

# Stay Connected

## Community Connections Quarterly

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

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## The Avenues Program Hit's One Year Mark

The Avenues Program is in full swing and growing. The program provides the ever changing needs of youth with intellectual disabilities activities that emphasize building life skills, enhanced with social interaction and enrichment experiences. One component of the program includes visiting local attractions to help build daily living and social skills and to enhance independence.

In addition, they are learning about public transportation with CT Transit's bus routes and are working on transitional goals and how to budget for, plan and prepare meals.

The program is expanding with an addition of four new clients joining throughout the next few months.



*Nijja getting on the bus as part of the traveling training*



*It's Robert's turn to water the garden*



*Tiffini, Nijja & Liam enjoyed the grounds at Lavender Pond Farm where they learned about the benefits of lavender plants and purchased some for their garden project*

## Garden Club is Underway

Staff and clients from the The Avenues and Individual Day Programs recently started a Garden Club and are planting vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers.

As with anything new, they began the club by doing some research into gardening and by visiting other gardens in the area to learn about the life cycle of plants and how they are grown. Their visits include UConn's Floriculture Greenhouse, Lavender Pond Farm in Killingsworth and the Yale Botanical Gardens. The goal of the club is to someday have a big enough garden to be self-sufficient in costs and to sell some of the items at a local Farmer's Market.



*Garden Club members from left to right; Chante, Priscilla, Mary, Skyla, Damedra, Dorothy, Nijja, Tiffini and Karl.*

# Summer Beach Dance Party

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> clients and staff of the Residential Program hosted their annual Summer Beach Dance Party. Each year they host the event for clients that attend or have attended the WHCH Programs as well as clients from area agencies.

From flip flops to sunglasses everyone was in character at the annual event. Although there wasn't any ocean or sand, there was lots of dancing and visiting with old friends and new, and an old fashioned ice cream sundae bar to complete the night.



*Laseanna hangs ten on the surfboard*



*Michelle, Laseanna, Karen and Eric show off their dance moves*



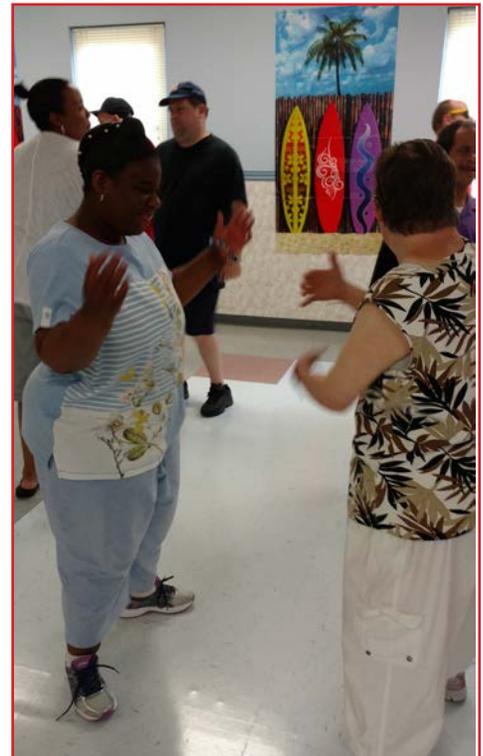
*Lyza & Eric getting down with the music*



*A big smile from Craig*



*Jamie & Robert pose for a picture*



*Nina's getting dance lessons from Karen*

## Walking Warriors & Coolest Walkers Join Forces

Members of Community Connections' Coolest Walkers team will merge with the Walking Warriors team forming one Community Connections team. They will keep the name Walking Warriors.

Team members have been busy raising funds to support the Family Fun Walk with a variety of activities including a bake sale, 50/50 raffle, pasta lunch, movie night, Valentine's Day dance, bingo and more.

With almost two months left to go, the top fundraising team for five years running are working hard to get to their goal of \$4,000 for the Fun Walk.



West Haven Community House's  
6<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Fun Walk  
Sunday, September 24, 2017

**Fundraising  
Goal of \$4,000**



*Brittany, Nijja and Liam selling baked goods*



*Natchea, Robert, Karen, Nijja, Yolanda and Mary fundraising at Walmart*



*Nijja congratulates Charlene for winning \$112 in the 50/50 raffle contest*

## A Visit from Local Reps

At the request of Paula Hennes (Mom of Ralph, Community Connections client), Senator Gary Winfield and Representative Michael DiMassa visited the Community Connections Headquarters on Campbell Avenue.

Mrs Hennes spoke movingly about the importance of both Residential and Day programs for individuals like her son Ralph. She was enthusiastic in her praise of our work and acknowledged how significant these programs are, not only for the clients, but also for the families of the individuals who can be assured that their loved ones are well taken care of and that they are engaged in meaningful and interesting activities that provide them opportunities to learn new skills.

She also mentioned the many opportunities for the clients to travel and become part of community life, which ultimately help their family members and



*Senator Winfield, Rep. Michael DiMassa & Paula Hennes*

caretakers stay employed without the necessity of staying home to care for their loved one. They spoke of funding challenges and expressed our understanding of the difficult job the legislators had in trying to create a balanced budget without impacting agencies like ours.

Both men were very supportive of our work and challenges and spoke highly of the services we provide to adults with intellectual disabilities along with families and children.

## Ahhh... There's Nothing Like The Great Outdoors

After a pretty cold winter and very wet spring, it is nice to get outside. Research shows that spending more time in the great outdoors can actually make you healthier by boosting your creativity and focus, improving your mood and self-esteem and reducing stress and blood pressure. Whether it's reliving a favorite childhood pastime or simply taking a walk in the park, our clients enjoy the beauty and peace of being outside.



*Pictured left to right is Marcus throwing a football and John M. making a winning kick in a rousing game of kickball on the West Haven Green*



*Liam tries his hand at playing chess with this life-size chess board at Lavender Pond Farm*



*Caprice is swinging into spring during a visit to Bradley Point on a chilly spring day in April*



*For the past year, Matt has been volunteering weekly at Animal Haven in North Haven where he walks dogs around a designated path on the grounds. Matt gets to choose which dog he would like. It typically takes him about 45 minutes to walk the dog around the trail*

## State Budget Crisis Affects Community Connections

Without a state budget, critical services to our clients are in jeopardy. Recently, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) reduced the number of days that they will fund our Day Service programs by 6. The agency simply does not have the funds to cover the costs of running this program without the revenue from DDS. This reduction is potentially a loss of \$50,000 in our day program alone. As a result of this loss of funding, we cannot possibly open our program on these 6 days. These six non-funded days are spread across the year on Wednesdays in July, August, September, October, February and April. Months that traditionally see higher attendance. This decision to provide us with no funding on these 6 days forces the Community House to close the program on those days. This is a terrible burden for the families who will now need to stay home or make arrangements for the care of their loved ones, as well as, for our staff who will be losing a day's pay.

In addition, the LON rates (the individual amounts of money that we receive per client/resident annually) will be decreased on average by 10% in this fiscal year. On the residential side of Community Connections this loss of revenue could approach \$100,000 or more.

Decisions such as these will greatly challenge our ability to continue to provide services, both day and residential, moving forward. We are a small agency and we cannot combine or make other arrangements so, needless to say, we will be very challenged as we progress in this fiscal year with these anticipated cuts.

***It is important that our legislators hear from us and others who support the services we provide. We ask you to please contact your legislators and encourage your friends, neighbors and relatives to do the same.***

***Visit [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov) for a list of legislators.***

***Thank you for your support and advocacy!***