



# Autism Speaks Family Services Community Grants

## *Recreation and Community Activities*

### **Grants Funded in 2011**

#### **Giving Alternative Learners Uplifting Opportunities, Inc.**

*New York, NY*

[www.gallopnyc.org](http://www.gallopnyc.org)

*Extending the Benefits of Therapeutic Horseback Riding: Resources and Internship Guidelines for Young Adults with ASD*

GallopNYC will develop an innovative educational program for young adults with ASD, building on successful work with youth interns and with riders on the Autism Spectrum, which will adapt the benefits of therapeutic horseback riding to develop job and life skills. GallopNYC will use funds from Autism Speaks to pilot the program, as well as create innovative resources that will be made available to therapeutic riding centers and other service providers nationwide. Specifically, funds will support curriculum and resource development, therapeutic riding lessons, internship training, and intern stipends for a pilot group of 24 youth with ASD.

#### **Quest Therapeutic Services, Inc.**

*West Chester, PA*

[www.questtherapeutic.com](http://www.questtherapeutic.com)

*"Let's Vault, Max!": Equestrian Vaulting as Social and Physical Training for Children on the Autism Spectrum*

The dynamic environment created in the Equestrian Vaulting program will result in new educational, social, and movement opportunities for the participants. The learning takes place in a natural environment, i.e., a barn and farm setting, where children perform highly motivating activities, resulting in better self control which carries over into the child's daily routines at home and school. Children with diagnoses on the autism spectrum will achieve the goals of improved social behaviors; teamwork and cooperation; and improved balance and gross/fine motor skills. Approximately 8-10 children on the autism spectrum disorder will participate in a 10 week vaulting session. Four sessions – fall, winter, spring and summer – will run a calendar year. In addition, the program will be shared as a model at professional conferences, so that other equine assisted therapy centers may replicate the program.

#### **Achilles International**

*New York, NY*

[achillesinternational.org](http://achillesinternational.org)

*Achilles Kids Virtual Marathon*

Achilles Kids is a running, walking, and rolling program for low income children with disabilities. Achilles provides 4,000 children in 150 New York City public schools with an adaptive physical education curriculum and holds weekend workouts for children with disabilities and their able bodied siblings. Approximately 1,400 of participating children are on the autism spectrum, and the program is school and community based. Achilles Kids has its largest chapter in Truman High School (Bronx, NY) the largest public school for children with autism in the country. Students keep track of the miles they run, walk, or roll in their adaptive physical education classes throughout the year, and they mark their progress on customized maps of New York City created by Achilles. Those who reach 26.2 miles are rewarded with a pair of sneakers. Achilles provides all supplies including logbooks, customized maps, t-shirts, medals, and the sneakers. Achilles also offers supplementary lesson plans in nutrition, history, geography, and math to enrich the program. Achilles Kids provides opportunities for children to play, improve their health and fitness, increase their confidence, and socialize with their peers.

**SNACK & Friends, Inc.**

New York, NY

[www.snacknyc.com](http://www.snacknyc.com)

*Expansion of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) Professional Support for SNACK Year-Round Socialization and Recreation Programs*

The past two years have seen a significant increase (35%) in the number of children participating in SNACK programs, with a 95% re-enrollment rate each year. To accommodate this growth and enable SNACK to serve more children with challenging behavioral issues, this project will increase the on-site hours of our ABA trained professionals to manage behavior plans; provide training to SNACK staff, offer support to families and interact with the children's schools.

**SNAP, Inc.**

Morristown, NJ

[snapclinics.org](http://snapclinics.org)

*Special Needs Athletic Programs*

The focus of SNAP is to incorporate a "children teaching children" model into all aspects of programming and create a culture of compassion for and acceptance of all children. SNAP was founded four years ago by a 15-year-old high school student as a series of sports clinics designed to integrate special needs children into public recreational leagues. Building on the success of this program, SNAP created a training module for young people that teaches ways to interact with children with special needs with the final outcome of forming long-term mentor relationships. Through a structure of workshops, which include hands-on activities, the mentor learns what it is like to have a disability and also comes away with a better understanding of autism. The ultimate goal of this project is the inclusion of children with special needs into the schools, communities, and SNAP's recreational activities.

