

July-August 2018 First Connections Newsletter Summer Programs



First Connections is a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant program through the Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care. We provide support, resources, and early childhood learning opportunities free of charge to all families with children under age nine in Acton, Bedford, Boxboro, Harvard, Hanscom AFB, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury and Westford. Justice Resource Institute is our Lead Agency.



Thank you to Concord-Carlisle Community Chest for the \$15,542 Grant awarded on June 7th!

Thank you to CHNA15 for the \$17,888 Collaborative Grant awarded in April for a new 15-month project serving working parents (see description below).

First Connections' Coordinated Family and Community Engagement renewal Grant was approved in June for the level-funded amount of \$129,294 for fiscal year 2019.

Looking for that great homemade playdoh recipe?
Can't remember the words to your child's favorite song?
Want some tips on helping your child to learn to share?



Check out Ellie's New Blog!
<http://blog.jri.org/firstconnections>

Where do the candidates for Niki Tsongas' seat in congress stand on the vital issues facing children and families?

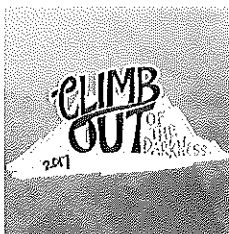
Join us for a moderated forum on: Sunday, June 10, 2:00 p.m.

Lowell High School Auditorium, 50 Father Morissette Blvd, Lowell

Free and open to all. <http://www.kathyretickerforum.org>

This congressional seat serves the towns of: Acton, Bolton, Boxboro, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Groton, Dunstable, Harvard, Hudson, Littleton, Maynard, Pepperell, Shirley, Stow, Townsend, Tyngsboro, Westford, Precinct 1 in Sudbury, among others.

The
**Kathy Reticker
Forum**
FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
.....



**Annual Climb Out of the
Darkness Walks 2018**

Please register if you are walking -
donations are optional. First

SUMMER PLAYGROUPS

RESIDENCY POLICY

Registration for families living in Acton, Bedford, Boxboro, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Hanscom AFB, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, and Westford will be prioritized until 1 week before groups begin, at which time out-of-catchment families will be registered as space allows.

If you need the contact information for the CFCE program serving your town, just ask - we can connect you! All CFCE grant recipients have the same programming requirements.



Connections will receive 75% of funds raised in these events.

Saturday, June 23
10:00 a.m.

Doyle Field, 100 Priest Street,
Leominster

[https://climb-out-](https://climb-out-2018.causevox.com/team/leominster)

[2018.causevox.com/team/leominster](https://climb-out-2018.causevox.com/team/leominster)
Please check the following link in case construction necessitates a change of location:

<https://www.facebook.com/LeominsterLeaders/>

Saturday, June 30, 2018
10:00 a.m.

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton

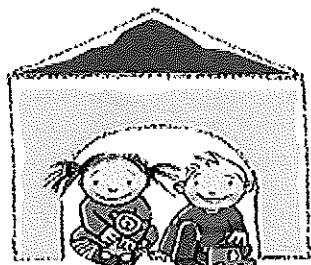
[https://climb-out-](https://climb-out-2018.causevox.com/team/NashobaValley)

[2018.causevox.com/team/NashobaValley](https://climb-out-2018.causevox.com/team/NashobaValley)

This walk will begin and end at First Connections, 179 Great Road, where parking, rest rooms, and refreshments will be available. We will enter the trail through the Dunkin' Donuts parking lot across the street.

Climb out of the Darkness is the world's largest event raising funds for awareness of postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, and all other mental illnesses related to pregnancy and childbirth, affecting 1 in 7 women.

Postpartum Support International sponsors the annual walk. Participants can join the walk and/or donate to support the walkers.



KINDERGARTEN

Transition Activities

ACTON & BOXBOROUGH
KINDERGARTEN SOCIAL

All Acton-Boxborough Public Schools incoming kindergartners are invited to meet their classmates and play at the playground!

