

January 2009

# The PEP Connection

A newsletter to keep us connected!

## From the desk of Cherry Czuba:

Much has happened these last few months. Our most exciting news!!! **Robin Drago-Provencher**, Parent Educator at the Charter Oak Academy Family Resource Center, West Hartford and a veteran PEP facilitator (since 1997) is our new PEP Program Coordinator. Along with her role as PEP trainer, Robin is following up and supporting PEP facilitators, serving as editor of the PEP newsletter, planning the March training and compiling evaluation results. She also developed a new introductory PEP power point, which will be on the web site. Robin is working evenings from her home. Welcome aboard Robin.

**New edited manual:** We have edited the PEP manual. Session 8 has been changed to *Our Community and Its Leaders*, Session 9 is a revised and shortened *Action Planning* and the title of Session 10 changed from *Community Issue* to *Community Opportunity*.

**The Community PEP evaluation is on the last page and is the only form we need back from facilitators.**

Also, thanks to **Rachel Bobst** at the Middlesex County Extension Center, the PEP manual is now easier to read and the sunburst backgrounds are gone. We think you will like the new layout! For trained facilitators the new manual is available for \$25.00 including postage. Please send a check payable to the University of Connecticut to receive the manual (those who attended the December, 2008 facilitator training received the new manual).

## PEP on the web: [www.pep.uconn.edu](http://www.pep.uconn.edu)

The web site for the general public and PEP facilitators changes frequently so check back often! Upcoming changes will include curriculum pages and certificates PEP facilitators can print from their home computers and **the community PEP evaluation form that I need back by May 1<sup>st</sup>**. For more info on the website, email [rachel.bobst@uconn.edu](mailto:rachel.bobst@uconn.edu)

**Possible grant opportunity:** Funding for our programs is tight! This might be an opportunity for you. We have just learned about *4-H Families Count: Family Strengthening Awards*. Through the 4-H Council they are offering four \$15,000.00 cash awards for programs that already exist. The criteria include the following: must have some rural component (meaning in locations of 50,000 population or less), must involve families with their young people, and must include work with the disadvantaged in some way (defined broadly). Applications are due in May 2009. Please let me know if you think your program fits these criteria.

As always thanks for the difference you are making in the lives of the adults and young people you work with through PEP and your other programs.

*Cherry Czuba*

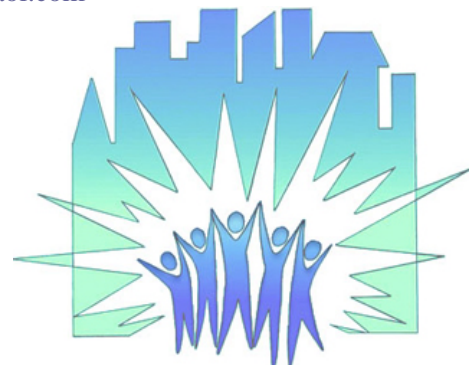
## From the Editor:

I am so excited to be working with Cherry and the wonderful staff at the UCONN Haddam Extension Center. I'm thrilled to have the time to continue to contact and support all of our PEP programs and to strengthen reporting to UCONN. We need to document and report the success of our programs. I look forward to hearing about your programs and successful PEPSTERS!

I hope you enjoy "The PEP Connection". It has information about Community PEP programs, Prison PEP and successful community collaborations. You are accomplishing great things. Thank you for all your hard work!

## Robin Drago-Provencher

Editor  
UConn Cooperative Extension  
[Rtp97@aol.com](mailto:Rtp97@aol.com)



## PEP & Community Collaborations

### Parents As Teachers

**Pam Langer** continues to support the partnership of ConnPAT (Connecticut Parents As Teachers) programs and PEP. Funding is available for certified PAT Parent Educators to get trained so they can offer PEP to families participating in their PAT programs. This partnership has been successful for years and many parents have advocated for funding for their PAT programs and their FRC's after participating in PEP. Please contact Cherry or Robin for more information.

### Connecticut Parent Power

**Ann Pratt**, Executive Director of Parent Power came and spoke at our December Facilitator training. We want to make sure that PEP Programs are connected with Connecticut Parent Power, a network of parents that advocate for children and families on the state and local level. Policy priorities are created based on the results of parent surveys. Year round advocacy, information, training and statewide connections are provided. **Every PEP program should be connected with CT Parent Power!**

*For more information write or call:*

CT Parent Power  
c/o Meriden Children First  
105 Miller Street  
Meriden, CT 06450  
(860) 209-1234 [www.ctparentpower.org](http://www.ctparentpower.org)

### A PEP Power House!

**BRISTOL** They won't say it but I will. Bristol is a PEP power house! **Waleska, Carol** and **Claudia** offer PEP in Spanish, English and Teen PEP! Year after year Bristol PEP programs are hopping! If you are having trouble recruiting, retention or reaching a target group I recommend contacting any one of the staff at the Bristol FRC's for ideas or support.

