



# FOCUS MATTERS

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

Winter 2014

Thanks to you, this issue's highlights include:

- The Spirit of Giving
- FOCUS and LACASA Fall Party
- FOCUS Programs
- A Big Catch from the Fisher Foundation
- Welcome to the Breakfast Club!
- Plant some resources for the Spring Party!

Upcoming Events:

Hartford Wolfpack:  
February 21, 2014

Spring Party:  
April 4, 2014

We will see you there!



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## The Spirit of Giving: Alive and Well at FOCUS!

Our **FOCUS** community is one of strength, unity, and love. It's no surprise, then, that our staff and their families rallied together to make the Christmas holidays a little brighter for three **FOCUS** families.

It started with an idea: Instead of purchasing gifts for the annual "Yankee Swap", staff would raise funds to purchase Christmas presents and necessities for three families in need. Our staff, board members, and their families were thrilled with the idea and gave heartily. It created a networking buzz as funds were pulled together in a matter of days. Nobody knew how much of an impact this effort would make.

A week before Christmas, **FOCUS** had raised \$1,500 and had purchased the presents for each family. Then, a phone call came. The Christmas tree in one of our adopted family's house had snapped in half. They were devastated, and so were we. Christmas isn't the same without a handsome tree decorated with tinsel, lights, and shiny ornaments of all shapes and sizes. **FOCUS** staff went beyond the call of duty, and a tree was found and assembled within hours. Christmas was saved!

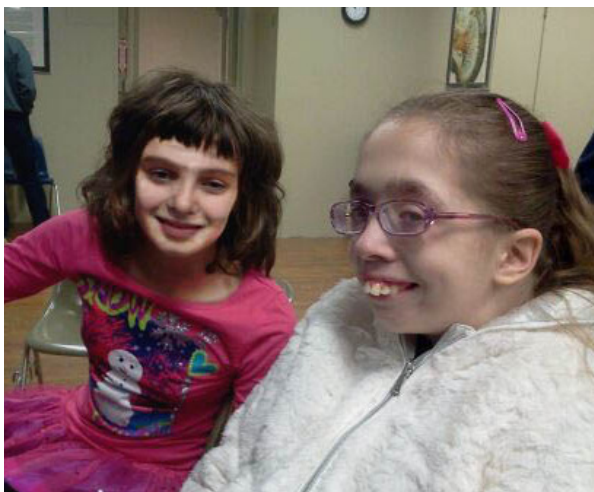
On Christmas morning, seven children awoke to find everything they had wished for and more nestled underneath their trees. Their bountiful holiday was made possible because of **FOCUS's** generosity. Thank you to everyone who participated. You are making a difference in the lives of these children!



*Above: Friends enjoying the Fall Party*



*Above: Having fun during a field trip to the Children's Museum of West Hartford!*



*Above: Relaxing with **FOCUS** friends!*

## **FOCUS and LACASA Fall Party: Four Times the Fun!**

The harvest moon shone brightly over the 4th annual **FOCUS** Fall Party. Over 100 Members of **LACASA** and **FOCUS** joined together in a night of food, fun, dancing and music at the Connecticut Junior Republic in Litchfield on September 20th. This Autism and family-friendly event kicked off the school year in style. There were lots of smiles and laughter as parents had the chance to see their children socializing and having fun while they relaxed and interacted with each other. A highlight of the evening was listening to "Downhill Jogger" by James Cable. His son, Alex, is a **FOCUS** alumnus.

**FOCUS** thanks Connecticut Jr. Republic, Marandino's Grocery Store of New Hartford, and the **FOCUS** and **LACASA** volunteers who gave their time and efforts towards this fantastic event!

