

Southampton Fresh Air Home
Case Statement 2024

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.

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, SFAH formalized our off-season programming, thereby transitioning from a "summer+" model to a year-round center 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.

In 2021, the Jack C. Alexander Sensory Garden was built. The garden is a place to explore, learn and stimulate the senses in a unique environment which includes a fire pit, wind chime arbor, living teepee, wishing well, insect house and touch garden.

Most recently, SFAH added two new programs: an assistive technology program and the Home Away from Home program. These new programs further our goals by equipping campers with the skills they need to be successful in their communities.

Statement of Need

Children and young adults with physical disabilities face unique barriers in accessing recreational and social opportunities. Those who require assistance with activities of daily living encounter a gauntlet of logistics when seeking such opportunities. Medicaid regulations dictating when and where care can be provided often restrict those with paid caregivers. In the absence of a paid caregiver, youth in need of personal care support 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 unusually intertwined and both parties experience stress and lack of independence.

Youth 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 diagnoses 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. Camps specific to people with disabilities are valuable in the development of positive self-identity and disability pride. Further, connecting with other youth 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 summer 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 our 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 25, 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

SFAH strives to serve as many children and young adults with physical disabilities as possible. There is an effort to make our services available for those who are also economically disadvantaged. Continued funding allows us to provide vital services to this underserved population 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 have access to meaningful recreational and social opportunities
- Youth with physical disabilities have the opportunity to connect with others who share in the disability experience in order to develop a positive sense of identity
- Youth with physical disabilities are given the skills to manage and have a voice about their own care
- Youth with physical disabilities build healthy relationships by socializing and interacting with peers who have similar needs
- Youth with physical disabilities gain strength and flexibility and self-confidence by participating in team sports and friendly competition
- Youth with physical disabilities learn to embrace their disabilities while simultaneously accomplishing age-appropriate developmental tasks
- Youth with physical disabilities experience new opportunities for success
- Both current campers and alumni have access to opportunities that better equip them for independent living, college, and employment opportunities

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.

Summer Program

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. They 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 each participant's ability. Counselors push children in wheelchairs while they make their moves or children propel themselves. The art of dance gives campers an opportunity to build strength and develop flexibility, creativity, and range of motion. Drama offers an exciting way for community members to express themselves. 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 participants 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.

Children learn computer sciences and have access touch screen tablets. For those unable to use standard keyboards, devices with onscreen keyboards offer more adaptability, enabling our campers to undertake special projects such as graphic design, music making, photography, film editing and computer coding. Knowing the basics of computer science is an important skill, opening the door to extremely accessible future jobs.

SFAH offers an assistive technology program to enable children to participate in activities through the use of high-and-low tech equipment aimed at providing access to age appropriate, meaningful activities. Assistive technology is utilized to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. Our adaptive gaming center allows children with disabilities to have the identical experience as their able-bodied peers and siblings. This program levels the playing field by providing a life-altering, complete esteem building experience and the opportunity to compete with and against those of varied abilities, feeling equal to all in the activity and experiencing true team work.

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, 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.

Alumni are welcomed back during our summer sessions as mentors to help the younger campers adjust to camp life.

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 more than \$4,000 per week. Published fees are \$1,500 per week. Most of our families pay less than \$300 per week after financial aid is offered.

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
- Seminars for parents offering resources to aid in planning and connections with other families in similar circumstances

SFAH equips physically disabled youth with the skills they need to be successful in their communities. The goal is to mentor, inspire, encourage and provide tools and information for our alumni to prepare for life after SFAH. Our off-season programs further these goals.

Life Skill Lab Workshops are offered year-round and are the most sought-after programs we offer during the off-season. Each workshop's main focus is to assess and develop an individual's ability to function in

daily activities at home, in school, in the community, and at work. Workshop topics 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.

Home Away from Home Expanded Off-Season Program

In 2022, SFAH expanded our year-round program offerings by implementing a new layer of programming entitled Home Away from Home (HAFH) focused on our alumni population, which aims to provide them with the tools and resources they need to reach their personal goals. These new programs are administered by Kiara Esteves, a former SFAH program participant hired to fill the senior position of camp coordinator. As a woman of color with physical disabilities, she is uniquely attuned to camper needs and can personally attest to SFAH's impact. She credits SFAH for allowing her to become independent.

