



Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Montgomery and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation
Idris J. Al-Oboudi, Recreation Services Manager
Michael Brooke, Recreation Supervisor

DATE: July 1, 2008

SUBJECT: Discussion of Recreation Programs Available After School for Manhattan Beach Children of Special Needs

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss the City's recreation programs available after school for Manhattan Beach children of special needs.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There are no fiscal implications associated with this report.

BACKGROUND:

Included in the City of Manhattan Beach City Council work plan for 2008-2009 is the request to provide a comprehensive review of existing after school programs for children with special needs.

DISCUSSION:

According to a report published by Southwest Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) in the summer of 2006, 194 students in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District were classified as having special needs. When combined with the number of special needs children in the Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, El Segundo, Torrance, Rolling Hills Estates, and Rancho Palos Verdes school districts, the total number of special needs children reached approximately 1,600.

With respect to recreation programming after school for children with special needs in the city of Manhattan Beach, the City's Parks & Recreation Department has a history of including such children in its programs, activities, and classes. While the City does not have programming specifically designed for special needs children, the programs the City offers can be made to accommodate their inclusion.

This practice of inclusion is demonstrated in the following examples:

1. The registration form used for enrollment in City of Manhattan Beach Parks & Recreation Department classes and programs includes a space where registrants can make requests for special accommodations. Those that make such requests are contacted by Parks & Recreation Department staff so that all reasonable accommodations can be arranged.
2. The Playground Program and Teen Center Program each have children with special needs as regular program participants. The most common developmental disabilities seen in these programs are autism and Down's syndrome. Because of the limited staff ratio, it is usually required that a child with special needs be accompanied by an aide or caregiver, depending on the severity of their disability.

The City's practice of inclusion is best highlighted by one special example. During the 1999-2000 school year, a young autistic teen began attending the Teen Center. Despite his autism, this teen was able to participate in all aspects of the program's activities. In his time at the Teen Center, he made friends with the participants and developed strong relationships with the staff; relationships that he maintained during his time at Mira Costa High School. Following his graduation from high school in 2006, this teen, now a young man, was hired to work part time in the Teen Center. Currently, he is still working with the City, three days a week, assisting with games, interacting with the teens, and adding immeasurable value to the Teen Center Program.

Additionally, the City of Manhattan Beach Dial-A-Ride Program provides transportation to Mira Costa High School students from the Special Education Class twice weekly to various locations in and out of the city, including job sites and social and recreational destinations.

Because of the importance of transporting these special needs students to their work site at the Salvation Army in Redondo Beach, Dial-A-Ride makes an exception regarding its travel boundaries and transports these students to Redondo Beach weekly.

In the past and for this staff report, staff has reached out to several local agencies that provide specialized services and programs for children of special needs. Several of the agencies recently spoke before City Council when Council was approving the playground at Polliwog Park which has been designed to accommodate children of special needs.

For this report, the following agencies were very helpful in providing information about their services:

- Pediatric Therapy Network
- Friendship Circle
- Harbor Regional Center
- Manhattan Little League
- South Bay Special Olympics
- AYSO Region 12
- Torrance YMCA

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

PEDIATRIC THERAPY NETWORK

1815 W. 213th St., Torrance, CA 90501

(310) 328-0276; www.pediatrictherapynetwork.org

Contact: Zoe Mailloux, Director of Administration

Pediatric Therapy Network (PTN) currently serves over 1200 children with special needs on a weekly basis. Therapy services and programs are provided within a playful atmosphere at a state-of-the-art clinic in Torrance, as well as at schools, homes, and other community sites. Comprehensive assessments, individualized intervention programs and consultation services are designed and implemented by a highly trained staff who are well-known for their expertise, both in the local Southern California community, as well as around the globe.

PTN is a non-profit organization and its programs and services are offered at a cost to participants. For children that qualify, though, program costs are paid for through funding received from area school districts and regional care centers. Currently, approximately 80% of PTN program participants are sponsored through these funds.

