

WINTER 2023

AP HAPPENINGS

Austin's Place Quarterly Newsletter



Winter Highlights

BY SARA HUBA

We did not let the winter blues stop us from having a great time the past few months. We spent the whole month of December preparing for Christmas by having themed weeks. Each week, we had fun activities leading up to a movie day. The first week was Miracle on 34th Street. We colored a picture of Santa Claus and did a Christmas tree craft. We made mini pancakes and made them look like Santa with strawberries, chocolate chips and whipped cream. We kicked Elf week off by coloring pictures of Buddy! We made gingerbread houses and had an indoor snowball fight. We also played bingo with fun words and phrases from the movie. For Grinch week, we broke out the crayons again to decorate the walls with pictures of the Grinch. We made Garlic In Your Soul rolls and they were delicious! We also made Grinch ornaments with clear ornaments, green cotton balls, and a red heart! For the week of Christmas, we decided to watch all three Santa Clause movies! We had a coloring page for Neil's Ugly Sweater which we proudly displayed on the walls. We made Christmas cookies for everyone to enjoy. During Santa Clause week, we had a special visit from Santa himself! He came bearing gifts for everyone and did not disappoint. We received games, puzzles, Play-Doh, sensory toys, blankets, and more!

Throughout the rest of the winter, we stayed busy inside when it was cold. We did lots of crafts and decorated our bulletin boards for Christmas and then Valentine's Day. Speaking of Valentine's Day, we all made our own boxes and had a fun party! We really enjoyed being able to share valentines with all of our friends. We also loved all the treats that people brought in!

Luckily, we had some unseasonably warm weather throughout this winter, so we were still able to get some fresh air on the nature trails and at the outdoor therapeutic center. We are definitely excited for Spring to start so we can spend more time using all of our great facilities.



All About...Austin

BY MEGAN ADAMS

As we look forward to the coming spring and all that it has to offer, we want to take a step back and begin highlighting (in some cases, re-highlighting) the individuals who make Austin's Place so wonderful. Every individual served at Austin's Place just wants to be treated like everyone else – not special, just ordinary, and they all want a place where they can continue to thrive. They all searched for a program that would fit their needs and encourage individual choice and independence. Sometimes, finding that perfect fit proves to be more difficult than imagined, especially when those places are few and far between. Austin's Place wouldn't exist if not for our first VIP Highlight – Austin.



Aust is our greeter here at AP. He is always sitting by the front door, awaiting the next individual to walk in. He'll greet you with an up close and personal smile – a smile that can light up a room and make anybody's bad day just a little bit brighter. He loves a good round of clapping or a quick rendition of 'head, shoulders, knees, and toes' and will encourage everyone around him to join in. His energy is infectious and when he takes your hands, you better be ready to jump and dance.

While at AP, Austin can be found engaging in some strongly preferred activities, such as listening to music, walking the trails, coloring, playing catch, and going on community outings. One of his favorite winter community outings is running around and playing at No Offseason Sports in Russellton (pictured above). This facility provides free space for the clients at Austin's Place. THANK YOU No Offseason Sports!

And, like many of us, he can't wait for the summer so he can spend his time swimming. He uses his time here to strengthen his socialization and vocational skills and his progress is and continues to be apparent with each passing year.

Though Austin was the inspiration behind and the first individual to attend the program, he was followed by 18 (currently) other individuals who wanted to experience what Austin's Place has to offer. Stay tuned and look forward to our second VIP Highlight (Chandler) in the next issue of Austin's Place Happenings.





What's Happening?

BY SAMANTHA WILCZYNSKI

Austin's Place is excited to announce that we are once again participating in Pittsburgh's Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community!

The Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community is an annual fundraising walk that benefits local health and human service agencies. Highmark Inc. coordinates and underwrites the cost of the walk so that 100 percent of the money raised by walkers goes to the participating nonprofits. The primary goal of the Walk is to help participating organizations raise money for their individual missions. The secondary goal of the Walk is to energize community members to have a greater hand in their health by becoming or staying physically active.

The goal of Austin's Place has always remained the same and we strive to provide the highest quality programming for the individuals that we serve. A part of that goal is to offer our individuals as many opportunities as we can, both in house and out in the community. With your help in previous years, we were able to raise enough money to pave walking trails around our campus to make getting active and healthy even easier. This year we are asking for your help again! As our program continues to grow and expand, we are looking to purchase additional vehicles to give more of our individuals a chance to go out on a daily basis. With nicer weather just around the corner, this will give us a great opportunity to spend more time out and about at our favorite warm weather spots! With your help, we know we can reach our goal! As always, thank you for your continued support and generosity!

Register to Walk or Donate Today:

http://hcf.convio.net/AustinsPlace_ButlerPA

Did you know that the inaugural Walk for a Healthy Community took place in Pittsburgh in 2003 and since then has raised more than \$17.6 million dollars for 500+ nonprofits across the state? Let's keep it up!



We Couldn't Do it without YOU.

BY BONNIE WILCZYNSKI

Austin's Place is THANKFUL for the families, friends, community members, and special guests who donate finances, items, and time (and talents) to our program.

This winter we celebrated Christmas, Valentine's Day and National Employee Appreciation Day. Thank you to all the families who sent in holiday treats. A special thank you to our amazing staff who made sure all the clients had a Valentine box designed just for them. For National Employee Appreciation Day, the staff were treated to a lunch from Chic-fil-A and given a gift bag with some small tokens of appreciation for all their hard work, creativity, and dedication to Austin's Place.

Donate to Austin's Place

Your contribution is truly appreciated. 100% of donations received will go toward providing quality programming and items to the young adults at Austin's Place. Learn more about donation options: www.austinsplace.org/index.php/donate

Volunteer at Austin's Place

Have a cool project, a musical talent, or something interesting and unique our clients might enjoy? We're always welcoming community members to share something with us. For example, in the past, we've had visits from turtles and an alpaca named "FriendLee," a local Fire Department (everyone loved seeing the big fire truck), a talented baton twirler, a fitness instructor, and a Pittsburgh business visit to do a science experiment with our staff. If interested, please email swilczynski@austinsplace.org.

Work at Austin's Place

Austin's Place is regularly accepting applications for experienced Direct Support Professionals and Nurses. Interested in working here? Email us your resume: jobs@austinsplace.org.

IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS REGARDING THE AP HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER, OR YOU'D LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION LIST TO RECEIVE NEWSLETTERS AND INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR AT: AKURTZ@AUSTINSPLACE.ORG.