

# Charting a CORSE

By Ryan Bray  
RBRAY@CNC.COM

It all started earlier this year with a fund-raiser.

Now, only eight months later, the Community of Resources for Special Education (CORSE) Foundation has made its mark on special education in Scituate.

With CORSE, a nonprofit organization geared toward funding grant proposals for improved special education programs in the Scituate school district, parents, teachers and other residents are making strides for students who have needs that can't be met through standard school curricula and classes.

Things began last winter when Nancy Johnston, the mother of a child with special needs in the district, approached Director of Special Education Judy Norton about hosting a fund-raiser for new special education programs in the district.

"As we started talking about it more, we decided it would be best if we created a district-wide program for the kids," Johnston said. Today, CORSE boasts a board of directors with 10 members, as well as the support of 170 loyal parents, teachers and residents. The organization hosts fund-raisers of various sizes and themes. As the money is collected, the board accepts grant proposals from teachers and parents to address specific needs. Every school in the district is represented on the board.

"We've got parents with kids with special needs, teachers and other community members on board with what we're doing," Johnston said. "It's very touching to see everyone come together the way they have."

On Monday, Johnson and fellow CORSE co-chairman Marynell Henry gave an update on the foundation's activities to the school committee. With its first grant cycle having closed this month (the foundation has two cycles annually, one in October and another in March), the foundation raised \$20,000.

At their annual grant meeting Oct. 26, CORSE members voted to allocate \$16,900 for nine grants. The remaining \$3,100, Johnston said, will roll over to the collected total for March.

"This is all due to great cooperation between teachers and parents," Johnston said. "Everyone did a remarkable job putting together these grants."

The grant money will be used in a variety of capacities, including a music therapy program for the early childhood center, outreach training workshops for staff and a conference on improving special education resources in the district.

"As state and local budgets continue to get tighter and tighter, there's less room for additional support for these programs," said Henry, whose son, Christopher, is a special needs student. "That's where we try to come in."

CORSE members spend much of the year organizing fund-raisers and benefits. Johnston said most of the \$20,000 raised for October came through a silent auction and gala held at the Scituate Country Club in May.

"People donated so much for the auction," Henry said. "We're just very lucky that the community has been behind us right from the start."

Proof of the community's commitment to the foundation came last weekend, as organizers held the inaugural CORSE walk around Scituate Harbor (see photos on page 21). Despite treacherous rain and wind that plagued much of Saturday afternoon, more than 150 residents showed up in support of the event, helping to raise about \$3,500.

Every Saturday, Henry and other members sell coffee and snacks at the Scituate Youth Soccer game. And while the money brought in through coffee sales is smaller, it helps raise awareness.

"We want to raise money, but we also let people know what we're doing," Henry said.