

Cerebral Palsy of Westchester Holds 70th Annual Pioneer Dinner

On Wednesday, October 16, 2019, Cerebral Palsy of Westchester (CPW) held its 70th Annual Pioneer Dinner at The Surf Club on the Sound in New Rochelle. The evening was filled with dancing, laughter, eating and socializing. The Pioneer Social Club is a social recreational program that provides adults with cerebral palsy and other disabilities the unique opportunity to get together and participate in organized activities with their peers. Celebrating its 70th year, the club honored three special individuals: Sean-Paul Denis, Kevin James O'Neill, and John Tripodi.

The Friendship Award is presented annually to individuals who have given their time and energy to help others. This year, John Tripodi and Kevin James O'Neill of BSA Troop 1 of Purchase were honored for their acts of service to CPW.

John Tripodi, a retired financial executive at Kraft General Food and resident of Purchase, along with his wife, Ailisa, advocates for volunteerism and community service. John is the treasurer of the Westchester-Putnam Council of the Boy Scouts of America and has served as Purchase Troop 1's Committee Chair for the past 24 years. John has overseen 34 Eagle Scout Projects, five of which have benefitted CPW. The most recent project, which took place this past August, included the exterior wall painting and mural installation for the newly constructed adaptive playground, Harmony Park, located on CPW's David G. Osterer Center in Rye Brook.

Eagle Scout candidate Kevin James O'Neill is a junior at Blind Brook High School in Rye Brook, where he is active in sports as well as the arts. To obtain the Eagle rank, Kevin is required to lead a community service project. In addition to the original project proposal of the exterior wall painting, Kevin offered to paint a mural that would illustrate the meaning of the playground. He fundraised for supplies and developed a work plan, as well as organized a team of 18 volunteers who worked for six days in August and completed the project on schedule. His mural, entitled, "No Boundaries" features a blue sky with fluffy clouds and colorful hot-air balloons. Kevin explains, "Just like the sky welcomes all balloons, Harmony Park provides access to us all to enjoy the playground."

The Martie Osterer Award is given each year to a Pioneer Club member who has made strides to live life to the fullest. This year's recipient is Sean-Paul Denis. Sean-Paul currently lives with St. Dominic's Home McHale Residence. He is the leader of his peers at the residence who depend on him to stay informed about schedules and events. Lisa Ferri, CPW's adult recreation coordinator and director of the Pioneer Club remarks, "Sean-Paul Denis is a friendly, handsome, and caring young man. With his stylish shades and impeccable suits and outfits, he appears to be a famous gentleman." Sean-Paul is bilingual in English and Spanish. He has a beautiful singing voice, wowing crowds at the Pioneer Club's Annual Talent Show and Empire City Casino's Karaoke Night. Recently, Sean-Paul has taken up photography. During the event, the Pioneer Club presented him with a camera so he can practice his newly discovered passion.

With a membership of over 200, Pioneer Club members plan activities with the assistance of CPW staff, under the direction of adult recreation coordinator Lisa Ferri. Membership is available to adults 18 years or older who have a disability and reside in Westchester or a surrounding county. Members take part in a variety of activities including theater, talent and magic shows, movies, bingo nights, arts and crafts, overnight weekend trips, summer barbeque, and holiday and theme parties. For more information about The Pioneer Club, contact Lisa Ferri at: 914-937- 3800 ext. 345 or email info@cpwestchester.org.



Friendship Award Honorees John Tripodi (L) and Kevin O'Neill (R) with CPW Board President Richard Osterer (CL) and CPW Executive Director Linda Kuck (CR). Photo by Angela Licht