

## EASTCONN Celebrates Its 30th Anniversary in 2010

*A letter from Executive Director Paula M. Colen*



**Executive Director Paula M. Colen**

EASTCONN will mark its 30th anniversary this year. It's hard to believe that time has passed so quickly and that so many changes have taken place since 1980, not only around the world, but here at EASTCONN and in the schools and communities we serve.

Thirty years ago, EASTCONN was formed when three small agencies merged to provide educational services across northeastern Connecticut. Back then, EASTCONN focused nearly 70 percent of its resources on providing direct services to special education students.

I was among those first EASTCONN employees, so I've seen many changes first-hand. In 1980, we had no computers. We didn't own a single bus or van. Cell phones were non-existent. We employed about 200 staff and I actually knew everyone by name. We had a budget of \$1.8 million, worked out of only one building, and served a region with 32,971 students, grades K-12.

Thirty years later, a lot has changed. Now we serve students from birth through adulthood. Technology plays an increasingly critical role in the way we communicate and deliver educational services. Agency cell phones are commonplace and we support hundreds of computers, a Web site, video conferencing, online communities, e-mail and much more. Our budget has grown to \$38 million, we own 105 vehicles, and we employ 525 staff (I'm sorry to report that I am no longer able to remember everyone's name). We work out of 21 different locations, administer several schools, including two magnet schools, and deliver a broad

See **30 YEARS**, back page



*EASTCONN Director of Early Childhood Initiatives Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, far left, joins her planning team, which includes, l-r, Early Childhood Specialist Teresa Surprenant, Early Head Start Manager Dawn McQuade, and Assistant Director of Early Childhood Services Kim Lewendon.*

## Stimulus Adds \$600,000 To NE CT Early Head Start

Between now and 2011, federal stimulus dollars will pump nearly \$600,000 into EASTCONN's Early Head Start (EHS) initiatives in northeastern Connecticut, creating a new program in Stafford and expanding existing services in both the Killingly and Windham regions.

"We are very pleased to bring Early Head Start into Stafford, which is currently an underserved area for infants, toddlers and pregnant women," said Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives.

"And, we are also delighted to be able to expand our existing programs in the greater Killingly and Windham service areas," she said. Currently, EASTCONN's Early Head Start offers both full-day, full-year, center-based programs in both Killingly and Windham.

Aschenbrenner credited U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, with ensuring that federal dollars continue to flow to the region's initiatives for early childhood and families.

"Representative Courtney is a strong supporter of all children and families across northeastern Connecticut," said Aschenbrenner.

"This federal funding comes at a critical time across eastern Connecticut and will significantly impact the successful Head Start program," said Courtney. "I am proud to have supported EASTCONN through this process and the countless children and families who will benefit from this increase."

See **EARLY HEAD START**, page 2

### In this issue

- 30th Anniversary - Letter from Executive Director ..... 1
- Increased Funding for Early Head Start ..... 1
- QVMCHS Marks First Year ..... 3
- Interdistrict Grants, 2009-2011.....Insert

View the EASTCONN Calendar  
at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org),  
click on "Workshops, Events & Classes "

### EASTCONN Program Reminders

- An **Open House** will be held at the new **Northeast Regional Program** on **Jan. 14, from 5-7 p.m.** Tour the new building, learn about the new program and meet staff. Located at 508A Pomfret St., Putnam. [See story, right.]
- **Open House at Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School (QVMCHS), Jan. 28, 6:30-8 p.m.** An information session, tours and student presentations are planned. In the QVCC auditorium, 742 Upper Maple St., Danielson. Open to all. [Editor's Note: See story on page 3.]
- **CTAA** will present the musical *Once on This Island, Junior*, on **Feb. 4, 5 & 6**, at the Capitol Theater, 896 Main St., Willimantic. The show, set in the Caribbean, is an adaptation of the classic Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, "The Little Mermaid." All ages will enjoy this fully staged, musical production, featuring Capitol Theater Arts Academy students. For tickets, call the box office at 860-465-5636.
- A reminder that **ACT** arts magnet high school student **applications are due Feb. 5**. Application forms may be obtained from guidance counselors or by visiting EASTCONN's Web site at [www.eastconn.org/ACT](http://www.eastconn.org/ACT).

### EARLY HEAD START, continued from page 1

EASTCONN administers Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Dayville, Danielson, Plainfield, Moosup, Putnam, Stafford, and in partnership with Stafford, Windham and Vernon public schools.

In Stafford, thanks to the federal stimulus funds, Early Head Start will, for the first time, offer a home visiting program for infants and toddlers, Aschenbrenner said.

In Windham, the stimulus money will fund a five-day-a-week EHS program that combines parenting education with GED and English-Language-Learner programs for families; those services will be offered at the Windham Public Schools' Early Childhood Center on Prospect Street in Willimantic.

