Holly Fitzgerald, *Daybreak*
Amy McPheeters, *Shepherd's Place II*
Mary Solomita, *Daybreak*

Greater Boston

Cynthia Brown, *Family House*
Bridget Faison, *Aswalos House*
Sharae Gittens, *Project Family Independence*
Cathy Peña, *Putnam Investments CCC*
Katrina Pope, *ESH-ER*
Lea Spellman, *Casa Myrna Vazquez-ATLP*
Joan Tepper, *The Second Step I & II*
Sharae Winston, *Re-vision/Miller House*

Northeast

Katherine Beal, *Milly's Place*
Deb Chausse, *House of Hope*
Noreen Donovan, *HART House & Spiritus*
Alicia Vakalidis, *Brigid's Crossing*

Southeast

Lisa Abrams, *Safe Harbor*
Amy Brigham, *Angel House*
Maureen Madiros, *Our Sister's Place*
Mandi Nicklay, *David Jon Louison Family Center*

West

Bob Phelps, *Main St. Shelter*
Pedro Nieves, *Prospect House*
Erika Matos, *Prospect House*

Upcoming Events.....

- Help us grow our PAL network by sending a friend to one of these **upcoming trainings**.
 - Saturday, May 6th in **Hyannis**.
 - Monday, May 8th & Tuesday, May 9th in **Boston**.
 - Tuesday, May 16th & Wednesday, May 17th in the **Lowell/Lawrence** area.
 - Wednesday, June 7th & Thursday, June 8th in the **Holyoke** area.
 - Wednesday, July 12th & Thursday, July 13th in the **Worcester** area
- **Save the date!** Annual Recognition Event on Wednesday, May 31st at the Cambridge Marriot. Invitations coming to your mailboxes soon!
- **Save the date!** PAL Activity Workshop on Saturday, May 6th at the Boston Children's Museum. Details coming via email soon!

Expanding Your PAL Bag Of Tricks!

Introduction: What, When, and How to apply it

When thinking about materials and supplies that you need for your Playspace, it's easy to come up with a long list of arts and crafts or board games that you could use. We thought it would also be helpful to come up with some ideas to "Expand Your Bag of Tricks" and to re-introduce some of the old-standbys that can be used at any time without preparation or materials. The following are examples of activities to pull out of your 'Hip Pocket' when you need them.

Mother May I

One person is assigned the role of "Mother." The rest of the group stands in a row at the opposite end of the room/space, facing the Mother. The Mother then starts the game by naming the person on the left by name and asking them to move forward in a special way. Example: "Jun, please take three ballerina twirls forward." The person must say, "Mother May I?" before making any forward movement. If the person does not ask this question, they are sent back to the start line. The object of the game is to reach Mother first. The first person to reach Mother takes over that role for the next round. The Mother can be as creative as she/he would like, asking people to make 10 choo-choo train steps forward or two cartwheels forward or 6 rabbit hops.

Food Duck Duck Goose and Other Adaptations

This game is an adaptation of *Duck Duck Goose*. Everyone sits in a circle and one person is assigned the role of "tagger." The tagger walks around the circle tapping each participant lightly on the head and names a food. For example, I might tap Sue on the head and say, "pickles." If Sue likes pickles, she will remain seated. If Sue dislikes pickles, she will get up and start chasing me. If Sue catches me before I sit down in her spot, I have to remain the tagger. If she does not, Sue becomes the new tagger.

I Spy

One person silently chooses an object in the room and then announces one clue. "I spy with my little eye, something red!" or "I spy with my little eye something round." Then each participant takes turns asking one yes or no question at the time until someone is able to guess the object. The person who guesses correctly is the next one to pick an object.

Simon Says

One person is assigned the role of Simon. All other participants stand opposite Simon in a row. Simon will give the group a series of directions, such as, "Simon says hop on one foot. Simon says sit down. Simon says stand up." The group will do each activity that "Simon says," to do, but ONLY if he/she begins the phrase with the words, "Simon says." If he/she does not, the group should not follow the direction. If a member of the group does follow a direction that does not begin with the phrase, the person is out until the next round.