## **Grants Funded in 2010**

### **Judson Center**

Royal Oak, MI

[www.judsoncenter.org](http://www.judsoncenter.org)

#### *Year-Round Inclusion Program*

Judson Center's Autism Connections will implement a Year-Round Inclusion Program. This program aims to train up to 25 community recreation providers in inclusive social and recreational practices for individuals with ASDs in the Detroit metropolitan area over a one year period, as well as to provide support to individuals with ASD that participate in these programs and their families. This program will increase the availability and quality of affordable social, leisure and recreational opportunities for individuals with ASDs and their families.

### **Long Island University, CW Post Campus**

Brookville, NY

[www.cwpost.liu.edu](http://www.cwpost.liu.edu)

#### *Support and Recreation for Children with Autism and their Siblings*

This weekend program will provide intensive instruction in key social, communication, and leisure skills for children with ASDs, as well as a support group for their siblings. The instruction and support will be followed by an inclusive recreation activity in which children with autism can practice their new skills with their siblings, and other typically developing peers. Counseling students will run support groups, while speech, psychology, and education students will conduct intensive instruction and provide support for the children with autism throughout the program, and physical education students will run the recreation activities. The children with autism and their siblings will benefit greatly from participation in this program, as the unique hands-on experiences will improve their knowledge and skills, ultimately improving service provision for children with autism and their families.

### **YMCA of Greater Kansas City**

Kansas City, MO

[www.kansascityymca.org](http://www.kansascityymca.org)

#### *YMCA of Greater Kansas City Challenger Athletics*

The YMCA of Greater Kansas City Challenger Athletics program provides year-round opportunities for children with ASDs and other disabilities to participate in sports, recreation and social integration activities. This proposal seeks to improve and expand these opportunities in a way that specially benefits children with ASDs, through specialized materials, targeted marketing, program equipment, additional sites and staff/volunteering training. The YMCA will also expand the existing program to include young adults 16 years of age and older through inclusive social integration activities that also incorporate life skills training and job-readiness activities. The new program for young adults will impact their lives by providing an outlet for fun and socializing as well as skill development and preparation for employment. This will be the first program of its kind in the Kansas City area for young adults with ASDs.

**Marin Autism Collaborative/Lifehouse**

San Rafael, CA

[www.marinautism.org](http://www.marinautism.org)

*Teen Recreation Integration Program (TRIP) for Young Adults with ASDs*

TRIP for ASD will provide young adults with ASDs with the opportunity to get involved in community recreation activities that interest them. The program will allow these young adults to interact with their peers, and will help them develop the necessary social skills to become more independent. The activities will be led by a recreation coach, who will also help participants with social skills development.

Volunteer peer mentors, typically developing young adults, will be paired with participants based on their interests and join them in their activities. The TRIP model creates an environment in which the participants with ASD and the teen mentors can learn from each other. The program will help participants begin to develop both independence and a peer network, and thereby increase social skills, confidence, and overall satisfaction with their lives.

**Arkansas Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health**

Little Rock, AR

[www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)

*Therapeutic Recreation In Parks (T.R.I.P.) Program*

Therapeutic Respite In Parks (T.R.I.P.) is a program that takes individuals with specific health care needs on weekend respite journeys to Arkansas state and national parks. This program is currently being expanded to include individuals with ASDs. Individualized recreational assessments will be conducted prior to the program and goals and objectives will be established for each camper. Quantitative data will be collected to evaluate the program's effectiveness. Respite continues to be one of the most needed services for families, and this model provides benefits not only for the families, but also for the individuals with ASDs. The T.R.I.P. program is a model that can be replicated all around the country.

**Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Treatment and Research Institute for ASDs (TRIAD)**

Nashville, TN

[kc.vanderbilt.edu/TRIAD](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/TRIAD)

*TRIAD Social Skills Summer Camp*

TRIAD Social Skills Summer Camp provides an integrated day camp with specialized social skills curricula targeted at different age groups (7-11 years old, 12-14 years old, and 15-21 years old). In addition to providing a supportive learning environment for the campers with autism, TRIAD Social Skills Summer Camp promotes community awareness and education, provides training activities for future professionals, and helps children better understand and interact with their peers and siblings with autism. As part of pre-camp training, students (both graduate and undergraduate) and professionals who work as counselors at TRIAD Camp are provided with an intensive, multiple-day training experience that focuses on evidence-based best practices for educating individuals with autism, promoting social interactions, and appropriately addressing behavioral and communication strengths and concerns. During camp, peers (both siblings and non-siblings) participate in an ongoing training program to address sensitivity, acceptance, and strategies for including brothers, sisters, and friends of all abilities in social opportunities.

