



### Getting Off to a Good Start



### A perspective on Early Childhood Partnerships in Harwich

by Francie Joseph

As I begin my twentieth year as Coordinator of Early Childhood Services in Harwich, I look forward to renewing my commitment to young children, their families and providers.

One of the most compelling aspects of my position is helping provide access to quality and affordable early childhood programs as well as offering support and education to both families and providers.

The years from birth to five are significant and formative in a child's development. It is vitally important to be proactive in providing the highest quality learning opportunities to support the cognitive, social and emotional development for all young children.

These opportunities are best provided through a partnership between families and providers, including key local agencies and individuals committed to supporting young children. With a cooperative effort, children arrive at Kindergarten ready to learn and with healthy self-esteem.

On a personal level, my family realized the benefits of such partnerships when we lived in Boston with our young children. When our boys were reaching preschool age, I was instrumental in setting up a parent-cooperative preschool.

As "founding mothers", we believed our children's learning experiences would be high-quality not only because we hired a wonderful teacher, but also because all the parents took active roles working in the classroom and running the school.

When parents and teachers become partners in guiding the development of children, everyone grows and succeeds.

In Harwich, we've extended this cooperative partnership approach to help new parents and families through the Harwich Community Partnership Council for Early Education (Harwich CPC). The headquarters, the Harwich Family Resource Center, is located within the Harwich Elementary School on South Street.

The CPC are teachers, administrators, day care providers, parents, as well as representatives of church and community groups, who share a commitment to bring quality, affordable programs and services to young children, their families and providers in Harwich.

We provide quality preschool experiences, giving priority to children who may be at risk and/or of low to moderate income working families. We support "Make Way For Kids" preschool, and provide financial assistance in the form of vouchers to families in need.



Francie Joseph [fjoseph@harwich.edu](mailto:fjoseph@harwich.edu) has been the Coordinator of Early Childhood Services in Harwich for the past twenty years, helping countless children and their families navigate the early childhood years.



For further information about Harwich CPC, or to make a tax deductible donation to support these programs, please contact Francie Joseph [fjoseph@harwich.edu](mailto:fjoseph@harwich.edu) (508) 430-1692 or write to:

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WIC <http://www.WIC.org> is a nutrition program that provides nutrition, health education, healthy food & other services free of charge to Massachusetts families who qualify.

Our newsletter details programs from WIC services to new mom-and-baby groups, to playgroups for different ages offered by the Children's Place, located at the Harwich Community Center. We also sponsor teacher training, parenting workshops and different children's programs.

To fund these various activities, the non-profit Friends of Harwich Early Childhood hold fundraisers throughout the year including a Winter Carnival, a Thanksgiving bake sale, the annual family Sock Hop, and the spring Ice Cream Social at the elementary school. Through these and other activities, parents and their children get involved and realize they're part of this caring community effort.

Unfortunately, in these tough economic times, cutbacks are a fact of life. The majority of our funding is through State Department of Education grants as administered by the Harwich Public Schools. The public schools provide in-kind services as well as space for several of our ongoing programs. Fundraising and private donations go a long way to fill funding gaps due to budget cuts.

By making people aware of these programs and their importance to the health and growth of our community, we can work together to focus on what is important and keep programs like these working for our families and children.

