

Parents as Teachers of Lake County, Inc. - A Timeline of Progression

1999 –

With headlines in the news of parents harming their children out of desperation and frustration and stories of children shooting other children, a concerned citizen named Ron Millies starts talking with area leaders asking questions – how can we better support young parents so that we can prevent these incidents from ever happening! How can we make sure that all parents in our community have the support they need?

A taskforce of area citizens comes together to explore support available for parents. The need for increased access to early childhood parent education and support is identified and the group begins to research available program models and approaches. Pastor Bruick of St. Pauls Lutheran Church recommends Parents as Teachers, explaining that he and his wife participated as young parents when they lived in Missouri.

The three founding sponsors, City of Hammond, Saint Margaret Mercy Healthcare Centers and the School City of Hammond, appoint a 12 member board of area citizens to implement a three year pilot project.

The mission is established: to inspire, educate and support all parents of children, infant through 3 years, to be their child's first, most important teacher, giving the child the best possible start in life.

2000 –

Parents as Teachers of Hammond / Lake County is incorporated in May and receives 501c3 status in June.

The City of Hammond provides a start-up budget of \$50,000 and in August a Project Coordinator, Kim Smith is hired to begin implementation of the award winning Born to Learn Parents as Teachers program model.

With discounted and in-kind space provided by Saint Margaret Mercy and some gently used furniture provided by the Sisters of Saint Francis an open house is held welcoming the community to learn about the new program. Services to 6 families with 10 children begin in October!

2001-

By the end of the first program year - 46 families and 49 children are receiving services.

In January, two part-time parent educators and an office manager are hired and quickly reach capacity. The board of directors hosts the first fundraiser "The Banker Meets the Potter" with featured speaker Calvin Bellamy. Community support allows for diversified funding from 6 grant sources, 47 private donors and 37 corporate donors.

With support from The Discovery Alliance and a Community Development Block Grant, the program begins specialized services to include Teens as Parents, a Spanish speaking component and an adapted model for families of children with special needs.

The Hammond site joins with other new sites in Hanover Township and Lake Station schools to form the PAT Lake County Council.

The Board of Directors and staff participate in our first Strategic Planning Retreat facilitated by Dan Lowery resulting in a shared Vision Statement: Participation in PAT programs is broadly accepted and valued as an essential component of early childhood development and education.

2002-

By end of the second program year –PAT is serving 115 families with 124 children enrolled, surpassing the original goal set forth by the founding partners of 100 families served in the first three years of the pilot!

The staff has grown to 6 part-time parent educators.

The Lake County Council of affiliate sites invites our new PAT friends to the east to join our collaboration. Parents as Teachers sites in Porter County and LaPorte County become members and we change the name to: The NWI Regional PAT Council.

The first Parent Evaluation Survey is conducted in collaboration with Indiana University Northwest School of Social Work_ to evaluate the effectiveness of the PAT program and indicate areas where changes are needed in order to improve participant satisfaction. 100% of respondents report feeling more confident in their role as a parent since joining PAT, 95% report that the support of the Parent Educator is “very” helpful and 98% said they would refer a friend – And They do!! The waiting list begins to grow.

2003-

By the end of the third program year, the end of the pilot phase – 191 families and 226 children are being served. The founding partners and board of directors acknowledge the success and growing demand for the program and agree to move into expansion and evaluation.

Data collected from Pre and Post testing utilizing the National Center’s *Parent Knowledge Assessment* shows an increase in parent knowledge of infant development over time, with an average score increase of 12%. These findings confirm that the Parent Educators are making a difference with families!

Healthy Families sites with the Villages and Mental Health America, who are utilizing the PAT Born to Learn curriculum in a blended model, become members of the PAT Regional Council.

As an emergent literacy grant recipient with The Discovery Alliance, PAT participates in a study being conducted by SPEC Associates. Over the two year period, PAT of Hammond administers 267 baseline surveys to families as they enroll in the program asking about pre-literacy activities done with their children. With follow-up surveys given quarterly, data received shows **an increase in reported pre-literacy activities** after 3 months and again after 6 months in the PAT program.

Through a new partnership with Dunebrook Prevent Child Abuse, the organization is contracted through Parent Information Resource Center (known also as PIRC) funds that allow for expansion into Lake County.

Representative Vernon Smith writes Concurrent Resolution #0014, which is approved by the House and the Senate encouraging all school superintendents to implement PAT programs.

