

Knights of Columbus donate to program

Money will fund On Your Mark classes for autistic children

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Members of the Manresa Council Knights of Columbus, New Dorp, last night presented Gene Spatz, executive director of On Your Mark, with a \$1,500 donation in recognition of the facility's work with autistic children.

Autism is a rare, severe developmental disorder that begins before 4 years of age. The condition appears as a group of symptoms, the most notable of which is the inability to relate socially to people.

"It's an honor to be helping out this organization because what

they do for these kids is wonderful. We have taken them as our special project," said Charles Murphy Jr., past grand knight, during yesterday's bimonthly meeting.

Funds were raised through a June 13 softball game at the council's softball field in New Dorp Beach, where the Staten Island Baseball Oldtimers faced off against players from several of the borough's Knights of Columbus softball teams.

Although the softball game is a "new tradition" for the council, the group has hosted a golf outing for the past five years to raise

extra money for the West Brighton facility.

"With all the budget cuts, we try to do a little better for them," added Murphy, a New Dorp resident.

Murphy explained that the council first got involved with helping On Your Mark because Past Grand Knight James McCue's 12-year-old son, Matthew, is autistic and has been attending programs there for the past five years.

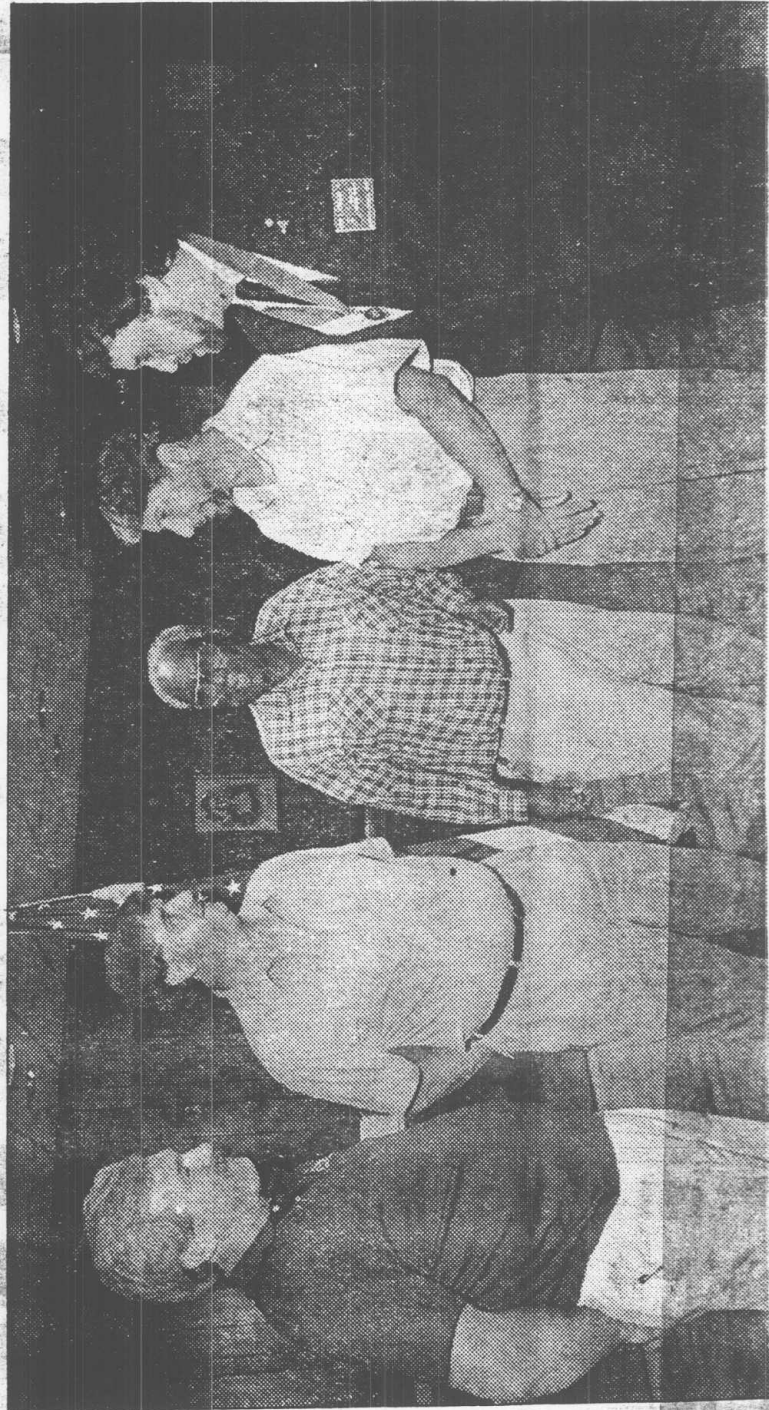
Spatz, executive director of On Your Mark, was very grateful to the council for their donation.

"We are very happy because

these monies provide lot of programming during a time of the year when money for summer programs and family support programs is low," he said.

Funds donated will be put toward various summer programs, such as the softball league, Saturday programs and the one-week trip to Camp Chenawanda in Pennsylvania.

The organization serves people with autism and other special needs, from preschoolers through adults. Activities are scheduled after school, evenings and on weekends at 12 sites on Staten Island. The agency also sponsors a cooperative summer camp program with the Jewish Community Center called Camp Tikvah.



From left, Manresa Council members Charles Murphy, Jim McCue, Robbie Robinson pose with On Your Mark Director Gene Spatz and Deputy Grand Knight Fred Romano.