



# FOCUS MATTERS

Celebrating 15 years of changing lives!

Winter 2015

Thanks to you, this issue's highlights include:

- 15 years of Changing Lives
- FOCUS and LACASA Fall Party
- FOCUS Receives Grant Awards
- "Dirt Wings for Autism"
- FOCUS Programs
- Go Fund FOCUS!
- FOCUS's Fish Friends!

Upcoming Events:

**Flatbread Fundraiser:**  
Tuesday, February 17  
5-9 PM

We will see you there!



**FOCUS Center for Autism**  
326 Albany Turnpike  
PO BOX 452  
Canton, CT 06019  
(860) 693-8809



## 15 Years of Changing Lives

Can you believe how time flies? It has been 15 years since we became a non-profit organization and it has been an incredible journey and privilege to get to where we are now and to have helped so many people!

For a number of years we had struggled with who we were and how we would fit into a system that had never seen the likes of us before. We knew that there was (and still is) a huge gap in services for our population and we were committed to developing a continuum of care for children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and after 15 years we are still dedicated to this same mission of creating supports and services that address the complex needs of our children and young adults.

It is no easy feat these days to be a non-profit organization; the ups and downs are not for the faint of heart. But what sticks out most in my mind over 15 years are the people of **FOCUS**, the hundreds of families we have been able to help, the staff that have given above and beyond and our supporters who believed in us even when times were tough.

I will never forget the faces of the children when they knew they had found a place where they could just be and their families when they understood that **FOCUS** was a community, a place to belong. The magic of this continues every day and it makes all of us so proud to be a part of this amazing program!

From the ground up **FOCUS** has been a cooperative and collective 15 year effort. We could not exist without your support! Together we have created a stellar community for our children and their families and we hope that together we can do so for another 15 years!

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!

**Donna Swanson, Founder and Executive Director**



*Above: Friends socializing at our Fall Party!*



*Above: FOCUS at Flamig Farm*



*Above: FOCUS and friends at "Paint for a Cause"!*

## **Fourth Annual FOCUS and LACASA Fall Party**

The fourth annual **FOCUS** and LACASA Fall Party was fantastic! Over 100 attendees came to FAVARH for music, dancing, arts and crafts, games, and more! Special thanks to The Fresh Market of Avon, and the **FOCUS** and LACASA staff and volunteers who donated their time and goods to this event!

Don't forget, you can check out the calendar on our website to see when our next family and Autism-friendly event will be!

## **FOCUS on our Programs**

The **FOCUS** Extended Day Treatment Program is in full swing! Our Day Program continues to build their Pillars of Character and make a positive impact on their community. They held a food drive for the Torrington Food Pantry, and the food was delivered by their CIT group in December.

Have you considered attending our Extended Day Treatment Program? It's not too late to enroll! We have openings available in our Day Program, which focuses on providing each child the clinical support they need to succeed! Call (860) 693-8809 for more information.

## **FOCUS Receives Grant Awards**

**FOCUS** has received some amazing grants! In September, the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts awarded over \$15,000 to fund a rigorous STEM project in the Day Program. Then, in October, the Union Savings Bank Foundation granted \$2,500 to purchase iPads for our Extended Day Treatment Program!

We are very grateful for the support of these wonderful organizations!





*Above: **FOCUS** with David Wozniki and Annmarie Hite of Kohl's #461 and Gregory Gardner of J. Timothy's Tavern*



*Above: **FOCUS** with Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited!*



*Above: **FOCUS** celebrates Thanksgiving*

## **“Dirt Wings for Autism”**

J. Timothy's Tavern and Kohl's are great friends of **FOCUS**! Recently, they partnered to host many “Dirt Wings for Autism” events with Kohl's Associates in Action program. For each event held, Kohl's provides **FOCUS** with a \$500 Associates in Action grant; which benefits our Extended Day Treatment program! Thank you to Gregory Gardner, general manager of J. Timothy's, David Wozniki, manager of Kohl's #461 of Plainville, and Annmarie Hite of Kohl's #461 for your generosity and support!

## **FOCUS's Fish Friends**

**FOCUS** made 200 special friends this past November! Thanks to a partnership with Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited, and financed by the Rotary Club of Avon-Canton, **FOCUS** is participating in “Trout in the Classroom”, a nationwide conservation-oriented environmental education program. Over the next few months, **FOCUS** will be raising 200 brown trout eggs to fry and will release them in a local river or stream this spring. Participating in “Trout in the Classroom” will teach our children lessons in responsibility, ecology, and conservation.

We look forward to sharing our progress on our **FOCUS** blog! Check in frequently to see how our new friends are doing!

## **Go Fund FOCUS!**

There is a new way for you and your family to support **FOCUS**: GoFundMe! Launched in 2010, GoFundMe utilizes crowdfunding to help people raise funds for things that are important to them. We are using GoFundMe to provide scholarships for the children of our neediest families. You can help by donating to our campaign, or sharing it on social media. We appreciate your support!

## Save The Date: Flatbread Fundraiser

Need plans for February Vacation? We have one for you! Join **FOCUS** on Tuesday, February 17 from 5-9 PM at Flatbread Pizza in the Shoppes at Farmington Valley! A portion of the evening's flatbread pizza sales will benefit **FOCUS**!

Flatbread and **FOCUS** are a perfect match. Flatbread prides itself on serving delicious pizza made with organic, locally sourced ingredients. They also cater to those following gluten free, dairy free, and vegetarian lifestyles. **FOCUS** is dedicated to meeting the complex needs of children on the Autism Spectrum, which includes providing access to nutritious meals and snacks while in our Extended Day Treatment program. We are thrilled to be partnering together for this fundraiser!

### The Festival for Autism is On its Way!

It may be the dead of winter, but **FOCUS** is already planning the number one event of your summer - the Festival for Autism! Our committee has been working hard to make the 14th year of the Festival the best one yet. **You** can play a part in its success! Here's how:

- **Share your experience:** Tell everyone you know about the Festival for Autism! Every dollar made at this family-friendly event directly benefits the hundreds of children we serve state-wide.
- **Make connections:** The Festival for Autism is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors and donors. If you know of a local business or organization looking for a community outreach opportunity, email [info@focuscenterforautism.org](mailto:info@focuscenterforautism.org)!
- **Show your support:** Contribute to the success of the Festival for Autism by making a donation!

We are so thankful for your support! Keep an eye on our website for more information about this year's Festival for Autism!



*Above: **FOCUS** on the Arts celebrates Halloween*



*The **FOCUS** Festival for Autism gives teens a place to connect and have fun. You make it happen!*



***FOCUS** is on social media! "Like" us on Facebook and "Follow" us on Twitter!*