## **Grants Funded in 2009**

### **Carey Services**

Marion, IN

[www.careyservices.com](http://www.careyservices.com)

#### *Face Place Theater Project*

Carey Services proposes to develop a program that specifically targets the social and communication skill challenges faced by individuals with ASD. Based on the work of Drs. Parasuram Ramamoorthi and Andrew Nelson, the Founders of the Applied Theatre Research and Autism Network, the program uses acting techniques and applied theater theory to improve these skills in a safe and entertaining venue. The program will serve up to 20 school-aged children with ASD in a studio environment.

*Significance for people with autism:* This program has the ability to be replicated throughout the country, to enhance the communication and social skills of individuals with ASD.

\*Click [here](#) to view the JFP Movie Program.

\*Click [here](#) to view the press release: "Jr. FacePlace Goes International"

### **Rolling Thunder Special Needs Program (RTSNP)**

Shirley, NY

[www.rtsnp.org](http://www.rtsnp.org)

#### *Expand Rolling Thunder Running Team Promoting Inclusion, Fitness, and Social Skills for Autistic Spectrum Youth and Adults*

Rolling Thunder Special Needs Program trains individuals with ASD, ages 3 through adulthood, and their family members, to participate in typical races in inclusive community settings: neighborhoods or parks throughout Long Island. RTSNP offers inclusion activities with typical peers and many opportunities to develop or improve athletic, fitness and social skills. There is never a fee for membership or coaching. No running experience is needed to join the team. All coaches are volunteers and the organization has no paid staff, there is a no wait list policy and individuals with challenging behaviors are welcome. Funding will help with the expansion plans include accepting new members, providing experienced members with new inclusion community practice activities, increasing mainstream competitions and provide uniforms for team members to practice during the winter months.

*Significance for people with autism:* Physical activity and fitness is important for all people and Rolling Thunder provides the supports necessary to help individuals with ASD to develop a life long skill of running. The program will work with individuals at all functioning levels. There is a strong opportunity for expansion and replication on a national scale.

### **Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago**

Chicago, IL

[chicago.easterseals.com](http://chicago.easterseals.com)

#### *After-School Programs at Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago Autism and Therapeutic Schools, Chicago and Tinley Park, IL campuses*

The After School Program at Easter Seals will provide high quality, educationally-enhanced programming for their children at the close of the school day. Funding of this proposal will support two additional staff members and will result in increased enrollment in the program. Additionally, Easter Seals will enhance programming through the purchase of new program equipment and supplies and, more importantly, a partnership with Best Buddies Illinois (BBIL) that will provide a Peer Buddy to each After School Program participant with which he/she can engage in regularly scheduled After School Program activities, communicate via telephone and email, and attend special BBIL social events.

*Significance for people with autism:* The program will provide after school academic and recreational opportunities for students with ASD. In addition, the collaboration with Best Buddies provides greater acceptance and understanding of typically developing peers; and can be provided as a model for other after school programs.

### **Autism Delaware**

Newark, DE

[www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org)

#### *Expansion of the Brandywine Social Club*

Autism Delaware will expand the Brandywine Social Club, a local YMCA recreation program for adults with disabilities, to include an additional 10 to 15 adults with autism. Very few options exist for Delaware adults with disabilities, particularly options which are autism-friendly, and the BSC has been northern Delaware's leader in recreation by holding a variety of events for 35 years. The emphasis on participant leadership, team work, and community integration, combined with the group's plans to initiate personal development workshops, provide a healthy environment for naturally observing or practicing skills that can be useful in personal relationships and employment while still giving participants a break from the demands of formal service programs or school.

*Significance for people with autism:* This proposal provides opportunities for adults with autism to participate in a local YMCA recreational program with the proper supports in place to make it successful. Based upon the success of this program, this is a model that could be rolled out to additional YMCAs across the country.

### **Millard Public Schools**

Omaha, NE

[www.mpsomaha.org](http://www.mpsomaha.org)

#### *Interactive Social Education Experiences*

Millard Public Schools will conduct a recreation/community activities project to teach social communication skills to high school students with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) and/or High Functioning Autism (HFA). The demonstration project is designed around peer modeling with frequent peer interaction and generalization in the community. Primary beneficiaries will be freshmen and sophomores with AS/HFA who manifest serious deficits in the social communication skills needed to develop effective interpersonal relationships. They will be placed in Friendship Groups consisting of two students with AS/HFA, a typically developing peer who has completed prior ASD awareness training, and one teacher. Friendship Groups will attend weekly social communication skills workshops taught by the teachers in the group, using curriculum tailored for each student. Homework will require personal communication between the students with AS/HFA and the typical peer in each Friendship Group. All

Friendship Groups, along with the parents of students with AS/HFA, will attend monthly social outings in the community to generalize their newly learned skills.

