



FOCUS Matters

FALL 2019

Fresh Start School Starts a New Year

Believe it or not the Fresh Start School just started its fourth year as a state approved special education program. The program, headed up by our very own Director of Educational Services Maeghen Harris LCSW, now serves children with ASD and related disorders ages 10-21. This year staff have been working hard to develop and expand our transition services so that adolescents can acquire the skills they need to move on from the program. We are also looking to expand our cramped learning spaces and hope to have additional classrooms in the near future. Fresh Start continues to be recognized as a unique program that fills a niche for many students who have had trouble fitting into traditional classroom settings. Here's hopes for another great year!



Supporting the Autism Community

Our new Support Services Coordinator Sharon Cable is hard at work. She now offers young adult social clubs weekly on Fridays and a monthly Parent Support Group that includes child-care. Sharon also oversees a weekly yoga class in collaboration with Sanctuary Power Yoga in Canton. In addition, she is developing a new cooking class designed to address the culinary needs of our young adult population. To obtain a schedule for these services please contact Sharon at 860-693-9128. New ideas for support services are also always welcome.



FOCUS After School

Our newest program is our After School Program. This clinically supervised program takes place every Wednesday from 3:00-6:00pm. The tuition based program is a hit with children who need to work on their social learning goals. The program Director Dan Sitcovsky LCSW has many years of experience as a clinician at FOCUS and is excited to develop this special after school program. The program incorporates structured group activities with mindfulness practice and offers a variety of social learning opportunities. To sign up, just call 860-693-8809.





Summer of Growth

The FOCUS Summer Social Skills Immersion Program started in 1998 out of Executive Director Donna Swanson's private practice in Avon. The program has evolved over the years but there has always been a good amount of fun mixed in with incredible social learning opportunities!



A highlight from this summer was a trip to Fascia's Chocolates in Waterbury. What a great time we had learning about the origins of chocolate and then making our own creations. We also had some awesome and inspiring visitors including a jazz performance by the Gianni Gardner Trio, a magic show by the Amazing Magical Paul, a live animal show with Harris In Wonderland, and so much more!



American Savings Foundation Grant

Our After School Program is honored to have been selected by the American Savings Foundation for their Community Grant. These funds will help make it possible for our children and young adults to grow socially and emotionally, learn to manage anxiety and frustration, and build relationships through structured group and recreational activities. Some of the program supplies purchased include art supplies, board games, yoga mats, and Dungeons and Dragons books and supplies.



Service Above Self

We are excited to announce that two of our FOCUS staff members are now Avon-Canton Rotarians. Wanting to give back to the organization that has continued to support FOCUS over the years, Lauren and Yvonne Gardner applied to the organization and were accepted as members of Avon-Canton Rotary in April 2019. They are proud to serve as Rotarians and represent FOCUS in the organization through charitable service in our community and abroad.

Baseball FUN-Raiser

Many thanks go to one of our favorite social work interns, Dave Benson, for setting up our first ever baseball fundraiser. On June 29th, the Tri State Baseball League sponsored FOCUS for their annual All Star Game. Donations were collected all afternoon and many of us showed up to root for these future major league hopefuls. Our own Aaron Schein sang the national anthem and some of our kids were feeling quite proud as they represented FOCUS by throwing out a first pitch. It was a fun afternoon and FOCUS was a winner too!



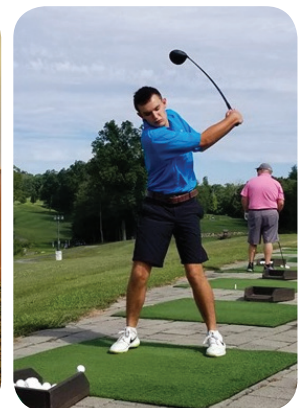
FOCUS Rocks It Again

We are still on cloud 9 from this year's performances at our benefit concert FOCUS Rocks! Over 100 people joined us on June 30th at Bridge Street Live in Collinsville as Michael Cleary, Mixed Signals and The 70's Project rocked it all night for our cause. We are beyond grateful for the musicians, sponsors, and everyone who attended for making this night a success and helping us continue to provide quality services to children and young adults on the autism spectrum!



Fore Autism

FOCUS Center for Autism held its inaugural golf tournament, Fore Autism on August 23 at Fairview Farm in Harwinton. Fore Autism is a charity golf tournament inspired by a Fresh Start Student named Jack Tanner. Jack arrived at the Fresh Start School in January 2018 and has made immense progress since beginning our programming. An avid and passionate golfer, Jack's family approached FOCUS with the idea and helped to form this charity tournament to raise money for FOCUS and The Fresh Start School. Jack and his family were among the golfers who played and competed to win various prizes such as a 5 day ocean cruise, a 2019 Jeep Wrangler, \$50,000 and other amazing prizes. The day was a complete success as 91 golfers and more than 40 others joined for dinner and bid on our incredible silent auction and raffle items. It was a fantastic day with beautiful weather and a passionate committee of volunteers, staff, donors, and guests. The night ended with a standing ovation celebrating the mission and work of FOCUS!



10 Year Employee Club

FOCUS Center for Autism is about to enter its 20th year of serving the autism community! We have been fortunate to have such amazing employees throughout our history. We currently have 20 out of our 60 employees that have been with us for over 10 years!

Working in the nonprofit industry isn't always easy but we are grateful to have employees who are not only caring but also fully committed to our mission! Thank you to the following people for your perseverance and loyalty:

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|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ★ Jen Archer | ★ Adam Cohen | ★ Eric Cohen | ★ Melanie Deal |
| ★ Carol Doiron | ★ Fred Evans | ★ Lauren Gardner | ★ Yvonne Gardner |
| ★ Kathy "Tink" Harrison | ★ Caroline Jestin | ★ Ross Kelly | ★ Sandy Kissel |
| ★ Val Lange | ★ Ted Murkland | ★ John Oluwole | ★ Chris Osborn |
| ★ Luz Ramirez | ★ Chantelle Spellman | ★ Donna Swanson | ★ William Womack |

20 in 2020



FOCUS Center for Autism will celebrate 20 years as a non-profit organization next year-2020. Over the years we have gone through many evolutions including business name changes, personnel changes and program changes. The one thing that has never changed however has been our unwavering commitment to our mission of helping children and young adults with ASD. We have provided services to over 1000 children and their families and have touched the hearts of thousands through our advocacy and Autism Spectrum Unplugged presentations. The dedication of our clinical, educational and residential staff is what makes us tick! They are the ones responsible for our 20 productive years! As we move into 2020, we hope you can continue to support our mission and will help us celebrate this incredible milestone!



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