

# HORIZONS

SUMMER 2024



# Making a Mountain-Sized Difference

Did you know that in Greenfield, New Hampshire, the Crotched Mountain Foundation owns and stewards the largest mountainside accessible trail system in the country? These trails were specially built by master trail designers over 15 years ago, with the specific purpose of providing anyone with mobility challenges the opportunity to safely access a New Hampshire forest.

Several million explorers come to New Hampshire each year to enjoy hiking and the large trail networks that the Granite State offers. Now imagine being confined to a wheelchair, or relying on a cane, or being a parent with a child in a stroller, or simply concerned that a trip over a root or rock could have devastating health consequences.

A walk in the woods would simply be too dangerous. A disability or health condition could make it impossible to access the beautiful woods and mountains of New Hampshire.

This is why our trails are treasured by so many people, people from all walks of life and people of all abilities.

On April 21, hiking season was nearly upon us and we needed to get the trails spruced up—so we put the call out to the community, and they responded. As a celebration of Earth Day no less, a group of volunteers took to the mountain and gave their day towards preparing and beautifying the trails. We donned our work gloves, our tick repellent, and our boots and spent a Sunday doing the labor that would pay off for others.

That is the heart of the Crotched Mountain Foundation mission—doing what it takes so others with unique challenges can have the opportunity to live, learn, and thrive in their community.

As a supporter of those values, you make this happen. Your support keeps these trails safe and open for people with disabilities to realize the satisfaction of independence—and the joy of sweeping mountain vistas.

Thank you for being an ally in all that we do for children and adults with disabilities. ■

Kindest regards



Ned Olney  
President and CEO



# THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY

## A Ray of Sunshine

Jackie Ray not only generously supports Crotched Mountain Foundation, her own story is woven into our history.

Seventy—yes 70—years ago, our good friend Jackie Ray spent nine weeks as a student teacher at Crotched Mountain Foundation’s Rehabilitation Center in Greenfield, NH. The new center was already filled with patients receiving clinical services for physical disabilities, like polio, which still afflicted millions worldwide.

Fourteen of the patients were of school age and, in a single classroom, Jackie taught them. For those nine weeks, immersed in special education and related clinical therapies, she discovered her life’s goal: she would be a Special Education teacher.

Jackie acquired her master’s degree in the late 1960s and a second master’s soon after. Nearly two decades of her 34-year career in teaching was in Special Education.

Longtime friends of Crotched Mountain Foundation, like Jackie, have watched our mission change to address the most urgent and changing needs. The Foundation supported community clinics for people with polio in the 1930s and 1940s before opening the Rehabilitation Center where Jackie taught in 1954.

Services that initially focused on physical disabilities evolved to serve those with brain injuries and other neurological issues. In the 1990s, services included an innovative “School Partnership Project,” helping communities serve children with disabilities in their local schools.

“Now I see Crotched Mountain Foundation working entirely in the community and supporting people with disabilities and other chronic conditions,” said Jackie. “They help local schools provide special education to thousands of children with complex diagnoses and they help hundreds of adults live independently in their own homes. Seventy years ago, this amazing charity helped me identify my career goal. I support them now to strengthen innovative services for those with disabilities for many more decades.” ■



### Thank You to Our Community Funding Partners

Athletic Brewing Company  
DCU For Kids  
Bank of NH  
NH Electric Co-Op Foundation  
James F. and Fernande Kelly Charitable Trust  
Norwin S. and Elizabeth N. Bean Foundation  
NH Master Gardener Alumni Association



# HELPING HANDS, OUTSTRETCHED PAWS

All is quiet at the Manchester Animal Shelter. The building isn't open yet for future cat and dog owners. In the office, the staff huddle, mapping out their day. A few steps towards the cat room reveals a pair of visitors. Though, as it stands now, "visitors" is probably the incorrect term.

Justin and Gajendra are fixtures.

