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# Beginning Bridges partnership provides family support

By Christine Galeone CORRESPONDENT



Parents follow their children's lead during a play group at Beginning Bridges. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

UXBRIDGE — While other family service organizations are under scrutiny, it's comforting that some are providing free programs and resources helping families with young children to not only survive, but thrive.

Beginning Bridges Family and Community Partnership, a nonprofit family support organization for families with children from infants to 8 years old, is one of those organizations.

Founded in 1998, Beginning Bridges offers an array of programs and resources for young children and their families. It is funded by a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grant and sponsored by the South Middlesex Opportunity Council.

Although it primarily serves Northbridge and Uxbridge, Beginning Bridges offers its programs to participants from neighboring towns when spaces are available.

"Beginning Bridges recognizes that parents are their children's first and best teachers and looks to build on family strengths through the programming we offer at no cost," said Emily Murray, coordinator for Beginning Bridges.

That programming includes a range of offerings, from drop-in programs to structured eight-week sessions.

"Parenting is a complex job in today's society and the services we offer are intertwined. We have goals to support families in fostering healthy child growth and development, school readiness, early literacy and family financial literacy," Mrs. Murray said. Among the programs that support their goals are parent-child play groups, an Early Literacy Skills Story Hour, craft programs and parent workshops.

The parent-child play groups, for parents with children up to 5 years old, are held one morning a week for eight weeks. Besides giving parents the opportunity to enjoy time bonding with their little ones, it also provides an opportunity for child development in countless ways. Mrs. Murray notes that the "play group is always in high demand and through it, we are able to work on all our goals simultaneously."

Like the play groups, the Early Literacy Skills Story Hour and craft programs are also offered one day a week for eight weeks. For children ages 2 to 6, the program focuses on several educational themes. Each week, the themes are explored through children's literature, musical activities and crafts.

The parent workshops are held throughout the year, on a variety of topics. The 2013 workshops focused on topics such as child behavior modification, reading with children and understanding children's motivation for testing parents.

In addition to those programs, Beginning Bridges offers drop-in music and movement programs at the Uxbridge Free Library and the Whitinsville Social Library, an ages and stages developmental questionnaire, a lending library and an annual kids fair.

The organization also started new, well-received programs this year. They include a parent-facilitated play group and a "Countdown to Kindergarten" school readiness group for parents and their children. With such offerings for local families, Mrs. Murray is enthusiastic about the programs Beginning Bridges provides.

"As a strength-based agency, we value that parents are the experts on their child and look to support the relationships surrounding the care of the child, so that the child may reach full developmental potential. Beginning Bridges looks to partner with and support the community resources available to provide families with the tools necessary to lead self-sufficient, contributory and satisfying lives,"

Mrs. Murray said.

The Beginning Bridges website contains more details about the programs offered. It can be found at [www.beginningbridges.org](http://www.beginningbridges.org). The organization can be contacted at [Emurray@smoc.org](mailto:Emurray@smoc.org)">[Emurray@smoc.org](mailto:Emurray@smoc.org) or (508) 278-5110. A calendar of early education activities for all communities in Massachusetts can be found at [www.brainbuildinginprogress.org/event-calendar](http://www.brainbuildinginprogress.org/event-calendar).