

CPW's Disability Awareness Team Holds Sessions with PT Doctoral Students at Shenandoah University

Rye Brook, NY, October 22, 2020 – Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's (CPW) Disability Awareness Team participated in two sessions in October (October 13 and 20, 2020) via Zoom with current second-year physical therapy doctoral students at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. CPW staff, participants, and one parent shared their physical therapy experiences with a physical therapy class of 60 students led by Dr. Melissa Wolff-Burke, Associate Director of Clinical Education and Associate Professor at Shenandoah University's Division of Physical Therapy.



Two Screenshots captured during Zoom sessions.

Disability Awareness Team members Lucas Dassler, Jennifer Feltenstein, Ollie Lowery, Claudia Tomkins and Keith Parker have varying disabilities, enabling each of them to share differing physical therapy experiences. The team gave a disability awareness presentation with singing, wheelchair dancing, puppets, and poetry that the group has been presenting at local Westchester County elementary schools the past two years. CPW's Vocational Coordinator and Community Developer Felice Gritz and Choral Director Pooja Khurana headed the sessions, with Executive Director Linda Kuck providing an introduction about the scope and impact of CPW's programs, and the importance of physical therapists. Although held virtually, the sessions created an impactful and tangible connection between the physical therapy students and the participants.

The Disability Awareness Team discussed their unique interactions with physical therapists over the years, and Richard Feltenstein (Jennifer Feltenstein's father) added a parent's perspective. Each of CPW's Disability Awareness Team members shared personal stories to help the class of prospective therapists understand the significant improvement that physical therapy has made for each of them, how physical therapy benefits those in the disabled community, and how strong therapist/patient relationships can evolve. Attendees participated in a Q&A exchange, where CPW's team as well as the university students had a chance to ask each other questions. The sessions not only informed students entering the physical therapy field about a community that relies on physical therapy to live life to the fullest, but also offered CPW's Disability Awareness Team members insight into a group that has significantly aided their physical progression over the years.

Quotes

"I absolutely loved the speakers today... all of it. In the middle of studying for exams, in the midst of a pandemic, when there is a lot of confusion and division between different communities, this was exactly what I needed. They are such a refreshing group, and did a wonderful job not only catching my attention but shedding light on the community they have around them." - Physical Therapy Doctoral Student at Shenandoah University

"This group [the CPW Disability Awareness Team], without a doubt, is the hardest working, most devoted group of people, that you will ever meet." – Felice Gritz, CPW Vocational Coordinator and Community Liaison

"One of the coolest parts of this program for me is that I get to shed a good light on the disabled community by showing the abilities some of us do have." – Lucas Dassler, CPW Board Member and Disability Awareness Team Participant

*Winchester, Virginia's **Shenandoah University** is a private university established in 1875. The University blends professional career experiences and liberal education, with a core mission to inspire individuals to be critical, reflective thinkers; lifelong learners; and ethical, compassionate citizens who are committed to making responsible contributions within a community, a nation, and the world. The school's Division of Physical Therapy offers a three-year Doctorate in Physical Therapy for individuals who have previously received a Bachelor of Science.*

*Now in its 71st year, **Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's** mission is to advance the independence, productivity, and full citizenship of people with all developmental disabilities including autism, neurological impairments, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy. Through a comprehensive network of educational programs, residential sites, therapeutic services, employment training, recreation programs and advocacy, the agency helps thousands of children and adults in Westchester and Fairfield Counties live more productive and satisfying lives. The organization's motto is: Realizing Tomorrow's Potential . . . Today!*

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