

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The Nemasket Group



Issue # 42

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NEWSLETTER

The ARC of Massachusetts 2008 Distinguished Citizens Awards

Ross Hooley, of the Nemasket Group in Fairhaven, honored by The Arc of Massachusetts as one of its 2008 Distinguished Citizens at the 26th Annual Distinguished Citizens Awards Ceremony on January 30 at the State House

Representative Antonio Cabral presented Ross with a Citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives “In recognition of significant contributions to the lives of many individuals with disabilities and their families with best wishes for continued success.” Ross received a similar Citation from Senator Mark Montigny on behalf of the Massachusetts Senate!

Ross Hooley of the Nemasket Group in Fairhaven was honored by The Arc of Massachusetts as one of its 2008 Distinguished Citizens. The award was presented to 12 individuals or organizations on Wednesday, January 30. This annual event was held in the Great Hall of the State House. The event, as always, is one of the highlights of The Arc’s year, and gives a much-needed occasion to celebrate the dedication and commitment of those who make a difference in the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. It is attended by a substantial audience that includes not only the awardees and their family and friends, but also by members of the Legislature, the Executive Branch, the disability community and the media.

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Family Connections Staff:

Sandra Kinney, *Program Director*
Ross Hooley, *Family Advisor*
Jorge Pagan, *Family Advisor*
Gloria Villalobo, *Family Advisor*
Sherry Amaral, *Family Advisor*
Emily Murgo Nisenbaum, *Associate Executive Director*
Louis Nisenbaum, *Executive Director*

The ARC of Mass., 2008 Distinguished Citizens Awards (cont.)

Ross Hooley has been an employee of the Nemasket Group for 21 years. During this time, he has had an exemplary career with important contributions made on behalf of youth and adults with significant disabilities and their families. Ross' contributions to the field have impacted not only people living in Southeastern Massachusetts, but throughout Massachusetts.

His extraordinary dedication to people with disabilities, creativity and progressive thinking were apparent early in his career.

Initially Ross worked as an employment specialist assisting individuals to find and maintain employment in their communities. He later became a Team Leader for other staff, teaching and leading staff and colleagues toward the same or similar goals for individuals. He has always demonstrated a consistency of positive values and hard work. As a role model, he elevates the abilities and capacities of those around him.

Eight years ago, Ross developed a project called Building Futures. The project supports students with disabilities currently attending local schools. Ross spends a considerable amount of time with the student, family and important others to create a support design that makes sense for that student. Most students participate in some form of person centered planning, many are working, some are attending college/university and in a myriad of ways they are all learning and growing as they move to adulthood and a life in their communities.

In addition to his work in Building Futures, Ross created and has managed a project to assist individuals with disabilities and families of people with disabilities to purchase their own homes. He has obtained grants from local banks to enable this project and has hired a professional with expertise in this area to work with individuals and families. Through his work in this area, several individuals and families have purchased homes!

Ross Hooley is a true champion in our field and very deserving recognition and acclaim! His nomination was supported by several colleagues as well as parents and students with who he's worked.



Ross Hooley, pictured with his family at the Distinguished Citizens Award Ceremony.



(Pictured From Left) Moderator Joe Shortsleeve, CBS4 News, Ross Hooley, Ann Jones, ARC of Mass., and Representative Antonio Cabral, New Bedford at Distinguished Citizens Awards Ceremony.



Ross Hooley (Right) with student Dwight Sumner at his High School Graduation.

“Regular Stores” #4

Home, Sweet Home (and Other Friendly, Welcoming Environments)

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.Disabilityisnatural.com

People who don't have disabilities modify their environments and use tools to make life better. People with disabilities may also need modifications in their environments and tools to make life better. This is one in a series of articles about ways to create accessible, friendly, and welcoming environments for all.

Once upon a time, I scoured a wide variety of "special" catalogs and visited durable medical equipment dealers on a regular basis to find items that could be helpful to my son. I was frequently dismayed, however, by the cost of these specialty items (insurance doesn't pay for everything!) or by the minimal selection offered. But I found a solution: I started looking for things-with a new set of eyes-at Target, Radio Shack, The Dollar Store, and a variety of other "regular" stores and catalogs! And, oh, what an abundant supply I found!

