



Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.

“KID’S COURIER”

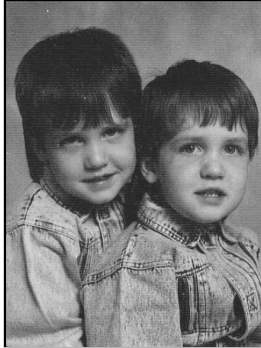
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Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
(CFO) Administrative Offices and
Ellsworth Early Care and
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Matthew (R) and his twin
Michael (L), ages 3 1/2.

HOMECOMING FOR A CFO ALUMNUS

It was homecoming week for an up and coming local “star” who lunched at his alma mater recently - CFO’s Ellsworth Early Care and Education Center.

Matthew Boucher, 22, Ellsworth City Councilor, and Maine State Representative candidate, is a young man with a strong vision. He has dedicated his life and vocation to supporting children, reducing poverty in Maine, and strengthening education and economic development in local communities. In addition to serving on Ellsworth’s City Council, Matthew is the Operations Director of Protect Mass Children, a children’s advocacy organization based in Massachusetts.

In visiting CFO, Matthew had time to reconnect with his former teacher, Cheryl Flanders. Cheryl taught Matthew and his twin brother Michael, and 26 years after first joining CFO, she is still teaching today. Cheryl remembered Matthew as a bright, mischievous boy who also had strong artistic talent. She recalls encouraging his exploration of art through drawing and colors. Matthew thanked his former teacher for recognizing and valuing these important aspects of his learning. He shared that his creativity and artistic talents are strengths he calls upon often to help him design eye-catching informational posters, brochures, and flyers for the campaign trail and other projects.

Cindy Orcutt, Matthew’s mother, thinks highly of the Head Start program. A mother of four children, Cindy reflected that theirs was a very active, involved family. At home they did art projects and spent lots of time engaged in learning projects. For her, basic daycare didn’t fit their needs. CFO’s program offered her an opportunity to have time in her day to focus on important tasks while her children were receiving quality educational care. Knowing that Matthew and Michael were being well cared for while being encouraged in educational exploration was important, she said.

Matthew can clearly identify another benefit of early education. In addition to Head Start, he attended Special Children’s Friends, Inc. where he received services that helped him and his family navigate some of the challenges he experienced as a young child with dyslexia. Matthew notes that these services were key to his ability to avoid some of the setbacks associated with undiagnosed learning disabilities. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, all children enrolled at CFO’s centers receive hearing and vision tests, height and weight screenings, and developmental screenings to help identify children who may be facing challenges. CFO also collaborates with Special Children’s Friends, Inc. and other similar agencies to assure that young children and their families are receiving the best possible services to meet their needs.

Matthew has seen many peers struggle through school because they didn’t have access to the comprehensive early education he had. Later in life they ended up in weak positions vocationally and economically. For these reasons, Matthew sees the value in providing quality early education in all Maine’s communities. “Poverty is a cycle and it affects families very deeply, at all levels, for generations. Without assistance each step of the way through the system and out of poverty, a family can get stuck. When that happens, the results are devastating. Quality early education programs, coupled with strong support services for families, are important first steps to breaking this cycle.”



Jeanie Mills,
Cheryl Flanders,
and Matthew
Boucher at the
Ellsworth ECEC
Feb. 24, 2010.
Also attending the
lunch were Rachel
Nobel and Jenn
Dyer, Ellsworth
Center Manager.
(not pictured)

FACING THE FUTURE

A MESSAGE FROM CFO BOARD CHAIR GRANT LEE



I'm so proud to be a part of Child and Family Opportunities, Inc. As a former parent of children who benefitted from the services offered here, as a former Director of CFO, and now as a current member of CFO's Board of Trustees, I have seen firsthand the blessing CFO has been, and continues to be, to so many children and families here in Washington and Hancock counties.

As we begin this, our 40th year of service, we're busily preparing for a change in leadership at CFO. Jeanie Mills, our long-time (and very successful, I might add!) Director, in announcing her departure, has graciously agreed to provide ongoing leadership to CFO during our quest for a new Director. A Search Committee, led by Board member Melody Havey and comprised of representatives of the Board and Policy Council, anticipates making a recommendation for Jeanie's successor in late Spring.