RSVP required before attending:
kindysocial@abfamily.org

SUNDAY, JUNE 10
3:00-5:00 p.m.

Goward Playground at the Main Library

Registration is required for all groups by emailing Linda at imatthews@jri.org. Please let us know ANY dates you will be away so we can serve as many families as possible each week.

Playgroups are free of charge. Your child's age should match the group's description on the first day of playgroup. **Groups will begin the week of July 16 and end the week of August 20.**

(See next section for infant playgroups)

Toddler Art-Literacy Playgroup

This group includes free play and time to work on social skills such as sharing and waiting for a turn. Some art and sensory activities may be messy or wet so don't wear your best clothes. Circle time and Reading Rockets handouts will help continue learning at home.

Tuesdays, 10-11:00, at First Connections

Appropriate for confidently crawling and walking children aged 11-23 Months.

Book Bag Nursery Rhymes Playgroup

Recent research into the development of early literacy skills has conclusively shown that rhythm and rhyme play a hugely important role. This is because children's early literacy skills are about listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. We will explore different nursery rhymes in this group, and borrow a bag of books each week to promote children's listening skills and parents' interactive reading styles. Free play, circle and snack time - let us know of anaphylactic food allergies when registering.

Fridays, 9:30-11:00, for Ages 18-30 Months

Held at First Connections in Acton

1 1/2 thru 5 Year Multilingual Read & Rise Group

This playgroup is for families who speak a second language other than English at home. The group includes free play, circle time with stories and songs, and snack time. In addition, opportunities will be included for parents to discuss how culture, traditions, and everyday family experiences can foster literacy and build early literacy skills at home. This program utilizes the Scholastic Read & Rise model and weekly book bags. Let us know of any anaphylactic food allergies when registering.



Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00, at First Connections, Acton

2 1/2 - 4 Year Social-Emotional Skills Playgroup

This playgroup will use the Mass. Early Learning Standards and Approaches to Play and Learning for social and emotional development. The group will include free play indoors and out, a weekly learning activity, snack time, story and circle time. Please let us know during registration if your child has an anaphylactic food allergy. Infant siblings in carriers welcome.

Mondays, 10-11:30, Roudenbush Preschool, Westford

Nature Explorers Group for 3-6 Year Olds

This group will explore the great outdoors using our senses. We will take short walks exploring all we see, hear, smell and feel around us. We will also read a book and do some activities during our walks. Siblings under 2 should be held in a backpack, sling or carrier since strollers will not smoothly travel along the trails, and toddlers may find it hard to keep up. Please wear sturdy walking shoes, appropriate clothing and bug spray to protect you from mosquitoes and ticks. We will meet at the Fay Park Playground, then proceed to the trails.

Fay Park/Prouty Woods, Littleton, Tuesdays, 1:00-2:00 pm

**CONCORD KINDERGARTEN
GET-TOGETHER**

Concord Family Network will host their annual Back to School Popsicle Party! This CFN tradition is free and open to all Concord families with a child entering kindergarten at any of the three elementary schools. In addition to tasty popsicles, we'll have face painting, coloring activities and more. Please RSVP so we have enough pops for every child by going to www.concordfamilynetwork.org.

Please include:

Names of adults attending
Names of kids attending
Kindergarten's school
Kindergarten teacher's name

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22
3:30-5:00 p.m.
Alcott Elementary School



**Celebrate World
Breastfeeding Week 2018**

Thursday, August 2nd
4:30-6:30 p.m.

**Lowell General Auditorium
Free admission & dinner buffet**

Infant massage demo
Happiest Baby soothing demo
Nutrition education
Car seat safety
Giveaways, raffle prizes

Open to any breastfeeding mom or pregnant mom planning to breastfeed. Babies & a support person welcome too!

**Register under the "Getting
Ready for Baby" tab**

www.lowellgeneral.org/health-and-wellness/



**Pregnancy Loss Support Groups
Finding Support through
Community**

FIRST YEAR OF LIFE PROGRAMS

Our new parent programs receive supplemental funding in addition to our State grant and are therefore free and open to families from all towns.



