

## MP3 Player Offers More Than Music

At Spurwink's Staff Secure Program in Brunswick, MP3 players have moved beyond entertainment to providing therapeutic benefits for young people with special needs. Many of the children in Spurwink's care have memory problems and/or receptive language difficulties due to developmental disabilities such as autism and mental retardation. They have trouble learning new information or lack that inner voice telling them what is appropriate behavior. Simple tasks, like personal hygiene or how to behave in social settings, seem insurmountable.



Betsey Davis, Speech/Language Pathologist, watches a video with Candace, a Spurwink student.

The MP3 – or video player – is changing that.

Betsey Davis, Speech/Language Pathologist, has introduced "video scripting" in her weekly "Girls Group." Comprised of female adolescents in residential treatment, the group is a safe, supportive place for the girls to share ideas, learn new skills and have fun.

Candace is a member of the group who needed help tending to her personal hygiene and remembering the steps to taking a shower. In a therapy session, Candace and Betsey discussed the steps and wrote them out. They brought the instructions to the Girls Group where the lyrics were put to music and the "Shower Song" was born – "First we get undressed, then I turn the water on, then I climb inside..."

The group performed and taped the song on video, the video was uploaded to Candace's MP3 player, and within a couple of weeks, Candace was showering without any cues from staff and feeling very proud of her accomplishment.

"Candace was resistant to asking for help and very self-conscious," Betsey said. "This was a big confidence builder for her."

As time goes on, Betsey hopes to offer her clients a library of social scripts on video that they can draw from.

"Kids can be as independent as possible by taking the visual supports with them," she explained. "It's really exciting – like an external memory."

The video scripts can offer a variety of supports – from cueing youth into activities within their daily schedule to prompting them about how to behave in different social settings. For example, upon entering a McDonald's restaurant, a teen who has autism or Asperger's Syndrome, could look at his MP3's video screen and receive prompts telling him how to order his lunch.

"It's important to do anything we can to make kids more comfortable," Betsey explained. "Holding a hand-held video player is normalizing for kids and allows them to be more independent. Besides, it's cool!" ■

*"The video scripts can offer a variety of supports – from cueing youth into activities within their daily schedule to prompting them about how to behave in different social settings."*

— Betsey Davis  
Speech/Language Pathologist

Spurwink

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## Celebrating 50 Years



Dawn Stiles, LCSW,  
Spurwink President

In 2010 Spurwink will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Throughout the coming year many activities have been planned to highlight this milestone.

Age is never a neutral. In life, we seem to race from “you’re too young” to the opposite. The attainment of maturity is either valued

like wine, antiques and old growth timber – or not. I can still recall the disparagement of being mistaken for my son’s grandmother by waitresses too young themselves to see the difference.

But what does it really mean to have been providing mental health services for 50 years?

It means we don’t follow trends. Our philosophical underpinning has always been unconditional positive regard for our clients. Care is based on a matrix of evidenced-based practices which continue to achieve successful outcomes for kids, adults and families.

It means we have developed a solid foundation of policies, practices, and an organizational culture that guides our treatment, measures outcomes and assures consistency.

It means we have a clear sense of purpose, mission and vision which facilitates continued growth and success. We’re not mired in the adolescent years of trying to figure out who we are or should be.

It means we have built a reputation for competence, integrity and stewardship. Staff, policy makers, donors and clients can all be proud to be associated with the Spurwink organization.

In the months ahead, I hope you will be hearing the Spurwink name loud and clear as we pursue opportunities to share the many stories of success that line our history of service to the citizens of Maine. ■

## A Brief Spurwink History

When Dick Smith founded “The Spurwink School” in 1960, there were few licensed residential treatment programs for children in the state. Dick wanted to purchase a building site in the “Spurwink” section of Scarborough near Route 77 and Black Point Road as his family had owned property in the area for three generations. When he was unsuccessful in obtaining the land and formal approvals, Dick found a site at 899 Riverside Street in Portland. Fifty years later, this original location continues to be the site of a residential program and the agency’s administrative offices.



In the first 13 years of Spurwink’s existence, the agency primarily served children from outside of Maine. “At the time, there was no paying authority in the state,” recalled Harvey Berman, who was employed by Spurwink from 1967 – 2000 and succeeded Dick Smith as Executive Director. “The State of Maine had its own psychiatric facility and that is where all children in need of mental health services were referred.”