The following programs and services are offered at Pediatric Therapy Network:

Leaps and Bounds

The Leaps & Bounds program is designed to foster the overall growth and development of children in preparation for preschool and community-based programs. Leaps & Bounds is a therapeutically enriched program designed for children 18 months to 3 years who have been identified to be at risk for developmental delays. Leaps and Bounds currently offers:

Morning Program – 8:30am-11:30am – Monday-Friday

Afternoon Program – 12:00pm-3:00pm – Monday-Friday

Individualized needs are addressed in the program by the development of goals for each child and direct intervention provided by occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, teachers, and assistants. Every child's development is further enhanced through the following four specialized centers: Sensory Motor, Cognition, Gross Motor, and Pre-Speech/Oral Motor. At these centers, each child is provided with opportunities for:

- Language development
- Oral-motor stimulation
- Cognitive development
- Gross and fine motor exploration
- Social interaction

Leaps & Bounds encourages further community integration by offering the following services:

Toddler Enrichment - Toddler enrichment is an innovative, fully inclusive program that promotes social, academic, and physical development for children of all abilities, aged 18 months to 3 years. Leaps & Bounds enrolls typically developing children to serve as peer

models in play skills and language development. Through this inclusion component, children with special needs have the opportunity to interact with same-aged peers in preparation for transition to preschool and community based-programs.

Family Centered Services - Leaps & Bounds recognizes the importance of the family as the primary nurturer of their child's development. In a friendly and supportive environment, families are offered support and education through Parent Social Hours, facilitated by an experienced social worker. Topics of interest are generated by the families and include strategies for fostering development. Leaps & Bounds also provide families the opportunity to enjoy a night out while their child is being well cared for in a fun, safe and enriching environment called Respite Rendezvous. Respite Rendezvous are scheduled monthly to help support parents in keeping their family strong.

Home Visits - After observing the child at home, therapists are able to collaborate with families and make recommendations for therapeutic activities and environmental adaptations to further enhance the child's development. Within this "natural environment", sibling interaction and cultural values can be better observed, discussed, and incorporated into all aspects of the child's program.

Leaping Out - Children within Leaps & Bounds who demonstrate readiness and meet specific criteria, are provided the opportunity to participate and interact with their peers by attending a selected preschool. Staff from Leaps & Bounds accompanies the child at the preschool to facilitate successful participation and social interaction.

Stepping Out - Leaps & Bounds encourages families to participate in community-based programs such as music, art, tumbling, preschool, etc. by providing support to the family and community program during the initial transition process.

Camp Escapades

Camp Escapades is a special summer day camp for children ages four to thirteen. Created for children with special needs, this camp program also offers a one of a kind opportunity for typically developing children to be part of an extraordinary experience. Although camp is not designed to be a therapy program, a multi-disciplinary team of occupational, physical, and speech therapists, together with teachers, counselors, and volunteers provide a supportive, engaging, and rewarding experience for all who attend.

During each week, arts and crafts, sports, music, sensorimotor activities, and special events are provided for a fun-filled, enriching experience for the children. Typically developing children are given guidance for understanding and helping children with special needs, while also serving as peer role models. There are also opportunities for sharing feelings and experiences about being the sibling of a child with special needs. Parents are welcomed to observe and help out, or to simply drop their children off for a day of adventure and learning through play.

Camp Escapades offers children:

- A supportive environment surrounded by peers
- Increased confidence and independence
- Opportunities for social interaction
- Improved play skills
- Physical benefits of increased activity
- Participation in a community-based experience
- Preparedness for mainstream camps or other community-based experiences

Buddy Club

Buddy Club is an after school, social skills program for children between the ages of 4-13 years. This program is designed to facilitate positive peer interactions. Children who demonstrate the following challenges would benefit from the Buddy Club program:

- Limited responses to social approaches by others
- Inappropriate social interactions
- Overly friendly advances towards others
- Difficulty in developing friendships
- Excessive shyness

Buddy Club meets once per week at the Pediatric Therapy Network's specially designed Clubhouse facility or other sites in the community. The children participate in small peer groups of 3 to 6, with personalized attention provided by licensed pediatric occupational, physical and speech therapists. The children engage in 90 minutes of fun-filled activities, which focus on specific social skills including:

- Greeting
- Sharing
- Cooperative and interactive play
- Turn-taking
- Participating in conversations
- Avoiding and resolving conflicts
- Making friends

Parent education is encouraged and provided through weekly handouts, individually made social stories, and viewing of videotapes including the Buddy Club participants.

Community Adventures

The primary goal of Community Adventures is to empower children, parents and families to successfully access and participate in their community by:

- Establishing and maintaining partnerships with supportive, developmentally appropriate community-based programs that will support families of PTN.

- Providing varying degrees of support to families and children participating in community based programs
- Cultivating resources in community programs for therapists and families

CHALLENGER LITTLE LEAGUE

Manhattan Little League

(310) 345-7954; www.mbill.org

Contact: Bill Hein, League Coordinator

Little League's fastest growing division provides boys and girls with special needs the opportunity to experience the emotional development and fun of playing Little League Baseball. In Manhattan Beach, the Challenger League consists of two teams that play each other weekly. Games are held at Premier Field and draw an average attendance of over 100 spectators.

