

# Insight

Fall 2017

Developments at The New England Center for Children®

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The New England Center  
for Children®  
*Autism Education and Research*

# Insight

Fall 2017

Vol. 1, No. 2

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**Our Mission:** To transform the lives of children with autism worldwide through education, research, and technology.

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The New England Center for Children

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## A LETTER FROM OUR CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



Welcome!

I have the pleasure of getting to know many of you — our parents, families, and supporters. Every day, I am impressed by the dedication of our clinicians, researchers, and especially our teachers. We are fortunate to be surrounded by an extraordinary community who value the work we do with our students, their families, and the community.

We at NECC are humbled by your generous support. In 2016-17, we reached record numbers at our events and surpassed our NECC Annual Fund goal. We completed a four-year Capital Campaign that resulted in the state-of-the-art 33,000 SF John and Diane Kim Autism Institute and the 13,000 SF Dillon Arledge Student Center.

Read more about the Arledge Student Center on page 2 and know that your support directly impacts our students' enrichment and learning every day. Thanks to you, our students have the tools they need to reach their potential.

**Jared Bouzan**  
Chief Development Officer

## NECC RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION OF BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS



Pictured, from left: Amber Mandler, Sharifa Yateem, Kathy Foster, Vinnie Strully, Maria Martha Hübner, Pam Olsen, and Dan Gould.

On May 27, Vinnie Strully and colleagues accepted the SABA Award for the International Dissemination of Behavior Analysis. Our peers in the ABA field witnessed NECC's recognition and viewed the history of NECC video.

# » Dillon Arledge Student Center Made Possible by You

## BY THE NUMBERS

- » 7,500 SF Student Center: music, art, library, leisure, vocational, student store
- » 6,000 SF remodeled offices, and new health services space including infirmary
- » Art and music increases from 6 hours to 52 hours per year, per student
- » Opened June 2017



Photography by Eric Greenberg

# Acts of Generosity

## » Beth and David Klein *Children of Promise Gala Committee Hosts*

Southborough residents Beth and David Klein have three children, Jake (13), (Callie) 10, and Ben (9). Jake attended kindergarten in Southborough public schools when he became fast friends with a classmate with autism. He came home one day and began asking Beth all sorts of questions about autism — “What is autism? Why does my friend have an aide? Can anyone get an aide?” The families quickly became friendly and did what parents with young children do, assisting with rides, hosting playdates, attending birthday parties.

When the boys were in 2nd grade, Beth chaperoned a field trip to Boston’s Museum of Science. She noticed that if Jake’s friend was getting too far ahead of the group, Jake gently put his hand on the boy’s shoulder to slow him down. If he was falling behind, Jake asked the group to slow down and wait.

*“I’d like to raise a million dollars at the Gala, I’d like to see a million children with autism cared for with NECC’s curriculum, and I’d like to see a million teachers trained by NECC.”*  
—Beth Klein

“This friendship provided for earlier development of empathy on the part of Jake, and his siblings, that I feel might take longer to teach if you’re not given the opportunity of an inclusive classroom,” Beth says.

This early friendship between her son and his pal sparked Beth’s interest in autism. She learned how autism affects families, the spectrum of diagnoses, and the services available.

As a philanthropist, Beth has great experience bringing people together to support something she is passionate about. She has run events resulting in millions of dollars raised for hospitals, medical research, UNICEF, schools, and for the local community.



Photography by Bill Brett

When she was invited to attend a gala fundraiser for NECC, she asked how she and David could be more involved and ended up chairing the host committee of the inaugural Children of Promise Gala in 2016.

“We wanted to bring our concern for these kids and families closer to home,” Beth says. She and David met Vinnie Strully and toured NECC.

“We had driven by NECC for 15 years and had no idea what went on inside. Why does Governor Dukakis have an aquatic center in Southborough? Why Abu Dhabi? It was amazing to see what was going on very quietly right beneath our noses.” Beth was impressed by the research, which focuses on treating children who have autism rather than on causes or cures. “The most urgent and critical work is with kids who need help right now,” she says.

