

the Achiever

 One of the first things you notice about Megan Dippel is her bright smile and golden blonde hair. Or, you can see how excited she gets when she plays with her sister or one of her favorite toys. However, you may also notice that Megan has difficulty focusing her eyes on objects and that at almost 6 years old, she isn't able to verbally communicate like a lot of other children her age. But what is most evident about Megan is her determination, energetic spirit and the hope that her parents have for her future.

At 6 months old, Megan was diagnosed with Septo Optic Dysplasia, a result of Partial Corpus Clossum (her brain not fully developing while in the womb). As a result, Megan is visually impaired, nonverbal, has cognitive and physical delays, is prone to seizures and uses a wheelchair and other adapted equipment.

Shortly after her diagnosis, Megan began occupational and physical therapy. Eventually, her parents crossed paths with the Achievement Centers' Adapted Aquatics instructor Karyn Kaschalk. Their relationship with Karyn brought Megan to the Adapted Aquatics program at our Westlake site. Not too long thereafter, Megan and her parents were introduced to Manager of Therapy Services Bonnie Boenig and physical therapist Josh Palcic who told them their daughter's diagnosis would

Megan's Reaching New Heights

make her an ideal candidate for a new intensive therapy program being introduced at the facility.

Instead of traditional therapy models which typically consist of half-hour or hour weekly sessions, Megan's parents were told that she would come to the Achievement Centers' Intensive Therapy Clinic for three hours a day, every day, for three weeks. By increasing the breadth and depth of her therapy sessions, Megan and her family could see more immediate, visible and sustainable results than could be achieved through traditional therapy methods.

"I had never heard of therapy intensives before coming to the Achievement Centers," said Megan's dad Scott. "But the way it was explained and the fact that it was such an out-of-the-box concept made me immediately want to go for it," he continued. Scott and his wife, Bridget, enthusiastically embraced the concept of the Intensives Clinic and set out to explore all of the possibilities which lay ahead for their daughter.

Bonnie and her team developed a customized treatment plan for Megan, focusing their therapy sessions toward meeting specific functional goals, such as improving her posture and teaching her to sit up on her own. Megan's days at the Intensives Therapy Clinic required hard work for all involved. Often Bonnie, Josh, Megan's dad, a physical therapy intern, and most of all, Megan herself, worked as a team to tackle the difficult task of helping Megan to train her body and muscles to accomplish the goals laid out in her treatment plan. Her specialized therapy consisted of muscle stretching and strengthening and improving

her motor skills through guided practice and physical challenges that promoted learning of new posture and skills. Megan's active participation and desire to learn and explore her environment contributed to the success that she realized.

The skills she learned were also reinforced at home as the family continued to work on exercises with Megan and through her participation in other therapeutic activities like Adapted Aquatics (a program that teaches swim skills and water safety for children with special needs).

In less than a month, Scott watched his daughter go from having extremely compromised posture and atrophied



Megan and her father Scott work with Bonnie Boenig, Manager of Therapy Services during an Intensive Therapy session.

muscles to sitting up almost completely unassisted. "I even noticed a difference in her breathing!" he said. "And now she's able to reach for things; sitting up and playing with her toys and even pulling things down off the refrigerator. It is encouraging!"

Scott says that the dedication and commitment Bonnie and Josh demonstrated while creating Megan's customized therapy plan was an integral

continued on page 3—see "Megan"



Message from the Executive Director

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA



ACCREDITATION and LICENSURE

The Achievement Centers for Children's programs and services are licensed and accredited by many entities, including:

American Camp Association
Certified Medicaid Provider
Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
Cuyahoga County Early Intervention Collaborative member
North American Riding for the Handicapped Association
Ohio Department of Education
Ohio Department of Health
Ohio Department of Human Services
Ohio Department of MR/DD
Ohio Department of Mental Health
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Numerous agreements with area universities and colleges

For information and referrals
216-292-9700

Visit our website
www.achievementcenters.org

If you would like to be removed from the Achiever mailing list please notify us in writing at: Achievement Centers for Children, 4255 Northfield Road, Highland Hills, OH 44128.

