

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



News and Resources January 2020



Happy New Year, VFN family and friends!

I hope that your holidays were happy ones. 2020 has arrived, and with it, many new opportunities and challenges! We are here, ready to rise to the occasion, with some new staff and some new programs, including the Puppets in Education's new Anxiety offering, which will debut at the Fletcher Elementary School on the 13th.

We will bid farewell to Lisa Maynes as a Family Support Co-Director this month as she moves full-time with [Family Voices](#) at the national level---we are excited for her, and happy that we will still be able to benefit from her expertise as a consultant to our organization. We are delighted to share that Jamie Rainville has accepted the role of Family Support Co-Director, and has been working with Lisa as she makes her transition.

We are seeking Family Support Consultants for our Family Support team, as well as a Developmental Educator and Family Resource Coordinators in our Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention team. [Check out these opportunities.](#)

Planning is under way for our 2020 Conference, which is aimed at being more accessible to families and the professionals who serve them throughout the state--[Check it out](#), and plan to attend at a location near you!

We have finalized our parts of the [Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights](#) and [Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance](#) platforms for the 2020 legislative session, which will begin on Tuesday, January 7th. We invite you to participate in advocacy for families of children and youth with disabilities/special health needs---contact me at Pam.Mccarthy@vfn.org if you are interested in taking part in advocacy efforts this year. Your stories matter!

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

Free Parenting Series Begins January 23

Are you the parent of a child or youth with disabilities or special health needs? Sara Forward and Tracey Girdich will facilitate a FREE 3-part Parenting Series called "Play Your Way Home." Come and start your day at Vermont Family Network in Williston and leave a little lighter with a few new tricks for parenting. We will explore games and stories from multiple cultures. You will be invited to learn what kind of "player" you are and what that means for who you are as a parent. You will reflect with others about places in your parenting journey where you might have room to let play in and create more space for humor and creativity to create stronger bonds within your family. Parents are asked to attend all 3 sessions from 8:30 am - 10 am on January 23, February 11, and March 10, 2020. Check out the [details](#) and [register](#) today. Space is limited. Please contact Janice.Sabett@vtfn.org or (802) 876-5315 x218.

New VFN Resources

We have many [resources](#) on our website including our own [publications](#) and many [webinars](#) recorded by subject-matter experts who generously donate their time to share their knowledge. Here is a quick list of our newest additions:

[Webinar: Special Needs Planning for Your Peace of Mind](#)

[Webinar: Restraints and Seclusions in Vermont Schools: What Families Should Know](#)

[Facebook Live: Anxiety in Teens with Dr. Jeremiah Dickerson, child psychiatrist](#)

We're Here to Help!

Our Family Support Consultants are here to help you. You can reach us by calling (802) 876-5315 or toll-free at 1-800-800-4005. Another way to contact us is to send an email to info@vtfn.org. Include your name, phone number, and a few words about your question or concern, and best times to reach you during our office hours (Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4:30 pm) so we can have the right person on our staff return your call. We do our very best to return calls within one business day.

Free Educational Opportunities

You can listen "live" or after the webinar is recorded and saved on our [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). We also record our Facebook Live events and save those on our website.

Facebook Live - Tuesday, January 14 starting at 2:15 pm. Family Support Consultant Martha Frank will be talking with Jayson Capobianco about transition assessments. Jayson is an Employment Specialist with the Barre Unified School District.

Facebook Live - Wednesday, January 15 starting at 2:15 pm. Family Support Consultant Janice Sabett will be talking with Randy Lizotte about self-advocacy.

Randy is the Board President for the [Green Mountain Self-Advocates](#) and also works at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services.

Transition to Adulthood for Youth with Disabilities - Wednesday, January 15 from 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services in St. Albans. Details and information on how to RSVP are [here](#).

Strategies for Dealing with Challenging Behaviors of Young Children - Thursday, January 16 from 10:30 am - 11:30 am at the Family Room in Burlington. Contact Janice.Sabett@vfn.org or (802) 876-5315 x218 for more information.

Funding a Special Needs Trust - Wednesday, February 5 from 12 noon - 1 pm. Presenter: Larry Hawley, Financial Representative with The Vermont Agency. Registration coming soon. [Register here](#).

Please help us by completing a [brief survey](#) when you're done watching any of our webinars. We need this information to report to our funders and to make improvements in our future offerings.

2020 Annual Conference - Save the Dates!

[VFN's Annual Conference](#) will have a whole new look next year! We're excited about our new half-day format that will happen in 4 different locations around the state. We hope to reach more people especially those who may never have had an opportunity to attend in the past.

