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MAY 26 - JUNE 8, 2015

## Free tuition for adults on autism spectrum for life skills training

BY ROBERT HAMILTON

One in 68 children today has an autism spectrum disorder according to the most recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Autism does not end when children reach adulthood and most will continue to need some type of services or supports. About a half million youth on the autism spectrum will age out of eligibility for special education supports over the next decade.

Approximately one in four young adults with autism received no services like speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, vocational services or career counseling, or mental health during their early 20s. Approximately 58 percent of young adults and their parents said they needed services other than what they were receiving. The most common service needs were vocational or job training (37 percent) and life skills services (32 percent).

The Carrie Brazer Center for Autism is filling the gap for much needed programming developed specifically for those adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's), who have graduated from high school, yet still require additional guidance and training to enable them to transition to more independent living. The Carrie Brazer Center for Autism has announced that the Adult Life Skills and Vocational Training Program, "Building Futures," is available for the rest of their lives, free of charge, with Med-Waiver.

The Carrie Brazer Center for Autism offers adults on the autism spectrum a life-enhancing alternative to staying at home or attending an adult day care facility. The center is one of the very few adult facilities to practice the principles of Conscious Discipline and Positive Discipline.

Conscious Discipline teaches the most basic skills needed to handle any difficult emotional situations for active calming. Conscious Discipline increases learning and success: specific language, behavior descriptors, visual supports, routines, rituals and, of course, the teaching of new skills. Positive Discipline empowers the students to feel a sense of connection.

The students are respected and encouraged. Methods are effective long-term. Instead of punishment, the students are offered logical choices to aid them to make the right decisions. The students learn valuable social and life skills for good character like respect, concern for others, problem-solving, and cooperation.

A primary component of the program involves taking students on weekly community outings to increase socialization skills and to generalize skills learned in the classroom. For instance, students go to local grocery stores to learn healthy food choices, how to read prices, and to use their money management skills by going through the checkout line and paying for the purchases.

Other outings include going to the library and picking out books, reading stories, and assisting the librarians by restocking books properly on the shelves; riding on the Metrorail and learning how to use public transportation; job training at Marshall's Department stores assisting with sorting and stocking merchandise, and learning how to wash and dry clothes at a laundromat.

In addition, they are taught how to make simple meals, maintain personal hygiene and a myriad other tasks which empower them to become more independent and self-confident individuals.

The curriculum is designed to keep the

participants active and engaged. The students have daily physical activities at local parks, in addition to horseback riding and swimming lessons, which also are an integral part of their physical education activities. Each class is limited to 10 students and is staffed by teachers and aides who are experienced in working with individuals with ASD's and are dedicated to "Building Futures" to ensure a more independent and fulfilling life-style for their students.

In addition to "Building Futures," the Carrie Brazer Center for Autism offers programming for all individuals on the autism spectrum. "Building Foundations," the Early Intervention Program is available for children ages 2-5 and "Building Fundamentals," the Full Day School Program is available for students ages 5-22. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities and Florida PLSA are accepted as payment toward tuition for the Day School program. Out-of-school programs are available after school, on Saturdays, and during holidays, Teacher Work Days, Winter, Spring and Summer breaks for all ages.

The Carrie Brazer Center for Autism, located at 8790 SW 94 St., Miami, FL 33176, serves students ages 12 and under. For more information, call 305-271-8790 or visit the website at <[www.cbc4autism.org](http://www.cbc4autism.org)>.

The Carrie Brazer Center for Autism, located at 16905 SW 100 Ave., Miami, FL 33157, serves students from ages 13 through adulthood. To learn more about the Adult Life Skills and Vocational Training as well as middle school and high school, the public is invited to attend an Open House on Saturday, May 30, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. For more information, call 305-234-0409 or visit the website at <[www.cbc4autism.org](http://www.cbc4autism.org)>.