



Providing social, recreation and therapeutic services for people with developmental disabilities since 1989



GREETINGS FROM SPARC'S PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that we bring to you the first edition of our new SPARC newsletter! In what will be a periodic communication, we will bring you SPARC's news, program information, and updates on our special events. Exciting things are happening throughout the SPARC community and we want to share them all with you in a new, concise, easy to read format.

As President of SPARC's Board of Directors, I have witnessed first-hand the impact SPARC has on children and adults with special needs. Each month, SPARC provides meaningful and fulfilling life experiences to over 1000 individuals through 80 different programs. SPARC participants enjoy friendships, new skills, leisure time activities, and a sense of belonging.

I hope you will enjoy reading about our SPARC community, news from the Board, tips for parents and highlights from inside the programs themselves. We are excited to bring you this issue, and many more to follow!

Warmest regards,

Rod Drysdale
President

SPARC NEWS



From left, Jennifer Blum, Noelle Molloy, Rose Rothe and Ellen Blum

SPARC Honored

SPARC was recently honored by the New York State Therapeutic Recreation Association (NYSTRA) as "2014 Organization of the Year". Noelle Molloy, a SPARC Recreation Therapist, was awarded the "Distinguished Service Award," and mother and daughter Ellen and Jennifer Blum were awarded the "Volunteers of the Year Award" for their service at SPARC's therapeutic riding program at Cimarron Ranch. The awards were presented at NYSTRA's 2014 awards banquet. Congratulations to all for your service and commitment to our participants!



From left, Dom Lanza and Dan Lanza

Golf Outing

SPARC hosted its 15th Annual Golf Outing on September 10, 2014 at the Putnam County Golf Club. Our 2014 Honoree was Dan Lanza. Congratulations and thank you to Dan and the Lanza family! Dan has been a supporter of every SPARC Golf Outing and is a "part of the family" at this annual event. His son, Dom, has been an active member of our Social Club and Golf Clinic for many years. Dan and his wife, Cindy, are very involved in supporting Dom's groups and our annual Gala. We would also like to thank the many volunteers who organized and ran the outing, and to our generous golfers for making this event a huge success!



From left, Rose Rothe, Matteo Pungello, and Patti Columbo

Leadership Award

Congratulations to Matteo Pungello, SPARC's 2014 recipient of the Cathy Kadner Leadership award. Matteo began working with SPARC in 2007 as an Assistant in our Film Production Workshop. He has gone on to become a Leader for the past four years and has developed this workshop into one of SPARC's most popular programs for teens and adults! Matteo is also a Leader in our Dobbs Ferry Teen Time, Link-Up and Movie Night programs. Matteo's enthusiasm, dedication and willingness to go above and beyond is an inspiration to all of us. Congratulations and thank you, Matteo!

OUR MISSION

Special Program And Resource Connection (SPARC) enhances the lives of people with developmental disabilities through high quality therapeutic recreation activities. Participants work on skill development in a nurturing social community that does not otherwise exist in their lives.

NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!

SPARClife

NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!NEWS!

WELCOME ABOARD!

SPARC extends a warm welcome to the following talented and creative individuals who have joined our team this fall:

Shari Burshtyn
Heather Cummings
Megan DelCampo
Nick Devino
Brittany Issac
Dee Kenny
Jeff Kreis
Nancy LoCascio
Steve Loftus
Jennifer Macri
Wendy Martinez
Brianna Nimphius
Jennifer Plumley
Rebecca Rothe
Jenna Spencer
Jacalyn Wasrshauer

CONGRATULATIONS!

Jennifer Avitabile
on her engagement.

Cheryl Balestra on her marriage.

Lauren Deleso Iglesia on the birth of her new baby girl on November 4th. Welcome to the world, Amelia Ann Iglesias!

Christina Larkin on her marriage.



Have an announcement to share? Email us at info@sparcinc.org!



fb.com/SpecialProgramAndResourceConnection
twitter.com/sparcrecreation
youtube.com/SparcIncTV

SPOTLIGHT ON SPARC PROGRAMS**Kidz Time and Club SPARC****Saturday Morning Programs for Kids and Young Teens**

Kidz Time is a therapeutic recreation program specially designed for children aged 4-12 on the autism spectrum. The program, under the supervision of SPARC's Director for Children Services, Jennifer Avitabile, is run by a caring team of trained therapeutic specialists in a fun, flexible and positive environment. During each session, children engage in music, games and art related activities which are goal oriented to build skills in the areas of attention, language, socialization, frustration tolerance, listening and self-esteem.

For younger teens on the autism spectrum, Club SPARC focuses on engaging participants in typical teen socialization and recreation activities. The program is designed to encourage self-expression, conversation, problem solving and decision-making skills while helping kids to develop interests and self-esteem. Each week, Jennifer and her specialists greet the children, along with their parents/caregivers to make sure that needs are met and that everyone settles in, ready to have a great experience! Parents are able to leave their children to have fun, play and learn in a safe and nurturing environment.

"Kidz Time, and now Club SPARC, is a safe, fun place where my son can interact with other children while doing activities that are wonderful for him. The staff is amazing and my son just loves going there!"

- A Program Parent

Kidz Time and Club SPARC are currently offered on Saturdays at 10:30am at the Briarcliff Congregational Church in Briarcliff Manor, NY.