2004 –

By the end of the fourth program year – 204 families and 248 children are being served.

The organization becomes the fiscal and administrative entity for the new Lake County Project, an exciting partnership with the Legacy and Crown Point Community Foundations governed by leaders from each of the existing PAT sites. Goals for this project include sustainability planning, awareness and expansion efforts.

The Quality of Life Indicators Report recommends PAT as a first action step toward successfully creating a learning community.

The Department of Education’s Roundtable highlights PAT as a quality early childhood program as part of their P-16 Plan, which provides guidelines for academic success in Indiana.

Northwest Family Services contracts PAT to provide on-site services and evening hours to working families utilizing their child care. This collaboration serves as a successful model for future intra agency partnerships.

With PIRC funding through Dunebrook, a State Training Team is established for Indiana and Program Director Kim Smith is certified as one of the first Parents as Teachers national trainers in the state.

Through a collaboration with Saint Anthony's Medical Centers and the Crown Point School Corporation, the first PAT services are established in Crown Point through a volunteer staff of home visitors. A taskforce is created to begin building community support for sustainability and growth.

Eight (8) children identified with potential delays through the screening process have received early intervention and recovered from delays before age three! Five (5) children have been diagnosed with a disability and transitioned to special education preschool programs.

2005-

By the end of the fifth program year – 227 families with 285 children are receiving services.

A Community Development Block Grant is awarded for the first PAT Neighborhoods project in collaboration with the Hammond Housing Authority and Wilson Elementary School in Hammond. Neighborhood projects are also launched through Lafayette and Irving Elementary Schools.

The board and staff participate in our second Strategic Planning Retreat facilitated by Amy DeHaan and emerge with an expanded mission to include services beyond age three until the child reaches kindergarten.

Gail Johnson of Dunebrook is named the first PAT State Leader for Indiana, thus establishing a state system for collaboration and a local link to the National Center.

The Knight Foundation awards a start-up grant and The Gary PAT Alliance is formed in collaboration with Gary Neighborhood Services, Tradewinds, the YWCA, the Gary Literacy Coalition and Gary School Corporation, and Workforce Development. Advisory members included Dunebrook and Mental Health America Lake County.

2006 –

By the end of the sixth program year – 240 families with 319 children are served.

The average retention rate holds at 70% with 85% of participating families meeting at least one high needs characteristic as defined by PAT National Center.

The Volunteer staff has grown to 30 wonderful people helping us achieve our mission, including interns from the IUN School of Social Work and Purdue University Calumet Schools of Psychology and Nursing.

Through a collaboration with Dr. Sandy Martinez of Whiting Schools and the BP Foundation, PAT services are established for Whiting families. Title I parent involvement funding is dedicated for targeted outreach to Spanish speaking families and classroom space is provided in-kind for local services. The site reaches full capacity to 20 families within the first 6 months.

The Department of Child Services awards a grant for professional development and service expansion to teen parents throughout the county. All Parent Educators in the county are trained and certified with the "Working with Teen Families" curriculum.

2007 –

By the end of the seventh program year – 274 families with 371 children are served.

A grant from the 4 Community Health Project is awarded to address the issue of childhood obesity. Participating sites are trained to deliver the *High Five Low Fat* curriculum as part of regular visits providing information and education in family nutrition and fitness. Based on pre and post test evaluation, 50% of respondents increased their servings of fruit, 80% of families improved vegetable eating habits, 80% of parents

reported an increase in their child's physical activity and 89 % of respondents stated they had changed their actions toward family and child fitness as a result of this project.

Frank Mrvan, North Township Trustee provides funding to establish PAT services available to families utilizing township services. The program quickly reaches capacity with 20 families. Wicker Park provides in-kind space to offer additional playgroups to the community.

Congressmen Visclosky accompanies a Parent Educator on a home visit to experience first hand Parents as Teachers services and to gain an understanding of how this research based and neuroscience infused program model is benefiting parents.

The Department of Child Services awards a primary prevention grant allowing for the creation of the Lake County Evaluation Cooperative and service expansion throughout the county. PAT sites work with Dr. Thomas Pavkov and the Institute for Social & Policy Research at Purdue Calumet to establish common measurement tools, data collection and protocol, and a matrix for evaluation of success toward our goals.

Belinda Rodriguez Montiel is named a National Parent Educator of the Year by Parents as Teachers National Center, the whole staff travels to St. Louis to share in the ceremony and celebration.

