

# Stay Connected

## Community Connections Newsletter

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

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News from December 2018 to February 2019

## Highlights from The Avenues

We are thrilled with the progress the members of The Avenues program have made over the last few months!

Here are some of the highlights:

- In November, they learned about the importance of elections, and how they can participate in local politics. Their Life Skills Coach took them to the voting polls to show them how to cast a vote. They learned about self-advocacy, and how politics has an important role in their lives.
- In December, the crew participated in a variety of activities out in the community. They visited the West Haven Library, created a Christmas craft, and attended a flu prevention presentation. They used their cooking skills to create homemade doggy treats to donate to the local animal shelter. In addition, they took a trip to CTtransit's local headquarters to see how the buses run and what it means to have accessibility on a city bus.
- January started out with a bang with members participating in weekly volunteer activities where they practiced their skills, and expanded the work exploration goals they have set for themselves. The volunteer activities also include working at the Audubon Society in Milford where they perform basic indoor cleaning and outside lawn care.

We have just started a new partnership with FISH of Greater New Haven, a non-profit organization that delivers free bags of groceries to households in New Haven. In January, they sorted and packed grocery bags to be ready for delivery. FISH relies solely on its volunteers to collect, bag and deliver food to the clientele they serve. Visit their website [fishgnh.org](http://fishgnh.org) for more information.



## Annual Holiday Party

Our annual holiday party was an inclusive event for both the DSO and The Avenues programs. Once again, the day's events were sponsored by our longtime friend and volunteer Walter Borenson and his wife, Joanne. This year our clients took an active role in creating the festivities, which emphasized their kitchen skills. They made homemade egg nog, warm cider, and even baked cookies, decorating them in their own style.

Each client enjoyed the opportunity to highlight and serve their creations to everyone. Other activities included karaoke Christmas carols and decorating your own stockings and Santa hats! As always there was much laughter, dancing and general cheer amongst the crowd. Twelve lucky raffle winners took home an additional gift to mark the occasion.



## Fire Safety

For this year's fire safety training, we invited the WH Fire Department to assist us in leading our staff through a realistic simulation activity. After the training, staff were invited to a surprise luncheon to thank them for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. To make the day a bit more challenging and fun, our staff teamed up to compete against each other in a fun Trivia game.



## A Visit to Bass Pro Shops



Who doesn't love a trip to Bass Pro Shops? Each year members of our Day Service Option and SMILES program look forward to seeing the tremendous holiday display at the store.



Not only did they enjoy the holiday decorations, they also enjoyed the impressive wildlife displays and the indoor aquarium.

Many had fun modeling different apparel and posing for pictures in front of the giant Christmas tree.

## Meet Michael



Upon meeting Michael, who participates in our IDN program, you soon discover that he is an avid music fan. He especially loves classic rock, and can tell you just about everything and anything about the genre. Michael often talks about how he would love to be a professional DJ for hire and on the radio. Working together with the Recreation Department at Apple

Rehab in East Haven, Michael's Life Skills Coach has, from time to time, been able to find him a DJ gig. In the weeks preceding each event, Michael works with his staff to put together a playlist and create a cd, utilizing his computer skills. During the event he introduces each song and includes some interesting facts about the group. Once the song is done he likes to ask the audience some trivia questions about the music. In addition to his impressive knowledge of classic rock, Michael has a very charming personality and really enjoys socializing with people.

## Andrew's Birthday Bash

Friends and family came out to celebrate Andrew's 50th Birthday this past February. Andrew has been a part of the Community House's Residential program since the late 1980's. Andrew has an old soul and still enjoys listening to music from back in the day like The Monkees and The Beatles. You will still see Andrew rocking the old-school tie dye shirts and reminiscing about the good ole days. At his party he was so excited about a special gift he received; tickets for he and a friend to see a WWE show this Spring!

After everyone sang Happy Birthday, and had a good laugh about the cane he received as a gag gift, he made a wonderful speech thanking everyone for their gifts and for coming to his party.



## Movie Night



Movie Night is always a big hit with participants in our day program. Beauty and the Beast was February's feature movie, and our jump start to fundraising for the Walking Warriors team.

## Ed Weller Retires After A Decade of Dedicated Service

We sure will miss our friend and long term staff member, Ed Weller, who recently retired after 10 years with Community Connections. Ed started out working with clients in our Day program in 2008 as a coach and then was promoted to a Team Leader in 2010, where his funny, yet calm manner was appreciated by both the clients and staff.

In addition to being a wonderful addition to the Community Connections' staff, Ed has earned many agency awards including a Spirit Award in 2016 and the Perfect Attendance award for 9 years in a row.



Not only was Ed an exemplary and selfless employee, he would often go out of his way to support the needs of the clients we serve and also the employees he led.

Saying goodbye has been bittersweet as Ed will be greatly missed. We will miss his entertaining and teasing nature, his "skills, skills, skills" chants, and the way he always encouraged us to work hard and do our best. While we will miss him, we are happy knowing that he will have plenty of time to enjoy retirement with his wife Kathy.