*Significance for people with autism:* This program will increase social skills and expand the interactions of people with ASD with their typically developing peers. Again, there is the ability to replicate this program.

### **University of Florida CARD**

Gainesville, FL

[card.ufl.edu](http://card.ufl.edu)

#### *Inclusive Summer Camp for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

This camp project facilitates the inclusion of children with autism into community day camps with support. A Project Manager will recruit campers with autism from the 14 county area served by CARD - Gainesville. CARD staff will work with families to identify goals for the camp so that specific skills may be targeted and training to camp staff members can be tailored to the needs of the children. The Project will support contracted personnel to provide capacity building training sessions for day camp staff members and university and high school volunteers in the community. The Project will offer ongoing support to camp staff and volunteers during the two weeks of camp as they work to include children with autism in camp activities with typical peers. Through this project CARD can build the capacity of day camp sites to offer camp opportunities to children with autism with minimal supports from outside resources.

*Significance for people with autism:* The proposal will increase the field of services providers and day camp opportunities for children with ASD

### **Outdoors for All Foundation**

Seattle, WA

[www.outdoorsforall.org](http://www.outdoorsforall.org)

#### *Expanded Outdoor Recreation Experiences Customized for Children and Adults with ASDs*

Outdoors for All Foundation will expand the number and quality of outdoor recreation experiences for children and adults living with ASD and their friends and family members. Key measurable objectives of the program will include: to serve 50 additional individuals with disabilities in our year round adaptive recreation programs; increase training hours for all staff and volunteers on issues of autism; design and establish a week-long adventure camp for teens with high functioning autism – benefiting at least ten participants; and obtain and implement sensory regulation equipment into the programs, as well as the design and creation of an Autism Tool Kit which will help staff and volunteers in the field ensure that participants with ASD will have a fun, safe and enriching outdoor recreation experience.

*Significance for people with autism:* Individuals with ASD will benefit from an increase in recreational and camping experiences. In addition, staff and volunteers will gain valuable information and training which will result in enhanced interactions with people with ASD.

\*Click [here](#) to view the Instructional Arrangements & Strategies for People with Autism presentation by Blueprints.

\*Click [here](#) to view the Autism Spectrum Disorder "cheat sheet" for trainees.

\*Click [here](#) to view Tips for Working with Participants with Autism.

\*Click [here](#) to view Social Stories for snow-related activities.

### **Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education (AAYTE)**

Philadelphia, PA

[www.asetennis.org](http://www.asetennis.org)

#### *Special Serve - Tennis and Life Skills Program*

AAYTE has a staff that is trained to utilize various teaching methodologies that are effective with ASD, AAYTE's *Special Serve* program has become a successful non-traditional recreational and educational option. Funding from Autism Speaks will enable AAYTE to meet the increasing demands for growth of this successful program. During the daytime school hours, AAYTE has an opportunity to expand programming to its full capacity for ASD students by working with local school districts to provide tennis instruction in a fun and nurturing environment.

*Significance for people with autism:* Students with ASD will have the opportunity to learn a new sport from qualified staff that is experienced working with people with autism. This program has the ability to be replicated.

\*Click [here](#) to read "Learn to Rally and Play: Practice Plans and Tips for Coaching Kids Ages 5-17."

### **Best Buddies New York**

New York, NY

[www.bestbuddiesnewyork.org](http://www.bestbuddiesnewyork.org)

#### *Best Buddies LI Middle and High School Expansion Project*

The Best Buddies Long Island Middle and High School Expansion Project will enhance the lives of students with developmental disabilities by providing them with opportunities for one-to-one friendships with their non-disabled peers. The Best Buddies program will strengthen efforts to serve youth with autism through student leadership training, community engagement and public awareness activities. The project will ultimately generate 660 new Best Buddies friendships and raise tolerance and awareness of students with developmental disabilities.

*Significance for people with autism:* People with ASD will have the opportunity to increase their social skills and further their participation in age appropriate recreational programs. This program can continued to be expanded through Best Buddies groups throughout the country.

