

Elementary school celebrates Kleefstra Awareness Day

BY HOPE PATTI
THE COAST STAR

MANASQUAN — In a show of support for 4-year-old Raymond Anderson, Manasquan Elementary School students and staff donned the color purple on Thursday, Sept. 17 in honor of Kleefstra Awareness Day.

According to Raymond's mother, Maureen Anderson, Raymond was born with Kleefstra syndrome — a rare genetic abnormality, which caused a deletion in his ninth chromosome.

When Raymond was born he was only one of 500 diagnosed with Kleefstra syndrome. Now at 4 years old, he is one of 1,000, which Ms. Anderson attributed to increased testing.

As done last year, the Manasquan Elementary School celebrated Raymond on Sept. 17, bringing extra attention to Kleefstra syndrome.

"We had great participation," said Kim Murin, a special education teacher who spends the school day with Raymond. "I think it's important and it's heartwarming, and it makes a difference."

"It was really a sea of purple in Manasquan. It was neat to see the entire school community come out in support of him and his family, and what he means to us," she said. "Obviously we make Kleefstra Awareness Day extra special, but we really celebrate Raymond every day."

The school also held "rock the rare genes day," which permitted faculty to wear jeans so long as they made a donation to Kleefstra syndrome research in Raymond's name.

Ms. Anderson said it was incredible to see the support shown for Raymond since starting school, however, she was anxious in the beginning fearing that he would be excluded or bullied.

"Last year I was definitely nervous about it all because he is different. He's our oldest child so we don't have any other kids in the school system and nobody knows us," Ms. Anderson said.

Being that Kleefstra syndrome is so rare Ms. Anderson said she wanted to educate others so they feel more comfortable approaching Raymond so she sent letters to parents and teachers explaining who her son is.



COURTESY OF MAUREEN ANDERSON

Kim Murin, a special education teacher at Manasquan Elementary School, and Raymond Anderson wear purple to celebrate Kleefstra Awareness Day on Thursday, Sept. 17.

"I think a lot of people see him and they don't really know what to say or do ... because he's super smiley, but he isn't able to say hello to you. He's the happiest little man out there and he communicates in his own way in terms of getting his needs across to us," she said.

"My husband and I thought it was incredibly important to try and make a place for him in the community," she said, which is why they enrolled Raymond in Manasquan Elementary School.

As any parent would want for their child, Ms. Anderson said she hoped the communi-

ty would embrace and get to know Raymond, and accept his differences. Now, she said, children frequently stop to say hello to Raymond when they see him around town.

Like Ms. Anderson, Ms. Murin also emphasized the importance of educating others about Raymond and Kleefstra syndrome in order to foster inclusivity.

"The kids in Manasquan have really stepped up — like I knew they would, the school environment is very inclusive. A little bit of knowledge has gone a long way," Ms. Murin said.

In his less than two years at Manasquan Elementary School, she said Raymond has made quite an impact.

"Raymond is super special in our school. As much as he's a 4-year-old preschooler, he's a very big personality in our school," Ms. Murin said. "All of the kids know who he is and all of the kids have completely embraced him in our school environment, which is fantastic."

"We feel pretty lucky that he's in our building and we get to be around him every day," she added.

With inclusivity in mind, Ms. Anderson also approached the borough last about creating an ADA compliant playground at Curtis Park that would meet the needs of all children.

"All of our playgrounds, while they may theoretically check the box for ADA compliance, are really difficult for any child to navigate that uses an assisted device for walking," Ms. Anderson said.

"There's not a park in town that I can bring my son to because he can't play at any of them. I know that there are other kids in the same situation, [but] we just don't see them," she added.

The goal, she said, would simply be to have children of

different abilities playing and enjoying the park together.

The borough recently filed an open space grant application with Monmouth County seeking \$250,000 for its multi-park playground improvements project aimed at Skokos Park and Curtis Park.

Curtis Park improvements, presented at the Sept. 8 council meeting, include: ADA-compliant, barrier-free, inclusive playground equipment and rubberized surface; ADA walkway and parking improvements; picnic tables, benches, and a canopy for shade; bike racks and water stations; fencing; restroom facilities; bocce ball court installation; and the relocation of monuments and removal of brick pavers as needed.

