



**THE HEALTHCARE
FOUNDATION OF NJ**
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Easter Seals New Jersey's Be Well! & Thrive™ Health and Wellness Program Receives Grant from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey

Program Focuses on Improving the Health and Wellness of People with Disabilities

East Brunswick, NJ – Easter Seals New Jersey was recently awarded a grant of \$42,813 by The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey for its health and wellness initiative to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of people with disabilities.

Easter Seals New Jersey's Be Well! and Thrive™ Health and Wellness Education program is designed to provide tools for Easter Seals' program participants, their caregivers, and staff members of the organization to make healthy lifestyle choices. The goal is to achieve and maintain optimal physical, mental and emotional health, and increase longevity through proper nutrition, hydration and a balance of rest and physical activity.

The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey seeks to elevate the quality of community healthcare, reduce disparities in access, and promote the infusion of compassion and humanism into our healthcare system.

Consisting of a 12-week series of workshops on nutrition, health, fitness, personal and oral hygiene, and ability-appropriate exercise classes, the Be Well! & Thrive™ Program aims to assist individuals with disabilities in making modifiable lifestyle changes.

"Individuals with disabilities are at a higher risk for chronic medical conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, which affect an individual's quality of life, employability, and integration into their community," says Laura O'Reilly, RN, assistant vice president of health and wellness at Easter Seals New Jersey. "However, few, if any, prevention efforts are inclusive for individuals with disabilities. And that's where Easter Seals steps in."

The inclusive exercise component of the program is also the first of its kind to be accredited by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE). What sets Be Well! & Thrive™ apart from other exercise programs is its adaptive approach to addressing the special needs of people with disabilities. The structured fitness class is based on a foundation of proper body mechanics in order to enhance participants' abilities to perform activities of daily living, improve strength and endurance, and enhance overall well-being.

"The classes help me to feel confident," says Finita, a participant of Easter Seals New Jersey's adult day program for people with developmental disabilities. "And, when I feel confident, I believe I can accomplish anything."

"The program – which launched early in 2011– has yielded tangible and measurable results," adds O'Reilly. "Now, thanks to the generous grant provided by The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, this critically important program can have an even greater impact by being able to include more participants."

In the next series of workshops, new educational materials will be introduced to implement health strategies for preventing metabolic health conditions including obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Media Contacts:

Anysa Holder
Director of Marketing
732/257-6662 x313
aholder@nj.easterseals.com
www.eastersealsnj.org

Laura O'Reilly, RN
AVP, Health & Wellness
908/492-4702
loreilly@nj.easterseals.com
www.eastersealsnj.org

To learn more about Easter Seals New Jersey's Be Well! & Thrive Health and Wellness Program visit www.eastersealsnj.org/health.

About The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey

The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey is an independent, endowed grant-making organization dedicated to reducing disparities in the delivery of healthcare and improving access to quality healthcare for vulnerable populations in the greater Newark, NJ area and the Jewish community of MetroWest NJ. For more information, visit www.hfnj.org.

About Easter Seals New Jersey

Easter Seals New Jersey, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, has helped individuals and families with disabilities or special needs to live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence since 1948. Annually, over 7,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities including autism, physical disabilities, mental illness and other special needs receive services in our programs designed to help them work toward achieving independence and full community-integration. For more information on Easter Seals New Jersey and its statewide disability services, please contact 732-257-6662 or visit www.eastersealsnj.org or www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj.

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