## **Grants Funded in 2008**

### **Camp Rising Sun**

Albuquerque, NM

[www.camprisingsunnm.org](http://www.camprisingsunnm.org)

*A Summer Camp Promoting Inclusion among Children with ASD and Their Typically Developing Peers*

Camp Rising Sun's primary goal is to provide additional opportunities for children with ASD to learn and practice social and communication skills in an inclusive camping environment. Campers will emerge more confident socially, parents will receive much-needed respite, and university students will receive valuable hands on training. Prior to Camp Rising Sun's 2006 inaugural year, the nearest camp for New Mexico's children with ASD was 818 miles away in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to providing children with ASD a positive camping experience, the camp will give them the opportunity to do so along side their typically developing peers. For older campers with autism there is a CIT (counselors in training) program, which is an inclusion model. Camp Rising Sun is partnering with Dennis Chavez Elementary School to train and educate peer models regarding autism, inclusion, and how to appreciate campers for who they are and the talents they possess. Utilizing Camp Rising Sun as an opportunity for advanced field work provides University of New Mexico students working in the fields of occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and psychological services as well as The Autism Programs at the Center for Development and Disability with comprehensive hands on experience working with children with autism.

*Significance for people with autism:* Funding will enable Camp Rising Sun to expand its one week camp to two one week sessions. New Mexico's children with ASD will get to experience camp in an inclusion setting. The collaboration with The University of New Mexico, The Autism Programs at the Center for Development and Disability and the Dennis Chavez Elementary School will lead to greater growth, education, and involvement of the community.

### **Autism Foundation of the Carolinas**

Charlotte, NC

[autismcarolinas.org](http://autismcarolinas.org)

*After School Program for Children with Autism*

The need for an after school program for children with autism in Mecklenburg County is great. There are no specialized programs for children with mild to moderate autism spectrum disorder. The Autism Foundation of the Carolinas, in collaboration with the YMCA of Greater Charlotte and the Autism Society of North Carolina, will offer an inclusion based after school program for children with ASD beginning fall 2008. The focus of the program will be to enhance independent functional living skills and self management skills by presenting opportunities for socialization, communication and self directed choice within each activity during the day. Program activities include: recreational play and/or relaxation with independent or inclusion options, and structured enrichment such as music/movement, art, social stories/life scenarios and homework assistance. A pilot program will be offered to a limited number of participants so program efficacy can be ensured before rolling it out countywide.

*Significance for people with autism:* The program will serve children kindergarten through 5th grade that are mild to moderate on the autism spectrum from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Thursday during the school year. The children will be provided a balance of recreation, relaxation, education and

socialization with opportunities for inclusion in a safe, nurturing environment. There is a tremendous opportunity for replication within North Carolina and nationwide, to partner with YMCA chapters throughout the country using this model.

**Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital for Rehabilitation**

Cleveland, OH

[cms.clevelandclinic.org/childrenshospital](https://cms.clevelandclinic.org/childrenshospital)

*Social Skills Program for High Functioning Children with ASD*

The Cleveland Clinic will use evidenced based social skills training, an inclusive summer camp for generalization, and parent therapeutic support to provide social skills programming for high functioning children with autism. Specifically, the grant will go towards expanding services during an already existing inclusive summer camp. In the summer months, typical summer camps will be utilized to foster generalization of skills from a clinic setting to a more natural setting. Here, children with ASD will be accompanied by a behavior therapist or coach for help in generalizing skills learned through structured social skills training into the inclusive camp setting. The coach will attend with the children to help facilitate social interaction and generalization of skills, and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst will observe the child's social behaviors in their school setting during lunch and recess prior to the start of the group. In addition, parents will be trained in utilized techniques that will result in consistent supports across several different environments.

*Significance for people with autism:* This program has the potential to demonstrate the remediation of social skill deficits following a specific curriculum and generalization of social skills in children with ASD in an inclusive setting. It is a program that has strong potential for replication.

