

# Networker

visit online at  
[www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org)

## 20 Years of RIPIN!



The year 2011 marks a significant milestone at the Rhode Island Parent Information Network — RIPIN turns 20!

What began with a few parents of children with special needs and like-minded professionals sharing information has grown into a state and nationally acclaimed nonprofit organization of 120 staff members and 18 programs.



“The RIPIN of 2011 looks quite different from our grass roots beginning in 1991,” says [Matthew Cox, Executive Director](#). “Today, RIPIN staff and programs offer support in every part of Rhode Island. We not only reach out to all families, but also individuals, educators, state decision makers, other community agencies, and more.”

It is the mission of RIPIN in 2011 and beyond to continue to help Rhode Islanders through support, advocacy, training, parent involvement, and workshops in health, education and all areas of life.

## Celebrate with Us at Kirkbrae

To celebrate two decades of service, RIPIN will host a *Twenty Years of Excellence* fundraiser at Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln on September 15, 2011.

It will be a unique and exciting evening to commemorate RIPIN’s work in the community with a look ahead towards the future. Tasting tables from top Rhode Island restaurants and fine wines will be a part of the evening festivities as well as live and silent auctions, cocktails, music, and more culinary creations.

If you or your organization would like to attend or get involved, please contact [Marilyn McCullough](#) at 401.270.0101 x112. Go to [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) to learn more today!

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## 2011 Partnerships Conference

### Health Care Reform:

*How will it impact children and youth with **special health care needs** and their families?*

April 27, 2011  
12:00 pm - 7:00 pm  
The Crowne Plaza  
Warwick, RI

The Partnerships Conference provides great information on programs and policies impacting families and caregivers; educates family members and professionals about resources, services and supports in Rhode Island; and demonstrates partnerships successfully at work throughout Rhode Island.

Special keynote speakers for this year’s conference are [Julie Beckett](#) and [Katie Beckett](#), the mother and daughter behind the Katie Beckett Medicaid Waiver.

Professional CEUs will be offered for nursing, education and social work.

REGISTER FOR PARTNERSHIPS  
ONLINE [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org)

## Board of Directors 2011

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1210 Pontiac Avenue  
Cranston, RI 02920  
401.270.0101 401.464.3399  
www.ripin.org info@ripin.org

## A Letter From the Executive Director

Matthew Cox



Dear friends and supporters of RIPIN, 2011 marks the 20th anniversary of RIPIN's founding as a grant-funded nonprofit organization. Throughout the coming year there will be many occasions to mark this important milestone in our history and we hope you will join us in our celebrations. In March, we host our fourth semi-annual Parent Involvement Summit with nationally acclaimed author and researcher Dr. Karen Mapp as keynote speaker. In April, we host the 7th Annual Partnerships Conference to share how Health Care Reform will impact children and youth with special health care needs. In partnership with Stop Bullying Now RI, we look forward to our first annual Walk to Stop Bullying on May 21st. Capping off our 20th year, we will celebrate this milestone anniversary with our 20 Years of Excellence fundraiser in September. Please join us at one or all of these events!

The new year also means that you will be hearing from us with greater frequency and in a number of ways. First, RIPIN's newsletter, the Networker, will continue to be produced each quarter in order to quickly impart timely information and opportunities to get involved, collaborate, or network. You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Popular information will be shared such as highlights of our new workshops and training opportunities, frequently asked questions, news and tips on simple and effective ways for parents to be more involved in the health and education of their children, and multiple opportunities to join us as volunteers.

In this issue of our newsletter, you'll read about the success of our first annual State-wide Transition Conference, MegaSkills Caring and Teamwork workshops, expansion of our peer-to-peer model through the new RI Department of Human Services' program "Communities of Care", and awards and recognition of our staff and community partners.

We also welcome the newest members of our RIPIN team, which now numbers 120!

