



A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Having a young child is a joy. However, I also know there were moments when my parenting skills or patience felt insufficient—times when the stress of a temper tantrum or the isolation of being a new parent was difficult for me.

When I first moved to New Haven, Vermont, and later to Wilder, I wasn't working, and my spouse was juggling a job and studying for his MBA. My son, Parker, and I spent every day together. I remember reaching a point where I felt desperate for connection and support. That's when I called Dartmouth Health, and they referred me to The Family Place. The staff at The Family Place suggested Parker and I attend a Playgroup. There, I found exactly what I needed—not just from the excellent staff but also from the other caregivers.

What I discovered was more than support—it was a community.



Jan Peltzer, with her son Parker in 1995

When families walk through the doors of The Family Place, the staff takes the time to listen, understand, and respond with programs, resources, and support tailored to their unique needs. Children develop at an extraordinary pace during their critical early years. The staff's knowledge, dedication, and foresight enable The Family Place to meet the diverse and evolving needs of families with young children. **This adaptability and commitment are among the many reasons I chose to volunteer as a Board member.** Thank you for your support and dedication to The Family Place. Together, we can continue making a meaningful difference in our community. *-Jan Peltzer* (Chair of The Family Place Board)



Jan and Parker (as an adult)

EXPANDED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Long-time staff member Lori Stever transitioned into a new role as **Parent Education Coordinator** in 2024 and is working to expand our activities and classes for families. This past year, The Family Place hosted more than 40 **Playgroups** for families, collaborating with other local organizations like the Montshire Museum of Science, Waypoint, Artistree, and the Hartland Library.



Playgroups are more than just informal gatherings. Staff are on hand to support growth and development and answer questions while children work on critical social and motor skills. We also hosted a range of classes on topics like nutrition, art, and strengths-based parenting. In total, 148 families participated. **Learn more: www.familyplacevt.org/playgroups**



A FATHER'S VIEW

Meet Bob, an Upper Valley Dad & Playgroup Champion



Bob, Larissa, and Ross (2 1/2) Pyer.
Not pictured: Kasia (born Dec. 2024).

What are some things that you and your family enjoy doing together?

Getting outside, hiking...leaving the house and going off in the woods or just being outside and coming up with our own curriculum. Instead of sitting inside and saying our ABCs, we're going to go outside and find, you know, an apple and learn about it.

Can you share a proud moment about your family?

Two weeks before I was planning to go back to work, we finally realized that we wanted to have me at home taking care of our child. It's a very team-oriented household. When Larissa comes home at night, she's helping out. She went to her job during the day and did her best. I stayed home and I did my best with Ross. But that doesn't mean my job is 24-7. She'll come home, she'll help cook dinner with him, and then she'll play with him. And then she'll help me put him to bed.

Why is it important to participate in activities like The Family Place's Playgroups with your son?

Ross has been an only child, so I wanted to make sure he had more interaction. When we started going, it gave me a chance to get out and do something fun with other families too. Through activities like this, I've heard a lot of different perspectives from people and what they're going through. These are people that I never would have been able to connect with otherwise.

What do you gain from your connections with other male caregivers?

I like to hear how they did something with their child, what they've tried. Learning what other people have gone through helps me embrace change more. It's great talking to other fathers and hearing they did something the same way or they did something a little different. It's great being able to have that connection with them.



**BOB PYER IS THE CHAIR OF OUR FAMILY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AND LIVES WITH HIS FAMILY IN LEBANON, NH.**

MEET OUR NEW CHILD AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

Responding to an increased need for mental health services in the Upper Valley, The Family Place hired two new Child and Family Therapists! We now have capacity for about 55 active clients at any one time, compared to 25 prior. Since July, we've seen 73 clients (49 of whom are new) and conducted 785 sessions!

ERIN SWASEY (she/her)



Erin has worked as a Clinical Social Worker in the Upper Valley for 18 years, supporting children, adults, and families. Erin has a particular interest in working with individuals and families who have experienced trauma, and with women in the perinatal period, before and after they give birth.

MOLLY BOWEN (she/her)



Molly is a rostered Psychotherapist working towards licensure in Marriage and Family Therapy. Molly has an MA in Couple and Family therapy and a BA in anthropology. Molly really enjoys working with families, parenting couples, and children, as well as folx in the LGBTQIA+ community.

HOLISTIC SERVICES THROUGH HOME VISITING



Children's Integrated Services (CIS) is a comprehensive program that delivers Early Intervention, Family Support, and prevention services that help ensure the healthy development and well-being of children in our community. The Family Place's Home Visitors (through CIS) are uniquely positioned to provide holistic support for families, particularly in the more rural parts of the Upper Valley.

A family looking for **Early Intervention** services for their child might also benefit from getting connected to other programs at the agency such as Child and Family Therapy or the Child Care Financial Assistance Program. One of our Home Visitors, Anya Gendal, is also a Child and Family Nutritionist, and over the past two years, she has provided **Nutrition Education** and goal-setting for families in their homes on topics such as picky eating, disordered eating, supporting a child who is overweight or underweight, shopping on a budget, and healthy meal planning.

CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Vermont's **Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)** is a subsidy program that helps families cover the cost of early childhood education. Over the past year, the CCFAP has been steadily expanding their income eligibility guidelines. To meet community demands, The Family Place hired an additional full-time **Eligibility Specialist**, which has allowed us to meet the growing need. In the past six months, our Eligibility Specialists have processed 454 applications compared to 259 in the same time frame in 2023.



CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER MOVE



The Family Place manages two of the 12 **Child Advocacy Centers (CAC)** in Vermont. Our CACs provide forensic interviews and victim advocacy for children and families who have experienced sexual abuse. In October 2023, a pipe burst at our North Springfield location, and we were unable to provide direct service for a period of several months. In the winter of 2024, we found a freshly renovated home on 11 Church Street in North Springfield. The CAC began seeing clients in June 2024. This inviting and functional space has received many compliments from clients and community partners.

FAMILY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The **Family Advisory Committee**, made up of parents and caregivers who have participated in one or more of our programs, continues to provide a critical voice for families within the organization. In addition to helping to plan our annual Gingerbread Festival in December, they also testified with us to the state legislature, and helped design a new Playgroup for dads and other male caregivers.



“The [FAC] was the first time I felt as though I was working toward something that aligned with my value of helping young children and their families in whatever way they need.” -Bradnee DeAguiar

22ND ANNUAL GINGERBREAD FESTIVAL



Over 1,200 attendees!



\$40,000 in Proceeds!



114 Gingerbread Creations!

The Family Place delivers comprehensive programs designed to strengthen positive relationships, teach essential skills and promote enduring healthy growth for families with young children in the Upper Valley and surrounding communities.



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