Congratulations Walking Warriors team members!
Great job, too, to the Cool Runners Residential program walking team in red shirts that had more than 15 walkers and raised more than $500.

Walking Warriors exceed FunWalk-15 goal
The Walking Warriors FunWalk-15 team raised more than $3,900 for this year’s event held on Sept. 27, surpassing by nearly 33% the team’s goal of $3,000, and beating the next best team by $1,000.

With the results now in, the Community Connections program team retains both its “Most Money Raised” and “Most Walkers” team honors for the 2015 event. It’s the 3rd year in a row sweeping the two top awards.

This year about 40 walkers came out to participate on a sunny day. All in all it was a great team effort.

Disabilities Act celebrates 25th
The 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was celebrated in July at the Savin Rock Conference Center, attended by clients and staff and West Haven Mayor Ed O’Brien. Live music and an adaptive bicycle exhibit were featured, and of course refreshments were served.

In the picture above, participants enjoyed a day trip to NBC-30 TV studios in Hartford. Below, the Milford City Hall duck pond made for a scenic backdrop for another day trip recently.

Sponsor thanks
Among the Walking Warrior sponsors were Jamie Jerrell, above, and Tim Smith, below.
**Summer work in garden reaps healthy rewards**

In keeping with ongoing activity themes that help heal mind and body, members from both the Day and Individual Day programs have been working together throughout the summer and fall on their vegetable gardens with some excellent results. Many studies confirm the benefits of horticultural therapy in a gardening setting including reduction of pain, improvement in attention and focus, reduction in stress, moderation in agitation, reduction in the incidents of falls, and even the lowering of levels of medications.

In our program, Richard, at right, enjoyed putting our homegrown vegetables into his salad, while Tiffany learned how to saute fresh squash. Meanwhile, individuals sampled garden grown tomatoes topped with basil and other healthy combinations as the growing season progressed. All in all, it was a great way to spend time in the summer and early fall.

**Staff Corner**

Cathy Crawford very busy working behind the scenes

This quarter’s Staff Corner recognizes Cathy Crawford, who has been with the agency since November 2003. For many in the program, Cathy’s is the first voice one hears in the morning, as she begins her typical day assisting our families with their transportation needs. In addition to this important duty, Cathy also manages all of our residents’ finances and bills. Paying bills is a task most people love to hate, but Cathy performs these duties well. All these tasks are just some of the contributions she makes in support of our Community Connections staff. For all of the above and more, we salute Cathy for her continuing efforts on behalf of clients and staff, and a job well done.

**Staff earn rave reviews for the portrayals of ‘A Day in the Life’**

Staff and board members in attendance at this year’s All Staff Meeting in August were treated to several special and very well done skits performed by Community Connections staff entitled, “A Day in the Life…”

The skits featured more than a dozen staff members playing the roles of staff members and clients. Each skit focused on individual situations that come up every day when caring for adults with developmental and physical disabilities. Role playing is a creative talent that each participating actor/actress showed extraordinarily as various situations were acted out in striking detail.

So well done and effective were the presentations that several Board of Directors members highly praised the effort in their report back to the full board at September’s meeting. Among the situations detailed in the skits were the various challenges facing our staff in transporting, feeding, bathing and overseeing numerous other daily activities that we take for granted in the non-disabled world.

It was a real “eye-opening” effort with kudos to Community Connections Assistant Director of Operations, Davaul Amin, who produced this collaborative effort between Residential and Day program staff who so effectively highlighted the complexity, roles and responsibilities in caring for the individuals we serve.

Hats off to all for their time, dedication and humor in these revealing presentations.
Painting continues to be a fun and exciting part of our Day program activities. All participants truly love learning the various techniques of how to put the paint to canvas and each continues to amaze with their abilities. These exercises in various artistic endeavors are part of a larger movement to utilize the creative processes of individuals therapeutically. The purpose of art therapy is essentially one of healing and is successfully applied worldwide to persons with physical, developmental or emotional issues. Any type of visual art and techniques can be employed in the therapeutic process, including painting, drawing, sculpting and photography. Among those participating in the artistic efforts this past August were Sterling, Kim, Russell and Mike. And already within the Day program, requests are being made for more art activities.

Hubbard Park a great summer destination

Sometimes it is as simple as the little things - and the summer sun and blue skies dotted with puffy white fair weather clouds makes it easy to go out and simply enjoy the moment. Allison (pic) and Marcus nourished their inner being by taking to the swings on one of several visits to beautiful Hubbard Park in Meriden. The 1,800-acre Hubbard Park features Castle Craig Tower, a stone observation tower at East Peak in Meriden dedicated in 1900. Also enjoying summer trips to this favorite day destination were Isabel, Sean and Caprice.

Hand-made!

Many of our clients have skills enabling them to create colorful and useful items such as the hand-made quilt, at left, the creation of Allison. Participants are encouraged to learn new skills and improve upon existing ones.

SMART tech is ‘exciting’

Technological innovations and breakthroughs continue at a rapid pace in our economy and world, and Day program staff have been very excited to continue to introduce new SMART technology opportunities to our program participants including the large hi-definition screen, pictured above. These wonderful program opportunities serve to not only enhance our participants’ skills, but do so in fun and exciting ways. And as these technologies become more available, affordable and accessible, they represent more than just a transformation for people with disabilities. They represent real opportunities with access to an inclusive education that teaches individuals in ways that classical education could not. And no matter what the disability, whether it is a mobility, physical impairment, visual, hearing or cognitive issue, there is an ever-growing array of technological tools aimed at each. The new equipment including larger screen and better sound has also been a boon for the “Night at the Movies” held occasionally.

Team building ‘exercise’

Management Team Building can take many forms, and for the Community Connections staff it included a day at a WipeOut event in Hartford in August that benefitted the Challenged Athlete’s Foundation. The 5k course featured 12 larger-than-life obstacles inspired by the hit TV show Wipeout.
Every August some of the best women’s tennis players in the world converge on New Haven to compete in the Connecticut Open, which was held this past Aug. 21-29 at the Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale. Participants from both SMILE and Day Services spent one of those tourney days mingling in the crowd and seeing world famous players compete for nearly $1 million in prize money. They enjoyed meeting and greeting different folks at the event, including Joyce, who was thrilled to spot Matt Scott from News Channel 61. They both talked weather and had fun posing together for pictures.