April Showers Bring May Flowers, but what do May Flowers Bring?!!! Ha-choo!!

Greetings and happy spring! I have not done an update for several months and I apologize. As many of you already know, I have been challenged by two major ankle/foot surgeries (in September and April), but I am well on my way and moving much faster these days. Thank you for your patience and for all your kindnesses and good wishes. I just want to briefly highlight some of the activities over the last few months, and then will move on to what’s up ahead!

APRIL RECAP . . . . .

4-H Babysitting Classes were in abundance this year during April vacation. They were held at Sandwich and Dennis Public Libraries, as well as at the Yarmouth Recreation Department. Weather wise it was a beautiful week!

We partnered with Centerville Library for the annual Earth Day event. This year, our Barnstable High School science leaders (from the TNT program) did an experiment called “The Raindrop Journey” to the delight of youth participants and their parents. These leaders have also been invited to present this experiment to their peers at the Summer of Science Camp at UMASS Amherst in June, which I will talk about later on in this newsletter.

April also included the final draft of the Cape Cod Foundation’s Youth Action Plan, which I had the privilege of participating in over the last 9 months…it was followed by a survey that was sent out (by CCF) to attendees of last year’s initial planning event and other key stakeholders...including YOUTH! We will keep you posted on this exciting community effort and I would just like to take a moment to applaud Kristin O’Malley and the Cape Cod Foundation for their visionary leadership!

Speaking of the Cape Cod Foundation, this was my tenth year partnering with them in the Cape Youth Force Grant Program. Youth at Barnstable High School and Harwich Middle School met to review the proposals and award money to deserving youth serving organizations. For a final list of awardees, please go to www.capecodfoundation.org. But even more exciting, Cumberland Farms has just chosen Cape Youth Force as the recipient of a fundraiser that will take place from May 24-June 30th at their new location on 626 Main Street, Route 28, West Yarmouth. Twenty cents from every purchase of any coffee, iced tea or chilled zone will be donated to Cape Youth Force for our 2012-2013 Youth Grants program!!! So if you are in the area over the next month or so, stop into Cumberland Farms and cool off with a refreshing drink that will generate some cool cash and programs for youth on Cape Cod. Thank-you Cumberland Farms!

Barnstable County 4-H once again provided curriculum and training to the Child Care students at Project Forward as well as the new Nutrition Education Program, with the added help of Susan Bourque from Cape Cod Extension’s Nutrition Education Program! Congratulations to all the graduates at Project Forward, but especially those we have come to know through one of these programs or through Peer Leadership.

MAY RECAP . . . .

For the third year in a row, we are offering an afterschool session in photography at Barnstable High School’s TNT program, and students have been busily taking photographs of a variety of subjects suggested in our “Controlling the Image” curriculum. We are editing photos taken earlier in the year of the TNT program activities and putting an end of year slideshow together with music. Some of these students will also accompany me to UMASS in June, where we are excited to participate in a photography/videography workshop to hone our skills further and open new possibilities for future documentation and projects!

TNT students are winding down from a marathon of 4-H sewing projects this past winter and spring, including mittens and scarves out of polar fleece, which they did by drafting a pattern to fit themselves, then cut out and stitched.
Two students also sought the assistance of the 4-H Sewing Instructor with the construction of dresses (designed by one of the girls) for their Fashion class fashion show! Others made unisex tote bags designed for varying needs, stitching pockets on as well as coordinating strapping. One student even made his own black tie!! Many thanks to Nancy McDermott for sharing her expertise and enthusiasm with this group, who really enjoyed learning how to sew.

4-H Science Clubs continue to thrive at Ezra Baker School and Centerville Library, and have been having scientific fun with projects like junk-drawer robotics and learning about the solar system, universe and planets. One of our “scientists” aspires to be an astronaut so we will continue to search for some hands on activities that are related.

And there’s more . . . .

May also included a flurry of activity in order to plan some very special projects ahead in the summer of 2012:
First up is our 2nd annual trip to the Summer of Science Camp at UMASS/Amherst from June 24-26th. Thirteen deserving students were chosen from our 21st Century Grant partnership at Barnstable Intermediate and Barnstable High School based upon a combination of their Science/Math grades, an essay telling us how they would apply skills acquired through this opportunity, and community service/leadership activities participated in over the past year. We patched the money together thanks to the generosity of the DESE 21st Century grant (bus transportation), The UMASS CYFAR grant, National 4-H Science award money, Barnstable High School (thanks to Pat Clark), Barnstable Intermediate School (thanks to Karen Stonely), and several private donors who are “sponsoring” students to attend. We are also awaiting word on a $500.00 grant application that would mean that students would not have to pay a registration fee, so we are hoping for the best! This year’s workshop tracks include robotics/Lego Mindstorms, Veterinary Science, Digital Photography and Multi media, What about Fish? and much more. Stay tuned for a full report with photos when we return!