DEAR FRIENDS,

As we all know, our community and nation are experiencing unprecedented challenges and financial downturns not seen since the Great Depression. Many individuals and families are living with financial insecurity, fears of what their futures may hold, and tremendous anxiety/stress because of these numerous "unknowns." As we consistently hear from families who have children with disabilities, I am reminded that all these feelings are also what the families we serve live with on a daily basis . . . in the *best* of economic times. Having a child with a disability creates so many unknowns, while almost always creating significant financial challenges, even sometimes resulting in bankruptcy, due to huge medical and other expenses that can accompany a child with a disability. And financial problems are only one of the concerns they face. So the children and families we serve need us now more than ever.

Gabriel Mistral stated, "Many things we need can wait—the child cannot. Now is the time his bones are being formed, his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his name is today."

Especially in today's economy, when a very young child is presented with so many challenges, we need to quickly understand how we can impact their lives to make the greatest difference with the best use of limited resources. Research has repeatedly shown us that quality early intervention programs greatly enhance the development and functioning levels of children with special needs. Advances in brain research have provided great insight into how the brain develops after birth. It is clear that what occurs in the first 3 to 5 years of life, profoundly influences how the brain will develop and how the child will interact with the world throughout their entire life. The windows of opportunity to maximize development and functioning are wide open in these initial years, but begin to close as the child gets older. If a child with a disability misses early intervention services in these first years, we cannot go back and make up for those losses. Windows of opportunity exist that can close permanently if not addressed in a timely manner. The earlier that the potential problems can be identified and appropriate interventions begun, the better the outcomes for the child, the family and our community. Research also tells us that for every dollar spent on early interventions and early education, at least sixteen dollars are saved in the future expenditures.

Therefore, we must not say to our infants and toddlers, please come back when the economy is stronger when we have more resources. Their futures are depending on us now.

Thank you to all of you for your meaningful support in our continued quest to provide these critically needed services to children who have been given so many challenges so early in their lives. I ask for your continued support, in whatever way you are able to give it.

With gratitude,

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
Executive Director

HIGHLAND HILLS
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216-292-9700

WESTLAKE
2421 Center Ridge Road
Westlake, OH 44145
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CAMP CHEERFUL
15000 Cheerful Lane
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440-238-6200

“Megan”—continued from cover

part of her success. But ultimately, it was the consistent repetitions of all the customized exercises that enabled Megan to experience the phenomenal results she obtained at the Achievement Centers’ Intensives Therapy Clinic.

Though Megan’s dad is aware that she faces a lifetime of challenges, he says that he is optimistic about the possibilities of his daughter reaching even greater milestones as a result of the progress she has made through the intensives. “I’m happy to see her become more independent and see her quality of life improve. The Intensives Clinic was like a blast of energy for her. I wish she could do Intensives every day!”

Campers enjoy a variety of summer activities at the Achievement Centers’ Camp Camp and Summer Adventures



Save the Date!

On June 6, 2009 from 10 A.M.–2 P.M., the Achievement Centers’ Camp Cheerful in Strongsville will open its doors to current and potential campers and their families for its annual Camp Open House. Experience the beauty of Camp Cheerful’s natural wooded setting through tours and fun activities. For more information about the Camp Cheerful Open House, call 440-238-6200.

FUN AND LEARNING UNDER THE SUN AT THE ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN!

Even during summer vacation, children with disabilities need to keep improving and building their skills. Fortunately, the Achievement Centers has found a way to help children sustain their year-long progress of learning and development. All while having a little fun in the sun!

SUMMER ADVENTURES are therapy-based programs for children with special needs including autism, developmental delays, fine motor challenges and neurological conditions. Students can improve their social skills, go on community outings and even practice handwriting skills.

The summer therapy programs are designed to provide a mix of learning and fun, with an emphasis on parent involvement and home-based carry-over skills. Led by the Achievement Centers’ therapy staff, children receive a customized summer adventure tailored to their individual needs.

Bonnie Boenig, Manager of Therapy Services at the Achievement Centers says that, “the summer is a time when so many of the gains made during the school year are lost as parents (of children with disabilities) often struggle to find camps and summer programs that can adequately meet the special needs of their child. Through programs like Summer Adventures, we are hoping to fill that void.”