Justin, an adult client who participates in Crooked Mountain's Enhanced Family Care program, has been coming to the animal shelter in Manchester, NH regularly, usually a few times a week, for a very special job. Gajendra, his home provider, takes his position a few feet away, ready to help Justin in his efforts if needed.

Slowly, deftly, Justin opens one of the cat cages. He is immediately met by an eager feline, which pads out and into Justin's awaiting arms. Justin whispers as he gently pats the cat, now purring. This is obviously a man who's done this before.

From cage to cage he goes, sometimes holding the cat or, if the animal is feeling shy that day (or there is a taped sign that notes this particular resident isn't really in the patting mood) moving on to the next one.

The bottom line? If there is a cat that needs company and comfort, Justin is there to lend a hand.



“I like animals,” Justin says, “I grew up with dogs. I have a dog named Angel.”

Nearby, Gajendra encourages Justin along. Since October, Justin has been living with Gajendra and his family in their home. The Enhanced Family Care program is a unique residential opportunity that matches adults with disabilities with providers who have the heart, aptitude, and living space to welcome clients into a shared living environment. Active participation in the community, either through recreation, employment, or, in Justin’s case, volunteerism, is a key component of the daily routine.

“It’s been great,” Gajendra says. “Justin is such a nice, sweet guy.”

Gajendra isn’t the only person who shares that sentiment.

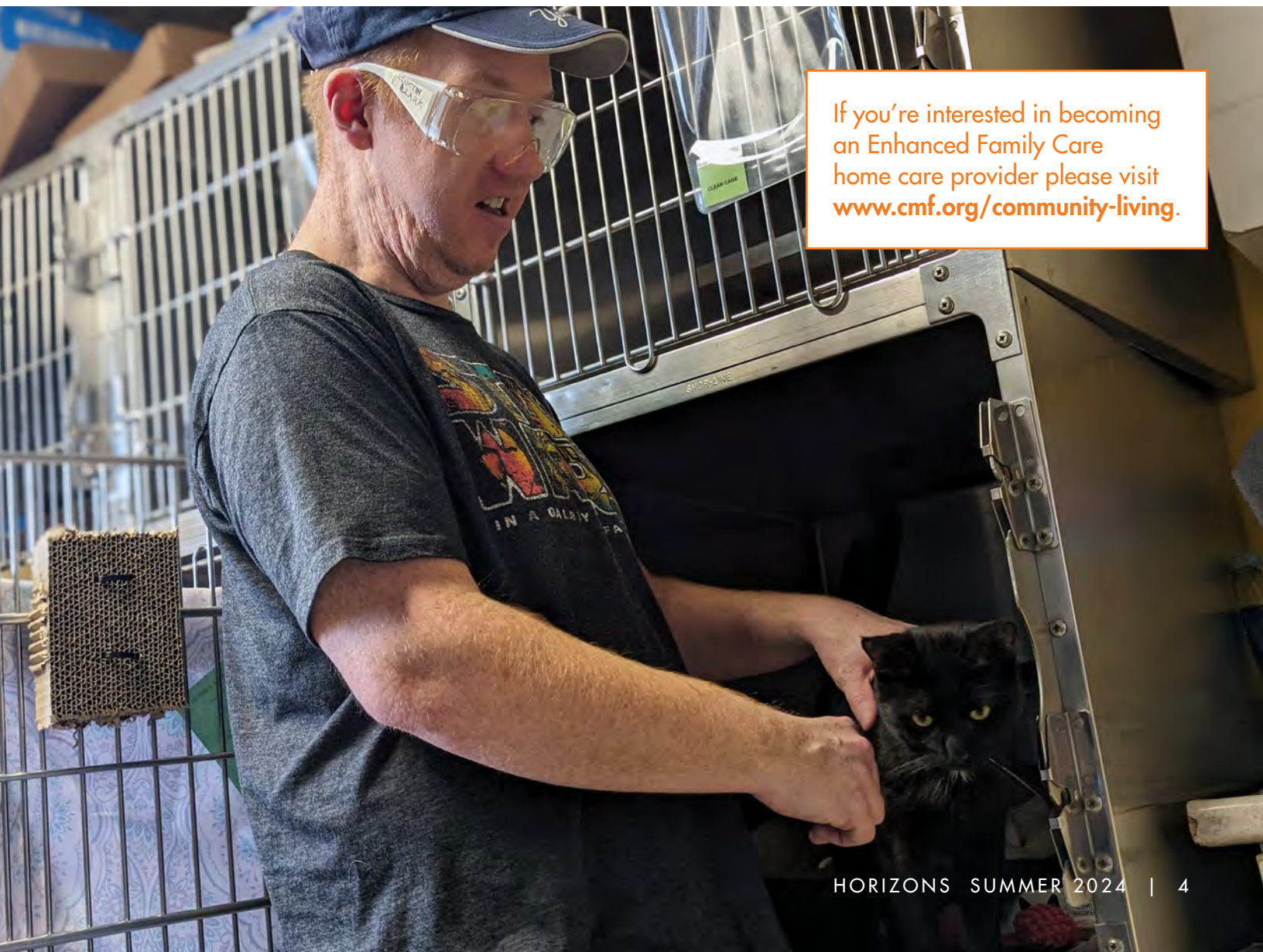
“Justin has always been a very positive person,” says Hannah, the Office Manager for the Manchester Animal Shelter. “He comes in with a smile on his face and he knows us all by name. He likes seeing all of us as much as he likes seeing the cats. It’s super cool.”