Spurwink began providing residential treatment and educational services for six children and gradually increased the number to 16. Early on, Spurwink served children who had a combination of very challenging disabilities and behaviors. In time, the agency built a reputation on successfully serving youth – and eventually adults – who no one else felt equipped to handle.

In 1973, Maine prepared to close the children’s psychiatric hospital and sought organizations that could serve those youth. Spurwink responded by developing a continuum of services that would address a wide range of needs and abilities. Although the agency owned a parcel of land on Riverside Street that could sustain the development of a large residential treatment facility, the decision was made to open smaller programs out in the community. This decision was paramount to the direction Spurwink has pursued ever since.

“It turned out to be an ingenious decision because Spurwink was the first in the state to establish a true community-based presence,” Harvey recalled. “We were taking really challenging adolescents out of the psychiatric hospital and placing them in homes within the community.”

As individual needs became apparent, Spurwink developed specific programming for small numbers of children who needed a particular program focus that didn’t exist anywhere in the state. “We would write a proposal to provide a specific focus for several children and then discover there might be nearly 30 youth who needed that level of services,” Harvey stated. “Spurwink established the first of many program options within the state, and that included the first community-based group home, the first Intermediate Care Facility for dually diagnosed populations, the first day treatment program for youngsters with autism and the first adolescent pre-vocational program. All of these things occurred because we were flexible, community-based and able and willing to respond to needs quickly.” ■

# Spurwink's 2009 Humanitarian of the Year: David H. Howes, M.D.



David H. Howes, M.D.

Spurwink Services is pleased to announce that David H. Howes, M.D., President and CEO of Martin's Point Health Care, has been selected as the 2009 Humanitarian of the Year. He will be honored at an award ceremony on November 14, 2009 at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks.

The son of a family physician from Cape Cod, Dr. Howes began his own medical career as a family physician serving residents of a fishing community in Downeast, Maine. He joined Martin's Point Health Care in 1989 as the Unit Medical Director in Bath. In 1991 he was promoted to the position of Medical Director, and in 1996 became President and CEO.

Under the leadership of Dr. Howes, Martin's Point Health Care has emerged as a leader in the delivery of advanced primary care and the use of health information technology systems to support patient care. Martin's Point is an innovative, not-for-profit organization, changing lives by continually improving people's health and health care experiences and reducing the long-term costs of care. The organization now provides primary and ancillary care to the community in health centers located in Maine and New Hampshire. Martin's Point also administers health plan services in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, and care management services for Maine employers.

Dr. Howes is widely recognized for his leadership role in advancing the principle that to improve health care in the United States we must begin with a reemphasis on the delivery of primary care. He is highly engaged in current health reform debates and has traveled to Washington D.C. this summer to participate in various discussions with policymakers and other health care leaders.

Dr. Howes is involved with numerous health care and business organizations. He is currently Board Chair for Maine HealthInfoNet, the largest health information exchange using clinical data in the country. He is also a member of the Boards of Directors of the Community Physicians of Maine, the Maine Health Management Coalition, and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. He is Chair of the Community Advisory Board for the Muskie Institute Health Professions Education Program at the University of Southern Maine and a member of the Board of the Maine Medical Center Physician-Hospital Organization. He is also a current member of the American College of Physician Executives and the American Academy of Family Practice.

Spurwink Services is pleased to honor Dr. Howes for his leadership and commitment to the delivery of exceptional health care services and for his civic engagement in Maine's health care, non-profit and business communities.

To purchase tickets to the Humanitarian of the Year Dinner or for more information about the event, visit [www.spurwink.org/humanitarian.php](http://www.spurwink.org/humanitarian.php) or call the Spurwink Development Office at 871-1200 ext. 208 or email [giving@spurwink.org](mailto:giving@spurwink.org). ■

## Spurwink Services Board of Directors

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## Our Mission

**To provide quality services and supports that effectively meet the diverse needs of children, adolescents and adults, and their families. Services at Spurwink are based upon determination of clients' strengths and needs, and include education, care and treatment. In home, community or agency-based settings, our goal is to assist our clients in achieving their optimal potential in the least restrictive environment possible.**

# Understanding the Link Between Communication and Behavior

Nicole Boivin knew she wanted to work in the area of special education since she was in the sixth grade and participated in a volunteer exercise led by her school's Functional Life Skills Department. Then, while in her first year at University of Maine in Farmington, she enrolled in a course on speech and hearing disorders. The subject matter enthralled her and she decided she wanted to pursue a career in speech/language pathology.

"Communication skills are so powerful across the life span," Nicole says.

