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HEADLINE: Westford students give youngsters a 'Better Start'

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From left, Erin Lafleche, Meghan Hurley, Jennifer Girardi, Sage Riddick, Megan Walter, and, in front, Justin and Juliana Lafleche.

Sun staff photos can be ordered by visiting our MyCapture site.

WESTFORD -- Westford Academy seniors Meghan Hurley, Megan Walter and Sage Riddick recently held a fundraiser, Art For a Better Start, with help from their teacher Jennifer Girardi, as a senior project. The trio collected donated artwork from Westford Academy students (including their own) and local artists. These pieces were auctioned off at the event to raise money for the organization Specs For Little Heroes. As well as the auction, the event included games, food, arts and crafts, face painting, and a puppet show by students from WATA (Westford Academy Theater Arts).

Specs For Little Heroes was started by Erin Lafleche and her family after their son, Justin, was diagnosed at age 3 with Retinoblastoma. Retinoblastoma is a rare cancer that affects the eyesight in young children. Often, children will lose an eye and the remaining good eye, or good parts of their eyes that can be used for sight, need to be protected. Special glasses (or specs) are prescribed to protect their eyes from further damage. Lafleche started the organization when she found out that the glasses Justin needed were not covered by insurance. She started Specs For Little Heroes to help other families whose insurance also does not cover the cost of the glasses.

Discovery Museums receive Autism grant

ACTON -- Discovery Museums recently announced that the English Family Fund of the **Foundation for MetroWest** has granted \$30,000 to support the Museums' Especially for Me program for families

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with children on the autism spectrum. The award grants \$10,000 per year for three years and will provide capacity for the Museums to expand the program.

The Especially for Me program offers families with children on the autism spectrum private use of the Museums for free on Saturday evenings throughout the year. A music therapist is on site to work with children and the Museums offer various special events and programming such as performances by the Open Door Theatre Company and discussions with relevant healthcare professionals. Museum staff have been specially trained to support these families by the Autism Alliance of MetroWest.

Teacher's Night Out at Bull Run

SHIRLEY - Drs. Stephen and Pamela Jarboe of Community Chiropractic in Groton invite local teachers to a free night out on Wednesday, June 5, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at The Bull Run Restaurant, 215 Great Road. The event is co-sponsored by The Bull Run Restaurant, Acu4Life Acupuncture in Groton, and Groton Board of Trade. Admission is exclusively for teachers.

This annual event honors the countless hours that teachers give in service to children in local communities. Participants may enjoy free food and drink, chair massages by Solas Therapeutic Massage and Centered Massage Therapy of Groton, live music, and a free raffle and giveaways with items and services donated by local businesses.

Entry is free. Teachers can call 978-448-9355 to make a reservation. For information, visit www.ItsForYourLife.com.

Sunshine Gals serving Girls and Boys Club

BILLERICA -- The Sunshine Gals, Inc., a non-profit organization, are now serving suppers to children who are members of the Billerica Girls and Boys Club each Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the club.

Elks' continue tradition of serving disabled

NASHUA -- Elks volunteers recently served dinner to attendees at The PLUS Company dance. The Elks Lodge #720 has been serving spaghetti dinners and providing a venue for dances to clients served by The PLUS Company for almost twenty years.

The PLUS Company, a non-profit agency, serves adults with intellectual disabilities and traumatic brain injuries. The main office of the agency is located in Nashua, with two satellite offices in Tewksbury and Lawrence. The agency provides supports and services allowing each client to become as independent as possible.

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Highlights: Foundation for MetroWest