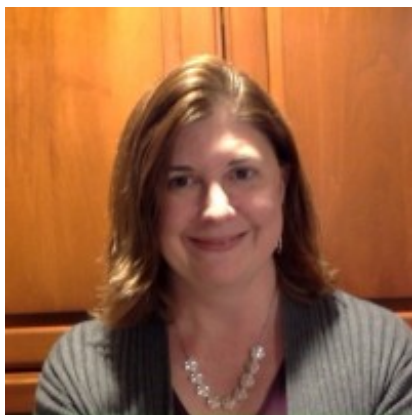




Winter Newsletter

January-February-March
2025



Leave your Memories for Mary

Mary Beilman has been a fixture at First Connections for 22 years. She started her journey with us as a parent volunteer with a toddler in a stroller. That child is now in college, and Mary will be moving on to focus on increasing her certifications for her business, Baby Connections. It's impossible to estimate how many new moms have sat in a circle with her during playgroup or New Moms Group over the years, but if you would like to send a message or photo to our online memory book, please use the link below. This book will not be made public or shared on social media - it will be printed for Mary's enjoyment only. Mary is one of a kind;

patient, caring and so skilled in the first year of life for babies and parents that she is irreplaceable to us. She will be missed, and we wish her all the happiness and success she deserves. [Memory Book Link](#)

Mary's last New Moms Group will be Wednesday, December 18 at 1:00 via Zoom

Free Winter Parent Workshops



Email lmattthews@jri.org to register for these programs

The Foundations of Self-Regulation Presented by Christine D'Agostino

Join us for a webinar to explore:

- the difference between self-control and self-regulation
- why self-regulation is a foundational requirement for all higher-order thinking skills
- how we can support its development in our children.

We will explore how a young child moves from fully relying on co-regulation with caregivers toward developing an inner capacity for self-regulation over time.

**This live virtual program will be held on:
Thursday, January 23, 8:00 p.m.**

It will not be recorded.



Encouraging Self-Help Skills in Children Age 18 Months to 5 Years

Presented by Pediatric Occupational Therapist Anna Knox

Children grow so quickly, and we're not always aware of what they are developmentally capable of doing for themselves in our day-to-day home life. Anna will give us information and an



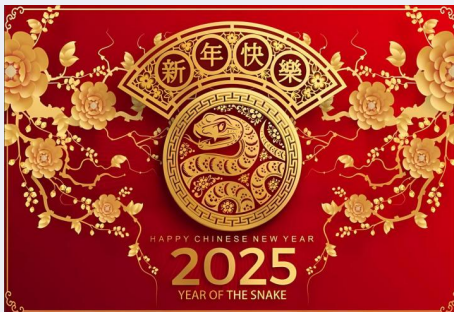
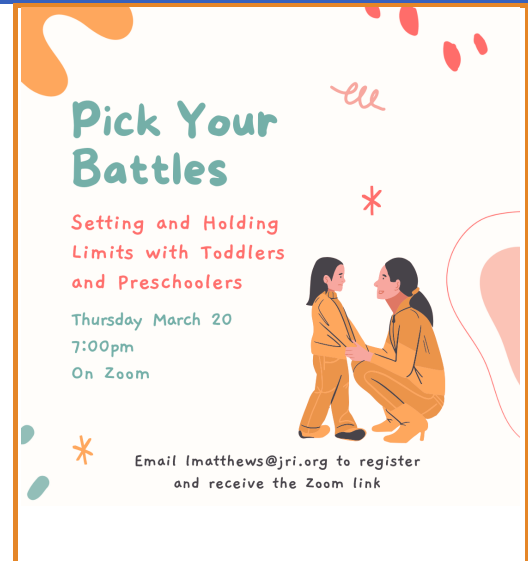
overview of how we can teach our children to do things for themselves at particular ages during toddlerhood and up to kindergarten age.

**This live virtual program will be held on:
Thursday, February 13, 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

Pick Your Battles: Setting & Holding Limits with Toddlers & Preschoolers Presented by Ellie Springer, M.Ed.

Young children thrive when they have clear & consistent boundaries, when they know what to expect from their caregivers, and when they know the adults are in control. Toddlers' and preschoolers' developing brains drive them to seek control and power, though, so they are constantly pushing the boundaries we set for them. In this presentation, Ms. Ellie will talk about how to decide whether a battle is worth fighting, when to give your child some control, when and how to set a limit, and what to do when you get that inevitable pushback.

Join us on March 20 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom!



2025 is the Year of the Snake!
Held at Maynard Public Library
77 Nason Street

Join us in Celebrating the Lunar New Year

Everyone is welcome at this cultural learning event celebrating the Lunar New Year! Jasmine Wang & Ellie Springer will lead a bilingual Mandarin/English story time.

There will also be music, crafts, games, activities, and Chinese snacks provided. Open to all - Mandarin-speaking and non-Mandarin-speaking families. Stories and activities will be aimed at children ages 2-6, but older and younger siblings are welcome. Register

at: <https://forms.office.com/r/ptsSHafiys> Registration will be limited based on the size of the room.