In just two years the Kleins have hosted a local awareness-raiser, an art show, and a successful Children of Promise Gala, strengthening relationships between NECC, its supporters, and the community.

“The Gala Committee showed unparalleled dedication, opened up their network of contacts, and called in

favors. They were all in. This showed such a passion for NECC, and made working with NECC so easy,” she says. “The highlight of last year’s Gala was the presentation of awards, honoring a student, a community partner, and a teacher for their efforts. It was such a fun and inspiring night!”

Going forward, Beth has a grand vision. “I like round numbers. I’d like to raise a million dollars at the Gala, I’d like to see a million children with autism cared for with NECC’s curriculum, and I’d like to see a million teachers trained by NECC. I’d also like to see the global standard of autism care match what is taking place at NECC and in their partner classrooms.”

“You can’t help but recognize the impact autism has on the community and the schools and the kids,” she says. “As a community, we need to pay attention to the work NECC is doing; it may very well be Massachusetts’ most important export, and is certainly Southborough’s. We need to ensure children with ASD are given the tools that they need, that all the kids in our schools understand what autism is, and that they know how to be a good friend.”

# Program Updates

EDUCATION

## How a biology major became a Partner Classroom Teacher working with children with ASD

During Alina Heim's undergraduate studies at Northeastern University her co-op employers strongly recommended NECC as her next step.

"In Boston, NECC is clearly viewed as a top provider in the human services field," Alina says.

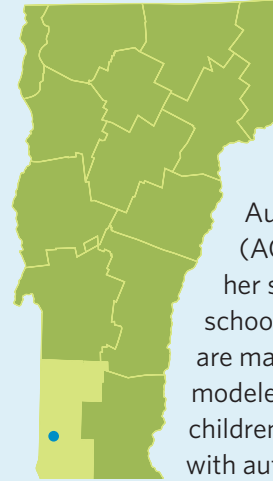
After graduating she joined NECC as a teacher and her career ascended. In just five years, Alina has earned her master's in special education and received her BCBA through Simmons College and Florida Institute of Technology, and spent two years as a teacher at NECC in Abu Dhabi.

"I love to travel," Alina says, "and having the opportunity to experience the culture in the Middle East, and travel around the region was really special to me. Abu Dhabi was a very welcoming place."

Today, Alina works through NECC's Public School Services division as a Partner Classroom Lead Teacher in the Bennington, VT school system.

"After my time in Abu Dhabi, I really felt confident about what I could offer to public schools and inclusion. I'm excited to be back in my home region and to help the programs there."

Bennington currently has four partner classrooms. Students start their morning much like the day students at NECC Southborough, placing their bags in cubbies and assembling to work on social skills. Later they attend inclusion classes (up to 80 percent of their day) before working on individual student-specific skills



not taught in general education, such as food desensitization, hand washing, or play.

The services Alina's students receive are like those provided on-site at NECC, including the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia (ACE®) Application, however because her students remain in their home school district, inclusion opportunities are maximized; her students learn from modeled behaviors of neurotypical children, who, in turn, learn from children with autism.

"Every moment at NECC is a learning opportunity for teachers," Alina says, "and I believe I am providing a lot of teaching moments for my public-school colleagues, even the community, about working with children with autism."

