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A publication of the West Haven Community House
227 Elm St., West Haven, CT 06516

Residential and Day Services

West Haven Community House Has Served the Needs of West Haven and its People Since 1941

Bermuda cruise memorable

Three residential program clients joined one Community House staff person on an enjoyable trip of a lifetime from Nov. 5 through 10 on a Royal Caribbean Cruise to the Atlantic island of Bermuda. Andrew, Lucy and Barbara were joined by Savin Avenue Residential Supervisor Dianna Hoyt on the voyage to Bermuda, located just 600 nautical miles off the coast of North Carolina.



Bermuda is “celebrated for its pastel painted houses, brilliantly colorful gardens, cricket matches, its charming ‘Bermuda’ shorts and its pink-sand beaches.” The trip began with a limo ride from the Savin Avenue residential home to Port Canaveral in New Jersey. There, everyone boarded the ship, which was buffeted with tropical storm force winds, causing the boat to “rock and sway the whole trip.” However, despite the stormy conditions, everyone managed to eat well.

Among the features of the trip were viewing an “Ice Capades” show, seeing “Dancing With the Stars,” enjoying a 1970s dance show and the excellent shopping opportunities. “We were treated like kings and queens in the dining room,” it was noted by Dianna. “We took a tour of the Galley kitchen and learned about the 80,000 meals served during the course of the trip.” That prompted Andrew to ask the chef, “How many desserts

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Clients enjoy a holiday season trip to Big Apple, Radio City Music Hall

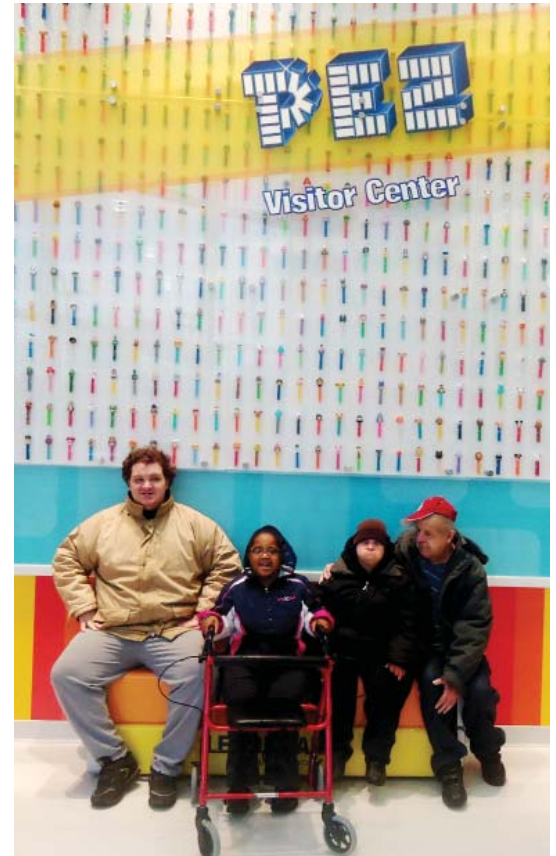


Community Connections clients and staff were not the only “guests” to head for the “Big Apple,” New York City on Nov. 30 to see the Radio City Rockettes and the Christmas Show Extravaganza at Radio City Music Hall. On the same day, President Barack Obama was in the city, as well as it being the day that the famous Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center is lit.

Despite the threat of travel and road gridlock, staff including Keri and Ed reported that the local contingent from West Haven arrived at Radio City Music Hall in “record time.”

Everyone on the trip, including clients Annette, Janice, Mike, Craig and Billy, once again were awed by the annual Christmas Show. For one client, it was an extra special day, as Annette also

celebrated her birthday on Nov. 30. It was also Janice’s first-ever visit to the city, and all are now eagerly anticipating their next trip to the big city in the Spring.



Visit to PEZ candy factory a sweet treat

What better field trip to take than to visit a candy factory! That’s exactly what Community Connections clients and staff did in December when they took the short trip to the next-door town of Orange to visit the PEZ Factory. PEZ was first marketed as a compressed peppermint candy more than 83 years ago in Vienna, Austria, according to the company’s web site. “The name PEZ was derived from the German word for peppermint and today more than three billion PEZ candies are consumed annually in the United States alone.” PEZ dispensers remain very popular collectible item for adults and children and are a part of American pop culture. During the



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Food & can drive helps others less fortunate during holidays

The holiday season each year is a time for celebrating good cheer with family and friends, getting together, sharing food and drink and being thankful for our respective blessings. It is also a time to reach out and help those who are not as fortunate as we are, and that was the theme of the food and can drive sponsored by the Day program in November. The drive benefitted the clients of WHEAT, the West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce.