Saturday, January 25, 10:30-11:30

New Parent Programs - Prenatal to 12 Months

FIRST YEAR OF LIFE SUPPORT GROUP
Meets Thursdays, 9:30-11 beginning Jan. 9
Meets via Zoom weekly & in person monthly
Email [Emily Fiorini](mailto:Emily.Fiorini@maynardpubliclibrary.org) for the Zoom Link

The First Year of Life Group, combines our Emotional Wellbeing after Baby group with our New Moms group. This group will be facilitated by Emily Fiorini, MA, who many of you already know as our amazing Emotional Wellbeing facilitator and occasional New Moms group facilitator. Parents in the postpartum year can join this free weekly group



Navigating the 4th Trimester: Supporting

to get support for their own emotional wellbeing, recovery and transition into parenthood; baby's development; feeding and sleep support; and community resources

Meets in Person at First Connections,
179 Great Road, #104A, Acton:
February 6 & March 6

RSVP to imatthews@jri.org for in-person and guest speaker dates

Guest Speakers: March 27, 10-11:00
Dana Williams & Melissa Brandon
from the Pelvic Health Team at Emerson Health

Learn more about pelvic floor dysfunction and pain, and how it can be treated. Do you leak when you laugh, cough or sneeze? Have you had trouble lifting or getting back into exercise? Do you have pain with intercourse? Join us for this helpful discussion.

The FYOL group supports all new parents. Whether you are breastfeeding or bottle feeding, parenting solo, partnered, or married, an adoptive or biological parent, have one baby or more, you are welcome here.

Your Postpartum Journey

This workshop offers a supportive place for expecting parents to explore the physical, emotional, and relational challenges that accompany the first 3 months after birth. In this workshop you will learn evidence-based strategies to support your postpartum journey. You will create a personal postpartum plan that includes practical strategies for adjusting to life with a newborn, managing challenges related to sleep and feeding, changes in your relationships and nurturing your own wellbeing during this transformative time. Join us for this interactive session facilitated by lactation counselor and infant sleep consultant, Mary Beilman, who draws from over 20 years supporting new parents, and Emily Fiorini, mental health counselor specializing in infant and parent mental health and First Connections program director. Additionally, participants will receive a list of resources for new parents. Birthing person and a support person are welcome to attend. Register through Emerson Health.

Wednesday, February 19, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Held at 310 Baker Ave., Suite 165, Concord
[REGISTER HERE](#)

The above programs are provided through funding from
Concord-Carlisle Foundation and Nordblom Family

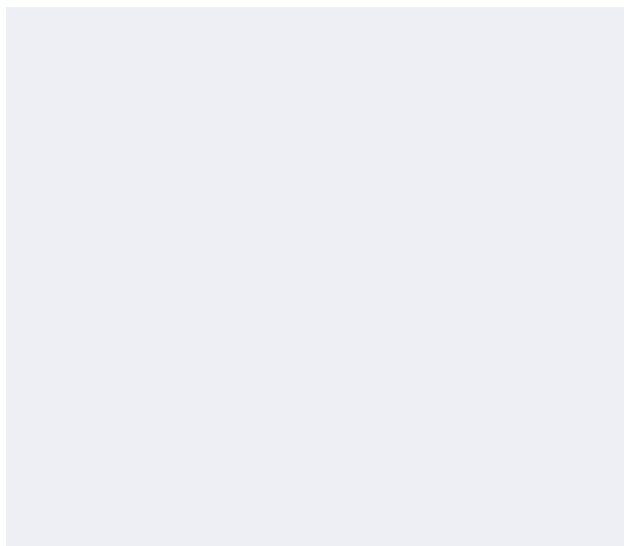
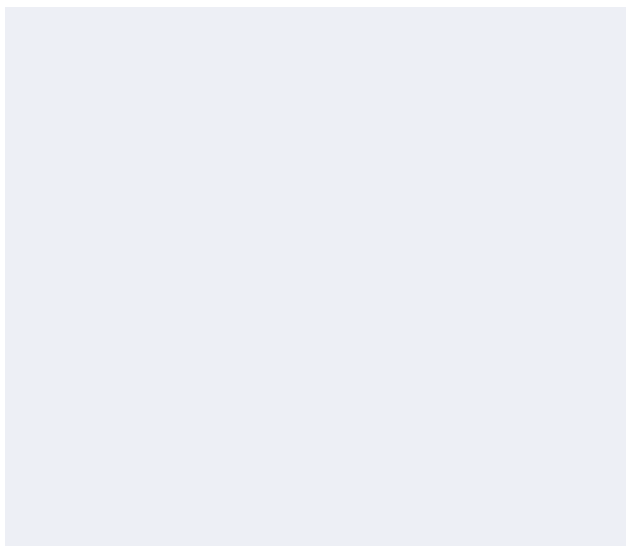
Foundation. Emerson Health is waiving fees, providing free space, and handling registration for "The 4th Trimester."



