

FAREWELL TO OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 30, 2023 will mark the end of an era for MCS as our longstanding Executive Director, Paul Conlon, retires. Paying tribute to someone who has had such an immeasurable impact on the lives of so many is difficult, but covering everything he has achieved throughout the years is impossible. For three decades, Paul has steered the organization through good and turbulent times, leading the transformation of MCS into one of the largest agencies of our kind in the Commonwealth. While his professional accomplishments are significant, those who work closely with Paul agree that what we'll miss most is his practical and consistent leadership, kind and compassionate nature, fairness, and quick wit. We will forever be indebted for Paul's vision and commitment to MCS. Paul has left an impactful legacy at MCS and in the developmental disability community that will endure for decades to come. We wish Paul well and hope he enjoys a long and fulfilling retirement.

PAUL CONLON

WELCOME NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hearing that MCS's very own Karen Fletcher was appointed by the Board of Directors as the new Executive Director softened the blow of losing the retiring Paul Conlon. There were audible cheers throughout the office when the announcement was made. Karen brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the directorship. Her tenure at MCS started at age 18 as a Direct Support Professional during summers and on college breaks. In the 30 years since, Karen has assumed different supervisory, managerial, and directorship roles in her effort to promote MCS's mission to provide comprehensive and responsive supports to individuals with disabilities and their families. And while her job titles and responsibilities have changed, her exemplary work ethic, leadership skills, and dedication to our families and MCS employees has been steadfast. Congratulations and welcome Karen! We're excited for all we're going to achieve under your leadership.

**KAREN
FLETCHER**

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Meet the Team... Leslie DesRoberts came to MCS as a Service Navigator back in 2012. She currently is the Program Manager for adults in both the Family Support Program and adults in the Intensive Flexible Family Support Program. She also does most of the grant writing for the agency. She says the best part of her job is working hard to enhance the lives of the individuals she works with and making them—and their caregivers—happy!

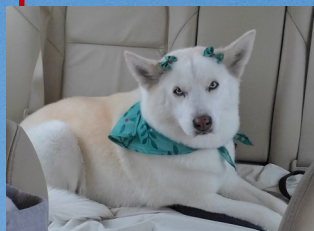
Leslie is the proud parent to two sons, ages 29 and 27. She shares her home with her three “fur babies” who make her condo feel like a mini zoo at times! She fiercely loves her dog, Rubi, and her two cats, Gracie and Tuukka.



Leslie enjoys spending time in the sun, especially on, in or near the water. She looks forward to attending concerts, music festivals and other live performances. She also likes doing home organization and renovation, woodworking, reading and watching documentaries.

Meet the Pets: HONEY FUENTES

Honey hit the jackpot!



Honey is an 11-year-old Siberian Husky who was adopted by Jessy Fuentes, Project Manager for the MCS Autism Program. Jessy found

Honey who had been passed from foster family to foster family and was not being well cared for. Honey came to live with her new family at age 3 and has never looked back. She is a joy who loves to take walks and meet new friends and adores attention. She is the princess of the house and will never turn her nose up to a seafood dinner!



SURVEYS

We want to extend a sincere thank you to all of you who responded to the Annual Satisfaction Survey. We had an excellent response and look forward to reading your thoughts and opinions. If you wish to follow up with any of the Family Support Directors on concerns you may have, please contact us:

marybeattie@mcsnet.org

isabelcastro@mcsnet.org

lillianyrodden@mcsnet.org

The results of the survey will be posted on our website. mcsnet.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grandparent Network Meeting—to be held at the SOS office, 505 East Columbus Avenue in Springfield, on Wednesday, July 12th from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

HIGHLIGHT

For this edition’s HIGHLIGHT, we would like to recognize the dedication, commitment, talent, and hard work of the Service Navigators. The behind the scenes effort necessary to pull off events such as day respite, dances, picnics, and overnight trips is enormous. The navigators not only put in the blood, sweat and tears needed to make the events happen, but they also shine with their hidden talents. From woodworking race horses for a game, designing 100 Derby hats, or putting together countless baskets, this is a talented and dedicated bunch. We are all grateful for your enthusiasm, talent, and positive energy. THANK YOU!!



Mary Beattie

Isabel Castro

Lillian Rodzen

*This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Kenjamin Thompson.
We wish his family and friends peace and comfort .*

2023 ARPA FUNDS

MCS was fortunate to receive DDS funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) this year. This funding enabled us to offer a number of additional programs for families. This page showcases some of the activities that have already occurred, and the following page has future events.

MOTHER'S DAY PAINT & LUNCH

On Thursday, May 11th we gathered together for our Mother's Day Paint & Brunch Event at Nathan Bills. We had a fantastic time filled with music, food, raffles and of course painting. The attendance was exceptional... we had 70 moms participate! We hope to be able to do this again next year and see even more moms! One of the participants summed it up perfectly by saying, "it's a beautiful thing to take time for yourself, and being a mom is the best reason to take good care of yourself."



