

Award Recipients

Nominee: Anat Eshed and Jeanne Saunders

Nominated by: Jen Cunha, Kelly Walker, Maureen Shields, Heidi Cadwell

Category: Collaborating with the community, decision making

Write-up: As Anat Eshed, parent, and Jeanne Saunders, Director of Special Education for SAU 41 wrote in an article about the partnership happening in their school district: A partnership with parents and the school community requires the same ingredients as any other relationship: the ability to listen, understand where the each other is coming from, take the perspective of others and to share feelings respectfully. Over the last several years Anat has worked tirelessly to bring families and the Special Education Department together to talk, and learn together, and from each other. It began with the creation of a parent support group for the Hollis/Brookline community aimed at building support and communication among parents with children in special education and their capacity to engage in family/school partnerships. Anat's next step was to work to establish a mechanism for developing trust and communication with the special education department including co-authoring a family friendly guide to special education along with administration. As the Assistant Director of Special Education, Jeanne had become involved with the partnership group and when she was appointed Special Education Director, made family/school partnerships a priority for the SAU. They serve as a model for how partnerships can be developed and sustained and for the power these family/school partnerships hold.

Nominee: Jan Santosuosso

Nominated by: Vicki Therrien

Category: Parenting, communication, learning at home, community collaboration, decision making

Write-up: Jan is special educator who has made significant impact on parent involvement in education. She relates well with parents and helps the school team understand parent experiences in difficult situations, thus promoting positive relationships and a willingness to facilitate creative problem solving. Jan organized trainings so the team could do tube feedings at school to assist a family when student with ASD wouldn't eat after surgery. She also daily walks a student home to assist parents. Jan has shown innovation by training and encouraging others to use SAKAI, an online web based professional learning community to promote home-school communication. Family and team post daily progress notes and add resources so all are informed and can celebrate success. Jan also did a SAKAI presentation at an SAU workshop day for other teachers and administrators in effort to better promote home-school communication. As a mentor for Beyond Access Inclusion Project (UNH IOD), Jan holds regular team meetings with parents (above and beyond IEP meetings) to set goals and plan actions for successful learning in all environments. Various Community resources are used to meet family/student needs. Recently she met with ATECH and our inclusion facilitator in home to plan for trial of an AAC device. She works regularly with behavior consult. As member of SAU 53 Learning Circle (5 towns) she helps make decisions to promote inclusion and to organize school/community activities each year. She's the best!!!!

Nominee: Judith Howe

Nominated by: Anthony Blinn and 12 other school staff

Category: Parenting, Communication, Learning at Home, Community Collaboration

Write-up: Judith Howe

Judith Howe, the Home-School Collaborator in the Allenstown School District, works with school staff and families to promote a positive educational experience and continually goes above and beyond her role to help the families living in the community. Whether it is help with locating resources, making home visits, or support through the educational process, Judith believes in empowering parents to help themselves and has supported them in getting the skills that will improve their and their children's lives. She believes that all children can learn and will do anything to bring a child to their desk at school, ready to learn. Her welcoming, non-threatening demeanor and infectious smile has fostered communication between parents and the schools in the district. She is seen by colleagues as critical to keeping Allenstown students in school and has aided in keep their tardiness and absenteeism numbers down. She has spearheaded events and initiatives to ensure there are multiple opportunities for families and schools to communicate and connect, including the first new Staff Orientation program and the back to school BBQ. Her tireless effort to seek out and use every moment to communicate with teachers, parents, administrators and other key people in children's lives has made tremendous impact not only to the district, but to her community.

Nominee: Carol Wyman

Nominated by: Lou Goscinski and Doug Wyman

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, community collaboration, participation in decision-making

Write-up: Three years ago Carol worked cooperatively with the school district and NH Connections to spearhead the creation of a Special Needs Alliance Committee (SNAC) in Moultonborough. Since that time Carol has been instrumental in increasing parent involvement in our schools by helping school personnel understand the needs of parents and families of children with disabilities and improving communication between our schools and parents. Carol has provided countless hours of volunteer time to support school-based parent education as well as recruit parent volunteers to support school activities promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in school and community settings. Carol's leadership has enhanced the learning of hundreds of people by her involvement in organizing numerous local and regional workshops and she has been instrumental in enhancing community collaboration to increase social and recreational opportunities for students and their families. In addition to creating SNAC, Carol has coordinated the creation of the Lakes Region Friendship Connection for students and families, organized a special screening of the movie Temple Grandin before its DVD release by HBO, that was attended by approximately 100 people, and spearheaded the creation of a parent support website. Carol has earned, deserves this honor!

