

# **Family to Family Network Annual Report 6/30/09**

The Mission of Family to Family Network is:  
To help families of children with disabilities by providing information, training, referral and support.

## **Program Accomplishments:**

It is important to note that this year, we were impacted by a number of weather related conditions. In Sept 2008, Hurricane Ike came ashore and knocked out power to much of the greater Houston area. Our office was without power and phones for a week; some of our staff members went without power for up to three weeks. As a result of the Hurricane, our property manager decided to have the roof replaced. The roof replacement was not completed when we had another storm come through in November 2008 which resulted in a ceiling collapse and water damage to our office. Then in May 2009, Houston was inundated with more rain which closed off some of the road access to our office; as well as shut down the Park nearby where our Annual End of School party was to take place. Despite all this, Family To Family Network had a record year of providing assistance to families, offering services and programs, etc.

### **Information, Training, Referral and Support**

Approximately 625 requests for information, referrals to resources, or answers to special education questions have been logged into the system this year, and increase of 45% over the prior year. An average call requires approx. 1-2 hours of staff time in listening, answering questions, researching and forwarding information to the family. We also received numerous email requests through our website also.

Our parent liaisons also made a concerted effort to sit down with Family members and help them understand their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) paperwork. IEPs are legal documents written and agreed upon to provide special education or related services to students with disabilities. This process usually takes 2-3 hours as these documents are usually written in a 10 pt. font created by school district legal counsel. This past year, we assisted 96 families with their IEPs.

Our Katy Chapter provided training to 67 families at its monthly meetings, offered a End of School year event for 25 family members on the west side of town. Attendance at Katy events was down due to cancellation of a number of educational events due to Hurricane and the relocation of the End of School party. The free Katy Parent Conference and Resource Fair that we put on in collaboration with Katy ISD was attended by 414 family members (a 22% increase). We had over 350 pre-register for the conference and had almost 100 walk in on the day of the conference.

In collaboration with school districts and universities, we provided training to educators. The University of St. Thomas asked us to provide 2 parent panels for its Educator training programs – one for an online course that we videotaped the day before the Hurricane hit. In addition, we made presentations at the state *Inclusion Works* conference (a conference established to promote inclusive education) and the State *Autism* conference (a conference providing training on autism). Both conferences are attended by over 1200 educators and family members. We also provided additional training for 715 people from Northwest Harris County Autism Society, Magnolia ISD, Texas A&M Empowered Conference, Low Functioning Disabilities Conference, Texas Parent to Parent Conference, Girl Scouts, and Child Protective Services agency. Our quarterly ARD clinics and monthly Brown Bag webinars, as well as various supplemental in-service trainings for our *Family Friends* program volunteers provided training to over 90.

We also participate in a number of Community Resource Fairs where we are able to provide information & referral to many families who might otherwise not know about us. We provided approximately 900 people with information & referral at the 23 events we attended.

Our Lending Library with over 650 books, videos, and other resources continued to be used by parents and educators; and we published quarterly newsletters. We supplied a monthly E-List of events and trainings in the Greater Houston area to over 800 individuals/agencies (an increase of 10%). The Family to Family Network website also received over 1.4 million hits last year, an increase of 20%.

### **Disability Leadership Network Of Houston (DLNH)**

DLNH is a leadership training program for people in the Greater Houston area who have a vested interest in the issues and policies affecting people with disabilities in our community. It is an exciting opportunity for adults with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities and professionals to get connected to each other and learn from experts in the field about current disability issues, best practices, decision making processes at both the local and state level, and how to impact those decisions. The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities recently renewed this project which began on July 1, 2008. We had arranged for training in Kingwood and Katy to begin October 2008, collaborating with The Village Learning and Achievement Center and The Arc of Katy respectively. Then the Hurricane hit. We decided to request a delay to the start of the program to Fall 2009 as we felt people would be more concerned with having their basic needs met instead registering or participating in leadership and advocacy training.

As we had already contracted with one trainer for the Nov. session, we decided to open the training up to educators and family members. *A Fresh Look at Inclusion* was attended by almost 60 people.

We expect to train at least 100 people this year, including a minimum of 42 adults with disabilities in our 4 month training course. As adults with disabilities, family members, professionals and other community members gain knowledge, skills and a network of support, they will become more empowered to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities and to spark change. There is a ripple effect that continues to impact more and

more people with disabilities as concerns are voiced, information is shared, decisions are made and policies are changed. The result is a better today and tomorrow, not just for those who are directly connected to our program participants, but for people with disabilities throughout our community.

### **Family Friends**

Family Friends is a volunteer mentoring program that originally matched adults over age 50 with a child with a disability. Funding for this program ended in the Fall of 2008, yet we felt it was an important program to continue. The relationships that occur between families and volunteers have been awe inspiring and have changed people's lives. Families are grateful for the help of a volunteer which allows them to spend time with their other children or to simply catch up on things that they have neglected.

In the past year, we interviewed 38 volunteers, trained 22 of those volunteers, and have matched an additional 18 families with volunteers to bring this total to 41 active family matches; yet approx. 50 families have been interviewed and are still awaiting a volunteer match. Over 3200 hours of respite support for family members and 700 hours of additional volunteer support was provided by our *Family Friends* volunteers. Family Friends also provided a Holiday Event for our families, organized trips to the Aeros games and Little Rustlers Rodeo, and hosted a Garden event for almost 350 family members. Due to their coordination of all volunteers for our organization, we had almost 130 volunteers assisting our organization this past year.

### **Texas Project FIRST**

In October of 2006, in collaboration with Texas Education Agency and Region 9 Education Service Center, we launched the Texas Project FIRST (*Families, Information, Resources, Support and Training*) website. The purpose of the site is to provide accurate and consistent information on the special education process to families of children with disabilities. We have loaded over 75 pages of content this year in English and Spanish, bringing the total to almost 500 pages of content. This year we had more than 430 families and educators have registered for updates to bring the total number of people registering to 1100. The website received over 1.3 million hits this past year compared to 891,000 hits in the prior year.

### **Supporters**

Texas Education Agency/Region 9 Education Service Center  
Houston Endowment  
Newfield Foundation  
Rotary Club of Katy Sunrise  
Katy Independent School District  
Lanier Law Firm  
Lubrizol Foundation  
Local Independent Charities

**Many Thanks to All Our other Generous Supporters, Contributors and Members!**

## Financial Information

YEAR ENDED:

	<u>Audited</u> <u>6/30/09</u>	<u>Audited</u> <u>6/30/08</u>
Revenues:		
Grants and Contracts	332,579	384,584
Fundraising	31,842	23,251
Memberships (Newsletter)	555	794
Contributions	18,677	16,550
Program Income	1,547	1,683
Donated Services	<u>6,940</u>	<u>6,990</u>
Total Revenue	392,140	433,851
Expenses:		
Program	302,131	319,425
Fundraising	38,973	18,310
Administrative/Support	<u>15,460</u>	<u>6,805</u>
Total Expenses	356,563	344,540
Net Change in Assets	35,577	89,311
Beginning Net Assets	209,152	119,841
Ending Net Assets	244,729	209,152

### **BOARD MEMBERS:**

Michael Fitzgerald, President  
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Mary J. Williams, Executive Director

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Family to Family Network is a 501(c)(3) public charity.