**Upstate Cerebral Palsy, The Kelberman Center**

Utica, NY

[www.kelbermancenter.org/](http://www.kelbermancenter.org/)

*Awesome Summer Days Camp: Social Skills Training & Peer Coaching Embedded in a Recreational Summer Camp Experience*

Awesome Summer Days Camp is the expansion of a successful pilot program and will take place at The Chadwicks Education Center that is owned and operated by United Cerebral Palsy. The program will work with each family to: (1) evaluate the child's current level of social functioning; (2) identify social skills that need to be learned or practiced; (3) modify and implement curriculum as needed to meet the child's needs; (4) practice skills during inclusion activities with Big Brothers/Big Sisters campers; and (5) test progress at the close of camp. Each week, Monday and Tuesday will combine social skills lessons with horseback riding, dance, art, photography and yoga. Each Wednesday the campers will join campers attending the Big Brothers/Big Sisters camp for a variety of field trips. Thursday will also be a day for inclusion activities spent with kids from Big Brothers/Big Sisters; campers will enjoy fishing and engaging in a variety of outdoor teambuilding exercises. The Center, in addition to using trained specialists, will be able to tap into the university community for program interns, many of whom will be inspired to pursue careers related to autism.

*Significance for people with autism:* The Awesome Summer Days Camp runs for five weeks and is open to children between the ages of six and fourteen who are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. With funding, the camp will be able to financially support the attendance of additional campers. The

collaboration with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the opportunities for interaction with typically developing peers provides additional awareness for those with autism. Again, there is the ability to replicate this program.

### **SPLORE**

*Salt Lake City, UT*

[www.splore.org](http://www.splore.org)

#### *Rock On!*

SPLORE's Rock On program will provide indoor rock climbing to improve outcomes for children with ASDs in a safe and supervised environment. Participation in active recreation promotes inclusion, optimizes physical functioning, and enhances well-being for children with ASDs. Additionally, participation promotes the development of friendships, independence, and creativity. Indoor rock climbing is an individual activity that can occur in a safe and supervised group setting. The Rock On! program works with community partners to identify underserved children and youth with ASDs.

*Significance for people with autism:* SPLORE addresses the physical activity, recreation, and social needs of children with ASDs - ages 5-15. As a result of funding, Rock On! will work with 120 children during an 8-week program in the Salt Lake City area.

\*Click [here](#) for a sample of the curriculum materials.

### **The Kennedy Center**

*Trumbull, CT*

[www.thekennedycenterinc.org](http://www.thekennedycenterinc.org)

#### *Stepping Out*

The Kennedy Center will begin a pilot program for children ages 12-15 that offers social skills training including peer modeling and inclusion opportunities. The program will include weekly social skills training with concurrent parent training. In addition there will be tailored seminars on the importance of social skills training in schools. One of the targeted school districts for this project will be an inner city school in the Bridgeport, Connecticut area. As a result of the targeted age of the participants, they will have worked on skills before transition plans are established. The program will teach skills in priority areas critical to self-esteem and independent living options such as job-related components and accessing employment.

*Significance for people with autism:* It addresses critical unmet needs for children with ASD in a multi-pronged approach by supporting the children themselves, and through partnerships and training with parents, extended families/caregivers, peer models and school districts. The benefits of the pilot project will extend well beyond the targeted children and impact circles of support critical to parents, professionals and paraprofessionals in the school districts and the community-at-large.

### **TERI, Inc. (Training, Education & Research Institute)**

*Oceanside, CA*

[www.teriinc.org](http://www.teriinc.org)

#### *The Learning Academy - Fit for Life*

Many children with ASD have difficulty exercising and are therefore overweight and at risk for serious medical conditions such as Type II diabetes. In response to this, TERI will run the Fit for Life fitness programs for children with ASD that will be individually targeted to the breadth of ability each student is capable of achieving. Two specific groups of individuals will participate in the program: (1) 65 children with moderate to severe autism and (2) 35 children with mild to moderate autism. All students will come from TERI's non-public school programs. The Fit for Life program will be run by a Corporate Fitness Director as well as a Recreational Director and will take place at a 5,000 square foot fitness facility. Physical activities such as Climbing Mount Everest Challenge and Walk Across America in addition to obstacle courses on the Fitness Walking Trial will be utilized to engage the students. The goal of the program will be that 100 students will exhibit incremental gains in gait stability, endurance, and weight/body fat loss, while developing life-long exercise skills.

*Significance for people with autism:* Weight management and a lifetime habit of exercise will be the results of this program. An added benefit beyond the increased level of fitness and mastery of exercise skills is the ability of the participants to enjoy more exercise related activities with their families and members of the community.