## **A Big Catch from the Fisher Foundation**

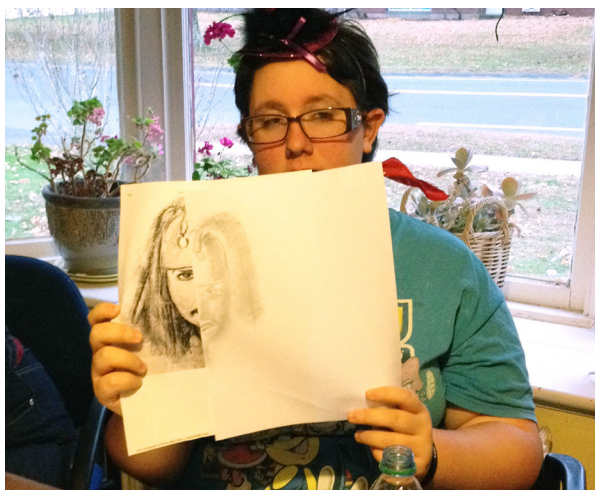
A generous grant from the Fisher Foundation is offering new opportunities for our children in the Extended Day Treatment Program. The funds provide resources for a challenging 21st century curriculum. The children are excited they are able to use brand new materials, and take pride in being a part of an innovative program which meets their various needs and capabilities. They also benefit from learning experiences outside our facility, such as field trips to the Children's Museum of West Hartford. Most of all, this grant assists in building each child's capacity for a thriving, positive future!

## **"Be the Fuel"**

**FOCUS**'s transportation program provides a vital service to children and families in the Extended Day Treatment Program. This important program needs your support. \$100 can subsidize a child's ride to and from **FOCUS** for one month. Please consider a contribution to the Transportation Program today!



*Above: Fall fun at **FOCUS**!*



*Above: A great sketch drawn during **FOCUS** on the Arts*



*Our teens can be themselves at **FOCUS** events! Volunteer today!*

## **FOCUS on Our Programs**

Our Clinical Educational Support and After School programs are in full swing, and there have been lots of positive changes! Thanks to **FOCUS** handyman Mike Wicke, there are now three large rooms supporting the learning and social needs of children on the Autism Spectrum. We have seen increased enrollment in our Girls' Groups, and we are enhancing our mentorship program as well. Our Parent Support Group continues to be held twice a month, and is a valuable resource for our families!

Be sure to check your email to find out when **FOCUS's** next Social Clubs will be!

## **FOCUS on the Arts**

Another year of **FOCUS** on the Arts has begun! Our artists are learning lots of new skills and having fun as well!

As you may remember, **FOCUS** on the Arts received a generous grant from the Fund for Greater Hartford in 2012. Thanks to their support, **FOCUS** on the Arts has had some amazing outcomes! One child discovered he had a talent for working with sculpting clay, and started to take sculpting lessons out in the community! This program has also been shown to help reduce anxiety, which has taught children how to relax and develop positive relationships with their peers.

## **“Plant” Some Resources for the Spring Party!**

Our Spring Party on April 4th will be successful with your help! **You** can make the Spring Party enjoyable by:

- Bringing healthy snacks: fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and allergen-friendly products please!
- Making a donation: help offset our costs!
- Volunteering your time!

If you want to contribute, contact Colleen Burns at [colleen.burns@focuscenterforautism.org](mailto:colleen.burns@focuscenterforautism.org) by **March 21st, 2014**. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Welcome to the Breakfast Club!

Study after study points out the link between good nutrition and the ability of children to learn and socialize with peers. Because breakfast is the most important meal of the day, the 15 children enrolled in our day program are now served breakfast each morning. We've even put a **FOCUS** twist on this. Run in a restaurant-style fashion, each child has a responsibility in making the program a success. They take menu orders, set tables, serve breakfast, and clean; which gives them essential social and employment skills that will benefit them in the future.

The Breakfast Club needs your support. \$250 can help 15 children have a nutritious breakfast for a week. Please consider making a contribution to this vital program today!

## The Gamer's Box Goes Above and Beyond!

For the second year in a row, Michael Hill from The Gamer's Box donated his time and services to provide an afternoon of fun to the Summer Program. His patience and enthusiasm for gaming made him a favorite among our campers. **FOCUS** would like to thank him for all his hard work and continued support! Check him out at [www.thegamersbox.com](http://www.thegamersbox.com)!

## Save a Tree – Join Our Email List!

At **FOCUS**, we are always looking for ways to go green! You can help us protect the environment by joining our email list. By doing so, the latest news from **FOCUS** will be at your fingertips. Find out about our events, updates from our program, and more! You will also be reducing our carbon footprint!

Sign up for our email list by visiting our website:  
[www.focuscenterforautism.org](http://www.focuscenterforautism.org)

## Hope for the Future

**FOCUS** offers programs that help children learn to grow both socially and emotionally. **Your** donation today will make a difference for our children and our families!



*Above: Making tasty treats during the Clinical Educational Support Program*



*Friendships abound in our **FOCUS** programs, thanks to you!*

