

Southampton Fresh Air Home
Case Statement 2022

Mission Statement

The Southampton Fresh Air Home (SFAH) is a not-for-profit residential center offering summer camp sessions and year-round programs for children and young adults with physical disabilities. Our mission is to provide an enriching, recreational and educational experience. We are committed to helping our children develop physically, emotionally, and educationally, with the goal of fostering self-esteem, maturity and independence through a broadly balanced program, while providing their families with a well-deserved respite. SFAH is dedicated to improving and expanding its programs and facilities as new opportunities, technology and financial support become available.

History

In 1901, a group of women who wanted to share the benefits of sun and ocean air with children with physical disabilities established a special camp. From the first summer of 10 children, SFAH has grown exponentially to accommodate 150 plus youngsters each summer and has served thousands of children and young adults with physical disabilities.

In 2008, with the construction of four climate-controlled dormitories, SFAH began offering several off-season weekends during the school year for smaller groups of children allowing them to maintain friendships made during the summer and enjoy seasonal activities. These weekend programs are offered free of charge and transportation is provided.

In 2013, a modernization of our campus was deemed necessary to better serve our children. Projects completed over a five-year period include:

- New Main Building including dining hall, commercial kitchen, laundry and staff residences
- Upgraded pools, pool house and pool filtration systems
- Updated fleet of accessible vehicles
- Administrative offices
- Sports court designed for numerous, adaptable sports and activities
- A sports court shade awning to protect the children from the direct heat of the sun
- A solar energy system

In 2014, SFAH established a Camper Advisory Committee (CAC) consisting of a diverse group of former and current campers, their parents, members of the Board of Directors, and management. It was formed to give campers and parents a stronger voice in future camp planning. It has become an invaluable planning tool and in 2017, SFAH's Board voted to

formalize the CAC by making it a permanent Advisory Board whose members are voting members of the corporation.

In 2016, we formalized our off-season programming, thereby transitioning from a “summer+” model to a year-round resource for youth with physical disabilities. The new model added components such as Life Skill Lab workshops, respite weekends, day trips, identification of colleges and universities equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities and social media groups to assess needs.

While SFAH will always be affectionately called “camp” by those in our community, we have grown to become not only a camp, but a year-round recreational center focused on this frequently overlooked population.

Statement of Need

Young people with physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, spina bifida and muscular dystrophy face unique barriers in accessing recreational and social opportunities. Youth who require assistance with activities of daily living encounter a gauntlet of logistics when seeking such opportunities. Those with the option of paid caregivers are usually restricted by stringent Medicaid regulations dictating when and where care can be provided. In the absence of a paid caregiver, they depend on parents and family members to help them in social and recreational settings. As a result, the lives of parents and children with physical disabilities are closely intertwined and both parties experience stress and lack of independence.

Young people whose needs are primarily physical and medical represent an underserved population that is largely failed by existing recreational programs. Many experience extreme isolation, leading to a sense of loneliness and exclusion. Programs specifically designed for people with disabilities often focus on those with cognitive and behavioral issues and do not have the resources to accommodate participants whose needs are primarily physical. A significant portion of recreational programs, both mainstreamed and disability-specific, are not physically accessible to people with such disabilities or lack the adapted equipment necessary to enable their full participation. A lack of contact with peers who share similar experiences of disability can cause these youth to internalize ableist stereotypes.

The benefits of summer camp programs in addressing the recreational needs of youth with physical disabilities are well documented. Those specific to people with disabilities are valuable in the development of positive self-identity and disability pride. Further, connecting with others with similar disabilities allows them to find community and strength in their shared experiences.

As one of the few camps in the nation specifically focused on the needs of youth with physical disabilities, SFAH plays a vital role in enriching the lives of these young people and their families. Free to play and learn alongside children in similar circumstances, SFAH offers these

often-isolated children an opportunity to dramatically increase their sense of independence and self-esteem while developing crucial new skills.

SFAH offers them:

- A barrier free community
- A home of their own to meet people living with similar disabilities
- An understanding of their full potential in all areas of life
- A comfort level in a social environment where disability is the norm, not the exception
- An environment to explore who they are and what they want to become
- A place that provides simple recreational fun and enjoyment

Many of SFAH's alumni look back at their time at camp as the highlight of their childhood and as the single most formative experience in their young lives. SFAH's programs are the bridge that spans up to 10 years of a child's developing years. Our most successful participants start between the ages of 8 and 11 and remain with us until the ages of 17 or 18. 80% of our campers return for multiple years.

