



May 18, 2009

25 years later, group still supports young families

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Staff Writer

Eydiejo Kurchan was pregnant with her first child when she moved to Central Jersey from Utah about three years ago.

"I knew no one, I was a little bit terrified," the Colonia resident said.

So she went online, looking for support groups, in an effort to make friends.

She said a chance sighting of the Family Friends Inc. Web site, a Central Jersey support group that meets in Metuchen, soon led to life-long friendships.

Kurchan attended one of the organization's meetings and immediately signed up to become a member.

"Everyone was very warm and welcoming," she said. She continues to participate, now bringing her 2-year-old son, Maxim, as well.

Family Friends Inc., a nonprofit organization, provides parents and their children with regularly scheduled opportunities to spend time with each other.

"It is a community builder for young families," said Allison Inserro, co-president of the organization. "In this economy, this is a low-cost alternative."

Family Friends hosts play groups every Monday and Wednesday morning at Fryer Hall next to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Metuchen.

"It helps the kids to learn to get along together, said co-president Kathy Davis, as she watched her 2-year-old daughter Margaret mingle with friends in the playgroup on Wednesday.

Besides playgroups for children, Family Friends also offers grown-ups the chance to socialize with nighttime outings to local restaurants and potlucks at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse.

They also have a "Meals for Members" program, through which a new mother or members who are sick are provided with home-cooked meals by other members of the group.

Highland Park resident Deborah Cherniss is one of the co-founders of the nonprofit organization, which dates back to 1984.

Cherniss, whose children are now grown up, said she decided to reach out to other young parents when she moved to Central Jersey from Chicago with her 3-year-old child.

She got the names of a couple of people through a local preschool in Piscataway and invited them home with their children. Very soon, the group came up with the idea of creating an organization to

meet their social needs, she said.

"Apparently, 25 years later, the need still continues," Cherniss said Wednesday.

The organization currently consists of about 45 families, who contribute minimal dues of \$80 a year.

Family Friends is celebrating 25 years with a "Cash for Gold" party on May 20. Participants will get paid for attending by selling their unwanted gold jewelry, with a portion of the night's proceeds donated to Family Friends.

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Additional Facts

At a glance

WHAT: Fundraiser for Family Friends, Inc.

WHEN: May 20, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

WHERE: The Old Franklin Schoolhouse, 491 Middlesex Ave.

MORE INFORMATION: www.familyfriendsinc.org