Heads-Up 7-Up

Seven people stand up (this number can be changed for smaller groups). The rest of the group remain seated and cover their eyes with one hand, putting their remaining hand out in front of them in a fist. The seven go out and touch a person's hand, and that person will stick his or her thumb up. Then the seven return to the front and say "heads up seven up". The seated group uncover their eyes and each seated person gets one chance to guess which of the seven touched his/her hand. If they guess correctly then they change places. If they do not guess correctly, the same child (of the original 7) stays up at the front for the next round.

**A special THANK YOU to the following PALs
who went above and beyond in helping to grow our PAL Network**

Visibility Events:

The following PALs attended an event in the community and spoke with interested people about the PAL Programs, their personal experience volunteering with Horizons for Homeless Children, and how they could become PALs.

Rebecca Barry, Patrick Berzai, Kimberly Carter, Patrick Clausen, Elaine Cronin, Phil Cunningham, Chris Edwards, Caleb Esterbrooks, Cathi Gianelli, Rosemary Hinteregger, Mike Hirsch, Denise Howe, Nathan Hutto, Lisa Jebali, Peter Johanson, Lisette Lopez, Thai Luong, Lauren Machunis, Margaret Merfeld, Sara Mohamedi, Gary Multer, Amanda Richter, Sue Rushford, Karen Saia, Jane Seney, Michele Sharpe, Barb Sherlock, Zoe Sherman, Alex Shopov, Rebecca Strimer, Jun-Shik Whang, and Marty Wrin.

Distributing Flyers:

The following PALs hung flyers around their communities and in their work places in an effort to spread the word about Horizons for Homeless Children and the Playspace Programs.

Patrick Berzai, Alissa Breitstein, Kayla Calkin, Kimberly Carter, Patrick Clausen, Judith Cohen, Elaine Cronin, Phil Cunningham, Sandy Dean, Chris Edwards, Sarah Fader, Eileen Groebecke, Rosemary Hinteregger, Scott Holley, Denise Howe, Nathan Hutto, Lisa Jebali, Cathy Johnson, Caitlyn Keckeissen, Natalie Kirschstein, Rebecca Kolpan, Lisette Lopez, Lauren Machunis, Beth MacKenzie, Susan Mayer, Yelena Melo, Gary Multer, Kamille Reaves, Amanda Richter, Sue Rushford, Karen Saia, Patricia Sanders, Thomas Seggers, Jane Seney, Barb Sherlock, Zoe Sherman, Jeremy Stein, Lauren Tajima, Donna Vincent, Tara Weaver, Jun-Shik Whang and Marty Wrin.

Sent Emails:

The following PALs sent emails to their friends, family, and co-workers about Horizons for Homeless Children and the Playspace Programs.

Kayla Calkin, Scott Holley, Tara Weaver and Karen Zurita.

Passed Word Along:

The following PALs spoke with their friends, family, and co-workers about Horizons for Homeless Children and the Playspace Programs.

Ashly Culver, Laiza Dipre, Maulana Dorce, Michelle Frasca, Reguina McCann, Judy Tan and Joanne Williams.

Corporate Outreach:

The following PALs connected their Region Director to a business or corporation that allowed Horizons for Homeless Children to speak with employees or send emails to employees about our Playspace Programs and the PAL volunteer opportunity.

Davina Abujudeh at **The Hard Rock Cafe** and Nirvana Mehan at **General Electric**.

Please let us know about the different ways you are spreading the word!

REGIONAL NEWS

GREATER BOSTON NEWS

The Boston office is delighted to introduce **Lisa Fishlin**, our new Programs Manager for the **Greater Boston Region**. Lisa has a background in child development and volunteer management. She received her degree in Child Development and Environmental Studies from Tufts University and has been an AmeriCorps*VISTA working with the National Student Partnerships in Somerville. Please join us in welcoming Lisa to our team!

In other Greater Boston news, we are busy working with the **Boston Children's Museum** for our next Activity Workshop and are exploring venues for our summer Picnic. In hopes to get you interested in participating, we will be soliciting your ideas! Thank you to the many current and former PALs who have been helping us with our recruitment efforts. We have a great need for many more volunteers (as many of you already know!) and your help to connect us with folks who are interested in working with our children is greatly appreciated! We are also grateful to the many PALs who rallied together so that we could provide a 6-month Parent Workshop hosted by **Homes for Families**. Many people took on an additional shift and went to great lengths to add this to their already busy schedule. Thank you! Lastly, we hope to see you all at the Recognition Dinner next month.

