

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

- New Pilot Program: FOCUS On Little Stars
- FOCUS' own TV series on Nutmeg TV
- Nyana "makes headway"
- Dutch visit again
- Spectrum Success: CJ Jordan
- Wilderness School
- J. Walton Bissell Grant allows 10 children to enjoy and grow with our Summer Program
- Festival For Autism at a new location with new features
- Celebrating the FOCUS "Angel," Mary Carol Harrison

Mark your calendar: Festival For Autism June 5, 2010



We hope to see you there!

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FOCUS MATTERS

FOCUS works to improve the quality of life for individuals and families on the Autism Spectrum

Dear Friends of FOCUS,

FOCUS is winding down a successful but busy summer program with 15-20 children on the Spectrum every day for six weeks. There have been many new faces this summer and this may reflect the new statistics that are available. Currently, 1:150 children are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder but this number is changing. In Connecticut it is 1:123; this is cause for great concern, as we at FOCUS already know that there are not enough treatment/services available. With your continued support FOCUS will stay on track as we work to develop a continuum of care for individuals with autism.

The new school year is only a few weeks away and much is new for the coming year. We have expanded our hours to include the morning and lowered our age requirement to 5 years old. We have also developed a pilot program called [FOCUS on Little Stars](#) which will target the development of social skills in kindergarteners. We are collaborating with Nutmeg TV on a show called "[FOCUS on Autism](#)" and we still have an exciting relationship with the Wilderness School.

All of this is only possible because of your support. As we enter a new year we look to you to help us make a difference one child at a time!

Respectfully,
Donna Swanson, MSN, CS, APRN
Executive Director

The Wilderness School Delivers

For the second year in a row we are collaborating with the Wilderness School in East Hartland, CT. The programs at the school are a huge favorite of our summer program children and adolescents, as well as the boys from our group home. Every Wednesday for six weeks the day is spent with the staff at the Wilderness School. Group and team building skills are a priority, yet the activities are flexible enough to accommodate individual needs. Through opportunities to hike, challenge rope courses, canoe and participate in the many structured games and activities our kids have a blast!

On June 30 of this year FOCUS staff got a taste of how things work at the Wilderness School when a staff team-building day was had. Guess what? The staff had a blast as well!

Like FOCUS, the Wilderness School is a unique program and the staff at the school have worked hard to make our unique population feel welcome and have adapted their programs to accommodate them. Our experience at the school always feels like a good fit. We can only say that the Wilderness School delivers and we thank them.



Spectrum Successes

**CJ Jordan and Donna Swanson
make NBC NEWS!!**



Once a child on the Autism Spectrum reaches young adulthood, life does not get easier. In fact, becoming an adult and finding a job is very difficult. However, more and more companies are beginning to recognize the unique qualities and loyalty of adults and adolescents on the Autism Spectrum.

One success story is that of CJ Jordan. CJ was a student at FOCUS for many years and went on to work at FOCUS after graduating from our program. Although we were sad to see him go, he recently began a job at Walgreens in Windsor, CT. His official job title is "Mission Control" and he makes sure all the other departments are running smoothly. CJ has come a long way and has become a confident, relaxed Walgreens employee. He is complimented for his attention to detail and ability to accept a challenge. We hope that CJ is looked upon as a role model for our younger students.

Walgreens' current employees are made up of 30% of individuals with disabilities. The company works to play on their strengths and there are many. There are signs posted that state the word "THEM" with a line through it, implying there are no differences in people with disabilities. They are all working as a team. They get the same pay and work to the same high standards. We are so proud of CJ and his accomplishment!! We are confident that he will continue to increase his skills and become whatever he wishes to become.

The story on CJ Jordan and Donna Swanson was written by Yvonne Nava and aired on NBC 30 on May 5, 2009.

7th Annual FOCUS Festival for Autism

The 7th annual FOCUS Festival for Autism was a huge success! This event which is free and open to the public, provides a safe environment for individuals with special needs to have fun and socialize with their peers and family. The Festival is set up as an old-fashioned country fair with activities, food, music and games and attracted over 400 visitors this year.

It was amazing to see all the smiling faces and cheerful families. The park was full from start to finish and all events were enjoyed. Mills Pond Park was an excellent new location with ample parking and many additional perks, such as jungle gyms, swings and a skate park.