Each player in the Challenger League is partnered with a volunteer from Mira Costa High School. These volunteers stay with their player out on the field and assist them throughout the game. At the start of each game, every player is individually announced and applauded.

Participation in the Challenger League is free, with all costs for registration, uniforms, and equipment covered by Manhattan Beach Little League.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

2108 Vail Avenue, Redondo Beach, CA 90278

310 214 4999; www.friendshipcirclesb.com

Contact: Jason Flentye, Program Director

The Friendship Circle in Redondo Beach is a non-profit organization addressing the challenges facing the families of children with special needs by pairing local teenagers with children with special needs and creating a very special environment of friendship and love for all.

As stated on The Friendship Circle's website;

“While many organizations address the issues of children with special needs, most are focused on goal-oriented therapeutic care. The Friendship Circle brings another dimension in that it offers unconditional love. By having this love flow from the youthful spirit of well-guided teenagers, its effectiveness has proven to be remarkable. These volunteers have been able to reach the children in ways that professionals, or even family members, have not.

Furthermore, the program has had a profound effect on the teenagers themselves, instilling within them the values of giving and gratitude.”

The Friendship Circle offers the following services and programs for special needs children and their families, at no cost;

Friends at Home

This weekly program has teenage volunteers spending quality time with children with special needs in the environment the kids are most comfortable and familiar with: their own homes. A unique bond is established between the volunteers and their friends. The range of activities shared can be anything from cookie-baking to arts & crafts, story-time to hide-and-seek. Parents speak glowingly of how the children look forward to these visits; and how they excitedly sit at the window in anticipation of their buddies showing up at the doorstep

Sunday Circle

This is a monthly event wherein the children, volunteers and staff come together at designated locations in the South Bay area for special activities. As they drop their children off in capable hands, moms and dads get to enjoy some free time to themselves. In addition to providing for one-on-one interaction with a teen friend in the company of others, highlights of Sunday Circle include music, dance, art, physical fitness, educational and comedic performances. It's social. It's lively. It's fun.

Sports Night

Participating in sports is a great way to build friendships, confidence, and physical health. At Sports Night volunteers get to be an assistant coach to their special friend, getting to know them as they shoot hoops and kick goals. Under the guidance of a professional instructor, and held at the Mira Costa High School gymnasium on the third Thursday of the month, volunteers will build skills together with their special friends as they take part in various sports activities.

Life Skills

Teens, ages 13 and up, learn to maximize functionality in public places and facilities. By navigating novel environments, the teens learn to reference signs as well as a general public awareness. By engaging in monetary transactions, they build skills used to communicate with unfamiliar faces. By giving them a budget, they learn the concept of value and receiving due change. Ultimately, as always, "fun" is our main priority. Friendships are made through participation in these socially fun outings.

Birthday Club

Staff from The Friendship Circle are contracted to help run the festivities at the birthday party of a special needs child. The Friendship Circle staff provide activities, refreshments and of a birthday cake.

Winter/Summer Camps

Children and volunteers enjoy creative and recreational activities with memories to last a lifetime.

Sibshops

Siblings of children with special needs often have issues and needs of their own. "Sibshops" provide opportunities for these siblings to get together with other brothers and sisters of children with special needs. Between the creative discussions and fun times, "Sibshops" allow the siblings of a special needs child to discover new tools and points of view with which to face their own often trying situations.

Mom's Night Out

These, too, are social gatherings with great therapeutic benefit. Upbeat and friendly, these luncheons, dinners or workshops allow mothers of children with special needs to catch an entertaining breather while exchanging ideas, sharing feelings and discovering available resources in the company of other moms in the same predicament as their own. The benefits of such interaction, support and mutual understanding have proven to be immeasurable.

Fairs and Festivals

These seasonal special events held throughout the year allow the entire family to celebrate together in a totally upbeat, relaxed and conducive setting. From carnivals to community fairs, picnics to concerts, Friendship Circle events are permeated with their own special brand of love and fun. Here again, staff and volunteers are on hand to cater the event to the particular needs of the special needs child.

HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

21231 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503

(310) 540-1711; www.harborrc.org

Contact: Nancy Spiegel, Director of Information

The Harbor Regional Center (HRC) is a private, not-for-profit corporation contracting with the State of California for the provision of services to persons with developmental disabilities pursuant to the Lanterman Act of 1969.