Nominee: Leslie Joyner

Nominated by: Dellie Champagne

Category: Volunteering

Write-up: Leslie is a very talented designer. Rundlett has many bulletin boards in its main corridor. Leslie has made those bulletin boards come alive! She has many unique ideas and creatively designs the boards, which promote community, excellence and spirit. When a new board goes up, it is the talk of the Rundlett community for days. I truly believe her boards have brought the Rundlett community

closer together. Parents and teachers stand together to admire her creativity. It takes a while to take in a whole board as there is so much detail put into them. Many have told her she should be a designer for the famous Macy's windows. It must be noted that Leslie has never asked for a dime of reimbursement to create her boards. She truly gives from the heart. Please strongly consider Leslie for this award.

Nominee: Maureen Gross O'Brien

Nominated by: Audrey Burke

Category: Communication, learning at home, decision making

Write-up: Maureen Gross O'Brien, Merrimack Valley School District Special Education Administrator - Middle/High School, readily volunteered to host NH Connection's Parent Involvement in Special Education Forum in February 2010, helping in all phases of preparation. She was instrumental in increasing the Merrimack Valley parental attendance by reaching out to them through phone calls and letters. As a spinoff of the forum, parents from her district expressed an interest in developing a group where parents and special educators could work together to provide support, guidance, and resources to parents of students with special needs. Without hesitation she agreed, providing a safe, welcoming environment giving them an opportunity to share experiences and resources which encouraged positive conversations. As a result, the SEPRG- Special Education Parent Resource Group has developed, holding monthly meetings, creating a pamphlet to be share with families looking for information or support around special education, and they are about to embark on developing a webpage on the Merrimack Valley School District website. This year Maureen is continuing her work to support parent involvement and is hosting the Parent Leadership in Special Education training and is encouraging the Special Education Parent Resource Group to attend.

Nominee: Lisa Grolljahn

Nominated by: Karen Gerdts

Category: Communication, decision-making, learning at home, parenting, community collaboration

Write-up: Lisa has been an important PIRC Team member of Hillsboro-Deering Elementary School. This shared leadership group (made up of administration, teachers, parents and community members) is a "data driven shared decision making team". Working on identified needs, this team is currently focusing on communication and homework, as well as other needs. Lisa has participated in Train the Trainer workshop sessions, including "Kindergarten Readiness" and "Interactive Reading, Storybooks and Storytelling." By doing so, Lisa has equipped herself to present these workshops for parents and others at Hillsboro-Deering Elementary. She is an organizer and facilitator of learning. Catherine Terry, Title I Project Manager recommends Lisa for this award as well. Lisa works with homeless youths and their families in getting them connected to services in the community and state. She has been a welcome addition to our district in this area. While we have gone through many inconsistencies in both the nursing and guidance department at the high school and middle school, Lisa has been the "glue" KEEPING THIS PROGRAM MOVING FORWARD AND TRAINING NEW ADULTS at both schools. Because of her, youths and families in all three of our district schools have not been forgotten. Lisa has made the difference for many families because of her persistence, knowledge of early childhood and elementary school best practices, and her special kind and caring manner when making these visits.

Nominee: Sally Morris

Nominated by: Dawn Mazur

Category: Volunteering

Write-up: I strongly support Sally for this nomination. She is ALWAYS the go to person when help is needed at either of our schools. Working tirelessly behind the scenes and doing so much for the children and adults, she does whatever is asked of her, with a smile and expects nothing in return. She handles so many events for the schools and PTA; Holiday Gift Shop, fundraisers, Open House/Ice Cream Social/Membership, Volunteer Coordinator, Auction, Bingo for Books, Pancake Breakfast, Movie Nights, and so much more. If there is a job to be done, she is always ready and willing to assist. We are so fortunate to have Sally in our schools, organizations and community. As long as she is here, we will always have support and assurance that the job will be done and done well.