Audrey Amegashie, Peer Navigator  
Raquel Barrera, Resource Specialist  
Bettina Brothers, Peer Navigator  
Rhonda DelRio, Peer Navigator  
Emmanuel Echevarria, Peer Navigator  
Yolanda Enos, Peer Navigator  
Rose Marie Hernandez, Peer Navigator  
Carla Laroche-Harris, Resource Specialist  
Brenda Leverett-Mullen, Peer Navigator  
Nathan Markley, Technology Assistant  
Aura Matos, Peer Navigator  
John McElroy, Peer Navigator Supervisor

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Jonna Mulvaney, Family Leadership Coordinator  
Nely Pires, Peer Navigator  
Diana Ranallo, Peer Resource Specialist  
Carla Russo, Parent Consultant  
Sinath Sun, Peer Navigator  
Katie Torres, Parent Involvement Specialist  
Tara Townsend, Family Support Specialist  
Patricia Waterman, Peer Navigator

Our 20 years of success could not have been achieved without you, our valued partners, and members of the RIPIN family. We look forward to the next 20 years of success. Come celebrate with us!

In partnership,

Matthew B. Cox  
Executive Director

# “RIPIN Workshops are Fantastic!” — MegaSkill’s Caring and Teamwork Workshop

**Workshop Participant:** Michael Gagnon  
Grandfather of a Middle School Student

## How did he find out about RIPIN workshops?

“Once I went on the RIPIN website, I decided to try some workshops,” said Michael. “I started with the special education workshops because I was interested in learning Rhode Island laws regarding school.” (Michael’s grandson is moving to Rhode Island soon, and Michael often advocates for him.)

## What did he like about MegaSkills?

Michael felt the MegaSkills workshops helped him begin new conversations with his grandson that teach important lessons about life. For example, Michael asked his grandson if anyone had done anything nice for him at school that day. “I never thought to ask a question like that, but it led us to talk about what it means to be nice to others, how it makes you feel, what are the outcomes,” said Michael. “It enriched our time together and made him think.”

## The benefit of sharing the workshop with educators

At first Michael thought teachers were in the workshop to learn the MegaSkills to teach their students. “Then I found out the teachers were there to learn the skills, so they could teach their students’ parents,” explained Michael. “I believe it all begins at home, so I was very impressed by that.”



Michael Gagnon talks with a fellow workshop participant during a MegaSkills workshop this fall. (MegaSkills is a series of five workshops that leads groups of parents and educators through key habits, attitudes and behaviors that lead to student success. Participants can take the whole series or attend individual workshops.)

## Final thoughts

“The MegaSkills workshop series is truly special. I tried not to miss even one,” said Michael. “I think all the RIPIN workshops are just fantastic!”



# Learn Something New this Winter with a RIPIN Workshop

The poster features the RIPIN logo (Rhode Island Parent Information Network) in a circular arrangement at the top. Below it, a purple circle contains the text 'Winter 2011'. The main title 'Workshop Series' is in large white font, with 'January - April 2011' underneath. A red circle with 'on-site at RIPIN' is connected by a dotted line to the contact information: 'RI Parent Information Network, 1210 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920, 401.270.0101, 800.464.3399, www.ripin.org'. At the bottom, five colored boxes represent the workshop goals: inform, support, educate, advocate, and empower.

All winter long RIPIN will continue to present the information you need to help you and your family.

RIPIN offers a wide variety of interactive workshops and training opportunities as well as information and support for all Rhode Island families and the professionals working with them each day.

Some of the workshops scheduled include *College: the Right Choice for your Future*, *Section 504: A Parent’s Guide*, *IEP - A Blueprint for Student Success*, *Basic Rights in Special Edu-*

*cation*, *Ready for Kindergarten*, and *Transition from Early Intervention (birth to 3)*.

Please visit our website and register for a workshop using our new **online registration** at [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) or contact Suzanne Tobin, Workshop and Outreach Coordinator at [tobin@ripin.org](mailto:tobin@ripin.org) or 401.270.0101 x123 to learn more.