Population Served

Children who attend SFAH's programs come primarily from low and middle-income families. Over 75% are from New York City, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. They live with a range of physical disabilities such as muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, osteogenesis imperfecta, spinal cord injuries and head injuries. While some children have congenital disabilities, others have acquired disabilities sustained in automobile and sports related accidents or through gun and gang violence. They range in age from 8 to 18, roughly half boys and half girls. Nearly 50% are African American, 30% are Caucasian and the remaining 20% are Hispanic and Asian. Campers use power or manual wheelchairs, braces or crutches. Some manage their own care with minimal assistance, while others require total care, receiving help with dressing, toileting, eating, bathing, and moving about.

Goals

Camps specific to people with disabilities are valuable in the development of positive self-identity and disability pride. Connecting with other youth with similar disabilities allows them to find community and strength in their shared experiences. SFAH strives to serve as many physically disabled and economically disadvantaged children and young adults as possible. Continued funding allows us to provide vital services for children and young adults with physical disabilities and to create an environment in which these youngsters overcome their fears, believe in themselves, and explore new possibilities. SFAH focuses on areas where we have the greatest impact:

- Youth with physical disabilities should have access to meaningful recreational and social opportunities
- Youth with physical disabilities should have the opportunity to connect with others who share in the disability experience in order to develop a positive sense of identity
- Both current campers and alumni with physical disabilities should have access to opportunities that better equip them for independent living, college, and employment opportunities
- Youth with physical disabilities should be given the skills to manage and have a voice about their own care
- Youth with disabilities build healthy relationships by socializing and interacting with peers who have similar needs
- Youth with disabilities gain strength and flexibility and self-confidence by participating in team sports and friendly competition
- Youth with disabilities learn to embrace their disabilities while simultaneously accomplishing age appropriate developmental tasks
- Youth with disabilities learn skills needed to manage their own care and experience new opportunities for success

Programs

During the summer months, our oldest program takes place: our sleep-away camp. In September, SFAH launches its slate of fall programs: retreat weekends, day trips and social gatherings. During the winter and the spring, we transform again, bringing the experience to the doorsteps of the children. Our activity specialists organize excursions that allow the participants to socialize together in settings that would otherwise be unattainable to them. Life Skill Lab workshops focusing on relevant topics such as independent living skills, managing personal care needs, job readiness and post-secondary educational options are integrated into all of our programs.

We host 150 campers each summer; there are 2 three-week sessions as well as a one-week program for younger children who have never been away from home as well as children who require a higher level of nursing care. Accredited by the ACA (American Camp Association), SFAH is one of the few residential camp facilities in the eastern United States for children and young adults with physical disabilities. Children live in spacious climate controlled fully equipped dorms suitable for wheelchairs with 24-hour staff. Registered nurses provide 24-hour medical coverage, and a doctor is on call at all times.

Campers enjoy the SFAH's unique sports programs which include swimming, sailing, relays, golf, tennis, basketball, baseball, dodgeball, football, cycling and hockey. These activities promote motor and athletic skills, build strong muscles, develop agility, coordination, muscle tone and flexibility. Most activities which take place on our sports court are tailored to fit the needs of each child's ability. Counselors work one-on-one to create an environment in which campers are fully involved and engaged in every activity. The benefits of physical activity are

universal for all children, including those with physical disabilities. Participation of children with disabilities in sports and physical activity programs promote physical, emotional and social well-being.

Campers spend time in our Arts and Crafts Workshop where activities include visual arts such as painting, drawing, sculpture and photography. Campers use adapted tools in the arts studio such as paint brushes, pencils and pens with handles, easels that can be attached to a wheelchair or placed on a table; non-spill containers, and tools designed for placement on the head. Dance is modified to suit the campers' abilities. Counselors push campers in wheelchairs while they make their moves or campers propel themselves. The art of dance gives campers an opportunity to build strength and develop flexibility, creativity, and range of motion. Drama offers our campers an exciting way to express themselves. Campers have the chance to help with set designs, costumes, and writing scripts. We create a daytime disco in which campers have fun in a place where the music is "loud and theirs". Counselors create a dance hall atmosphere and campers have fun dancing with friends, being silly and being free in an environment that is comfortable and safe. Musical instruments such as keyboards, drum pads and guitars are offered.

