

## Important Phone Numbers

- **Infoline**, for child care, health and human services, dial 2-1-1 or log on to [www.infoline.org](http://www.infoline.org)
- **Care4Kids**, helps low to moderate income families pay for child care expenses. 1-888-214-5437.
- **CT Birth-to-Three**, for FREE evaluation, based on concerns, of your child's growth and development: 1-800-505-7000.
- **Connecticut Parent Power**, mobilizes parents on issues affecting children and families. [www.ctparentpower.org](http://www.ctparentpower.org), 203-630-3566
- **Danbury Public Schools Early Childhood Program** for children ages 3–5. If your child has difficulty listening, talking, playing, thinking, moving, understanding, or learning, there is help! Call Claudia Anderson at 203-797-4771.
- **Danbury School Readiness Programs**, offer accessible, affordable, and high-quality early childhood experiences. Open to all Danbury children, ages 3 to 5. Sliding fee scale. Call Education Connection, 203-791-1904, ext. 168.
- **Strengthening Families Program** is a prevention program for parents and youth. Call Consuelo Brown at 203-792-4515 or 203-743-4027.

## Parent Support

- **Danbury Regional Child Advocacy Center**, for free parenting classes and home visits, call 203-748-4542.
- **Danbury Youth Services, Inc.** has a youth and family counseling program and mentoring program for pregnant teens/teen moms. Also Youth Employment Services for the community. Call 203-748-2936.
- **Divorced Men's Association of Connecticut**, provides support to all non-custodial parents. Call John DiBiase at 860-643-8516.
- **Families Network of Western Connecticut**, home visitation and family support for new parents. Call Susan Giglio at 203-791-8773.
- **Greater Danbury Child and Family Network**, for families with children who have special needs. Call Heather Rivers at 300-6456. For Spanish, call Gloria Mora at 203-797-8088.
- **Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury**, provides services to Hispanic Families. Call 203-798-2855.
- **Lee y serás (Read and you will be)**, serves Latino parents of infants and toddlers to support early learning. Call 203-797-8088.
- **MOMS Club of Danbury**, support group for stay-at-home moms. For Danbury South, call Christine Foster at 203-791-0760 or email [foster\\_christine@sbcglobal.net](mailto:foster_christine@sbcglobal.net). For Danbury West, email [momsclubdanburywest@yahoo.com](mailto:momsclubdanburywest@yahoo.com)
- **Parent Leadership Training Institute of Danbury**, 20-week course enables parents to become advocates for their children. Call Lauren Halpin at 203-797-8088.
- **ParentNet**, free parenting skills classes. Call Maria Vargas at 203-748-4542.
- **People Empowering People (PEP)** helps Spanish-speaking parents gain experiences and skills while taking greater control of their lives and connecting with the community. Call Gloria Mora at 203-797-8088.
- **WeCAHR** provides support to parents who have children with disabilities. Call 203-792-3540.



**Does Your Child  
Have Health  
Insurance?  
If not, call toll-free:  
2-1-1**

## Playgroups and Storytimes

- **Danbury Public Library Storytime** for 2- to 5-year-old children. Call 203-797-4528.
- **Family Resource Center Playgroup**. Morris St. School, Fridays, 9 am to 10:30 am. For more information call Regina Lima at 203-790-2682.



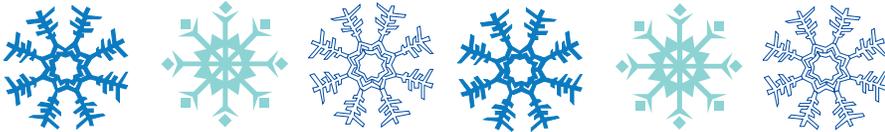
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# Parent • to • Parent

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Fall/Winter 2009

For Danbury Parents of Children  
from Birth to Age 8

Volume 13, Number 2

[www.danburychildrenfirst.org](http://www.danburychildrenfirst.org)

203-797-8088

## Keeping Kids Healthy and Fit in the Winter: Eat Right and Keep Moving!

By Karen Tensa, Danbury Children First Volunteer

It may be a difficult fact to face as we brace for winter and hunker down with schoolwork, but children need to get moving and get more exercise.

“Get outside and play in the snow!” says Nancy Salem, a registered dietician with the Outpatient Nutrition Services at Danbury Hospital.

Your child’s health may depend on it.

According to the Community Report Card of 2007, 1 in 4 children are overweight or obese in the state. And even if your child is a healthy weight, he or she may not be physically fit. According to the Connecticut state Department of Education, only 19% of Danbury public school students passed the state’s fitness test in 2007-08.

“The lifestyle and diet of children and adults have changed drastically,” Salem says. “We rely on restaurant or convenience food, where the food portions are too big. Even our plates are bigger.”

Salem’s tips for healthy eating appear in the column on the right. She notes that “lots of 100% juices are healthy, but limit it to no more than 4 ounces per day.” Save soda and other sugary drinks for special occasions only.

Salem also blames a more sedentary lifestyle for the high obesity rates.