(from top) Diana Kriner, RIPIN Transition Manager, participates in the Parent Panel; Nathan Markley, RIPIN Technology Assistant and a student at the Northern RI Collaborative Transition Center; and RIPIN staff providing information to conference attendees.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Statewide Transition Conference for families = Success!

On December 3rd, RIPIN had the pleasure of hosting the First Annual Statewide Transition Conference for families of students with disabilities transitioning from school to adulthood in conjunction with the Regional Transition Centers and the RI Department of Education, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports. More than 140 parents of children in middle and high school came out for this important event.

“As with any life transition, leaving the school system can often be a very intense time for students with special needs and their families,” says [Susan Donovan](#), Director of the Parent Training and Information Center at RIPIN. “But, the earlier families begin talking about transition and exploring options, the smoother the transition will go.” (The transition process officially begins in RI schools at age 14, but it is never too soon to become informed about what is available.)

The conference was a great opportunity for families to network with support agencies, and learn about the transition process within Rhode Island including vocational assessment for students, the Regional Transition Centers, college options, employment internship opportunities, and health care transitions.

In addition, a parent and student panel allowed attendees to hear from people who have already made the transition. Keynote speakers for the event were David Sienko, Director of the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports at the RI Department of Education and Joe Walejko, Regional Transition Coordinator at the Southern RI Collaborative.

If your child is nearing transition from high school and you’d like to learn more, please contact [Diana Kriner](#), Transition Manager, at 401.270.0101 x129 or [kriner@ripin.org](mailto:kriner@ripin.org).

## RIPIN Hosts Fall Special Education Advisory Network (SEAN) Meeting

RIPIN's Parent Training and Information Center hosted Rhode Island's Special Education Advisory Network (SEAN) this past fall.

SEAN is a network of parent leaders from Local Advisory Committees, the RI Special Education Advisory Committee and representatives from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

The group meets to share ideas with a goal of improving outcomes for students with disabilities in Rhode Island. At the fall meeting, Deborah Gist, Rhode Island Commissioner of Education, gave the opening remarks and described the educational priorities in Rhode Island for the coming year.



**WALK to  
STOP  
Bullying**  
May 21st  
2011



## Bullying in Rhode Island – Join RIPIN & Partners at the **WALK to STOP BULLYING!**

RIPIN has joined forces with *Stop Bullying Now! RI* to put an end to bullying in Rhode Island.

As Linda McMullen, Director of Administration, explains RIPIN is committed to shining a spotlight on bullying. “As a team, we are dedicated to getting the word out about the destructiveness of bullying, and how we can all come together to make a positive change for the sake of our children.”

Educators, parents and students can go to [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) to find resources regarding bullying including articles, in-classroom/school assembly opportunities, workshops, and information about the upcoming **Walk to STOP Bullying and Pep Rally**.

Visit [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) and register online today for the Walk to STOP Bullying on May 21, 2011 at Roger Williams Park in Providence.

*Together we can make a difference!*

# Upcoming Events

RIPIN and partners have a number of informational and educational conferences coming up in 2011. Please call RIPIN at 401.270.0101 or visit [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) to find out how to register.

## ■ 7th Annual College Planning Forum

March 26, 2011

8:30am-1:00pm

Providence College, Providence

Developed for high school students with disabilities, 504 plans and other challenges, their parents and school personnel, the forum puts students on the road to success by informing them of accommodations and supports available at the college level.

## ■ 12th Annual New England Fathering Conference

March 23-25, 2011

The Newport Marriott, Newport

This conference brings together dads, service providers, social workers, state and federal representatives, and family advocates.

## ■ 2011 Parent Involvement Summit

March 28, 2011

Chelos, Warwick

Dr. Karen Mapp, nationally acclaimed author of *Beyond the Bake Sale* and researcher on the forefront of parent engagement, will present and take questions about the most effective ways to engage parents. The Summit is an opportunity for Rhode Island teachers, administrators and parents to come together to learn from each other how to increase parent involvement within their schools.

