Questions and Comments

Questions and comments can be directed to the Recreational Therapy staff at:

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Munroe-Meyer Institute
for Genetics and Rehabilitation

A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service
Recreational Therapy Program

The Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) Recreational Therapy Program was founded in 1982, with funding from the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation for Camp Munroe, a summer day camp for children with developmental disabilities. The MMI Department of Recreational Therapy has continued to grow throughout the years, thanks to the generous support of the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation, the C. Louis Meyer Rehabilitation Foundation, the MMI Guild, the MMI Operating Board, and recently the Enrichment Foundation of Omaha, and the GWR Sunshine Foundation. Also, several private family endowments, administered through the NU Foundation, provide additional program and scholarship support.

Sixteen unique programs for children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities are available. In addition, educational opportunities, community awareness and volunteer opportunities are provided.

The MMI’s Recreational Therapy (RT) staff includes: a director, certified therapeutic recreation specialists, registered art and horticulture therapy specialists, a full time volunteer coordinator and many part-time activity therapy technicians. These trained individuals are responsible for providing a safe, positive, learning environment that emphasizes recreational and leisure experiences which are age appropriate, follow the principles of normalization and are, dedicated to maximizing each participants developmental potential. Exceptional quality of life experiences for participants and respite care opportunities for families are the dual goals of the department’s efforts.

Camp Munroe

Camp Munroe includes summer and winter day camps which run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and camp outreach inclusion placements for qualified children and youth, ages 2½ to 21. Participants may attend camp for one or more weeks, and participants are placed in small groups based on their age. Camp Munroe uses the buddy system, with each camper having either a volunteer or staff member assigned for the day. The full day curriculum includes activities such as cooking, swimming, art, music, dance, sports/games, gardening, and community outings. The purpose of all camp programs is to provide recreation, play and social interaction opportunities for the campers and peers, learning experiences for student volunteers and respite for families. Summer camp is offered Monday through Friday and runs from late June through early August. Winter camp occurs for several days in December and January.

The camp outreach program for children and youth 6 to 18 provides inclusion services at other camp programs such as the Henry Doorly Zoo Camp, YMCA, Scouts, 4-H, and other camping programs within the metro area. Typically one or more campers are provided MMI staff support.

After School Program

The After School Program is offered each fall and spring for children and youth, ages 2½ to 21. Each day from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., participants enjoy self-directed play sessions as well as structured small group activities that include cooking, swimming, art, music, sports/games and community outings. Younger children and pre-teens participate on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Youth 13 and up participate on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Saturday Recreation Program

This 9:30 a.m. to noon program is offered to 2½ to 21 year old participants. Each Saturday morning participants are placed in small age appropriate groups, and participate in a variety of structured activities such as cooking, swimming, art, music, sports/games and community outings.

Community Inclusion Social Club Transition Programs

There are two monthly clubs for 13 to 21 year olds available: the Arnold Stern Saturday Nights program, which provides for chaperoned co-educational opportunities, and the Girls Group program which seeks to encourage friendship development among female teens and young adults. Nights and times of programs vary from month to month based upon the opportunities available across various metro events including concerts, sporting events, plays, and festivals. The purpose of the programs is to provide leisure education and awareness activities within the greater community to help prepare participants for adult leisure independence and decision making.
Preschool Programs

The Splash and Play program is designed for children with developmental disabilities and typically developing peer play partners, ages 2½ to 5. Children participate in either a morning or afternoon session one day a week. Three to four age appropriate activities are offered each session designed to stimulate cooperative and parallel play skills. Activities include, swimming, art, music, sensory stimulation projects and snack time.

The Starfish program is a unique interdisciplinary program offered in conjunction with the departments of Occupational and Physical Therapy. Parents participate with their own children and are led through a variety of physical and sensory water play activities designed to make the initial orientation to swimming a fun and positive experience. This six week program is offered one night a week each fall and spring.

Adult Evening Respite and Habilitation Program

This center-based program serves participants over the age 21. The program provides weekly recreational activities and social interaction opportunities with high ratios of staff and volunteer support. Activities include cooking, swimming, art projects, social dance, karaoke, holiday theme parties and community outings. This program has fall, spring and summer enrollment opportunities and is held on Thursday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Adult Aquatic Program

This specialized program is designed for participants with extreme mobility restriction or medical fragilities requiring active transfer and in-water assistance. The program includes individualized programs of exercise, sport/game, play and social activities. Enrollment is limited to ten participants in order to ensure adequate pool space. Fall, spring and summer enrollment opportunities are available for this Tuesday evening program, which runs from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Adult Chaperoned Vacation Club

Both day and overnight trip opportunities are available on a monthly basis for participants, ages 21 and over. Small groups with high staff ratios provide for safe and high quality services. Day trip opportunities are typically 12 hour experiences with area destinations, such as Kansas City or Des Moines reached via motor coach. Trips may include theme parks, sporting events, state parks and festivals. Overnight trips are typically one to three nights, and destinations may be reached by motor coach or plane. Overnight trips include concerts, sporting events or special attractions in cities such as Minneapolis or Las Vegas. Participants are limited to one vacation experience each year, so that all members of the club can travel within a reasonable time frame. Costs to participants are minimal.