Serving the Beach Cities, Torrance, Harbor, Bellflower, and Long Beach health districts of Los Angeles County, Harbor Regional Center provides services to individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and other conditions that are found to be closely related to mental retardation or to require the same kinds of services. The condition must have occurred before the age of 18, be likely to continue indefinitely, and constitute a "substantial" disability for the person. A disability is "substantial" if it affects three or more of seven major life areas (for example, a person's ability to communicate or to learn).

For individuals with developmental disabilities, and their families, Harbor Regional Center can provide diagnosis and evaluation, information and referral, individual or family service planning, family support, and assistance in finding and using community resources. Services provided by Harbor Regional Center include:

- Early Intervention
- Parent Training
- Behavior Intervention
- Respite Care
- Supported Living
- Licensed Homes
- Adult Day Activities
- Supported Employment

Due to recent state budget cuts, family support services that had otherwise been offered at no cost, like Child Care and Extended School Year, have adopted a fee schedule. Therapeutic services remain free.

Specific recreation and family support services include:

Child Care

Child care is care and supervision for pre-school and school-aged children up to age 12 who require such supervision because of their age or disability and whose parents are engaged in full-time work or vocational training. This service includes both day care for pre-schoolers and after school care for school age children.

The regional center assumes that families are responsible for child care to the extent that the cost of such care is the same as that for a typical child. However, the regional center may be able to support and assist families when additional staff or other special accommodations are required in a child care setting, in order to deal with the exceptional needs of the child. Typically, this would include the extra support required because of the child's need for a caretaker who has special knowledge or training related to medical equipment, extreme behavioral challenges, or self-help requirements beyond those typical of a child the same age.

Extended School Year

Extended school year services offer behavior intervention and social skills development for school age children with extreme behavior challenges who live with their families. Extreme behavior challenges are defined as behaviors that are likely to result in physical harm to the child or others, or in destruction of property.

Extended school year services are provided during periods when the child with developmental disabilities is on vacation or holiday from school. The intent of these services is to provide a structured group experience that will help prevent regression or escalation of challenging behaviors that can occur if the child has prolonged periods of unstructured time.

Harbor Regional Center can also assist eligible families in applying for public benefits such as year-round school, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), and Medi-Cal.

Inclusion Support

Some people with developmental disabilities (for example, those with behavior challenges or limited safety awareness) need more support than the typical child or adult to be included in social or recreational activities with typical peers. Inclusion support programs use a variety of strategies aimed at adapting the environment to the person with special needs. Sometimes they work with the staff of a community agency or recreational program to educate them about developmental disabilities or to help them learn how to provide the extra support needed by the disabled person in the included setting. Or, the inclusion support program will place one of its own staff into the program setting to provide the "extra" support that will enable the person to fully participate in the activity. The type and amount of support provided in each case is

determined by a formal assessment of the person, the type of activity, and the environment in which the activity will take place.

SOUTH BAY SPECIAL OLYMPICS
(310) 618-2934; www.sosc-southbay.org
Contact: Phil Duthie, Area Director

South Bay Special Olympics is a year-round training program for youth and adults with developmental disabilities. Weekly practice locations vary and competitions are held throughout Southern California.

Sports include track and field, basketball, tennis, softball, soccer, and volleyball. Athletes must register prior to participation and practice. Special Olympics is a free program.

VIP SOCCER
AYSO REGION 12; P.O. Box 10437, Torrance, CA 90505
(310) 378-0066; www.aysoregion12.com
Contact: Cathy Howard, VIP Division Coordinator

AYSO Region 12, South Torrance, runs a soccer division known as the VIP (Very Important Player) Program. This division provides a fun soccer experience for children whose physical or mental challenges may make it difficult to participate on mainstream teams.

The league runs from September through December with games held on Saturdays and practices on Wednesdays at Richardson Middle School in Torrance. Participation in the VIP Division is \$80.00 per player.

SPECIAL NEEDS AQUATIC PROGRAM (S.N.A.P.)
Torrance YMCA; 2900 W. Sepulveda Blvd., Torrance, CA 90505
(310) 325-5885; www.ymcla.org/tsb
Contact: Art de la Rosa, Program Coordinator

The Torrance-South Bay YMCA Special Needs Aquatics Program is designed to build confidence, foster independence, and teach safety in and around the water using five main components: personal growth, personal safety, stroke development, rescue and water sports and games. The following class levels will benefit students who are fully ambulatory. Students may have hearing, visual, tactile and/or mental impairments. Students may also have trouble with concentration or may need instruction at a slower pace.

The price for six (6) thirty (30) minute sessions is \$103 for non-members and \$49 for members.