



FOCUS MATTERS

Because the creatively wired and socially challenged should not have to go it alone...

Fall 2013

Thanks to you, this issue's highlights include:

- A Spectacular Season of Fun
- A Bear Hug from Build-A-Bear Bear Hugs Workshop Foundation
- Our New Friends at Kohl's
- Summer and Academic Programs
- Wanted: Great Volunteers!

Upcoming Events:

Fall Party:
September 20, 2013

We will see you there!



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A Spectacular Season of Fun!

Can you believe it? Another season of fun **FOCUS** events has flown by!

Our "Celebrate **FOCUS**" Dinner was on April 26th, where we celebrated all the great things **FOCUS** has done throughout the year.

Then, on June 8th, we had our Festival for Autism. Our favorite event was bigger and better than ever! Our families enjoyed the Eurobungee, Petting Zoo and pony rides. Most importantly, our families loved being in a safe, Autism-friendly environment; a true judgement-free zone! We made many new friends this year, including K21 KidStrong Foundation, Spirit Horse Therapeutic Riding, Roses for Autism, and Phoenix Rising.

A Bear Hug from Build-A-Bear Bear Hugs Workshop Foundation

During the month of August, FOCUS received a \$1,500 grant from the Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation. This grant will be used to purchase a leveled reader program and numerous silent reading books for the Clinical Educational Support Program. Lead Teacher Erika Davis is thrilled to know this grant will fulfill one of the Clinical Educational Support Program's biggest needs.

The Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation is committed to making life more bearable for children, families, and pets who are in need of a helping paw. With the sale of each Paperback Pup - a special furry friend available in all Build-A-Bear Workshop® stores - one dollar is donated to First Book and other literacy programs throughout the United States and Canada. Visit www.buildabear.com for more information.



Above: Kohl's Associates take a brief pause to pose for a photo.



Above: FOCUS walks with the dinosaurs



Above: Graduation Drum Circle

Our New Friends at Kohl's

During this year's Festival for Autism, our families noticed a lot of new faces. These friendly folks represented Kohl's in Waterbury and Berlin as part of Kohl's *Associates in Action* Program. Kohl's awarded **FOCUS** two \$500 grants; one for each store that participated. **FOCUS** is appreciative of their hard work!

Community Foundation of Northwest CT Provides Summer Opportunities

Thanks to the Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut, **FOCUS** was able to provide scholarships to two campers for this year's Summer Program. This exciting opportunity gave these campers two full weeks of fun and social learning.

At **FOCUS**, the need for scholarships goes year-round, not just in the summer. Numerous families rely on your generosity. Donate to FOCUS's scholarship fund!

FOCUS On Supportive Education

It has been another active and successful year in the Clinical Educational Support Program! This innovative program supports children who are currently unable to attend their traditional school settings. This year culminated in a spring graduation ceremony. It was an exceptional day of pride and accomplishments for staff, students, and their parents. The day ended with a ceremonial drumming circle celebrating their successes.

The Clinical Educational Support Program is proud to announce that five students received awards for academic achievement. Jeffrey B., Carson F., Alison W. and Hope W. received Certificates of Completion in Elementary Education, and Jeremy T. received his Promotion to Secondary Education.



Above: Happy to be canoeing at Burr Pond



Above: The Summer Program at the Children's Museum in West Hartford.



Above: Fireman's Fund volunteers take a break during their Day of Sharing.

A Splash of a Summer!

The **FOCUS** 2013 Summer Program has been an amazing ride. There are many familiar faces, as well as new friends that have joined us this year. Many lasting memories are made at camp.

This year we've revisited some of our favorite summer hot spots, such as Coco's pool where the kids enjoy swimming, playing games, coloring in the pool house or relaxing and socializing with each other. At Donna and Fred's, fish and crayfish can be caught (and released), dams are built by future engineers, and a game of soccer or capture the flag can be joined in the field. We can't forget about the dogs that kids love to sit with and pet while visiting with one of their favorite people, Donna!

Every Wednesday was spent at the Wilderness School in East Hartland where kids were engaged in "Challenge By Choice" activities, including the zip line and canoeing.

There were also some new field trips added this year, including a hike up Heublein Tower and a trip to Dinosaur State Park.

The summer program closes with a talent show where the participants have their chance to shine, and shine they do! The smiles on their faces as staff and peers cheer them on warms the heart and makes one feel proud to be part of the **FOCUS** Family.

Fireman's Fund Beautifies FOCUS

On September 12th, our friends from the Fireman's Fund Insurance Co. spruced up the EDT exterior as part of the Fireman's Fund Day of Sharing. This year, six begonias were donated to **FOCUS** by Joe Sampieri of Canton Garden Center. Thanks to organizer Darlene Borre and her crew, the garden and our building look great! **FOCUS** is grateful for their continued hard work and support.

Wanted: Great Volunteers!

Are you interested in giving your time at **FOCUS**, but aren't sure how? Do you have a special talent or expertise that you think **FOCUS** could use? Do you want to give your input on our great **FOCUS** events, such as the Festival for Autism?

We can help!

FOCUS is in need of parent volunteers to serve on event committees, assist with fundraising, participate in event preparation, and more! Your time and energy will be rewarded with smiles, laughter, and timeless memories.

Interested? Contact Valerie Lange at val@focus-centerforautism.org for more information!

Hope for the Future

FOCUS offers programs that help children learn to grow both socially and emotionally. **Your** help is needed now more than ever. Please consider a donation today.

FOCUS is Social (media)!

Like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/FOCUSAUTISM> and follow us at @**FOCUSC-tr4Autism**!



Above: Parent volunteers make special moments possible! This great memory was from the 2013 Festival for Autism.



Above: Friendships grow and blossom at FOCUS, thanks to you!