Nominee: Annie DiSilva

Nominated by: Molly Gray

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, community collaboration, decision making

Write-up: I have worked with Annie as an advocate for her son through his services with MDS and I have found her to be a wonderful, knowledgeable advocate for her own children and for others as well. She is involved in many community activities and she has also been a valuable partner in helping to sustain a fitness group I initiated at our local gym. She has provided rides to some of the other students who would normally not be able to attend. She is fun, great sense of humor, and the children enjoy her. She is involved in many community groups, including autism groups. She is involved with many initiatives in both elementary and high schools as well as in the community. Please consider her as I know her work and commitment to our youth and families are far from over.

Nominee: Dr. Norman Crisp Elementary School PIRC Team

Jennifer Gosselin, Maureen Decker, Marilyn Martin, Luanne Phair, Kim Sousa

Nominated by: Jane Quigley

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, community collaboration, decision-making

Write-up: This team's original goals were to 1) Create a parent resource room: including forming a PTO, 2) Foster literacy in the home: including hosting whole family evening literacy events, school wide literacy initiatives, contests, and 3) To strengthen student study skills: including building students organizational and time management skills. We set these goals 3 years ago and have accomplished all of the above. Our PTO is fully functioning, our volunteerism had increased by 30%. A parent resource room where GED and ESOL classes as well as PTO and parent groups meet; was created, furnished and supplied with rich materials, and the homework policy was written. The final stages of the study skills is being organized and implemented this year. This team has accomplished amazing work within these past 3 years. Parent, student & staff surveys were taken, tallied and goals were set from there. All voices were heard and valued. This team has gotten parents involved in training other parents, and teachers training other teachers to facilitate workshops. This is teamwork at its best with passion and purpose as its guide. I couldn't be any more proud!

Nominee: Jennifer Darois

Nominated by: Angela McAneney

Category: Communication, volunteering

Write-up: Jen started volunteering on the Lamprey River Elementary School (LRES) PTO in September of 2009. In February of 2010 she was hired as the Volunteer Coordinator at the LRES. From her time as the PTO's volunteer coordinator she learned that there needed to be a better way to communicate with parent volunteers, one that was less costly and time consuming than paper and copier. She started an email newsletter filled with all the volunteer opportunities for both the PTO and the school. Every two weeks it is updated and sent home via email. The email list started small at around 30 emails but as of the beginning of this year it has snowballed to over 170, with only a few families (10) electing for a paper copy. By creating this newsletter, she has effectively broadened the range of volunteers as it reaches more people. Because of this, volunteerism in the school has more than doubled. Volunteers are given the opportunity to pick and choose from the entire offering of volunteer requests rather than just being contacted based on their interests, as you never know what additional activities might peak their curiosity. The newsletter is easily able to be passed along to other parents who might not have initially wanted to share their email addresses. Best of all, it has significantly cut down on paper waste.

Nominee: Nashua High School South PAWSS (Parents at Work with Students and Staff) Kristi Durette, Ruth Meyer, Martha Liamos, Jen Seusing

Nominated by: Sharon Frothingham

Category: Parenting, volunteering, community collaboration

Write-up: On March 20, 2010, Nashua High School South hosted our first-ever Nashua community TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) Parenting Expo, a free community event intended to bring together key community resources, businesses, workshops, and numerous opportunities for Nashua neighbors to draw from as we work together to raise our children. Historically, schools have often served as the center of communities. The goal of the TEAM Parenting Expo was to bring that sense of community back to where we are all watching out for each other's children. We strived to re-connect as parents, business members, and neighbors to offer support, suggest ideas, and implement strategies to raise a generation of children who will grow to be caring, involved citizens within our community. This FREE community event brought together over 50 local area businesses which provided free community resources to parents. Exhibitor tables were displayed throughout the school hallways, refreshments were provided by the schools' clubs, and the SADD group provided free babysitting and fun activities for the kids. Guest speakers, such as Jack Agati, Dr. Benjamin Garber, Boys and Girls Club of Nashua, Nashua Public Library, Nashua Police Department, Prevention Makes Cents, John-Michael Dumais, Susan Haas, and Michael Plourde provided free informational workshops for parents and students on various parenting and educational topics. This event was planned and implemented by parent volunteers, community volunteers, and over 30 student volunteers. We have set a date for our next Expo 2011.