**Carol Corliss** had some helpful hints to stay energized and to recruit families. "Last year I offered the additional monthly sessions [from Cherry] on Humor, Friendships and Family Rituals. The conversations with families

were introspective, yet non-threatening. Many of the parents who attended these workshops plan to participate in PEP this year. Some of the Raising Readers parents have also gone on to participate in PEP." Carol can be reached at (860) 584-7815, Ext. 5.

### Life After PEP

**WEST HARTFORD** I spoke with **Michelle Lacroix** (PEPSTER, 2007) about her PEP experience and current career choice. If you don't know Michelle, let me describe her to you using a few of the words her fellow PEPSTERS did. She's energetic! Affirming! Knowledgeable! Loving! One dynamite of a mother! A natural leader! Knows how to get the job done! And yes, she even makes me look calm!

When I interviewed Michelle I wanted to show the long-term impact that PEP can have on a participant. So, I asked Michelle how PEP impacted her career choice. She responded, "The PEP program opened doors for me. During session five, I learned about Parent Power and part of my project was to go to the capitol to give testimony about the importance of Family Resource Centers. I knew then that I had to take the next step to get more parents informed and involved in the legislative process. The PEP program was a great way to get started, meet more parents, and learn more about my community and state funding issues. " Michelle is now working for Connecticut Parent Power as an Education Organizer! Amazing!

*"Wealth is not measured by how much one has, but by how little one needs."*  
*Unknown*

### Prison PEP!

Our volunteers go above, beyond and behind bars to bring PEP to some of the inmates in our prisons. It's hard to find the words to capture the impact of the program on the men and women but read on.... **Amy** submitted the following about her PEP program at Enfield CI:

*"This is my first time facilitating PEP - and my first time inside a prison. With the help of Cherry Czuba, the draft curriculum (for Prison*

PEP) developed by **Diane Tracy**, and especially the depth, wit and wisdom of the amazing participants in my inaugural group, my experience has been profound. Every week, I feel like I am the student learning from 13 masters! I have thoroughly enjoyed facilitating the dialogue between the inmates. I find that when I guide the discussion using Dianne's questions, the men teach each other most of what I've come prepared to share.

We are working on a group project, a collection of letters to students in the Urban League of Greater Hartford GED classes in memory of **Lewis Dickerson**. Mr. Dickerson, a student in the Urban League's adult education program, died in a stabbing November 19, 2008, outside the Urban League building in Hartford during a break from class.

The project is in response to a plea for help in a letter to the Hartford Courant from **James E. Willingham**, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Greater Hartford. He said: "The Urban League is committed to assisting those most vulnerable in our community, but we cannot do it alone...I hope you will remember the countless young people like Lewis who look to us for help in their quest to make their lives better." The inmates are writing on the topic "Better Choices" – surpassing the barriers that hold young people back, such as drugs, alcohol, gangs, people they consider "friends," family issues, and so on. GED teacher **Jaime Ruiz** plans to use the letters in her class.

We also are working to host **Dr. Dennis J. Richardson**, a biology professor at Quinnipiac University, and co-founder of the Bawa Health Initiative in Bawa, Cameroon, West Africa, for a presentation at the prison about the BHI work, including Malaria prevention via bed nets, provision of clean water via biosand water filters, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, and worm control.

As you can see even if someone is incarcerated they can make a difference!"

To repeat the words of James Willingham - **"We cannot do it alone!"** As you can see PEP programs are making a difference locally and globally!

*"Joy is not a matter of what's happening around you, but inside you."*  
*Steve Miller*

### HOLD THE DATE(S):

A **PEP facilitators' conference** is on the calendar for **March 27** at the Middlesex County Extension Center. The day will focus on **taking care of yourself**, recharging and moving forward with positive goals. We are fortunate to have Dr. Bari Dworken back again with a new workshop, "Finding Your Voices, Sharing Your Dream". Kathleen Kiley will help us relax with "Mind and Body Relaxation Techniques."

**The next PEP Facilitators' Training will be Thursday and Friday, March 5 & 6** from 9:00 to 4:00 pm at the Middlesex County Extension Center. To register, call or email Cheryl Czuba  
cheryl.czuba@uconn.edu  
UConn Cooperative Extension Center  
Middlesex County  
1066 Saybrook Road (Route 154)  
Haddam, Connecticut 06438  
(860) 345-4511