Trying to turn the knob on a traditional table lamp is difficult for Benjamin. A "touch pad" I found at a discount store provided an inexpensive (\$12.00) solution. The lamp is plugged into a box, the box is plugged into the wall. A thin cord leads from the box to the touch pad-a small gold disk that sits on the end table. With a touch of the finger, Benj can turn the lamp on or off. (Table lamps with a built-in "touch" feature-a metal base-can be found in many department stores.)

The tall "torch lamp" in his bedroom (the kind with a small round knob on the pole) was another barrier to Benj's interdependence. First, he couldn't turn the knob. We considered plugging the lamp into the outlet which is controlled by the wall switch just inside his door. That would enable him to turn the light on when he went into his room, but he wouldn't be able to turn it off after he finished reading in bed each night (he can't get out of bed by himself). The solution was a voice-activated control box (about \$30.00 at discount/hardware stores and on the Internet). Again, the lamp's plug is inserted into a control box, and that box is plugged into the wall. Benj says, "Light commander!" The box emits a beep in response, then Benj says, "Light off [or on]," and his wish is fulfilled! Now, he can stay up in bed long past the time his Dad and I are asleep, and can turn his light off by himself.

Benj spends a great deal of time at the computer. But when it froze up, he couldn't reach around the back to turn the master switch off and on. My husband found a switch console at Radio Shack that solved this dilemma. He was able to plug the computer and two lamps into the console's outlet box. He placed the "other end" of this device on Benjamin's desk next to the computer. Benj can now restart the frozen computer by himself, and can also control the lights in that room. This switch console could be helpful in any room of the house or in an office.

We replaced the traditional wall switches in our home with the "rocker" switches that are easier for all of us to use. Wall switches can also be easily lowered, or a plastic rod that hangs parallel to the wall can be attached. These accommodations can be helpful to people who use wheelchairs, individuals of short stature, or folks with limited finger dexterity.

“Regular Stores” #4 (Continued)

At some point-either in our family home or in Benj's own place when he moves out on his own-we may look into one of the more sophisticated environmental control unit (ECU) systems which can control just about anything and everything in a home or office. For now, however, the low-tech, inexpensive devices I've described work just fine.

When Benj was a preschooler, he-like all kids-sometimes needed comfort during the night. Since he couldn't get out of bed by himself, he wasn't able to wander into the den to find us or climb into our bed. We had, of course, used a "baby monitor" with both of our children when they were very young. But we wanted to help Benj learn to tell us what he needed instead of simply crying for help, and we wanted to be able to respond to him, as in me saying, "Daddy's on his way....when it was my husband's turn to help! An inexpensive 3-way intercom from Radio Shack did the trick. One was placed on the table next to Benjamin's bed, one was hung on the wall in the den, and one rotated to our bedroom, our daughter's bedroom, or the living room, depending on the situation. Not only did the intercom system meet our family's needs, it was also fun! The kids (and their friends) had a great time playing "radio" and other imaginary games on the intercom.

We've happily discovered a wide variety of other helpful items in "regular" stores. At Radio Shack, we found a talking calculator (with large buttons and a large display) which helped Benj with math, and a digital talking clock that made telling time a fun learning activity.

The small control buttons on many clock radios are impossible for some folks to operate. We found one suitable for Benj that featured large buttons and a large display at Wal-Mart. And after a little comparison shopping at various electronic stores, we found a CD player that was the right size for Benj to handle (a small one) that had large, easy-to-use buttons. Now he can listen to his favorite music without needing help from anyone.

Our next purchase will most likely be a keyless entry system, available for about \$100.00 at hardware stores and on the Internet. A numbered touch pad is used instead of a key. Then none of us will have to fumble with getting a key into the front door! Remote control door openers are also available, as are those thingamajigs (attached at the top of the door) to help open/close doors-especially helpful for people who use mobility devices.

And speaking of doors, we replaced all the round door knobs in our home with lever door knobs. These are easier for everyone: when my arms are full of groceries, I can open the front door with my elbow!