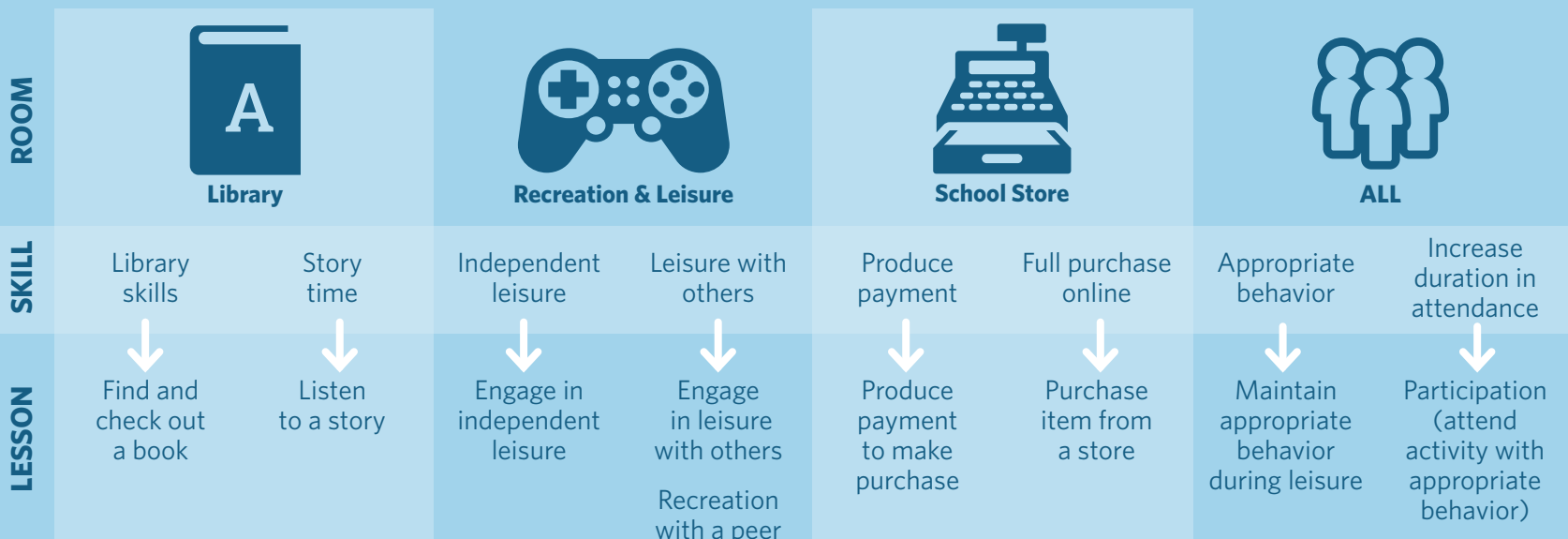
RESEARCH

A major impact of annual giving is having resources to spread our knowledge worldwide. Over the last 30 years, our researchers have presented at conferences in 22 countries. Through these efforts, we are positioning NECC as a global leader in autism education. Attendees gather valuable knowledge to implement in their work with children with autism of all ages, and generate discussion about best practices. In May alone, NECC researchers presented 38 papers, workshops, symposia, and posters on recent research, including:

- *Advancements in teaching play skills to children with autism spectrum disorder.* Ahearn, W.H.
  - *Training therapists and parents to implement joint attention procedures.* Holohan, B.R., & MacDonald, R.P.F.
  - *Treatment of anxiety in individuals with autism.* Noyes, B., & Ahearn, W.H.
  - *Establishing social repertoires in children with autism: Joint attention, social referencing and social conversation skills.* Parry-Cruwys, D.C.
  - *Teaching social referencing to toddlers with autism.* Walker, C., & MacDonald, R.P.F.
  - *Shaping a functional communication repertoire.* Ward, S., Hanley, G.P., Warner, C., & Gage, E.
  - *From the classroom to the workforce: Teaching vocational skills to individuals with an autism spectrum disorder.* Weiss, J.S., & LeBlanc, J.
- NECC Research recently launched a Research Newsletter — *News and Notes About Scientific Research on ASD and Other Developmental and Behavioral Disorders* — which covers recent research in greater detail.

TECHNOLOGY

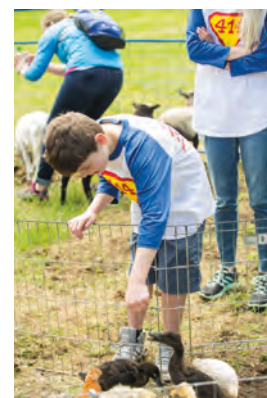
ACE and the Dillon Arledge Student Center: ACE contains thousands of lesson plans, many of which can be applied while students use the Arledge Student Center.