Thanks to all of you who completed a conference survey to guide our decision in picking a presenter and topic. We are pleased to announce that Sara Forward, LICSW with the Child Welfare Training Partnership at the University of Vermont, will guide us in a program entitled "The Power of Play: Opening Doors in a Small Town." Visit our [website](#) for Sara's bio and more information about her interactive presentation. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information! Registration will open on February 3rd. Only \$10 for parents and \$25 for professionals.

Saturday, **March 21** from 10 am - 2 pm in a location to be determined in Springfield

Tuesday, **March 31** from 4 pm - 8 pm at the Eastside Restaurant in Newport

Thursday, **April 2** from 8:30 am - 1 pm at the Delta Hotel (formerly Trader Duke's) in South Burlington

Saturday, **April 4** (time/location to be determined) in Burlington. The focus audience will be parents from New American communities. As with all of our other conference dates, everyone is welcome to participate!

Genetics: Check it Out!

What do you know about your family tree? Have any of your relatives had health problems that tend to run in families? Which of these problems affected your parents or grandparents? Which ones affect you or your brothers or sisters now?

Which problems might you pass on to your children? With advances in medical research, doctors now have the tools to understand much about how certain illnesses, or increased risks for certain illnesses, pass from generation to generation. [The New England Regional Genetics Network](#) has completed a new brochure for families that can be found [here](#). Additionally, Vermont Family Network is able to match many families who have children with rare conditions to support each other through our [parent-to-parent match program](#). Please call us at (802) 876-5315 or toll-free at 1-800-800-4005 and ask to speak to a Family Support Consultant for more information about either a parent match or additional genetics resources.

Are There IEPs and Section 504 Plans in College?

The short answer is "no." The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#), which is the law that provides students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) no longer applies once they graduate from high school. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 still protects students from discrimination when they get to college. However, they won't get a [504 Plan](#) like they had in high school. A student's 504 plan doesn't "travel" with a student to college. Rather, colleges are required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate based on disability. Read [Know Your Rights and Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education](#) in our [Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities](#) for more information.

News from the Puppets

The Puppets are honored to have worked with more than 3,000 students and 700 adults since the start of the school year. This past month, our focus has been on Bullying Prevention, Learning Differences, Children's Mental Health, Sexual Abuse Awareness, Cultural Diversity and Blindness and Visual Impairment. We strive to meet the students' needs, answer questions and, most importantly, listen to their stories.

From the Students

"Thank you for teaching us life lessons about bullying and learning differences. My favorite part was the song, because we got to sing it with puppets. I hope you come back!" 4th Grader, Barkley Elementary

"I learned that you can talk about Feelings." Kindergartener

"This play is about me." 2nd Grader

"Do you ever get embarrassed from having a Learning Difference?" 4th Grader

"I saw a puppet that looks like me!" 1st Grader

From the Adults

"It was AMAZING! I had the luxury of attending all three shows and they did a wonderful job and the students were SOOOO ENGAGED! I am thoroughly

impressed." Guidance Counselor, Summit Street Elementary School, Essex Junction (Blindness/ Visual Impairment Program)

"I really appreciated the openness with which you talked about sexual abuse." 4th Grade Teacher

"These are tricky topics and you treat them with respect and dignity." 5th Grade Teacher

"The small group discussions after the puppet show really engaged the 5th graders in discussions. They wanted to talk about it, and did." 5th Grade Teacher

"I would like to see this every month or so, not the same skit, but different situations." 2nd Grade Parent

Stay tuned...next month we launch our Anxiety Pilot Program!

SibShop Fun on Sunday, January 12

Our next Sibshop will be on **Sunday, January 12 from 2 - 4:30 pm**. Sibshop on ice! We will be celebrating the winter months by going to the [Essex Ice Skating Rink](#) at the high school for skating and sib chat. Skates will be rented or sibs are welcome to bring their own. All skill levels are welcome!

For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Molly Lawney by calling 802-876-5315 x216 or emailing Molly.Lawney@vtfn.org. Space is limited so RSVP soon!

Join Our Closed Facebook Page

Our [closed Facebook page](#) (Vermont Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs) is for parents, family members, and people in a parenting role. The current membership is 495 and growing. This group shares ideas, asks questions, and offers support. You may also want to join our [Listserv](#) which is an email sharing list.

Did you know we have 90+ webinars on [YouTube](#)?



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