“The cats definitely benefit from having people come in to interact with them,” added Daniel, the Lead

Feline Technician. “And with someone as friendly as Justin, it helps them socialize better. He’s really good with them.”

The “Family” in “Enhanced Family Care” is an appropriate piece of the relationship Gajendra and Justin have forged. Cousins, siblings, spouses on both sides have deepened their bonds, weaving in the branches of each family tree into a special new group of like-minded individuals—with what’s best for Justin at the root of it all.

As Gajendra says: “His family is my family. And my family is his family.” ■



If you’re interested in becoming an Enhanced Family Care home care provider please visit [www.cmf.org/community-living](http://www.cmf.org/community-living).



# FOR JACKSON

## A New Fund for Kids with Autism

When a family is weighed down by the costs of autism therapy, CMF Kids and our donors are here to help.

“We couldn’t be more grateful for what Crotched Mountain has done for us. It’s amazing.”

This is the first thing Jody Dillon says during the interview for this story. She can not hold back. The relief and appreciation in her voice are unmistakable.

Jody and her family live in Dracut, MA, and just over six years ago, their lives were turned completely upside down. That was when her young son Jackson was diagnosed with Smith-Magenis Syndrome, a rare developmental disability caused by a missing chromosome that limits cognitive ability. Smith-Magenis presents similar to autism.

“We started noticing very early on, even before he was diagnosed, that he was not hitting his developmental milestones,” Jody says. “We’ve been doing therapy with him, intense therapy, up to five days a week.”

Jackson eventually received an autism diagnosis and challenging behaviors

soon accompanied his developmental delays. Therapy was critically needed—especially at a young age when early interventions have been proven to be most effective.

“The public schools do provide services, but it’s just not enough,” Jody says. “You really need to do outside therapy, so we’ve been going to Pediatric Therapy Center in Salem, and it’s been wonderful.”

But this comes with a price. Each therapeutic session requires a \$20 insurance co-pay. When Jackson first began, he was doing nine sessions a week (\$180 every week in co-pays). Now he’s at six sessions a week (\$120 a week).

For Jody and her husband—both of whom are not high earners—the co-pay costs are onerous.

“Of course, I would gladly pay them,” she says, “but, they are financially strenuous. It’s the cost of groceries or a car payment.”

*Left: Jackson and his mom, Jody.*

Which is why when Jody received the application for the CMF Kids Logan’s Giving Fund for Autism she was ecstatic.

