

FAMILY SUPPORT NEWS

January, 2010

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

Enriched Lives.....

Enlightened Communities

125 Walnut Street
Watertown, MA 02472
(617) 926-1113
www.beaverbrookstep.org

A private, non-profit corporation dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of individuals with developmental disabilities in Belmont, Waltham, Watertown, Brighton, Brookline & surrounding communities.

REMINDER

Tues, Jan. 26, 2010
Health Care Workshop
7 to 9 P.M.
Beaverbrook STEP
125 Walnut St.
Watertown, Ma 02472

Steve Dwyer, R.N., Director of Health Care Services at STEP will discuss medical topics pertinent to the services STEP provides:

- Current Health Trends
- Multiple Diagnoses
- Medications
- The Aging Process
- Health, Nutrition & Well Being

Gifts at Peppermint Place

An elegant & Fun Gift Store
5 Lexington Street
Waverley Square
Belmont, MA 02478



January, 2010

Dear Beaverbrook STEP family members,

Hoppy New Year to everyone! We had a very successful 4th Annual Family Celebration on November 5, 2009 at Gifts at Peppermint Place. The evening was a resounding success! Over 40 family members and staff enjoyed great food, good company and fabulous shopping! Many thanks to all for purchasing over \$500 in merchandise— getting the shop off to a profitable Holiday sales season. Many of you also attended the STEP Christmas Party in December which also had a great turnout!

Our focus in this issue is on important health care issues for adults with developmental disabilities. Critically important issues—physical activity/sound nutrition for people with developmental disabilities and Alzheimer's Disease in adults with Down syndrome— are reviewed. In depth information on these and many other health care issues will be addressed by STEP's Director of Health Care Services, Steve Dwyer, R.N., at our Family Support Health Care Workshop scheduled for Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 7 to 9 P.M., at Beaverbrook STEP's main office. Your invitation outlining the workshop's agenda is enclosed. We hope you can join us!

So far this fiscal year, STEP has been able to manage the funding cuts from our government sources without cutting essential services. It has not been easy and the hope is that an improving national economic outlook will mean a brighter economic forecast for next year. Thank you also for all of your very generous gifts made this Holiday Season. Your support and contributions have helped us tremendously.

The Massachusetts Budget process will commence soon when Governor Patrick releases his version of FY 2011 budget at the end of this month. STEP already has plans with other local providers to sponsor a joint Legislative Forum for a dialogue with our elected officials about adequately funding services to people with developmental disabilities. So save the date of Tuesday evening, March 16th, from 6:45pm to 8:30pm for this forum. More information will be sent out later, before the event.

Sincerely,

Virginia A. Connolly
Executive Director

Nutrition and Physical Activity for Individuals with Disabilities

Being physically active and nutritionally sound are two of the most important steps that Americans of all ages can take to improve their health. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services promotes *Well-Being Guidelines for Adults with Disabilities*, providing the following science-based information summarized below:



- Adults with disabilities, who are able to, should get a sufficient amount of moderately intense aerobic activity each week, preferable spread throughout the week.
- Adults with disabilities, who are able to, should also do segments of muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or high intensity that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits.
- When adults with disabilities have unique needs limiting exercise, they should engage in regular physical activity according to their abilities and should avoid inactivity.
- Adults with disabilities should consult their health-care provider about the amounts and types of physical activity that are appropriate for their abilities.
- Adults with developmental disabilities may experience poor nutrition, obesity, and other serious health problems. Diabetes and hypertension can also present medical difficulties. Interventions focusing on diet and favorable nutritional intake have been successful in improving quality of life and reducing the rate of serious secondary medical conditions.

For more information about nutrition and physical activity guidelines, please visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) at <http://www.health.gov/>. *This fact sheet was last updated on 03-13-2009.*

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND HOW IT AFFECTS ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

(Excerpted from The Arc Fact Sheet, "Alzheimer's Disease and Mental Retardation")

Alzheimer's disease is age-associated, that is, it affects primarily older adults and its prevalence increases with advancing age. It is a slow and progressive, degenerative disorder of the brain that eventually results in diminished brain function and death. Clinically, Alzheimer's disease is expressed through dementia, or the impairment of cognitive and adaptive skills necessary for successful personal, community and occupational functioning. Dementia also involves memory loss, personality changes, and diminished self-care abilities.

Large population studies show that the rate of occurrence of Alzheimer's disease among persons with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities appears to be about the same as in the general population (or about 6% of persons age 60 and older). The rate among adults with Down syndrome is much higher - about 25% for adults age 40 and older and about 65% for adults age 60 and older.

Research suggests that people with Down syndrome experience premature aging as many as 20 years earlier than would be expected in normal aging, often in their mid to late 40s or early 50s compared to the late 60s for the general population. Behavioral symptoms of Alzheimer's dementia may include, but are not limited to: the development of seizures in previously unaffected individuals, changes in personality, long periods of inactivity or apathy, hyperactive reflexes, loss of activity of daily living skills, visual retention deficits, loss of speech, disorientation, increase in stereotyped behavior, and abnormal neurological signs.

There is no single diagnostic test for Alzheimer's disease. If the presence of Alzheimer's disease is suspected, a complete physical examination and more frequent medical, neurological and psychological evaluations are strongly recommended to establish the progressive nature of the symptoms.

Studies show that persons affected by dementias can continue to live in the community, if the right supports and assistance are provided. Some agencies (including Beaverbrook STEP) have redesigned or developed group homes to accommodate adults with dementia. Tips on care and supports are contained in the booklet, *Developmental Disabilities and Alzheimer's Disease: What You Should Know*, The Arc of the U.S., www.thearc.org.