When we did some home remodeling, we widened all the doors in our home to 36 inches, making it easier for Benj to get around (and also easier to move furniture). If tearing out part of the wall and reframing the door isn't an option, you can still widen a doorway by replacing the original hinges with offset hinges. These "widen" the doorway about two inches when the door is fully open via the "offset." Look for these at home/hardware stores.

Regular Stores” #4 (Continued)

Some pretty fancy bath/shower chairs can be found at durable medical supply companies. And these may be necessary for some folks. But we've found lawn/patio chairs work fine for our son. A ceiling lift/track system gets him from his bed to the bathroom, and he can lower himself into a \$10.00 plastic patio chair for his shower. A piece of foam rubber for the seat and back completes the picture! When traveling, we carry a folding canvas camp chair, instead of hoping the hotel will have a suitable bath chair. The camp chair fits in the tub, dries fast, and doesn't rust.

There are many great "specialty" products that are helpful to individuals with disabilities-and I'm glad we have those! But in many cases, with a little shopping savvy and persistence, we can find useful, easy-to-use, inexpensive solutions in neighborhood stores that can change the world for children and adults with disabilities, and other members of the family, too!

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Creating Community for Persons with ASD and their Families

The ASD Symposium is held every March in Providence RI, and has been ongoing since 1995. It serves as a fundraiser to support family support services through *Community Autism Resources*, and all profits go to our annual parent retreat. Each year, the symposium includes nationally and internationally known speakers who focus their presentation on a positive, practical theme for each year. Past symposium themes have included:

The 13th Annual Providence ASD Symposium will be on March 14 - 15th, 2008, at the Providence Weston Hotel. The theme is *Creating Community for Persons with ASD and their Families*. The symposium will focus on the theme of creating community for children and older individuals with autism and their families. Presentations by parents and professionals, and a young man with autism, will address issues of creating supportive and caring educational communities and preparing children and adults with autism to be active and participating members of their communities. A cross-cultural perspective also will be presented, based on research examining autism in different cultures. Finally approaches to supporting people with autism who experience challenging behaviors will be presented. The symposium is intended for educators, SLPs, OTs, psychologists, paraprofessionals, social workers, therapists, family members and other caregivers who live with and/or support the development of people with ASD.

REGISTER ONLINE : at CommunityAutismResources.org or contact Kelly @ 401-467-7008 or Kelly@ccseminars.com



STATE BUDGET NEWS! FROM ARC MASSACHUSETTS:

If you care about funding for services, the time is now to contact your state representative!

The state budget process has moved to the House of Representatives. The time to contact your state representative is now. The Governor's budget does not have enough \$\$ for Turning 22, Quality of services, Family Support, Wait List, and Autism Services.

Three fact sheets focusing on different issues are on the Arc's website.

Go to arcmass.org and click on **State House/Policy and then on Budget**. The fact sheets are useful in talking with your legislator.

More than 300 Turning 22 students (those who graduate high school requiring adult services) are left out of Governor Patrick's 2009 budget blueprint. The state estimates 607 students will be in need of adult services through the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) but the budget of \$6.1 Million is \$4.5 Million short of projected service costs. Other adults and children also face bleak possibilities for services. No funds were allocated for the waiting list, residential service rates, employment and family support.

The governor included \$23 Million in a salary reserve for contracts purchased by Health and Human Services. This amount is the same as last year's appropriation. The account includes language that allows EOHHS to use some of the reserve dollars to address low rates.

The Arc applauds Governor Patrick's first bold step to provide community services for elders and individuals with disabilities with a \$45.8 Million allocation (4000-0650 Community First Initiative). The initiative will particularly target those in nursing homes. This initiative mirrors the changes that continue to take place at services provided through DMR and reflects a commitment to implement Olmstead planning for all individuals with disabilities regardless of age.