There is a well-equipped computer center where the children have access to computers and our popular iPad program. For those unable to use standard keyboards, there are onscreen computer keyboards. In 2022, SFAH will implement an Assistive Technology Program to enable children to participate in recreational activities through the use of high-and-low tech equipment aimed at providing access to age appropriate, meaningful activities. Assistive technology (AT) is defined as any item that is utilized to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

Gardening has long been regarded as a therapeutic activity, and research has shown that handling different plants and flowers has beneficial effects on both physical and mental health. The pleasure of creating a raised garden fosters self-confidence by successfully reaching set goals. As an added bonus, campers can enjoy the food and flowers they have grown. It is also a chance to learn about the outdoor environment in a safe and pleasant atmosphere and to develop a love of nature.

Children spend time in the Jack C. Alexander sensory garden, a place to explore, learn and stimulate the senses in a unique environment. The garden includes a fire pit, wind chime arbor, living tee pee, wishing well, insect house and touch garden. It is an environmentally friendly ecosystem with native plantings designed to capture rain water and the perfect environment for pollinators to flourish.

SFAH offers a transportation program to bring campers to and from New York City. With our fleet of wheelchair vans, we also offer a wide variety of off-site field trips including ocean beaches, sporting events, museums, concerts, carnivals, zoos, aquariums, farms, theater and more.

Through a robust Alumni Program, our goal is to mentor, inspire, encourage and provide tools and information for our alumni to prepare for life after SFAH. Throughout the year, SFAH offers alumni days and weekends where alumni get together and enjoy a baseball game or a movie or luncheon in the city. During the summer sessions, we welcome one or two alumni to act as mentors and to help the younger campers adjust to camp life. During the off-season and on several days in the summer, alumni return to the Home to revisit old friendships and share their thoughts about life after SFAH.

No child is denied an opportunity to be a camper because of their inability to pay. SFAH provides more than \$250,000 in financial aid rewards to approximately 100 of the neediest children every summer. Financial aid is available for all levels of need, from minimal need to 100% of camp fees. Typically, 75% of campers require some amount of financial aid to attend our program. The actual cost of a child's stay at camp is over \$3,000 per week. Published fees are \$1,000 per week. Most of our families pay less than \$300 per week after financial aid is offered.

We offer virtual programs to expand our impact. Initially part of our programming during the pandemic, virtual activities provide recreation, socialization and education for campers during the time they are not here with us in-person.

Off-Season Programs

While our summer camp program is a successful one, our youth pointed out that during the rest of the year, they lack recreational opportunities and face social isolation in their communities. Our off-season programs directly address these needs through an innovative model serving both current campers, ages 8-18 and young adult "alumni" who have aged out of the summer camp program, but still need support as they transition into adulthood.

Between September and May, SFAH offers a regular schedule of programs including:

- Respite weekends
- Day trips and social gatherings
- Excursions to concerts, theme parks, and sporting events
- Life Skill Lab Workshops focusing on relevant topics such as independent living skills, managing personal care needs, job readiness and post-secondary educational options
- Access to an equipment exchange that offers wheelchairs, strollers, and ramps available to interested young people when others no longer use them
- Seminars for parents offering resources to aid in planning and connections with other families in similar circumstances

Our Life Skill Lab Workshops are offered year-round, but are the most sought-after programs we offer during the off-season. The workshop's main focus is to assess and develop an individual's ability to function day-to-day in daily activities at home, in school, out in public, and at work. The goal is to foster independence, productivity and self-care. Enabling participants to improve strength, dexterity, and coordination while performing tasks. Workshops include hygiene, bathing/showering, dressing, feeding, increased participation in self-care through the use of adaptive equipment, financial management, home management and maintenance, first aid training, leisure exploration, social skills and more. Staff incorporate theme-based workshops and day trips for participants with similar identified goals.

The workshops have been designed and implemented by Anna Wotowiec, an occupational therapist with extensive experience working with our population. Anna has worked seasonally with SFAH since 2010, and as a year-round consultant since 2016. She evaluates each child and educates staff members on manual handling, feeding, and care needs. Anna oversees all Life Skill Lab workshops and personalizes each offering to suit individual participants based on her knowledge of their circumstances and needs.

SFAH equips physically disabled youth with the skills they need to be successful in their communities. Our off-season programs further these goals.

Evaluation

SFAH continually evaluates and quantifies the effectiveness of its programs for youth with physical disabilities via the Long-Range Planning committee:

- The committee formulates strategic planning goals and reports on the implementation of these goals.
- It develops future programs and analyzes their operating and capital needs. It reviews proposed new programs presented by the staff, and makes recommendations to the Board and the staff about the future and the growth of the organization.
- The committee oversees planning and decisions regarding the buildings, facilities and the usage of the camp and sets benchmarks to determine the reach, success and sustainability of SFAH's programs.