“When I got the email that we were approved, I think I cried like ten times,” she recalls.

Here, now, was a portal for relief, a means to ease the burden and pressure that mounting co-pay fees have brought to the family.

“I don’t know where we would be without therapy for Jackson,” she says. “Because of the amount of therapy we have done, he’s starting school now. He’s also been saying more words, and we’re hearing more unprompted sounds. Before you would be like ‘Jack, what’s this or what color is this?’ and he’ll tell you. Now he’s just coming up to you and expressing himself.”

That is the power of community collaboration, the bedrock of CMF Kids in general, and the Autism Fund in particular. With the confluence of resources and expertise, from the effectiveness of therapies from places like Pediatric Therapy Center to the financial support that Crotched Mountain Foundation can provide to directly impact families, lives are changing. And that is a tangible impact that you—our supporters—are making happen. Which is not lost on Jody.

“To Crotched Mountain’s donors I am so appreciative of you,” she says. “As a parent, every day you have a little battle and there are days that are more challenging than the others. So to have any type of relief, it’s just...you can’t put it into words how grateful we are.” ■

[See the back page for information about the 2024 Winnepesaukee Volleyball Classic, which supports Logan’s Giving Fund for Autism.](#)

# CMF KIDS' FIRST TEACHING FELLOW

Elena Register came to Littleton, NH as the first ever CMF Kids Fellow—and stayed in the North Country to make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities.

It's probably not a stretch to say that if you told a young Elena Register, who grew up in Alabama, she would begin her Special Education career in the quintessential New Hampshire town of Littleton amongst snowfall and skiers she may have shot you a disbelieving look.

But that's how destiny unfurled—and the students and families of Littleton are realizing incredible benefits from her decision to head north.

“I come from a family of educators and I knew that's what I wanted to do,” Elena says. “I knew I wanted to teach children but I wasn't sure of the avenue in which I wanted to do that.”

Her academic voyage brought her to Plymouth State College, where, as a graduate student, she would become the first ever CMF Kids Fellow, which gave her first-hand experience in the Special Education field in the Littleton school district. She had found her avenue.

“Littleton had a partnership with CMF Kids and I was in search of a new home,” she says. “I was eager to learn coming into Littleton and I loved the area and knew I wanted to be a teacher in the community.”

Elena was impressed with CMF Kids and saw it as an innovative, groundbreaking Special Education partnership. Crotched Mountain Foundation's new program—powered 100% by the generous support of donors and supporters—reflected the ethic she valued as an up-and-coming professional educator.

“I support the equity of education in the way that CMF Kids tries to support all students,” Elena says.



“The CMF Kids Special Education Teaching Fellowship supports the ongoing development and success of new or first year special education teachers within CMF Kids anchor school district partners,” said Melissa White, Executive Director of CMF Kids. “We want to assist school districts by helping to mitigate the challenges of recruitment and retention of special education teaching professionals within rural, remote or socio-economically disadvantaged communities.”

CMF Kids Special Education Teaching fellows receive ongoing special education teaching mentorship within the school district and opportunities for enhanced professional development, as well as engagement in other activities that foster meaningful community connections leading to the increased likelihood of tenure. In addition, CMF Kids provides a monthly stipend to help defer first year costs of settling in a new community.

Following her teaching fellowship and residency, Elena made the decision to stay in Littleton. She is currently in the home-stretch of her first full year working as a teacher where she runs an alternative education classroom as part of the public school system.

“Last year there wasn’t a full-time teacher involved and they relied on long-term substitutes,” she says. “The program and the families just need that focused attention. The parents that I’ve been in communication with have been very supportive.”

She is wrapping up year one, and she has already seen the kind of impact that a strengthened Special Education program can have on a community that may be short on resources.

