



*Quentin with Matilda, three years old, and Hudson, six months*

## FEATURED MEMBER:

### Quentin Ball: Balancing Work and Motherhood

Juggling the joys and responsibilities of being a working mother is a topic that Quentin Ball likes to talk about. "Half of all breadwinners in families are women!" and "Did you know that 25% of all working women, especially most low-income individuals, have to leave their baby and return to work just 10 days after birth?" she says.

Research reveals that the US is one of only three countries left in the world that do not guarantee paid maternity leave. Further, though we have the Family Medical Leave act, according to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 12% of women have access to the paid parental leave, most of them being middle and upper class ladies.

Quentin is the Chief Strategy Officer at New Beginnings Family Academy in Bridgeport, educating youth from Kindergarten through eighth grade. She knows she is the minority, among fortunate working women; getting 10 weeks off after having her last child. The CEO of New Beginnings, Ronelle Swagerty, who by the way, has six children of her own, is sensitive to the needs of parents. If Quentin needs to pick up one of her children from preschool with a 103 fever, for example, she has the flexibility to get them.

New Beginnings is a charter school, which in Connecticut means that they follow most of the same rules that apply to the public schools, but get to choose their own curriculum and can hire and fire as they see fit. Their teachers are unionized like the rest of the schools and because New Beginnings school fundraises, they can pay them more than the public schools—an arrangement which may result in higher quality staff members. Each child in the school comes from a low income family. All too many arrive at school without having had breakfast nor dinner the night before.

Quentin wasn't originally in development. She has a bachelor's degree from Vassar College in Biology and Russian and worked as a pharmaceutical consultant for 15 years in New York City. She assisted companies like Bristol Myers and Proctor and Gamble market their drugs, beginning in the clinical trial development phase to the marketplace. In 2009, she went back to Indiana University and got her MPA (Masters in Public Administration).

Her role at New Beginnings is a mix of development responsibilities, Public Relations and marketing, and Executive Director like long-term strategic planning and advocacy. In her first year on the job, she doubled the number of fundraising dollars the school brought in, and by the second year, the donations and grants had tripled. How did she do it?

1. Quentin collaborated with the Board to identify new prospective donors among their social circles and then cultivated them. Then, she worked with the Development Committee to bring on more Board members with the ability to "give (money) or get (prospects)." Finally she challenged a board member to offer the organization a \$20,000 gift if the rest of the members could bring in 50 new donors—and explained that it was acceptable to bring on those who could just give small quantities like \$50. Quentin then stewarded these new prospects into major donors.

2. She worked with the development committee to escalate the volunteer program by five times its previous size and transitioned some new volunteers into donors. The school values having volunteers in the classrooms and there are many opportunities. Volunteers read to younger kids, help judge the annual science fair, and participate in a mentoring program. Quentin fostered a partnership with the Starwood Corporation's volunteers in which the various departments such as finance, IT and Human Resources come to the school and tell the children about their jobs and the children get to ask questions. Recently, the Starwood design group talked to the youth about their architectural jobs and what it is like to create large luxury hotels around the world. (Several of the children wanted to know, foremost, if they could have pizza delivered inside the resort hotels.)

Through expansion of these efforts, New Beginnings got 79 new donors last year.

3. Quentin asked and was given approval to hire a part time Development Associate and a full time Grant Writer, who doubled the grant dollars compared to the prior year.

New Beginnings has a waiting list of over 500 families. The school and its founder, Southport businessman Jon Dawson, and staff have accomplished some pretty amazing feats. Here are some facts from last year.

- Academics - The percentage of students who were Kindergarten ready was 60% for those who spent one year of Pre-Kindergarten at New Beginning Family Academy versus 30% for those who were not enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten at the school.
- High school - 91% of the last graduating class attended a competitive high school such as Fairfield Prep or Greens Farms Academy.
- Comparison - on the state assessment (SBAC) administered for the first time last year, New Beginnings Family Academy outperformed Bridgeport Public Schools at every grade level on every subject including Math, ELA (English), and Science. In some cases such as ELA in our upper grades, the school outperformed the state of Connecticut at large, which has many privileged high income children.