In addition to restoring cuts in the DMR budget (\$4 million), the following are needed investments:

1. Turning 22—\$10.6 million for 2009 with annualization including adequate support for employment services
2. Maintain and increase Salary Reserve
3. Family Support and Respite of \$3 Million
4. Autism Services of \$2 Million
5. Residential Rate Initiative \$10 Million
6. Adult Waiting list for residential services to increase \$5 Million
7. DOE/DMR program - \$1 Million
8. Pass Senate 65 to develop a rate setting system for EOHHS community services

The Federation for Children with Special Needs Presents Visions of Community 08

Register Now!

Visions of Community 2008

A Conference for Families of Children with Special Needs and the Professionals Who Serve Them

March 1, 2008

Seaport World Trade Center • Boston

With over 35 break-out sessions - many presented and/or translated in Spanish, Portuguese and Cantonese...

Featured Speakers



Paul Reville



Keith P. Jones

The Federation for Children with Special Needs, along with co-sponsors the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, Massachusetts Family TIES, Massachusetts Parent Information and Resource Center, the Parent Training and Information Project, and the Parent/Professional Advocacy League is excited to announce next year's Visions of Community conference will be held March 1st at the Seaport/World Trade Center-Boston.

The conference features over 35 break-out sessions (many presented and/or translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Cantonese) with topical strands and information covering Early Childhood, Special Education, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Health Care for Children with Special Needs, Transition, Social/Recreation Opportunities and more. Network with other parents and families and pick up free resources in our exhibit hall packed with more than 50 vendors.

ROOMMATE(S) WANTED TO SHARE APARTMENT

My name is Jared and I am planning to move into an apartment in the Dartmouth/New Bedford area in the next year. I am looking for one or two roommates (male or female) who have similar interests to myself who would be interested in sharing with me. I am a baseball and football fan and enjoy watching sports on TV. I like going to concerts, movies, playing poker and music. I also work five days a week. I am neat, have a calm personality and am a non smoker. Person should be between 25-40 years old and able to share expenses.

If you are interested and would like more information please call Bill Corbett at ph. 508 992 7685 (h) or ph. 508 824 1717 (w).

CONFERENCE:“Focus” on Vision Impairment & Blindness

Meeting the Needs of individuals with Cognitive Disability & Vision Loss

When: Wednesday, March 12 2008 **Where:** Holiday Inn Taunton, MA **Time:** 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Welcome Remarks: *Larry Tummino*, DMR Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Keynote Speakers: *Y.K. Chu, OD, MPH*, Vide President, Community Collaborations
Associate Professor, New England College of Optometry

Barry S. Kran, OD, FAAO, Chief, Individuals with Disabilities Service,
Associate Professor New England College of Optometry, New England Eye Institute Optometric Director, NE Eye Perkins Low Vision Clinic

Keynotes, Workshops, Poster Sessions & Vendors

For brochure or more information: Visit www.nercve.umb.edu OR
Call Lisa DiBonaventura @ 508-384-5539

the
nemasket
group

Family Connections

Joint Project of The Nemasket Group and DMR

56 Bridge Street

Fairhaven, MA 02719

Phone: 508-999-0077

Fax: 508-997-9239



Creating a network of family support

For individuals with developmental

Disabilities and their families



Why Should I Attend?

What you've got .

Put it in the pot .

*Every bit counts, from the largest to the
least together we can celebrate.*

(from the children's fable, Stone Soup)

Each of us has something to contribute that makes our lives richer but also enriches our communities. Our abilities, passions, interests, skills, and desires are based on this.

Join us to discuss, brainstorm, listen, and question all the wonderful ways people create opportunities to contribute and share in their communities. Be inspired to look for ordinary and extraordinary opportunities and then concoct some of your own.

What makes a good life is a lot like making a good soup. A little bit of this and a little bit of that and a lot of love.



*Limited scholarships through
Massachusetts Developmental
Disabilities Council Consumer
Empowerment Funds are available.
Call: 617-770-7676 Ext. 115
for more information.*

Directions to the BU Conference Center

72 Tyng Road
Tyngsboro, MA 01879

www.bostonuniversityconferencecenter.com

FROM THE NORTH:

Follow Route 3 South to Exit 34 (Westford Road, Tyngsboro). Bear left at exit and drive under bridge onto Westford Road. continue one mile to traffic light; the Merrimack River is straight ahead. Turn right onto route 3A for one mile. Turn right just after the old cemetery onto Tyng Road. The Center is .1 mile on the right.