“I have definitely noticed a change in my students’ attendance,” she says. “They want to come to school now. We’ve been able to support them enough that they want to at least come and they know that learning is important.” ■



## A New Sensory Room for Concord Community Music School

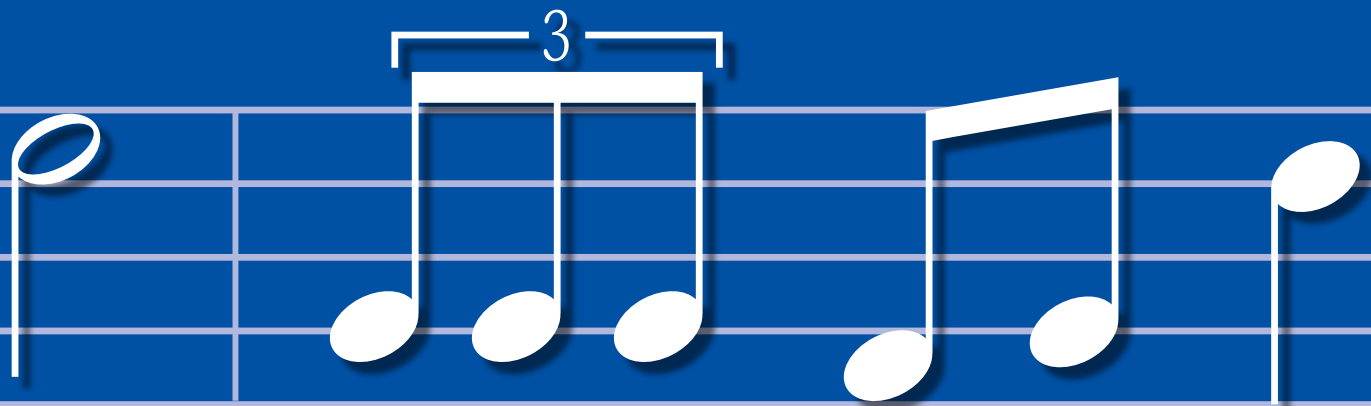
Concord Community Music is hustling and bustling. Students from all musical disciplines are filtering through classrooms or taking a breather in between lessons to catch up on schoolwork or chit-chatting with their teachers about upcoming projects and productions.

Amidst the maelstrom of creativity, one of the most transformative and exciting additions to the school is a modest room just behind the reception area. Through that door is the new sensory room, a fully outfitted, state-of-the-art area designed from scratch to provide music and dance therapy to children and families of all abilities. And it was made possible through the support of Crooked Mountain Foundation donors and the power of CMF Kids.

Sensory rooms are specialized environments designed to support and help children with autism, intellectual, developmental and other disabilities. They are called “sensory spaces” because they engage senses such as sight, hearing, and touch.

“These spaces help children optimize learning and participate in school and other programs,” says Melissa White, Executive Director of CMF Kids. “CMF Kids is partnering with schools and community-based providers across New Hampshire to design and create sensory spaces within classrooms and community program spaces that optimize learning and participation for children of all abilities.”





# A SYMPHONY OF SENSORY SPACES

“I work with a number of children on the autism spectrum,” says Heather Bigelow Hearne, Dance Movement Therapist for Concord Community Music School. “The first goal of a therapist is to create a safe space, which is why we partnered with CMF Kids to create this room. I wanted to make sure that this was set up specifically for the clientele we’re serving.”

The room is filled with all manner of items geared towards this very approach. Giant yoga balls, sprawling mats, a swing, and much more. The lighting can be manipulated, the sounds can be dampened—essentially, Heather

can modify the surroundings to serve each client’s respective needs.

“We need to remove barriers,” she says. “Every client has different goals and there are different things to work on.”

The impact Crotched Mountain supporters helped make happen isn’t limited to this one room. Down the hall, you’ll find a large performance and recital space. In the middle is a removable dance floor, purchased in partnership with CMF Kids.

“We always had just this hard floor with carpet on top of cement,” Heather says. “Having this dance floor

gives us the ability to serve larger groups and provide more room for movement exercises.”

In addition to Concord Community Music School, CMF Kids also partnered with Manchester Community Music School to support their music therapy offerings and helped implement their first-in-the-state sensory-sensitive programmatic spaces for music schools.