CENTRAL NEWS

We have been busy in the **Central Region**, focusing on expanding our volunteer network while maintaining our current Playspaces. In the past year, we have nearly **doubled** the number of Central PALs!!! We are now offering more activities to our PALs, including our First Day of Spring event at Jillian's. Over 40 PALs, shelter staff, family members, and friends gathered for a fun night of food and games. And congratulations to **Daybreak** staff member **Meghann Logan** for winning another VIP party. **Thank you to Jillian's** for sponsoring the event! We have also been lucky to collaborate with a number of generous children and families who have organized birthday party donations so that we can restock our Playspaces with new arts and crafts supplies and toys. Additionally, **Brownie Troupe #193** included HHC brochures and information while selling cookies this season. They then donated 50 boxes of cookies for children living in Central Region shelters. Thank you all for thinking of our Programs. It is greatly appreciated.

NORTHEAST NEWS

Wonderful things have been happening in the Northeast Region over the past few months! In February, we held a PAL training at UMass Lowell, and we had our biggest turnout to date with 43 PALs. Many thanks to **Katrina Thompson**, PAL and UMass Lowell student, who worked tirelessly to secure us space, get our flyers hung, and spread the word about our volunteer program on campus. This helped us reach a peak of 131 PALs! Also in February, we installed our 20th Playspace at **Women in Transition** in Lowell and refurbished the playspace at YWCA of Greater Lawrence's Fina House which houses the **Oasis** and **Teen Living Programs**. A special thanks to **Alexis Baskin**, a Lawrence High School student, who spent the day with us as a part of the 2006 Groundhog Shadow Day, and helped with the refurbishment. On March 8th, the Boston Celtics honored **Sarah Fader**, PAL at **Bridge House** in Lynn and **Taking Care of Business** in Gloucester, as a "Hero Among Us", for her 8 years of outstanding dedication to the Playspace Programs. It was an amazing night that many of our PALs attended thanks to the tickets generously donated by the Boston Celtics. **Gale Batsimm**, a journalist for the **North Andover Town Crossings**, wrote an article about the Playspace Programs and highlighted the experiences of 3 Northeast PALs—**Sonia Chadha**, PAL at **Lazarus House** in Lawrence, and the mother/daughter team of **Lisa and Jacqui Kumph** who volunteer at **Emmaus House** in Haverhill. We have received many calls from interested volunteers who read the article and were touched by their stories. Thank you to all of our PALs who have helped our region grow!

SOUTHEAST NEWS

The Southeast Region has recently opened two new Playspaces! On January 10, 2006 we opened our 15th Playspace at **Gentle Arms** in Fall River. We added the 16th Playspace of the Southeast Region on March 9, 2006 at **David Jon Louison Family Center** in Brockton. This Playspace is the second of three that will be at David Jon Louison Family Shelter. The Southeast Region just had a training for its Playspace Activity Leaders on March 21st and 22nd at **Carney Academy** in New Bedford. We look forward to placing PALs throughout the region and especially in the two new Playspaces!

WESTERN NEWS

On March 28 and March 29 the Western Region held a PAL training in Holyoke. Many thanks to our speakers, **Tom Salter**, Vice President of the **New England Farm Workers Council**, **Kimm Quinlan**, Accreditation Specialist with the **Preschool Enrichment Team**, and **Rosemary Surdyka**, RN from **Healthcare for the Homeless** for sharing their expertise with our volunteers. The event was well attended, and the lively group of potential PALs are eager to be matched with a shelter and begin playing! Over the next couple of months, we will be installing Playspaces in Greenfield and will be targeting recruitment efforts in that area in addition to Holyoke and Springfield.

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Open Position, AmeriCorps*VISTA/Programs Coordinator

Thank You to our PALs

Ryan Debin &



David Constantine

who ran the 2006 Boston Marathon and raised
money for Horizons for Homeless Children!