

# Insight

Spring 2017

Developments at The New England Center for Children®

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The New England Center  
for Children®  
Autism Education and Research

# Insight

Spring 2017

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

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 The New England Center for Children

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## A LETTER FROM OUR CEO AND FOUNDER



Dear friend,

Welcome to our newly minted newsletter, which we have produced to keep you aware of the many advancements we are making at The New England Center for Children® (NECC®).

We rely on the support of readers and donors like you to make our mission a reality. Looking toward the future, I envision a time when every child with autism has access to the resources they deserve and need.

The Center is poised to make incredible advances over the next decade. With the recent opening of the John and Diane Kim Autism Institute, we have newly dedicated and expanded space for research and graduate training, so that we may continue to create a vast network of top-in-class educators and disseminate our knowledge globally. Our new student center is currently under construction. The advent of this space means that our day and residential students will have access to the many enrichment and social activities that typical schoolchildren receive.

We need to continue to bring greater awareness to the mission of NECC. While we educate students on site and in partner classrooms, our impact is global. We continue a strong partnership with our Abu Dhabi school and with countries using our Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia® (ACE®) ABA Software System. As a research, technology, and educational institute, NECC is uniquely positioned to bring the advancements of autism research and technology into the future.

**L. Vincent Strully, Jr.**  
CEO and Founder

## NECC TO RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION OF BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS



This May, at the 2017 Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) Conference in Denver, Colorado, NECC will accept the Award for International Dissemination of Behavior Analysis from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA).

This award recognizes a person or an organization that has demonstrated a significant and sustained contribution to the international dissemination and development of behavior analysis outside of the United States. The SABA Board bestowed the award after recognizing our longstanding work to provide services, train service providers and students, and establish programs across five continents.

“The reach and influence of NECC are truly inspiring, and the success of NECC Abu Dhabi in particular illustrates the impact of dissemination; NECC has played a large part in making inroads for behavior analysis in the Middle East,” said Maria E. Malott, PhD, CEO of ABAI.

This award is typically given to individual researchers. Of the past 21 award recipients, only one other has been an organization. This is the second significant award NECC has received from SABA. NECC received the Award for Enduring Programmatic Contributions in Behavior Analysis in 2005.

# » John and Diane Kim Autism Institute



## BY THE NUMBERS

- » 33,000 SF
- » 8 research rooms
- » 2 model classrooms
- » Resource library
- » Graduate and professional classrooms



