

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



News and Resources

March 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family!

March is here, and we are very excited about our upcoming April 3rd annual Conference! Stories of Hope and Resilience is this year's theme, and we have an incredibly dynamic start with keynote Hasan Davis, a rousing end with Dan Habib and *Intelligent Lives*, and 10 amazing workshops in between. We have terrific exhibitors available throughout the day, and at lunch, we will celebrate Vermont Family Network's 10th birthday! [Register today](#) or sign up to be an [exhibitor](#).

I want to thank all of the wonderful restaurants who made this year's Dine to Donate and Restaurant Raffle so successful. These businesses are such great partners! Congratulations to the many raffle winners---Enjoy!

A big thank you to all of the dancers who shared their time and talents in the Dance Showcase fundraiser on February 23rd---we are grateful to have such a diverse group of performers supporting our mission work of giving families a strong start, lifting family voices, and advancing inclusive communities throughout Vermont!

Congratulations to the Vermont Leadership Series graduates who were celebrated at the Statehouse on Disability Awareness Day, February 27th---we cannot wait to see how you'll use your new skills in effecting change for people with disabilities/special healthcare needs and their families. You give us such hope for the future of our brave little state!

Looking forward to Early Childhood Day at the Legislature March 13th in Montpelier, and successful advocacy through the next few months for budget and policy choices that positively impact the people we serve. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact me at pam.mccarthy@vfn.org

Here's to an early Spring!

From the heart,
Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

Join Us April 3 for Our Annual Conference *Celebrating 10 Years Together*

Please join us for our [Annual Conference](#) on Wednesday, April 3rd at the [DoubleTree by Hilton](#) in Burlington. Vermont Attorney General, T.J. Donovan will be introducing our keynote speaker [Hasan Davis](#) whose talk "Don't DISmyABILITY: A Transformational Journey from Juvenile Delinquent to Juris Doctor" will surely inspire you!

We have a fabulous line-up of [10 workshops](#) on topics including: Anxiety in Children and Teens; Challenging Behaviors and School Success; Self-Care; IEP and Transition Planning; Special Needs Trusts & ABLE Accounts; and workshops geared specifically for transition-age youth (ages 14-26).

There will also be 40 exhibitors, a special lunch-time program to celebrate 10 years together as VFN, plenty of time to meet other parents, and of course, birthday cake.

The cost for this information-packed, all-day event is \$75 for parents, \$115 for professionals, and a discounted rate of \$25 for youth with disabilities. We offer full and partial scholarships for parents and family members on a first-come, first-served basis. Please fill out the [scholarship form](#) before registering for the conference. If you are a parent and need to travel 2 or more hours from your home to attend our conference, please ask us about a travel stipend to help cover your expenses.

And there is more! Right after our conference beginning at 3 pm is a free screening of the new documentary [Intelligent Lives](#) by award-winning filmmaker [Dan Habib](#). Dan will lead a panel discussion after the film. If you have any questions about this part of the day, please contact the host, the [Center on Disability and Community Inclusion](#) at UVM.

We look forward to seeing you on April 3rd!

[Register Now](#)

Join Vermont's Special Education Advisory Panel

The Special Education Advisory Panel is a group of people who have disabilities, are parents of kids with disabilities, or work with students with disabilities. Parents can apply if their children are under age 26. Individuals with disabilities can apply at any age. We are especially interested in people in school, or recent graduates, who are getting or have gotten special education services joining this panel. The job of the panel is to give advice to the Agency of Education about the educational needs of children with disabilities, provide input

on rules that impact children with disabilities, and give other advice to the Agency of Education when it comes to reports, policies, procedures, and plans. Panel members can get mileage reimbursement and a small stipend when they attend meetings.

If you are interested in joining this important panel and helping make special education better for all Vermont children with disabilities, please contact [Rachel Seelig](#) with your name, email, phone, and mailing address. Rachel can help with the application process. If you have questions about serving on the Panel, please contact [Karen Price](#).

Summer Services: The Extended School Year

Is a summer program necessary to help your child reach their educational goals? Is a summer program necessary for your child to keep from regressing in the skill areas they have already achieved? If the answers to these questions are "yes" and your Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 team has not yet talked about the need for Extended School Year (ESY) services in the summer, you may want to schedule a meeting to talk about just that! It's never too early to start planning. Read the [VFN fact sheet](#) on ESY services or call our helpline at 1-800-800-4005 or (802) 876-5315 if you have questions.