FROM THE SOUTH:

Follow US Highway 3 North to Exit 34 (Westford Road, Tyngsboro). Bear right at exit and continue one mile to traffic light; the Merrimack river is straight ahead. Turn right onto Route 3A for one mile. Turn right just after the old cemetery onto Tyng Road. The Center is .1 mile on the right.

MFOFC

Northeast

**Massachusetts Families
Organizing For Change**

Stone Soup

**Bringing Together a
Community**



Saturday, March 29, 2008

**8:30 AM—3:15 PM
Boston University
Conference Center
Tyngsboro, MA**

Hosted with assistance from

Department of Mental Retardation
Northeast Training Council



Stone Soup

Conference Overview

8:30 –9:15 AM Registration / Networking
Continental Breakfast

9:15-10:15 AM Keynote: Tim Piccirillo

Born with Tourettes Syndrome, Tim grew up with jerking his limbs involuntarily, facial tics as well as self-abusive behaviors. Tim graduated from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 1984 with a B.S. in Habilitative Science. He worked in positions in the mental health/intellectual disability field before becoming the Executive Director of a Center for Independent Living. In 1995 he decided to share his experiences and knowledge to help others fulfill their dreams. Tim travels across the country motivating and inspiring audiences through his use of comedy and magic. He lives what he teaches and believes in the power of **EVERY-ONE'S** potential.

10:15-10:30 AM Break
Visit Community Flavor*

10:30-12:00 PM Morning Sessions

12:00 -1:00 PM Lunch
Visit Community Flavor

1:00 - 2:30 PM Afternoon Sessions

2:30-3:30 PM Closing Remarks and
Evaluations ~Raffle~

* Community Flavor is Stone Soups version of exhibit tables featuring various offerings throughout the general community.

Morning Sessions 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM

1. Creating Our Own Unique Recipe

Cooking up your soup requires knowing what ingredients are essential. Replace the fear of the future with faith in the future, by having a clear vision. Presenters: Chris & Laurel Peltier

2. Gathering the Ingredients

Leave no stone unturned in making connections with those around you. In this very interactive session, learn to seek out and utilize the contributions of others. Presenter: Lynn Williams Tonkin

3. Collector of Bedford Street

Academy Award nominated film follows Larry Selman, a community activist and fundraiser with developmental disabilities. Join us for an delicious discussion on how communities build understanding and how individuals truly belong. Facilitator: Cynthia Levine

4. Soup D' Jour - Panel 1

A diverse panel of self-advocates will discuss their personal recipe to creating enviable lives.

Facilitator Evelyn Hausslein

Afternoon Sessions 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

5. Adding the Spice

Come learn a variety of ways that people with disabilities can participate fully in their communities. The utilization and enhancement of natural supports, volunteers and paid help will be explored as well as information on how to find them. Support and transportation issues will be discussed. Presenter: Pat Pakos

6. Is it Soup yet?

Making it happen with a little of this and a little of that. Moving from a vision to a rich and fulfilling life. One families list of ingredients. Presenters: Lou & Emily Nisenbaum and their daughter Amy Recupero

7. Soup, Stew, Chowda'

Join us for an interactive, brainstorming workshop on creating ways to utilize and engage a community. All kinds of activities and options will be shared. Leave with a big bowl of ideas. Presenter: Christine Shane

8. Serving it Up - Panel 2

A diverse panel of self-advocates will discuss their personal recipe to creating enviable lives. Facilitator Evelyn Hausslein

Registration Deadline is **March 20, 2008**

SPACE IS LIMITED – register as soon as possible!

Name

Address

City / Zip

Telephone

Email

AM Session: First Choice _____ Second Choice _____

PM Session: First Choice _____ Second Choice _____

Mail this form with \$50.00 registration fee to:

MFOFC - 16 Warwick Rd. - Melrose, MA 02176

To receive confirmation of your registration, you must provide your telephone number, OR if you have email, please indicate so that we may contact you sooner.

If special accommodations are needed, please indicate, and RSVP no later than March 1: