

Summer 2012

Thanks to your support, some of this season's highlights include:

- Summer Program
- Summer Clinical Educational Support Program
- FOCUS Will Miss Susan Daly
- We Recycle Employees
- Red Stone Pub
- Our New Website
- Above and Beyond
- "Tweety"
- UNICO National Grant
- CAAC Mini-Grant
- Donor Appreciation Meet & Greet

Mark your calendar:

FALL PARTY
September 21, 2012

DONOR APPRECIATION
MEET & GREET
November 1, 2012

FESTIVAL FOR AUTISM
June 8, 2013

We will
see you there!



FOCUS MATTERS

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

Summer Program

The Summer Program just ended... the kids had a blast and the staff are worn out but there really is nothing like it anywhere! Each day for six weeks 5 vans transported 20 children on the Autism Spectrum plus staff to various locations for a unique and different kind of summer experience. Mondays were spent at Coco's pool. Coco is a longtime friend and supporter of FOCUS and she most graciously opened her pool and property every week to our kids and staff! We are most thankful to her! On Tuesdays and Thursdays the program came to Donna and Fred's house where they got to groom horses, play with dogs, catch and release fish and crayfish in the brook, play outside and watch movies inside during the hottest July on record. On Wednesdays we were lucky enough to have the program go to the Wilderness School in East Hartland. The school is accepting and sensitive to our kids and the staff is creative in designing the group activities. The school provides a unique experience for our kids who might not otherwise engage in some of these kinds of activities. Many thanks to the staff! Fridays were spent at the EDT building playing games inside and out with the option to go to tag sales, which some kids loved to do! On the final day of the program we had our most successful Talent Show where anyone can step up to the mic and show their talents. DVD's are available! By having a sense of community and belonging to a constructive peer group the kids over the six weeks were able to grow both socially and emotionally while still having fun. Check out our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FOCUSAUTISM ...the pictures tell it all!



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Summer Clinical Educational Support Program

This year we added our Summer Clinical Educational Support Program for those kids choosing to do



some school related work rather than attend our regular summer program. The program ran three days a week for six weeks and the kids loved it! Led by our Special Education teacher Erika Davis the program mirrored the incredible work Erika does in our Clinical Educational Support Program during the school year. This is a very unique and effective clinical program that helps with the social and emotional obstacles our kids face and helps teach them how to get back to their original school system!



FOCUS Will Miss Susan Daly

Our Finance and Human Resource Director Susan Daly is leaving. We are sorry to see her go but, hey, she gets to retire! For over four years Susan has developed the Finance and Human Resource Department at FOCUS. As our budget grew and the number of employees skyrocketed to over 50 we were in desperate need of someone to help us with our infrastructure needs. It turned out that person was Susan as she began to develop a financial system that made sense to our staff and our board, and that made our auditors happy. She put safeguards and systems in place that really helped our hiring process and that structured our entire human resource department. She developed and tracked program budgets, helped design project budgets for grants and even wrote and received a grant of her own. We will miss her dedication, her great organizational skills and her calm demeanor. We wish her the best in retirement!

We Recycle Employees

A number of staff changes have been made in the last few months. They are all for the good, however, and we are happy with our decisions as we continue to mentor our staff and allow them to grow and be challenged in new positions. It began with our Shannon House Group Home Program Director Lara Skirvan accepting a clinical position outside of FOCUS. We are happy for her and most thankful for all her hard work these past 4 years. This set off an interesting chain reaction! We are excited that the current Shannon House Clinician Liz Langevin accepted the position of Program Director, which led to Jerrica Dell'Aera, a clinician in our EDT Program, accepting the position of Clinician at Shannon House. This led to Maeghen Plourde, an EDT Intern, Direct Care Staff and recent master's level graduate, accepting the open clinical position at EDT! Also, in our DCF program, Charlie Grillo will step down as Residential Supervisor to a part time position as he gets married and returns to school full-time. This leads us to Rebecca Thomson, currently a Direct Care Staff at Shannon House, accepting the position of Supervisor. In our Program Development Department we are losing our part time position filled by Caroline Jestin and have expanded and filled it with both Jamie Cohen and Colleen Burns, both seasoned EDT staff. It's all good!

Red Stone Pub Night

On a sweltering July 18th evening FOCUS was lucky enough to be inside the Red Stone Pub in Simsbury for a Guest Bartending Night. This little fundraiser was quite successful as our very own Yvonne Gardner and Jamie Cohen worked hard learning to be guest bartenders. The raffle was quite a hit and many thanks to our own Jen Archer for selling so many tickets. The night was not just for friends of FOCUS but an opportunity to make new friends as the event was also open to the public. A special thanks to Red Stone Pub owner Marc Lubetkin for hosting this event!





