

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 2009

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

#### Board of Directors

Judy Cockerton, Chair  
Doug McClure, Vice Chair  
Peter Harris, Treasurer  
Sheila Kane, Secretary  
Christopher Dial  
Phil Mastroianni  
Joanna Neas  
Nat Saltonstall

“ I love seeing their faces  
Light up with glee  
While opening presents  
Or on the trapeze

Memory after memory  
From the carnival to the songs  
Each day a few more memories are made  
Here at Camp To Belong

This camp brought us together  
And we'll never be apart  
I love you E and C  
You're always in my heart ”

-CTB MA Camper



# Sibling Connections

## The Perfect Holiday Gift

“Mom, I don't want any toys for Christmas. I just want to be with my sisters and brother for the day. I want to get up in the morning and run downstairs, open some presents and play. I want to be together all day long. Is that possible ?”

This is our youngest daughter's Christmas wish. A wish our family will work hard to make come true! We'll have a sleepover with family members who can make it on Christmas Eve. We'll schedule sibling visits on Christmas day and spend time together during the week.

Since becoming a foster/adoptive family 10 years ago, my husband and I learned that one of the most important things we can do to support the health and well-being of our daughter is to keep her connected to her first family, whenever possible.

Our favorite way to do this is through Camp To Belong MA and Sibling Sundays, two programs that Sibling Connections offers to sisters and brothers who have been separated when placed in foster care. Sibling Connections offers great events and provides a huge safety net of support.

There are numerous payoffs. The biggest: My daughter and her siblings get to spend the week together at camp AND come together all year long. I love being with the kids at their monthly events. While driving 4 siblings who live in 4 different homes to Sibling Sunday, I look in the rearview mirror and smile as they share conversation and music over cups of hot



chocolate. This is “typical kid stuff”. Siblings in foster care don't often get the chance to be “typical kids”. 75% are separated from one another.

Our daughter also loves being with peers who have the same life experiences. When she is at CTB

MA or Sibling Sunday she is not different. She belongs. Everyone understands foster care and its ramifications. All of the counselors are supportive AND fun. They ride on banana boats, scale climbing walls, fly on trapezes, dribble basketballs and woosh down snow covered sledding hills. They act as teachers, friends and role models.

Sibling Connections is investing in lives and futures. It is helping young people build life-long family relationships and community connections so that they will not “age out” of the public foster care system alone when they turn 18 and be at risk for homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, and lives of poverty.

This holiday season I know what the perfect gift for my daughter will be. At the top of my Wish List: Everyone who reads this letter will make a donation to Sibling Connections and help us continue to offer dynamic programs that increase the number of sisters and brothers who will come together in wonderful ways all year long.

Thank you!

Judy Cockerton  
Board Chair

# WELCOME KELLEY!



When I first learned about the mission of Sibling Connections, I knew right away that I wanted to be part of this innovative organization. As a foster parent, I know children residing in foster care deserve much more than we currently offer them. This fact was the catalyst for me to pursue my masters degree in social policy and management at Brandeis. It is also the reason that I applied to become the Sibling Connections Program Director.

I have a vivid memory of an annual DCF Christmas party. I took one of my foster sons who had been separated from his younger sister. I was told she would be attending the event. When I noticed someone who resembled a little girl I had seen in a family photo, I asked my foster son if that was his sister. He looked over and said "Nope, that's not her". Later, I found out it was his sister. He did not recognize her...

Being part of the Sibling Connections team, I have been fortunate to meet many dedicated, passionate, and outstanding individuals who truly strive to meet the needs of children in foster care. I am honored to meet great kids all across the state and witness the love and support they offer one another. This is the most rewarding part of my job. I am truly lucky to be part of an organization that honors and respects the importance of the sibling bond.

Kelley Lane, Program Director ●

# COUNSELORS EXTRAORDINAIRE

Camp To Belong MA counselors are extraordinary people. They are smart, good hearted, flexible, and generous. They volunteer their time, expertise and goodness to our campers at camp and throughout the year. Many folks have been with us since our first season.

Some counselors have become foster and adoptive parents after their Sibling Connections experiences. Some have become CASA advocates. Some serve on the Sibling Connections board. Some have chosen to go to graduate school to get a degree in social work. Some are already experienced social workers, fantastic teachers, skillful accountants, and caring nurses.

Last winter when our funding for camp was cut, one of these amazing counselors stood up and said, "I'd like to help. I'll ride my bike from Boston to San Francisco to raise money. I'll share the Sibling Connections story with people along the way."



That counselor is Tyler Harlow. Tyler left Boston after a rousing send-off at the State House arranged by Senator Stan Rosenberg and hosted by Representative Gloria Fox, two MA state legislators who experienced foster care firsthand.

At Tyler's Send-Off Fiesta, Rep. Fox shared her life story. She told the kids about being separated from her brother when she was in foster care. She applauded Tyler for his dedication to young people in the system. Then he hopped on his bike and took off for his 3,000 mile fundraising adventure.

Thanks to the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald*, Tyler's Ride Across America got the attention

of a MA foundation that was impressed by his courage. They stepped up to the plate to provide funding. That funding, along with the donations of Tyler's friends and family, helped make our 2009 CTB MA season possible.

