



FOCUS Matters

SPRING 2019

FRESH STARTS

The Fresh Start School is now nearing the end of its third year. As word of the program spreads, we are steadily adding children with ASD who also experience severe anxiety, have school phobias and are currently unable to make it in traditional school settings.

Fresh Start provides a unique program for these children by offering a safe, nurturing environment. Each child has an opportunity to belong, feel understood and to become a part of an awesome, supportive community of peers and staff.

Clinical work is all inclusive in the Fresh Start program. Helping children resolve issues as they arise improves self-regulation, helps control behavior, and creates children who want to be active learners.

**We are in the habit of giving children with ASD a Fresh Start!
Your Support Directly Impacts Our Success!**



Check Out the New School Van!



The Fresh Start School was able to purchase a brand new 12 seater Ford Transit Van. Our two Honda Odysseys had seen better days and were on their last legs. The deal was brokered by our good friend Chris Hansen from Northwest Hills in Torrington. The van will be used for field trips and other off grounds school activities. Did we say it seats 12!



In Memoriam: Marcia Bok



It is with much sadness that we had to say goodbye to our good friend Marcia Bok. Marcia was a board member and for many years was the FOCUS Board President. Her exemplary life in social justice was truly remarkable. As a professor of social work, an activist, and a writer she was the voice for many. With intelligence, wit, and humor she defended those who could not defend themselves. The world will miss her, as will we!

Volunteer of the Year - Ben Morris



Ben began volunteering for FOCUS after completing programming in what was previously our Extended Day Treatment Program. Looking back on what he learned from his time as a student, Ben said, "It helped me express myself and my emotions through a social learning experience." Despite battling chronic migraines and arthritis, he wanted to give back and began volunteering at The Fresh Start School after graduating. He is a great asset in the classroom and uses his experience as a previous student of FOCUS to relate to The Fresh Start students. Ben finds joy in watching the students at The Fresh Start School learn something new. Thank you Ben for your dedication!

FOCUS on the News

Since our last update, FOCUS has had several great opportunities to appear on local television.

August 20, 2018, executive director Donna Swanson made an appearance on FOX 61 to speak about back to school anxiety.

October 22, 2018, Donna and Fresh Start student Dillon Oliviero went on FOX 61 to discuss the progress he has made in our program and appealed to the community to support our school through our Stand by Me campaign.

October 29, 2018, Donna spoke on FOX 61 about how to make Halloween a success for children on the spectrum.

On December 13, 2018, Lauren Gardner appeared on Channel 8 to discuss tips and tricks on making the holiday season a success with loved ones who have sensory processing disorders.

On April 2, 2019, Lauren also appeared on FOX 61 to talk about World Autism Awareness Day and highlighted the importance to recognize that autism spectrum disorder has many different struggles depending on where an individual falls on the spectrum.



FOCUS television appearances help to promote awareness and provide public education on the many issues that children and young adults with autism face.

Helping Hands

It sure can be tough as a non-profit to have the resources to tackle projects around our building. That is why we are SO grateful for Valley Community Baptist Church. The time and work they put into our building when they visited this past November is so appreciated!

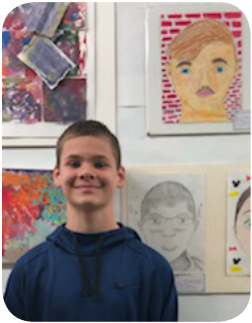


We started the holiday week on a high note! Volunteers from H&R Block Bristol branch arrived bright and early to The Fresh Start School and decorated our building for arriving students. Then they made delicious pancakes and sausages served with hot cocoa. We are so grateful for all of our wonderful volunteers!



FOCUS Art at CCSU

Six students from The Fresh Start School had the opportunity to display their artwork at Central Connecticut State University. As a member of the CT Art Ed Association, art teacher Donna Frustere and her students were invited to host a youth art exhibition. Donna is passionate about her art students having the same opportunities as other students in the state. A group of students took a field trip in March to see the artwork and appreciate their peer's hard work and success!



Sharon Cable, Coordinator of FOCUS Support Services

Welcome Sharon Cable, long-time friend and supporter, parent of FOCUS alumnus, and new Coordinator of Support Services at FOCUS. Sharon is spearheading the new parent-run support group which not only provides much needed support to families but is also helping to assess the needs of our ever increasing autism community. Sharon is working with our young adult, autism services, and educational directors to expand our social clubs to reach more young adults with ASD. In addition, Sharon and her son Alex are an important part of our Autism Spectrum Unplugged Panel. Sharon is the right person to help develop our collaborative and shared service initiatives. FOCUS is lucky to have her!



Life on the Spectrum TV

The Fresh Start School has partnered with Nutmeg TV to create a show centered on our students which is titled "Life on the Spectrum". The Fresh Start students and staff were trained on how to use the equipment and will be creating all of the content for the show. "Life on the Spectrum" features a variety of segments which include interviews, cooking, games, and improv comedy! 2 episodes have already aired with 4 more episodes coming soon. All episodes will be available for streaming on www.youtube.com/nutmegtelevision.



A Day at the Ballpark



FOCUS Center for Autism is partnering with the Tri-State Baseball League to host their All-Star Game on Saturday, June 29th at 2:30 pm. Gather your friends and family for a high quality baseball game at Fuessenich Park in Torrington, CT. Admission is free with a recommended donation at the gate to benefit the Fresh Start School. Kids will be able to run the bases after the game!

Summer of Fun

There will be 2 fun filled fundraisers coming in the next few months! First will be the 2nd Annual **FOCUS Rocks Benefit Concert** on Sunday, June 30th at Bridge Street Live in Collinsville, CT. Michael Cleary will start the night at 5 PM with a solo acoustic set, followed by Mixed Signals returning from last year with their groove oriented blend of rock and blues. Headlining the evening will be the 70's Project which will get you moving to the biggest Billboard hits of the 70's. You won't want to miss this evening of great music and dancing!

Tickets can be purchased at the Bridge Street Live Box Office or www.41bridgestreet.com. For up to date information and sponsorship opportunities visit focuscenterforautism.org/

The inaugural **Fore Autism Charity Golf Tournament** will be taking place on Friday, August 23rd at the beautiful and challenging Fairview Farms Golf Course in Harwinton, CT. Mixed in with the scramble golf tournament will be many other contests where you can have a chance to win \$10,000, a new 2019 Jeep Wrangler, and even \$50,000! If you're not a golfer, you can still join us at 4 pm for the reception with delicious food and a huge raffle!

Become a sponsor or register to golf at www.foreautism.com! Space is limited and the deadline to participate in this event is August 2nd so don't delay!

All proceeds from these wonderful events will benefit the programs of FOCUS Center for Autism and the Fresh Start School!



2nd Annual Benefit Concert for FOCUS Center for Autism
Featuring Rock, Blues & R&B music from local CT artists!

June 30 5 PM

BRIDGE STREET live
Bridge Street Live
41 Bridge Street
Collinsville, CT



FORE AUTISM CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

08/23/19 FAIRVIEW FARM GOLF COURSE
300 HILL RD, HARWINTON, CT

BENEFIT FOR FOCUS CENTER FOR AUTISM & THE FRESH START SCHOOL