**Infant 3-11 Month Playgroup
Held at Sargent Memorial Library, Boxborough**

This group includes developmental discussions and handouts, playtime, circle time with finger plays, rhymes and songs. Based on the Parents Interacting With Infants model. Please let us know any dates you will be away this summer so we can register as many families as possible for each week. Registration required.

Thursdays, 10:30-11:30, July 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9, 16, 23

**First-Time Moms Group
Held at Fowler Library, West Concord**

Facilitated by a Certified Lactation Counselor (registration required: lmattthews@jri.org). For the new parent, there are many changes, many questions, and often a feeling of isolation if you've just left the working world or your family is not close by. This group strives to be educational, supportive, and the ideal format for new mothers to share ideas and experiences. During the 6 weeks we focus on adjusting to your new role as a mother, infant care concerns (feeding, crying, sleeping), infant development, making the return-to-paid work or stay-at-home mom decision, and changes in your relationships with your spouse, family and friends. Based on the Zero to Three Healthy Minds Series.

Tuesdays, 11:30-1:00, June 19, 26, July 3, 10, 17 and 24

Ongoing New Mothers Group - Wednesdays 1:00-2:30*
Held at First Connections, 179 Great Road, #104A, Acton
Any mother with a pre-crawling baby is welcome to attend this weekly support group. Open discussion format is a forum for you to share experiences and resources, connect with other new mothers, and seek guidance about any concerns you might have. No registration required. Facilitated by a Certified Lactation Professional from Emerson Hospital or First Connections. ***This group will not meet on July 4**

Emotional Well Being After Baby Group
Held at First Connections, 179 Great Road, Acton
Emotional challenges are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, yet mothers often feel isolated and ashamed if they are struggling. Mothers experiencing anxiety or depression, or who are feeling overwhelmed in the postpartum year can come together for this supportive, nonjudgmental, confidential group to share stories and learn from each other. While this is an ongoing, weekly group, before attending for the first time please contact the facilitator, Heather O'Brien, LICSW, hobrien@jri.org. **Meets Every Thursday, 10-11:30* *This group will not meet on July 5**

New Dads Group - One Tuesday per Month
Held at Maynard Public Library, 77 Nason Street
Our new dads group allows dads to make connections with other fathers, ask questions, exchange tips, and share their experiences of parenthood and all the changes that come with it. Fathers are welcome to attend with or without babies, most of whom are 0-24 months. Facilitated by Heather O'Brien, LICSW, who runs our postpartum group for moms. Email hobrien@jri.org to be added to the monthly reminder email list for discussion topics.

Held on the 2nd Mondays of each month
at First Connections

5:00-6:15 p.m.: Miscarriage and early
pregnancy loss

6:30-8:00 p.m.: Pregnancy and infant
loss

Both groups facilitated by an advanced
practice nurse with experience
supporting families whose pregnancies
have ended unexpectedly or whose
infants have died. Individuals are
encouraged to contact the facilitator,
Katie Stockman, NP, at
kstockman@emersonhosp.org or 978-
287-3422 before attending, though this is
not required. This is a free program.



Meets Tuesdays, July 10 and
August 14, 7-8:30 pm, Cullen Room



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Group meets in Acton

Come share the rewards and
challenges of raising your
grandchildren. Learn from other
grandparents and experts about
legal strategies and resources.

Discover ways to relieve
stress. Share in the grief of your
own children being unable to
parent. Benefit from the knowledge
available through the
Massachusetts Commission on
the Status of Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren.
Contact Joe O'Leary for more
information, 978-760-0360 or
j.j.oleary@comcast.net.

Meets at the Acton Senior
Center on the 3rd Tuesday of
each month, 11:00-12:30, 30
Sudbury Road Rear, Acton



**If you have a child with any
type of special need, there is a
great monthly newsletter
available to keep you up to
date on activities, workshops,
camps and events that could
be helpful:**



NEW!