After children age out of our programs, they often lose the community that most supports their independence and unique goals. Each year, 10 alumni who will benefit from sustained life skill programs are identified. The HAFH program works with this core group by providing a series of tailored actions and undertakings including:

- Five to six overnight stays at SFAH allowing participants to engage in life skill exercises through an implementation of relevant activities in a real-life setting.
- 10+ transportation training lessons to develop individualized travel goals and gain experience in navigating unplanned obstacles. Traveling while using a wheelchair can be a challenging endeavor, even for the most seasoned travelers due to the inherent inaccessibility of public transportation: in the New York City area, only about 25% of Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) stations are wheelchair accessible, making our system one of the most challenging in the world.
- A mentorship program during the summer in which alumni work one-on-one with new campers and campers who need additional support during their time at camp. Mentors have daily jobs in the office and around campus where they learn valuable skills so they can continue their journey toward independence. Mentors staff SFAH's two large off-season events – the holiday party in December and family fun day in April, running activities and sharing real life skills and experiences.
- Two to three seminars allowing younger children to seek advice from mentors in a socialized group setting and promoting parents to foster their child's independence goals. These programs educate and inform parents of younger children about their child's potential through interacting with young adults who have been through the SFAH program and who have made great strides with their own independence journey.
- A monthly podcast covering an array of topics to provide advice on the struggles faced by people with disabilities. The goal of our podcast program is to have a platform to share life-changing camp memories and provide an important resource for people of all abilities to learn the ins-and-outs of our participants' perspectives.

This new and innovative program will allow us to serve more participants and focus on the specific needs of individuals who will benefit greatly from a peer sharing real-life experiences. Now in our second year, we have documented tangible results. The HAFH program has become a permanent

addition to our year-round program offerings. In 2024 and 2025, SFAH will expand HAFH to include programming about time management, communication and caregiver recruitment and training. The popularity of this program, and demand for its services has grown.

The HAFH program is an addition to our traditional off-season programs. Each participant creates goals within five key areas:

- career/education
- independent living
- healthy living
- care management
- socialization

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 qualitative outcomes of our programs and more specifically, 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.

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. 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 Decorators-Designers-Dealers event
- Annual American 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
- Program Revenue
- Endowment Dividend Income – 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 five full-time staff members (executive director, camp director, camp coordinator, administrative associate, facility coordinator), three part-time, year-round staff members (assistant camp director, staff coordinator, facility assistant), 65-part-time/seasonal members (counselors, nurses and support staff) and more than 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 32 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.

Credentials of Key Personnel

Thomas Naro joined Southampton Fresh Air Home in 2008, and became Executive Director in 2011. As Executive Director, he supervises all programs, administrative and fundraising activities of the organization. He develops the annual operating budget and supervises all expenditures, accounts payable, accounts receivable and bookkeeping. He oversees all building and capital improvement projects, all facility/property management, financial aid for each camper, grant writing and reporting, and the yearly audit and preparation of the IRS 990. He interfaces with parents on issues regarding campers and oversees facility management personnel and office personnel as well as volunteers. Prior to joining the Southampton Fresh Air Home, Tom was Press Representative for The Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival in New York City. He served on the Board of ATPAM, the Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers and was Chairman and Treasurer of The Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter, a not-for-profit environmental group dedicated to the preservation of the beaches. Tom received a BFA from New York University in 1988.

David Billingham has been Camp Director since 2000. He began his career at the Southampton Fresh Air Home in 1993 as a Counselor. In 1996 he was appointed Head Counselor, and in 1997 he became Head of Boys Programs at the Fresh Air Home. In 1998 he was named Assistant Director and in 2000 Camp Director. David applied for and received American Camping Association accreditation. He developed a comprehensive week-long staff training program which was commended and approved by the Suffolk County Health Department. He developed innovative programs for wheelchair campers in sailing, theater and court sports (tennis and basketball). During the Home's 2008 Capital Campaign to remodel the dorms, David served as the program design liaison with architects and builders, helping to develop a fully accessible and state-of-the-art activities building. David is a member of the Association of Special Needs Camp Professionals, the New York State Camp Directors Association and the American Camping Association. David received a BA (with honors) from the University of Hull, Humberside, Great Britain in Contemporary Studies and Leisure Management. David is married and has three young children.

Eilis Welsh is the Assistant Camp Director. She has worked at SFAH since 2016, first as a counselor and off-season staff member, then a supervising head counselor. Eilis earned her clinical master's degree from Mass General Hospital's Institute of Health Professions and actively practices as a fully certified Speech Language Pathologist with a clinical interest in children with complex communication needs, assistive technology and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Eilis credits SFAH campers, staff and leadership as the community that peaked her personal and professional interests. With her credentials and passion for the SFAH mission, Eilis hopes to continue to channel her work into supporting, connecting and honoring the experiences of the disability community through off-season programming, mentorship/life skills programming and summer leadership.

Kiara Esteves the Camp Coordinator. Kiara is a recent college graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Genetics. As Camp Coordinator, she helps to facilitate the enrollment of all campers each summer. An eight-year SFAH alumna, Kiara joined the staff to develop and embolden SFAH programs for older campers and alumni to gather all of the tools they need for life after the camp experience. Kiara's goal is to ensure that every camper that comes to camp gets empowerment and motivation they need to thrive outside of camp. She has already helped to create and grow a mentorship program for young women in the STEM field at John Jay College of Criminal Justice while also mentoring a number of students from her alma mater, the Henry Viscardi School. As a young woman with a disability, Ms. Esteves says the HAFH programs are the programs she wishes she had when she was transitioning to adulthood. Kiara is very excited to use all of her experience with the campers at the Southampton Fresh Air Home.