

Stay Connected

Spring/Summer 2015



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

Community Connections Quarterly

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

Residential enjoys annual dinner

Early spring saw the Residential clients and staff gather together for their annual "Friends & Family" dinner at Anthony's in East Haven. This year's dinner had a "nautical" theme, "Sailing Through 30 Years." The evening was also dedicated to clients who have passed on. As Community Connections Assistant Director Davaul Amin told the gathering, "Even though they are no longer with us, they remain part of our family." During the evening, all home supervisors were introduced, and in turn they introduced each client and spoke briefly about each person. Of course, there was great food and lots of dancing. It was certainly another night to remember for all those clients, and friends and family who attended.



Campbell Avenue site hosts an Open House

In April, the Day Services Option program held an Open House at 622 Campbell Ave. where Kanita, sitting above, described her artwork to all visitors including CT State Rep. Charles Ferraro, D-117. Below, Community Connections Assistant Director Davaul Amin greeted a visiting couple and explained the variety of programs offered at the site.

Photo, t-shirt & art classes popular

Some residential clients have taken up a new hobby – photography – and are loving it. Patrick Jones, a local photographer, led the first class for about 90 minutes in late March teaching clients how to use a camera. Everyone agreed that they want to meet on a regular basis. Clients were able to go out and take their own pictures and have them constructively critiqued by Jones. Several clients also expressed an interest in purchasing their own cameras, too. So it won't be long before all our homes are



adorned with original photography by clients.

Clients also were creative in making special t-shirts featuring a photograph superimposed onto the front of the shirt, see picture, above. Residents at the Elm Street, Savin Avenue and Wood Street homes worked with a volunteer who has a heat press to imprint. Residents used pictures – some from the Friends & Family Dinner – to print on t-shirts. The finished products were being distributed to client's friends and family members as gifts, several for Mother's Day. This same volunteer will also be leading art classes for our residential clients. Many thanks!



Programs are rebranded 'Community Connections'

The agency has reorganized all its disability services programs including SMILE, Day Service Option, Individual Day and all our Residential services under the one banner name - **Community Connections.**

\$3,000 **More than halfway!**

The two-time defending top fundraising team, the Walking Warriors, are continuing to seek support for the Sept. 27 FunWalk. To date, the team has raised \$1,700 including Rita's Night, Movie Night and raffles toward its \$3,000 goal! Clients are currently competing to win prizes for whomever raises the most during the month of July! If you want to join the team, contact Keri McLaughlin at 203-931-4004.

STAFF CORNER



Keri McLaughlin cited for 15 years service

Day Services Option Program Manager Keri McLaughlin was among four agency staff persons cited for 15 years of employment at the West Haven Community House. Keri was recognized at the Board of Directors Annual Meeting in June. Congratulations, Keri!



It's challenging learning to knit

Starting in May and continuing into the summer, Allison, a participant in our ID program, graciously volunteered her time and talent teaching some of our Day Service Option clients - Jamie, Nina and Kanita (pictured above) - how to knit. While individuals continue to struggle to grasp this tricky craft, the time and camaraderie spent learning how to knit has strengthened everyone's bonds through laughter and learning.

Spring & Summer is time for gardens, flowers

This past spring and into the summer months the Community Connections Individual Day (ID) and Day Services Option (DSO) programs have joined together to harvest organically grown herbs and vegetables in West Haven's community garden located at the former Molloy School grounds.

Starting in early May, Carlos, Chuck, Joe, James and Bryan worked hard tilling the soil in preparation for planting tomatoes, basil, peppers and eggplant. Throughout the summer they have been maintaining the garden in anticipation of a continual harvest through the fall.

