

The United Preschool Center's 10th Annual Autism Acceptance Celebration *Building awareness and acceptance of people with autism, one leaf at a time!*

April 29, 2022 - CPW's United Preschool Center (UPC) hosted its 10th Annual Autism Acceptance Celebration today as part of National Autism Acceptance Month. The day's celebration included the unveiling of the Tree of Friendship and Acceptance, a collaborative art project led by teacher Donna Hysler, an outdoor parade in the sunshine, and a performance by UPC music teacher Mark Pethtel, a musician and teaching artist from Shake, Rattle & Roll.

The Tree of Friendship and Acceptance was created to build awareness and acceptance of people with autism. Each classroom worked together to bring the tree to life, using recycled paper to create all the elements - including the squirrel, birds, flowers, butterflies, and a giant sun. The Tree of Friendship and Acceptance is now on display in the UPC lobby.



Left, The Tree of Friendship and Acceptance on display in the United Preschool Center lobby. Right, Mark Pethtel performing for the students of the United Preschool Center. Photo credit Honora Banks

This beautiful annual event concluded a month-long fundraiser in honor of National Autism Acceptance Month. This year, funds were raised for the UPC speech department, expanding the resources and tools used by the students. Donations came from family and friends, and were recognized on each leaf hung on the Tree of Friendship and Acceptance. Throughout the month of April, in recognition of National Autism Acceptance Month, individuals and organizations work together to build acceptance and awareness of people with autism and fostering worldwide support.

All of us here at UPC are thankful to the family and friends whose gave so generously. Your support will allow our speech program to grow. - Marcy Weintraub, United Preschool Director. Mr. Mark, as the students call him, is a new addition to the UPC program this year, leading music classes each week. Mark

Pethtel comes from **Shake, Rattle & Roll**, a local Westchester organization that offers high energy, multicultural, early childhood music and movement programs, that support musical learning and development. Shake, Rattle & Roll works with daycare centers, schools, and camps, in addition to offering outdoor parent-child classes in local parks in Westchester.

The United Preschool Center (UPC), located at 456 North Street in White Plains, offers an integrated learning experience for children with and without disabilities. Within a safe, friendly, and nurturing environment, children grow together through integrated programs with activities designed to meet each child's intellectual, physical, and social needs. Program administrators collaborate with various school districts throughout Westchester County, and UPC is an authorized Universal Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten program site for the White Plains School District. UPC is a division of Cerebral Palsy of Westchester. For more information go to <https://cpwestchester.org/united-preschool/>

About Cerebral Palsy of Westchester: With a main campus located in Rye Brook and now in its 73rd year, CPW'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, day services, 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!*



The students of the United Preschool Center during their parade. Photo credit Honora Banks

For even more information, visit these websites:

<https://cpwestchester.org/united-preschool/>

<https://cpwestchester.org/>

<https://shakerattleandrollmusic.com/>

<https://autismsociety.org/>