



NO LIMIT NEWS

NEWSLETTER for United Cerebral Palsy of the Golden Gate



SPECIAL NEEDS AQUATIC PROGRAM

SNAP SPACE

BY NANCY DEROCHE

For the past **19 years** the **Special Needs Aquatic Program (SNAP)** has been a place where children with varying abilities could learn, exercise, play, make friends, and connect with their community. Founded in 1991 by Dori Maxon PT, PCS, MEd, SNAP is an aquatic based motor development program for children with a variety of abilities and challenges. The objectives of SNAP include helping children with special needs develop pride and self-confidence, while providing them with an opportunity to enhance their physical abilities (i.e. grow stronger), making friends, and having a really, REALLY fun time. Each participant's program is tailored to their unique and individual needs in a supportive, nurturing, and safe environment. Over these past years SNAP has been a labor of love for Dori and the many volunteers who have kept the program going.

SNAP serves children 1-18 years old, with a variety of diagnoses including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, SMA, arthritis, developmental delay, sensory integration disorder, and autistic spectrum disorder. SNAP accepts children with a variety of abilities and challenges.

All program participants work one-on-one with volunteer instructors whose efforts are guided by a specially trained and certified Head Instructor who manages a class of six children. SNAP classes are currently held five times a week in Berkeley, at the YMCA and the Berkeley High Warm pool and in Palo Alto at the Palo Alto YMCA. As a result of strong volunteer support, which is comprised of students as well as members of the local community, and various fundraising efforts, SNAP fees have remained low and scholarships are available for those in need. Look for more

info about SNAP from participants, parents, volunteers, and staff in SNAP STORIES at the UCP website { WWW.UCPGG.ORG } and in future newsletters. ✦

If you're interested in participating, volunteering, or learning more about SNAP please contact us at:

510.832.7430 EXT. 8

INFO@UCPGG.ORG

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“EVERYONE IN”-side Perspective

BY PAM BRAIN

As we were preparing our son Garrett for kindergarten, our biggest concern was what he would do after-school until we could pick him up. Although we liked the after-school program, administration could not offer the necessary support for him, and as a result could not place him in their program. Fortunately, about that time we heard about a program



being developed by UCP of the Golden Gate to provide “inclusion aides” for after school programs, in order to enable children, with special needs, to attend traditional after school programs. This program’s goal is to promote and nurture a paradigm of inclusion that children can carry forward throughout their lives, and that is exactly what we wanted for Garrett.

The process for getting started was straight forward. First we worked with UCPGG staff to obtain Regional Center funding for the service. Next, with the support of UCPGG staff, we were able to find an amazing young woman to assist Garrett. She didn’t have a lot of experience with special needs children, but was a fantastic fit with Garrett. She accompanied Garrett from his classroom to the after-school program and most significantly provided support for Garrett which enabled him to participate in program activities with the other children, whether it was a cooking project, an art project, outside activities such as sports, or just sitting on the couch and reading a book.

Initially Garrett was the only special needs child at the after-school program. In so far as this arrangement was new for everyone,

including Garrett, the aide, and the other students, there was a period of adjustment. However as time has gone by everyone has settled in nicely and we couldn’t be more delighted with this program.

It is such a pleasure to pick Garrett up in the afternoon and find him playing pickle-in-the-middle with the other children or chasing a ball with a group of friends. And I do mean “friends”. These children all say good-bye as Garrett is leaving. If he misses a day, they are looking for him. He is invited to their birthday parties and they always attend Garrett’s parties. I am proud of the friendships he has made. This has been a terrific learning experience for us all.

Because of the support from **Everyone In**, Garrett has become a part of the larger school community, not just that kid from the Special Ed classroom. He has friends in all the classes. Looking forward, I know when Garrett transitions to middle school, and then high school, he will see familiar faces from his elementary years. I know these early experiences will help with those big transitions, and for that, I am much appreciative of this wonderful program. **IN THE MEANTIME, GARRETT IS HAVING A BLAST.** ♦

Special Needs Youth BASKETBALL CAMP

BY DOUG SENZ

Sports and athletics have always been a big part of my life. They have provided me with some of my most enjoyable experiences, enlightening moments, and longest lasting friendships. One of the reasons I started coaching was to teach youngsters and provide them with the opportunity to have some of the same positive growth experiences that I enjoyed as a youth. I began my coaching career in the 1970’s and have had the opportunity since that time to work with children of all ages and skill levels, from youth leagues through high school.

In 2000, I had a son, John Scott who was shortly thereafter diagnosed with cerebral palsy. As my late father was a neurologist, I was raised with an awareness and understanding of children with special needs. At an early age my dad impressed on me the potential that each individual has. He told me that “if you work with (children), give them love, care and attention, they will flourish and be successful in their own right”. As a result of my early teaching I knew right away that I was in a good position to address my son’s needs.