WHEAT was founded in 1975 by the West Haven Clergy Association and the Community House as a central place where city residents could go for food. It actually started as a food pantry in the basement of the Community House on Elm Street and is now housed around the corner in a 30,000 square foot location

on Washington Avenue. Since its beginning 37 years ago, WHEAT's program has expanded to include referral services for legal services, housing, clothing and furniture, among other services. Throughout the month of November, can and food drive participants dedicated their time and efforts to collecting non-perishable food. They did a fantastic job and were able to deliver five heavy tubs of food to WHEAT in November.

Chuck did an amazing job delivering and unpacking the items at the WHEAT office, and organizers thank all donor participants. Thank you to all our participants, staff and family members who helped us make this a truly successful food drive for this year.



Day clients honor vets with visit to West Haven Military Museum

In honor of our military veterans on their day on Nov. 11, several groups of Day program clients and staff toured the West Haven Military Museum located on Hood Terrace in West Haven.

The museum is the first of its kind in West Haven and according to the city's web site "perhaps the largest in Connecticut, and houses collections from the 102nd Infantry Regiment and the New Haven Grays, a protective force formed after the War of 1812." The museum also "showcases artifacts from each conflict since the United States fought for indepen-

dence, allowing visitors to walk a tangible timeline around the 9,000-square-foot warehouse."

Among those Day clients visiting were Robert, Jamie, Yolanda, Annette, Brian, Purnell, Carlos, Lasundra and Robert. Staff members helping lead the activity included Ed, Jen and Ryan. Each client enjoyed the museum and were amazed that this museum existed in West Haven. Afterward, Robert wrote a letter of appreciation to the veterans who assisted them during their tour.

Reptiles' visit delights clients

Learning about the natural world around us including the animal creatures that inhabit it was the theme and purpose of the visit by local store, Slither & Swim, on Oct. 20 at the Community Connections building on Campbell Avenue.

Store representatives brought several reptiles for viewing and touching by residents. All but three of our Community Connections program clients participated, and enjoyed this unique experience. Janice was especially intrigued with the boa constrictor, while Chuck & Sharon, among others, took the opportunity to closely examine each and every reptile that came their way.

Training helps staff appreciate challenges

Day Services staff held a training in December where staff learned about fire safety and were tested on their knowledge of same, in addition to getting a first-hand experience doing regular activities while being in a wheelchair. While in a wheelchair, staff members had to complete an obstacle course that included picking up objects, going around everyday items in their way, and loading themselves on and off the handicapped van. There were scrapes and bruised hands, noted Director Marie Watson, "but all now have a new appreciation for some of the difficulties that may arise in the daily lives of our clients."

Hat, coat drive benefits homeless

Community Connections staff and clients hosted a Hat and Glove Drive in December to benefit the homeless and their families in the region. All staff and clients participated in this project, and once again the generosity of our participants, staff and families was extraordinary. During the short month of December, the Day program collected not only hats and gloves for the soldiers but also many for children as well. These items were donated to the Columbus House and to Beacon on the Hill Clothes Closet.



Thank you, Walter, for luncheon

On Dec. 20, the clients of Community Connections celebrated the annual December holidays with a luncheon generously donated by longtime friend and program volunteer Walter Borenson. Clients enjoyed ziti, salad, bread, cupcakes and gifts. They also entertained each other by singing holiday songs and having a rousing round of Michael Jackson's experience on the Wii. All participants had a great time against the backdrop of the holidays!



Turkeys, turkeys, turkeys! of all sizes and colors

Turkeys are a hot commodity during the month of November, and in the spirit of the Thanksgiving season last November, Day and Residential program participants eagerly made their annual trek to Gozzi's Turkey Farm in Guilford to see the famous colored turkeys. Gozzi's is noted throughout the region as a place to go to purchase a farm fresh turkey for Thanksgiving. But another treat is to view the turkeys various feather colors as varied as the colors on a rainbow, prompting one Community Connections client to note that the turkeys were colored like Easter eggs. A good time was had by all.



Halloween party a hit for clients

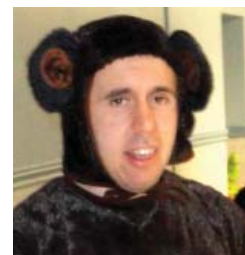
One of the favorite holidays of the year for Day and Residential program clients is the annual Halloween Party, where clients dress up in their favorite costume and enjoy the food and especially the "treats" that are so closely associated with the holiday. The party was held in the auditorium at 227 Elm Street, which provided ample space for the various costumed clients to play act their respective Halloween characters. In addition, the annual event featured a night of dancing and games, and many participants walked away with prizes. In fact, several had such a good time that they've already started asking how soon the holiday season will arrive again. A special thank you to staff volunteers for evening including Debi L., Arianna, Ed, Anita and Jessica.