I have every confidence that we will select a leader who will possess the values, knowledge, skills, and vision to build upon CFO's strengths in meeting the challenges that lie ahead. Some of these agency strengths include an excellent reputation in our communities, dedicated staff who value and provide high quality services, and volunteer governance and advisory groups who bring an incredible wealth of professional and personal life experiences committed to helping CFO be the best it can be in service to our communities.

As you read this edition of Kid's Courier and see the pictures of smiling and happy children and adults, please know that behind these pictures are strong groups of committed, hard-working, and caring groups of staff, parents, and volunteers dedicated to providing the best of care and support to children and families. I am so proud to be a part of this effort and so grateful and appreciative of everyone who contributes to keeping CFO strong in service to our communities here in Washington and Hancock counties.

THE GOOD FOOD PROJECT: MAKING HEALTHY EATING EASIER



Healthy food cooked for the F.E.E.D.

Childhood obesity rates have tripled in the past 30 years and childhood Type 2 Diabetes is rapidly rising. First Lady Michelle Obama recently launched the "Let's Move" initiative to give parents support, provide healthier food in schools, help children to be more physically active,

and make healthy, affordable food available for all. Food Network star, Jamie Oliver, launched a TV show chronicling his efforts to help the community of Huntington, West Virginia, learn to cook and feed their children wholesome meals. Closer to home, the Good Food Project, an initiative of Healthy Peninsula funded by the Maine Health Access Foundation, is working in Sedgwick to make healthy eating easier, more fun, and socially normative.

The goal of the Good Food Project is *not* to chastise people for eating potato chips or birthday cake but to combine education with economic, social and environmental supports to encourage healthy choices. Most adults know that it is best for health to eat plenty of vegetables and to limit fat, sugar, salt, and processed foods; however, limited economic resources, busy schedules, and force of habit make boxed macaroni and cheese or a package of hot dogs easier. Focusing on education alone is not sufficient; economic, social, and environmental supports are also necessary.

Healthy Peninsula (HP) has been awarded a \$50,000 grant (\$25,000/year for two years) from the Maine Health Access Foundation as part of the Fund for the Future initiative. From January 2010 to December 2011, the Good Food Project will...

- teach adults how to plan and cook nutritious meals
- involve children and youth in cooking and nutrition education
- make it easier to walk into the grocery store and pick up the ingredients for a healthy meal that takes minimal preparation time
- make it easier to exit a convenience store with a healthy snack
- provide economic support for individuals and families seeking fresh produce
- support local food production by connecting families to farms
- facilitate social networks that encourage healthy eating
- celebrate local wisdom about food preparation in a community blog.

MEET A CFO BOARD MEMBER— ERNIE REISMAN



Asher, Avram, Jon, and Ernie Reisman— Cathance Lake, ME

Ernie Reisman has served on the CFO Board of Directors since 2008. Currently the Vice President of Human Resources at Down East Community Hospital (DECH) in Machias, Ernie has spent most of her career in the field of Early Childhood. Her first connection with CFO started in 1990 when she held the position of Director of Washington County Children's Program (WCCP). At that time CFO, then called Action Opportunities, rented space in the WCCP building. Both agencies

worked on collaborative projects in support of children and families in Washington County. In 1998, when Ernie became the Program Manager for the Home Visiting Program through DECH, she had many families who were also served by the Head Start program, and collaboration continued. Ernie and her family also have personal experience in CFO's Flaherty Early Care and Education Center located on the UMM campus. Avram, Ernie's youngest son, spent two summers volunteering at the Flaherty Center and Ernie herself has been a volunteer at the center, helping serve breakfast and lunch to attending children. Ernie's commitment to Early Childhood was enhanced when she served on the Board of Maine's Infant Mental Health Association from 1993 –2000. She was honored to serve as Chair of the Board of that organization for four years. CFO is fortunate to have Ernie serve on its Board where she also serves as the Chair of CFO's Board Personnel Committee.

GOOD FOOD PROJECT CONTINUED

Good Food partners include HP, Sedgwick Elementary School, Peninsula Early Care and Education Center (PECEC), food retailers, a food pantry, and local farms. The grant supports take-home kits for children at PECEC to explore food and healthy eating with their families. In March, HP facilitated a workshop for Sedgwick School teachers and staff to begin integrating food education and greenhouse activities into their curriculum in a sustainable way. HP consultant, Hadley Friedman has been working with 2nd grade teacher Brenda Monteith to implement hands-on, plant-based cooking lessons. It is delightful to watch children try vegetables they’ve never tasted and to hear “I thought those beans would be yucky, but they were yummy!”