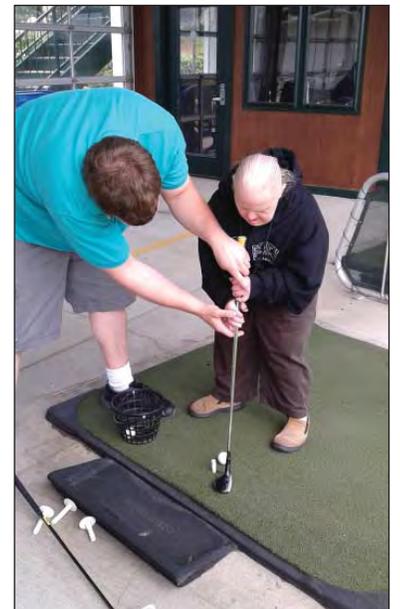
The exercise continues to be a source of personal pride in seeing plants they've nourished and cared for reply in kind with a bountiful harvest. The ID program participants have also volunteered to plant and to maintain a flower bed in conjunction with the West Haven Beautification Committee. This is our 4th year partnering with the city in helping keep our city beautiful, and we encourage readers to visit our flower garden at the corner of Savin Avenue and Main Street in downtown West Haven.



Sensory activity fosters understanding



Sometimes one has to try on someone else's shoes to understand that person's unique gifts. And that is exactly what the Day program's Sensory & Sensitivity Activities group did recently in an exercise to help them understand vision loss. Jamie, Annette, Rosemarie, Kanita and Theresa were asked to identify objects strictly by using their sense of touch, an "eye opening" experience that gained everyone a new and beneficial perspective.



SMILE program participants in June enjoyed getting out and keeping fit and active while visiting the Shelton Sports Center, as seen above.

Residential clients enjoy their Florida vacation



Residential program clients recently went for a week's vacation to Orlando, Florida, which included visits to Seaworld, Animal Kingdom and Disney World. The fun included taking a part in a Lion King show and dancing at Disney. The group flew out of Bradley Airport and had a great time.



Hands-on exhibits promote recycling

Day program clients participated in a guided tour at the Recycling Center in Hartford in April designed to teach them how to "Go Green." In this day and age it is important for everyone to learn our role in preserving the planet. Participants were able to see an active recycling plant and participate in some hands-on learning experiences. Pictured is Carlos, above.



Warner Theatre trip



Day program clients went to Torrington in May to visit the Warner Theatre, once described as "CT's Most Beautiful Theatre." Annette, Kanita, Theresa, Jamie, and Russell (pictured) toured the theatre and were even able to step into the world of actors and actresses by trying on costumes and working the stage.



Activity celebrates Mother's Day in May

In April and the early part of May John, Devan and Stephanie could be found cutting, folding and designing a magnificent bouquet of paper flowers to present to their Mothers, who each received a colorful bouquet in honor of Mother's Day.

Healthy eating habits are stressed

Last April, Susan Furbish from Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) came to visit the Day program to teach our participants about healthy eating. During her visit, participants learned how to make healthy humus to snack on and also played "nutrition bingo." It was fun, informative and motivated our participants to continue their pursuit of a healthy and active lifestyle.



Art is fun and helps build confidence



In an effort to build a personal sense of creativity and confidence in their own abilities, clients have been exposed to the “wonderful world of art.” Throughout the spring and early summer participants Kanita, Annette, Jamie, Kim, Theresa, Lasandria, Charlene, Nina and Eric have spent time learning about famous artists including Van Gogh and Jackson Pollock – all in an effort to find their own “inner artist.” Everyone who has participated has been amazed and proud of their own abilities in various creative activities, and art has quickly become one of the most favorite and looked forward to scheduled activities in the program. And who knows how soon the program might have enough new masterpieces in hand to host an art exhibit?



Making a Connection

Day Service clients recently visited Mystic Aquarium, and Zandra, above, made a mutual connection with one of the Beluga whales.



‘Spring Fling’ dance in May celebrates multi-culturalism



At its dance in May featuring DJ Bob playing music from other cultures, Residential clients also enjoyed a variety of different foods from many lands courtesy of local restaurants, all in celebration of ‘multiculturalism.’ Many flags decorated the auditorium giving the venue a ‘United Nations’ feel. Of course, a great time was had by all.