“With videogames and computers and more TV, children don’t play outdoors as much,” she says.

That screen time—computer use, texting, TV—should be limited to no more than two hours per day, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that children be active for at least 60 minutes per day.

### Tips for Healthy Eating

- Increase servings of fruits and vegetables – canned and frozen are OK!
- Limit fruit juices to 4 ounces per day – serve water and 1% or skim milk instead.
- Keep soda and other sugary drinks out of the house
- Serve healthy snacks, such as baby carrots, instead of sweets.
- Eat at the table with no distractions or other activities.

### Go Take a Hike

Director of Recreation Nicholas Kaplanis says the city has a wealth of hiking trails. His favorites include:

- Bear Mountain
- Grounds of Tarrywile Mansion
- Still River Greenway
- Old Quarry Nature Center
- Pond at Rogers Park

Kaplanis called the trails “not difficult” and family friendly for kids of all ages. See Links for Danbury Residents at [www.ci.danbury.ct.us](http://www.ci.danbury.ct.us).

“Kids are watching two to three hours of TV per day,” says Maureen Farrell, Director of Member Wellness for the Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut. “They should go outside and play, just run around.”

Farrell recommends easy, fun activities for all ages, such as playing kickball, going for a walk or heading to a playground, regardless of the temperature.

Nicholas Kaplanis, Danbury’s Director of Recreation, points to a number of organized winter sports options for kids, including PAL basketball, lacrosse at Rogers Park, and wrestling at PAL and some elementary schools, as well as hockey and skating at the Danbury Ice Arena and the facilities at the Regional YMCA.

But physical activity doesn’t have to be a competitive sport, he says. He points to family friendly activities available in the city, such as playgrounds and hiking trails.

“We have a wealth of beautiful hiking trails in Danbury,” Kaplanis says. (See above for a list.) Kaplanis says the trails are beautiful in the fall and winter.

“I’m a big proponent of being outdoors,” Kaplanis says. “It’s just healthier.”

### Danbury Children First

*The mission of Danbury Children First is to involve, empower and support parents to improve the lives of children.*



Se voce gostaria de receber uma copia de “Parent to Parent” en Portuguese chame 797-8088.

Si usted desea obtener una copia de la revista “Parent to Parent” (“De Padres a Padres”) en Español, por favor llame al 203-797-8088.

## And The Survey Says...

### Parents Like Living in Danbury, But Want More Information About Community Services

For the past 18 months, a group of parents representing a broad spectrum of the community have been working to improve access to the services and supports that are needed to raise happy, healthy children in Danbury. The parents have been working closely with Danbury Children First and other community partners. This project, called the Parent Resource Initiative, is funded by the Discovery Initiative of the William Caspar Gaustein Memorial Fund.

In an effort to collect as much information as possible about what gaps in services might exist, and to find out how easy or difficult it is to access services in Danbury, the group collected 500 surveys from parents (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese); conducted 24 interviews with service providers, educators, business people, and city employees; and held a Community Conversation on the Quality of Life for Young Children in Danbury.

Here's what they learned:

#### The Good News—

- Most parents feel that Danbury is a great place to live and raise their children.
- Almost all children are receiving routine healthcare.
- Most families feel very or mostly safe moving in and around Danbury.
- Parents see diversity as a strength in the community.

#### The Not-So-Good News—

- Parents identified a lack of affordable dental services.
- Parents identified a lack of affordable mental/behavioral health services.

#### Some Areas of Concern—

- Many parents feel they don't know about the services that are available to them. It's worth noting that most parents rely on word-of-mouth (friends, neighbors, family) to get information about services.
- Service providers have difficulty getting information to parents.
- Parents would like more information about what is going on in the schools, and more information in their native languages.
- Parents want more and better communications with their children's teachers
- Middle-income families may not have as much access to services as lower-income families.
- More multicultural/bilingual staff people are needed in the schools.
- Parents want more out-of-school time activities and recreational activities for their children.
- People want more kid-friendly neighborhoods, with sidewalks and safe places for biking.



Danbury Parent Leader Leticia Rocha receives an award for her outstanding work on Danbury's Discovery project, the Parent Resource Initiative. The award was presented by David Nee, Executive Director of the William Caspar Gaustein Memorial Fund, at the Memorial Fund's Stone Soup Conference on October 20, 2009.

#### What's Next—

These findings, and all of the work conducted by parents as part of the Parent Resource Initiative, are being incorporated into Danbury's new community-wide plan for young children. Called the New 3R's (Ready Children and Families, Ready Communities, Ready Schools), the plan enables the community to take advantage of funding and other resource opportunities as they become available, so that we can start to "fill the gaps" in services needed for Danbury's families. The ultimate goal is that all Danbury children, ages birth through eight, are healthy and ready for school and lifelong learning.

For more information about the Parent Resource Initiative and the New 3R's, call Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088.

## Become a Parent Leader!

Parent Leadership Classes will give you the skills you need to help your kids and others in the community.

