



FOCUS MATTERS

Celebrating 15 years of changing lives!

Summer 2015

Thanks to you, this issue's highlights include:

- Festival for Autism!
- FOCUS Receives Second Grant Award
- Life Skills
- Continuum of Care
- Friends of FOCUS
- It's All About The Trout!
- FOCUS Awards
- Day Program: Out and About

View the new 2015-2016 Program Calendar @ www.focuscenterforautism.org

Stay up to date @ [facebook.com/focusautism](https://www.facebook.com/focusautism)



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The Festival for Autism!

This year FOCUS celebrated **15 years** of changing lives with our best ever *Festival for Autism!* Thank you to our many **new sponsors** (see insert) including the presenting sponsor, Goodworks Insurance, who supported and made our success possible. There were raffle baskets galore and silent auction items that included a trip to Disney World with a \$1,000 gift card included!!

FOCUS' signature event was open to the public and brought the community together for an afternoon of Autism and family-friendly fun. There were the great games and exciting activities you have come to expect as well as some new ones. Three huge Inflatables provided tons of sensory-friendly fun all day! Of course the pony rides and petting zoo are always a hit!

Don't forget the food - many thanks to our friends from the Lion's Club for grilling up delicious burgers and hot dogs, and Mr. Sprinkles of Torrington for providing the ice cream!

A number of vendor booths were present to inform and inspire, including an array of service providers ready to speak with you about their programming.

102.9 The Whale provided the music and did a great job of streaming the Festival live. Thanks to Chaz from the morning show who called the raffle and silent auction winners!

Thank you to the over 400 families who joined us to make this day memorable! We are truly blessed! Thanks to all of our supporters and volunteers. And a special welcome to all the new friends! What a great way to kick off the summer!

THANK YOU!

FOCUS Festival For Autism 2015



Thanks to all our sponsors:

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FOCUS Receives Second Grant Award

FOCUS has received a grant award from the **Stanley D. and Hinda N. Fisher Fund**, a donor advised fund at the **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**. The grant award will be used in our Day Program, and will purchase educational, life skills and vocational materials to enhance its current programming.

The funding FOCUS first received from the Fisher Foundation (now the **Fisher Fund**) in 2013 made a tremendous impact on the Day Program. The children learned educational, social and life skills at our program site, and were exposed to experiences they may not have otherwise had outside of FOCUS! We look forward to offering more opportunities for learning and growth with this second grant award!



FOCUS celebrates our 100th day of programming

Life Skills Program

A Young Adult Life Skills group has been formed and will meet three days per week in the evening. Residents from both of our residential programs as well as from the FOCUS community are attending the program that is held in our Dowd Avenue building. This pilot program is developing a curriculum of life skills for young adults that will help them learn the skills they need to eventually live as independently as possible. Staff from our Young Adult Supportive Housing Program are the mentors for this program and so far the feedback has been positive!

Creating a Continuum of Care

It has always been an important goal of FOCUS to work towards establishing a continuum of care for children and young adults with ASD. In July of this year we are happy to say that our DMHAS Young Adult Supportive Housing Program will move to Torrington and **double** in size! In collaboration with the Corporation for Independent Living who purchased and renovated the property, six young adults with Autism will begin their journey of Independent Living. The building that has been refurbished has three two-bedroom apartments and room for 24/7 support staff on the property. **This will truly be a unique program and hopefully can be a first step in our mission to help meet the growing demand for supportive housing in our young adult ASD population.**



Friends of FOCUS

A group of parents from our programs, in conjunction with staff have volunteered to form the Friends of FOCUS. Their Mission is to support FOCUS Center for Autism with social and fundraising activities. The idea for this group came from parents who are so grateful for what we provide for their kids and families that they were looking for a way to give back. We are thrilled to have this kind of support to help carry out the mission of FOCUS and to make our Community stronger!! Please see the enclosed insert for more information. THANK YOU!

It's All About The Trout!!

The kids in our Day Program got a real treat this year as the Avon/Canton Rotary funded an educational program called Trout in the Classroom. Sponsored by Trout Unlimited, numerous trout eggs were kept in a very large and cooled fish tank where they incubated. From Nov-May the children fed and cared for the eggs and got to see them hatch and grow. As the weather got warmer at the end of May, a release day was set and a field trip was taken to Peoples Forest where the fish were released in the Farmington River. The kids were beside themselves as they watched the "babies" they nurtured and tended to set free after six months of vigilant care. Thanks to all who helped make this experience an important and life changing experience for all who participated!