Photography by Gregg Shupe

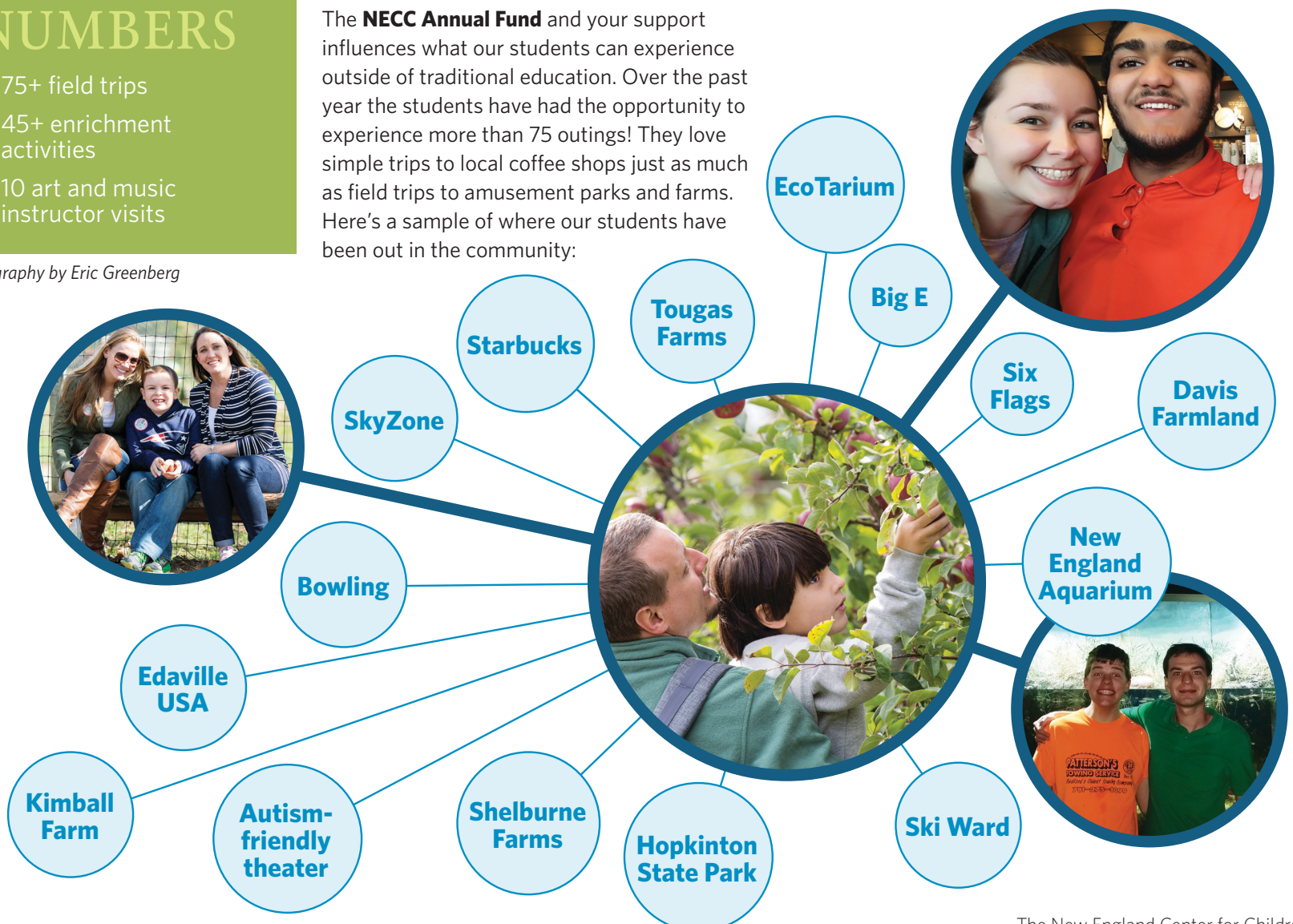
## BY THE NUMBERS

- » 75+ field trips
- » 45+ enrichment activities
- » 10 art and music instructor visits

Photography by Eric Greenberg

## » Year in Review

The **NECC Annual Fund** and your support influences what our students can experience outside of traditional education. Over the past year the students have had the opportunity to experience more than 75 outings! They love simple trips to local coffee shops just as much as field trips to amusement parks and farms. Here's a sample of where our students have been out in the community:



# Acts of Generosity

## » Stephen and Allison Patenaude

Allison and Stephen Patenaude received their son Nathan's autism and global developmental delay diagnosis just two days before his sister, Morgan, was born.

Nathan was already enrolled in Early Intervention, but when the autism diagnosis came, Allison and Stephen began exploring other options. They first learned about The New England Center for Children (NECC) through Nathan's early intervention teacher, which prompted Allison to read about the program online.

"It really boiled down to the research. We knew they would be on the cutting edge of what needs to be done with autism," Stephen said.

In January 2015, Allison met with admissions staff and was quickly impressed with NECC's 30 hours per week of intensive home based training. Nathan was 2, but functioning at a 12-month-old level.

*"We knew from the first day we made the right choice."*  
—Stephen Patenaude

"When we started with home-based he couldn't sit, [he had] a lot of repetitive motions, no eye contact, couldn't point, lost all of his early toddler skills,"



Stephen said. "Julie, our lead NECC therapist, sat on the floor the first day, and he joined her and shape sorted with her."

As full-time working parents, they found NECC home-based services to be invaluable.

"In the first week he was sitting in a session for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. NECC really gave him those foundational skills back," Stephen said. "We knew from the first day we made the right choice."

The Patenaude's started a support group for families using Early Intervention services. They met monthly to talk about autism and other diagnoses, and discuss how it affects their families' lives. Once Nathan began using NECC services, they shared their experience and seven families from their group started at NECC.

Although Nathan used NECC services for only eight months, the Patenaude's are strong supporters of NECC.

"We realized quickly how life-changing NECC has been. [It] literally changed our lives for the better, especially Nathan's life," Allison said.

They found unique ways to give back. With every real estate transaction Stephen closes through Century 21, he donates a percentage to NECC. They also support NECC's Annual 5K Walk/Run for Autism with "Team Nate."

"We wanted to raise a little bit of money and awareness so we started a GoFundMe page," said Allison. "Our goal was five hundred dollars, but we raised over five thousand."

In 2016, they hosted a fundraising night at Night Shift Brewery in Everett. More than 125 people attended, and they raised \$12,000.

The Patenaude's want to help ensure that all kids with autism get the services and education they need.

"Statistics are showing that autism rates are going up so fast that everyone is going to know someone with autism," said Allison. "It's something we have to figure out."

It's this passion and caring that has inspired others to support their fundraising efforts.

"We know we will always have NECC in our lives," she said. "It's something that's important to us."