One Friday night in March more than 120 people attended a Family F.E.E.D night (Fun, Education, Entertainment, Dinner) at the Sedgwick School sponsored by the school’s PTF, the Blue Hill Food Co-op, The Simmering Pot, the Tree of Life Food Pantry, and HP. Families and Coop members brought cooked dishes to share for a healthy potluck; the school band offered a recital; local food retailers offered door prizes, and after dinner children chose from one of two movies to watch.

HP is looking forward to collaborating with PECEC on the take-home kits and involving the childcare children and families in greenhouse activities during the summer. Families from PECEC and the school will be able to participate in a subsidized program providing fresh produce from local farms along with recipes and helpful tips for preparing unfamiliar vegetables. The community blog will gather special recipes, gardening tips, and local food lore. The hope is to provide enough momentum for healthy eating in the community of Sedgwick to reach a tipping

point where improvement will continue beyond the life of the grant.



Organizers of Family F.E.E.D (L to R): Linnette Grindle, Sedgwick School; Rose Kane, Sedgwick School; Denise Black, HP; Eileen Mielenhausen, Blue Hill Coop; Amy Vaughn, HP
Below: Don Buckingham, Sedgwick School Principal

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION = GOOD ECONOMICS

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUSINESS SUMMIT ON APRIL 12TH, 2010

“The real benefits (from early care and education) are not from making children smarter, but from nurturing children’s non-cognitive skills, giving them social, emotional, and behavioral benefits that lead to success later in life.” (Committee for Economic Development, “A new Framework for Assessing the Benefits of Early Education.” A Working Paper, NY, September 2004)

Child Care Opportunities Resource Development Center has joined with the Children’s Growth Council, United Way of Eastern Maine, Bucksport Bay Healthy Communities, and other organizations to bring Hancock County business leaders together to hear about the importance of investment in early care and education. On April 12, up to 60 Hancock County leaders will hear from Dr. Erik Steele, OD (interim CEO of Blue Hill Memorial Hospital), on the latest research regarding early brain development. Dana Connors, President of Maine Chamber of Commerce is slated to address the economic importance of investing in early care and education. Jeanie Mills, Executive Director of Child and Family Opportunities, will ‘bring the discussion home’ by sharing insights and opportunities in Hancock County. Maine’s First Lady Karen Baldacci will also be a guest speaker. The luncheon meeting will frame the economics of early childhood in a meaningful way. It will mark the beginning of a process to develop collaborative partnerships to address the challenges of affordable, accessible, and quality early care and education in Hancock County.

Currently, there is growing discussion in health and education fields about the social and personal benefits of ‘life long learning’. Early brain development occurring in the first three years of life has a profound impact on a child’s future potential. Studies have shown that early development is the foundation upon which intellectual, social, and emotional development is built.

Quality early care and education also has immediate and long term economic benefits for businesses and communities. Investing in early care and education results in improved educational success, higher levels of employment and lower costs to the criminal justice and social welfare systems. One longitudinal study puts the total benefit-cost ratio at \$17.00 for every \$1.00 invested in early care and education. (Lawrence J. Schweinhart, “The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, conclusions and Frequently Asked Questions”)

These long term economic benefits may be difficult for businesses to prioritize when they are dealing with the immediate realities of running a business; however, quality, affordable and dependable child care is a prerequisite of a quality, dependable workforce. This is a reality to which every employer can relate.

Note: This article went to print as the business conference occurred. For further information on this event, and more CFO news, please visit us on line at www.childandfamilyopp.com.

MUSIC AT FLAHERTY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CENTER

Children at the Elizabeth Flaherty ECEC had a special treat this March when the University of Maine Machias Ukulele Band came for an afternoon to share their love of music. Children were introduced to this unique instrument and many fun folk songs. Joan Moore, Lead Teacher at Flaherty, noted there will be a return visit soon. “Everyone loves their visits sooooo much that we would like to have them keep coming back.” (UMM Ukulele band photo below)



Flaherty student Carson Prout and Assistant Teacher Duane Ingalls practice making their own music on a classroom ukulele and drum. (photo above)





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Aaron Wray standing tall in the Infant Toddler Playground at Ellsworth Early Care and Education Center.

To receive our newsletter, learn more about CFO, or to support the services offered by Child and Family Opportunities, Inc., please contact:
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