At the meeting Council President Mike Mangan noted that there are only a few inclusive parks in Monmouth County, which is something Ms. Anderson would like to see change.

"There's a big push for inclusive parks," she said, adding that she would love to see every municipality have their own or a shared park that features inclusive and accessible equipment. Since coming forward with the idea, she said, others have also come forward to voice their support.

PUBLIC NOTICE

**MANASQUAN
HYDRANT FLUSHING**
Monday, Sept. 28, 2020
thru Friday Oct. 9, 2020
8:00am-3:00pm
Please be advised
not to do laundry during these hours.



The Manasquan Water Department will begin its bi-annual hydrant flushing. Please be advised that some discolored water may be experienced during this time. To eliminate this harmless discoloration, turn on cold faucets and leave open until the water runs clear. Thank you for your patience during this time.

Any problems or questions please feel free to contact Superintendent Kevin Thompson at kthompson@manasquan-nj.gov or call 732-223-0544 ext. 550.

The Samaritan Center receives \$20K donation for counseling

Raises \$32K during remote fundraiser

BY HOPE PATTI
THE COAST STAR

MANASQUAN — The Samaritan Center at the Jersey Shore was recently presented with a \$20,000 donation from the Mariner Wealth Advisors' local branch.

Senior wealth advisors George Steiner and Nicholas Raffetto, and associate wealth advisor Amanda Salemi stopped by the Samaritan Center on Wednesday, Sept. 16 to deliver the check to board members at the center.

"The Mariner Wealth Advisors office in Manasquan was one of the award recipients of the company's 2019 Giving Back Campaign, where employees were encouraged to volunteer their time and fundraise," accord-



COURTESY OF CAROLANN CAVIOLA

Advisors from the Manasquan branch of Mariner Wealth Advisors presented two checks totaling \$20,000 to The Samaritan Center at the Jersey Shore on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

ing to a statement from Ms. Salemi.

"The prize was the privilege to choose a local organization to bequeath a gift to, directly from both The Mariner Foundation and the CEO's Bicknell Family Foundation. The unanimous

choice for the group was The Samaritan Center at the Jersey Shore."

The Mariner Foundation, which is the charitable arm of Mariner Wealth Advisors run by the company's employees, focuses on supporting children and families in need,

according to Ms. Salemi. Associates are able to donate to the foundation through payroll deductions and each dollar donated is matched by the firm.

In addition, the Samaritan Center raised \$32,000 from its Lunchless Luncheon, also on Sept. 16, which was held in lieu of the center's annual traditional luncheon and auction.

According to Carolann Caviola, executive director of the center, the fundraiser was a great success that was "attended" by many of the event's usual guests.

While there was no formal gathering, Rev. Cindy Wilcox, a chaplain at Jersey Shore Medical Center, led a virtual prayer reminding guests of the work that the center does.

"Nothing can keep us from being united in spirit, in heart, mind and soul for the Samaritan Center mission of caring for community members that are weary and heavy laden, and need to be reminded they are loved and they are not alone," Rev. Wilcox said.

The Samaritan Center, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, offers counseling and support services for various traumas, tragedies and stressful life events.

The donations from Mariner Wealth Advisors and the luncheon will benefit clients of the center who are unable to afford counseling services, which is an issue that has worsened as a result of the pandemic, Ms. Caviola said.

She said the center is also preparing for its return to in-person counseling, however, services will be offered virtually until further notice.

For more information about the Samaritan Center, visit <https://njsamaritan.org/>.

Hope Patti can be reached at hpatti@thecoaststar.com or 732-223-0076 Ext 49.

Squan

With the craziness in our country this year, remember when you get your ballot...

VOTE LOCAL in 2020

1. Mail your ballot back right away
2. Drop your ballot off at the Wall Township municipal building
3. Bring your ballot to St. Denis School on Election Day



Please reach out if you have any thoughts or suggestions about how we can continue to improve Manasquan.

mail@squancampaign.com

In Manasquan, the government has helped where it could... and stayed out of the way where it should.



Paid for by Lee & Mangan for Council—66 Parker Ave, Manasquan NJ 08736