New Beginnings Academy's high level of quality is attributed to the fact that the school day is two hours longer than the Bridgeport public school day for half of its children and four hours longer for the other half who attend the in house after school program. New Beginnings is also committed to art, music, library media and sports. Each day a child will have at least one art enrichment activity. The staff also has a focus on kindness and you can feel it as you walk through the halls. Another visible difference is that children are allowed to be children. They can be seen engaged in drumming sessions in one classroom and taking a dancing break in another. "We nurture self-esteem in our kids and we kind of like it when they talk back a little." says Quentin. Continuous Quality Improvement too is one of their main values of the organization. "Everyone is expected to excel. Teachers are not allowed to be on cell phones in classrooms, for example, and we use a lot of data to inform our decisions regarding: our relationship with parent; children's behavior expectations; academic standards and curriculum; alumni relations; fundraising; and, the organizational direction," she continues. "The school actually has a full time data specialist on staff."

Everything New Beginnings does and accomplishes is on behalf of the children, and the fathers and mothers it serves. Suburbanstats.org reports that there are twice as many families headed by women in Bridgeport compared to two parent units. This means that half of all the families that New Beginnings serves are headed by single women householders, among whom, almost all live in poverty.

In terms of being a working mother, Quentin's husband is supportive, like her workplace. The day that I interviewed her, he was at home with one of their sick children and had volunteered to do so. He splits the household duties and soothes their little ones when they wake with nightmares in the middle of the

night. "He does laundry and I do the dishes. He drops the kids off and I pick them up. We both make dinner," remarks Quentin. This is in stark contrast to most households where women on average spend two hours and thirteen minutes on chores daily compared with one hour and twenty-one minutes for men, according to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data. This data relates to households in which there are two full time working parents and essentially takes note that women are still doing more than half of the housework. Quentin, like so many others, has a dream that, someday, all marriages will be as efficient as hers. She also has high hope that paid maternity leave will be the standard –for the benefit of all women who work, and their families.

*By Anne Tack*

## Photos



*AFP CFRE Review Course headed by Trenton Wright, CFRE, (far left) of the AFP Connecticut chapter and Lisa Ferraro, CFRE, of the AFP-Fairfield County chapter (far right)*



*AFP Fairfield County chapter members at AFP Fundraising Day in New York City with Keynote Speaker, Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III (middle), President of SUNY College at Old Westbury and Pastor at Abyssinian Baptist Church*

## New Members

**Marianne Delaney**  
*Director of Development*  
Person-to-Person

**Alyson Redner**

**Casey Simmons**

**Stacey M Goodwin**

**Leah Kagan**  
*Major Gift and Planned Giving Officer*  
Planned Parenthood of Southern New  
England

Innovative Concepts, Inc.

**Ellen Sullivan Crovatto**  
*VP Board of Directors*  
Seabury Academy of Music & Arts

---

## Renewed Members

**Katherine DiGiulio, CFRE**  
Congregation of Notre Dame

**Faith M. Douglass**  
*Development Director*  
Hall Neighborhood House

**Lisa Ferraro, CFRE**  
*Director of Development*  
Eagle Hill School

**Dawn Fleming**  
*Donor Relations Director*  
The Salvation Army

**Kerry Garofano, CFRE**  
*Stewardship Manager*  
Connecticut Humane Society

**Lisa Habasinski**  
*Development and Program Associate*  
Family & Children's Agency

**Nancy Joan Heller**  
*Director of Development*  
Abilis

**Fiona Hodgson**  
*Vice President, Development & Marketing*  
Fairfield County's Community Foundation

**Nils Morgan**  
*Strategic Account Manager*  
MSP Cultivate

**Sarah Motti**  
*Director of Development*  
McGivney Community Center

**Tara Navara, CFRE**  
*Chief Development Officer*  
Make-A-Wish Foundation of CT

**Joy S. Nazzaro**  
*Associate Director of Mission Advancement*  
School Sisters of Notre Dame

**Denise Rose**  
*Executive Director*  
Sarah Foundation

**Cynthia Russell**  
*Principal*  
CrossSector Partners

**Jennifer Seeley**  
*Development, Events & Membership*  
Ridgefield Community Center

---

## Contact Information

For more information on AFP Fairfield County, visit  
our website at:  
<http://www.afpfairfield.org>.

For questions related to membership or to get  
involved with an AFP Board Committee, please  
contact Lorraine Gibbons  
at [lgibbons@shehancenter.org](mailto:lgibbons@shehancenter.org).

For questions about events, contact Colleen  
Harkey at [charkey@optonline.net](mailto:charkey@optonline.net).

For questions or comments about the newsletter,  
please contact AFP board member, Anne Tack at  
[Tackwriters@ad.com](mailto:Tackwriters@ad.com).

---

STAY CONNECTED:



---

**[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!](#)**

---