The Long-Range Planning committee evaluates the effectiveness of programming by presenting quarterly reports to the Board on the number of programs offered, the number of campers served, and the impact and accomplishments of each program. It meets annually with key stakeholders to discuss the effectiveness of the Home's programs. The information gathered during this meeting is shared with the Board in a written, formal report allowing the Board to focus on and expand the most effective programs and set new goals for future programs.

At the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors in October, the camp director presents a comprehensive report to the Board containing empirical data on the impact of our programs. The report includes:

- number of campers served in each summer session, broken out by age
- number of campers served during the summer sessions
- number of campers attending more than one summer session
- total unique campers served during the summer sessions
- analysis of camper care needs
- number of returning campers
- number of first-time campers
- number of applications received
- geographic locations of campers accepted into the program
- total summer program camper days
- total number of off-season programs offered
- total number of campers served in the off-season program
- total off-season program camper days
- detailed data on program staff

The camp director reports on the success, or lack thereof, of new initiatives as well as changes to existing programs and any issues that have affected, or may affect the corporation. The camp director's report allows the Board to determine whether they have reached the benchmarks set by the Long-Range Planning committee.

We conduct ongoing evaluation of both programs and participant outcomes, using a combination of verbal and written feedback from all participants and staff about all program components.

The quantitative outcomes of our Life Skill Lab workshops are measured using the Casey Life Skills (CLS) assessment as a self-guiding tool of identification of needs. CSL is a tool that assesses the behaviors and competencies youth need to achieve their long-term goals. It aims to set youth on their way toward developing healthy, productive lives. In general, participants noted improved knowledge base and a carry-over of skills following participation. Regarding qualitative results, as stated above, participants report improved knowledge base and generalization of skills following participation in Life Skills Labs. Our Life Skill Lab coordinator has developed an assessment tool which enables us to plan, expand and evaluate our Life Skill Lab programs more definitively relative to the needs of our participants.

Benchmarks

We have set the following annual benchmarks to ensure tangible results:

- Summer camp program will operate at capacity, serving 150 children with physical disabilities regardless of their financial situation
- Off-season programs will serve 250 young people with physical disabilities regardless of their financial situation
- Summer and off-season camp programs will continue to help campers and alumni achieve their goals of higher education, employment and independent living
- 80% of our children between the ages of 8 and 17 will return to SFAH for multiple summers

Sustainability

SFAH is in a strong strategic position. The physical campus, situated on four pristine acres in Shinnecock Hills, NY, consists of 11 buildings, most of which have been rebuilt over the past decade. All the buildings, as well as the outdoor landscape, have been designed with the specific needs of our population in mind. SFAH has an ample endowment that allows it to navigate downturns in the economy and fluctuations in fundraising revenue. It is a community organization with strong support from both local residents and businesses as well as from regional and national foundations and corporations. It hosts two signature fundraising events throughout the year, whose benefits, together with private donations and grants, account for almost 80% of our annual revenue. Only 10% of our revenue is generated from program fees. Operating shortfalls are covered from dividends and interest earned from our endowment.

The Southampton Fresh Air Home anticipates raising operating revenue through activities including:

- Annual D-D-D (Decorators-Designers-Dealers) Event
- Annual Picnic Event
- Annual Board Campaign. We receive 100% participation from directors.
- Direct Mail (Holiday Appeal/Annual Report) and major individual gifts
- Both corporate and foundation grants in support of general operations as well as special projects
- Annual Author's Luncheon
- Program Revenue
- Endowment Dividend Income – Dividend Income from the Endowment is used to cover shortfalls

SFAH's integrative approach to life-long learning enlists the talents of a dedicated team. There are three full-time staff members (executive director, camp director, administrative associate), four part-time, year-round staff members (assistant camp director, camp coordinator, facility coordinator and staff coordinator) and 65-part-time members (counselors, nurses and support staff) and over 100 volunteers who regularly work with the staff. The counselors receive extensive on-site training, and most study in related fields and work with children with

disabilities throughout the year. The senior professional staff has worked with this population for over 50 years combined and provides expert care for all children who come to the Home.

A dedicated Board of Directors governs SFAH. There are 31 voting members and 8 honorary members. All voting Board Members are fully involved with the governance, goals, and fundraising activities of the camp. Funding for large capital projects has come from capital campaigns and bequests received through planned giving. SFAH's endowment also provides up to 20% of the funds needed for strategic capital projects.

Additional funding allows us to continue to offer and expand our summer camp and off-season programming.