2025: A Year of Nature Play and Exploration



Each season this year, First Connections will choose an activity, tips and information for caregivers about how to incorporate nature and outdoor exploration into their daily routines. Families can come to First Connections' office in Acton to pick up the activities or find links to them on our website. We hope they will share their experiences with us and/or share them on social media, tagging us @firstconnectionsfcce on Instagram and @firstconnections on Facebook, and using the hashtag #yearofnatureplay. We invite you to join us in our year-long celebration of nature and outdoor play for young families! Here are two free winter activities to get you started!



Littleton Little Town Tree Hunt

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brown's Woods
Littletown Conservation Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Newtown Hill
Littletown Historical Society |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bumblebeek Park Red Trail
Bumblebeek Park | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Oak Hill Red Trail
Still River Pottery Planning |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bumblebeek Park Yellow Trail
Littletown Youth League | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Oak Hill Yellow Trail
Ayer Oil Scout Troop 83542 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cloverdale Conservation Area
Cloverdale Land Stewards | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert and Emily Cobb Memorial Forest
Littletown PTA |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> George and Lucy Yapp
Conservation Land White Trail
The McCall Family | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Town Forest Yellow Trail
Little Town Coffee Co |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> George and Lucy Yapp
Conservation Land Yellow Trail
Forest Garden | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lucy and George Blue Trail
Littletown Youth Baseball |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> George and Lucy Yapp
Conservation Land Red Trail
County Associates | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Town Forest Balsam Trail
Forest Street Neighbors |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hartwell Family Memorial
Preserve Yellow Trail
Pittsboro Family | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Two Brothers Trail
(North Side of 110)
Browns Troop 64187 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hartwell Family Memorial
Preserve Blue Trail
Lower Mountain Loc | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Two Brothers Trail
(South Side of 110)
Friends of the Southern River Library |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Long Lake Park Yellow Trail
Boy Scouts of America Troop 20 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whitetail Woods Orange Trail
Sanctuary |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Long Lake Park Red Trail
Woodshed Strength & Conditioning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whitetail Woods White Trail
Pregnancy and Postpartum PT |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mill Hill
Littletown Lycium | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Williams Land
Be Well and Beyond |

Organizations in Littleton have decorated trees along conservation trails in town for you to enjoy with your family through January 1st!

Map of Trails where trees are decorated
Facebook site for sharing your tree finds.
 Click on list to print.

Bare tree with no Leaves



Two types of cones—pine, spruce, cedar, etc.



Evergreen tree with its needles still on



Acorns with their "hats" on



Squirrel



Lichen on the bark of a tree or fallen log



Bird (you might have to use your ears!)



Ice or frost

In addition to this scavenger hunt sheet you can use anywhere, this handout includes recommendations for winter nature picture books, and suggestions for ways to explore nature inside!

You can print this from our website here!



Winter Playgroups

Our playgroups are free of charge and open to all families living in Acton, Bedford, Boxboro, Carlisle, Concord, Hanscom AFB, Harvard, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, and Westford. Residents outside of those towns can attend if there is space. **To register for a playgroup, [email lmatthews@jri.org](mailto:email.lmatthews@jri.org)** and include your child's age, town you live in, the playgroup you're registering for, and the name of the person who will attend the group with your child for name tags. Space is limited in all groups.



MONDAYS, 10:00-11:00

Ages and Stages Playgroup for ages 24-35 months

Jan. 13, 27, Feb. 3, 10, 24, Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24

at Concord Carousel Preschool

This group will meet in a preschool classroom, where the children will have a chance to play with their toys and activities based on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to help them practice their social, fine motor, language, problem-solving, and other skills as they interact with each other and the materials. Each group will end with a circle time with songs and a book. Infant siblings in carriers welcome.

TUESDAYS, 10:00-11:00

Little Learners Playgroup for Mobile Babies through 5 Years

Jan. 21, 28, Feb. 4, 11, 25, Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25

at Hanscom Air Force Base's Youth Center

This group will provide opportunities for children to play with peers, learn or practice new skills, and explore different toys. Caregivers will have the chance to play with their children and to connect with other families on the base. Each group will include a circle time with songs and a book. Come see old friends and meet new ones! Infant siblings in carriers welcome. Participants must have access to the base to attend this group.

WEDNESDAYS, 10:30-11:30

Ages & Stages Playgroup for Ages 12-23 Months

Jan. 15, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 26, Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26

at Sargent Memorial Library, Boxborough

This group will include developmentally-appropriate toys and activities each week to support different areas of a one-year-old's development, based on suggested activities in the Ages & Stages Developmental Milestones. Each meeting will also include a circle time with songs and a story. Infant siblings welcome but should be held or in a carrier to keep them safe.