## ■ 2011 Partnerships Conference - Health Care Reform: Changes and Challenges for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Their Families

April 27, 2011

12:00 pm -7:00 pm

The Crowne Plaza, Warwick

Julie and Katie Beckett, the mother and daughter behind the Katie Beckett Medicaid Waiver, will be the featured speakers at the 2011 Partnerships Conference. (Please note there is a new time and location for this year's event)

## ■ Walk to STOP Bullying

May 21, 2011

Roger Williams Park, Providence

Join RIPIN and STOP Bullying Now! RI for the 1st Annual Walk to Stop Bullying. Everyone can participate - families, students, friends, PTAs, office groups, youth groups, and faith-based groups. To register online today, go to [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) and click on **Stop Bullying Walk**.

## ■ Dare to Dream 2011 Student Leadership Conference

May 24, 2011

University of Rhode Island, Kingston

Students in middle and high school are invited to this youth empowerment conference. Youth who are becoming leaders share their experiences in fun and engaging ways. To find out how to attend or be a presenter, please contact RIPIN's Deb Golding at [deb.golding@health.ri.gov](mailto:deb.golding@health.ri.gov) or call 401.222.5954

## ■ 20 Years of Excellence Fundraiser

September 15, 2011

Kirkbrae Country Club, Lincoln

Celebrate RIPIN's 20 year anniversary at Kirkbrae Country Club. It will be an evening of fine dining, auctions and a celebration of RIPIN's 20 years of service to Rhode Islanders.

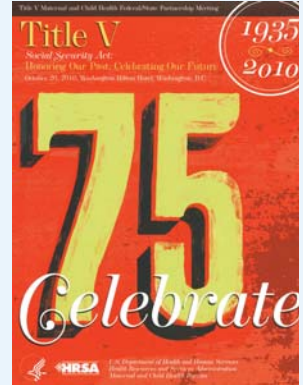
# RIPIN NEWS..... and information

## RIDE's J. David Sienko's New Role



(from l to r)  
RIPIN's Sue Donovan and J. David Sienko; Tom DiPaulo, former Westerly schools Superintendent and RIPIN's Dawn Wardyga

In December, RIPIN hosted a welcome reception for J. David Sienko, the new Director of the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports at the RI Department of Education. David has worked with RIDE for more than 10 years. Best of luck David!



## Associate Director Lisa Schaffran Awarded

This fall [Lisa Schaffran, Associate Director](#), was recognized for her work to promote and facilitate peer to peer and parent / professional partnerships as well as capacity building at the Maternal and Child Health Federal/State Partnership Meeting at the Title V Social Security Act's 75th Anniversary Celebration in Washington, DC.

*Congrats Lisa!*



## « Women and Infants' Resource Specialists Collaborate with Early Intervention

RIPIN Resource Specialists at Women and Infants' Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Follow-up Clinic and RI Hearing Assessment Program (RIHAP) have recently joined RIPIN's Early Childhood team. They are now working in collaboration with RIPIN Early Intervention Parent Consultants to better assist families of young children.

## RIPIN Writes the Book on Parent Involvement!

RIPIN's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) recently won a bid to produce a manual on how to start a parent group for the Providence School District. The guide will include establishing a group, money management, operational strategies, and fundraising.



# RIPIN's Peer Support Model Bridges the Gap in Medicaid — Again!

RIPIN is once again using the successful model of “peers helping peers” with a new Department of Human Services’ (DHS) program, Communities of Care (CoC).

By partnering with DHS, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI and United HealthCare, RIPIN’s Communities of Care Peer Navigator team is reaching out to individuals, helping them to better access: community resources; appropriate, timely and proactive medical care; and consistent primary care that can meet their unique needs. Connecting individuals with what they need before they become ill or need emergent care will hopefully reduce unnecessary emergency room visits.

