

Newsletter of
Sibling Connections, Inc.
29 Hereford Road
Marblehead, MA. 01945
www.siblingconnections.com

Providing year-round sibling
connection opportunities for
sisters and brothers who are
separated when placed in foster care.

Fall 2008

Our primary mission is to
create enduring relationships for
siblings who experience foster care
through innovative programs and
practices.

Board of Directors

Judy Cockerton
Christopher Dial
Peter Harris
Sheila Kane
Phil Mastroianni
Doug McClure
Joanna Neas

“ I LOVE Camp To Belong!
I LOVE Sibling Sunday.
I LOVE the people.
We get to do so many great
things. I feel lucky
to come and be here
with my siblings. ”

—CTB MA Camper



Sibling Connections

Creating Joyous Shared Memories

Hands on!
Arms across!
Up and over!
Down to the shoulders!
Move together!
Down to the dock!

This month one of our Sibling Sunday programs went to Holyoke Rows in Holyoke, MA to learn how to row a boat! The kind of boat that holds 8 people who all row at once. What an incredible experience! Thank goodness for Stephanie Moore. Stephanie is an experienced rowing coach and a foster/adoptive parent who knows first hand just how important it is for sisters and brothers who have been separated in foster care to come together all year long.

As the kids and counselors lowered their boat into the Connecticut River and prepared for their initial entry into the boat, I could hear big kids quietly saying they were afraid. Then I asked them to go in and sit behind their little sisters and brothers, who were already seated in the boat. They reluctantly sat in the boat and, as it turned out, had the time of their lives...

This is the magic of Sibling Connections – great kids and fabulous volunteer counselors spending the day together having fun. Whether it's during our summer camp program or at one of our year-round events, we come together to weave family and community connections while creating joyous shared memories.

Life-long family relationships and community connections are important for all of us. They enhance our health and well-



being. They are especially important for children who experience foster care. Why? Because every year as many as 25,000 young people experiencing foster care turn 18 and “age out” of the public foster care system in this country without any enduring family relationships or community connections. Suddenly, after a childhood spent in a system that has made every important life

decision for them, they are on their own with no one to count on. The result: they are at risk for homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, and early parenthood.

For the past four years we have been providing innovative Sibling Connection programs to sisters and brothers throughout the Commonwealth. We invite you to support our year-round sibling connection initiative. It's easy:

- Apply to be a volunteer counselor at Camp To Belong MA.
- Send a sibling group to Camp To Belong MA
- Join our spring 2009 Walkathon
- Make a donation!
- Be a Sibling Connections Corporate Sponsor.
- Apply to be a volunteer counselor for Sibling Sunday
- Become a Sibling Connections Program Partner

Come be part of the solution! The kids need you and so do we!

Judy Cockerton
Board Chair

HAPPY CAMPERS!

Beautiful Camp Taconic in the Berkshires was the perfect place for us to celebrate our fourth season of Camp To Belong MA! The fun began the minute the buses rolled into camp. We had 80 sisters and brothers from all across the Commonwealth join 40 volunteers for a fabulous CTB MA experience.

The highlights of Season Four: the trapeze, new ropes course, banana boats, swimming pools, canoes, water trampoline, beach volleyball, carnival, Tall Daddy's comedy show, Arthur's slide shows, birthday party, scrapbooking, horseback riding, and campfires. Boy, those hot dogs and s'mores taste so much better at camp!

From sun up to sun down, the campers were having a blast creating joyous shared memories! Thanks to the generosity of the Beaver Summer Programs, every camper walked into their bunk and found a brand new sleeping bag, pillow, beach towel, duffel bag and flash light on their bed. The folks at Cradles to Crayons made sure each camper got a Back to School pack back when they headed home.

We love this fabulous program and all that it offers. In fact, we signed up for season five before we left the Berkshires. We thank all of our supporters for making Camp To Belong MA a reality and hope that you will continue to support us as we dedicate ourselves to doing what's right for the kids!



“The bonds I have made with the staff and campers through Sibling Connections have touched my life in so many ways. My experiences have changed my idea about what it means to be family and made me re-evaluate my own career path.”

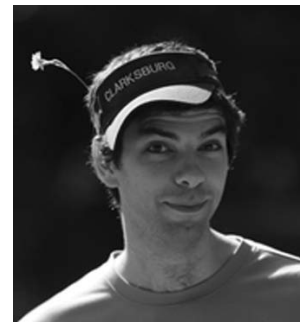
—Sibling Connections counselor



“I believe that all children deserve the right to transcend their statistic and just be a kid.”

“I am very lucky to have been able to be a part of something so special and ordinary at the same time—ordinary in a good way. Watching kids finally get the opportunity to just be kids was truly inspiring.”

—Sibling Connections counselor



“ My experience at Camp to Belong reminded me that kids have the right to be kids! Programs like CTB-MA are essential for creating an environment where perhaps for the first time, children can put aside their life armor and let their inner spirit free!”

—Sibling Connections counselor



WALK THIS WAY!