THURSDAYS, 10:00-11:00

Social & Emotional Skills Playgroup for Ages 18 months to 5 years

Jan. 16, 23, 30, Feb. 6, 13, 27, Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27

at First Connections, Acton

This playgroup will meet in our playroom where we will have a large selection of toys, pretend kitchen, dolls, books, and a train table. Children will have time for free play, as well as to engage in activities designed to support their social and emotional development, based on the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire. Each group will end with a circle time, songs and a story. Infant siblings in a carrier are welcome.

FRIDAYS, 10:30-11:30

Tinker Playgroup for children ages 3-5

Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 14, 28, Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28

at Maynard Public Library

Play and learn together, meet new friends, and practice important STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) skills for children. Based on a curriculum of activities developed by the Boston Children's Museum. Younger siblings welcome, but we will use small parts, so please be aware for children who are still mouthing objects.

Saturday Morning Virtual Mandarin Story Times for Ages 2-5

Meets on Zoom Saturdays from 9:00-9:30

Ms. Jasmine's popular program includes read aloud stories, language facial exercises, introduction to Chinese characters and pronunciations, and virtual activities. Jasmine Wang graduated from Communication University of China with an M.A. in Language arts and a Certification of Mandarin Grade A. She specializes in teaching vocalization, speech, recitation and debate. This is a Mandarin immersion experience. **New families should email**

xwang@jri.org to receive the Zoom link.

One-time registration and weekly zoom sign-ins will be used to track attendance.



**Attention families
with toddlers!**

Who We Serve:

Families with a child 1.5 to 3 years in Acton, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Hanscom AFB, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury or Westford

Priority will be given to immigrant families and those with limited resources or other challenges.



“

Too many children fall behind before they even set foot in a classroom and they struggle to catch up. We see a different path. We help families find the path, set off upon it and succeed together.

”



**FREE
BOOKS & TOYS**

A school readiness program for children 1.5 to 3 years old.

No cost to you!

Apply online: Scan the QR code to submit the registration form or contact Jasmine Wang, Coordinator
978-505-4227
firstconnections@jri.org



**ParentChild+
Program includes:**

Home Visits: A trained home visitor will come to your home twice a week for 30 minutes.

Fun Learning: They will bring a book or toy each week and show you how to use it to help your child learn. You keep the books and toys!



We speak:

English

Spanish/Español

Mandarin/中文

All languages welcome

First Connections offers the ParentChild+ program to families in our service area through a grant from the MA Department of Early Education and Care! This **free program brings fun and engaging early learning experiences right to your home.** Each week a home visitor brings a **high quality book or toy** that the family **keeps**. The home visitor models reading, conversation, and play designed to promote language, literacy, and school readiness. Families with a child age 16 to 36 months may apply. This 23-46 week program supports families who cannot easily access traditional playgroups. Lack of transportation, language barriers, multiple toddlers, single parenting, or other circumstances are also considerations for participation. Any interested family may inquire by contacting Jasmine at: firstconnections@jri.org or texting 978-505-4227.

ParentChild+ has a 40-year track record of supporting early childhood success. **Children who take part in this program are well prepared to transition to preschool and kindergarten**





Acton-Boxborough Public Schools Kindergarten Information Night
Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

[Registration information and calendar](#)

Online registration begins January 15 for children who are 5 by September 1, 2025

Bedford Public Schools

[Information will be posted here February 1st](#)

or call Tami Heywood at 781-275-6804

Registration will be for children who are 5 by August 31, 2025

Carlisle Public Schools

To receive the Kindergarten planning postcard, contact Linda Cavallo-Murphy, Registrar.
978-369-6550 x3191 or email lcavallomurphy@carlisle.k12.ma.us

[FAQ for Kindergarten Registration](#)

Registration will be for children who are 5 by September 1, 2025.

Concord Public Schools Kindergarten Registration Begins Online January 1, 2025

[Registration Information Here](#)

Contact Erin Higgins with questions: ehiggins@concordps.org or 978-318-1500 x8101

Registration will be for children who are 5 by August 31, 2025

Hanscom AFB Residents

[School Liaison Program](#)

Harvard Public Schools

[Fill out a Pre-Registration Form Here](#)

or call the elementary school 978-456-4145

Registration will be for children who are 5 by September 1, 2025

Lincoln-Hanscom Public Schools

[Kindergarten Information Page](#)

or contact mradi@lincnet.org at the K-4 office, 781-259-9404

Registration will be for children who are 5 before October 1, 2025.

Littleton Public Schools

Registration will begin in May. Check here in April: [Information Here.](#)

or contact Shaker Lane School, 978-486-3959, x1301 or kfitzpatrick@littletonps.org

Registration will be for children who are 5 prior to September 1, 2025

Maynard Public Schools

Contact Green Meadow School, 978-897-8246 or ndangelo@maynard.k12.ma.us

Registration will be for children who are 5 by September 1, 2025

Westford Public Schools

[Kindergarten registration information page](#)

Registration opens February 12, call 978-692-5560 x2107 with questions

Registration will be for children who are 5 by September 1, 2025

Sudbury Public Schools "Kickoff to Kindergarten" Information Night

Tuesday, January 30 virtually

[Early Childhood Website](#)

Questions: early_childhood@sudbury.k12.ma.us or 978-639-3204

Registration opens February 1st for children who will be 5 on September 1, 2025

Getting Ready for Kindergarten!