Working Parents Playgroup

Feedback from our 2017 Needs
Assessment showed that parents
with babies who are working full
time are having a difficult time
staying connected, managing
stress, and finding a peer
community -- especially if you had
a short maternity leave or
experienced any type of difficult
birth experience, postpartum
anxiety or depression. For this
reason First Connections applied
for and received a CHNA15 Collaborative grant in order to provide a
Saturday morning Working Parents Playgroup. We are collaborating
with NAMMA Families first-year-of-life professionals to be able to offer
the group on a weekly basis through May 2019

The group runs in 8-week sessions and is focused on parents and
their babies 0-24 months. We appreciate knowing of any dates that
participants will be unable to attend so we can register as many
families as possible. Free, registration required.

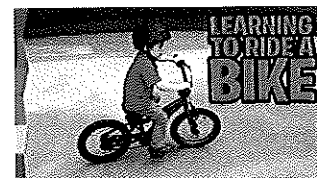
**The next session will be held July 7-August 25.
Dads and moms unable to attend weekday parent-child
activities are welcome to inquire of openings in the next
session by emailing lmatthews@jri.org.**

Saturdays, 9:30-11:00 at First Connections in Acton

Free Motor Development Parent Seminars

**The First 12 Months of Life
presented by Mary Evans, D.P.T.**

Learn about the important motor
development milestones in the first 12 months of life, and how to assist your
child as he/she explores the environment. Hands-on demonstrations with
handouts so you can share the information with other caregivers. Infants
welcome to attend. Email lmatthews@jri.org to receive summer date when
scheduled. Held at Emerson Health Center, Westford

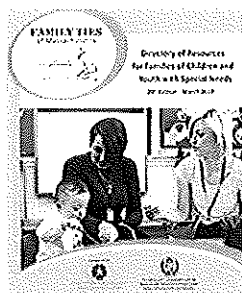


Introducing a Bicycle

presented by Physical Therapist Karen Veilleux

What age is appropriate to introduce a bicycle to your child? What type of
motor skills should be in place before successfully attempting this new way to
have fun? What purpose do training wheels serve, and when is the right time
to wean off of them? Join us for this parent presentation - your child is
welcome to stay with us in the playroom if childcare is needed - just let us
know he/she is coming. Email lmatthews@jri.org to register.

Held at First Connections, Acton



The March 2018 edition of Family Ties of Massachusetts Directory of Resources for Families of Children and Youth with Special Needs is now available at:

www.massfamilyties.org

Two staff members from this valuable resource to families spoke at our June 2018 Advisory Council meeting about the many programs and services available free of charge. Feel free to contact the Metrowest Regional Coordinator, Luanne Pike: lpike@fcsn.org or 781-774-6736

We are grateful to the staff of Emerson Rehabilitative & Sports Therapies who are donating their time and expertise toward educating parents on their child's growth and development. www.emersonrehab.org

Our Annual Free and Low Cost Things To Do With Children Aged 0-8 is almost ready!



The chronological list covering June 25 thru August includes events, programs and activities in or near our catchment area towns, most of which are on a drop-in basis and free. Activities requiring registration or a small fee are clearly noted.

The list also includes museum passes available at all libraries in our catchment area, and what type of discount is available to your family when you borrow one.

You can receive the list in your email by sending a request to Linda: lmattews@jri.org. We will also post it on our website when completed.

Specialty Camps for Kids this Summer

Camp Stepping Stones for families who have lost a loved one Registration deadline July 6

One-day adventure for the whole family developed to support children, teens and their families through a combination of activities. Parents and other adult caregivers of campers will have the opportunity to attend relevant workshops, relax and unwind, and socialize with other parents/caregivers who know what it's like to raise grieving children. The entire family will learn new coping skills while having fun. Held at Glen Urquhart School in Beverly Farms, MA. Transportation available from Metrowest if needed (978-750-9335). The only cost is a \$25 registration fee per family. First Connections has brochures and packets - just ask and we will mail to you (lmattews@jri.org). www.caredimensions.org/camp

