

SCC Helps Imagine Academy Unlock Everyday Miracles

By Mindy Jerome

Joey, an eight-year old Imagine student, packs his bathing suit every Wednesday morning, so he can attend Imagine Academy's aqua therapy program at the Sephardic Community Center. This simple task is extraordinary because Joey is a child with autism who is nonverbal with many significant developmental delays. Children with autism often focus on details and have trouble with choices. They are unable to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information; they have trouble understanding cause and effect relationships and are usually not able to understand the concept of time. Despite Joey's challenges, he packs his bathing suit without any prompting every Wednesday morning.

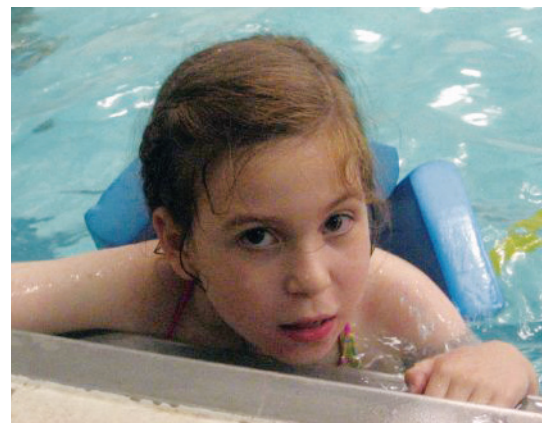


Shira, an eleven-year old Imagine Academy student, has been attending Wednesday's aqua therapy program at the SCC for over a year. Because Shira's two siblings are also autistic, her parents have had little time to teach her to swim. At first, Shira refused to enter the pool deck, but because of the staff's persistence and dedication they have slowly encouraged Shira to become comfortable as well as relaxed in the pool. After 8 months of one-on-one therapy, Shira now has learned how to swim while also seeking the benefits of aqua therapy!



The warm water provides a safe and supportive environment that calms the children, providing the necessary sensory input they crave. Research continues to support the concept that water is the ideal medium in which to exercise or rehabilitate the body. Water provides an environment, which reduces body weight by 90%, decreasing stress or impact on the body. For children with autism aquatic therapy can focus on therapeutic play-based functional movement, improving range of motion, improved body awareness, increased balance, sensory integration, mobility skills and most importantly, having fun.

Robbie, a fifteen-year old boy, practices balancing in the pool on a flotation device with his occupational therapist. While having fun, Robbie is strengthening his muscles, so he can slowly transition to riding his new bicycle. Gabe, a fourteen-year-old boy who has a special sense of independence in the pool, works with his therapist on building his muscle tone while self-regulating his behaviors that ultimately strengthen his self-confidence.



Beyond the public perception of Dustin Hoffman's performance in the movie Rain Man, most people understand very little about this complex disorder that affects every aspect of an individual's life. Autism is a neurological and biological developmental disability. Two new government studies indicate about 1 in 100 children have autism disorders—higher than previous U.S. estimate of 1 in 150.

These new statistics are astounding and it will take a community to help support, educate and provide for Imagine's children and their families. By building bridges and sharing precious resources, we have the capacity to make a significant difference in the lives of children with autism and their families. Imagine Academy for Autism, along with the Sephardic Community Center, continues to raise awareness of developmental disabilities and educate our community on cutting-edge proven methodologies to help treat this challenging disorder.

Imagine thanks the Sephardic Community Center's staff and Board of Directors for their graciousness and on-going support.

Sephardic Community Center

1901 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11223
718-627-4300
www.SCCLive.org

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Brooklyn, NY
Permit #4154

New state-of-the-art facility February 2010



Imagine Academy is dedicated to help each child with Autism Spectrum Disorder reach their fullest developmental potential, socially, emotionally and academically, thereby improving their lives and the lives of their families.

We graciously thank our community members for their continuous support.

1458 East 14th St, Brooklyn, NY 11230
718 376 8882

www.imagineacademy.com

education • residence • resource