As **Shavon Smith, RIPIN Communities of Care Manager**, explains barriers often exist between individuals and families and the support they really need. “There are many reasons why families aren’t accessing the appropriate medical care, maybe it’s a transportation issue or a language barrier. We look at the whole picture and then work with the individual or family to create a more effective plan.”

Care Managers from the health plans also collaborate with Peer Navigators to better educate families about what’s out there and coordinate their care through a family-friendly medical home model, where the entire situation and family is accounted for, not just individual issues.

The 15 Peer Navigators are well aware of the challenges individuals and families in Rhode Island face each day. They are all either family members or caregivers of individuals with special health care needs or have navigated community systems for themselves.



(from left) Peer Navigators: Yolanda Enos, Audrey Amegashie and Emmanuel Echevarria; the RIPIN Communities of Care team

## Do YOU have Questions?

Our trained Resource Specialists can help answer questions about:

- school issues**
- parent involvement**
- special education**
- housing**
- health care**
- community supports**

The RIPIN Resource Center  
can **Help** you!

*Let us help you find  
the solution!*

401.270.0101 or 800.464.3399  
info@ripin.org www.ripin.org

### Q-

*Last year, my family spent a few cold months with our heat set very low because we were worried about the bill. Where can I go for assistance to be ready this year?*



### a-

*There are community action programs in every region of Rhode Island that offer energy, heating and nutrition assistance. To qualify a family or individual, they usually look at income level, financial supports, state assistance, and size of the family.*

*To contact the Rhode Island Community Action Agency in your area, please go to [www.ricommunityaction.org/agencies](http://www.ricommunityaction.org/agencies)*

# Follow RIPIN on



Now you can be a “**Fan**” of RIPIN on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and receive lots of great tips for you and your family.

It’s easy! Just go to [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) and click on the Facebook/Twitter icon in the upper right corner and say you “**like**” RIPIN.

You can also “**like**” RIPIN by going on your own Facebook account and search [RI Parent Info Network](#).

You’ll get updates about RIPIN events, important information on health, wellness and education in Rhode Island and great parenting tips too.

Go to [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org) and join us today!



1210 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920

## YOU can Become a Family Leader with FLDI!

**The Family Leadership Development Institute (FLDI) is one of RIPIN’s newest initiatives. The vision of the Family Leadership Development Institute is that family leaders in RI will have consistent trainings and the support needed to provide peer assistance; and effectively advocate for person/family centered care at the individual, local, systems, and policy levels.**

Family leaders include parents and individuals who lead peer involvement efforts in schools and communities; parents of children/youth with special healthcare needs; family members or caregivers of people with disabilities; and/or consumers with disabilities, chronic conditions or special healthcare needs who provide peer assistance, either as a paid employee or a volunteer.

RIPIN’s website offers a clearinghouse of information regarding workshops, trainings and informational sessions happening all of over the state.

“We are so happy to offer this ‘one-stop-shop’ of information for anyone interested in gaining the skills to become a family leader,” says [Deb Belanger, Training and Professional Development Manager](#).

“With just a few clicks on our website, [www.ripin.org/fldi](http://www.ripin.org/fldi), you can access multiple schedules of trainings and workshops from a variety of places including Rhode Island hospitals, community helping agencies and other nonprofits as well as our partners in this new endeavor.”



Family Leadership  
Development Institute (FLDI)

The FLDI is a collaborative partnership between RIPIN, the Community Health Workers Association of Rhode Island, Parent Support Network of Rhode Island, Sherlock Center on Disabilities, RI Department of Health, RI Department of Human Services, RI Department of Education, and the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families.

For further information, contact [Jonna Mulvaney, FLDI Coordinator](mailto:Jonna.Mulvaney@ripin.org), at [Mulvaney@ripin.org](mailto:Mulvaney@ripin.org) or 401.270.0101 x155.