Parents looking for a recreational summer program experience for their child will want to know about Champ Camp! This day camp program is available to children ages 5–17 with physical or developmental disabilities, sensory impairment or communication delays. Champ Camp participants enjoy activities such as music, field trips, arts & crafts and games in a wooded outdoor environment. Best of all, CHAMP CAMP activities are also available to typically developing friends and siblings.

SUMMER ADVENTURES and CHAMP CAMP are currently offered at the Achievement Centers’ Highland Hills and Westlake locations. Parents interested in learning more can call 216-292-9700 or visit www.achievementcenters.org for more information.



Get Acquainted with the Achievement Centers for Children

Join us on Thursday, July 16, 2009 at 8:30 A.M. for a "Get Acquainted Breakfast" at our Highland Hills location. You'll discover why we're so passionate about providing comprehensive services for children with disabilities and their families. Tour our state-of-the-art facility, learn about the programs we offer, and meet some of our board members and staff while enjoying a complimentary breakfast. Call 216-292-9700 ext 235 to reserve your seat now!



YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR "CIRCLE OF CARE"!



Would you like to contribute in an impactful way to programs that will directly benefit children with disabilities and their families? Many donors like to contribute an outright gift to specific programs or services that are especially meaningful or interesting to them. You might like to know that . . .

- . . . a gift of \$30 buys a life jacket for a child's use in our Adapted Aquatics program*
- . . . a gift of \$200 covers the cost of a professional workshop given by area psychiatrists to keep staff updated on the newest developments in mental health*
- . . . a gift of \$500 covers the cost of transporting a child in our agency van for one year*
- . . . a gift of \$1,000 will underwrite the costs of a week of residential camp for two children with disabilities*
- . . . a gift of \$5,000 will provide everything needed to support a horse in our Therapeutic Horseback Riding program for a year*

Perhaps you are excited by the idea of making a lasting legacy gift to the Achievement Centers or a transformational gift that will support our mission and work for decades to come. Our Oak Tree Society is a prestigious giving club that recognizes and celebrates donors who provide a bequest or other planned gift in their estate plans. We want to learn more about your charitable interests and the kinds of programs you like to support. We invite you to start that conversation by calling Deborah Osgood, Director of Development and Marketing at 216-292-9700 x 224. We would love to hear from you!



Guests at the Get Acquainted Breakfast will be able to tour the Achievement Centers for Children's state-of-the-art Breen Family Center which opened in 2004 and sits on five acres of land in Highland Hills. The site is headquarters to the Achievement Centers' administrative offices and includes an atrium, outdoor pavilion, accessible paths and multiple play areas.

ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN SPECIAL EVENTS



Pictured left to right front row: Pat Nobili, Executive Director; Sparkle Co-Chair Fran Dacek; 2008 Sparkle honoree, Ronald B. Richard; Sparkle Co-Chair Tracey Kooser; Tim Lathe, Board President.

SPARKLE, SHIMMER & SHINE

On November 15, 2008, more than 400 business, community and civic leaders gathered at Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine to honor Ronald B. Richard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Foundation for his contributions to the Greater Cleveland community. Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine, the Achievement Centers' annual black-tie gala, was held at the InterContinental Hotel and Conference Center. Along with a tribute to Mr. Richard, the program also featured a moving parent testimonial from Mozelle Jackson about the impact of the Achievement Centers in her son and family's life. Guests bid on special items such as an elegant diamond necklace by Goldmax by Diana and a 5-star resort retreat. Live and silent auctions of more than 100 items also helped make the evening a success, generating over \$420,000 in support for the Achievement Centers programs and operating expenses. *Save the date for Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine Saturday, November 14, 2009!*

Thanks to our Platinum Sponsors: John G. and Mary Jane Breen; Michael A. and Susan K. Clegg; The Cleveland Clinic; The Cleveland Foundation; Colliers Ostendorf-Morris; Forest City Enterprises; Huntington National Bank; Jones Day; National City; Parker Hannifin Corporation; Swagelok Company; and the University Hospitals Health System.

Many thanks go to our Gold Signature Sponsors: Antares Management Solutions; Brush Engineered Metals, Inc; Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP; Citizens Bank; Developers Diversified Realty Corp.; Ernst & Young LLP; Fidelity Investments; Fifth Third Bank; GE Consumer & Industrial; Dr. Michael and Michelle Koehler; KeyCorp; Mansour, Gavin, Gerlack & Manos, LPPA; Linsalata Capital Partners; Merrymeeting, Inc.; Medical Mutual of Ohio; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP; Resources Global Professional; Socius Executive Search; The Sherwin-Williams Company; Thompson Hine LLP; Watson Wyatt; Western Reserve Partners; Workers Compensation Management Solutions.