As she worked with children with special needs, Nicole also became absorbed in behavior and its relationship to how individuals learn and acquire skills. In time, she became one of the few, if not the only, Speech/Language Pathologist in Maine who is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (ABA).



Nicole Boivin

"To me, the two go hand-in-hand," Nicole explains. "As speech/language pathologists, we are often taught to follow the child's lead. But in the case of children who have great trouble communicating, it is the educator's responsibility to create structured opportunities for the child to respond. Such opportunities are provided through the methodology of ABA."

This June Nicole joined Spurwink as Senior Program Director of Educational Services.

Pam Sperry, Spurwink's Director of Educational Services, is pleased to have Nicole's insights and expertise. "Challenging behaviors are often connected to an inability to communicate. Nicole's background in ABA is invaluable to our educational staff – she is helping to further their understanding of certain behaviors and to implement strategies that will impede negative behaviors and build on positive behaviors that affect learning."

Nicole is working with Spurwink's seven schools, helping staff address the specific needs of students with significant communication and behavioral challenges. Due to her background in alternative and augmentative communication, Nicole also works with Spurwink's ALLTech Program once a week. ALLTech provides assessments, consultation and training to schools and individuals throughout New England.

"I love my job so much," Nicole beams. "Our employees are doing great things. From the program directors to classroom staff, everyone is fully invested. And when a student makes a successful breakthrough or is able to communicate successfully for the first time, we share in the success. This is what feeds me." ■

## Our Sincere Thanks

Thank you to all of our friends and supporters who responded to our recent summer appeal. This special appeal provided immediate and valuable support following a major reduction in state and federal funds for residential treatment services. We appreciate the generosity and interest of those who value Spurwink's work on behalf of Maine children, adults and families.

## Spurwink Bequests

Have you considered making provisions for Spurwink in your will? For more information on bequests and planned giving, contact the Spurwink Development Department at [giving@spurwink.org](mailto:giving@spurwink.org) or 871-1200.

## Sheldon Scott Takes a Vacation – With a Little Help from His Spurwink Friends

Up until eight years ago, 41-year-old Sheldon Scott never left the premises of his residential treatment and day services program at Spurwink. Sheldon came to Spurwink as a child and has severe autism, impulse control issues, auditory processing delays and serious behavioral challenges.

“Sheldon is unpredictable,” explained Sue Murphy, Director of Adult Services. “He responds impulsively to lots of external stimuli and has no control over visual/auditory stimulation. His impulses can be physically violent.”

But as Spurwink’s direct support staff became proficient at recognizing what stimuli led to Sheldon’s violent behaviors and developing ways to avoid those stimuli, his world gradually expanded to excursions out in the community. Any outside excursion requires two staff to accompany Sheldon, but it allows him to enjoy new experiences, sights and sounds.

One of those experiences is what has become an annual trip to Sheldon’s family cabin in Jonesboro, Maine. There was a period of time when Sheldon hadn’t been home for 10 years – his family couldn’t handle his behaviors as he grew older and bigger.

“While it was a major breakthrough when Sheldon could finally leave the Spurwink property, taking him up to the family camp was really significant,” said Paul Hopkins, a Program Supervisor who has worked with Sheldon for 22 years. “Sheldon’s father doesn’t travel at all and Sheldon loves seeing the ocean and visiting family.”

Paul and Greg Hawkes, a Spurwink Direct Support Professional, have been accompanying Sheldon on the downeast trip for five years. “It’s a guys’ weekend at camp beside the tidal bay with breakfasts at the home where



Greg Hawkes, Sheldon Scott and Paul Hopkins make a stop at the Penobscot Narrows Bridge & Observatory on their way to Sheldon’s family camp in Jonesboro.

Sheldon grew up and a huge family feast at camp on Saturday,” Paul said. “As soon as Sheldon walks through the door, he sees his favorite chair and settles in. Sheldon’s Dad has been lobstering for many years – so the centerpiece of this celebration is big plate of boiled lobsters with all the fixings.”

Both Paul and Greg have a long-term relationship working with Sheldon. This has been critical to his ability to feel safe and secure, particularly when venturing into the community. On the trips to Jonesboro, Paul and Greg provide not only daily care like medicine administration, but also the invaluable comfort and trust that has been developed over the years.

“Sheldon is uptight and fearful of the world around him,” Paul explained. “When his world is predictable and safe, Sheldon is happier and can get out and about more.”

