

Kaleidoscope

changing . . . adapting . . . growing



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Kaleidoscope

changing... adapting... growing

Fall 2013

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Spina Bifida

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info@sbawp.org

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Our Mission

The Spina Bifida Association of Western Pennsylvania is committed to improving the quality of life for people with Spina Bifida and their families by providing a continuum of support services, education and advocacy.

GARDENING

What do you do when the air is warm and sunny and you want fresh vegetables? If you live at the Gatehouse, you ask your fellow residents for assistance and you plant a garden in the backyard. This summer saw a lot of work for some delicious bounty from the Gatehouse residents.

Alex Tirenén spearheaded the idea. The Gatehouse had some raised beds in the backyard that weren't being used. Alex decided that they would be the perfect spot for a vegetable garden. After securing permission to use them, he then asked around to see if the other residents would be interested in helping with the garden. Several other residents, Preston Hess, Sarah Kleifgen, and Marissa Courtney helped out. Together they chose several vegetables and herbs to plant and grow in the garden.

They grew tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, strawberries, basil, oregano and mint. The Gatehouse residents took turns watering and weeding throughout the summer. The raised beds turned out to be the perfect place for the garden as they were high enough for our participants to do the weeding while sitting in their wheelchairs. The residents also were able to harvest the vegetables and herbs on their own with little assistance. They enjoyed eating the bounty of their little garden!

All in all, there was a great spirit of community and comradeship while the garden was in bloom. Unfortunately, with fall, this fun activity came to an end, but there is already talk of a new garden for next summer. ■





a time to grow...
...a chance to glow

CAMP ROCK RECAP!

As the leaves begin to fall and the air gets brisker, we look back and remember those warm summer days together. This summer was all about rocking. The theme for FireFly Camp this year was Camp Rock. It was a “rocking” good time.

Youth and teen campers had the chance to rock with two performers named Josh and Gab, who put on a show surrounding the topic of bullying. They also got to rock around Kenywood Park while enjoying a good time with their friends.

(continued on page 6)



EVERYONE LOOKS FORWARD



GETTING BULLS EYES DURING ARCHERY



IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO REUNITE WITH FRIENDS



FRIENDS HANGING OUT IN BETWEEN ACTIVITIES



STAYING COOL IN THE POOL



TO THE POOL



ANNUAL CAMPFIRE ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF CAMP



ADULTS POSE FOR A PICTURE

(Camp Rock Recap cont..)

The adults hung out and rocked to music with one another. They competed over who could shoot the most bulls eyes in archery and win the most games of basketball. The birds were rocking and singing over the wooden bird feeders that were made. There was an epic Game Night of guys versus gals game of Family Feud.

Everybody had a fun time soaking in the summer rays while swimming. Who can forget archery, fishing, sports, cooking, and all the art galore?

It's always nice reuniting with friends. While the weather gets colder, we can look back on those summer days and feel a little warmth. We hope to see everyone at the fall and spring retreats. They're sure to be a blast with many more new and exciting activities. ■



JOSH AND GAB ENTERTAINING DURING YOUTH AND TEEN WEEK



HAVING FUN WITH FRIENDS



FISHING AT THE POND



YOUTH AND TEEN TOGETHER FOR A PICTURE

JACK VASVARY: ARTIST

Jack Vasvary, SBASP program participant, was a guest artist at the Pittsburgh Comic and Collectibles Show held on October 26th at Century III Mall. The event was sponsored by New Dimensions Comics and provided an opportunity for local artists to show their creations. About twenty photographers, writers, crafters, illustrators and more were represented. Jack had a table display of several pieces of his art work, ten of which were for sale. He also raffled off a picture that he designed in memory of his mother, Ellen B. Vasvary, to promote breast cancer awareness. He came up with the idea, signed and framed the picture, and donated all of the proceeds to The Susan G. Komen For The Cure Fund.

“I like to draw anything and everything, but mainly cartoons.”

Although Jack attends many comic book shows and conventions, this was his first as a participant. “I am friends with many of the employees of New Dimensions Comics and they were encouraging me to show my work.” He is also friends with Steel Man, a Pittsburgh comic book character/celebrity. “Steel Man has always been a huge supporter of my art.” Once he decided to participate, “I busted my butt to get pieces done. I literally worked up to the time of the show.” It was all worth it. The next show will be on February 1st at Clearview Mall. Jack plans to again be a participant.

Jack has always had an interest in art. “I like to draw anything and everything, but mainly cartoons.” He does freelance artwork and is always creat-

ing something. “I have designed promotional flyers for concerts as well as illustrations and cartoons for various newsletters. I am currently working on illustrations for table-top games as well as for my first graphic novel.” The graphic novel is a tale of redemption, vengeance, and justice. I am hoping to have it published sometime next year.”

He studied visual arts at Radford University as well as multimedia at Pittsburgh Technical Institute. While attending Radford, “I was a staff writer and graphic artist for *Whim-the university’s on-line magazine.*” He is best known for his one panel *The Far Side*-esque cartoons.