Our New Website

Although it is a work in progress, our new website is up and running! Check out www.focuscenterforautism.org! This new site has been a long time coming and we are grateful to all the hard work put into it. Thanks especially to Lauren Tancredi for the design and to our very own Caroline Jestin, Eric Cohen and Colleen Burns for all their hard work. The new site is more professional and user friendly. Please visit the site and let us know what you think! Check out the photo gallery!

Above and Beyond

Over the last few months we have been lucky enough to have some very special people in our lives. A few folks have donated their skills and time to FOCUS in unique ways-going above and beyond! We want thank [Jeanette and Todd Brodeur](#) along with their children [Lauren, Aaron and Gillian Schein](#) for spending a day of service planting and sprucing up our yard...it looks beautiful. In addition, in honor of Lauren and Aaron's B'nai-Mitzvah, they had FOCUS designated for donations rather than gifts out of appreciation for all that FOCUS has done for their family...so generous and kind of them! Our newer board member [Craig Ellis](#), owner of [Got Paint](#) was kind enough to donate the painting of our EDT building-paint and labor included, even the shed! The building was so in need of painting, we don't know how to thank Craig enough! Our



new friend [Jimmy Grasso](#) volunteered his time and skill designing and installing our logo in our EDT van window. He did a beautiful job and we have received many compliments on it. Thanks, Jimmy! As luck would have it, our Special Education teacher, Erika Davis's father [Dan Cox](#) has a HVAC license. He was kind enough to donate his time and expertise to our built in air conditioners which were in dire need of cleaning and tuning up. Many thanks Dan for keeping us cool this very hot summer! A big thank you goes out to [Gary James](#) owner of [Colony Pizza](#) in Avon who out of the blue donated 20 pizzas to the kids and staff in our Summer Program! Above and Beyond! We would also like to thank [Michael K. Hill](#) for providing our Summer Program with an afternoon of high-tech video game fun. He drove his gaming trailer into our parking lot and the good times began as 8 kids joined him. Each had their own video screen and they thought it was so cool that they could all play games at the same time! Find out more at www.thegamersbox.com. Thank you all so much!



GOT PAINT

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Interior/Exterior/Powerwashing



“Tweety”

Twitter is something us older folks know very little about, but in terms of social networking and getting the word out about FOCUS on Twitter and Facebook we turn to our very own Colleen Burns, who is affectionately better known as “Tweety”. She truly has a handle on social media and is doing a great job posting on Twitter. Check Tweety out as she goes for 200 tweets in two weeks!



UNICO National Grant

FOCUS Center for Autism received a \$4,200 grant from UNICO National! This grant will be used to purchase a portable SMART Board and an iPad2 for the FOCUS Clinical Educational Support Program. Our Special Education teacher, Erika Davis, was thrilled and excited when she learned FOCUS had received the grant. “This is going to be a great tool for our classroom!” she exclaimed. Executive Director Donna Swanson agreed, noting that the addition of the SMART Board and the iPad2 will expand the educational opportunities available for students enrolled in our Extended Day Treatment Program.



CAAC Mini-Grant

The Department of Public Health, in conjunction with The Connecticut Autism Action Coalition (CAAC) and FAVOR, awarded a 3 year mini-grant of \$12,500 to FOCUS Center for Autism “to ensure that all children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities will receive access to comprehensive coordinated health care and related services through a comprehensive community-based system of care”. FOCUS created a collaborative panel of ASD experts to provide trainings in each of the five Connecticut medical regions. The panel was comprised of Donna Swanson, Founder and Executive Director of FOCUS, Sharon Cable from the Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA), Shannon Knall from Autism Speaks, and Dr. Eric Geigle from the Institute of Living, along with two FOCUS Spectrum Unplugged panel members. We presented four times around the state sharing information on recognizing the signs of ASD, understanding the behaviors, assessment and diagnosis, early intervention, Milieu Therapy Model of Treatment, and the importance of supporting the family. We received rave reviews and will be back on the road again over the next 2 years!



Donor Appreciation Meet and Greet

On November 1st from 6p-9p FOCUS will be hosting a donor appreciation meet and greet event at our 126 Dowd Avenue, Canton location. This is an opportunity for donors, our board members and management staff of FOCUS to get together and exchange ideas and to learn more about each other. Updates will be given on all FOCUS programs and any questions you may have will hopefully be answered. Appetizers and wine will be served so don't miss out! We hope that you will join us as we celebrate 12 years of growth and success...we could not have done this without YOU!