These new connections and relationships offer a new dimension to CMF Kids, composing a movement of impact that will resonate in the lives of children with autism and other disabilities. ■

*Below: Heather shows off the cool tools of the sensory room.*

*Below: The big multipurpose room, now with state-of-the-art flexible flooring.*



# SNAPSHOTS



## BEAUTIFICATION, VOLUNTEER-POWERED

On April 21, we welcomed members of the UNH Master Gardener Program alumni to the Memorial Garden at Crooked Mountain. There, they spent time assessing the post-winter conditions of the garden, taking inventory of what's thriving, and what needs attention. Afterwards, they continued with general clean-up to prepare the garden for a major planting session later this spring. Green thumbs up for these amazing volunteers!

Located near the scenic entrance to our award-winning accessible trails, the Memorial Garden is designed to allow gatherers to lovingly celebrate, honor or memorialize family and friends while being rejuvenated by the beauty and bounty of our surrounding countryside. Learn more at [www.cmf.org/memorial-garden](http://www.cmf.org/memorial-garden). ■

*Above, left to right: Kate Dean, Lori Gordon, Trish Campbell, Marilyn Soper, and Tracy Coverdale.*

Our appreciation runs deep for the many, many volunteers who have worked to maintain and beautify the Crotoned Mountain Accessible Trails in Greenfield. Recently, we welcomed a host of friends and neighbors, as well as corporate supporters like the crew from Eversource (pictured at right), who were eager to make a huge impact.

To stay up to date with the latest news, updates, and resources of the trails, please visit [www.cmf.org/trails](http://www.cmf.org/trails). ■



## Crotoned Mountain Foundation Receives \$12,000 Dental Health Grant from Northeast Delta Dental Foundation

The Northeast Delta Dental Foundation awarded a \$12,000 grant to Crotoned Mountain Foundation to improve dental health care for low-income adults with disabilities and chronic health conditions served by Crotoned Mountain Community Care (CMCC).

Crotoned Mountain Community Care provides independent case management to individuals served by the Choices for Independence (CFI) waiver. CMCC case managers coordinate needed services to help adults with disabilities, chronic conditions, and other unique needs remain independent in their communities.

The funding from Northeast Delta Dental Foundation offers much-needed support for oral health for CMCC clients, which represents a population that often faces challenges accessing appropriate dental care. The majority of CMCC's over 800 clients require some form of dental care, and most lack the funds to pay for these critical services.

Northeast Delta Dental Foundation has provided previous grants to support CMCC clients, and this generous award will continue this critical program.

“We are incredibly grateful to Northeast Delta Dental Foundation for their support of our clients,” said Kara Nickulas, Executive Director of Adult Programs for Crotoned Mountain Foundation. “A lack of proper oral care can have a debilitating effect on the quality of life for the people we serve. This generous grant greatly improves health outcomes and contributes towards greater independence for CMCC clients.”

“Partnering with CMCC enables us to carry out our mission of advancing the oral health of the communities we serve,” explained Jennifer McGrath, Senior Manager, Corporate Giving, Northeast Delta Dental. “We also appreciate their acknowledgment of the vital connection between oral health and overall wellness.” ■



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Horizons Summer 2024



# Bump, Set, and Spike Your Way to Helping Children with Autism!

Hit the beach and make an impact! Sign up today for the Winnepesaukee Volleyball Classic and help children with autism live, learn, and thrive!

Get your team of four or more together for an exciting day of beach volleyball at the **2024 Winnepesaukee Volleyball Classic!** Music, food, fun, and friendly beachside competition—all in support of families with children with autism.

**Saturday, June 22, 2024**  
Akwa Marina Yacht Club  
95 Centenary Ave, Laconia, NH

[www.volleyballclassic.org](http://www.volleyballclassic.org)

Visit the event page to learn more info or donate to the Logan's Giving Fund for Autism!

