

★ Belmar ★

Thousands turn out for autism beach bash, surfing event in Belmar

By Brian O'Keefe
Children with autism and their families, from around the state and the region, enjoyed a day at the Seventh Avenue beach in Belmar on Sunday, during the Autism Family Services of New Jersey's [AFSNJ] fifth annual Beach Bash.

4,000 people came to the free event, which featured activities, food, and a chance for youngsters with autism to experience surfing, under the guidance of the surfers, many of them professionals, in Surfer's Healing, an organization based in California.

who has autism, has attended the beach bash the past three years.

"I think it's really fun," said Colton, who has participated in the surfing at the event. "My favorite sport is surfing. I like the water."

Near the edge of the water, family members watched as their children rode along with the surfers of Surfer's Healing. Many brought cameras, and each time a child was brought back to shore there were cheers from the crowd.

While some children preferred to keep their bodies against the surfboards while riding the waves, others stood up with the help of the surfers, who assisted them by pulling up on handles on the backs of the children's life jackets.

Among those watching on the beach were Jeff and Amy Skalecki, whose son, Stanley, 6, was surfing with Israel Paskowitz, the founder of Surfer's Healing. Stanley also surfed last year, but he stood up this year for the first time.

"He loved it," Mrs. Skalecki said of last year's event.

"He was a little gun-shy last year, but this year he couldn't wait," said Mr. Skalecki. "It's a very calming thing for him."

The surfing experience gives the children self-confidence and a feeling of accomplishment, Mrs. Skalecki said. "They feel so proud ... Every time [Stanley] looked at his trophy he was really proud ... He was on that high for a couple days."

"With a condition where you so often have challenges in society, it's an opportunity to succeed," Mr. Skalecki added.

Belford resident Joanne



JOSEPH J. DELCONZO, The Coast Star

Donovan Vix, 8, of Medford, got a surfing lesson from a volunteer with the organization Surfer's Healing, during Sunday's annual Beach Bash, held by Autism Family Services of New Jersey. More than 150 children with autism experienced surfing during the day with the help of the surfers, many of them professionals.

DWI Task Force checkpoint set for Sept. 19

The Monmouth County DWI Task Force will conduct a DWI checkpoint on Saturday, Sept. 19 in Belmar to detect drivers under the influence of alcohol and, or, drugs.

The checkpoint will be held on Route 35 from 11 p.m. on Saturday through 3 a.m. on Sunday.

Cars will be directed by police from the southbound lanes into the Belmar Marina parking lot to determine drivers' sobriety.

ST. JUDE NOVENA

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us. Say this prayer 9 times a day. Say it for 9 days. By the eighth day, your prayer will be answered. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you, St. Jude. CF

"Kids with autism have a very difficult time in large settings with large crowds," Mr. Potito explained. But at the beach bash, "everybody is in that situation," he said. "Parents find it very comforting to be here ... [They] don't worry about anyone else being on the beach, 'cause we're all in the same boat."

Autism makes it hard for people to be around others and relate to them, resulting in "a real isolation," said Mr. Potito. An event like the beach bash can relieve that isolation because it "sort of forces that issue," he said.

The event took place with help from Whole Foods, the Borough of Belmar, the Belmar Fishing Club and Belmar EMS.

Among the attractions at the beach bash were arts and crafts, dancing with hula hoops and limbo poles, a live DJ and yoga for the parents.

Over the years, the event, which started in Long Branch as a surfing camp, has grown from several hundred attendees to thousands.

Mr. Hines' son, Colton, 11,

Grodek brought her daughter, Rosie, 9, for the third year. "She loves it. It's a big event ... She was raring to go."

The experience for Ms. Grodek of watching from the shore was "a little scary," she said. "But I know how she loves it, so if she's not fearful, I can't be."

Many children with autism rarely talk, but when they get on the water they talk to the surfers, Mr. Potito said. "Something changes, something happens" during the experience, he said.

"They come back all happy," said Ms. Grodek. "So the ocean does something."

Among the surfers taking the children out was Nick Hernandez, of Laguna Beach, Calif., who has volunteered with Surfer's Healing for 10 years.

"It's one of the most rewarding feelings I've ever had," Mr.

Hernandez said of the experience, adding he is "hooked on it."

Numerous other people volunteered at the beach bash. Volunteer Jay Sheridan, of

Freehold, said it was about "giving back to the kids ... They love the attention."

"The parents love it the most," said Mr. Hernandez.



JOSEPH J. DELCONZO, The Coast Star

Belmar's Seventh Avenue beach was filled with the happy faces of children with autism, and their families, on Sunday, during Autism Family Services of New Jersey's fifth annual Beach Bash.

KEEPING IT LOCAL!
Shop Your Neighborhood Wireless Store
"You can always count on US!"
Terry & Snickers
Unlimited Communications
1818 Hwy. 35, Wall
Next to Boston Market
732-681-9009

THE LIGHT THAT TREATS ALL SKIN CARE NEEDS
A new technology can now treat unsightly leg veins, unwanted hair, sun damage, and the signs of aging. Intense pulsed light (IPL) uses controlled flashes of light to resolve these imperfections with no down time, right in the office.
Skin First
2401 Hwy. 35, Manasquan, NJ 08736
732-600-8497
CALL FOR YOUR FREE CONSULTATION.

Take the **PUZZLE** out of finding the right Heating & Air-Conditioning Contractor!
F I O Q I L A M O R W B F
D A U Q X M K W I R O E J
I F M T A E L Q N X W Z K
P X O I L J Y A N D N E S
V N P U L G C D P Y E W Q
W R H T I Y Q L O S D X E
X O P E R A T E D J M T P
I K E R B Q S E M N Y I O
Find the "Four Word Phrase" and receive **\$150 OFF** a Heating and/or Air Conditioning System.
TOM ROSTRON CO. INC.
— HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING —
Manasquan • 732-223-8221
www.tomrostron.com

Cafe Bocelli's
Home of the Famous
3" Veal Chop & Tiramisu
featuring **CHEF REGGIO**
formerly of Reggio's Ristorante
ITALIAN CUISINE - SEAFOOD
STEAKS & CHOPS
SUNDAY
Early Bird 1-4pm • Dinner 1-8pm
TUES-THURS
Early Bird 3-6pm • Dinner 3-9pm
SATURDAY
Early Bird 3-5pm • Dinner 3-10pm
Closed Mondays
Small Private Parties ~ Corporate Events
On or Off Premise Catering
Showers - Luncheons - Repast
WE OFFER A FULL RANGE OF CATERING SERVICE.
ALL DISHES ARE PREPARED TO ORDER USING ONLY THE FINEST AND FRESHEST INGREDIENTS!
VISA & MASTERCARD ACCEPTED
Located at 714 Main Street • Bradley Beach
(Across from City Hall)
732.988.8111