

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

By Deanne Detmers

All parents find providing their child with after-school activities challenging. Having your child with hours of down-time each day is far from ideal for every parent. Yet for the parent of a child with special needs, this task can be even more daunting as the options of after-school activities for children who require additional support or structure are extremely limited. Below is a comprehensive list of after-school programs specifically for kids with special needs. If we have left your favorite program off this list, please let us know as we are eager to provide families with as many options as possible.

6 Seconds Synapse Institute (Palo Alto)

This program is designed for high functioning students ages 5-14 with autism or Asperger's Syndrome. It meets from 3:30-5:30pm twice per week and emphasizes peer interaction through multi-media projects. For more information, go to their website at www.6seconds.org/synapse or phone 650.520.7124.

Alacosta Center (Oakland)

The Alacosta Center offers afterschool programs for students ages 5-22 who have a range of disabilities. Services occur Monday through Friday from 2-6pm (during holidays and the summer the program runs from 9am-6pm). There is a Berkeley location and an Oakland location. For more information, please visit: www.alacostacenter.org or call 510.527.2550 (Berkeley) and 510.383.3200 (Oakland)

BIA – The Village Clubhouse (Oakland)

BIA's Clubhouse in Oakland is for students ages 5-12 who have a diagnosis of autism. Participants meet 1x per week from 3:30-5:00pm (time may vary). Sessions last 8 weeks and each session has a theme. BIA runs a Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer session. For more information, please phone 510.652.7445, extension 10.

Communication Works (Oakland)

Communication Works in Oakland provides after-school groups for ages 3 years old to adults. Groups consist of 3-4 students and meet 1x weekly for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Groups run from September through June and are most appropriate for students working on high-level social skills. For more information visit: www.cwtherapy.com or call 510.639.2929.

Head Over Heels Gymnastics (Emeryville)

In partnership with BIA, HOH in Emeryville is offering specific gymnastics classes for children on the autism spectrum. Classes are fun and have an individualized approach to the needs of each student. Students improve their gross motor skills and gain confidence in a supported peer setting. These classes are well-staffed at low traffic gym times. They meet for 1 hour per week

and also offer 1 free trial class. For more information, please contact them at www.hohgymnastics.com or call 510.655.1265

Kaleidoscope After-School Program (Dublin)

The Kaleidoscope program in Dublin offers recreation, education and socialization for 5-22 year old students with a variety of disabilities. It is run by Easter Seals and meets daily. For more information contact Matt McAlear at mmcalear@esba.org or phone 510.835.2131, ext 161.

Quest Therapeutic Programs (Alamo, Oakland, San Francisco)

The Quest afterschool program meets 1x per week from 3:30-5:30pm in either Alamo, Oakland or San Francisco. It is for students ages 5 and up who are average to above average intelligence but have social or emotional difficulties. For more information, please visit their website at: www.questcamps.com or phone: 1.925.743.1370

Special Skater Program

This program is a learn-to-skate program for people with special needs. It meets every Friday from 4-5pm at the Oakland Ice Center. For information, please visit their website at: www.oaklandice.com or phone: 510.268.9000, ext. 101.

Super Kids (Piedmont)

Super Kids is an after-school program that meets 2x per week from 3:00-5:00pm in Piedmont. The focus of the program is on community, recreation and social skills. For more information please contact: superkidscamp@hotmail.com or call Andrea Nguyen at 510.334.0339 or email her at andreavu@yahoo.com.

If you have heard of an after-school program or extracurricular activity that would interest your child but they do not cater to children with special needs, speak to the program director. You may be able to enroll your child in an undersubscribed class with lower teacher: student ratios or the organization may be amenable to your child coming with an assistant. These dialogues are important as they de-mystify diagnoses, educate people about the capabilities of people with special needs, and create new avenues of access much needed in the community.