Nominee: Virginia Day

Nominated by: Leslie Anderson

Category: Communication, learning at home

Write-up: My daughter, Hannah, has multiple difficulties learning in a traditional setting. During the Middle School years, her self-esteem plummeted making the learning process that much more difficult. We have literally spent years searching for the right program for Hannah, a program which would both support reading skill building and help Hannah monitor and witness her improvement. Virginia Day worked with Hannah during all 3 of Hannah's Middle School years. Ultimately, she steered Hannah into the Reading 180 program, which seems to be the best fit for Hannah. However, the nomination of Virginia Day is not driven by the finding of this program. It is driven by her cooperative spirit and her communication efforts. At times we felt lost in the maze, bumping into walls and not able to find our way. Virginia Day was probably as lost as we were most of the time....but she did not give up, she worked with us, she worked with Hannah. Most people slide to the floor and give up once they've hit the wall too many times. Virginia kept her arms linked with ours as we kept trying to move forward. While this metaphor may have gone too far, Virginia doesn't understand the meaning of too far. She was one of the very few constants on Hannah's education team. Hannah continues to have a tough road ahead, but Virginia Day helped her blaze the trail. We won't forget her.

Nominee: Dr. Norman Crisp PTO

Joyce Bedard, Cean Lamper, Marie Ditolla

Nominated by: Jennifer Reno

Category: Volunteering, learning at home, decision making

Write-up: We built the Dr. Crisp PTO from the ground up, starting during the last half of the 2009 school year and becoming an official PTO at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. We held a hugely successful fundraiser that helped us raise more than \$6000.00 for our school, allowing us to put back into place the ability to contribute to programs for the school. We hosted a spectacular, catered Teacher & Staff luncheon. We worked together with the PIRC team & contributed to evening family literacy events. We have established a welcoming group of people that encourage parent involvement & dedication to making a difference in the lives of all our students. Members of the PTO Board also sit in on the PIRC team meetings & are members of the PIRC team as well. We have made it our goal to enhance all the lives of the children at the Dr. Crisp Elementary School. We donated money to the music department at the school to have instruments repaired and made available to students who cannot afford the cost of being in band. We volunteer on a continual basis for individual teachers, the office staff. In the last 2 years there has been an increase in the number of volunteers. I would love to see these amazing people be recognized for their hard work, without them the feeling of community wouldn't have come back to Dr. Crisp.

Nominee: Candace Lord

Nominated by: Judith Raskin

Category: Communication, learning at home, community collaboration

Write-up: Candace provides services to students on the autism spectrum in 4 schools in grades K-12 through the special education department of SAU #44. She understands each student's needs, and develops approaches specific to each student. Her students score higher than any other group of students with disabilities on the NECAP, largely due to Candace's intense and personal work with them. She coordinates and communicates with each teacher and parent, to help them understand what

students on the autism spectrum need, and how to best help them learn. Candace started and coordinates a parent support group for parents of children with autism -- the only such parent support group in the SAU. She volunteers her time to work with the families, arranging for speakers and supporting the needs of the parents in the group. During IEP meetings, she is the student's and parent's most effective advocate and resource. She finds activities within the community to help her students socially. Candace continues to pursue the latest knowledge and best practices in autism, often on her own time and at her own expense. Candace is an exceptional educator, and she deserves to be recognized as a model for other special educators.

Nominee: Northwest Elementary School Community Council
Shelly LaRochelle, Paula Alexander, Kristi Cali, Joanne Petrello

Nominated by: Karen Gerdts

Category: Communication, volunteers, community collaboration

Write-up: During the 2009-2010, the Northwest Elementary School Community Council focused on two goals 1) to develop a homework guideline, 2) improve communication and parent education. The group put a staff/ parent survey together to collect data on current homework perceptions. The outcome was great and the SCC team worked diligently to develop a simple homework guideline that would be included in the home-school communication notebook for grades K-5.

Communication: In developing the home-school communication notebook, we included a Language Arts, Math, and Parent Communication section. A homework folder will go home daily. Labels on the inside include one saying "KEEP HOME" and one saying "RETURN TO SCHOOL." Also, we have a Thursday envelope that will be utilized for ALL other notices that need to go home. The principal has met with the staff to explain the process of how each of these projects will increase and keep communication open between school and home.