Releasing the trout in the Farmington River

FOCUS Awards

At the end of the year ceremony our Day Program students reflected on what FOCUS has meant to them and described some of their best memories from the past year.

"...for a while before I came to FOCUS, I felt like I didn't belong. Then when I showed up, I realized I fit in." -Hope

"My favorite memory was going to release the trout because it was so fun seeing the different stages in my head." -Alison

"FOCUS means to me love, peace, hope and caring" -Quinn

"FOCUS makes me happy because I love to be here every day. I enjoyed our new trout fish,... they didn't want to swim away from me." -Kyle

"FOCUS is a place where I feel that I can complete my work without hesitation. What it also means, is that I know I can get through the day." -Keith

Trout Life Cycle



Singing "I'll Always Remember You" by Miley Cyrus at the End of the year award ceremony



FRIENDS of FOCUS

You are invited to join "FRIENDS of FOCUS"

Our mission is to support FOCUS Center from Autism with social and fundraising activities as well as supporting other FOCUS needs.

We meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6pm at Focus, 126 Dowd Ave, Canton.
If you cannot make the meetings you can still join and support us through helping out at events, donating baked goods.

Parents, grandparents, friends of kids that go to FOCUS are all welcome to join.

**For more information please contact us at:
FriendsofFocus@yahoo.com**

If you are interested please fill in the form below and return to FOCUS:
Please print clearly.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

- I can attend meetings I can't attend meetings but want to help out.

I can help with items below:

- Help plan/run events Event setup Event clean up
 Event food/drink Bake for events Donate Raffle/Gift baskets
 Donate supplies for program (art supplies/food for snacks/breakfast)
 Other: _____

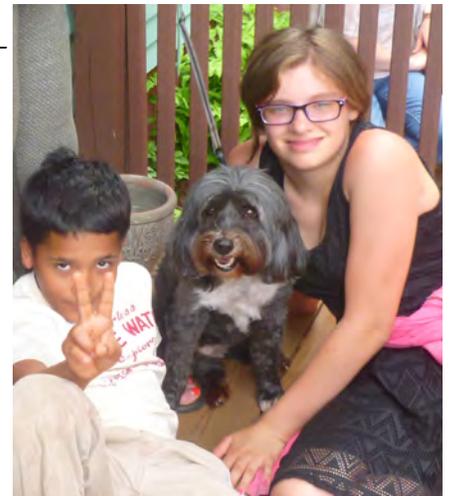
The Day Program: A Fun Year of Out and About

Our Day Program provided many extracurricular activities this year in addition to the full daily schedule of academic and clinical work. Field trips included the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Home Depot for a wood workshop, a production of “Ms. Nelson is Missing” at the Warner theater in Torrington and a regularly scheduled movement group by Gayle Micca at Valley Ballet in Canton. In May we began a morning stretching and walking group. Both these activities as well as the Occupational Therapy that kids attend at Creative Development in Avon, has had tremendous benefits. Those children who were initially having trouble moving around outside in the beginning of the year, now feel more comfortable in their own skin, have built up their endurance and increased their self-awareness.



Showing off their planters at Home Depot

Splash the therapy dog visits once a week, which has helped some children get over their fear of dogs. For an art project the kids made dog treats and donated them to a dog shelter and they also collected non-perishable foods and donated them to the Friendly Hands Food Bank in Torrington. The hay ride at Flamig Farm was a hit as was the performance by the Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra at Region 10 high school. Visitors from Heart International Corporation in Fukuoka Japan visited us to teach Japanese culture and to learn more about American culture. They taught us a traditional dance, read us a story, and led a craft activity.



Visit from Splash the Therapy Dog

All of these activities and trips are designed to enrich the experience of the children in the program. As always, character education is ongoing- with lessons and demonstrations on each of the six pillars of character; Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, Citizenship, and Respect. A truly awesome program!



Movement Group outside on the bike trail by the pond!



Learning a Japanese dance

Enroll Today!

The 2015-2016 school year will be here before you know it. Ensure that your child has a spot in our Extended Day Treatment Program by enrolling today! We have slots available in our Day and After School sessions. Call (860) 693-8809 for more information.