#### Parent Leadership Training Institute:

- Attend a FREE 20-week course (once a week).
- Learn how your community works.
- Become familiar with local government.
- Develop leadership skills and coalition building skills.
- Empower yourself!

CEUs and College Credits may be available!

Next class begins January 2010.

For more information, contact Lauren Halpin at Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088.

#### People Empowering People (PEP):

- 10 weekly 2-hour sessions for parents conducted in Spanish.
- Provides opportunities and resources for parents to gain skills and get connected to the community.
- Builds on the gifts and capacities of each person.

For more information, contact Gloria Mora at 203-797-8088.

**FREE dinner and childcare provided at each class.**

Please Join Us!  
Holiday Breakfast to  
Support Parent Leadership  
on December 10, 2009  
Call 203-797-8088.

## Danbury-area Parenting Classes and Support Groups Can Be Informative, Rewarding, and Fun

Feeling a little overwhelmed by your toddler? Want to make some connections with other parents? Interested in improving your fathering skills?

With the broad range of parenting classes and support groups that are available in Danbury, you can learn anything from how to change a diaper and give your baby a bath to how to become an advocate in the community for children. For more information, or to sign up, call the numbers listed. Additional information about parenting classes and support groups can be found by dialing 2-1-1 or logging on to [www.infoline.org](http://www.infoline.org).

**Programs for Parents**—Six-week series of classes covering “Childbirth Preparation,” “Baby Care Basics,” and “Child Safety.” Classes meet from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in the Robilotti Conference Center at Danbury Hospital. Fee for the series is \$200. One-day Childbirth Preparation Class is also offered on a Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and includes “Baby Care Basics.” Fee is \$175. Call Danbury Hospital at 1-866-374-0007 for more information.

**Mother/Baby Talk Support Group**—Free support group for mothers of babies zero to five months. Meets Tuesdays from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm at the First Congregational Church of Bethel. Call 1-866-374-0007.

**New Mothers Support Group**—Held every Thursday from 1 pm to 3 pm at the Connecticut Childbirth & Women’s Center. \$20, sliding fee scale. Also offers “Return to Work” breastfeeding classes. Call Barbara Latterner, RN, and lactation consultant at 845-279-7605 for information.

**Nurturing Fathers Group and 24/7 Dads**—Free groups for fathers and father figures. Meet other dads, share experiences, learn hands-on skills, and/or learn about the changing role of fathers. Call Families Network of Western Connecticut at 203-791-8773 for more information.

**Feliz Mama**—Drop-in social group for parents of young children who speak Spanish or Portuguese. Call Families Network of Western Connecticut at 203-791-8773.

**ParentNet**—Free 8-week classes for parents or caretakers of children of all ages. Provides parenting education, support, and skill development. Evening and weekend classes with childcare provided; conducted in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Call the Danbury Regional Child Advocacy Center, 203-748-4542.

**C.O.P.E.S. (Communication of Parent Effectiveness Skills)**—Provides parenting information, advocacy, and skill development for parents with infants and toddlers. A parents’ group and children’s group meet concurrently to improve communication skills between parent and child. Weekly groups are offered in English and in Spanish with

door to door transportation provided. Call the Danbury Regional Child Advocacy Center, 203-748-4542.

**Education Connection**—Offers low-cost classes for parents and childcare providers on a variety of topics throughout the year. Call 1-860-587-0863.

**Grandparent Support Group**—For grandparents who are the primary caretakers of their grandchildren. Call the Danbury Regional Child Advocacy Center at 203-748-4542.

**Parent Leadership Training Institute**—Free 20-week class that teaches parents how to be advocates for children and how make changes in the community to benefit families. (See opposite page for more information.) Call Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088.

**People Empowering People**—Free 10-week class helps Spanish-speaking parents gain skills and connect with the community and each other. (See opposite page for more information.) Call Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088.

**Lee y serás (Read and You Will Be Anything)**—Free 6-week program conducted in Spanish teaches parents how to build literacy skills in their children. Call Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088.

**For Parents of Children with Special Needs**—WeCAHR, The Greater Danbury Child and Families Network (LICC), the Danbury Special Education PTA (SEPTA), and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) run workshops and programs throughout the year for parents who have children with special needs. For more information, call WeCAHR at 203-792-3540, Danbury Children First at 203-797-8088, or CPAC at 800-445-2722.

**And if you just want to get out of the house this winter... Preschool Open Gym**—Held at the Police Athletic League (PAL) building at 35 Hayestown Road. Children play with a variety of ride-on toys, balls, and other equipment while parents meet and mingle. \$30 membership for each family per session. Call PAL at 203-778-4725.

### Can You Help Support This Newsletter and Our Other Programs?

Danbury Children First is donor dependent and needs your help to continue its programs and services.

Can you send a donation?

All donations are tax-deductible.

Checks should be made payable to Danbury Children First and mailed to us at 83 West Street, Danbury, CT 06810.

Or log on to [www.danburychildrenfirst.org](http://www.danburychildrenfirst.org) to donate.

Questions? Call Linda Kosko at 203-797-8088. Thank you!

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