



FOCUS Matters

WINTER 2018

IT TAKES A VILLAGE!

These days, making it as a non-profit organization is no easy feat! We struggle every year to make ends meet to continue to provide quality services to our children and young adults with autism spectrum disorder.

You will notice in this newsletter we are thanking the organizations and funders who form the backbone of our fundraising efforts. Their support helps to enrich our programs and is an integral part of our ability to keep our doors open. We are so grateful!

We are taking a moment to recognize how important this community support is to us now, and how important it will be to our future. Your commitment to our success is most appreciated!

Thank You to all who help make FOCUS possible!



ROTARY CLUB GRANT FOR IPADS

Rotary Club of Avon-Canton graciously donated \$3,000 for The Fresh Start School to purchase 9 new iPads and accessories to be used in the classroom! The new iPads replaced outdated and unreliable laptops and iPads that the students were previously using to complete schoolwork. Thank you Rotary Club!





ADVOCARE Grant

Many thanks to the ADVOCARE Foundation for their grant of \$6,000 to help support our Fresh Start School Program. The money will be used to purchase classroom table and chairs, testing materials, curriculum, and text books. ADVOCARE has been consistently supportive of FOCUS for the last 3 years. We are most appreciative!



Thanksgiving Feast

On November 21, FOCUS hosted a Thanksgiving Feast for the students, volunteers, staff, and board of directors! It was a great opportunity for the FOCUS community to come together and share their appreciations for the year. The Friends of FOCUS worked with FOCUS staff to organize the event and the food was sponsored by a donation from Thrivent Financial. Thank you to the Friends of FOCUS, Thrivent Financial, and FOCUS staff for creating such a meaningful event!

The Bearded Villains Strike Again!

On January 28, The Saints chapter of the international organization, The Bearded Villains sponsored and hosted a pasta and meatball dinner at Chatterley's Banquet Facility in Torrington in our honor. This was the second year in a row that The Saints held a benefit dinner for FOCUS. Bearded Villains from all over New England attended bringing their families and friends. Generous donations were made from members of the community for a raffle and silent auction. Residents from FOCUS housing programs, FOCUS staff, friends and families, as well as other supporters gathered to celebrate our cause listening to music, auctioning, and enjoying the meal. By the end of the afternoon, \$10,276 was raised.



To Ric McAllister and all of the Bearded Villains, we THANK YOU!

Your incredible devotion to bettering the lives of others through charity and kindness will always be appreciated by the FOCUS family.





Malibu Fitness Thanksgiving 5K Race

For the 2nd straight year, Malibu Fitness owner Jack Banks selected FOCUS as one of the benefactors for the Malibu Fitness Thanksgiving 5K Race. Almost 800 people gathered at dawn Thanksgiving morning for the run in Farmington. Thank you Malibu Fitness for including FOCUS and for the donation of \$750!



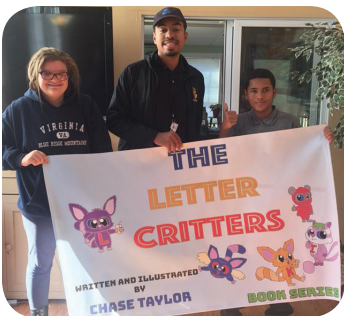
Our Friends Katie French, Maura Hammick, & Coldwell Banker

Thanks again to Katie French and Maura Hammick from the Simsbury Office of Coldwell Banker for their generous donation of \$1,000! Coldwell Banker has been a supporter of FOCUS for over 10 years. We are most grateful!



Gallery of Trees

Our friend Geoff Wolf at Dynamic Auto Works of Canton sponsored our involvement in the Canton Historical Museum's Gallery of Trees for a second time! The Gallery of Trees is a fundraiser where organizations from the community decorate Christmas trees to be raffled off to benefit the museum. The Fresh Start School students created beautiful ornaments to hang on a snowman themed tree. Thank you Dynamic Auto Works for your continued support and making it possible for FOCUS to participate in such a wonderful event!



The Letter Critters

The Fresh Start School was lucky to have a visit from, Chase Taylor, the author and illustrator of the book series *The Letter Critters*. Chase is a young man living with autism who has always had an interest in letters. He wanted to create a book series that allowed other children to enjoy letters just like him. Chase published his first book last year at the age of 17, and will be releasing his second book later this year! Thank you Chase for visiting with our students and inspiring us to share our passions and dreams with the world!



Mindfulness and Indrani

FOCUS incorporates mindfulness activities into the daily schedule of the Fresh Start School to help students manage their stress and anxiety. One mindfulness activity utilized is chanting by Indrani, who stops by twice a week to perform her relaxing and healing music. On Thursdays, our clinician Sandy Kissel leads students in drumming encouraging them to focus closely on the rhythm in order to follow along with everyone. Other mindfulness activities include both guided and unguided meditations, breathing exercises, coloring mandalas, and more.

The H.O.P.E. Foundation / R.E.A.L. Man Program Grant

Thank you to the H.O.P.E Foundation For a Better Tomorrow and R.E.A.L. Man Inc. for a gracious donation of \$1,000! Their goal is to build better men and women today and to create a better world for tomorrow. Founders Kathy and Lou Dicocco carry on their son's legacy by promoting the important message of respecting all people, doing the right thing, and living a life that matters.

FOCUS on Art

We welcome talented local artist, Donna Frustere to our FOCUS team as our new art teacher. Donna has been teaching art since 1980 in both private and public schools. She is in the process of working with the Fresh Start students to produce large wooden painted canvases which will be hung on our fences in the backyard in the spring. The students are also working on enhancing their artistic skills in many different media. Under Donna's direction, the students using a block printing technique created over 100 holiday cards for our loyal donors and friends. In addition to the Language Art Programs, the students will be enhancing their comprehension of their selected topic by learning the skill of book making.

With your donation, you can support our arts program!



Hakuna Matata!

On December 11, we had the absolute pleasure of meeting Ernie Sabella. Ernie voiced the lovable warthog Pumbaa from *The Lion King* series, as well as many other accomplishments in film, TV, and theater! The kids couldn't be more grateful for Ernie taking time to share his experiences and answer questions about his career and life.

One of the highlights from Ernie's visit was when he sang the classic Disney song, "Hakuna Matata", to students of The Fresh Start School. Seated next to Ernie is Dan, who is a huge fan of *The Lion King*. Dan can recite each of *The Lion King* movies by heart and talks about them every day! It's truly a dream come true for him to have Pumbaa right next to him. It was truly a very special and unforgettable experience for all of us at The Fresh Start School!



YOU can make a difference!

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED for FOCUS Center for Autism to continue providing the care and services the autism community deserves. **Every gift counts!**

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