Another exciting piece of news that I just received is that the RAP Program at Barnstable Intermediate School submitted a grant to the Bilezekian Foundation to use “There’s No New Water” (a nationally juried 4-H curriculum from University of California) this summer, and it was FUNDED! There’s No New Water! is a water conservation and water quality curriculum grounded in a simple yet powerful concept that water is a finite natural resource which must be responsibly preserved, protected, used, and reused. Students will spend four weeks using the six sequential learning modules to explore the natural water cycle, human interventions that affect quality and quantity, local conservation issues, and much more. If you are interested in learning more about this curriculum, here is the link:
http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum/4-h-theres-no-new-water/facilitator-guide/

OMK Summer Camp . . . .

Thanks to a partnership with Smithfield Farms and OMK Massachusetts, we are offering a special day camp for military children called “Stars, Stripes and Saddles.” This program is, in particular, geared toward children experiencing a deployment or in the deployment cycle. Due to the enthusiastic response we received, we were also able to offer a few slots to children in active duty families from Air station Cape Cod, much to our delight as well as theirs! We applied to the Cape & Islands Youth Community Development Council to fund four more campers and just received word that it was fully funded. Many thanks to the Youth Council for your generosity.

Campers will spend a week in July from the 16th to the 20th at Smithfield Farms learning all about horses, including anatomy, grooming, feeding and care, and will receive an hour riding lesson daily. They will also journal, participate in an arts project and have an opportunity to use our brand new OMK state mobile tech lab to create lasting memories for themselves and their families. A guided conversation on what it is like to be a military child will take place during lunch daily, and there are many other plans still in progress, including a visit by the Companion Animal Program (CAP) and a plan to incubate some eggs 21 days before their arrival so that participants can celebrate their birth-day!

Sew many choices . . . .

During the week of July 23 through 26, we will be offering “Sew Many Choices!” at the Harborview Conference Center (formally the Old County Jail) in Barnstable Village from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The line up is as follows (you can check out the pictures of the projects on page 3):
Day 1 – Learn to sew accurately on a machine while making a chicken that can be used as a pincushion, a beanbag, a door stop --- or anything else you’d like. If time permits, you also may make a “hot dog” pillowcase.
Day 2 – Expand your skills by making a bag. It can be a little coin purse, pencil case, tote bag or whatever.
Day 3 – Finish your bag (from day 2) and then make something you can wear, a “what is it?” -- For girls, a colorful cotton garment that can be worn as a beach cover-up, a dress, or a skirt; for boys, a cover-up that can be used for beach or bathing.
Day 4 – Make a beaded fabric necklace, a decorated headband, a belt, or a neck warmer, or repeat one of the earlier projects using different materials or patterns.
Cost of the workshop is $20.00 a day and $5.00 materials fee ($80.00 for the week with a $20.00 materials fee payable to the Instructor). Students are required to pre-register and bring a bag lunch with them each day that they attend. For more information, check our website, or contact Kerry at kbickford@barnstablecounty.org.

A denim bag or skirt workshop is also planned for August 23rd from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Hyannis Public Library. This class is being generously sponsored by the Friends of the Hyannis Public Library so there is no cost for the program and lunch is provided. Participants must be between the ages of 9 and 12. Registration is on a first come first served basis. Sign up can be done by contacting Mary Bianco in the children’s room at the library.

**Babysitting . . . . .**

Upcoming babysitting programs include:

**Centerville Library** on June 21 and 22 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Fee for this program is $25.00. Participants are asked to bring a brown bag lunch both days.

**Brewster Ladies Library** on June 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and June 22 from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m. Fee for this program is $25.00. Participants are asked to bring a brown bag lunch on Thursday only.

At this time there is another one being planned at the Eastham Library. There may even be more by the time June rolls in, so keep checking our website for the updated list!

There is lots more going on as well…don’t forget to check out the Barnstable County Fair Premium Book and see if there is a category you can enter this coming July. It is a lot of fun and your work will be displayed throughout the week in the Youth Building!

Meanwhile, congratulations to all the graduates who have passed through our programs, clubs and lives…whether it is Kindergarten, 8th grade, or college, we take pride in each and everyone of your accomplishments and wish you a safe and happy summer!