# Program Updates

## EDUCATION

We recognize the enormous need for quality trained Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) in the autism field, not only at NECC but around the world. More than 1,300 employees have completed a master's degree at NECC and in 2016 we graduated more than 105 alone. Professional development is a key component of NECC's success. With on-site classrooms and faculty from Western New England University and

Simmons College, tuition reimbursement, and first-hand experience, our teachers earn their master's with a best-in-class education. Graduate students work with children with autism on a daily basis and contribute to ongoing autism research.

In addition to our master's training programs, 12 teachers have earned their PhD through a program established just eight years ago.

*"I am currently halfway through my last year in the Simmons program here at The New England Center and am grateful for the opportunities that furthering my education has provided me here."*

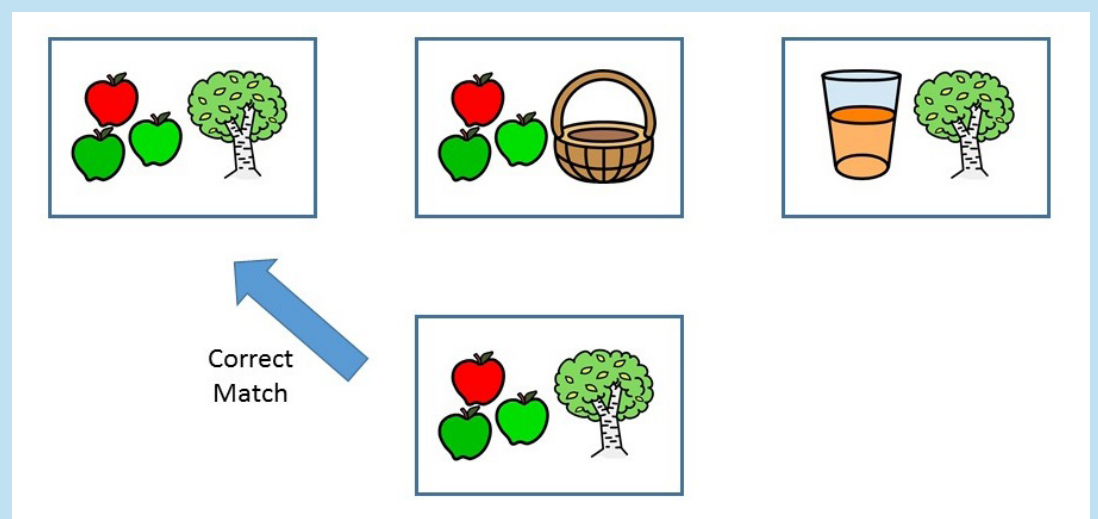
— Amanda B.

## RESEARCH

NECC has a long, fruitful relationship with The Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center at UMass Medical School. Recently NECC Assistant Director of Research, ACE®, Chata Dickson, PhD, together with colleagues from the Shriver Center, published a report of their NIH-funded study titled "A sorting-to-matching method to teach compound matching to sample." The research influenced a new educational process at NECC to build compound matching skills in students.

In compound matching, the learner has to pay attention to multiple parts of a picture or word. For example, if a student is looking at a card with a picture of apples and a tree, they can often match that card to a sample card with apples and a tree. Add in other choices that contain the apples or the tree, but not both, and the matching capability in some students drops dramatically.

A 5-step tabletop-sorting-to-matching teaching procedure was used to teach compound matching. If progress stalled, researchers modified the tasks temporarily and observed student behavior. After



tabletop teaching, participants were retested on the compound matching task and accuracy improved to at least 95 percent for all children.

Much of the work in the research line with Shriver focuses on remediation — solving problems of learning in children with developmental and behavioral disabilities. Study results, such as those from the compound matching study, provide methods to fine-tune educational procedures if a

student stops making progress at a certain point in the curriculum.

"We, at NECC and the ACE, are committed to making sure that every one of our learners, no matter what, makes progress," Dickson said.

In the last three years NECC research staff worked on more than 130 research studies. The compound matching procedure will be one of many research-based solutions integrated into ACE going forward.

## TECHNOLOGY

The ACE ABA Software System reaches more than 4,600 students around the world but it's not just being used for teaching children with autism. At Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, ABA program director, Joe Lambert, PhD, uses ACE to train future ABA and special education teachers.

What makes the relationship especially unique is that the program was brought to Vanderbilt thanks to Lambert, a former NECC teacher who received his master's training on-site at NECC and then took those valuable skills elsewhere, helping to distribute NECC expertise and best practices to others.

"I was impressed with the way NECC did their programming and organized their curriculum," said Lambert, who uses ACE to teach graduate students how to progress from assessment to intervention. "Having these resources is amazing for graduate students."

We are thrilled when these relationships expand with the help of former NECC staff. NECC believes in sharing our knowledge so as many children with autism as possible receive services. By aiming to radiate out



into the world what we have discovered, learned, and accomplished, young executives and teachers who are starting services have the materials, the ideas, and the resources they need to be successful.