Flutie Funds for Children with Autism

Families who have children (from birth to age 22) with an autism diagnosis may request up to \$200 for needed equipment, respite, camp, therapies, emergency childcare, or to attend a conference related to their child's diagnosis. We encourage families from rural areas (e.g. Bennington, Essex, Orleans and Windham counties) to apply. Application forms are available on our [website](#).

[Contact Jamie](#)

Camps and Recreation

Summer camps and other recreational programs can provide a variety of experiences for children with disabilities. Check out our updated [Summer Camps list for 2019](#) and see our website for other ideas about [recreation](#).

Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination, & Disclosure

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up and advocate for your own needs. Self-determination is the belief that one has the right and is in charge of their life, is active in making decisions, setting goals and being involved in the direction of one's life. Self-advocacy skills and a strong sense of self-determination are important for a youth with a disability as they transition from school to adulthood. Disclosing information about a disability is voluntary and a personal decision, but

one that is also necessary to receive accommodations and modifications in an educational and employment setting. These [topics](#) and many more are covered in our [Transition to Adulthood Toolkit](#).

Welcoming New Family Faculty Coordinator

At the end of 2019, Jan Hancock will be retiring after 18 years in Family Support. Jamie Rainville, Family Support Consultant and our primary connection to the UVM Medical Center, has begun transitioning into the role of Family Faculty Coordinator. Our [Family Faculty programs](#) include Parent and Family Panels at the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS), the 3rd year Medical Education Project (MEP), the 1st year medical student course at the Larner College of Medicine, and the UVM Department of Education. Family Faculty participants teach family-centered care by offering future healthcare providers and educators insights into parenting a child who has a disability, chronic health condition, or special needs. Jamie served as the Autism Program Coordinator with CIS-EI (Early Intervention) for 6 years and now 3 years in Family Support after she became a parent. Families can contact Jamie to learn more about joining our Family Faculty.

[Contact Jamie](#)

Free VFN Webinars

Wednesday, March 13 from 12 - 1 pm: Health Care Advocacy Resources and Free Legal Help -- [Register Now](#) The Office of the Health Care Advocate will give information on navigating health insurance, rights to health care, and appealing claim denials. You'll leave with resources and information to be a better advocate for you and your loved ones accessing health care. The Office of the Health Care Advocate is a project of Vermont Legal Aid. We give free advice, advocacy, and support to Vermonters with health care problems. Presenter: Amelia Schlossberg, HCA Communications Coordinator

Wednesday, April 24 from 12 - 1 pm: Residential Options for Adults in Vermont with Developmental Disabilities. Presented by Amy Roth, More information coming [here](#).

News from the Puppets!

Four is the magic number! So far this year, we have reached 4,444 people. We have had a few snow day reschedules, and the puppets will be on the road throughout Vermont every week in March from St. Albans to Poultney and places in between. Our Children's Mental Health Programs will be the focus for the month, thanks to a grant from the Vermont Department of Mental Health.

What kids are saying to the puppets and puppeteers:

"You should show kindness because you can learn from one another." 3rd grader

"That show was AMAZING!" 4th grader

"Don't judge someone, get to know them by asking questions." 6th grader

What teachers are saying about the puppets:

"Everything was great and appropriate for the grade levels, thank you!" Grade 1 Teacher

"It was fun and helpful." K Teacher

"I like the humor you brought to the program." Grade 2 Teacher

"Working in cooperative groups was a great way to engage students." Grade 6 Teacher

Meet the Family Tours

Join us for a 1-hour "Meet the Family" tour, an overview of the work that Vermont Family Network does. For information on when tours will be held, please contact Claire Giroux-Williams. You will be amazed!

Keep Your Resolution to be Tobacco-Free

If you made a resolution to quit smoking in the new year and are struggling with your confidence to stay quit, [802Quits](#) can help. Free resources by phone, online or in person can improve your chances of success. [Read more...](#)

Join VFN's Closed Facebook Page

[VFN's 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 382 and growing. This group shares ideas, asks questions, and offers support. You may also want to [join our Listserv](#) which is a closed email sharing list.

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



(802) 876-5315 or 1-800-800-4005

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