### **Western Reserve Speech and Language Partners**

Beachwood, OH

[wrslp.com](http://wrslp.com)

#### *Friendship in Teams (FIT)*

This is a new program that combines social skills intervention with adaptive physical fitness instruction. This project will specifically address the need for recreation/community activities for children on the autism spectrum. FIT is designed to foster in each student confidence in his or her ability to join and interact effectively in groups of typically developing peers. Students ages 4-18 are divided into three groups: Ages 4-7 focuses on social skills and activities that children can use on the playground and at recess; Ages 8-11 focuses on social skills and physical activities that teach and practice skills typically needed in a physical education environment; and Ages 12-18 focuses on social skills and physical activities, as well as age appropriate games involving technology and less traditional sport activities.

*Significance for people with autism:* This grant will provide funding to expand the program (shorten the waiting list by at least 75%), and to reach low-income youth who are currently unable to afford services. This program has the ability to be replicated by other organizations.

## **Grants Funded in 2007**

### **Acting Antics**

Morgantown, PA

[www.actingantics.org](http://www.actingantics.org)

#### *Developing Social Cognition Through Theater*

The basic premise of Acting Antics is to use live theater as a means to teach social cognition skills. Students participate in theater games, improvisation activities designed to develop the reading of non-verbal cues, build confidence and stimulate appropriate interaction. Actors participate in short scenes with a partner, in which they must take on the persona of a particular character. Development of that scene requires taking the character's perspective, and provides great opportunity to teach this difficult skill in a fun and non-threatening manner. Six of the twelve Chester County school districts are using the "Acting Antics" program as part of an Extended School Year option. This grant would provide the necessary resources to assist Acting Antics to bring direct instruction of the program to additional school districts during the school year, modeling the techniques and gathering data. To train special educators in the school districts in the techniques, and to provide ongoing consultation for the trained educators in the school district.

*Significance to people with autism:* This program provides social skills training to individuals with autism in a fun environment. This program has the ability to be replicated.

### **Bergenfield Public School District**

Bergenfield, NJ

[www.bergenfield.org](http://www.bergenfield.org)

#### *Not Far from Par Golf Program*

Last summer, the applicant, a school district, organized "Not Far from Par," a summer golf program for 16 middle and high school students in Bergen County, New Jersey. Based on feedback from parents, students, and the community, the program was a resounding success. Students improved communication, social and physical skills, and formed closer bonds with peers, siblings and parents. The community at large was introduced to the idea that children with autism can be successfully educated within the community. This project will expand the golf program for next summer to a minimum of 32 students. In addition, the golf program will offer a training program for general and special education teachers, both to help teachers interact more effectively with students on the autism spectrum, and to encourage other New Jersey schools to begin similar programs.

*Significance for people with autism:* This project will double the size of a summer golf program (at a minimum) in Bergen County that successfully taught students with autism in a community setting. Through a teacher training program, it is hoped that other schools will be inspired to launch similar programs.

## **Garden State Discovery Museum's Center for Learning**

Cherry Hill, NJ

[www.discoverymuseum.com](http://www.discoverymuseum.com)

### *Open Arms: Support for the ASD Community*

Children's museums aim to further the growth and development of children through hands-on learning, make-believe play and social interaction. Children with autism may miss out on these benefits because they cannot tolerate crowds, or because their families wish to avoid the unwanted attention and comments that the child's behavior in public may provoke. This program arranges exclusive events for children with autism and their families at the Garden State Discovery Museum so that the children can benefit from the museum in a safe, friendly and understanding environment. On Family evenings, the museum is open exclusively for children on the autism spectrum and their parents, siblings and caregivers. On 'Rents and Sibs evenings, parents hear speakers on topics from eating habits to speech development, while siblings enjoy a support group involving crafts, games and discussion.

*Significance for people with autism:* This program opens the Garden State Discovery Museum to children with autism for exclusive events, and includes programs for their parents and siblings. It will also serve as a way for individuals with autism to become more familiar with the museum, and eventually be able to participate during regular operating hours. This is a program that could be replicated at other museums throughout the country.

## **Judson Center**

Royal Oak, MI

[www.judsoncenter.org](http://www.judsoncenter.org)

### *PALS (Peer Assisted Lunch Social)*

Children and teens with autism often do not receive the kind of social skills support they need. To address this issue, the applicant, a provider of services to individuals with autism and their families in the Detroit area, will bring social skills intervention and staff training to ten local schools (elementary, middle and high schools) for one year. The intervention, a "Peer Assisted Lunch Social," will use the research-based model of "integrated play groups" to integrate students with autism with their typically developing peers. School staff members will be trained in this method by the applicant, so that they will be able to continue the intervention without assistance by the end of the year.

