



Welcome to the fall issue of the MCS Family Support newsletter. We are pleased to announce that Karen Fletcher started in her new role as Executive Director for MCS. Paul Conlon retired with a rocking retirement party on September 29th. Everyone is sorry to see him go, but delighted to have Karen as our leader!

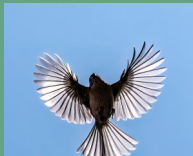
HIGHLIGHT



This issue's highlight is on Matt Soliwoda who combines his love of nature, birds, and photography to produce beautiful photographs of birds. Matt has been a bird-watching enthusiast for his entire life, and in recent years has turned that into a career as a professional photographer. Matt says that his favorite part of bird watching is the adrenaline rush he gets after spotting a rare species, such as the nesting pair of Sandhill Cranes and their chicks that he saw in Ashville. The serenity of nature also helps Matt with his anxiety. Check out his photos on his website:

Mattsoliwodogallery.com

Matt kindly included an owl photo when I mentioned it is my favorite bird!



MEET THE TEAM...



Maggie Serrano has been a Service Navigator at MCS for seven years. She works with our Adult population and loves the opportunity to talk to her families and find out how she can help them. She does her best to provide whatever support they need to lead enjoyable and productive lives.

Maggie has been married to the love of her life, Domingo, for 40 years. They have three children: Andrew, Alex, and Jackee, and are doting grandparents to five beautiful grandchildren with one more on the way! The grandkids keep Maggie on her toes and she spoils them with love. Maggie and Domingo share their home with their yellow lab, Thor, who enjoys eating food out of the grand-kids' unsuspecting hands.

When Maggie isn't working or babysitting, she enjoys hiking in the wilderness and paddle boarding. Just kidding...she enjoys watching ridiculous shows on TV and spending time with her family.

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TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting Friendships

This is a workshop for families & caregivers discussing the importance of friendships in our family members' lives, and how to create a plan to help them make friends. **Thursday, November 9th at 6:00 p.m. at the MCS Holyoke office.** Light dinner provided.

Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/X7Ydr3YW2TznZp48>

Lifecourse in Action Series

2nd Wednesday of each month from Oct. 11 thru Feb. 14, 2024. For more information contact: Elizabeth.Wike@umb.edu

Planeando una Transición de Exito (Guia para los padres)

19 de octubre de 2023, 7-8pm & 26 de octubre 7-8pm Registro disponible en <https://bit.ly/43n2Cvn> presentado en español

Transition Mini Series

The 3rd Wednesday each month—this virtual series offers a variety of topics related to transition.

September 2023 - June 2024 6PM TO 7PM ZOOM Meeting Number - 817 1885 3189 Passcode - 123456 or use the link below:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81718853189?pwd=ZSVJvakJ3UEYvMndnR2pMVDILdz09>

End of Summer Bash

The rain did not stop the Family Bridges, SOS, DESE & Grand-parent's Network Families from enjoying the End of the Summer Bash held at the School St Park in Agawam! Fun was had by all. Good food, great company and lots of laughter.



THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING STAFF

As everyone is aware, it has been increasingly difficult to find reliable direct care workers in recent year. RewardingWork.org and DDS are joining forces to help families find and hire qualified caregivers through their online directory and job board.

Families served by Massachusetts DDS get a free subscription when they register with a DDS access code: **ddsconnect**

It only takes a few minutes to register and subscribe. If you have any questions, email info@RewardingWork.org or call (866) 212-9675.

**To register, go to
RewardingWork.org**

TOYS FOR TOTS

MCS has applied for assistance from the local Toys for Tots program for the holiday season. We have been successful in the past, however, we did not receive any toys last year, so we're crossing our fingers they will help out this year! Please let your navigator know if you would like to be part of the Toys for Tots program. It is typically available for children up to the age of 16. We need to know the ages and gender of the kids.



Meet the Pets: Freddie

This is 12 year old Freddie, and he lives with his mom, Kisha Holley. Kisha is of the very unbiased opinion that he is the cutest dog in the world. Freddie joined his family as a rescue puppy 8 years ago. He loves his mom, and loves his treats!



Trunk or Treat

Join us on Friday, October 27th from 4:30 to 6:30 in the 1000 Wilbraham Road parking lot for Trunk or Treat! Wear a costume and collect goodies from decorated trunks!



Kosinski Farms

Thank you to Elisa Kosinski of Kosinski Farm Stand for her help providing over 100 pumpkins for last year's Trunk of Treat event. Kosinski Farms is a great family-owned farm with quality products and nice people! Visit them at kosinskifarms@comcast.net.



Kid's Winter Dance

Springfield and Holyoke MCS offices are combining to offer a Kid's Winter Dance. A flyer will be mailed at the beginning of November with more details. This is for children ages 4 to 15 and their parents, and it will be held at the Knights of Columbus in Chicopee from 6:00—9:00 p.m. on December 1st. Up to 4 family members can attend for free. Additional people can also go for a fee. Hope to see you there!

**SORRY!
SOLD
OUT**

Taylor Swift

Join us for a private viewing of the Taylor Swift concert film at the West Springfield Cinemark theaters! Fee is \$10 per person including popcorn.

Ages 14+

Sunday, October 22, 11:30

Call Takisha at 413-200-7347 to register.

RELAX & RESTORE YOGA for caregivers

Caregivers—join us for a relaxing yoga class. Beginners are welcome, and the classes can be adapted for chair yoga. This is a time to unwind and mingle with other family members.

Contact Felicia at (413) 200-7603 or feliciarios@mcsnet.org

for more information or to sign up

Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway

As Thanksgiving rapidly approaches, escalating food prices are a cause of concern for many families. This year's MCS Thanksgiving Basket drive is kicking up a gear so that we can help even more families. Gigi Oliveira and a team of volunteers are committed to increasing the number of baskets available for MCS families. They are seeking outside resources to make this possible, though the majority of the donations still come from MCS staff. In past years families were selected randomly, but this year we want to make sure that anyone who is struggling will have their name in the mix. Please let your navigator know if you would like to throw your name in the raffle basket. If we receive more names than baskets, we will pick random winners.

You will be notified if you're a lucky winner this year. Please reach out to your navigator!

