



Riverwalk to offer new program for disabled young adults



Hilary Decent

The mom of a young autistic man has helped to spearhead a new program for disabled youth, even though her son will not be using it.

The struggle for parents of special needs students over the age of 22 is so dire, she had to accept day placements as soon as they became available.

However, Susan Rink is delighted that the new program will be able to help others like her son Garrett.

Following a proposal by parents of Indian Prairie School District 204 students, Riverwalk Adult Day Services found an affordable location to provide Riverwalk Recreational Services: at Grace United Methodist Church.

Ironically it is the first place the nonprofit organization used when it was founded 40 years ago. In September, the church will open its doors to students over age 22 who are no longer supported by the

school system.

Nicole Zaccaria is the Open Doors Ministry Coordinator at Grace United and a speech pathologist with District 204. She said: "When Riverwalk started 40 years ago, their first location was at Grace so it's pretty amazing coming back. We are so glad we are blessed to have the space and God brought us together. We are delighted and thrilled and looking forward to this partnership."

Grace United already has a sensory room and provides programs not only for its special needs congregants, but others in the community. The new program will include field trips for bowling and store visits, fellowship, crafts and a drum circle lead by their music director.

"The congregation is excited," Zaccaria said. "There's a dire need for help. At least our community has options, but so many families who have nowhere to go."

For Rink, the new program, which starts next month, marks the end of a campaign that started in October 2022. A group of parents presented evidence of the compel-



Garrett Rink, right, accepts a bronze medal after playing basketball in the Illinois Special Olympics in March. His mother, Susan Rink, has spearheaded a campaign to get more programs for other students like him. **SUSAN RINK**

ling need for additional services for their children who were transitioning out of district programs.

Nine months later Riverwalk, based at the Ruben Center in downtown Naperville, found what they believe is the perfect site. Although they already support adults with special needs, most are seniors.

Rink, who also has two other children, one who's Garrett's twin, said: "A disabled person gets a flat rate SSI [federal Supple-

mental Security Income] payment of \$900 a month for housing and day-to-day medical needs. It is up to parents to provide everything else. It's almost like having to get day care for my adult son. What 22-year-old wants to hang out with mom?"

Hilary Decent is a freelance journalist who moved to Naperville from England in 2007.

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NAPERVILLE NEWS DIGEST

Friendly Neighborhood Historian lecture at Naper Settlement

Naper Settlement will offer its Friendly Neighborhood Historian lecture this month with a focus on weather disasters.

The presentation, "It Came From the Skies," will be held at 6 p.m. Aug. 17 at the settlement, 523 S. Webster St., in Naperville.

Participants will learn about weather disasters and what they tell us about life in northern Illinois, settlement officials said.

Tickets are \$10 per person and participants should register at www.napersettlement.org.

Park District offers draft of master plan

The Naperville Park District will be taking resident feedback on its draft version of its 2023 master plan through Aug. 18. The master plan is used to guide the district over the next five to 10 years.

Residents can check out the draft plan at <https://online.flippingbook.com/>



North Central College in Naperville. **ERIN HEGARTY/NAPERVILLE SUN**

view/186737075/.

Comments and questions can then be sent to city planner Aileen McElDowney at amceldowney@napervilleparks.org. Resident feedback will be taken into consideration as Park District staff prepares the plan's final version, Park District officials said.

The park board will then vote on the plan at a future meeting.

According to the Park District, the 2023 master plan update is based on its mission, vision and core values as well as community surveys, demographic studies and national standards for parks and recreation facilities.

Naperville residents who attended a public open house or submitted comments via email this past spring had that feedback taken into consideration when the 2023 plan was drafted.

Will County purchasing new election equipment

Will County Clerk Lauren Staley Ferry has signed contracts to buy new election equipment to modernize the county's voting system. The clerk's office announced it is working with Governmental Business Systems, a Lisle-based

provider of Hart InterCivic election equipment, and Tenex Software Solutions.

The clerk's office is buying InterCivic's Verity line for tabulating paper ballots, reporting election results and supporting post-election audits. The equipment includes devices to assist voters with disabilities.

Hart InterCivic, a Texas-based company, provides tabulation equipment and software across the country, according to a news release from the clerk's. Governmental Business Systems will provide local support services.

The Hart InterCivic tabulators function with paper ballots that document and record a voter's intent for secure and verifiable elections, the clerk's office said. The tabulators use digital scanners to read the paper ballots. All tabulators are isolated and operate independently with no wireless communications capabilities to prevent potential exploitation by hackers, the news release said.

Tenex Software Solutions, a Florida-based company, will provide new pollbooks, a new voter registration system and a new elections management system and provide the clerk's office with the greatest efficiency, the news release states. The new pollbooks will streamline and simplify the process of checking in voters for election judges, according

to the clerk's office. The new equipment replaces outdated tabulators and voting devices and had been approved by the county board.

North Central College partners with Inside Out Club DuPage

The North Central College School of Graduate and Professional Studies has expanded its partnership with Naperville-based Inside Out Club DuPage, a nonprofit organization that helps children practice good character and leadership skills such as empathy, acceptance, perseverance and kindness.

The partnership extends the resources of the college's Cultures of Character Initiatives into elementary and middle school programs offered by Inside Out Club DuPage.

"This partnership represents the college's deep commitment to supporting our home community," Abiódún Gökè-Pariolá, provost and vice president for academic affairs, stated in a news release. "North Central faculty, staff and students have provided guidance and expertise to Inside Out Club DuPage for several years, and the addition of this partnership brings new character resources and contacts that will expand and enhance their and our outreach."

The Inside Out Club works to build a community that values good character, which requires having like-minded partners working together, its founder and executive director Marion Ruthig said in a statement.

The partnership with North Central College's Character Initiatives opens additional avenues to engage teachers and future leaders in education with the club's programs, Ruthig said.


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