This year we were able to add some new activities as well. One of the most exciting events was the Mobile Rock Wall which was donated by Katie French, Maureen Swarts and members of the Simsbury Coldwell Banker Real Estate group. A number of kids, parents and FOCUS staff were brave enough to climb the wall. Another new event was the Traveling Petting Zone, which was sponsored by the Health Consultants Group of Plainville. The air conditioned trailer housed many animals, including alpacas, goats, donkeys and chickens...oh my!! It was a nice place to cool off, too!

Oldies but goodies included the annual pet parade with prizes donated by Horses and Hounds of Granby, the Dunk Tank which was donated by Dynamic Auto Works of Canton, the always popular High Striker donated by Collinsville Savings Society and the Bounce House, which was donated by our good friend Jessica Rhodes. There were also pony rides courtesy of Strain Family Horse Farm of Granby, and an array of carnival games and prizes that all families were able to enjoy for free. Face painting was provided by our School Psychologist, Yvonne Parenteau, and was a hit, as was the ever popular "find the bubble gum in whip cream" challenge!

Raffle baskets were provided by a number of generous donations from FOCUS families and local businesses. Cheers of joy were heard from the crowd when the winners were announced. We all stayed cool underneath the pavilions and listened to the music provided by the Sweetheart Mountain Band.

We want to express a heartfelt THANK YOU to the Lions' Club of Canton for helping with refreshments!! We had to make three runs to the grocery store to keep up with all the hungry folks!

A thank you goes out to all the FOCUS families and staff that volunteered their time to make this a memorable event. It could not have happened without you! Your support of FOCUS over the past seven years has been amazing and we are grateful to have you as part of our FOCUS community.

Mark your calendar for the 8th annual FFFA next June 5, 2010 at Mills Pond in Canton! We hope to see you there!



Nyana Reist is "Making Headway"



The FOCUS family is always looking for ways to help children on the Autism Spectrum to live a fully functional life. Many of our staff and students have already experienced the healing powers of Nyana Reist. She has a special connection with the autism community and has made tremendous changes in our lives.

CranioSacral Therapy (CST) and body energy work specifically allow children on the Autism Spectrum to maximize their potential by beginning to feel more comfortable in their own skin. Ultimately the goal is to make social interactions with others tolerable and enjoyable. CST is based on the theory that the human nervous system has a constant, rhythmic motion that malfunctions when restricted.

Unfortunately, a restricted craniosacral rhythm seems to be an almost universal given for those living within the Spectrum. Each individual is unique, a fact that CST not only recognizes but uses as an advantage. By accessing the body's natural healing ability, the gentle, individualized application of CST helps decrease brain inflammation and promote ease. The end result is a nervous system that functions more as it should. The sessions last about an hour and parents have reported that it improves their child's ability to connect with others by relaxing them and making it easier to maintain eye contact and to verbalize their feelings.

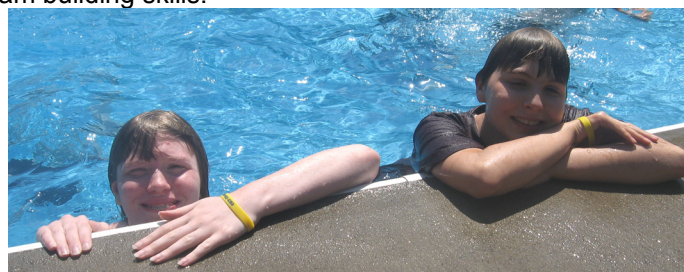
Nyana Reist has been practicing body work and energy therapy since 1992. She is a Connecticut Licensed Massage Therapist and a member of the American Massage Therapy Association. She has studied in multiple healing modalities, including studying in Europe, India, and the United States. Nyana utilizes music, which she studied and taught initially, to tune into the deeper levels of being. Her training, judgment, experience, sensitivity, and intuition help her relate to her clients on multiple levels. Please feel free to contact Nyana during normal business hours at (860-690-3112).

Many Thanks to the J. Walton Bissell Foundation

The J. Walton Bissell Foundation has done it again! They awarded a \$10,000 grant to FOCUS to fund 10 students to participate in a full or partial week in our Summer Social Skills Immersion Program. Families were chosen based upon need and would not have otherwise been able to attend the program. The spirits of many parents and students were lifted this summer thanks to the Bissell Foundation who have supported FOCUS for a number of years and are the primary sponsor of our Summer Scholarship Program.



