



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## The show goes on: Sen. Murphy announces grant to fund theater program for special needs kids

TERRENCE MURPHY August 11, 2017

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Croton Falls, NY - Senator Terrence Murphy is pleased to announce the Yellow Finch Project has been awarded a \$2,000 grant from ArtsWestchester that will help kids with special needs reach for the sky. The grant will support their dramatic arts programs for children and teens, particularly those with autism.

The Yellow Finch Project is made up of a group of professional actors, teachers, therapists

and mental health specialists working together to create and develop a unique repertoire of theater games. The Project's mission is to enhance the lives of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other social-communication issues through dramatic arts. This unique program opens doors for children who struggle with communication and social skills. Students with special needs learn to use their imagination and explore their emotions within a supportive environment while they interact with others.

"Studies have shown that children with autism can see big gains in socialization, communication and other skills by participating in live performances," said Senator Murphy. "The performers and staff of the Yellow Finch Project help children with autism find their own voice and they teach them social skills in a fun and positive way."

North Salem Town Supervisor Warren Lucas said, "We applaud the Yellow Finch Project, its volunteers and the work they do with children with autism. Children with autism are not given many opportunities to participate in interaction and emotion as enjoyable experiences and the Yellow Finch Project works to supply those experiences. The program is a great asset to the families of children with Autism and the hamlet of Croton Falls."

"Many of these children struggle with finding community activities to participate in. Attending public events or going on a school field trip can be difficult and overwhelming to a child with sensory issues. Our team utilizes theater and special education professionals to create a safe, welcoming, and interactive environment," said Tara O'Boyle, co-founder and Artistic Director for the Yellow Finch Project. "Our Arts Westchester grant allowed us to create, produce and tour a new, interactive sensory theater production designed for an audience of children with disabilities. The feedback from the parents, educators and the children themselves was overwhelmingly positive. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to utilize an Arts Westchester grant that allowed us to create this program and share it with

so many children with special needs in the County."

Founded in 2012 and located in Croton Falls, The Yellow Finch Project is based on the "Red Kite Drama Time" curriculum created by Jacqui Russell, Artistic Director of the Chicago Children's Theater, and David Rensch. As Tara O'Boyle noted, "We were trained by Jackie during a hurricane and have since taken the world by storm." The Project's presentations and sessions are tailored to the age, levels and abilities of each particular audience.

The Project debuted "A Wisp of Air" in March 2017, a new interactive sensory theater production designed for children with disabilities. "A Wisp of Air" was performed throughout Westchester County, including the Pound Ridge Elementary School, The Westchester Exceptional School in Purdy's, The Somers Community Center and the Rebecca Turner School in Mount Vernon.

The Yellow Finch Project is a member of the Arts and Education program of Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES. Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES Arts in Education is a comprehensive support service that provides a cost-effective way for school districts to bring arts programs to their students.

ArtsWestchester grants reach every part of the County and make possible an extraordinary array of cultural activities including funding for cultural organizations, individual artists, museums, galleries, concerts community choruses, theaters, and orchestras.