Community Collaboration: Northwest Elementary has a great group of volunteers that help with daily tasks, which include popcorn, ice cream, kitchen help, copying and school functions. We provide our families with a number of family nights that include support/ education around academics, homework issues and learning at home. There is a continuum of community collaboration with getting donations from agencies to help our families and our school. Our school social worker deals in depth with our families to make sure they get the support and resources they need within our community.

Nominee: Darby Sue Lewis

Nominated by: William Foster

Category: Communication, learning at home, community collaboration

Write-up: Working as my son's one to one aid, Darby has had an extraordinary effect on his educational and social development. Insuring the success of his IEP, her communications with us have always exceeded our expectations and created a consistency between home and school learning that he would not have had without her. She always goes above and beyond to make our son feel important and included. She volunteered to take him on field trips with the recreation department during his summer program, showed up on her own time for his Therapeutic Horseback Ridings Demo night, even though her own daughters had girl scout camp the next morning, and she invited him to come along with her own children to her parents lake house for swimming and boating. She is a great parent, and is William's aid, mentor, role model and friend. The world needs a million more parents like her.

Nominee: Robert Mullen

Nominated by: Susan Searah

Category: Communication, learning at home, decision-making

Write-up: Mr. Mullen has been my son's teacher now for six years. Once each week a school to home and home to school worksheet is sent home. He is readily available by phone and answers my phone calls/emails to assist in supporting my son. He has provided both his school and home email addresses so that he is available almost 24 hours per day. He is the coach of the MV High School Track and Field Team and encouraged my son to volunteer as the student manager. This opportunity has enriched my son's life/school experience to such a wonderful level, allowing him to be involved in activities with his peers. Mr. Mullen has been instrumental in my son's success in school despite his disability. Being the track manager has taught my son social skills, leadership roles, following through on commitments, etc. - none of this would not have happened without the support/encouragement of Mr. Mullen. Mr. Mullen has always asked me for my input into all decisions made in regards to my son's education. He seeks out my ideas on how best to handle situations. Mr. Mullen definitely listens to, and encourages parents to be involved in their child's education, and makes the parent feel like an equal member of the team who has valuable information to share. I have to say that Mr. Mullen has been a valuable asset to me and my child. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to nominate Mr. Robert Mullen.

Nominee: Carol O'Connell

Nominated by: Susan Roy

Category: Communication, learning at home, community collaboration, decision making

Write-up: Carol O'Connell is a reading teacher at Valley View Community School. She is the coordinator of all parent activities in the school and was the coordinator at the Middle School last year. She is mentoring another teacher to take over at the Middle School this year. She organizes parent math and literacy training nights for parents. She plans summer events in literacy for the community. This summer she provided the book Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs to all children in grades K-3, along with summer activities and a culminating Spaghetti Dinner on Sept 23rd. Carol was part of the team that successfully wrote a grant that allowed PIRC to work with VVCS free for 3 years. She works with the PTA and PIRC to ensure that parents have the information they need to support their children in school. Last year she hosted a monthly coffee for parents who were waiting for their children to be dismissed from an After School Tutoring Program. Carol has also worked with Title I to develop a Home School Compact and goals that will help all children develop into successful learners. Carol gives her time to all activities in the community that promote home/school success. Carol is a community member and sees the impact of the high poverty rate in Farmington and works tirelessly to mitigate the effects on our children.

Nominee: Aviva Warford

Nominated by: Kary Bijeol

Category: Communication, learning at home, decision-making

Write-up: It is with great pleasure that I nominate Aviva Warford - a special education paraprofessional at Weston Elementary School in Manchester NH. This individual has made such a positive impact on my youngest son, Austin - who is entering 6th grade. As I read, the criteria for nomination - I thought this individual does ALL of these things, but particularly excels at bridging the gap between parents of children with learning challenges. Communication is such an important part of any relationship - and

like many little boys my son, wasn't very verbal with communicating his needs. This was perceived by other teachers as "defiant or a child that just didn't care". He was struggling with reading, writing and staying on task. Mrs. Warford spent many hours researching different ways to "bridge" the communication between myself, his teacher and the special ways that he needed to be taught. Instead of old fashion "communication books" - We used daily emails - sometime multiple times a day...This helped me as a parent, to know daily how he was progressing. She provided him many choices in books, within the level that he could read as well as adapted book reports, spelling tests and testing strategies. As a graduation gift, she gave him a book by his favorite author and asked him to write her a "review" - It is because of the dedication and constant encouragement of this special individual that my 11 year son, can read and write.

