

Insight



The New England Center
for Children®
Autism Education and Research

Spring 2020

Developments at The New England Center for Children®



**Sensory-friendly concert
at Boston Pops** [PAGE 1](#)

**Children of Promise Gala
raises \$1 million** [PAGE 4](#)

Insight

Spring 2020

Vol. 4, No. 1

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

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Please send comments or suggestions to development@necc.org.

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A LETTER FROM OUR CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



Dear friend,

Do you remember a favorite teacher, professor, instructor or coach who inspired you? Perhaps at the time you didn't realize the impact they would have but as you matured some pearl of wisdom they instilled has shaped you into the person you are today.

These impactful moments happen every day at The New England Center for Children, and never has the commitment of our staff been more significant than during this current pandemic. Understanding the importance of structure for the population of student we serve, our staff have been incredibly flexible and compassionate — willing to do whatever it takes to provide a safe and secure environment for our students.

In the following pages, you'll read about a teacher who became a professor, a long-time NECC employee whose daughter was in NECC's integrated pre-school 15 years ago and last summer interned at NECC, a job coach who helps teenage students grow in their vocational experiences, and numerous staff from across the Center who voluntarily run to raise awareness and money to support NECC.

Much more than a school, NECC is *home* to hundreds of students with autism, like my son. It's also *home* to the many staff in every department who believe in the mission, grow their careers at NECC, and contribute in myriad ways — from volunteering to assist the teams to contributing to the Annual Fund with every paycheck.

You won't find a collection of more passionate and compassionate individuals anywhere. And NECC is proud to help them feel at home.

Sincerely,

Jared Bouzan, MEd
Chief Development Officer

START YOUR CAREER AT NECC

Join #TeamNECC

NECC believes in investing in the future of our staff. From unparalleled professional development, to providing the opportunity to pursue graduate degrees at little to no cost, NECC is the perfect place to begin a career.

Want to join #TeamNECC?
Visit our website, www.necc.org.

Apply Today!

- Teachers
- Overnight direct care
- Maintenance
- Food Services
- Marketing Specialist
- And many more...

On the cover: NECC students and their families enjoyed a sensory-friendly performance of the Holiday Pops at Boston Symphony Hall last December. Thanks to a generous grant from Ms. Carolyn Pruyne, this special day was complimentary for our families. Meltin and his father, Martin, were all smiles during intermission.

» Your gift. Your impact.

Your gift gives teachers opportunities to learn from the best, grow their careers, and help the children with autism we serve achieve their goals large and small. **Thank you.**



Simmons professor, Heather Fortin (center), featured on page 4



NECC Knights Special Olympics soccer team



Alexander on Halloween



Valentine hearts created by NECC students



Erland Foundation's "Strike Out Autism" event



Elliot and his mom at the holiday party



Adri and her teacher, Connie, at the arcade



Colin performing with his puppet



Grace and Rachel sang a duet at the NECC talent show



Luke goes for a dunk during Special Olympics basketball

Program Updates

Health Services

New! Electronic Medical Records

Student safety is paramount to the success of NECC's programs, and the accuracy, completeness and accessibility of their medical records is an important part of maintaining a safe environment. Last April, NECC's Health Services department switched their record-keeping system to E-Clinical Works. The new system allows staff to easily store and access comprehensive medical records for every student at NECC. Whereas in the past, documentation for different aspects of a student's medical history were stored independently, all those records are now condensed into one file. This consolidation not only saves personnel time, but also has streamlined the workflow to primary care industry standards. By making the workflow similar to primary care standards, NECC has become an optimal place for aspiring medical professionals to begin and advance their careers.

Enrollment and Family Support

Created at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, the Office of Enrollment and Family Support aims to welcome and support families throughout their time at NECC. In addition to acting as liaisons between direct-care professionals and families, the office also has a hand in managing and hosting several fun, inclusive events. In addition to Family Yoga, Family Swim, Sibling Groups, and Adult Discussion Groups, the office recently hosted "Parents Night Out." This social event, held on February 27, brought together NECC parents for a night of fun, food, and trivia at UNO Pizzeria & Grill in Westborough.



Community Partners Breakfast

Despite snowy conditions, over 33 business leaders in the local community attended NECC's Community Partners Breakfast on February 13. This event was held to thank Community Partners, as well as provide an opportunity for them to learn more about NECC's programs and its positive impact on the local community. While they were here, the attendees were treated to a tour of NECC's facility, giving them a first-hand look at the amazing work that is done every day. Danielle Ayache, who attended on behalf of ADP, was impacted by her time in the school. "I was truly touched by [NECC]," she said. "I am so blessed to be partners with such a great company. I left the building a different person. I look forward to our continued partnership."