*Significance for people with autism:* Students with autism at ten Detroit area schools will have an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging. Peers will learn about autism, and school staff will interact more effectively with students affected by autism. This is a program that can be replicated.

## **Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN)**

Washington, DC

[www.keengreaterdc.org](http://www.keengreaterdc.org)

### *Recreational Programs for Children and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN) provides recreational and sports programs for children with disabilities. At least 80% of the athletes who participate in KEEN programs are diagnosed with autism spectrum

disorders. Kids with disabilities are at greater risk of leading isolated and sedentary lives. KEEN will match kids with volunteer coaches who help them to be the athletes they aspire to be - kickballer, bowler, swimmer, runner, dancer, tennis player, whatever they want to do. KEEN sessions are non-competitive, flexible, and always free-of-charge. Programs are located in facilities that have access to public transportation. In addition, KEEN sessions take place primarily on Saturdays and Sundays. A Saturday or Sunday session allows a KEEN athlete to get out of the house and be physically active. It also provides much appreciated weekend respite to the athlete's parent or caregiver. KEEN currently operates six locations throughout the country and this grant will provide some of the funding needed for additional locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, St. Louis, New York City, and Phoenix.

*Significance for people with autism:* KEEN sessions provide an inclusive recreational opportunity where athletes with disabilities interact with non-disabled coaches. This grant will provide with funding to continue to expand the program to new cities.

### **Mid-Island Y Jewish Community Center**

Plainview, NY

[www.miyjcc.org](http://www.miyjcc.org)

#### *Aspire – A Camping Experience*

Aspire is a pilot summer camp program, in collaboration with Variety Child Learning Center, using the natural environment for children with autistic tendencies to learn and to be included with their peers. The program will include 20 children across the spectrum, and facilitate inclusion. The components of the program will include a "train the trainer" model, which is based on adult learning theory, which states that people who train others remember 90% of the material they teach, and diffusion of innovation theory, which states that people adopt new information through their trusted social networks. Thus the Train the Trainer Project first develops a cadre of skilled community-based trainers, who in turn train others in their community or within an organization. More specifically, this proposal seeks to develop a pilot preschool program for children with autism spectrum disorders as well as to expand an existing summer camp for school age children and young adults by providing more inclusive experiences.

*Significance for people with autism:* This program will provide inclusion opportunities by trained staff in a summer camp program for children from pre-school to pre-teen ages.

### **Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association**

Addison, IL

[www.nedsra.org](http://www.nedsra.org)

#### *Camp Exploration*

Camp Exploration will serve approximately 12-15 children with autism spectrum disorder, 5 days per week for 7 weeks, beginning in June 2008. Due to the multi-sensory needs and cognitive levels of this population, there was an observed and expressed need by staff and parents to plan programs exclusively for the autistic population. This exclusive program will give these children a more structured environment during the summer months, which provides continuity from school year to school year. Camp Exploration will give children with autism spectrum disorders the opportunity to experience community outings (museum tours, zoo visits, water park exploration, library visits), in-

house activities (arts and crafts projects, interactive play, cooking), as well as art and music therapy.

*Significance for people with autism:* Camp Exploration will provide a day camp experience for 12 – 15 children with autism for 7 weeks. They will be provided community activities as well as day camp activities.

**YMCA Camp Manitou-lin**

Middleville, MI

[www.campmanitou-lin.org](http://www.campmanitou-lin.org)

*Weekend Respite Services for Young Adults with Autism in a Camp Setting*

Young adults with autism need opportunities to feel independent and spend time with peers, while their families need a break from caregiving. To meet these needs, YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin will provide 10 weekends of respite care in the camp setting for 20 young adults with autism spectrum disorder, aged 19-26. Camp weekends will be offered once a month, from January through October 2008, from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Campers will enjoy recreational activities including hiking, horseback riding, archery, and the like, as well as hayrides and campfires. Activities will be adapted to each camper's needs. Campers will stay in heated, carpeted cabins with restrooms and showers. All meals and supplies will be provided. The camp will be staffed with counselors and volunteers in the campers' age range, at a ratio of two campers for every counselor/volunteer. During meals and activities, campers will interact with other camp groups of typically developing peers. Campers will pay \$20 per weekend, with all other fees to be funded by this grant.

*Significance for people with autism:* 20 young adults with autism will get to go away to camp for 10 weekends. They will enjoy independence, recreation and social interaction, while their families enjoy some respite.