Nominee: Griffin Memorial Playground Committee

Kathleen Follis, Rebecca Feely

Nominated by: Bonne Cavanagh

Category: Volunteering, community collaboration

Write-up: The 22 year old playground at our Elementary school was condemned. This group of parents brought our community together and within 6 months raised over 23,000.00 through fundraising. We now have a brand new playground that was installed and opened by the first day of school this year!!! Their commitment was amazing!! They continue to fundraise for even more sections to add to the playground as well as a new sign for the front of the building. INCREDIBLE BUNCH OF PEOPLE!!!! We are so grateful to them for all their hard work!

Nominee: Fairgrounds Middle School PIRC Team

Team Members: John Nelson, Principal; Kristi Rouleau, Teacher; Charles Gray, Teacher; Kathleen Karvelas, Teacher; Karen Boivin, Parent; Elizabeth Hutchins, Parent; Gustavo Campos, Parent; Julie Goulet, Parent; Alfredo Teyes, Parent

Nominated by: Karen Gerdts

Category: Communication, learning at home, decision-making

Write-up: The Fairgrounds Middle School PIRC Team has a great deal of desire and passion when it comes to parent involvement. John Nelson, Principal is 100% on board for building parent support for his school and has made his parent involvement team a priority.

Communication - The PIRC Team has fostered positive 2-way home-school communication by developing a Home-School Compact that promotes a safe, productive, respectful environment, and demonstrates academic success, creativity and teamwork.

Learning - The PIRC Team supported reading, and reading for pleasure, by sponsoring an event called, "Books, Bingo and Building Reading Habits." During this event they sponsored a "Book Swap" and brought in over 2,500 books. Over 250 students enjoyed bingo, and were able to take a stack of books home, encouraging at home and at school reading. At the same time, over 100 parents participated in the parent education workshop, "Motivating Middle School Readers," designed to encourage student language development and reading.

Participating on decision-making committees – This team is part of a "data driven shared decision making team". The development of the School Compact and Reading efforts was the result of identified gaps and part of an action plan to make improvements in those areas.

Nominee: Holly Tate

Nominated by: Colleen Charest

Category: Volunteering, decision-making

Write-up: This nomination goes to our PTA past president Holly Tate – Last year Holly lost her dear friend and our Vice President to a brain aneurysm. Together these two women had visions and a plan. Despite her grief, Holly moved forward following her friend’s death, keeping her composure and finishing her General Meetings. Holly still continued to plan and implement the plans that she and her friend and developed together. I've known Holly since 2006 she has always been involved in Bartlett, not only organizing the HOPE program (Helping Our Playground Evolve) but making sure there were volunteers lined up for the building, clean up, donations etc. Holly also volunteers for almost all the functions and teacher appreciation week, etc. Holly also volunteers at the Up Reach Therapeutic Riding Center, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the physical, emotional, and psychological development of children and adults with challenges through progressive therapies, specifically those centered on the horse. Holly asked to step down as President this school year for personal reasons but still advises our newly elected group and says she will continue to oversee anything we may need this coming year! Holly also started our first School Field Day that was such a huge hit with our students and parent volunteers! She'd be the perfect candidate. And I know our NH State PTA board, that knows her personally, would agree!

Nominee: Elisabeth Hill

Nominated by: Jeff Hill

Category: Parenting, volunteering, communication, learning at home, community collaboration, decision making

Write-up: Elisabeth has been an active and involved parent since our daughter entered first grade at Valley View Community School in Farmington. She stepped into the role of PTA President and began trying to bridge the gap between home and school. She is also on the PAWWS committee, (that is Parents at Work with Staff) and the middle school survey and involvement committee. Elisabeth has helped coordinate family nights, math nights, family reading events, open house events and free family fun nights to help bring parents into the schools. She was part of the team that created the "I'm ready when" kindergarten readiness books that have been used throughout the state to help families. Elisabeth has helped by attending kindergarten registration to help families learn about resources and activities the local community has to offer, along with helping families learn how they can get connected with those resources. Elisabeth has since become part of the state board of the PTA helping bring PTA efforts into local schools.