Link-Up**"Without Walls" Program for Young Adults**

Link-Up, now in its fourth year, is SPARC's innovative daytime "without walls" program for young adults aged 18-30. With a staffing ratio of 1:4, Link-Up is an alternative to traditional day habilitation programs in that it is integrated into the community through participation in volunteer work, visiting museums and exhibits, utilizing public transportation and learning to manage money.

On-campus experiences provide cultural and educational programs that engage the mind, body and spirit. With an emphasis on forming relationships, learning pre-vocational and travel training skills, our participants have fun and build self-confidence and independence while learning to navigate the world. Here is what a few of our Link-Up crew have to say about the program:

"I love Link-Up because I feel like myself in this group" -Dean

"Working on my blog for the world to see is why I like to be in Link Up" -Joey

"The way we connect in the community is so much fun" -Elizabeth

"Learned lots at the bookstore in town today with Link Up" -Molly

Link-Up meets at Pace University Graduate Center in White Plains, NY twice a week from 9:00am-2:00pm.

To learn more about these, and all of SPARC's programs, visit our website at www.sparcinc.org or call the SPARC office at (914) 243-0583.

10 PLANNING ESSENTIALS AS YOUR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED CHILD TURNS 18

1. Register with OPWDD (formerly OMRDD). This should be done by age 14 and must be done by 18/21 to obtain services after High School.
2. Prepare and implement a transition plan (appropriate measurable postsecondary goals) for your child to make a successful transition to life after school (training, education, employment, and independent living skills). Transition services must be included in the first IEP in effect when a child turns 15. Include ACCES-VR (vocational services), if appropriate.
3. Have no more than \$2,000 in child's name (i.e. UTMA accounts).
4. Apply for Guardianship to be effective @ 18 (begin paperwork @ 17 ½).
5. Apply for SSI @ 18 (easy if registered w/ OPWDD & less than \$2,000)
6. Obtain Medicaid (automatic with SSI) – mandatory for your child to receive a Medicaid Service Coordinator (your “access to agencies”) and group home eligibility for their entire lifetime. Once you go through the Front Door orientation and assessment, your Medicaid Service Coordinator will obtain Medicaid Waivers as necessary so you can obtain necessary lifetime services and individual and community supports (ISP).
7. You can have your child placed on your private health insurance (before he/she is 26) – this way, you will not have to pay COBRA costs.
8. Consult with an Estate Planning attorney for creation of a supplemental needs trust (SNT) appropriate for your family's situation. The SNT will provide for your child and ensure that your child will remain eligible for governmental entitlements (3rd party SNT – inter vivos or testamentary and 1st party SNT).
9. Prepare a Letter of Intent for your child – your outline of your hopes and desires for your child. This is your opportunity provide future guardians and trustees a unique “Road Map” that will guide them in understanding your child. Update your Letter of Intent every year and place this in your child's “Notebook”. Keep a Notebook with all relevant information for your child in 1 place (i.e. health information, emergency contacts, social security card, IEP, ISP, Guardianship, OPWDD acceptance, Letter of Intent, etc.). Let everyone know where your child's Notebook is kept. The Notebook and your Letter of Intent will help maintain the quality and consistency of your child's care for their lifetime.
10. Obtain a NYS non-drivers id @ 16; if male, register for the draft @ 18 (mandatory, but won't serve); if appropriate, register your child to vote.

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Wizards and Princesses and Cowboys, Oh My!

Members of SPARC's Teen Time and Social Club gathered for a Spooktacular Halloween celebration at Briarcliff Middle School on October 31, 2014!





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Lisa Cohen
Deborah Fischer

FUNDRAISING FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS YES, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

While SPARC hosts several fundraising events each year in order to sustain our quality programming, ability to offer scholarships and special programs, we also have some amazing families and friends who have helped to support us through their creativity, unique ideas and thoughtfulness. You can do it, too!

We are truly grateful to the following families and individuals who have designated SPARC as the recipient of their fundraising/donation efforts in 2014...THANK YOU!

- ★ In Memory of Briarcliff Manor teacher, Alison Bankes
- ★ Church of St. Barnabas clothing drive to benefit SPARC's Teen Filmmaking Program
- ★ In Memory of Club SPARC member's Grandfather, Robert Moss
- ★ In Honor of Teen Time member, Prizeman Family birthday occasion donation
- ★ In Honor of the birthday of Susan Seal
- ★ In Honor of Club SPARC member, The Rim to Rim Grand Canyon Challenge by hiker Dan Fischer and friends
- ★ Masters Party in honor of Rec Night member conducted by Michael Emerson
- ★ Chilly Hilly 5K Run/ Walk by the North Yonkers Scholarship Fund, chaired by Tony Gianelli

Your Amazon purchases can bring charitable donations to SPARC! Click the link from our homepage, www.sparcinc.org, or visit: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3832725>

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You shop. Amazon gives.

2015 Gala

SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 11, 2015

SPARC's 6th Annual Gala will be held on Saturday, April 11, 2015 at the Scarsdale Country Club.

This year's theme, "Havana Nights," promises to be an amazing evening of music, dancing, entertainment and more!

Put a little SPARC in your life!

www.sparcinc.org