We deeply appreciate all of our Sibling Connections volunteers! We congratulate them for creating the kind of citizen-led change that is inspiring new realities for sisters and brothers nationwide. ●



## THANK YOU CAMP TO BELONG MA & SIBLING SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS!

Aaron Aggerwal  
Laura Bakaysa  
Sandy Bakaysa  
Stephanie Bakaysa  
Danielle Belden  
Kyle Belden  
Anne Bouthilette  
Barry Bouthilette  
Matt Bouthilette  
Nick Bouthilette  
Nonie Bouthilette  
Andre Cardoso  
Kate Cardoso  
Kristina Cumbyhill  
John Dahl  
Shadia Damra

Christopher Dial  
Pat Donoghue  
Raylene Doran  
Christine Flannery  
Jim Flannery  
Katie Flynn  
Hope Forbes  
Kathy Galvin  
Keith Gildea  
Jennifer Gleason  
Jay Green  
Tyler Harlow  
Eleanor Hartzell  
Mike Jones  
Sheila Kane  
Chris Langlier

Jeannie Langon  
Deidre Mannion  
Mike Marlow  
Anita Marshall  
Phil Mastroianni  
Kate Merli  
Stephanie Millette  
Byron Moore Thomas  
Kyessa Moore Thomas  
Michelle Poirer  
Amanda Neas  
Joanna Neas  
Leah Novotny  
Jeff Pike  
Arthur Pollock  
Jenna Pollock

Karl Rehbein  
Kathryn Rizzo  
Jason Runnals  
Adam Roy  
Jennifer Santos  
Bridget Schirripa  
Jill Schreider  
Harvey Sheperd  
Brit Snyder  
Carolyn Snyder  
Lily Ventrell  
Allison Welna  
Seth Window



## PASS IT ON!

Kindness. Caring. Compassion. We appreciate all of the generous people and organizations who make Sibling Connections possible! Every gift matters. The following 2009 donors made gifts of \$500.00 or more.

- Anonymous
- Boston Bruins Foundation
- Fran & Denise Boucher
- Cape Cod Foundation through the Jesse and Juanita Grimes Foundation for Humanitarian Services
- First Parish Church United, Westford
- Peter & Connie Harris
- Hasbro Childrens' Fund
- Jason Hayes Foundation
- Susan Healy
- Jordan's Furniture
- Kids Fund
- Kid's Net
- KPMG - Boston Office
- Doug & Kimberly McClure
- MENTOR Network Charitable Foundation
- National Grid
- York Childrens' Foundation

## Sibling Sundays East and West

This fall we launched our fifth season of Sibling Sundays! This unique monthly program is creating new realities for siblings by offering them the opportunity to come together on a regular basis and work toward building healthy, life-long family relationships.

Our base for Sibling Sundays West is the Treehouse Community in Easthampton. We gather at Treehouse in the morning and go out into the region to spend the day together having fun: skating, sledding, swimming, hiking... We end the day back at Treehouse, with an afternoon snack and best wishes for the month ahead. Sibling Sundays East offers fun events at local YMCAs, art museums, roller skating rinks and the Museum of Science in Boston.

Sibling Sundays allows us to increase the number of siblings who are connected. It increases the number of sisters and brothers who will not "age out" of foster care without any enduring family relationships and/or community connections. It increases the number of citizens who are supporting children with foster care histories. More importantly, it is a replicable program model that states all across the country can implement in their own communities so that sisters and brothers can enjoy the pleasures of creating happy childhood memories together.

As we come together for our fifth season we look forward to showing up all year long to make a difference in the lives of children we care about and are invested in. We invite you to invest in them as well. ●

## CTB MA Collaborator's Award

This annual award goes to Nat Saltonstall and the Beaver Summer Programs community for the second year in a row. Beaver Summer Programs has been a stellar Camp To Belong MA partner for the past four years. BSP offers camps a unique partnership model by inviting children, families and citizens of all ages to actively support the Sibling Connections' mission.

We are deeply grateful to Nat and the BSP community for their generosity. Thanks to BSP we were able to give sleeping bags, pillows, flash lights, beach towels, duffel bags, birthday store gifts, carnival games and prizes to CTB MA campers this season.





# Holiday Shopping Have You Tied Up in Ribbons?



This year create a new gift giving tradition. Choose to give someone a present that is meaningful, fulfilling, and long lasting.

Forget the fruit baskets and scarves galore! This holiday season give a gift that will last a life time! Donate to Sibling Connections!

**Thank you for your generous support!**

## Sibling Connections Wish List:

- Sponsor our CTB MA Trapeze Program - \$2,000.00
- Send two siblings to Camp to Belong MA - \$1,000.00
- Send a sibling to Camp To Belong MA - \$500.00
- Sponsor our CTB MA Drama Program - \$100.00
- Help us throw our campwide Birthday Party - \$100.00
- Donate to our Holiday Fund - \$100.00
- Be a Sibling Sunday Sponsor - \$100.00
- Be a Sibling Sunday Meal Sponsor - \$50.00
- Be an Arts & Crafts patron - \$50.00
- Be a CTB MA Carnival leader - \$50.00
- Support a Horseback Riding Event - \$50.00
- Help buy presents for the CTB MA Birthday Store - \$25.00
- Help us purchase materials for Sibling Pillows - \$25.00
- Support the Sibling Sunday Field Trip Fund - \$25.00
- Donate to our Face Painting Fund - \$25.00

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

It's easy! Just read our Sibling Connections Wish List, then

Send a check to:

Sibling Connections  
29 Hereford Road  
Marblehead, MA. 01945

- OR -

Make a secure  
on-line donation at  
[www.siblingconnections.com](http://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*