



# LEO News

## Mother's Brunch welcomes more moms, and Swedish as sponsor

Smiles were in abundance the morning of May 10th as LEO's 2nd Annual Mother's Brunch took place at Swedish Issaquah. Ninety attendees enjoyed delicious food, wonderful music, and the companionship of other families facing many of the same challenges in raising children with developmental disabilities.

The brunch was an opportunity to recognize and appreciate the moms of these children for all they do, and to give their families the chance to experience a brunch similar to those common at restaurants that time of year, but in an environment accepting of their children and any behavior issues they might have.

"We had a wonderful time and really appreciated being a part of it," commented the Ammon family.

The staff at Swedish Issaquah, led by Nicole Yurchak, Business Development and Community Relations for Swedish Issaquah, Redmond and Mill Creek, and Stephanie Mitchell, General Manager of Nutrition Services, went above and beyond by offering many varieties of foods for the brunch, including taking into consideration dietary restrictions by offering gluten free foods.

Timothy Scallon volunteered his time to provide music for the event, adding to the feel of a typical



*The activity provided by the Tavon Center was a hit!*

*Everyone enjoyed decorating a pot and planting marigolds or herbs as a Mother's Day gift for their moms.*

Mother's Day brunch, and the Issaquah Press joined in by sharing the invitation to the event in its publications. Parents were free to connect with one another as the Tavon Center and Swedish volunteers kept the kids entertained with a project of decorating a pot and then choosing a plant to put in it as a gift to their moms.

LEO began offering the Mother's Brunch last year as a way of celebrating moms of children with special needs. This event is especially fitting for LEO to host since the organization itself was founded by five moms wanting more for their kids than what was available. The Tavon Center was an appropriate addition to the event as it also was

started by a mother of a child with disabilities.

The brunch will be an annual event that will allow families with children with special needs to celebrate this most important holiday - Mother's Day - in a comfortable and accepting environment.



*Swedish Issaquah provided the wonderful accommodations of Café 1910 for the Mother's Brunch.*

## Caring Community Awards acknowledge those who show they care

Congratulations to Bella Mancini and Becky Gordon on being awarded Caring Community Awards for supporting people with developmental disabilities, and to Sydney Weber for being the first person with a disability to win the award for her community service and involvement in our wonderful community!

Bella has worked daily with special needs students in the Options Program at Eastside Catholic in a kind and patient way. Instead of taking other electives, Bella has chosen to take the peer tutor class every consecutive semester since her sophomore year. She is active outside the classroom as a volunteer coach for Special Olympics Soccer and she attends many of the Options program's extra-curricular events. She spent weeks practicing with an Options student and they sang a duet together in the school talent show. Bella will be attending Western Washington University in the fall and plans to study Special Education.

Becky is involved in many aspects of supporting those with disabilities in our community. She currently serves as the chair of LEO's Issaquah Outreach Committee, has served as a coach for Special Olympics, and has partnered with another mom to start the Issaquah Special Needs Group (an Issaquah School District PTSA committee representing students and families with special needs). She is the first art docent that the ISD Academy of Community Transition program has ever had, planning and enabling the ACT students to do monthly



*Caring Community Award recipients Bella Mancini, Sydney Weber and Becky Gordon.*

professional-looking art projects and making arrangements for the students to exhibit their artwork at the Issaquah ArtWalks.

Sydney loves to contribute to her community and this shows with the 80 volunteer hours she has completed in the past year. Having autism has been a challenge, but by being an active volunteer at the Issaquah Food Bank, and at Eastside Catholic, LEO, 4-H and Girl Scout events she demonstrates that a person with a disability can contribute to their community, and in a joyous way.

Sydney recently graduated from the Eastside Catholic Options Program and plans to attend the Issaquah School District's Academy of Community Transition, where she will no doubt happily tackle any internship she is offered.

This is the third year that LEO, AtWork! and the Tavon Center have partnered to recognize those in our community who support and spread awareness of those with developmental disabilities. Congratulations to our award winners!



*Ann Dennis with her son, Scott.*

## Ann Dennis

We are sad to announce that Ann Dennis, one of the founding members of LEO, recently passed away. Ann was an integral part of LEO and we will be forever grateful for her efforts in not only creating the organization, but helping it grow to the community resource it is today.



Ryan, Lad and Dan show off their moves in Zumba class.

## Zumba classes get movin'!

Where there's a need, there's LEO. Finding that the people with developmental disabilities in our community were in need of more recreational opportunities than were available, LEO started offering Zumba classes for ages 6 and up on Saturdays.

We are fortunate to have found a wonderful instructor certified in Zumba for those with special needs, Jill Saitta, and are also enjoying the opportunity offered to us by physical therapist Penny Coyner, of Northwest Pediatric Therapies, of the use of her clinic.

The music is infectious and the response had been incredible, resulting in the addition of a third class! For more information, or to register, email: [info@lifeenrichmentoptions.org](mailto:info@lifeenrichmentoptions.org).

## "Ask a cop" presentation answers all the questions

LEO's spring presentation was an evening of questions and answers, but especially one of shared understanding. Those attending were not only able to ask questions of Issaquah Police Officers Detective Brian Horn, Officer Nate Lane and Officer Jesse Petersen, but they were able to experience the inside of several police vehicles and even turn on the lights and siren!

The officers described their jobs and the equipment they use to allow those with disabilities a better understanding, and hopefully less anxiety, when dealing with officers. "I think having the opportunity for the participants to see, touch, experience the police cars, see the equipment that the police wear, and talk to them was useful and educational on many levels," commented a parent.



Kevin is excited to check out Officer Jesse Petersen's police car.



## LEO selects Nystrom as executive director

LEO is pleased to welcome Fred Nystrom as our new Executive Director. Fred has an extensive background in media and fundraising with both nonprofit organizations and businesses. He is very much involved in the Issaquah community, serving previously as a board member for the Issaquah Chamber of Commerce and the Issaquah Schools Foundation.

During his 30 years of involvement with the Rotary club of Issaquah, Fred has held club and district positions, and has been an ardent supporter of LEO's efforts in the community, especially with the yearly Challenge Series Races that are sponsored by Rotary.

The addition of an executive director will allow LEO to create greater organizational structure and increase its ability to serve its clients. Welcome Fred!

## GiveBIG = big give

LEO would like to thank all who donated to our organization in our first year of participating in the Seattle Foundation's GiveBIG one day fundraising event on May 6th. Your support inspires us to further our mission of supporting those with developmental disabilities. Thank you!



Life  
Enrichment  
Options

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➤ To learn more about LEO,  
make a donation or  
join our mailing list, visit

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

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A Truly Special Event By Life Enrichment Options

Visit our website to learn more about the  
Challenge Series Races.

To register or for more information, contact:

Leo Finnegan at (425) 392-5682  
or by e-mail at [finneganleo@aol.com](mailto:finneganleo@aol.com).

**Challenge Series Races coming soon  
to Issaquah, Sammamish, Snoqualmie  
and beyond!**

### **2014 Race Schedule**

Richland - June 28

Issaquah - July 12

Spokane - July 19

Sammamish - August 9

Oak Harbor - August 23

Snoqualmie - September 13

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