**Scituate: Thanks for Giving CORSE a home**Scituate Mariner - October 24, 2013

The Scituate CORSE (Community of Resources for Special Education) Foundation has always been about community involvement. And at the organization’s upcoming 8th annual gala event, the focus will be on some of the people, businesses and groups that have helped to make a positive difference in the lives of special needs children and their families.

“It’s the people in this community that make CORSE as good as it is,” said Tracy Johnston, president of the Scituate CORSE Foundation. “I say this all the time – I really think Scituate is such a unique community because people are so helpful to one another. The gala is an evening out to celebrate that.”

The theme of this year’s gala is “Celebrating Scituate: Thank You for giving CORSE a Home.”

Over the past four years – since CORSE has been honoring some of its supporters – individuals have been singled out to receive the prestigious Compass Award – something members of CORSE came up with to show how much someone’s efforts mean to the organization, and the community at-large.

However, this year, Johnston said, “we couldn’t decide on just one person.”

“The theme this year is celebrating our home, so we thought let’s not give it to a person, it’s all about the organizations.”

So in recognition of their hard work and dedication in designing successful social, academic and recreational skill development programs, the following community organizations will be presented with the 2013 Annual CORSE Foundation Compass Award: AccesSport America - Maritime Adventures on Scituate Harbor, Booth Hill Farm - Therapeutic Horseback Riding, Funtastics – Gymnastics, Lauren McGonagle and Elizabeth Walsh – Swimming, Scituate Public Schools - Integrated Social, Academic and Peer Mentor Programming, PreK-High School, Scituate Recreation Department - Integrated Sports Programs and Summer Recreation Camps, Scituate Youth Center – Tennis, and Xplosion Dance Center – Dance.

“Our programming affiliations with this year’s recipients have made a tremendous difference for our children and their families,” Johnston said. “These affiliations have been a gift in the lives of many who might not have had the chance elsewhere to participate and achieve. The compassion that these award recipients convey has also given a true sense of community to all CORSE families.”

She said it is “humbling to sit back and think of how it all came together. That’s why it’s so important to acknowledge those who have helped.”

**Coming together**

The Scituate CORSE Foundation was launched in 2006 as a grassroots effort that aimed to fill the void in community-based programming for children with special needs. “When we first started we thought we were going to be a small PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), and do one or two fundraisers and give the money to the schools,” Johnston said.

That’s not how it worked out. CORSE currently has 80 programs and approximately $100,000 annually to give back.

Johnston points out that CORSE programs are open to all children, regardless of ability, but staffed appropriately so that children with special needs can successfully access them.

She said CORSE is a nice way for parents, educators, and community members to come together and collaborate on how to take care of the supplemental needs of special needs kids.

“We’re all coming together to do it,” she said. “And we’re able to do it in an affordable way for families.”

Linda Adams, owner of Booth Hill Farm, said she runs a therapeutic horseback riding non-profit organization through the farm that “does amazing things for children with all different disabilities.”

“Kids really like it, and it’s good for their self-esteem,” she said.

Adams said she became involved with therapeutic horseback riding after a granddaughter was born with special needs.

“I’ve been around horses all my life,” Adams said. “One of my granddaughter’s doctors recommended therapeutic riding, so I started putting her up on the horse. It did so much for her.”

Adams said she began taking classes in therapeutic riding, and soon word got out within the community.

There is a waiting list for families who want to enroll their children in the program.

“We have kids come who have all different types of disorders,” Adams said. “You really fall in love with each child. They are all so special.”

Adams credits the CORSE Foundation for being “valuable to the town.”

“They have been great,” she said. “I think every community should have an organization like that. When you have a child with special needs it changes your life immediately. These people from CORSE are just so dedicated to making them comfortable and to giving them as close to a ‘normal’ life as possible. So many people are just grateful for them.”

Scituate School Superintendent John McCarthy said that he has “never experienced a program with the mission and passion for ensuring equity of access for children with special needs like CORSE has done for this community.”

“CORSE is not just a fund raising organization, but rather an educational organization destined to raise awareness in this community and beyond that all children have special gifts and talents and have a right to access everything any other child would,” he said.

McCarthy acknowledged the Scituate Public Schools’ excellent special education program, and said it is strongly believed within the school district that “children with special needs are fully included and educated in their hometown.”

“Being able to ‘keep our kids home’ requires us to continuously think outside the box and look for partners and resources,” he said. “CORSE is an invaluable partner in our quest to fully live our mission. Without them, much of what we have built in our schools and community would never have happened. I strongly support their mission and give them my highest endorsement.”

Johnston said CORSE would not be able to survive “without the different organizations we work with.”

“This would never have happened if people weren’t willing to support and work with us,” she said. “This is a model community success story.”

If you go…

CORSE Foundation's 8th Annual Auction and Gala  
When: Saturday, Nov. 2, 6:30 p.m.  
Where: River Club Music Hall, 78 Border Road  
Tickets: Tickets are $55 per person, and $500 for a table of 10. (As of Oct. 21, there were only 30 tickets remaining.)

For more information, or to purchase tickets visit www.corsefoundation.org