Nominee: Ledge Street School PIRC Team

Team Members: Byrn Bustead, Jen Martel, Monique Duda, Rita Lewandowski, Crystal Slater

Nominated by: Janet C. Valeri, Principal

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home

Write-up: Our PIRC Team has worked very hard over the course of the 2009-2010 school year. This included multiple parent trainings in the evenings as well as organizing and implementing a homework workshop at the annual conference. The team has increased parental involvement both on a daily basis with our students, as well as at family events and trainings outside of the school day.

Nominee: Fr. Joseph Gurdak, OFM Cap.

Nominated by: Elena Acosta

Category: Community collaboration

Write-up When PIRC approached Fr. Joe about holding workshops on Sundays after services, he immediately took out the church planner and wrote us in. Fr. Joe understands the importance of parent involvement in education, and more so, he wants very much for Hispanic parents to become involved. Because of his support, PIRC was able to have Spanish-speaking parents at the P4E conference. His collaboration and community support allowed PIRC to:

- Make announcements from the pulpit and by print, about the upcoming workshops to be provided in Spanish
- Hold Hanen workshops at the church
- Hold a series of workshops at the church
- Print the 6 Sundays for School Success in the church bulletin.

This is the beginning of the collaboration between Fr. Joe and PIRC. Plans are underway to meet at the church and incorporate an action plan to build capacity for parent involvement in their children's education. Success comes in small packages. Two Latino parents are volunteering at their children's school. We hope more parents will come forth and this will happen because of Fr Joe's efforts. Fr. Joe definitely deserves the Parent Involvement Month recognition award.

Nominee: Not Just One Disability (NJ1D) committee

Dr. Teresa Bolick, Janice Martin, Cynthia Clarke, Donna Kraus, Neil Rogers

Nominated by: Joe Hatch

Category: Parenting, community collaboration

Write-up: Neil & Lori Rogers, parents of a child with Autism, founded *PASE* (Parents Assisting Special Educators) in 1999 to enhance the education of children with disabilities by providing funds for special education supplies to schools in Greater Nashua. Since *PASE* began, the Rogers have worked hard to develop a strong partnership with the Special Education Administration at the Nashua School District. Several years ago, *PASE* began working closely with Janice Martin, Cynthia Clark, and Donna Kraus of the Nashua School District, and Dr. Teresa Bolick, to host the *Not Just One Disability (NJ1D) Conference and Seminar Series*. The collaborators found that too often many of the new ideas on disability were discussed at national conventions where few people could afford to attend and they partnered to inform the education community and parents in a local setting. Through the *NJ1D* series, the group has been able to share innovative best practices in educating and treating those with disabilities, real life experiences of parents and practitioners both in the classroom and at home and explored the myths and realities of families experiencing disabilities in their lives. The partnership between *PASE* and the Nashua School District demonstrates the tremendous impact family/school partnerships have on children's education.

Nominee: Fairgrounds Elementary School PIRC Team

Team members: Theresa Keene, Chuck Healey, Kelley Paradis

Nominated by: Karen Gerdts

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, community collaboration

Write-up: The Fairgrounds Elementary School PIRC Team has taken a focused approach to their team efforts. They have had success in all six areas of parent involvement.

Parenting – Workshops are held every Friday morning on a variety of topics.

Communication – The PIRC Team developed two documents to enhance communication between home and school: a Parent Involvement Guide and a Classroom Visitation Guide. We have also developed a “Welcome to Fairgrounds” folder that is given to all families new to Fairgrounds and highlights ways to become/stay connected.

Volunteering –Parent volunteers from our morning parent group and PIRC group help by handing out late slips each morning, working at our Book Fairs, photocopying, assisting with project work for teachers.

Learning – School-wide events are held in the evening to highlight academics and learning. Last year we ran a Math Night, where parents came and played appropriate grade-level math games with their children and, an Authors’ Tea, which highlighted student writing. We also ran an evening parent series on helping your child with homework.

Community Collaboration – Fairgrounds works with the Nashua Adult Learning Center to reach out to parents and families in the community. Other community connections include Trinity Church and Bishop Guertin High School - both are located in our neighborhood and both have partnered with us to improve the quality services at Fairgrounds.

Decision-making committees –Parent input was sought last year, in particular, in developing our Restructuring Plan and in improving our drop-off/pick-up situation at Fairgrounds.

