

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



News and Resources

May 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family!

I am writing this month's note from Delaware, where I am supporting my sister in caring for our 85 year old dad, who is experiencing complications of Myelodysplastic Syndrome and is currently in the ICU. It is National Nurse's Week, and I am struck by two big thoughts today: 1. Family caregivers like my sister and so many of our VFN parents are unsung heroes, whether caring for children and youth with disabilities, or navigating healthcare for elders (and sometimes both). 2. Nurses are an incredibly important part of our healthcare system, and deserve our support and admiration as professionals. As we look at healthcare reforms in Vermont, we need to pay attention to the significant roles that nurses and family caregivers play in supporting good health outcomes for children, youth, adults and elders with special healthcare needs/disabilities. I hope you will take a moment today to appreciate a family caregiver or a nurse you know---they make a real difference, each and every day.

With a grateful heart,

Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

Vermont Leadership Series Coming Soon

Nearly 100 self-advocates and family members have graduated from the [Vermont Leadership Series](#) so far! The application process for the 2019-2020 Leadership Series will begin soon. A recent graduate commented: "If you care about justice, an end to discrimination, rights of people with disabilities - do it!" For more information, please contact Joanne.Wechsler@vtfn.org or 1-800-800-4005 / (802) 876-5315 x217.

1st Annual Youth Summit

1st Annual Youth Summit--May 30th, 2019 at Vermont Technical College from 9am to 2pm.

This event is organized by the Youth Advocacy Council, a group comprised of youth and young adults who educate and empower individuals with differing abilities. EDUCATE - ELEVATE - EMPOWER. This is an event FOR youth BY youth.

Information about the day:

- Keynote presentation by [Matthew Shapiro](#)
- Workshops focused on the areas of self-advocacy, employment/careers, bullying/harassment, and transition to adulthood.
- [Umatter](#) activities for participating schools will be occurring throughout the day.
- It is a packed agenda dedicated to youth who are engaged in advocacy and leadership activities.
- Space is limited. There is availability for 150 youth and young adults, and 50 adults who are actively supporting attendees and the intention of the day.
- Deadline for registration is May 10th.

Contact: Martha.Frank@vtfn.org

[Register Today](#)

Special Education Evaluations

VFN Family Consultants get many calls from parents regarding special education evaluations. The Vermont Agency of Education has issued a [memo](#) with some important clarifications. Amongst them are that school breaks, (including summer vacation), lack of school staffing, or the use of MTSS (multi-tier systems of support) cannot be used to delay evaluations.

A comprehensive special education evaluation is crucial in developing appropriate services and supports in your child's individualized education program (IEP). IQ tests are but one measure of your child and the results need to be viewed in context of the whole child. It should not be used as a reason to set low standards. The Endrews F. decision states that a student's (IEP) must be "appropriately ambitious" and that "every child should have a chance to meet challenging objectives." The [Endrews F. toolkit](#) can help your team set challenging objectives for your child. Read these [FAQs](#) issued by the U.S. Department of Education for the nitty-gritty of this landmark Supreme Court special education decision.

Call our Family Support Consultants at 1-800-800-4005 if you have questions about special education evaluations.

Sibshop Fun on May 18

Our next Sibshop will be held at the [Ethan Allen Homestead Picnic Shelter](#) in Burlington (fully accessible) from 12 noon - 2 pm on Saturday May 18th. Parents and all siblings are invited to share pizza, play some games, and visit with each other. There is a suggested \$10 donation (for participating sib only) but we do have scholarships available if needed. For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Jamie.Rainville@vtfn.org or 802-876-5315 X 243. Space is limited, so please RSVP soon!

Free VFN Webinars

Update on Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Vermont: Wednesday, May 9 from 12 - 1 pm. Presenter: Erin Maguire, Director of Student Support Services, Essex Westford School District [Info and registration](#)

Helpful Approaches to Navigating Sensory Sensitivities in the Community: Wednesday, June 5 from 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm. Presenters from the UVM Children's Hospital: Jennifer Eddy, Certified Child Life Specialist - Comfort Zone (Outpatient Pediatric Sedation Center) and Jennifer Dawson, Certified Child Life Specialist - Baird 5 and PICU (Inpatient) [Info and registration](#)

Remember that we save all of our webinars on our [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). If you watch a webinar, please take a few minutes to fill out an [evaluation form](#), which helps us with our grant reports. If you would like a Certificate of Completion after watching a webinar, send an email to Info@vtfn.org and tell us the name/date of the webinar(s) that you watched.

News from the Puppets!

Vermont Family Network's Puppets in Education team has been on the road in other states this past month. Thanks to The Turrell Fund and Upstate Chevrolet, messages about inclusion and friendship have reached into New York and New Jersey--at the Albany School of Humanities (Albany, NY); Gray Charter Academy (Newark, NJ), Okte Elementary (Clifton Park, NY) and The Learning Community at Broadalbin-Perth (Broadalbin, NY). This school year 7,517 students, 1,593 adults have participated in our programs, for a total of 9,110 to date. We will finish up the school year with programs every week in Vermont and one more in New York. Check out our calendar [here](#).

What the **students** are saying to the puppets:

"Everyone is different, no one is a certain kind of different." 5th Grader, Okte Elementary School, Clifton Park, NY

"When I am really scared on my first day of school but then I do it, I am really proud of myself." Kindergartener, The Learning Community at Broadalbin-Perth, Broadalbin, NY

"In this world, we are all a family." 3rd Grader, Gray Charter Academy, Newark, NJ

What **teachers** are saying about the programs:

"You presented ways to solve each problem, which was a great way to encourage scholars to problem solve." 4th Grade Teacher

"I really liked the simplicity of how the puppets dialogue conveyed messages of understanding." 3rd Grade Teacher

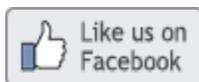
"The videos were very powerful!" 7th Grade Teacher

"That workshop brought tears to my eyes. This was great." 6th Grade Teacher

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 396 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](#)?



(802) 876-5315 or 1-800-800-4005
Info@vtfn.org | www.vermontfamilynetwork.org

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