The summer program has evolved over the years and our students are truly able to flourish socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. The structured routine and nature of this program provide priceless social interaction opportunities with peers on the Autism Spectrum. This year the Wilderness School has again been added to the schedule on Wednesdays. This weekly visit has been an amazing opportunity for our students to experience nature as well as to practice important group and team building skills.



The J. Walton Bissell Foundation granted wishes this summer for many of our students and families. The cheerful laughter and bright smiles we see each morning assure us that memories are being made that will last a lifetime. Thank you again from the FOCUS family!

The Dutch are Coming!

The cry, "The Dutch are coming,." was heard twice this past spring. Educators from The Netherlands came to visit the Northeast, study inclusion in schools and visit special programs like FOCUS. Two groups of nine came and spent most of two afternoons at FOCUS. All the educators verbalized our commitment to a high level of care and the milieu of relatedness that exists in our programs. This is not the first year that they have come and it is said that the members fight over being on the team that is able to visit FOCUS. Several members on the teams cried because they were so moved by the caring and happiness they witnessed. **FOCUS Holland anyone?**

Get the Camera in FOCUS

FOCUS has been lucky enough to be able collaborate with Nutmeg Public Access TV to create a regularly featured show beginning in this fall entitled **"FOCUS on Autism."** Nutmeg TV is broadcast on channel 5 to Comcast customers in Avon, Berlin, Bristol, Burlington, Canton, Farmington, New Britain, and Plainville, CT. FOCUS staff, children, adolescents and young adults from all three of our programs are participating in this project. Some of our staff and clients are being trained to use the cameras and equipment while others will be featured on the show. Some of the taping will be done in the studio while the ability to use and borrow the equipment will allow us to film on location. The possibilities are endless!

Everyone is excited about this opportunity and best of all there is no cost to FOCUS. Our thanks to Nutmeg TV for their sense of community awareness and for allowing FOCUS to share its voice for Autism.



★ What's NEW? ★

The FOCUS on Little Stars Program

We are very excited to announce we are accepting students from ages **5-18 years old** in our Extended Day Treatment Program. We have also expanded our hours and are open from **8:30am-6:00pm**.

FOCUS on Little Stars is our pilot therapeutic program that incorporates components from our successful Milieu Therapy Program and is designed to teach social skills to kindergarten children on the Autism Spectrum. Milieu Therapy is organized in a safe environment to constantly support, nourish, and reinforce the child's ability to learn life skills and to develop problem solving and coping skills. Through the use of daily routine, predictable rules and sensitive adult responses the children are able to grasp their potential for learning and to build and sustain peer and staff relationships.

Our program will offer:

- Extensive Social Skills Training in the areas of peer relationship, self-advocacy and improved self-esteem, understanding and expressing feelings, managing anxiety and learning to understand themselves and the world around them.
- High staff to student ratio. Limited enrollment.
- The program runs 8:30am-11:30am three to five days a week.
- The daily schedule will include a morning meeting, snack, arts/crafts, social skills lessons as well as reinforcement of kindergarten academic skills.
- Academic Support and Social Skills training can be individualized for any student.

Please call our Clinical Coordinator, Jennifer Haggerty, MA, LPC, for more information or to schedule an intake appointment (860-693-8809, extension 14).

A FOCUS Celebration

On Friday, June 19th, a special event occurred at La Trattoria in Canton. What started out to be a small gathering to honor Mary Carol Harrison's birthday and generosity as a benefactor of FOCUS, turned into a joyous celebration of more than 45 FOCUS friends, families and alumni who came together to acknowledge the astounding support Mary Carol has provided FOCUS over the past 8 years and to share in recognizing FOCUS and all its good work. In tough times and good, Mary Carol has been unwavering in her commitment to the success of FOCUS and has truly been the "angel" who has continually blessed the program. The love and appreciation for all of the people who have helped to make FOCUS what it is today was also evident by the many smiles that filled the room. We thank Mary Carol and all of **YOU** who continually offer your wonderful friendship and support. It truly takes a vision and a village to make miracles happen! Thank you all so much!



(From left to right) Mary Carol Harrison, Nancy Rogers, Keyne Reid, Alan Looper