When not working on his artwork or novel, Jack is employed by Cranberry Cinemas. He has been there for five years. “I love movies, which is why I got the job as a ticket-taker.” He also enjoys attending the annual *Mayhem Festival*, which is a heavy metal and extreme sports festival that takes place during the summer.

Jack lives in Wexford, PA with his dog Mindy, a beagle mix that he got four years ago from Animal Friends. ■



Fifth Annual SUMMER FESTIVAL

Sponsored by Seubert & Associates

Approximately 800 people joined in the fun for the Fifth Annual Summer Festival presented by Seubert and Associates on August 10, 2013. The sun shone brightly on the Maple Grove Pavilion, our new space in Blueberry Hill Park in Franklin Park, which turned out to be the perfect setting for SBAWP's largest annual fundraiser.

SBAWP Board President Joe McCormick welcomed the crowd, and Dick Smith, Chairman of the SBAWP Board, presented this year's Chairman's Award to Doug Caye, "The Rockin' Realtor," for his tireless efforts working on the Summer Festival. Midlife Crisis then kicked off the "concert in the park" with their mix of classic rock tunes.

The North Star Kids entertained the crowd with some Broadway show tunes, followed by the Thera-Dancers doing an energetic dance routine to "Price Tag" by Jesse J. Price. Southern Comfort played some cool jazz, and then the Jeffe Jam Band closed the show jamming with an eclectic mix.

There was something for everyone at the Festival. The kids "got their bounce" on with inflatables, played

Spin the Wheel, and made wooden treasures, rainbow loom bracelets, and spin art creations to take home. The Pirate Parrot took some time out of his busy schedule supporting this year's great Pittsburgh Pirate team to make an appearance.

People of all ages enjoyed playing and competing in a ladder throw, corn hole toss, can jam, archery, and the ever-popular bingo and chair massages. There were auction prizes, and lots of good "festival food."

We are especially appreciative of all who contributed so much to make this event such a success, all for the benefit of SBAWP programs, including: the Summer Festival Committee, SBAWP Board and Staff, Executive Director Adele Duffy, our Corporate Sponsors and Donors, Auction and Prize Donors, the Fund Development Committee, and all our tireless volunteers.

Next year, the Sixth Annual Summer Festival presented by Seubert and Associates will be held at the Maple Grove Pavilion at Blueberry Hill Park in Franklin Park on Saturday, August 16, 2014. Mark your calendars now, because you don't want to miss the fun! ■



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Doug Caye “The Rockin’ Realtor” Receives Chairman’s Award from the Spina Bifida Association of Western PA

On August 10, 2013, Richard L. (Dick) Smith, Chairman of the Board of the Spina Bifida Association of Western Pennsylvania (SBAWP), presented Doug Caye with its Chairman’s Award at its Fifth Annual Summer Festival presented by Seubert and Associates in Blueberry Hill Park in Franklin Park.

This honor was given to Doug in recognition of his tireless efforts to help build the Annual Summer Festival into SBAWP’s largest annual fundraiser. Doug has been an active member of the Festival Committee since the event began, working on building the corporate sponsorship program for the event and organizing our Festival concert line-up featuring his band Midlife Crisis as the headliner. Not only has Doug worked on the Summer Festival himself, he made it a “family affair” when he recruited his son Fred to work on the committee three years ago when Fred was just 14.

After graduating from North Allegheny High School, Doug moved to New York City and played in rock groups for about ten years. In 1995, he returned to Pittsburgh and opened Midnight Music, a music instrument dealership that he owned and operated until 2006.

Doug began his career as “The Rockin’

Realtor” when he began selling real estate in New York in 1994 as a leasing agent. Upon his return to Pittsburgh, he started working for Prudential Preferred Realty in Hampton and quickly became a top producer for the company. In 2010, he was recruited by Coldwell Bankers’ corporate office. He has been in the top 100 since joining the company and was the company’s “Excellence in Ethics” award winner for 2012.

Doug is one of the original members of Midlife Crisis, a local band who plays classic rock for the benefit of some worthy causes, like SBAWP programs and services. Founded in 2003, their first performance was a sold-out benefit for CAPA High School at the Byham Theater in 2004 that raised nearly \$50,000 for the school. Together a decade now, the band practices once a week and still only play fund raisers and charity events, as they all have “day jobs.” In addition to Doug, current Midlife Crisis members include Brian Long, Alexander “Nick” Nichols, Alan Long, Randy Bauer and Ron Debrezeni. They look forward to playing the SBAWP Summer Festival every year and will continue to do so!

Doug lives in Hampton with his wife of 21 years, Melissa (who is a Yoga instructor) and their two sons Freddie and Theo. ■



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NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Spina Bifida Association of Western Pennsylvania (SBAWP) is happy to welcome Robert T. Davies, Melanie Dragovits, Steven B. Shivak, and Rachel Zalewski to its Board of Directors.



Robert T. Davies

Robert T. Davies

Bob Davies is Vice-President of Equipment Financing & Leasing for Fifth Third Bank – Western Pennsylvania Affiliate. Bob has been with Fifth Third Bank for more than six

years and joined the Western Pennsylvania Affiliate in 2011. He has over 17 years of experience working in the equipment financing and leasing industry for Commercial Finance, Captive Finance and Diversified Financial Services companies.