Thank you to all who helped us raise money for CTB MA at our first annual Walkathon! Thanks to Leah Bird who donated her design talent to make our WTW poster and to all who donated their time and dollars to make our first effort a huge success.

Sign up for the spring 2009 WALK THIS WAY event on our website:
www.siblingconnections.com

THANK YOU TO OUR FABULOUS CAMP TO BELONG AND SIBLING SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS!

Sandy Bakaysa
 Laura Bakaysa
 Andrea Baptiste
 Jennifer Bash
 Danielle Belden
 Leah Bird
 Michele Benkis
 Michelle Bisson
 Anne Bouthilette
 Matt Bouthilette
 Nick Bouthilette
 Nonie Bouthilette
 Saf Caruso
 Andrew Cayward
 Kerry Cayward
 Katherine Davis
 Christopher Dial
 Patrice Donoghue
 Noah Drori

Christine Flannery
 Jim Flannery
 Katie Flynn
 Kathy Galvin
 Scott Hamilton
 Tyler Harlow
 Peter Harris
 Mike Jones
 Sheila Kane
 Beth Karp
 Jill Kleinman
 Chris Langelier
 Dorothy Lombardi
 Mike Marlow
 Phil Mastroianni
 Doug McClure
 Kathleen McDonald
 Amanda Neas
 Joanna Neas

Jane Novotny
 Leah Novotny
 Sue Novotny
 Sarah Palmer
 Jeff Pike
 Arthur Pollock
 Jenna Pollock
 Rafael Rodriguez
 Jason Runnals
 Adam Roy
 Bridget Schirripa
 Jill Schreider
 Harvey Shepard
 Shaemus Shepard
 Wayne Shepard
 Marie Smith
 Lily Ventrell
 Allison Welna
 Rosa Young

CTB MA Collaborator's Award

This award goes to Nat Saltonstall and the Beaver Summer Programs community, an incredible organization that has been a reliable and generous CTB MA partner for the past three years.

We thank Nat and the BSP Community for their amazing support and truckloads of camper supplies: sleeping bags, flash lights, pillows, beach towels, duffel bags and so much more.

Sibling Sundays East and West

It's a wonderful scene. Every month two teams of dedicated volunteer counselors set out bagels, hot chocolate, fruit and other tasty treats. One in eastern MA and one in western MA. Then the kids come through the door and the day begins.

Sibling Sunday is a program we launched in 2004, after our first summer of Camp To Belong MA. As the kids were getting on the bus to head home from camp we vowed to raise the money needed to offer a year-round sibling connection experience so that the kids could spend time together through the seasons.

For the past 4 years, we have provided this unique program. We have seen remarkable results. Sibling relationships have flourished. Child well-being has been enhanced. Big brothers are offering sage advice to younger siblings. Sisters and brothers are creating shared memories. The kids have a record of their time together—photos they can keep for life.

Another benefit of the program is that the kids get to spend time together with other siblings who have also lived apart. The kids say, "This is so nice. Everybody understands my life. I don't have to explain what it feels like to live in separate homes. The counselors understand and are here to support us. They are also here to go rowing, carve pumpkins, bake cookies, and play soccer. I can count on seeing my sisters and brothers every month at Sibling Sunday."

This is the beauty of our year-round program. The kids are surrounded by trained counselors who really know them and care about them. We weave a community safety net under each sibling and show up all year long.

Winter is coming. That means ice skating, sledding, and playing in the snow. Just thinking about last year's playful adventures makes us all smile. Kids and adults alike... ●



GIVE THE GIFT OF CONNECTION!



This year create a new gift giving tradition. Choose to give a gift that is meaningful, fulfilling, and long lasting – a gift to Sibling Connections that will enhance the lives of sisters and brothers who experience foster care.

Thank you for your generous support!



Sibling Connections Wish List:

- A summer campership to Camp To Belong MA - \$500.00 per camper
- A year of Sibling Sundays - \$1,000.00 per year
- Transportation to and from one of our programs - \$100.00 per season
- Animal Therapy sessions - \$50.00 per session
- The Summer Circus Program at CTB MA - \$100.00 per camper
- Carnival at CTB MA - \$350.00 per season
- A Sibling Garden Program - \$150.00 per camper
- Our campwide Birthday Celebration - \$350.00 per season
- The Birthday Store - \$25.00 per gift
- Design and Research of We Are Family! for little sibs, ages 0 – 7 years - \$1,000.00
- CTB MA Volunteer Training - \$500.00 per season
- We Are Family! Volunteer Training - \$100.00 per person



**Give in honor of a loved one, a friend, a colleague,
a coach, or a teacher.**

It's easy:

You can send a check to:

Sibling Connections
29 Hereford Road
Marblehead, MA. 01945

- OR -

Make a secure
on-line donation at
www.siblingconnections.com



We appreciate your gift and will work diligently to ensure that it enriches the life of a sibling group separated in foster care!

*Peace and Joy,
The Sibling Connections Team*