Adult Community Sports and Entertainment Club

Each month members of this club, ages 21 and over, have the opportunity to attend a local sporting event, concert or festival. Activities include Royals baseball, UNO hockey, basketball and football games, Qwest Center concerts, and City of Omaha sponsored events.

Adult Social Dining Club

This monthly club operates on the “Cuisines of the World” theme. Dining experiences throughout the city are rotated among German, Chinese, Italian and other ethnic themed restaurants to provide club members with unique dining perspectives and education. Cost to participants is minimal.

Adult Leisure Coaching Services

The leisure coaching program assists in the development of lifetime leisure skills within the community. Participants with the support of a trained activity technician, may enroll in area YMCA classes and programs, City Park and Recreation programs, and other private recreation programs. The program will pay all admission fees, provide equipment, staff support and assist with transportation so that participants may enroll in programs such as water aerobics, craft classes, dance and martial arts academies.
Social Skills School and Community-Based Programs

This program is a prescriptive service offered to middle school and high school students with Aspergers syndrome or autism spectrum disorder, who would benefit from participation. Participating districts include Westside Community Schools, Ralston and Papillion-LaVista Public Schools. The year-round program has three required components: (1) One-to-one goal directed training by certified therapeutic recreation specialists during the school day, (2) Parent assisted homework and communication log assignments, and (3) Bi-monthly attendance at weekend social clubs utilizing peer assisted practice in developing social skills and friendship circles. Participation in this program must be dually approved by the Recreation Therapy department and the host school. Cost to participants is minimal.

Autism Social Club

This program is open to adults with Aspergers syndrome or autism spectrum disorder, who would benefit from participation. The club meets bi-monthly, usually on Friday or Saturday evenings. The activities vary across concerts, sporting events, festivals and other recreation vendors depending upon the member’s interests. The goal of the club is to enrich the social opportunities for members and assist in developing friendship circles. Activity technicians and/or typically developing adult volunteers provide one-to-one support during club activities. Cost to participants is minimal.

Wheel Club

This adapted cycling club operates bi-monthly on Sunday afternoons, from April to October depending upon weather conditions. All of the club’s cycles are three and four wheeled tandem designs that allow pairing of an able companion rider with a person with disabilities. Participants can experience the enjoyment of outdoor trail riding through membership in this club. The club varies trail rides across several area park and trail systems including the Lewis and Clark landing, Lake Zorinsky, and others. Family members are encouraged to participate, and activity technicians are available to assist with cycle selection, rider fit and comfort, and to serve as co-riders if needed. In addition to trail riding, several parade event rides are scheduled, and include the St. Patrick’s Day and Fourth of July holidays as well as area festivals.

Community Gardening Club

This club operates in conjunction with the City Sprouts community garden on a seasonal basis from April to October. Participants and their families can plant and manage their own small plot of community gardening space with support from MMI recreation staff. The City Sprouts facility offers barrier free access and raised bed planting designs.

Kids on the Block

The Kids on the Block Program is an internationally known disability education and awareness program designed for elementary school children. The program utilizes large puppets with disabilities in short scripted skits to educate children about disability attributes, medical concerns, social needs, and advocacy. Bi-monthly presentations are made across the Omaha metro area and in other parts of Nebraska. The MMI troop has over 30 puppets and expertise in dozens of scripts including: autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and many more.

Volunteer Service Learning Program

Students ages 12 to 25 may volunteer for programs offered by the Department of Recreational Therapy, however adult programs are open only to persons 18 and older. Volunteers provide support to program participants to ensure safe and fun activity participation. The program strives to increase the volunteer’s awareness of individuals with disabilities. Volunteer training is required and includes instruction on safety rules, behavior management, universal precautions, use of adaptive equipment, and disability education and advocacy.

University Internship Opportunities

Undergraduate and graduate internships in therapeutic recreation are available on a year-round basis. Additional practicum and training opportunities are also available in the disciplines of art therapy, horticulture therapy, and adapted physical education. Students interested in applying for training experiences should contact the RT department director at least four months in advance of their target start date.