Bob's professional affiliations include the Equipment Leasing & Finance Association, the Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association, and the American Association of Drilling Engineers. He is a graduate of Juniata College with a B.S. in Finance and Accounting.

Melanie Dragovits

While Melanie Dragovits might be new to the Board, she certainly isn't new to SBAWP.

Melanie first became involved with SBAWP when her daughter Elizabeth, who was born with spina bifida, hydrocephalus and Arnold Chiari Malformation, enrolled in SBAWP's BluePrints Preschool Play

Program. Ms. Dragovits was instrumental in establishing the Support Group for Caretakers, presented by SBAWP in partnership with National Rehab. Dragovits has also worked on fundraisers like the Highmark Walk and SBAWP's Annual Summer Festival as a member of the SBAWP Fund Development Committee.

An advocate for all people with special needs, Melanie provides valuable insight and comfort to families by educating them on what it means to be a parent and medical caregiver of a child with special needs. She has also taken courses in anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, laboratory procedures, etc. to increase her medical knowledge.

Melanie earned degrees in Education from Illinois State University, and Business with an HR specialization from Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. Prior to her work with special need families, she



Melanie Dragovits

worked in the fields of human resources and later taught secondary mathematics in both the public classroom and in the hospital homebound environment. She also served as an active partner at Creative Force Video Productions, her husband Matt's video production company,

which specializes in patient education and CME Programming as well as technology features for military contractors.

In addition to Elizabeth (now a 7-year-old first grader at Rowan Elementary School in Cranberry Township), Melanie and Matt have an older daughter, Angelina, and a younger son Luke.

Steven B. Shivak

Steve Shivak is the President for the SMC Business Councils and its for-profit subsidiary, SMC Insurance Agency. In less than one year with the organization, Steve has been a driving force in the organization's visibility, credibility and expansion

of its products and services. As President, Steve provides overall strategic leadership for both organizations and a staff of 20.



Steven B. Shivak

Previously Steve was the Executive Director

at the American Diabetes Association of Western Pennsylvania where he increased revenues by nearly 50% and net income by over 400%. As Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) Steve increased revenues by 100% during his tenure and became the go-to organization for the Pennsylvania Department of Banking on issues related to foreclosure in western Pennsylvania. As Vice President of Operations for the Pittsburgh Technology Council, Steve was responsible for restoring profitability to the organization, increasing revenues, membership retention, customer satisfaction and new product/program development.

Steve received his Bachelor of Arts de-

gree in Public Relations from Illinois State University and his Master of Science degree from Robert Morris University.

At home, Steve enjoys a full life with his wife Jodi and two young children. An avid Pirates fan, Steve has enjoyed the resurgence of the Pirates this year. Steve remains an active donor of the American Diabetes Association.

Rachel Zalewski

Rachel Zalewski is an experienced financial specialist and auditor who is currently Senior Auditor and Assistant Vice-President with PNC Financial Services Group in Pittsburgh, a position she has held since 2011. Prior to joining PNC, she had worked with Key Bank and Alaris Field Services (both in Cleveland, OH), and SIRVA Relocation in Mayfield Heights, OH.



Rachel Zalewski

Zalewski holds a B.S. in Business Administration with a major in Finance from John Carroll University in University Heights, OH.

Zalewski brings a wealth of community leadership and involvement with her to

SBAWP. Since returning to the Pittsburgh area, she has helped to lead training running groups for the Marathon and other distance races as a YMCA Fitness Volunteer, organized volunteer events as a member of the Internal Audit Community Involvement Committee, and served as a committee member of the PNC Recognizing Emerging Professionals, as well as the Women's Connect Group. She also is a member of the Girls Hope Young Leadership Board, and is a past member of the Junior League of Pittsburgh. ■



Calendar of Events

December, 2013

6-8 | **Adult Retreat** – Family Retreat Center

10 | **Support Group** – Fithian House

January, 2014

23 | **BluePrints Bounce** - Bounce U

February, 2014

7-9 | **Adult Retreat** – Family Retreat Center

March, 2014

1 | **SBAWP Rockin' Fundraiser** – Jergle's Rythmn Grill

7-9 | **Adult Retreat** – Family Retreat Center

21-23 | **Youth/Teen Retreat** – Family Retreat Center



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Day of Giving

On October 3, 2013, 46 donors made donations totaling \$11,550 to SBAWP through the 2013 Pittsburgh Foundation Day of Giving. The Pittsburgh Foundation provided a partial match for donations made to non-profits, so the total amount raised to support SBAWP programs and services was \$12,716.55.

Over 18,000 donors – a record for the 24-hour giving event – made contributions to 719 non-profits during The Pittsburgh Foundation's Day of Giving. The total raised for charitable organizations in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties was \$7,719,000.

SBAWP is grateful to all its generous donors (which included board members, staff, families, past donors, and new donors), those who so rigorously promoted the opportunity to their contacts, and the Pittsburgh Foundation for making the 2013 Pittsburgh Day of Giving such a success for SBAWP.

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