MASSACHUSETTS



STUDENT FEATURE

HARRISON, WITH JOB COACH, MICHELLE ADMIRE

"I'm lucky to have him in my life, more than he is lucky to have me," says Michelle Admire about her student, Harrison Shaffer. Michelle, a teacher and job-coach, has had an eventful tenure since joining the staff at NECC in 2013. In her seven years with the school, she spent two years teaching in Southborough before transferring to NECC's Abu Dhabi campus for the next two years. About her time abroad, Michelle says, "It was amazing. It's a beautiful school and the kids are great."

After completing her time in Abu Dhabi, Michelle returned to Southborough to become a liaison between Vocational Services and her classroom in the day school. It was in that role, where she first met Harrison.

Over the last three years, Michelle has been Harrison's job-coach, assisting him while he has worked in ten different roles around NECC and within the community. Today, Harrison is the office assistant for J. White's Automotive, where he recently celebrated one year of employment, as well as a cashier at the school store and an office assistant within the Development office at NECC. Asked how he manages so many jobs simultaneously, Harrison replies, "I'm very detail-oriented and hard working."



Equipped with these impressive traits, Harrison will graduate from NECC in November, before beginning to work even more in the community. "He has grown so much in the time that I've known him," states Michelle about how Harrison has changed during the past three years. "He's much more independent and communicative. I'm confident that, whatever job he works after graduating, he will be successful."

2019 Event Highlights

The 11th Annual "The Mike" Golf Invitational

For more than a decade, NECC parents, Mike and Lori McKenna of Norwell, MA, have invited friends, family members, and business contacts to participate in a golf tournament at the end of August, with the proceeds benefitting NECC. This year, 115 participants together contributed **\$71,235** to NECC's Annual Fund. The eleven-year total from this tournament is just over **\$700,000!** We are grateful to all the sponsors, especially Blue Cross Blue Shields of MA, and the McKenna family.

Team NECC: Falmouth Road Race

On August 18, 2019, 15 runners on Team NECC braved the heat and humidity to complete the 46th Falmouth Road Race on Cape Cod. The team consisted of parents of NECC students, teachers from NECC, staff, and community members who collectively raised \$22,081 for the school. Thank you to all who supported their effort!

JUST ANNOUNCED: NECC has 15 bibs for the 2020 Falmouth Road Race and we're looking for runners! Contact Ashley Dodd (adodd@necc.org) if interested.



2019 TEAM NECC (left to right):

Jordan Saks, former NECC student
Lori McKenna, parent
Jessica Mirisola, friend
Caroline Fearnley, NECC teacher
Lauren Palmateer, NECC teacher
Matt McKenna, sibling
Emily McKenna, sibling
David Blank, NECC teacher
Robin Drew, NECC staff
Beth McGonagle, NECC staff
Priscilla Camarda, parent
Stephanie Muse, NECC teacher
Fatou Njie-Jallow, NECC staff
Margaret Smith, NECC teacher (not pictured)
Stephanie Carlin, parent (not pictured)

TEACHER FEATURE

HEATHER FORTIN

Heather Fortin, a NECC employee since June 1993 is not your typical NECC team member. To her students in the Simmons University NECC Autism Specialization program she is a kind-hearted professor, whose curriculum challenges students and pushes them to become better educators and caregivers to children with autism. To those in the Development office, she is a mentor, liaison, problem solver, and friend. Altogether, her days are dynamic and unpredictable, but the constant is her ability to manage it all.

From her first role as a direct care staff through her graduate degree to now teaching and advising, she intimately understands the challenges and rewards of the job. Many of the students she worked with in those early years have graduated and she maintains strong relationships with their families. Today, her "students" are new teachers at NECC, gaining insights from her experience. With education in her DNA, Heather sees her position with Simmons as an opportunity to mold the next generation of exceptional special education teachers.

For Heather, the rewards come daily. "The teachers at NECC work diligently and it is my job to keep them focused." Her face lights up as she describes the multiplying effect, "To watch my students take the Simmons lessons they have written, teach in

their own classrooms, and to witness their students responding so positively — there is no better feeling in the world!"

The Development office benefits from her experience, too, as she spends her time working with families who support the Center philanthropically and as volunteers. When the office was restructuring, it was a no-brainer to put Heather in charge of Donor Relations. "Heather is the best — she has charisma; she knows the students, families and staff; she has deep institutional knowledge and is well respected; and she exudes genuine concern for everyone," says Beth McGonagle, Director of Advancement. "Heather is the glue."