In Killingly, the EHS program will be located at EASTCONN's Northeast Learning Center, and will combine two days of center-based services, plus bi-weekly home visits for children and families. Currently, EHS only offers an infant program at the Northeast Learning Center, where EASTCONN's Adult Education also offers job skills training classes and other services for parents and adults.

Aschenbrenner said she is very pleased about enhancing Early Head Start's collaboration with EASTCONN's Adult Education division.

"The new Early Head Start initiative at Northeast Learning Center will provide even greater services to at-risk families, including those who may need to learn better parenting skills, or who may have mental health needs," Aschenbrenner said.

To learn more, contact Elizabeth Aschenbrenner at 860-455-1501 or at [aschenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto:aschenbrenner@eastconn.org).

## PACE North and Northeast Regional School Merge To Form Northeast Regional Program



The new Northeast Regional Program, located at 508A Pomfret Street in Putnam, serves non-traditional students in grades K-12.

EASTCONN has opened a new, K-12 program to serve non-traditional learners and youngsters with behavioral challenges in downtown Putnam in Connecticut's northeast corner. The Northeast Regional Program opened in November after EASTCONN merged two of its schools, PACE North, and the Northeast Regional School. The new program provides a range of educational, clinical and vocational support.

Learn more during the Northeast Regional Program Open House on Thurs., Jan. 14, 2010, from 5-7 p.m. Or, call 860-963-3328 for more information.



## EASTCONN's Autism Program Moves to New Site in Columbia



The EASTCONN Autism Program has moved to a spacious facility located at 10 Commerce Drive, Columbia. The new site features a full complement of BCBAs, clinicians and related services personnel for elementary-school-age children with autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities. Contact the Program Director Doris Dyer at 860-228-3240, or at [ddyer@eastconn.org](mailto:ddyer@eastconn.org), for more information.

### EASTCONN Connections

Writer/Editor: Teddie Sleight ~ [tsleight@eastconn.org](mailto:tsleight@eastconn.org)

Assistant: Cindy Laurendeau ~ [claurendeau@eastconn.org](mailto:claurendeau@eastconn.org)

### Communications Department

Dotty Budnick, Director ~ [dbudnick@eastconn.org](mailto:dbudnick@eastconn.org)

### EASTCONN Administration

Paula M. Colen, Executive Director

**EASTCONN**, 376 Hartford Turnpike, Hampton, CT 06247  
860-455-0707 FAX: 860-455-0691

## EASTCONN Professional Notes:



*Magliocco*



*Norton*

At the Assistive Technology Industry Association's fall conference in Chicago, EASTCONN Assistive Technology Coordinator Carol Magliocco and Assistive Technology

Specialist Amy Norton presented a workshop titled "Off the Shelf is Special, Too," about using commonly available products to assist student learning.



*Drasch*

EASTCONN staff developer Donna Drasch co-presented a workshop titled "It's a Classic" during the 2009 annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, held in Philadelphia, Penn., last fall. Her presentation explored the value of reading classic literature.



*Mullins*

Daniel Mullins, an EASTCONN staff developer and science specialist, has been awarded the 2009 Graduate of the Last Decade (G.O.L.D.) Award by the University of Connecticut's Alumni Association for his "extensive contributions to the revitalization of Eastern Connecticut as well as his efforts to improve the education of potentially disadvantaged populations in Connecticut and nationwide." In 2002, Mullins founded the

non-profit Willimantic Whitewater Partnership (WWP), devoted to restoring the environmentally fragile Willimantic River.



*Magnani*

The "outstanding work" of EASTCONN's science specialist Nancy Magnani was acknowledged during the Frontiers in Optics/Optical Society of America's Annual Meeting in San Jose, CA, in November. Magnani has received numerous OSF grants to bring youth science education projects to northeastern Connecticut. To

learn more about EASTCONN's Science Cadre and its programs, for both students and teachers, contact Nancy Magnani at 860-455-1536, or at [nmagnani@eastconn.org](mailto:nmagnani@eastconn.org).

### Send Us Your Good News!

We'd love to publish good news about staff awards, honors or new administrators in your schools or districts. Just send the information to *Connections* Editor Teddie Sleight at [tsleight@eastconn.org](mailto:tsleight@eastconn.org). Or, call her at 860-455-1553.



*QVMCHS Principal Gino LoRicco, far left, joins students Laura Raymond, Adam Lane and Angie O'Farrill in the QVCC lobby.*

## One Year And Counting... Checking In On QVMCHS

In just over a year, the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School in Danielson has developed not only a fine reputation, but boasts a growing waiting list and a 21st-century curriculum that is helping students make impressive academic and personal strides.

"Before I came here, I just didn't like school that much," said Laura Raymond, 15, a junior from Killingly who is in her second year at QVMCHS. "That has really changed for me."

Raymond plans to be a lawyer and is currently taking four Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) classes.

QVMCHS, a magnet school administered by EASTCONN, opened its doors on the campus of QVCC in August 2008 with 34 sophomores hailing from towns across northeastern Connecticut. This year, QVMCHS has added 36 more sophomores as last year's class moved up. Students represent 11 towns. Eventually, QVMCHS will serve up to 200 students, grades 10-12.

