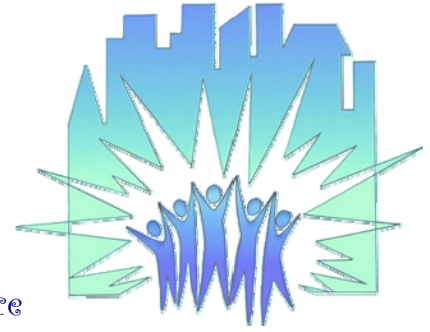


July 2009

The PEP Connection

A newsletter to keep us connected



From the Editor:

Wow! **Cherry Czuba** and I recently finished tabulating the evaluation forms of the community and prison PEP programs in Connecticut. We are so impressed with the personal accomplishments and projects that were completed by the PEP participants! The survey results are just amazing! I am energized by your stories of success! Your determination and hard work with PEP is making a difference with positive community action throughout the state!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter which highlights the results of Community and Prison PEP programs, as well as our PEP Conference that was held in March.

Relax, read and re-energize! Your hard work has planted the seed of change and growth!

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Save the Dates:

- ✓ **November 12 & 13, 2009**
Community PEP Facilitator Training
Train the Trainer
- ✓ **March 26, 2010**
PEP Facilitator Retreat
Haddam, CT

→ **Prison PEP Training**
Contact **Cherry** directly @
860-345-5215 for more information

PEP Conference

Finding Your Voice: Sharing Your Dream

The **PEP Facilitator Retreat** in Haddam provided a chance to rest, relax, and connect with each other as well as learn some new ideas that could be used with your programs. For those of you who couldn't join us, the day felt like a warm reunion with friends, filled with laughter and positive energy! Personally, I loved seeing everyone and enjoyed the atmosphere of hope and excitement. Cherry Czuba and I enjoyed seeing all of your smiling faces and hearing about the good work happening with your programs.

During the day we participated in **Dr. Bari Dworken's** workshop *Finding Your Voice: Sharing Your Dream* as she led us through individual and group activities that helped us to set attainable goals and to identify what inspires and motivates us! She gave us the tools to offer the same workshop to families attending our programs.

Certified Yoga Instructor **Kathleen Kiley** guided us through breathing and relaxation techniques. We learned about releasing toxins, strengthening our "CORE" and having balance in our lives. Many facilitators wanted to continue and have an ongoing class with Kathleen. Kathleen is available to work with you or your program and can be reached at kkileyrose@aol.com.

We look forward to planning next year's PEP Facilitator Retreat which will be held in Haddam on **March 26, 2010**. After reading your comments we will make sure to include time for facilitators to network and share accomplishments. More info to come!

Congratulations
Migdalia Rivas!

Migdalia Rivas was recently honored for her accomplishments and hard work. She received the **Norwalk PLTI Leadership and Service Award!**



Migdalia is an inspiration to all of us!

Migdalia's passion for community engagement has led her to participate in PLTI, PEP, Parent SEE and Parent Power! But, this was just the beginning for Migdalia; her leadership does not stop there. She was appointed to the Board of Education in 2006 and has facilitated **Spanish PEP** in Norwalk.

When I asked Migdalia about how PEP and the other programs have impacted her life she answered "I felt valued, accepted for who I am as part of the group. I never would have found my identity, my Puerto Rican culture. The PEP training helped get me to think out of the box and opened my mind. By understanding PEP it helped with Parent SEE because it helps you to understand people in depth- that it is not just who you know, but who you understand that has the same interest and passion."

It is obvious that Migdalia's generous heart, combined with her community involvement will continue to have a positive impact on the families in Norwalk and beyond!

PEP Facilitator Evaluations

Thank you everyone for returning the Community PEP evaluations to Cherry!

In 2009 **PEP** graduates volunteered over **800 hours** while completing projects that impacted over **2000 people** in Connecticut!

Community PEP was conducted in 13 communities (Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Greenwich, Hamden, Hartford, New Haven, Norwalk, Thompson, Torrington, West Hartford, and Willimantic). A total of 191 males and females graduated from community PEP programs!

Bloomfield: Participants in **Sheila Crocker** and **Gail Nolan**'s group were in the process of completing a Family Resource Center Newsletter! One participant started her own business!

Bridgeport: The group lead by **Hernan Illingworth** and **Anna Gonzalez-Cruz** held **Spanish PEP** and graduated 16 parents who were part of a community fair!

Bristol: Three facilitators offered **five PEP programs** this year(!)

Waleska Castillo reported that the participants looked out for each other and after PEP they completed Raising Readers which helped to increase the amount of time they spent reading to their children!

Claudia Chokshi's group of five young mothers completed four projects! One mom had an a-ha moment of realizing that despite *wanting* to break the cycle of verbal abuse it is easy to slip up and snap back to learned parenting ways when you are running on empty. The group realized that you **MUST** take care of yourself and ask for help!