2008-

By the end of the eighth program year – 291 families and 401 children are served.

The growing Parents as Teachers office moves to expanded space in Miller Elementary School provided in-kind by Dr. Watkins and the School City of Hammond.

Reflecting on the expansion from Hammond into other communities throughout the county, and with the blessing of the founding partners, the board votes to change the organization's incorporation name to "Parents as Teachers of Lake County, Inc."

Looking to the future, the board adopts a new vision that: Northwest Indiana families will nurture their children to learn, grow and develop to meet their maximum potential.

With funding and space provided through Tri-Creek Community Schools, the Lowell site is established with services to 20 families and reaches capacity in 6 months.

Centier Bank offers space in the Crown Point branch to accommodate the expanding south county staff.

The application to become a Lake Area United Way agency is accepted!

The program experiences tough cuts in grant funding and for the first time must decrease the number of families served.

The Board of Directors, staff and donors are determined and committed to sustain programming and rebuild capacity. The Annual Campaign exceeds the goal of \$75,000 which is matched by a generous private donor and vacant positions are soon filled.

2009-

In the ninth program year – 250 families with 344 children are served.

In collaboration with United Neighborhoods Organization, Lake Area United Way and BP Foundation, the East Chicago site is established with in-kind space at the Bessie Owens Community Center with services available to 20 families in English and Spanish.

The Lake County Project works with Hobart Community Schools as they launch what will become one of the fastest growing PAT sites we have seen, enrolling more than 100 families in the first year.

The Board and Staff participate in our third Strategic Planning Retreat facilitated by Andy Robinson. The process includes input from affiliate sites and stakeholders in the community. The organization emerges with a strong three (3)year plan that will guide us into the next chapter of our history.

A scholarship is awarded through the Southshore Connection to participate in the pilot implementation of the nFocus TraxSolutions data warehouse, an on-line software programming that is outcomes driven and connects social service agencies with school systems for improved transition services and longitudinal outcomes tracking.

PAT sites throughout the County collaborate with Dr. Jeanette Shutay of Calumet College of St. Joseph in an evaluation study utilizing the Survey of Parenting Practice, designed by the University of Idaho to measure parent perceptions and behaviors regarding their parenting practices and the impact of the PAT program on parents and their children. The results indicate that the parents who participated in the PAT program statistically significantly increased their parent knowledge, confidence, abilities and improved their parenting behavior. All demographic groups benefited from the program, with those in low income homes and those of minority status appearing to benefit most. In addition, the children of the PAT parents gained in self-confidence, became more prepared for Kindergarten and had the opportunity to interact with other children of their age group.

2010-

Since the program began in 2000, PAT has provided services to more than 700 families.

Continued advances in technology and new research findings in neuroscience and early childhood development clearly establish the critical need for positive early learning experiences in the first years of life. Those who have been champions of early childhood programs for decades are finally seeing a shift in thinking about investing early in a child's life.

In collaboration with Geminus Head Start, Parents as Teachers of Lake County and Dunebrook are contracted to provide Early Head Start home based services to 120 families throughout the region.

Success by Six brings focus and synergy shining a light on early childhood initiatives. PATLC is awarded funding through a collaboration with the regional United Ways and private funding to implement the PAT Regional Initiative "Enriched PAT", piloting a model of collaboration, quality and evaluation that allows for shared regional infrastructure and expansion of services in Northwest Indiana.

Congressmen Pete Viscklosky authors an appropriation supporting Parents as Teachers services in the district which is approved by the house and senate for application in the 2010 budget year.

Since its inception, our program has provided 1070 developmental and health screenings. Of those screened, 163 children have been identified as suspect for delay and referred for further evaluation and intervention services. Of the 163 identified, 35 children recovered to normal development before graduating PAT, 30 children were diagnosed and transitioned into special education services.

Of the more than 700 families we have worked with over the past nine years, only ten families have been reported for suspected abuse or neglect while active in our program and only five cases were substantiated with Child Protective Services (based on parent reports and staff documentation).

Our founding partners, the City of Hammond, Saint Margaret Mercy and School City of Hammond remain the foundation of the organization as we celebrate and honor our roots in the community and the opportunities that lie ahead. We are grateful to all the donors, partners, volunteers, staff and especially the PAT families that have all contributed to the success to the first 10 years!