

Parent, teachers and volunteers team up to do more to help kids

Read more: <http://www.patriotledger.com/mobile/x1055170303/Scituate-group-is-on-CORSE-to-helping-special-needs-kids#ixzz24tRHvPj6>



Tracy Johnston is President of Project CORSE, which along with Scituate Recreation, holds a summer camp for special needs kids, Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012. Her son Billy, 10 participates in the camp and daughter Abbey, 12, is a volunteer.

SCITUATE —

Working with a child with special needs changes your perspective, Tracy Johnston says.

After her son was diagnosed with autism, she and friend Marynell Henry detected a gap in the services available to Scituate children with special needs.

Then they came up with something to fill that gap: an organization called CORSE, which is short for Community of Resources for Special Education.

“I can’t explain what exactly it was that made it so successful, but obviously there was a need in the community and this hit it,” Johnston said.

CORSE, led by parents, teachers and volunteers, raises money to provide academic, social and recreational experiences.

In addition to holding three major fundraisers a year, it seeks grants from organizations such as the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, the Evan Henry Foundation for Autism and the Boston Bruins hockey team.

None of the people involved in CORSE, including the 14 board members, are paid, Johnston said, and she thinks that's why "a lot of people have chosen to donate to us."

The money, she said, is "going right back to the kids."

CORSE offers after-school support programs in math, reading, writing and study skills. Its recreational offerings include baseball and karate, and there are specialty camps such as Lose the Training Wheels Bike Camp and Maritime Water Sports Adventures.

Johnston said 90 percent of the programs are integrated, which is a key to their success.

Parents tell her that, thanks to the integration, "my kid just feels like a kid," she said.

Johnston said the experiences she has during CORSE programs put life in perspective.

During a boat trip, she heard how astonished many of the children were to be seeing what the land looks like from the water.

Johnston also talked about students whose confidence was raised by being able to do things "in a safe, familiar environment."

"That's usually all they need," she said. "These kids can attain anything they want to do; it's just they need to have this structured, supportive environment to accomplish it."

Johnston said CORSE has also made an impact on the Scituate community.

"I think it has brought our town much closer together. Having community programming that everyone goes to and everyone has a good time at has broken down barriers."

Johnston said there is a lot of extra work in raising a child with autism, but the rewards make it all worthwhile.

"When you have a child with special needs, you are just working under that umbrella of uncertainty about what are they going to accomplish and what aren't they going to accomplish," she said. "Nine out of 10 times they exceed your expectations."

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On CORSE to help special-needs kids in Scituate

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The parents, educators and volunteers who run the Scituate organization called Community of Resources for Special Education, or CORSE, strive to provide social and academic opportunities that aren't available elsewhere to local children with special needs.



Gary Higgins/The Patriot Ledger

Harry Halford, 6, of Scituate, a camp participant, trains the water slide hose on another camper. Project CORSE, which along with Scituate Recreation, holds a summer camp for special needs kids, Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012.



Catherine Faherty, 7, enjoys the camp along with volunteer Abby Clark, 15, of Scituate. Tracy Johnston is President of Project CORSE, which along with Scituate Recreation, holds a summer camp for special needs kids, Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012.



Camper Karly Erickson, 11, enjoys the company of Kathleen Burke, 18, a 2012 Scituate High grad. Tracy Johnston is President of Project CORSE, which along with Scituate Recreation, holds a summer camp for special needs kids, Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012.



The water slide is a popular activity at summer camp held at Scituate High School. Project CORSE, which along with Scituate Recreation, holds a summer camp for special needs kids, Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012.



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