

MAYOR'S PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Mayor's Program has been part of the West Orange fabric since 1973. It has provided individuals with disabilities a year round program that includes holiday theme parties, trips and the dissemination of important information. The cornerstone of the program has been a six-week summer respite camp. Since its inception, the target group of residents has been ages sixteen and older.

SUMMER OF 2006

The summer of 2006 was a watermark for the Mayor's Program. Recreation Director Bill Kehoe, with the unwavering support of Mayor John F. McKeon, convened an ad hoc committee to examine the possibility of expanding the Mayor's Program. The committee was represented by a member of the Township Council, educators from the Student Support Services Dept. of the West Orange Public School system, Rec Dept. personnel and dedicated community volunteers. This committee without reservation endorsed the expansion of the Mayor's Program to include school aged children. Shortly afterward the Footsteps Program, under the auspices of the Recreation Department, was introduced to the West Orange community.

GOALS OF FOOTSTEPS

Footsteps seeks

- to enrich the lives of exceptional children from the age of four to sixteen
- to foster long term, peer relationships between exceptional children and mainstream children
- to forge friendships and understanding between the families of the participants and the families of the "Big Buddies".

CLASS OFFERINGS

Footsteps for the Exceptional Child offers four semesters (4) per year: Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Each semester is five (5) weeks long. Each class meets once a week for one (1) hour. Courses are divided into the following Three (3) grade levels: Primary (PreK-2), Elementary (3-5), Middle School (6-8). Some classes overlap age groups. Classes are scheduled based on the availability of the instructor and the availability of the site. Class offerings vary semester to semester. Community input on potential courses is encouraged. Each class is led by a professional with appropriate training and/or experience. Some classes are privatized. Parent volunteers, student assistants (high school age) and "Big Buddies" (peers) assist each instructor.

THE "BIG BUDDY" PROGRAM How it Works

Footsteps offers an opportunity for students ages eight (8) and up to become mentors to children with special needs. Footsteps matches each class participant with a "Big Buddy" of the approximate same age. Additional opportunities are available for high school age students to assist each class instructor. Footsteps provides children in West Orange the opportunity to perform community service and gain from the invaluable experience of mentoring another child. The "Big Buddy" assists the special needs child thus enabling him or her to participate in various programs. A two-hour training workshop is provided which covers how to be a friend to children with varying special needs. Participants will also learn about the various diagnosis such as autism, visual & hearing impairments, developmental disabilities, etc. Training is offered throughout the school year as needed.

REGISTRATION POLICIES

Course Offering/Registration

Registration is required for each semester. Registration forms are available in the schools through the Case Managers and/or the classroom teachers. They are also on the Rec website (www.westorange.org) Forms need to be completed by the parents, signed by the child's Case Manager or classroom teacher and then submitted to the Rec Dept with the required fee. Class size is limited. Participation is limited to West Orange residents on a 1st come/1st serve basis. Exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis by the Director of Recreation. Times and locations vary due to instructor availability and space availability. Nominal participation fees are charged.

Big Buddy Registration

Successful completion of a two-hour training course is required to become a Big Buddy. The training course is limited to twenty-five (25) per session. Pre-registration is required. **Applications are available at the West Orange Recreation Department.** Participation in the program is limited to West Orange residents on a 1st come/1st serve basis. Footsteps seeks to recruit Big Buddies that are close in age to the class participants (peers). In addition, a selected number of high school students are used as assistants to the various instructors. Demonstrated prior interest in one of the upcoming class offerings is a major plus. For example, if Footsteps were to offer a program in dancing they would seek volunteers who were currently involved in a dance program. Training courses are posted one month in advance on the Rec Dept. website.

Required Documentation

The WO Rec Dept. requires the following documents **each & every** time you register for a program; 1) Parent's Driver's License (WO Address), 2) Child's Birth Certificate, 3) Child's Most Recent Report Card

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

West Orange Rec. Department
973-325-4150

Website: www.westorange.org

Director of Recreation: Bill Kehoe

Email:

Recreation@westorange.org

FOOTSTEPS Coordinator: Paula Korey

Email: footsteps@westorange.org

On the WO Website, click on **Notify Me** to receive FOOTSTEPS information an/or the monthly Rec Newsletter delivered right to your home or work computer. Confidentiality is guaranteed.

**Mayor's Program for Individuals
with Special Needs**
973-243-1169

Coordinator: Lisa Adams

Email: specialneeds@westorange.org

Committee Chairperson: Laura Lab

West Orange Board of Education
973-669-5400 X-231

Director of Student Support Services:

Constance Salimbeno

Supv. PreK-8: Kristen Gogerty

Supv. High School: Dawn Ribeiro

Email: All WO Board of Ed staff members

Email addresses follow the same format.

First Initial Last Name@woboe.org

**Parents Advocating Special
Services**

in Education (PASSE)

Website: wopasse.org

Co-Presidents

Sue Frievald & Alexander Deronde

Emails: wopasse@gmail.com

Statement of Policy

Footsteps, The West Orange Recreation Department, The Mayor's Program for Individuals With Special Needs and the the West Orange Board of Education do not discriminate based on age, race, color, creed or gender.

Information contained on all applications and in all participant records are confidential and will not be released without the written permission of the parent.

REV. 2012

FOOTSTEPS For The Exceptional Child

**A Year Round Program of
Recreational Activities for Children
with Special Needs.**

INCLUDING

**A Peer Mentoring Program
of "Big Buddies"**

Township of West Orange

Mayor: Robert D. Parisi

West Orange Recreation Department

Director: Bill Kehoe



Endorsed By

West Orange Board of Education
Student Support Services Dept.

&

Parents Advocating Special
Services in Education (PASSE)