I started John Scott in organized youth team sports (t-ball) shortly after his third birthday. Unfortunately, this was not the positive experience for him that I’d hoped for, as the coach lacked understanding and awareness of his condition and chastised him for “not holding the bat right like normal children”. As any parent would I removed my son from this team. It was at that point that I decided to apply my coaching experience to teams and in leagues that could accommodate my son, and other special needs children.

John Scott is now an active ten year old who has developed into a passionate athlete whose favorite team sport is basketball. He has participated in community basketball programs: YMCA, CYO, Upward, for the past six years. At this age however the programs that he’s been involved in are no longer suited for his unique abilities. As a result, with the encouragement of my coaching mentor, Tom Blackwood, I’ve decided to create this unique basketball camp, not only for my son but for other special needs children like him who are would like to play basketball, but don’t have an appropriate outlet.

I am excited and grateful to Senior Pastor Bill Matthews of the Oak Park Christian Center for giving his blessing and the United Cerebral Palsy of the Golden Gate for supporting my efforts to create an opportunity for children with special needs to participate in a basketball camp. »



Ultimate HOLIDAY PARTY a Real Hit!

BY BARRY GARDIN

Once again the UCPGG annual Ultimate Holiday party lived up to its name. On Saturday, December 12, 2009, over 125 special needs children from throughout the Bay along with their siblings and parents gathered at the **Marriott City Center** in Oakland to celebrate the holiday season and receive a special gift.

Although this event began seven years ago as an effort to provide adaptive toys to children with special needs and to bring attention to the challenges families face trying to find them, it has blossomed into an annual holiday celebration where special needs children and their siblings can equally share in the holiday spirit. This year's party included a visit from Santa, who was assisted by his Raiderette elves and featured magic shows, clowns, face painting, and the fun and excitement of several Nintendo Wii gaming stations courtesy of the "Geek Squad" from the **Best Buy** location in Union City.

UCPGG's efforts to raise awareness and increase the utilization of technology, specifically assistive technology and augmentative communication, to promote life fulfillment of persons with special

needs was also promoted at this event, thanks to representatives from **Prentke Romich Company (PRC)** and **DynaVox Technologies** who hosted demonstration stations for children and their families in order to familiarize them with the latest in assistive technology and augmentative communication devices.

The atmosphere was more festive than ever thanks to the participation of **Barrango, Inc.** { WWW.BARRANGO.COM } who helped transform the Jewett Ballroom at the Oakland Marriott into a spectacular holiday wonderland. Their oversized displays, including several fifteen foot tall nutcrackers, dancing bears, etc. wowed the imagination and provided a special holiday "magic" to the air.

Lisa Vigil, mother of Jose came to the party for her second year and said, "Jose gets to see kids like him and realize that he's not alone." We were very proud and honored to be able to show Jose and all of our special guests such a wonderful time and to provide the families and kids with an opportunity to get together and have fun with old friends and to make new ones.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS YEAR'S EVENT! ♦

The camp is for all special needs children (boys and girls) between the ages of 6 and 12 who want to learn basketball fundamentals and team concepts in a supportive, positive, fun environment. No previous basketball experience is necessary and campers can start to grow and be successful at their own pace.

I am also proud to have several local high school coaches, including Tom Blackwood (Miramonte), Don Menez (Berean Christian), Pat Ertola (Alhambra), Sportstrong Basketball Director Dave Siu and Upward Basketball Director Rob Lim to help me provide guidance and instruction at the camp. This camp promises to be a unique and rewarding experience for everyone involved. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CAMP:

WWW.UCPGG.ORG or 510.832.7430

SPRING BENEFITS!!!

BY DR. CHRISTINE AGUILAR, MD

UCPGG extended the holiday season this year by providing the Children's Hospital Oakland and Research Center with a "bundle" of adaptive toys and games. On March 9, 2010, Board members Christine Aguilar, MD and Barry Gardin delivered the toys directly to the Pediatric Rehabilitation Department at Children's Hospital Oakland and Research Center. In addition to putting smiles on faces, these gifts aid the recovery process of children who are hospitalized and undergoing intensive rehabilitation. "Having a variety of toys is important to engaging a child for play," says Karen Matsuura, Management Coordinator, Physical Therapy for the rehabilitation department.

For the past seven years during the holiday season UCPGG (see above) has provided toys that are suitable for children with a variety of abilities. This donation was an extension of that effort as we were able to provide toys with a variety of features that are suited for fine and gross motor development as well as electronic toys with switches that enable children who have difficulties manipulating toys in the usual manner have greater access.

We will continue delivering "surprise" bundles and bringing smiles throughout the year as we continue our efforts to raise awareness of the use and utility of adaptive and accessible toys. ♦

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New & Improved WEBSITE!!!

BY UCPGG

In order to enhance our ability to communicate, share information, and raise awareness we have redesigned our website. In addition to the artistic improvements and greater interactive functionality our new site will include weekly updates of programs and events as well as listings of resources and supports that are available.

The site will also include regular features of programs and services. "BOOKMARK" it and check back often as there is sure to be something there for you! ✦

WWW.UCPGG.ORG

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