Saturday, July 14, 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Summer Workshops for Adopted Children Aged 9-15

Boston Post Adoption Resources in Brookline will be holding special programs for children in July and August such as "My Story My Way" and "Creating Roots". Each workshop is 2 hours and includes art and expressive therapy activities. \$75 each. 617-418-6163

<https://bpar.org/events/category/summer-workshop0s-for-kids/list>

Social Skills Camp for Ages 3-6

The Peter Pan Center in Boxborough will be offering their Summer Social Saplings camp where children learn prosocial behavior and independence social skills while participating in themed structured activities, playground trips, nature walks, and a visit to the police and fire station. \$225/week for half-day morning sessions. Great way to get ready for school in the fall! Other social skills programs are available for older children.

www.peterpancenter.com, knormandin.peterpancenter@gmail.com, 508-331-2927

The Brave Bunch for Children 4-8 Years Who Have Difficulty Speaking in Social Situations

A week-long, 9:00-2:00, August intensive program designed for children diagnosed with selective mutism or who have difficulty speaking in social or school situations with familiar and/or unfamiliar peers and adults. The purpose of the camp is to get children ready for their return to school. Diagnostic evaluation and several sessions with a therapist who will support the child during the camp is required. Limited to 8-16 children. A

Boston University Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders program. For information contact rmerson@bu.edu, call 617-353-9610 see:

<http://sites.bu.edu/childcardresearch/clinical-services/brave-bunch-program-for-children-with-selective-mutism/>

Parent Education and Support in the Community (Kids' activities will be on our Free & Low-Cost Summer Things To Do list)

Patient & Family Education Day: Emotional Dysregulation and Bipolar Disorder

Mass. General Hospital Psychiatry Academy clinicians will present the latest innovative treatments for adults and children who have bipolar disorder such as medications, lifestyle interventions, psychosocial treatment, and there will be time for Q&A. www.mghpatientfamily.org Program takes place at Charles River Plaza, 185 Cambridge St., Boston.

Saturday, June 23, 9:15-3:00 (lunch included). Free, parking fees apply

Collaborative Familying Parent Support Group at Simply Social Kids, Tyngsboro

First 30 minutes will be topic-based and last half a chance to chat and gain support from other parents. You are welcome to attend only the topics that interest you. www.simplysocialkids.com

June 19: **Conflict resolution**, June 26: **Emotional fitness**, July 3: **Anxiety-what it is and how to help**, July 10: **Growth vs. fixed mindset**, July 17: **ADHD-Share your journey**, July 24: **Dealing with control issues**, July 31: **Online - what are kids watching?**, August 7: **How to help kids read social cues**, August 14: **Discipline Issues**, August 21: **Executive Function - why it matters**. Groups run from 8:15-9:15 pm. Facilitated by author and Director of Simply Social Kids, Nadine Briggs \$20/group. 978-764-2758 or nbriggs@simplysocialkids.com.

Circle of Security Free Parent Group - Childcare provided!

Sometimes our children behave in ways that make us angry, sad, ashamed, or confused. In this group, parents will learn to understand what their children are telling them in these moments and how they can respond to better meet their children's needs and their own. Parents will explore how to help their children manage feelings, how to identify what they and their children need, and how to overcome conflicts.

Held at JF&CS in Waltham on Fridays, 10-12:00, June 15-August 3.

RSVP required: acable@jfcsboston.org or 781-860-2195 (habla Espanol).

Support Group for Parents of Children with Special Needs at Pediatrics West

Free group for parents and caregivers of children with a variety of special needs. The goal of the group is to provide support, build friendships, and offer a safe place to exchange ideas with others in similar situations. Meets at 133 Littleton Rd., 3rd Floor Conference Room, Westford from 7-8:30 p.m.