If you have a child who will be entering kindergarten in 2025, you

can sign up to get a monthly email from our early childhood education coordinator, Ellie Springer. In January, February, and March, we will share articles on kindergarten readiness and how to help your child *and you* get ready to start kindergarten. In April through August, we will send you a monthly calendar with simple activities you can do each day to help your child develop the skills to be ready to learn in kindergarten. Please note, these activities WILL NOT emphasize "academic" skills like letters and numbers but instead will focus primarily on the skills kindergarten teachers say children actually need to be successful in school, such as self-help, fine motor, and social-emotional skills.

Please fill out this form to register to receive these emails:

<https://forms.office.com/r/3xadWuvpha>

Before I go to Kindergarten...

I can ask for help and I know my name.	I can go to the bathroom all by myself!	I can dress myself even with zippers & buttons.	I can follow routines. CLASS schedule
I can take turns and share.	I can count objects & recognize some numbers.	I can hold a pencil correctly.	I can tell you my birthday. Happy Birthday!!
I can identify colors. ABC	I can identify the letters in my name.	I can play with crayons & glue sticks.	I can cut safely with scissors.
I can identify some shapes.	I can do a simple puzzle & build a block tower.	I can listen to a story & sing a song.	People understand me when I talk.

Free & Low-Cost Parent & Child Programs in the Community



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

February 8: *A Sweetie Valentines Day Party* will be hosted by Acton Boxborough Family Network from 10-11:30am with a Sensory Friendly Party immediately prior from 9:30-10am at Blanchard Elementary School gym, 493 Massachusetts Ave, Boxborough. Families with young children can enjoy fun activities provided by local preschools, crafts, and **music by Rockabye Beats!** Attendance is free to ABFN member families, Non-ABFN Families welcome: \$10. **Register Today!**

January 25: *Winter Wonderland* will be held at Hunt Recreation Center, 90 Stow Street, Concord. This FREE program will take place from 1-3:00 with horse wagon rides, s'mores by a bonfire, crafts, a bounce house, D.J. and more. No registration required.

Concord Youth Theater Productions for Ages 2-9 Years-Saturdays 10:30-11:30

Interactive new & improved versions of favorite stories with a sing-a-long and audience participation encouraged. Read the story at home, then see it acted out in person! Held at 53 Church Street, West Concord. \$5 cash at the door. For more information email cyt@concordyouththeatre.org or call 978-371-1482. Upcoming schedule - no reservations required!

December 21: *The Grinch*

January 11: *Doctor Dolittle*

January 25: *The Princess and the Pea*

February 1: *Chicken Little*

February 15: *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

March 1: *Pinocchio*

March 15: *Brave*

March 29: *Robin Hood*

April 12: *Sleeping Beauty*

AUTHOR VISITS

December 14, 11-11:45: "*Nisha's Just-Right Christmas Tree*" Storytime with the authors at Silver Unicorn Bookstore, 12 Spruce Street, Acton. No registration, free.

December 15, 10-5:00: *Authors & Illustrators Day at the Family Trees Celebration of Children's Literature* at Concord Museum. Special visits from costumed characters and 11 authors & illustrators today. The exhibit presents dozens of decorated story trees inspired by Children's picture books and continues thru January 1st. Museum fundraiser: \$20 adults, \$10 ages 6-17, \$5 ages 3-5, 2 & under free. **29th Annual Family Trees — Concord Museum**

January 8, 2-3:30: "*Dr. Rosie Helps the Animals*" Hands-on Vet Experience at Acton Library. The Author will read her book then show the children examples of treatments using their own stuffed animals. Register Jan. 1 [01/08/2025](https://www.actonlibrary.org/2025/01/08/2025-Dr-Rosie-Helps-the-Animals-Hands-On-Vet-Experience) | "*Dr. Rosie Helps the Animals*" - Hands-On Vet Experience | [Acton Memorial Library](https://www.actonlibrary.org/)

MUSEUM PROGRAMS

December 24, 10-3:00: **FREE Admission to the Ecotarium today!** Free programs = Animals in Winter, Animal Discovery, Science Discoveries, Table Top Ice Fishing (Planetarium & Otter Encounter require \$tickets) Celebrate the Holidays at the EcoTarium! | EcoTarium

December 28, 10-12:00: **Maker Space for Little Artists at deCordova Museum**, Lincoln. All ages creating activities based on two sculptures, "A Snail's Pace" and "Huff and Puff". Includes admission to the park for the day. Art activity held indoors. \$5. Maker Space: Winter Break for Little Artists & Junior Creators - The Trustees of Reservations

December 31, 12-1:00: **Bessie's Rockin' Noon Year's Eve** at Discovery Museum, Acton. Shake, rattle & roll into the New Year by making party hats & noise makers. Come decked out in your finest pajamas and stick around for the count down with a noon year's eve ball drop!
Bessie's Rockin' Noon Year's Eve | Discovery Museum. Activities free with admission.

