Annual Dinner marks our ‘75th’

The Residential program held its annual Family & Friends dinner and dancing night out at Anthony’s Ocean View restaurant in East Haven in March. The theme this year was in honor of the 75-year history of the West Haven Community House being celebrated in 2016.

At each dinner table, the seven decades of the Community House were represented with each decade’s table decorated with objects, items, and/or toys from that decade. The 1940s table, for instance, had Silly Putty, a Slinky and M&Ms. Each also had a “fun facts’ sheet including famous births, inventions, wages and prices of the era, etc.

Organizers also collected memories, messages, and/or congratulations on Post-It notes that were put in small glass bottles that will become part of a time capsule. Each resident was able to invite friends and family to this event and along with fine food there was lots of dancing and much laughter and smiles.

Community Connections clients a hit at ‘Party on the Green’

The “We’re Poppin” Dance Team, led by Laseanna Thompson, danced up a storm to the delight of the crowd at the agency’s 75th Anniversary “Party on the Green” in June. The dance team is comprised of Community Connections clients and staff.

On the Green, they danced through songs of the decades like ‘Thriller’ and ‘Rock around the Clock’ closing with ‘Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)’. The team has been practicing two days a week since early 2016 and their hard work paid off with a wonderful performance before the West Haven community attending.

The dance team led into the Community Connections Flash Mob to Uptown Funk. Staff and Clients over the past two months learned parts of the dance to perform at a certain time during the song. We had staff from the SMILE, DSO, ID and Residential programs all participate to make it a huge success - and a lot of fun!
Savin House residents went to see the Harlem Globetrotters on Feb. 19th. The team, now in its 90th year of entertaining young and old alike, is world-famous and features fancy ballhandling and shooting wizardry on the court. Our residents got to see some amazing basketball tricks and they hope to see them again soon.

Several Community Connections Day program clients worked together to assist the Family Resource Center by putting together more than 100 diaper bags filled with goodies for expectant families last April. They completed the project in record time, sharing quality time as well as putting our own Director of Community Connections, Marie Watson, to work in their assembly line. Day program participants included: David, Dennis, James, Bryan, Carlos and Kanita. Great job, everyone!

Lucy, Andrew and Sharon went to Las Vegas recently. Andrew got to spend some quality time with his sister whom he misses very much. Meanwhile, Cheryl and Sharon toured the entire Vegas strip, stopping at food buffets, museums, and casinos along the way. It certainly was a trip to remember for all.

May visit to Nature’s Art Village was a great learning experience

In early May, Evette, Robert, Kanita and Paul visited Nature’s Art Village in Montville where they saw The Dinosaur Place featuring 40 life-sized dinosaurs on pristine nature trails, a water park, a dinosaur-themed maze, moon bounce and more indoors, including a hands-on activity center, replica silver mine and fossil quarry. The residents were able to explore the village and the many museums that are a part of it. And although they were not able to see the dinosaur exhibit because of the rain, everyone really enjoyed seeing the vintage technology museum.

SMILE clients work with Head Start kids to plant

SMILE participants and Head Start students got together this past April to make new friends, to learn some fun facts about gardening and to plant some flowers in celebration of Spring and in honor of Earth Day. The group met at the agency’s main building at 227 Elm Street and all agreed it was a great way to mark the arrival of the Spring and the warmer weather by planting some flowers and making new friends. It was a lot of fun for all and participants including Sandy, Tony, Tallance and Sharon are looking forward to getting together with their new friends again soon.

Vegas trip featured fun, family

Nothing better to beat bad weather than a night out for pizza at the ‘Hut’

After a long season of winter and a sometimes not-so-bright Spring, SMILE participants, pictured above decided to break out of the seasonal blues and indulge in a little Pizza therapy session this past April. Pizza Hut was the destination of choice for the group that included Patrick, Cheryl, Tallance, Jill, Tony and Sandy. It was delicious, and fun!

‘Trotters’ amaze and delight

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Spring Fling features country-western theme

The Spring Fling was a big hit for all the residents and clients from the Community House, all of whom had a blast. Eric and Carlos really embraced the theme and came dressed as Cowboys!

Everyone really enjoy the authentic backyard BBQ dishes and DJ Bob was in fine form, spinning some good old country tunes that kept everyone dancing all night.

Every February, clients get together for our traditional Valentine’s Day dance. Above, Robert and Charlene share a dance at the event held on Campbell Avenue this year.

Clients are shown above at “Movie Night” on Cambell Avenue featuring Grease, which doubled as a fundraiser for the Walking Warriors Fun Walk event team.

Everyone Irish on St. Pat’s Day

Everybody is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day and at our client gathering Evette was voted by her Community Connections peers as the “Irish Woman of the Day.” Pictured top right, Rose and Theresa search for gold coins playing the ‘Luck of the Irish’ guessing game. Clients and staff celebrated the annual March holiday with shepherd’s pie, Irish soda bread and green punch. It was a lot of fun and all participants were proud to be Irish, if just for the day.

Several clients, including Joe, pictured above left, and Michael at right, decided to try their hand at painting on an unlikely surface: rocks. Some would say they totally rocked it!
This year Mother Nature had different plans for our annual Memorial Day cookout. The outdoor event was rescheduled three times due to the rain and finally was held inside at our Wood Street home on June 8, and even on that day the weather did not fully cooperate. However, the party went on and everyone enjoyed the great food dishes prepared by Tamila Bass.

Residents enjoy February visit to the Stamford Nature Center

In late February, Enaida, Karen, and Laseanna joined staff in visiting the Stamford Nature Center where they saw many different types of animals, walked a small trail, and spent a fun day together. The Center is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of art, popular culture, history and natural and agricultural sciences.

Mother Nature throws a curve thwarting Memorial Day plans

In many ways, Community Connections programs improve client skills through different sensory, fine and gross motor activities. In the pictures at left and below left, are Michael, Caprice, Eric, Joe, Sterling and James – all participating in a painting class showing off their creativity! In activities like painting, clients have found that it relieves stress, encourages their creative side, and increases patience. In addition, staff has found that it builds a client’s self-esteem, stimulates communication and lowers some of the client’s anxieties, all while they are enjoying making their own masterpieces.

Clients had a chance to practice practical money skills and indulge in a sweet summer time treat while on a trip to Rita’s in June as the weather really started to warm up. Among those attending were Erik, James, Mike, Sterling and Shawn.

Mark spent some time in May on a special craft project for his Mom for Mother’s Day. He created a colorful piece of pottery.