When the “guys” return to Sheldon’s Spurwink home in Limerick, they con-

tinue to share fond memories of their annual pilgrimage. Sheldon sits in his favorite seat at the Day Program where he can view a photo slideshow of the trip on the computer. “We reflect on these summer vacations in a warm way throughout the year,” Paul stated. “This helps the memories to last until we head downeast again next year!”

“Without the dedication and long-term relationship both Paul and Greg have with Sheldon, trips like this would not be possible,” Sue Murphy said. “This is a great example of how our staff go above and beyond to help individuals reach their potential and experience life in some of the same ways we all do.” ■

*“We reflect on these summer vacations in a warm way throughout the year.”*

— Paul Hopkins  
Day Program Supervisor

# Wrap-around Services at Work: Tapping into a Family's Strengths

Kim Knight knows all too well what it's like to be down and out. This past year, she lost a new baby, her family was evicted from its apartment and lived in a motel for seven months, and her husband and two sons endured hospitalizations and significant physical and mental health concerns.

"It was a combination of some bad choices, bad luck and various health problems," Kim stated. "We really hit rock bottom. Our family was just about torn apart."

Early on, Kim and her husband, Mike Hensen, were introduced to Mary Bennett, a clinician with Spurwink's Functional Family Therapy Program. Mary provided counseling to help Kim, Mike and their two sons cope with the loss of their baby and the emotional struggles they were facing.

During that time, Mary learned the family was about to be evicted. "They were in turmoil and couldn't get caught up financially to be able to afford the move into another apartment," Mary explained. She called in Stephanie Norton, a Spurwink Case Manager, to assist the family and help connect them to resources in the community.

Both Kim and Mike were on disability and the family was challenged by ongoing mental health problems. Struggling to make ends meet, there were many times when there was barely any money for food and Kim and Mike wondered if they might have to give their sons up to the state so they could be financially cared for.

Stephanie recognized that the family needed the assistance of Spurwink's newest program, High Fidelity Wraparound Services, which uses a team-based approach to support families of Lewiston and Auburn's most at-risk children. (Spurwink

oversees one of nine High Fidelity Wraparound sites around the state.)

Stephanie turned the Hensens over to Theresa Bisson, a Case Manager with the High Fidelity Wraparound Program.

The goal of High Fidelity Wraparound Services is to help families identify their needs, create a team of natural supports that build self-efficacy, and create success from a single unified family plan. The wraparound process is overseen by a board comprised of the parents, child and their natural supports and representatives from multiple community sectors including: child welfare, children's behavioral health, corrections, education, mental health, labor, law enforcement, health care, recreation and faith-based, family and youth organizations. Through High Fidelity Wraparound Services, the Hensen family was able to access financial help as long as they did the legwork involved and proved they could maintain their monthly bills going forward.

In time, and with Theresa's support, the family did the necessary work and was able to secure a new apartment. They have been able to maintain their monthly bills and have achieved financial stability once again.

Theresa credits the Hensens with using their family's strengths and doing the hard work needed to get back on their feet, but the Hensens feel indebted to Theresa and her colleagues at Spurwink.

"I feel like I can never tell or show them how much they meant to us and what they did for our family," Kim Knight stated. "They went above and beyond offering support, referrals, comfort and caring to fix a broken family. I've never met anyone like them before."



A family with great strengths. In front from left to right: Skyler Hensen, Mike Hensen (dad) and Kim Knight (mom). Behind them are Seth Hensen, Stephanie Norton, Spurwink Case Manager, and Theresa Bisson, with Spurwink's High Fidelity Wraparound Program.

This September, Kim and Mike's two sons left for their first day of school with heads held high, proud of their family's successes, their new home and the new clothes and school supplies they felt very fortunate to have.

"This is a cohesive family with enormous strengths," said Theresa Bisson. "They know what they need to improve their lives and they are now able to advocate for themselves."

"We had everything going for us but then we were down to nothing," Kim Knight said. "These professionals really cared about our family – they weren't doing the work just to get paid. We were so blessed by them." ■

# Employment Program Boosts Work Readiness Skills

This summer, five energetic work crews comprised of Spurwink students and staff, have been seen in various sites throughout Augusta. Part of a Youth Summer Employment Program, the work crews are supported by an \$80,000 grant from the Central Maine Workforce Investment Board. The grant, which was made possible through federal stimulus funds, was awarded to Spurwink's Residential Treatment and Educational Program in Chelsea. The employment program targets youth ages 14 – 20 who face a variety of challenges.