Ways to Save on Admission

December: **The Grinch's Grotto, Gingerbread in Toyland & School Vacation Fun & Games** at Springfield Museums. Check the calendar on website to see when the Grinch will make an appearance. Activities free with admission (click "ways to save").

Grinchmas: Holiday Events | Springfield Museums

January 18: **Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood** exhibit opens at Boston Children's Museum. Did you know you can visit the museum for \$1 on Sunday afternoons? Welcome to Boston Children's Museum! - Boston Children's Museum

FREE SPECIAL LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Dec. 16, Jan 13, Feb. 10, Mar. 10, 10-11:30: **Busy Bees Playtime at Littleton Library**, 41 Shattuck St. Preschool-age children and caregivers are welcome to join other families for playtime with the library's toys. Register on library calendar. December 2024 Events | Reuben Hoar Library

December 19, 4-5:00: **Storytime with Santa at Littleton Library**, 35 Shattuck St. Register: 12/19/2024 | Story Time with Santa | Reuben Hoar Library. Photos welcome.

December 20, 10:30-11: **Spanish Storytime for ages 1 1/2 thru 5** with stories, songs and rhymes at Goodnow Library, 21 Concord Rd., Sudbury. No registration. Bilingual program.

December 21, 10:30-11: **Winter Movies & Muffins for Ages 2+** at Lincoln Library, 3 Bedford Rd. Watch winter-themed film versions of classic picture books and enjoy muffins and juice. Drop in, no registration.

December 21, 10:30-11:30: **Welcome Winter Storytime & Cookie Decorating** at Maynard Library, 77 Nason St. Celebrate the first day of winter with stories, sugar cookie decorating and make paper snowflakes. No registration required.

December 23, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00: **Gingerbread Party** at Concord Library, 129 Main St. See the giant gingerbread house and enjoy a variety of gingerbread crafts including decorating your very own cookie to take home. Ages 10 & under requires supervision. Register for your arrival time. Calendar | Events | Concord Free Public Library

December 28, 10:30-11:15: **Silly Sally's Marvelous Magic Show** for all ages at Maynard Library. Register here

December 30, 3:30-4:30: **Drive-in Movie at Concord Library**, 129 Main St. Customize your very own cardboard box car and then use it as your seat while you enjoy a short movie & snacks. Then take your car home! Ages 2+ with an adult. Register: 12/30/2024 | "Drive-In" Movie, ages 2+ | Concord Free Public Library

December 31, 11-12:15: **Family Noon Year's Eve at Fowler Library**, 1322 Main St., Concord. Drop in to ring in 2025 early! Wear your sparkly best, create crafts, sing and countdown for when the clock strikes 12. Cheer in the New Year with snacks! No registration required.

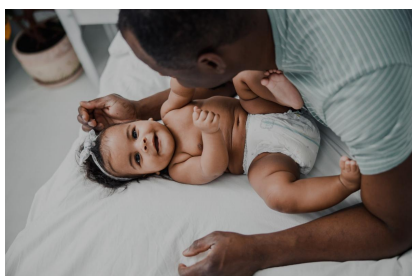
December 31, 11-12:00: **Noon Years Eve Party** for all ages at Goodnow Library, 21 Concord Rd., Sudbury. Includes crafts, music, party hats & countdown at noon. No registration.

December 31, 12-1:00: *Noon Year's Eve Party* with story, dancing, crafts, counting, crafts, countdown, snowglobes & bubbles at Maynard Library for ages 3-12. Party attire welcome. No registration required.

February 8, 10:30-11:30: *Valentines Storytime & Breakfast for Seniors and Children* Age 3+ (special someone doesn't have to be a grandparent). Held at Carlisle library, enjoy stories, songs, a craft and waffles! Register January 11. [02/08/2025 | Grandparents & Grandkids' Valentine Story Time and Breakfast | Gleason Public Library](#)

February 21, 3:30-4:30: *Spanish Fun Program with Miss Esther* at Concord Library, 129 Main St. Bilingual program with music, and games. Drop in, no registration. All ages!

First Connections' Updates



Infant Diapers Needed

A number of families with infants in our community are in need of diapers for

their babies right now, so if anyone has leftover diapers size newborn, 1, 2, or 3 we welcome any donations. They can be dropped off at our door any time since the building is always open.

Babies grow fast, so larger sizes and pull-ups are also always welcome and can easily be shipped to us via our Wishlist below.

For 2025, qualified families will be able to receive 1 box of diapers and wipes on a monthly basis if they are residents of Acton, Bedford, Boxboro, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury or Westford and have a proven financial need.



Our List of Child Care Providers has been Updated!

