

## Monroe Special Sports Meeting

January 13, 2016

Meeting Minutes

A meeting was held on Wednesday, January 13, 2016, for in-person bowling registration. Twenty-five people were in attendance.

New car magnets were purchased. The Soccer Stars logo was added. These were handed out at the meeting.

We collected volunteer forms. Some of the volunteers were new, and we explained how the program works, what their responsibilities are and who they should contact for absences, community service hours, etc.

We collected registration forms and payment for bowling. We were excited to see many new players. To date we have 25 registered bowlers.

A recap of the meeting minutes from the Executive Board Meeting in December was reviewed. 2016 program dates as well as meeting dates were included in these minutes. These will also be posted on our website.

The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and accepted. The current funds available are allocated for each MSS program. Don't forget in addition to the new events and opportunities available to our families, MSS will still provide the resources needed to lower the costs for activities such as the Lakewood Blue Claws Game, Somerset Patriot tickets, and Etch Farm Corn Maze. We are also working on the Grant Program and have allocated funds to support this effort.

Details of Monroe Special Sports Buddy Ball's 10-year anniversary celebration were discussed. Opening Day Parade is scheduled for April 9<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary t-shirts will be purchased and given out to attendees. This will be a great day for the community to acknowledge the program, its players and volunteers. We are hoping for a strong showing. For those who make the parade, we will be handing out goody bags, which will include tickets to a Somerset Patriots game. A parent asked if the parade was a long walk. It begins at the lower field parking lot to the upper field lot, which is manageable for our players. Buddies and volunteers will be available to anyone needing assistance.

Bob and Katie Belko will be handling the details of the day for Monroe Special Sports. They will be providing more details as they become available.

Monroe Special Sports will purchase Service Anniversary Awards. Jennifer Acquaviva is handling this.

Christian Quijano, one of our lead volunteers, presented a great idea to benefit our players. He and the varsity captain of Monroe's baseball team, Anthony Talgliafero (sp) will coordinate having one of our players at each of the home games. There are about 7-9 home games right now. They are usually played during the week at 4:00 p.m. The idea is to have the player throw out the first pitch, watch the game and receive a signed, game ball. This is very exciting, and we are hoping your child can participate. Once the baseball game schedule is available, an email will be sent with more specific information about the game and whom you can contact. We will also announce by e-mail which of our players will be participating so that we can attend and support them.

Bob Belko announced that Monroe Township Baseball Association would be arranging another "movie night" at James Monroe Park. The blow-up screens will be on the fields with popcorn and snow cones. A night game is being planned as well for Monroe Special Sports. The players will play at night, under the lights! Players' names will also be announced. Bob will keep us posted on these events.

Monroe Special Sports will be making a donation to Hope Yoga in Jamesburg. Hope Yoga is a program for special needs children. (The owner has opened a class for special needs children. ) It is not one of our programs, but a few of our kids have been participating in it on Thursdays (approx. 45 minutes). They love it. Hope is a paraprofessional in Monroe Township Schools. She is embracing of the kids, working lovingly and patient with them. Hope allows the kids to learn at their own pace, feel comfortable in this setting. Encouragement and praise are constantly shown. Since it has been so successful, MSS would

like to make this donation to open up a 6-week trial class. If anyone is interested or would like additional information, please contact Su.

### **Employment Opportunities for people with disabilities**

Employment opportunities for those with special needs can be difficult to find. The Pop In Café located at the East Brunswick Mall provides training and employment opportunities for adults with disabilities in the areas of food preparation, order fulfillment and sales. Their goal is to ensure that every adult has the opportunity to work for good.

Purchase of a popcorn tin provides 2 hours of employment to an otherwise unemployed adult with disabilities. Tins of popcorn packaged by these employees were handed out at the meeting. If you bring back the tin to the store, you will get 50% off the purchase price of another tin. The popcorn is sold at fundraisers for local sports teams and school clubs and can be purchased on line as well. They also serve a variety of other products at the store. It's a great opportunity for people to interact, share a snack while supporting others in need. For more information, you can contact Steven Bier at 201-621-2245 or email them at [steven@popincafe.net](mailto:steven@popincafe.net).

Another great program is Eden Autism Services. It is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to improve the lives of children and adults with autism. The organization has over 40 years of clinical experience and success in educating individuals with autism and training family members, educators and other professionals in these best practices.

Eden operates an adult employment program, which includes a number of its own microbusinesses to employ adults with autism. This new business is a screen-printing business for t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, bags and other items. This was developed by a parent, Andy Abere, whose son Spencer works in the program (and is a former Buddy Ball participant!). The goal of the program is to produce competitively-priced, high-quality products while simultaneously providing employment with adults with autism. The contact person is Mona Shahid at (609) 570-2620 or [mona.shahid@edenautism.org](mailto:mona.shahid@edenautism.org).

It's going to be a great year for the program with lots of activities and opportunities planned. We appreciate all of our volunteers and welcome new ones.

Jennifer Acquaviva

Secretary