# Student Activities

Annual giving makes *many* things possible at NECC including student and staff favorite, Field Day. Now in its 25th year, Field Day provides students a true carnival experience with the support of their friends, family, and teachers. Field Day includes bouncy houses, carnival rides and games, music and dancing, arts and crafts, and a petting zoo.

For students who have limited access to such events in their community, or for whom a visit to an amusement park or carnival is difficult, Field Day offers a stepping stone to learn about crowd management, waiting in lines, ride safety, sharing, safe choices, and managing behavior.



# NECC Showcases Expertise in Adapted Physical Education for Children with Autism



In May, NECC hosted the Massachusetts Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD) Annual Adapted PE Conference. Teachers, professors, physical therapists, and program directors from New England attended to learn best practices on teaching students with ASD. The pool in the Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center was a focal point for learning about adapted aquatics and how these methods can be used to teach across other physical education programs for children with ASD.

Phil Leonard, NECC's Assistant Director of APE and OT, received many compliments on the quality of NECC's facilities as well as the level of expertise of NECC staff. NECC's teachings focus on consistent, predictable routines, which help students feel safe and know what to expect. Attendees took this structure back to their own programs and noticed immediate improvement in their students' skills development.

The Dukakis Aquatic Center is a special place at NECC, made possible by private support. Most students greatly enjoy the freedom of movement water provides. Pool time provides opportunities for free play along with practical skills development, including acclimating to the environment, water safety, moving independently, stroke development, and fostering endurance.

The NECC Annual Fund provides all recreation equipment for students, from pool noodles to life vests, treadmills to bikes. With 131 students living in one of our 17 residences, access to adapted physical education equipment in their homes has proven so beneficial.

"The fitness benefits are huge at the residences," Phil says. "Students are able to access the equipment regularly and we see significant gains in motor skills and endurance. This translates to better coordination in daily activities and of course, improved physical fitness."

## In the News

### *Abu Dhabi World*

This leading English language news magazine in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, included NECC on a trend story about autism.

### *India Today*

India's premier English language news magazine highlighted NECC's work in India.

### *Miami Herald*

Florida's daily newspaper covered NECC's recognition from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis.

### *NonProfit PRO Magazine*

This trade magazine for the nonprofit sector awarded NECC Founder and CEO Vincent Strully, Jr. the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award.

### *USA Today*

NECC CEO and Founder Vincent Strully, Jr. commented on Sesame Street's new Muppet with autism, Julia, in the letters page of USA Today.

### *WBZ News Radio 1030*

For Autism Awareness month, NECC's Dr. Rebecca MacDonald joined former NECC student, William, and his mother to discuss autism on *NightSide* with Dan Rea.



Find us @NECCforAutism

### **Trending NECC hashtags**

#NECCforAutism  
#NECCAnnualFund  
#ChildrenofPromiseNECC  
#GivingforAutism  
#TeamNECC  
#WorkatNECC



## Save the Date

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2017

Please join us at the InterContinental Boston for a night of recognition, auctions, and dancing to support autism education and research. Register at [www.childrenofpromisenecc.org](http://www.childrenofpromisenecc.org).



The New England Center  
for Children®  
*Autism Education and Research*

Boston • Abu Dhabi

## SAVE THE DATE

### **Children of Promise Gala**

Friday, November 17, 2017  
*InterContinental, Boston, MA*

### **Team NECC runs the Boston Marathon**

Monday, April 16, 2018  
*Hopkinton, MA*

### **NECC 5K Walk/Run for Autism**

Saturday, May 12, 2018  
*Southborough, MA*

### **Annual Carlos Placido Dunkin' Donuts Golf Classic**

Monday, June 4, 2018  
*Franklin, MA*

### **New Balance Falmouth Road Race**

Sunday, August 19, 2018  
*Falmouth, MA*

### **"The Mike" Golf Invitational**

Monday, August 27, 2018  
*Kingston, MA*

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