Separated by the 11 towns in our catchment area, the list includes:

- Center-Based, After-School, and Family Childcare Programs
- Hours the Program is Open
- Whether they Accept Vouchers or have Financial Aid
- Website, Email Address, Phone Numbers
- Ages the Program Accepts
- Where to Apply for a Voucher or a Head Start Program

[Posted on our Website](#) or email Linda: lmattthews@jri.org

[Diaper Pantry Wish List](#)

New Community Resources

NEW

Caring for Aging Parents While Parenting

A free support group has begun that will assist parents who are balancing the unique challenges of caring for both children and aging parents at the same time. Join facilitator Amy Chervin to share or just listen, find resources, ideas and support. Held at Roudenbush Community Center, Westford

Upcoming dates: December 17, January 28, 7-8:00 p.m.

[More Details](#)

[RSVP Here](#)



UPDATE



Lurie Center for Autism Free Coffee Convo Presentation Series Topics

December 18: Fever and Autism, A team of Drs. and Ph.Ds
January 15: Profound Autism, Lisa Nowinski, Ph.D.
February 12: Supporting Siblings: Tips for Parents & Caregivers
A team of psychologists and social workers
March 19: Genetics of Autism, Kelly Dakin & Susan Kuo, PhD
April 16: Emergency Preparedness & ASD, Julie O'Brien, LMHC
May 21: ADHD & Autism, Nora Friedman & Christina Sakai, M.D.
June 18: Recognizing Autistic Joy, Brett Mulder, PsyD
[Register to receive email reminders of topics](#)

Registration opens 4 weeks prior to each event. Presentations take place 6:30-7:30 p.m., are free and open to the public. Links are emailed the day before the presentation

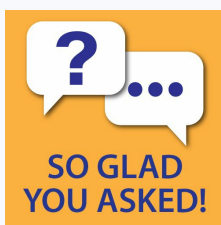
Need Help Paying your Heating Bill?

Apply online or at the local agency for your town.
You do not need to be on public assistance.
Renters and homeowners are eligible for assistance.
Assistance extends from November to April 30.
Pays for oil, electricity, gas, propane, kerosene, wood & coal.
Application available in 16 languages.

[Check the 60% SMI Chart for Your Household Size](#)

A family of 3 qualifies if household income is \$79,470

[Apply or find your local Agency here](#)



"So Glad You Asked!" Coming in 2025 A New Podcast from MGH's Center for Women's Mental Health, Perinatal & Reproductive Psychiatry Program

Dr. Ruta Nonacs, Staff Psychiatrist, and Alice Hales, mom of 4, will co-host an interactive podcast to have your toughest questions about mental health in motherhood answered. Hear real-time answers to your questions from top experts in the field and hear from other moms who have faced similar challenges.
Fill out the [Questionnaire](#) with your interests!

Growth: Harmonizing Solitude, Guidance & Freedom Part of Concord's Transforming Childhood Series

Psychologist Andrew Richlin will address the balance between isolation & socializing, family & community, goal-driven activities & open-ended play, and self-direction versus being led in this discussion that focuses on children's after-school hours and summer plans.

**Held at Concord's Main Library, 129 Main Street
January 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

[Register Here](#)




Buried in Treasure Free Groups being held in Bedford & Westford

If you or someone you know can answer yes to one or more of these questions, then this free 15-week in-person workshop may be for you:

- Do you want to declutter but are overwhelmed?
- Are you struggling to let go of some items?
- Are you unable to use some rooms in your home as intended?
- Do you worry about having guests over?
- Do you have storage spaces filled with stuff?

This is a relaxed program open to all levels of clutter. It will teach you how to build insight skills and strategies to help declutter, get organized & reduce acquiring.

**ARE YOU READY TO
CLEAR THE CLUTTER?**

Buried in Treasures Workshop
Every Thursday starting January 9, 2025
12 Mudge Way (Town Center)
Flint Room 1pm-3pm

- Do you want to declutter but are overwhelmed?
- Are you struggling to let go of some items?
- Are you unable to use some rooms in your home as intended?
- Do you worry about having guests over?
- Do you have storage spaces overflowing with stuff?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions then this 15-week in-person Buried in Treasures workshop may be for you. This is a relaxed program open to all levels of clutter. It will teach you how to build insight, skills and strategies to help declutter, get organized and reduce acquiring.

A BIT workbook will need to be purchased through the COA for \$10 and pre-registration is required. Please call the COA at 781-275-4825 to sign up by December 16th. Residents from Bedford will be prioritized, but residents from surrounding towns are welcome.

BURIED IN TREASURES WORKSHOP

Winter Community Parent Support & Education

The following programs are not provided by First Connections but are compiled here for your convenience.



SEMINARS/WEBINARS

Basic Rights: Understanding the IEP. Gain a deeper understanding of the IEP document as presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Learn why the IEP is important, how it is developed, and about the different sections of the document. Join a discussion on the types of services that can be provided, what measurable goals are, and how to resolve disputes.