QVMCHS students finish high school while taking free QVCC classes and earning college credits. A typical QVMCHS student is capable academically, but has been identified as being in danger of dropping out of high school. Hometown guidance counselors refer potential students.

QVMCHS provides a hands-on, student-focused curriculum with a 15:1 student-teacher ratio. Students help govern the school through weekly "town meetings." Contextual, applied learning requires students to master each subject before moving forward. They also participate in real-world, service-learning projects.

The waiting list is currently 30-plus students. "Word is spreading," said QVMCHS Principal Gino LoRicco.

Adam Lane, 16, a junior from Plainfield, is in his second year at QVMCHS. He is taking four college courses through QVCC.

"I like the study of world cultures," Lane said. "It raises important questions and I'm learning that there are as many ways to live in this world as there are people." Lane said he may go into the Marine Corps after graduation.

"When I first got here, I didn't know what to expect," Lane said. "I went to orientation and at first I said, 'No.' But I thought about the opportunity to get college and high school credit and

See **QVMCHS**, back page

## 30th ANNIVERSARY, continued from page 1

continuum of 163 programs and services to 33 towns, 36 school districts and 41,426 students.

And yet, while many of these numbers and services have changed dramatically in 30 years, our mission has not: EASTCONN still seeks to help all learners reach their fullest potential.

So. What change will the next 30 years bring? It's hard to imagine, but important that we try. This rapidly transforming, tumultuous global community will shape the lives and destinies of all northeastern Connecticut's citizens, and we must all work together to meet whatever lies ahead, using regional approaches and meaningful collaborations.

To that end, we will spend the coming months considering future trends and their implications, not only for EASTCONN, but for the schools and communities we serve. To help us, we have invited futurist and author Gary Marx to share his insights at our annual meeting next spring. Marx, who has identified 16 trends that will profoundly impact education, will join us in our effort to meet not only the education challenges of today, but those that will greet us tomorrow.

Thank you for helping to make the last 30 years possible. Here's to the next 30!



## Free Public History Program on Concept of Freedom in Earliest U.S. Documents in Feb.

Educators are invited to a free **Public History Program on Wed., Feb. 10, 4-6:30 p.m.**, at EASTCONN, 376 Hartford Tpke., Hampton. Sponsored by the Teaching American History Project, the program will feature Dr. William Fowler, Distinguished Professor of History at Northeastern University, who will discuss "The Concept of Freedom in Our Earliest American Documents." For more information, contact TAHP's Dan Coughlin at 860-455-1511, or at [dcoughlin@eastconn.org](mailto:dcoughlin@eastconn.org). (Snow date Feb. 11.)



376 Hartford Turnpike ~ Hampton, Connecticut 06247  
860-455-0707 ~ [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org)

*EASTCONN, one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in Connecticut, has been serving the educational and training needs of schools, organizations, and individuals of all ages in northeastern Connecticut since 1980.*

EASTCONN  
376 Hartford Turnpike  
Hampton, CT 06247

U.S. Postage <b>PAID</b> Non-Profit Permit No. 86 Willimantic, CT 06226
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## QVMCHS, continued from page 3

decided that this was a great opportunity.

"These days, I consider myself more of a college student than a high school student," Lane said.

Angie O'Farrill, 16, a junior from Windham, said she agreed to apply to QVMCHS to escape the "drama" at her old high school.

"I needed a change and I found it here," O'Farrill said. "There were fewer people, smaller classes, more help, and college courses – it was great," she said.

Proudest of her grades and of taking college courses, O'Farrill said she will be the first member of her family to attend college. She plans to become a registered nurse.

"I think traditional schools do a great job, given their numbers," said LoRicco.

"At the same time, there are kids who simply don't flourish in that environment and that's where we come in," he said.

LoRicco said QVCC officials have been "tremendously generous in giving QVMCHS students access to everything at the college."

In particular, QVCC President Dianne E. Williams and Dr. Susan Huard, Dean of Learning and Student Development, have been very supportive, LoRicco said.

A new QVMCHS building adjacent to QVCC will open in 2013.

"The new facility will create a total integration between QVMCHS and QVCC," LoRicco said. "It will provide additional music rooms, art rooms, labs, classrooms and library space, which all of which will be used by both learning communities."

"The possibilities of what this school can bring to northeastern Connecticut are boundless," he said.

EASTCONN operates QVMCHS as part of a partnership with QVCC, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson, Windham and Woodstock.

*An open house for students, particularly prospective 10th-graders for 2010-2011, will be held Jan. 28, 2010, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the QVCC auditorium, 742 Upper Maple St., Danielson.*

To learn more, contact QVMCHS Principal Gino LoRicco at [gloricco@eastconn.org](mailto:gloricco@eastconn.org), or call him at 860-412-7400.