



Organization of Special Needs Families
1340 S. De Anza Blvd., # 207
San Jose, CA 95129

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OSF News

Organization of Special Needs Families (OSF) Newsletter ~ April 2008

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OSF Founder Reflections

Six years ago, a Cupertino mom, frustrated by numerous denials and lack of services that would help her autistic son, decided to come up with her own extracurricular program that she hoped would improve her son's life. She recruited help from three other moms in similar situation and they put together ingredients and sauces for such a program. They tried out their home-brew concoction at the Cupertino mom's house, and two hours went by quickly with fun and joy. After two months of numerous sleepless nights and modifications to the program, a non-profit organization called OSF was founded in March, 2002. The following month, the Saturday Enrichment program, designed to help children develop intellectual, social and motor skills through the use of music, arts and crafts, reading, computers and sports, kicked off at St. Jude Church. From those original four children, OSF has since helped and served more than 300 families of children with special-needs.

As you may have guessed, that Cupertino mom was me. Having a son with autism poses extreme challenges and difficulties. I had so many moments of depression, as his disabilities deeply haunted me. I felt hand-bound and helpless when my son's situation didn't seem to be getting better. But there were more moments when I was touched and elated by his tiny steps of improvement and success, and by those of the many boys and girls like him, as they benefited from the programs at OSF.

I want to share with you the story of OSF parent Mable Tang, who endures a long commute to bring her daughter to our Saturday program. Here is what she has to say about OSF:

"I live in San Francisco and I drive my autistic daughter to the OSF integrated playgroup every Saturday. It takes about 50 minutes to travel each way but it is well worth the effort. Since I home school my daughter, I am constantly searching for quality programs for her. I have not yet been able to find a program like OSF in San Francisco, so when I found out about OSF I wanted to let her try it even though it was not located near my area. OSF has turned out to be such a blessing in our lives! We both look forward to this special outing every Saturday. She asks to go to the "classroom" every week and I look forward to some respite time for myself. She enjoys the activities there along with seeing the other people on a regular basis. The people that run OSF are so incredibly wonderful! They always make me feel so welcome even though I am not able to participate in other programs due to the distance. I never worry about my daughter while she is there and know that she is in good hands. OSF is unlike any other program that I have ever come across and if I lived closer I would be much, much more involved with them. When my family and I attend the OSF annual dinner each fall, our hearts are so touched by the warmth of the OSF family and the community. Thank you, OSF, for making us a part of your family!"

In the bible, the book of Romans says, "all things work together and are for good to and for those who love God and are called according to His design and purpose". I believe that all things have its purpose and all people serve their purposes. Looking back at the past six years, OSF has been such a blessing to me and many other families. This truly warms my heart. I am sad that there are no cures for many of our children's disabilities, but grateful that there are so many children we can love. And most of all, I am thankful for so many people who lend their support to OSF children. Life is beautiful and meaningful because we care.

~ Lihuei ~



Organization of Special Needs Families (OSF) Presents:

4th Annual **Cupertino Special Festival** "Building a Full Inclusion Community"

Cupertino Civic Center, 10300 Torre Avenue, Cupertino, CA 95014

May 16, 2008

Autism Conference

"Building the Future"

8:30 am – 3:30pm

- **Keynote Speaker:**
Terri Delgadillo, Director
California Department of Developmental Services
- **Research Presentation:**
MIND Institute, U.C. Davis
- **Early Intervention, Parent Support, Health and Education Workshops**
- **Panel Discussion**

Please visit www.osfamilies.org for details and to register.

May 17, 2008

Festival Activities & Exhibitions

10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Festival Activities & Exhibitions:

- Flag Raising Ceremony (10am) and Performance
- OSF Soccer Festival (1:30pm)
- Cupertino Music Festival (Noon - 6pm)
- Food Court and Beer Garden
- Children's Carnival featuring petting zoo & train ride
- Community Service Exhibits
- Health Exhibits w/ Free Health Services
- Vendor and Sponsor Booths
- Live Performances

Sponsored by: **Pot Sticker King, Fatima, Evergreen Healthy Vegetation**



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OSF ~ Bringing Families and Community Together

THANK YOU!

A huge thank you to our sponsors, donors, volunteers, and families! You made our Annual Fundraiser Dinner a success!



New OSF Administrative Office

Our administrative office recently moved to a new location. Our new address is 1340 S. De Anza Blvd., # 207, San Jose, CA, 95129. Our phone and fax number remains the same at 408-996-0850.

If you come by or call the office in the morning, you'll most likely be greeted by our administrative assistant extraordinaire Aki Kawaharada. Aki has been with OSF for over two years. Aki is super efficient and super friendly. We are very glad to have her.

OSF Program Highlight – Summer Day Camp

The OSF Summer Day Camp will be in full swing again soon. This extremely popular 4-week program provides a safe and secure environment for children to participate in a variety of fun-filled activities, which includes hiking, science, swimming, and sports.

Most camp activities take place in neighborhood parks, regional open spaces, and community facilities such as Cupertino City Hall and the YMCA. By scheduling activities in public places, our children are given opportunities to explore and connect to their community, and for the community to learn about our children. Most of all, everyone has lots of fun too!



OSF Summer Day Camp '07

Thank you for your generosity. Your gift will help OSF continue and grow its fine set of programs and services for special-needs children and their families. Please detach this portion and mail it along with your donation to:

OSF
1340 S. De Anza Blvd., # 207
San Jose, CA 95129

Name _____ Amount Enclosed _____

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Please make checks payable to "OSF". Your contribution is fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Beyond the Service Hours – Teen volunteer Aaron Hu, in his own words

AP World History this, Pre-calculus Honors that. Chemistry Honors this, English 2 Honors that. Don't forget the extracurricular activities – speech and debate, choir, sports...oh, and don't forget about piano. As if you aren't busy enough and we care about your growth and integrity as a student, let's slap on an additional 15 or so hours of required community service each year.

Many of us found out about OSF through the same ways – friends, family, or even the news. It was just another organization founded for a good cause, just another way to get in community service hours. Such was the perception we've all had at one point or another during our time at OSF.

However, this view began to change for me as I continued to work at OSF. The more immersed and familiar I became with this community, the more I realized that this community was something beyond just another source of service hours. In the beginning, it was quite difficult to work with the autistic children. Many could not speak, and their actions at the time were completely unpredictable.

Yet, as time passed, a slow, gradual understanding and compassion for these children began to grow. Although unable to communicate in what we deem in society as "communication" through words and facial expressions, one comes to realize that how these autistic children act aren't just "random." In fact, they're actually communicating to us in a different way that we haven't been accustomed to notice in a society whose communication is gotten across through words and writing. When a child cries, he/she doesn't cry or hit someone just because he/she feels like it. Rather, something is bothering him/her, and it's up to us to figure out the cause. It's frustrating in the beginning, as we are unable to figure out what they want.

However, once one begins to understand these children, one fosters a compassion for them. They never had a choice whether or not to be autistic. Still, they've ended up in a disadvantaged position compared to most other children their age, misunderstood, scorned, and ridiculed by society. Upon this realization, one realizes the magnitude of small actions like spending 2 or 3 hours with these children. For these 2 or 3 hours, these children are in a place they can enjoy themselves, sheltered in a tight-knit community that understands them unlike most of society. Thus, while spending these few hours may not amount to much, it brings a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction to know that at least for these few hours we can provide them the simple happiness that all human beings strive to attain.

Many thanks to the sponsor of this OSF News edition!



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