January 13, 6-8 pm thru Acton-Boxboro Schools: [Register](#)

January 16, 7-9 pm thru Westford Schools: [Register](#)

McLean Hospital FREE Mental Health Webinars

Register for the link to these and more programs [HERE](#).

Anxiety in Kids & Teens 101 with Lisa Coyne, Ph.D.

January 14, 12:00

When Young People + School = Anxiety with R. Meredith

Elkins, Ph.D., **February 5, 12:00**

Understanding ADHD in Kids & Teens with Roberto

Olivardia, Ph.D., **February 12, 12:00**

Anxiety & OCD in Kids & Teens: On-Demand Course

SUPPORT GROUPS

NAMI Basics (FREE) Information Page

"NAMI Basics" is an on-demand educational program available to parents/caregivers of children and adolescents with emotional or behavioral issues [Link Here](#). NAMI also offers support groups for family members of persons struggling with mental illness, as well as peer groups for those with a diagnosed mental illness. Specialty groups are available for partners and parents, including a Spanish-language group.

Parent Groups Held by the Center for Early Relationship Support (FREE)

If you have any questions, email Leslie, lpucker@jfcbsoston.org or [Website Information](#)

Fragile Beginnings for parents of babies who've spent time in the NICU, Thursdays 10:30-11:30 via zoom

Newly Adoptive Parents of babies under 12 mos. meets on 1st & 3rd Fridays, 10-11:30 in Belmont

Parents of Toddlers (1-3 yrs) meets from 1-2:30 on Wednesdays via zoom,

Spanish-Speaking New Parent Group via zoom on Tuesdays 9-10:30 am. Email jcaceres@jfcbsoston.org or call 781-693-5022.

In-Person New Mothers Group meets weekly in Arlington on Fridays, 10-11:30.

Parents Helping Parents Support Groups (FREE)

Facilitated virtual groups allow parents to get advice, give feedback, and find resources to help you manage day-to-day parenting challenges. Specialty groups include **Single Parents**, **Parents of Preschoolers (3-6 yrs)**, **Mothers**, **Fathers**, **BIPOC Families**, **Parents in Recovery**, and those working with the Department of Children & Families. [Information Page](#)

Infant and Pregnancy Loss Support Group (FREE)

This ongoing monthly group is for those who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy at any stage or infant loss shortly after birth and are looking for support from others with shared experiences. The group is facilitated by an advanced practice nurse practitioner specializing in perinatal grief support. Individuals are encouraged to contact the facilitator, Katie Stockman at kstockman@emersonhosp.org or 617-299-1533 for the connecting zoom link. "We are a compassionate and nurturing community of grieving parents - you are not alone."

[Website](#). **Second Monday of the Month, 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group in Acton (FREE)

Come share the rewards and challenges of raising your grandchildren. Learn from and support others in similar circumstances. Discover ways to relieve stress. Benefit from the resources available from the Commission on

the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, and hear about State agencies which can provide assistance. If you are interested in joining a local group, which meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, 11-12:30, at Acton Senior Center, contact Joe at 978-897-9595 or j.j.oleary@comcast.net. For additional statewide resources, workshops, & evening groups, contact colleen.pritoni@state.ma.us or 617-748-2454. [Website](#). 3-Part **Healing Pathways for Caregivers** begins January 27. **Building & Maintaining Healthy Boundaries** will be held February 2nd. Email for Zoom Link.

Adoption Journeys Monthly Support Group (FREE)

Every month this professionally-facilitated group for adoptive parents meets virtually for support, education, and connection. Periodic guest speakers, family events and a bi-monthly newsletter are additional benefits of registering. To find out more or join this group, call Child & Family Services in Waltham (781-444-1042) or Tewksbury (978-687-5852)

Boston Post Adoption Resources (\$30/35 per group)

This agency provides support groups for adoptive parents (ages 4-7, 8-12 or teens), single adoptive parents, adopted children age 8 and older, parenting as an adoptee, in addition to counseling services. [Website](#)



Denotes funding for this program provided by Mass. Dept. of Early Education & Care CFCE Grant

First Connections, a division of Justice Resource Institute, is one of 84 Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) programs in the state of MA, funded in part by the Department of Early Education and Care and offering regionally specific family support services. Our CFCE funded programs extend to families within our 11-town catchment area including Acton, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hanscom AFB, Harvard, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, and Westford. We also rely on the generous support of local partners who help fund these programs and expand the geographic reach of our First Year of Life & EWAB programs. We are grateful for the financial support of Acton-Boxborough United Way, Concord Carlisle Foundation, Emerson Health Determination of Need Mental Health Grant, The Sudbury Foundation, Maynard Community Chest, Nordblom Family Foundation, William E. Schrafft and Bertha E. Schrafft Charitable Trust, Acton Congregational Church, Concord Trinitarian Congregational Church and individuals like you. Thank you for your support!

Visit our website

First Connections | 179 Great Road Unit 104A | Acton, MA 01720 US

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