

NFAR-funded KIT Projects Help Include Children with Autism in Summer Camps



Poolside at YMCA camp

As summer vacation quickly comes to a end, we want to recognize the many summer camp programs made available to San Diego children with autism thanks to Kids Included Together (KIT), a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the meaningful inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in out-of-school time programs.

Three years ago, NFAR funded the development of a KIT Training Module "Teaching and Modeling Respectful Accommodations for Children and Youth with Autism in Out-of-School Programs." Since it's development, the module has been presented to 473 providers working in extra-curricular programs, including four presentations at statewide and national conferences.

In 2007, NFAR continued its support by awarding a direct consultation and modeling project grant to KIT entitled "Supporting Inclusion for Children with Autism in Community Programs." The training encourages inclusion and successful social experiences for

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March 28, 2009

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Find out how by contacting NFAR at sponsors@nfar.org or (858) 679-8800

www.RaceforAutism.org

**NFAR Teachers
Grants Now
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children with autism and has already made a difference for many families dealing with autism in San Diego.

NFAR Board Member Carol Stachwick was especially appreciative of the new KIT programs. Her 12-year old son, who was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at age 5, was able to successfully attend a 7-week summer camp program at the YMCA thanks to the KIT counselor-training program.

"With the support of a KIT trained counselor and a few advance phone calls, our son was - for the first time - able to be a part of the same "regular" summer camp programs that his sister and friends have always attended. It really helped him grow more confident," Carol says. "He loved it!"

"Everyone - from management to the counselors - were supportive, understanding and prepared. That's not something we had experienced before when trying to include our son in other camps and programs."

KIT works with 46 San Diego County organizational affiliates that represent over 199 sites, including many of the largest local child and youth care programs such as the Boys & Girls Club, YMCAs, before and after-school programs on San Diego County school campuses, City Park & Recreation Departments (San Diego, Chula Vista, Coronado and Santee), as well as theater arts and other enrichment type programs. KIT affiliate sites offer a wide variety of activities to children and youth with disabilities, from childcare, aquatic recreation, drama and art classes to recreational programs and surf and summer camps.

Currently, KIT reports that autism is the most frequently reported disability represented at their affiliate sites.

[>> Click here to learn more about how your child can benefit from participation in KIT trained out-of-school time programs.](#)

NFAR Grant Helps Fund Technology Needs at Vista Hill Stein Education Center

Through the San Diego Autism Teachers Fund, NFAR is assisting educators by providing for the specialized needs of their students with autism.

Grants of up to \$1000 may be awarded for specialized educational programs, materials and equipment.

The application deadline is September 15 and grants will be awarded in October in time to be implemented during the 2008/2009 school year.

For more information and to download a grant application, visit www.NFAR.org

NFAR Grants to be Awarded this Fall

The 2008 Project Grants, which closed its application period on July 1, provides funding to non-profit organizations for the purpose of creating or expanding programs that increase the current level of treatment services to children with autism.

These grants can be up to \$10,000 each.

The 2008 Project Grant awards will be announced in



Vista Hill is currently celebrating 50 years of leadership as a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to creating stronger families in San Diego County. The Stein Education Center (SEC) is a major program of Vista Hill and currently serves more than 350

children and adults with severe developmental disabilities. Fifty percent of the students enrolled at SEC are diagnosed with conditions on the autism spectrum. Services provided by SEC include special education, after-school recreation and socialization programs, and vocational services.

NFAR recently awarded the Stein Education Center with grant funding to help meet the needs of its students and after-school program participants through the use of technology. Funding will be used in two areas of need: (1) for the purchase of licenses to place Boardmaker software in 17 of SEC's classrooms and (2) for the creation of a computer lab for the after-school recreational program.

Boardmaker is a software program used to help non-verbal children communicate by the use of standardized picture symbols. "The ability to communicate with others is so important" says Sharon Leon, Executive Director of NFAR. " We are pleased to be able to assist the teachers at SEC (with the Boardmaker Software) as they help their students learn to effectively communicate with others."

Boardmaker software has over 3,000 picture communication symbols to improve and enhance communication skills. These pictures can be used to improve communication and comprehension skills throughout the academic day, as well as enhance the student's ability to communicate with their family and others in out-of-school time activities. Through NFAR funding, SEC will be able to provide Boardmaker software to each of its classrooms.

Grant funding was also awarded to Vista Hill to help create a computer lab for the after-school recreational program. The lab is scheduled to open this September.

The after-school recreation program at the SEC provides supervised after-school care, social skills training and recreational opportunities to children who require more attention and support than is available in traditional recreation or day care programs. This service is available from 1 pm to 6pm on weekdays, and fills a critical need for youth with autism or other disabilities and their families in San Diego.

The Computer Lab will become a part of the recreational

early September.

NFAR grant programs are made possible by the funds raised by the parents, friends, professionals and supporters of the San Diego Race for Autism held in Balboa Park each March.

NFAR in the News

As part of a recent series on autism, **SheKnows.com** - one of the top 10 most-visited websites for women-spoke with NFAR Executive Director Sharon Leon about coping with the financial impact on families.

Read the informative article at SheKnows.com

program's rotational activity schedule offering students creative as well as instructional opportunities. Students will also be allowed to earn additional computer time for playing their favorite computer games, a highly motivating activity for most of the participants, as part of SEC's rewards system.

>>[Click here to learn more about NFAR Funded Projects](#)

