

Actors Gymnasium Announces Special Needs Pilot Program - Evanston RoundTable



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The Actors Gymnasium (AG) is starting a pilot program serving children and adults with disabilities. Initially, the program will offer classes tailored for students with autism, age 10-14, and students with Down Syndrome who are age 16 years and older. Additional classes will be added based on community interest.

Circus Arts offers a non-competitive, creative recreational opportunity that allows individuals to shine. Taught by certified instructors, classes will provide instruction in a variety of circus disciplines, including aerial arts, tumbling, and dance in a safe and supportive environment. Students will receive individualized attention and be coached according to their ability, helping them to develop confidence in a community of their peers.

Parents within the Actors Gymnasium community saw the growth in confidence that students experienced in private lessons and workshops and knew the potential AG's open environment could bring to students with special needs.

When they approached Executive Director Virginia Nugent with the idea, she saw it as a perfect opportunity to help another community "learn to fly" physically, emotionally, and creatively.

The ability to launch a new pilot program is largely due to support from the Noyes Tenants Association and The City of Evanston to get an additional teaching space in the Noyes Cultural Arts Center. This new space opened up a number of new



An Actors Gymnasium instructor supporting a student with special needs during a private lesson.
Photo from Actors Gymnasium

possibilities for the non-profit.

Open House will be held at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., on Sept. 11, 6 p.m. for students with Down Syndrome and Sept. 14 at 7:30 p.m. for students with Autism to introduce parents and students to the space. Interested parties are asked to email their interest to specialneeds@actorsgymnasium.org.