In addition to developing work readiness and occupational skills, students learn teamwork and social skills as well as problem solving and critical thinking skills. They are also helping out the city of Augusta and other community organizations such as Togus Veterans Hospital and the Bread of Life Shelter that are trying to address landscaping and facility needs amid budgetary cuts and concerns.

Larry Harty is a horticulturist for the city of Augusta who appreciated having extra hands, particularly since he had a reduction in his staff. "The first week we had to see how the crews were going to do," Harty said. "But it was really nice – the kids removed sod, weeded, planted trees and put down mulch. Some of this work wouldn't have gotten done without their help. I was very happy – it went great."

As Alex, a Spurwink student, helped shovel mulch and transfer it to the flower beds in Forest Grove Cemetery in Augusta, he expressed satisfaction at the difference he was making. "I like putting the mulch down," he said. "It makes it look a lot better."

The faces of Spurwink students were a familiar site at Togus Veterans Hospital where they swept up the winter sand, weeded, raked and planted grass seed. Other projects included grounds work and maintenance at the Bread of Life Shelter in Augusta and the renovation of a barn on Spurwink's property in Chelsea. The barn is slated to eventually become a site for organic food production and woodworking, and provide a community access point for Chelsea students to create and operate an organic farm stand at the site.

"This program is invaluable for those teens who are at high risk of dropping out of school," said Martin Donlon, LCSW, Director of Chelsea Program. "The majority of the kids who are benefiting from the program have traumatic family histories, many are in the custody of DHHS Child Welfare Services and several are in foster care."

The students are matched with appropriate work experiences based on their ages, skill levels, current functioning, cognitive

abilities, emotional/mental health and interests. When the students return to the Spurwink school after a day's work, they complete time cards, participate in a self-reflection exercise and set goals for the next day.

The impact of this program is significant in a state where few resources have been allocated to help adolescents who face mental and behavioral health challenges transition to adulthood. From painting to raking to carpentry work, the students are gaining an experience that can't be found through a classroom presentation or discussion.

"In addition to learning new skills, they are learning what it means to be a worker, how to conduct themselves appropriately and the satisfaction of completing an honest day's work," Donlon explained. "Upon completion, students who have attained a high level of work readiness will be encouraged to begin seeking and preparing for employment in the community."

Meagan Soule is a Spurwink teacher who has been working alongside her students all summer. "The kids feel really connected to the community," Soule said. "This is a win-win situation for everybody." ■



Robert, a Spurwink student, helps renovate an old barn in Chelsea.



Larry Harty, horticulturist from the City of Augusta, gets a hand from Spurwink students, Will and Alex.

# Professional Development Center

This summer, several Spurwink programs moved into one central location in Portland creating the Spurwink Professional Development Center. The Center, under the direction of Jane Spencer-Sears, brings together the Spurwink Training Department with two programs that were formerly housed within The Spurwink Institute. (The Institute's programs merged with Spurwink Services in July.)

The new Professional Development Center has four main areas of focus:

- Serving the ongoing training needs of Spurwink employees
- Providing training to external groups and businesses
- The Behavioral Health Sciences Institute – providing training and research to improve the quality and range of behavioral health services
- ALLTech – providing technological solutions to educational, daily living, communication and workplace issues presented by disabilities

"We have a large group of professionals with different levels of experience and expertise – and some overlap in areas as well," Jane stated. "This creates a lot of strength and synergy. The energy

and enthusiasm within these four walls is tremendous."

In addition to providing training and consultation to individuals and groups, the Center is offering external training to schools, mental health agencies, pre-schools and day care facilities. The Center's areas of expertise include: assistive technology, assistive and augmentative communication, behavior management and working with adult learners. "We also plan to offer training to the business sector," Jane said. "We will cover any topic related to working with people, from teamwork and mentoring to performance counseling."

The Professional Development Center is unique in its ability to be flexible. "We listen to what our clients need and then customize our trainings to those needs," Jane explained. "We are also willing to deliver trainings at the client's site if that is more convenient." ■

**For more information:**  
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207-321-6080  
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**The Spurwink Professional Development Team:**

Front row, left to right: Jana Arsenault, Deb Dimmick, Kim LeClair, Lisa Penney, Sarah Dowling.

Back row, left to right: Faith York, Eric Campbell, Trudy Little, Jane Spencer-Sears, Dave Kinsella, Faith Hauger, Mercedes Foster-Dougherty.

Missing from the photo: Amy Ponti, Taanya Pillsbury, Patty McTigue and Jon Normand.

Newsletter Editor: Donna Murphy, Director of Communications & Marketing  
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