

THE KENNEDY CENTER

A UTISM PROJECT



For More Information, visit
www.thekennedycenterinc.org

ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER

Established in 1951, The Kennedy Center is a 501(c) 3 non-profit rehabilitation agency supporting more than 1,500 children and adults with disabilities with vocational, residential, educational, therapeutic, social and recreational programs throughout Connecticut.

Our mission promotes the empowerment of individuals with diverse abilities, disabilities, and experiences toward optimal participation and inclusion in the community.

Guided by its mission and history, The Kennedy Center is committed to providing services and supports to families of children with autism spectrum disorders. Recognizing the growing need within the community, The Kennedy Center established The Autism Project in 2006 to increase and develop services for children and young adults - birth through 21 years of age.



WHAT DOES THE AUTISM PROJECT DO?

Established by The Kennedy Center in 2006, **The Autism Project** aims to support children with autism spectrum disorders and their families. The mission of The Autism Project is to provide these children and families with:

- Information, referral and resources
- Family support & service coordination
- Financial assistance
- Support for children in community activities
- Behavioral services
- New services for unmet needs within the community

A Solid Foundation:

With guidance from a knowledgeable Advisory Board comprised of local professionals and parents, The Autism Project has accomplished many of its early goals by identifying the needs of families and launching new programs and services. Among numerous initiatives completed in its first two years, The Autism Project has recently:

- ✓ Hired a full-time, bilingual Manager with extensive personal and professional experience with agencies and families in the Connecticut autism community
- ✓ Implemented a Family Grant Program to assist local families struggling with autism related expenses
- ✓ Awarded 32 grants to families across the region to help cover the cost of diagnostic evaluations, speech therapy, social skills programs, respite care, safety equipment, summer camp activities, and numerous other items
- ✓ Received an Autism Speaks Community grant to provide wrap-around social skills development services to Bridgeport children, their families and their extended circles of support
- ✓ Created and implemented a pilot after-school program for children in the Bridgeport public school system
- ✓ Established 8 new social activity groups for ages 3-21, including a preschool playgroup and a social group for teens and young adults which includes community outings
- ✓ Created a new model of informational sessions for parents of children enrolled in social activity groups, offering resources, support and networking opportunities
- ✓ Provided children with one-to-one support to allow inclusion in activities at local summer camp programs
- ✓ Provided behavioral and educational consultation and support services, as well as ABA programs for families and local agencies

Plans for 2009:

In addition to continued growth and expansion of the many programs and services now in place, some of The Autism Project's immediate plans and goals are to:

- Provide in-home coaching services for parents and caregivers to attain skills and strategies to support their child's development and growth
- Conduct 11 new workshops for parents, professionals and extended family members on various topics, including estate planning, advocacy, behavioral and health issues, with additional programs to be determined
- Provide training and consultation to Birth to Three staff, and strengthen family support services for children's transition to school
- Work with area agencies to develop after-school and summer programs for children across school districts
- Expand behavioral services requested by local families

For more information, contact **Rose Abreu-Sanchez, Manager of The Autism Project**, 203-332-4535, ext. 247 or email: rsanchez@kennedyctr.org

The Autism Project depends on its annual **Magic Moments** fundraising event to sustain and develop these programs. The next event will take place on **March 28, 2009**, at the Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield University.

All contributions benefit The Autism Project and are tax-deductible to the extent of the law.