Father's Day Bowling at MGM

MCS hosted a Father's Day event on June 15th at MGM in Springfield. We had 15 fantastic dads come out and enjoy some bowling, food, and games. It was great to see the dads evolve from not knowing anyone when they arrived to cheering each other on as they bowled. There were a lot of laughs, jokes, and all-around comradery. We received a lot of positive feedback on this event, and we hope to do it again bigger and better next year!



Overnight Camp

Another fun filled camp weekend is in the books!!!! Sixteen campers and MCS staff participated in a week-end of outdoor activities, games, great food, dancing, and lots of laughs. Hamburgers, hotdogs, and s'mores were enjoyed by all on Friday night. Saturday's rain held off long enough for us to get in a visit to the blacksmith shop, do some fishing and ax throwing, and launch bottle rockets. The Dominos, Uno, and What Do You Meme rivalries were fierce and funny. Our disco dance party went on for over two hours. Campers' family members joined us for Sunday brunch where they got an earful of funny and fun camp weekend antics.



Asian Project Picnic

The Asian project team organized a picnic for Asian families on June 10th. The picnic was truly amazing and filled with joy. Gathering together in a beautiful outdoor setting at East Longmeadow's Heritage Park, staff prepared delicious food for the 70 guests. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, as everyone enthusiastically participated in conversations and small games that we had prepared, creating a sense of excitement and friendly competition. It was heartwarming to witness the smiles and genuine enjoyment of the day, showcasing their unique abilities and strengths. The picnic not only provided a fun-filled experience but also served as a supportive community where families could connect, share experiences, and build lasting friendships.



Semi-Formal Dance

Attendees danced the night away at our Kentucky Derby themed dance party. The guys and gals pulled out all the stops with their Derby attire including dapper feathered fedoras and wide-brimmed hats decorated with colorful flowers, feathers, and bows made by Family Support staff. Table centerpieces included handmade wooden replicas of a finish post, white and red rose bouquets, and shimmering horseshoe sculptures. Dance-goers were also able to play a floor sized horse racing game and win a medal if their horse was 1st to cross the finish line. Like the hats, the game was handmade by members of our Family Support team. The evening flew by as everyone enjoyed great food, music, activities and each other's company! We can't wait to see what our next dance theme will be!!



Upcoming Events

High Meadows

MCS is once again hosting two High Meadows outings this summer—June 30th and August 18th. For those who are unfamiliar with High Meadows, it is a beautiful resort located in North Granby, Connecticut. There is a pool with lifeguards, volleyball, games, ice cream truck, bingo, DJ, giant slide, and all you can eat buffet. Hopefully you can join us! You must RSVP to attend!



Backpack Giveaway

Though summer has just begun, we are already planning a backpack giveaway for our families with school age children, ages 5–15. On Thursday, August 8th from 4:00–6:00 p.m., you can drive through the 1000 Wilbraham Road MCS parking lot and receive a backpack filled with supplies and treats while supplies last! We hope to see you on that day.



The MCS Parent Advisory Council and a group of MCS Navigators worked together to send out a survey of how we can support caregivers within our program. Many of you responded to a survey the group sent out about which activities would be enjoyable. We're pleased to announce the first two offerings in the Caregivers Series, a walking group and yoga classes. If you didn't respond to the survey and wish to participate in either activity below, please reach out to Felicia Rios at 413-200-7603 or Shannon Aleixo at 413-200-7659 for more information. We will keep you apprised of upcoming events.

Yoga Classes for Caregivers

Coming soon! Natalie Woodger, part of the MCS family and owner of **From Roots to Branches Yoga & Wellness**, will be offering classes in Relax and Restore Yoga. These classes instruct participants in gentle movements to restore bodies and peaceful stillness to relax minds. Natalie adapts her classes so that everyone can participate, no matter the physical challenges present.

We are currently looking for a convenient location to hold the classes. We will let everyone know as soon as the classes are finalized.



Walking Group for Caregivers

Join us for the Caregiver Walking Groups! There are two locations to choose from for your convenience. The first three dates are scheduled at two different area tracks just in case we're not all in the best walking shape! The hope is that the groups will continue on their own after these planned walks.

Please bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, and give yourself the chance to take a breather and meet others with a similar story. This activity is intended for caregivers, not our consumers. It is a chance to get away and recharge and receive a special gift from us!

Agawam High School (760 Cooper Street, Agawam)
Thursdays, June 29th, July 6th, July 13th
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Blunt Park (1780 Roosevelt Avenue, Springfield)
Wednesdays, June 28th, July 5th, July 12th
6:00—7:30 p.m.