Carol Corliss' group had a strong motivation to "Pay It Forward" so they held a tag sale to raise money for the FRC when the first funding cut happened. They raised \$240.00 by selling items at only .25 cents each so families could afford to purchase things.

Dianne Laviero Ward's group of eight received donations from the Dollar Store, and other local stores and prepared Easter baskets for 26 children.

Danbury: 44 PEP graduates, male and female, participated in **two PEP groups!** Danbury's group leaders, **Gloria Mora, Juana and Leonel Villicencio** have mastered the graduation celebration with music, food, families, and *politicians* attending! PEP and PLTI are offered through **Danbury Children First.**

Greenwich: Four facilitators, **Liliana Herrera, Natalie Queen, Astrid Ortiz and Angela Valentine** worked with two groups, one in Spanish and one in English! From the two groups, 6 of the 17 PEP graduates went on to join PLTI, 8 attended a Board of Education meeting for the first time, and 4 participants spoke at that meeting!

Hamden: Facilitators **Lynne Malone and Guadalupe Martinez** shared that a 2006 PEP graduate went on to get her CDA and is now working as a *Parents As Teachers* certified Parent Educator in their program!

Hartford: **Latoya Banks, Dawn Dickenson and Melissa Howard** at **Community Renewal Team** facilitated a PEP group. PEP graduates created a portrait gallery of grandparents raising their grandchildren. They hosted an event called "Portraits of a Community" and honored politicians for supporting their Generations campus.

Noemy Maldonado offered PEP through **Catholic Charities.** Graduates became involved in the PTO, Parent Meet and Greet, and Project Light!

New Haven: Migdaly Centeno was full of excitement at the Facilitators Conference in March. She had completed one group in English and was about to begin another group in Spanish with 22 participants! A mother said that after completing PEP she finds herself thinking before she speaks and that her children have noticed the change!

North Grosvenordale/Thompson: After completing PEP, **Christine Schuler's** group became involved in planning a local playground, a parent support group and participated in a community conversation.

Torrington: Karla Woodworth completed her first PEP group which was offered through the **Torrington Early Childhood Collaborative!** Karla described the group of six as "remarkable!" Three of the six women even attended the college course "Parent Leadership Through Civic Engagement" offered by Northwestern Connecticut Community College, receiving certificates and *three college credits* each! Members also spoke to the finance committee of Torrington on behalf of keeping TECC in the city budget and completed a project at the Susan B. Anthony project for battered and abused women!

Heather Kosmulski and Cara Menegal also facilitated a program with 11 participants who completed three projects (a focus group, letter campaign and a fundraiser to help a family at Christmas).

West Hartford: Group leader **Robin Drago-Provencher** included projects such as organizing a spring cleanup at **Channel 3 Kids Camp**, a food drive for the local food bank, participating in trainings offered by CT Parent Power and meeting with legislators at the capitol & writing letters of support to reinstate funding for Family Resource Centers. Many members also continue to serve on the Health Care and School Readiness Committee.

Willimantic: This was the first PEP group that **Sonia Summers** and **Laurie Redford** facilitated, and 2 of the 8 participants **went on to begin higher education** after completing PEP!

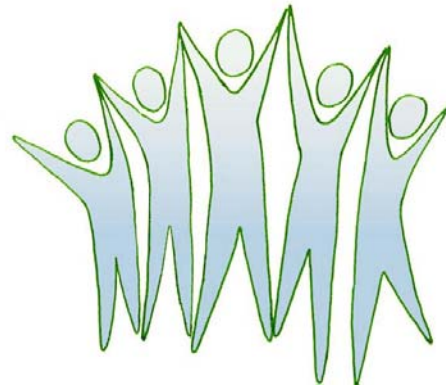
Prison PEP was facilitated by six volunteers, Amy and Larry Malick ,Peter Sage and Diane Tracy, Bob Sireno, and Peter Spinner, .They worked with women at York Correctional Institution and men at Connecticut Correctional Institutions, Cheshire, (2 sites), Enfield and Radgowski . A total of 102 men and women participated in Prison PEP programs! When completing the PEP evaluation a 26 year old male who has been in prison since he was 15 wrote “You helped me understand me and path I need to take to better myself”. Another male stated that he knows he will make it because he now has a goal driven plan. Amy and Larry Malick’s group completed a project called “Letters From Within” a book of advice letters, presented for use in Urban League of Greater Hartford GED classes.

Sites for Volunteer and Paid

PEP Facilitators

Cherry has been hearing from retired or semi-retired professionals interested in facilitating PEP with offenders, ex-offenders, or community residents.

Cooperative Extension will provide training for these individuals. If your organization or faith community (*program must be open to the public*) is interested in having a trained volunteer or is able to provide nominal funding for a paid PEP facilitator please let Cherry know.



Reach for your dreams and they will reach for you.