# In the News

Last year, NECC appeared in more than 35 publications. The Media Center page on our website, at [www.necc.org/about-necc/media-coverage](http://www.necc.org/about-necc/media-coverage), lists awards and published research as well as links to press releases and recent media spots. Recently NECC has been mentioned in *The Washington Post*, *The Worcester Business Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *WBZ News Radio*, *New England Psychologist*, and *The Boston Globe*. We encourage you to browse the page for latest news or follow us on social media for updates.



NECC is active on social media. Our Facebook page is a good way to stay connected with us and to catch highlights of student activities and events at the school. On Twitter we post event updates, job listings, news links, and other autism-relevant information. Follow us on LinkedIn for business-related updates and on Instagram for student and program pictures.

Find us @NECCforAutism

## Trending NECC hashtags

#NECCforAutism  
#NECCAnnualFund  
#ChildrenofPromiseNECC  
#GivingforAutism  
#TeamNECC

# 2016 Event Highlights



## April 18

### Team NECC Runs the Boston Marathon

Through the John Hancock Non-Profit Marathon Program, NECC had four runners train for and run the Boston Marathon in 2016. Collectively, Team NECC runners raised **\$50,453** for NECC!

## May 7

### Annual 5K Walk/Run for Autism

More than 1,500 participants comprising friends, families, and community members came together to support the NECC Annual Fund. This run not only supports NECC fundraising efforts but promotes autism awareness in the local community. In 2016 we raised **\$222,846**.



## June 6

### Carlos Placido Dunkin' Donuts Golf Classic

Led by NECC Board member and Dunkin Donuts franchisee Neal Faulkner, this golf tournament is in its twentieth year. More than 100 golfers and philanthropists played an 18-hole round at the Franklin Country Club to support NECC. They raised **\$207,365**.

## August 21

### New Balance Falmouth Road Race

Ten runners ran the Falmouth Road Race on behalf of NECC and together raised **\$32,952**.

## August 29

### "The Mike" Golf Tournament

This annual golf tournament, in honor of NECC student Mike McKenna, had its highest participation to date, with 137 golfers. Thanks to the McKenna family's active support and sponsorship of this event we reached a record fundraising total of **\$70,040**.



## October 17

### John and Diane Kim Autism Institute Ribbon Cutting and Open House

More than 200 people attended the event to celebrate the opening of the John and Diane Kim Autism Institute. Campaign donors were honored and members of the Southborough community came to learn about the Center's great work.

## November 18 Children of Promise Gala

NECC's annual fundraising gala provides our biggest support for the NECC Annual Fund. Your gifts helped us raise a record **\$528,567**.

This year we recognized several community members for exceptional work:

### Community Autism Champion — Walgreens

NECC and Walgreens partner to provide NECC students opportunities to learn retail skills and eventually become team members of Walgreens stores. Walgreens uses Project REDI — Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative — to provide training prior to employment to ensure success. Currently, Walgreens employs eight NECC students in four Walgreens stores and has five students in the Project REDI program.

### Educator of the Year — Melissa Swisher,

**MSEd, BCBA, LABA** Melissa is an Education/Day Coordinator at NECC, where she has worked for 11 years. She is passionate about helping students with special needs achieve success. Melissa was chosen from more than 700 teachers between the Southborough campus, Abu Dhabi campus, and partner classrooms around the world. Her positive attitude and skillful teaching continually inspire those around her, and parents of her students overwhelmingly supported her nomination.

### Outstanding NECC Alumnus — William

**Lionetta** William joined NECC's preschool program when he was 3 years old. He made enormous strides in several years at NECC and was later introduced into an NECC partner classroom at his local public school. William is currently a senior in high school and highly active in his community. He enjoys music, hiking, and theater, participates in a New England-area chorus, and even performs on stage.



Photography by Eric Greenberg



The New England Center  
for Children®  
Autism Education and Research

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Boston • Abu Dhabi

## SAVE THE DATE

**Team NECC runs  
the Boston Marathon**  
Monday, April 17, 2017  
*Hopkinton, MA*

**NECC 5K Walk/Run for Autism**  
Saturday, May 6, 2017  
*Southborough, MA*

**20th Annual Carlos Placido  
Dunkin' Donuts Golf Classic**  
Monday, June 5, 2017  
*Franklin, MA*

**New Balance Falmouth  
Road Race**  
Sunday, August 20, 2017  
*Falmouth, MA*

**"The Mike" Golf Invitational**  
Monday, August 28, 2017  
*Kingston, MA*

**Children of Promise Gala**  
Friday, November 17, 2017  
*InterContinental, Boston, MA*

