In early January 2015, the Disability Services’ SMILE (Seniors Maintaining an Independent Lifestyle Everyday) program relocated to a larger space on the Post Road in West Haven.

SMILE began three years ago and has been located in the Upper Lang building at 227 Elm Street, complementing the main Day services site just down the road at 622 Campbell Avenue.

With more and more Disability Services clients living longer lives due to advances in medicine and healthier lifestyles, the need is there for a larger space, said Executive Director Patty Stevens. The SMILE program serves clients over age 50 and is part of the larger Community Connections Day program serving adults with disabilities 21-years and older.

SMILE features age-appropriate lifestyle and related activities, and remains focused on our mission to bring maximum independence, better quality of life and greater community inclusion opportunities to clients, noted Disability Services Director Marie Watson.

And fortunately, the move to the Post Road occurred just prior to the arrival of heavy snows in late January, so it was a dose of good fortune for Watson, her staff and of course, our clients.

The new site at 840 Boston Post Rd. features one larger program space area with kitchenette, three handicapped accessible bathrooms, accesible shower, several smaller program rooms and a staff office. It is on the first floor and occupies 3,000-sq.-ft. with a private rear access for vans to drop off clients.

“The clients love it,” said Watson. “They enjoy the brightness of the new location and there is more room to do the various activities.” Meanwhile, management and staff appreciate the ability to meet the needs of the clients in a more accessible environment, she said.

Day Services Program Manager Keri McLaughlin oversees the SMILE program, while Individual Day Program Manager Karl Pepin has his office at the Post Road location.
UNH students help make birdfeeders at SMILE

It is always fun for Day program clients to interact with students from local high schools and colleges and this past December was no different as a group of student volunteers from the University of New Haven came to visit our SMILE program. Together, the students assisted program clients put together unique birdfeeders as part of an arts and crafts project. Of course, the camaraderie exhibited between the two groups is always something special, too, as both the younger students and the young-at-heart clients had fun comparing facets of their lives. Students, just starting out in their careers, and our SMILE participants, all spoke of their work experiences and several on how they were enjoying the benefits of retirement. It was a fun and satisfying experience for both groups, and so much so that the UNH students have already asked to come back and host a Bingo Day for SMILE in the Spring.

Door decorating highlights winter fun

There were a variety of fun and ambitious activities during the winter holiday season. Among them was a door decorating contest at the home of Community Connections at 622 Campbell Ave. Every group outdid themselves in this first-ever door decorating contest, as clients put together door decorations that included snowmen, chimney, fireplaces, holiday trees, colorful presents and holiday wreaths to name a few. Kudos to all staff and their client groups for your outstanding creativity and effort! You did yourselves proud!

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AND ONCE AGAIN, many thanks for the help and generosity of our longtime volunteers Walter and Joyce who treated our participants to yet another wonderful extravaganza. They shared lunch, dessert, fun and games together as all programs DSO, SMILE & IDN came together to celebrate the winter solstice.
The Holidays - a Joyous Season for All!

Karen Chamberlin, above, at Lorenzo’s Christmas party for Residential Services. All 18 residents and staff gathered in December 2014 to celebrate the holidays with a sit-down dinner, a surprise gift giveaway and great conversation by all.

A day trip was made to the city to take in the winter sights including ice skating in Rockefeller Center and seeing the world famous Christmas tree amidst the holiday hustle and bustle of Times Square. Just a fun filled day of sightseeing in the Big Apple for Kim, Michael, Carlos, Russell and Joe.

Andrew getting ready for Christmas at his apartment putting together the Christmas tree. Holiday decorating is very big to him and his roommate, Lucy. They enjoy this time of year and being festive.

Every once in awhile it is fun to head up to the Mohegan Sun casino to have a fun day trip, seeing all there is to see and taking a chance on those penny slots. This is especially true at Christmas time, and Theresa, Tim and Edwin made a December trip and were in awe at the colorful and beautiful array of holiday décor.

Karen Chamberlin, above, at Lorenzo’s Christmas party for Residential Services. All 18 residents and staff gathered in December 2014 to celebrate the holidays with a sit-down dinner, a surprise gift giveaway and great conversation by all.
The annual Halloween party has become something that residents and Community Connections clients alike look forward to attending every year. And the October 2014 dress-up event was no exception. The party was held in the Community House auditorium at 227 Elm St., which was decorated befitting the season. Along with food and music, attendees had a great time dressing up in costume as well as socializing and dancing with their peers and staff.

**Firehouse tour**

Several participants were provided the opportunity to tour a local West Haven firehouse. There they were able to meet the firefighters, see where they eat and sleep when they have to stay overnight. Clients also learned about all the equipment needed to fight fires and some of our clients even got to slide down a real live fire pole!! Many thanks to the WH Fire Dept. for your time and service protecting our community!

**Second floor buddies!**

The second floor residents at 42 Wood St. have welcomed the Residential program’s newest resident, Laseanna, pictured middle above, into their lives. Laseanna is a big New England Patriots fan, and she certainly enjoyed the Super Bowl Party held at Wood Street in early February.

The Wood St. home and property also have had several major projects completed of late to celebrate, including a new access ramp to the two side doors, and a newly extended and paved driveway during last summer (2014). In addition, a new second floor walk-in shower was installed in February 2015.

**Annual Halloween Party**

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