October is for 'pumpkins' and picking apples at farm



October is the time to think of pumpkins, harvest and Halloween, and in the spirit of the season clients from our residential and Day programs joined staff on an Oct. 16 visit to Silverman's Farm in Easton. Silverman's Farm was founded by Ben Silverman in the early 1920s, "where he pressed apple cider for over 60 years and had the only operating mill in the area that allowed customers to watch the cider being pressed."

Today, Ben's son, Irving, is the operator of the farm. During the 1970s and 80s, Silverman's Farm became a "pick your own" fruit farm featuring a large orchard, scenic tractor rides, and a petting farm hosting many barnyard animals and fowl. Residential clients Andrew, Dennis, Lucy and Debbie were joined by staff members Kendra Wearing and Pheobe Durham on the field trip to pick pumpkins and apples, also enjoying a walk through a hay maze and a bumpy but fun hay ride. After the visit, both staff and residents looked forward to making apple pies and carving pumpkins at home.





Clients see Gov's Mansion meet Santa, enjoy dinner

Day and Residential program clients and staff took an early December holiday trip to Hartford to visit the Governor's Mansion. After the mansion visit, the group treated themselves to dinner at the U.S.S. Chowder Pot restaurant. Upon their arrival at the entrance to the Governor's Mansion, "We were greeted by handsome gentlemen from our armed services promoting "Toys for Tots," noted one staff member. Residential clients who made the trip included Virginia, Debbie and Karen, who were chaperoned by staff members Dianna Hoyt and Gwen Henderson. "We entered the Mansion with visions of beautiful Christmas decorations" dancing in their heads, and indeed

the decorations were beautiful, all agreed. "All of us wore our Santa hats and enjoyed the responses from everyone" who observed and greeted the visitors from West Haven. At the end of the tour, "Santa shook our hands, leaving us with candy cane treats." Later, at the restaurant, staff observed that "dinner was wonderful and everyone managed to fit in a dessert of Key Lime Pie. The residents truly enjoyed themselves." One other feature of the dinner impressed at least one resident, too, as "Debbie was sure to let everyone know that you can have free refill of soda" at the restaurant.

Reflections on the residential holiday party - 2011

The annual residential program Holiday Party was filled with cheer and good times as all residents joined with about a dozen staff members to celebrate the season on Dec. 16 at the home on 228 Elm Street. The evening featured good food and gifts, as a fine buffet spread of food and desserts were featured. Everyone in attendance, too, enjoyed the grab bag gift game. Later, staff and residents gathered around the beautifully decorated Christmas tree for pictures. There was dancing to holiday music and everyone agreed it was a wonderful time filled with laughter and joy, just as the holiday season should be.

As the work day wound down, I was about to leave before a gentle reminder inside guided me to 228 Elm St. "Tonight is the night!" it said. Tonight the Residential staff is having a party for our clients to help them celebrate the upcoming holiday season!

When I first arrived, I had no idea of what to expect. But what I found was something truly amazing and for that I say thank you to the staff who were present.

Although it could be argued that you came because you were on shift, I saw something different. I noticed Frank Lecardo as he patiently helped Rose with her dinner; I smiled as Virginia greeted her beloved staff, Tamila Bass, with a hug when they saw each other. Paula Gary was there as well preparing plates and seating the guests for dinner, while Sunshine

Clark spread sunshine getting clients to dance! I smiled as Sharon Mitchell made sure that Michael had enough on his plate to eat.



Thank you, Venita Godfrey, for making sure Theresa had a chance to be a part of something so special, her smile said it all. Seyue Rosler arrived and made sure to acknowledge each client that he saw individually. Leshayne Henry took the opportunity to gather guests for pictures by the tree, and thanks to April Gibbs

for being available for clients needing attention. Last but not least to my supervisors! From food, music to decorations you should all be proud for a job well done.

In ending, I was only dropping by to say hello but ended up staying for nearly the entire time. What a beautiful team effort I saw and for that I thank you, and I'm sure the clients do too!

- Davaul Amin

PEZ visit -

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month of December, the famous candy maker opened the doors to its new museum for free. Among those clients making the visit were Johnny, Edwin, Nick, Renee and Jamie, who were joined by staff members. Clients were able to watch the candy being made, view replicas of the famous dispensers and take a knowledge quiz. In one portion of the tour, where the glass floor covers over Pez candy, many a client including Jamie wished that "they could just reach down and scoop it up."

Bermuda -

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did you make?" The group also "dressed our best to pose for professional photos taken on the ship and attended the unveiling of the new Blue diamonds - all of us received a free silver pendant!" While on the island of Bermuda itself, "we took a tour and stopped off at the zoo to see all the tropical animals."

Meanwhile, "the wind was unbelievable from the storm and we were anxious to get back on the boat." Said Barbara, "It's too windy out here!" But from the inside the tour vehicle, it was noted that everyone "had an enjoyable view of the island," and overall, it was an experience not to forget, everyone agreed.