Nominee: Marni Fennessy

Nominated by: Karen Gerdts and Carol O’Connell

Category: Parenting, communication, volunteering, community collaboration

Write-up: Marni Fennessy is an excellent parent representative for her team at Valley View Community School in Farmington, NH. She has been a terrific member of our organization. I would be happy to give you some ways she has helped:

Parenting: I call her our ambassador because at the “K Screening” she talks with parents about what to expect in Kindergarten and tells them about our school culture.

Communication: She has e-mailed other parents on our connector list and created a letter to teachers explaining our volunteer program.

Volunteering: With her 4 daughters in tow, Marni helped stuff 400 summer reading packets, collected and organized the nurses office with clothing for children in need. She is always ready with a baked good for our coffee socials and always is the best advocate for our PAWWS group. In fact she helped us create our title; Parents At Work With Staff (PAWW).

Community Collaboration: She was part of the PTA board, and has been involved with our Middle School PIRC group. She found a book program online and has been collecting funds for our book distributions. She is also soliciting local restaurants for gift certificates to be given at our Summer Reading celebration.

Nominee: Family Connections Parent Center at Fairgrounds Elementary School
Louise Waugh, Marie-Carmel Damis, Tina Sawtello, Mandy Eberle

Nominated by: Maura McGowan

Category: Volunteering

Write-up: The parents & guardians who come to Family Connections, the family resource center at Fairgrounds Elementary School are dedicated to being contributing members of the Fairgrounds school community. Last fall, while dropping off their children, these women noticed a bottle neck that would occur in the office every morning. With staff having to answer phones, welcome visitors, coordinate substitutes and handle a multitude of other tasks all while handing out late slips to students. The question became, "Why don't we hand out the late slips in the morning?" And the idea was hatched. We approached administration, who were incredibly supportive of the idea, and put a plan together. The Monday we returned from Thanksgiving break we began a very successful program handing out an average of 20 late slips a day. In addition to the late slips, we implemented a task box in the center where teachers could leave projects that they needed work on. The parent center took care of things like putting together first grade readers, creating flash cards, building props for Kindergarten plays, prepping for and volunteering at the book fair, etc. In the spring, the center took on the task of mounting art work for every student in each grade level for the art teacher. Over 400 pieces of art were mounted in our center then hung throughout the school community for a school event. It is both an honor and inspiration to work with this group at Family Connections, Fairgrounds Elementary School's Family Resource Center.

Nominee: Denise Maher

Nominated by: Ellen Boudreau

Category: Volunteering, community collaboration

Write-up: Denise has organized a dynamic group of parents of special needs children to meet, share ideas, exchange stories, and participate in each other's IEP meetings. The group is making a positive change in the lives of children.

Nominee: Brigid Howell

Nominated by: Noreen McAloon

Category: Communication, volunteering, learning at home, community collaboration, decision making

Write-up: As a parent, volunteer, and last year's PTO president, Brigid helps the school so often that I, as a new principal, wondered if she were a staff member. She has served on the school Leadership committee, representing the parent voice. She has organized, set up, run, and cleaned up refreshment banks for school events and meetings. She has organized fundraising events and then provided the school and children with items like the large screen so the whole school can see a presentation. She has painted games on the playground surface two years in a row. Some of the events provided for family have had a learning base, others have provided for free family fun; such as the holiday craft fair. She has provided resources for town events like the Living History event, in addition to events specific only to the elementary school. She provides constructive suggestions and practical assistance. All of this is done quietly and matter of factly.

Nominee: Sheila Morris

Nominated by: Dellie Champagne

Category: Communication, volunteering

Write-up: Sheila, almost single-handedly created a school store at Rundlett including a roving snack cart which she manned for many, many hours every week. She also kept the cart and store stocked with frequent trips to Sam's Club. The profits from the store were used for students to attend educational field trips. Rundlett has a new policy that parents are not to be asked for funds to support field trips. Sheila wanted to make sure this important extension of the curriculum was still available for students so she created a win-win situation; students could have affordable snacks as well as attend educational opportunities outside of the school building. As a volunteer coordinator, Sheila also served as a parent-school liaison. She sent many emails to parents throughout the year to keep them abreast of school events and let them know about opportunities for volunteering. Please strongly consider her for recognition. Thank you!