As busy as the days get wearing two hats, Heather loves her job. "I am truly fortunate to be able to teach in a school where I can directly observe my teachers in the classrooms of NECC. I love seeing teachers put theory into practice and watching not only the teachers learning new educational skills but the students making progress. I am also able to see daily the effort of the Development Department and how it directly has an impact on our teachers and students. I cannot think of another job for me that would be so rewarding."

See Heather pictured on page 2 with the Simmons banner.

Acts of Generosity

» Divino Ribeiro, a loyal donor for 19 years...and counting

When Divino Ribeiro talks about his daughter Millena, his voice swells with pride. "Family is the most important thing for me," he says. "My job and friends are too, but family, that support system, is everything."

For Ribeiro, who has been with The New England Center for Children for 24 years, now serving as Night Custodian Supervisor, family and his workplace have an abnormally close relationship. After Millena was born, Divino brought her to the onsite daycare facility. On her last day, Divino remembers her saying that, although she was leaving to go to school, she would return to NECC someday. He laughs, "It was like a prophecy. She said she would come back, and then she did."

Last summer, Millena made her return to NECC when she interned for the Development office. Now a sophomore in college studying business, Millena gained valuable real-world experience in marketing, stewardship, and event planning. "I'm very happy she had this opportunity," says Divino about his daughter's internship. "I always told her how much you can learn from people on the business and financial side [of NECC]. To see my daughter come and work here, makes me very proud."



"I always tell people, they treat the kids so well. They care so much about them. I have so much respect for the kids and the families and the teachers." -Divino Ribeiro

Beyond this connection between NECC and his daughter, though, NECC has always been a special place for Divino.

"It is a great place to work," he says. "Everyone is so nice. You never walk by straight faces, everybody is always smiling and happy to see you. You feel like you know everybody." The welcoming, friendly work environment is only part of why he has stayed with NECC for such a long time. He also

cites NECC's employment benefits, specifically the daycare that Millena attended, and the impact that NECC has on children with autism and their families, as reasons for sticking with the organization. "I always tell people," he says, "they treat the kids so well. They care so much about them. I have so much respect for the kids and the families and the teachers."

The firsthand look at NECC's work with children with autism has provided Divino with added motivation to help where he can. In addition to his tireless work to keep the building and grounds in pristine condition, he has been donating financially to the school every year for nearly 20 years. "[My family] does it for the good," says Divino, "If I have the opportunity to help, I'm going to help." The cumulative

effect of the Ribeiro family's donations amounts to thousands of dollars for the Center. And that impacts the students in many ways.

Employees like Divino make NECC a unique place to work. Whether working in a direct care position or not, all 1,200 staff members are united in the mission to help children with autism in every way they can. Thanks to Divino and other employees with long histories of giving both their time and money to NECC, the Center continues to thrive and provide comprehensive services for children with autism.

And for Divino and Millena, NECC will continue to hold a special place in their hearts. Says Divino, "NECC has given me and my family great opportunities. I'm proud to work here."

Gala Recap 2019



The 2019 Children of Promise Gala raised an incredible **\$1,060,239** to support NECC's comprehensive autism education programs, teacher professional development, research, instructional technology, and vocational programming.

Led by Gala Co-chairs, Elizabeth Wetherbee Klein and Matthew and Dina Wosk, the event attracted nearly 500 business leaders, philanthropists, and NECC families and friends who enjoyed dinner, awards, and exciting live auctions. Emotion-packed speeches by three mothers of current students set the stage for the incredible impact NECC has on families, while TV personality Jenny Johnson electrified the crowd to inspire the highest-ever live auction and fund-a-need.

The theme of impact resonated with guests, many of whom have children who benefit (or have benefitted) from the Center's world-class programming. Alumnus of the Year recipient, Andrew Roberts, proved that anything is possible with his sportscasting career and accolades. Erland Construction took home the Community Autism Champion Award for their foundation's efforts in support of children with autism, and the focal point of the event was the head table filled with NECC teachers in honor of the tremendous work they do every day.



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Boston • Abu Dhabi

SAVE THE DATE

NECC 5K Walk/Run for Autism — VIRTUAL

Saturday, May 9, 2020

www.necc.org/5K

New Balance Falmouth Road Race

Sunday, August 16, 2020

Boston Marathon

Monday, September 14, 2020

Children of Promise Gala

Friday, November 20, 2020

www.necc.org/gala

WE'RE GOING VIRTUAL

That's right - we still need your support and participation to make this event a success even though we can't physically do it together at Neary School.

From now until May 9th we encourage our supporters to register and fundraise for the children at NECC. On May 9, our virtual event will commence with participants embarking on their 5K independently (or as a family). All day, we will be collecting photos, videos, and self-reported finishing times.



PRESENTED BY  **Avidia Bank**

WWW.NECC.ORG/5K
REGISTRATION IS COMPLIMENTARY