Contact Alison for more info: 978-577-0464. **Summer dates: Thursdays, July 12 & August 9**

Moms of Amazing Kids Supports Mothers of Children with Special Needs

This local community group is for moms raising children with medical, developmental, and other special needs. The group provides opportunities for families to share resources & recommendations, and to talk about all the joys and challenges of raising their children. Special needs moms often suffer from isolation, depression, and lack of self care. Moms of Amazing Kids helps you connect with other moms who "get it", while having a little fun too. We host monthly dinners, classes, workshops, and playdates! Our sensory-friendly or inclusive playdates are a wonderful, safe, and judgement-free way to have fun with your kids. Learn more: www.moms-of-amazing-kids.org

Attachment, Regulation & Competency Free Parent Group for Caregivers of Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

Learn about attachment, child development, and the impacts of trauma. Build skills for caring for yourself and managing parenting stress. Learn ways to respond to your children in a way that helps them feel safe and secure in relationships, more effectively regulate their emotions/energy/behavior, and develop a healthy, positive sense of self. Facilitated by Julie Thayer, PsyD. Held at Metrowest Behavioral Health Center in Acton on Mondays, 11-12:30. Start date TBD based on enrollment. For more information and to learn whether you are eligible for this group, contact Dr. Thayer at jthayer@jri.org or 978-264-3500 x3513.

Upcoming Emerson Hospital Healthy Living Family Programs

Please call 978-287-3777 or go to www.emersonwellness.org to register.

Basics of Infant Feeding, Friday, August 10, 10:30-12:30, \$30

Infant CPR, Tuesday, July 10 or August 14, 6:30-8:00, \$50 includes Anytime Kit

Soon to be Grandparents Class, Tuesday, August 7, 7-9:00 pm, \$35

WIC Program Locations and Eligibility Information

The Women, Infants and Children Nutrition program provides healthy food for your family if you have a child under age 5 and meet income eligibility requirements. A family of 4 can earn \$46,435 per year and be eligible. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are also eligible for WIC. More information is available at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/check-eligibility-for-wic> or 1-800-WIC-1007. Local offices are in Ayer, Clinton, Marlboro, Leominster, Framingham, Lowell and Waltham.

Statewide Childcare Subsidy Wait List Information June 2018 update!

The Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care provides subsidies to low-income families who meet the work or activity requirements and need childcare or before/after school/summer child care. Currently families who applied in October 2017 or earlier have been contacted for vouchers. Families who used the subsidy for summer care last year have been contacted to provide continuity of care this summer, however there will not be any new summer care vouchers offered in 2018. If you are anticipating needing financial assistance for childcare within the next year, please read the information provided at this link to see if you are eligible, and if so complete an application now: <https://www.mass.gov/early-education-and-care-financial-assistance-for-families>

Do you live in Acton, Boxborough, Concord, Littleton, Maynard or Westford and not have access to a car during the day? The Cross-Town Connect transportation service has two low-cost options that can take you to First Connections, shopping plazas, the train station, town halls, libraries and Concord medical facilities. Children can ride in the vans without a car seat, or bring your own. The cost per ride is \$1. Call 978-844-6809 or go to www.crosstownconnect.org for more information. In addition, the Minute Van service provides scheduled pick up/drop off rides for \$4/ride in Acton. To make a reservation in advance for your trip call 978-844-6809 or www.minutevan.net.

Do you live in Bedford and not have access to a car during the day?

The DASH transportation system is available to all Bedford residents weekdays from 11:00 to 6:00. The van can transport you within Bedford or to Billerica, Burlington or Lexington, and to Concord on Mondays and Tuesdays. Cost is only \$2 each way in Bedford or \$4 each way out of town. For more information: www.BedfordDash.com or 781-275-3274.



The Constant Contact Cares for Kids program supports youth oriented nonprofit organizations. Learn more about the [Cares for Kids](#) program.

More than 600,000 small businesses and organizations trust Constant Contact to connect with their customers and members. [Signup for a free 60-day trial.](#)

✉ SafeUnsubscribe®

This email was sent to imatthews@jri.org by imatthews@jri.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Rapid removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [About our service provider.](#)