We are also grateful for the underwriting support of: Stephanie and Juan Antunez; Cleveland Cliffs Inc.; Cuyahoga Community College; The Fedeli Group; Ferro Corporation; Invacare Corporation; Donna and Stewart Kohl; The Lerner Foundation; Roetzel & Andress LLP; RPM International; Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP; Swiger Coil Systems; TMG Services; Jennifer and Mark Vergilii; Butler Wick Trust/Home Savings Foundation.

A Most Excellent Race



Lace up your running shoes; the Achievement Centers for Children presents A Most Excellent Race! In its 19th year,

A Most Excellent Race is a family, walker and runner-friendly fundraiser to benefit our Camp Cheerful, which provides a supporting, adaptive outdoor experience that creates lifelong memories for children and adults with disabilities.

This high-quality, professionally-timed event will take place on Sunday, June 28, 2009 at Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights and features a 10K Run, 5K Run, 5K Fun Walk, and the lively Camp Cheerful Classic, a 100-yard sprint by the children who attend camp. We hope to have 800 participants in this year's race. Register your team or as an individual online at race.achievementcenters.org. For sponsorship, donation or volunteer information, contact Maggie Musnuff at 216-401-5587.

Blue Chip/Blue Tee Golf Outing



On July 27, 2009, some of Cleveland's best golfers will pair up for a day of golf and charitable giving at the 25th Annual Blue

Chip Blue Tee golf outing at the Kirtland Country Club in Willoughby. Participants enjoy a competitive round of golf while generating much needed financial resources for the children with disabilities and their families served by the Achievement Centers every year. Blue Chip Blue Tee raised over \$85,000 last year for the Achievement Centers' programs and services. Our thanks to Lexus Champions for Charity and our local sponsors for their continued support! And special thanks go to this year's co-chairs Dave Dunstan of Western Reserve Partners and Hank Centa of JP Morgan Chase Bank!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Several members of the Achievement Centers' Family Support staff are newly-trained in the time-honored practice of infant massage. Mothers, fathers, and other caregivers can learn how to meet their baby's needs through loving touch and massage. Infant massage plays a significant role in promoting healthy growth and development in babies. Currently being offered to the Achievement Centers' existing clients, infant massage is ideal for infants ages 6 weeks to pre-crawling. It is especially beneficial to families of babies with special needs. Parents interested in learning more about infant massage classes can contact Kristine Snell, LISW at 216-292-9700 ext 274.
- Support groups often provide a much-needed outlet for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities. By participating in these groups, parents share resources and parenting techniques or find an empathetic ear in another parent that understands the complexities of caring for a child with special needs. The Achievement Centers understands the importance of connections like this, and offers a parent support group that meets monthly at its Westlake facility. Additionally, a support group for adult women with disabilities meets at the Achievement Centers' Highland Hills location bi-monthly. Anyone interested in joining one of our support groups can contact Anne Smith at 216-292-9700 ext 231.
- The Achievement Centers' Early Childhood Mental Health program recently received a perfect audit score from the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Health. Congratulations to all of our ECMH staff!
- Studies have shown that a number of children with learning disabilities also have a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome or other forms of autism. Organizations, like the Learning Disabilities Association of Northeast Ohio work with this population to help them realize their potential and overcome some of the obstacles that often accompany learning disabilities. To learn more, visit www.ldane.org.
- For over 30 years, the Up Side of Downs has provided free community resources for people with Down syndrome. What started as a small social support group, Up Side of Downs provides advocacy, education and support for over 800 families throughout Northeast Ohio. For more information about the Upside of Downs, visit them online at www.theupsideofdowns.org.



Camp Cheerful Fall Festival

Every fall, members of the Strongsville community and other Camp Cheerful supporters gather for a night to remember at the annual Camp Cheerful Fall Festival. This festive night is full of dancing and live entertainment, auctions and raffles under the backdrop of a beautiful autumn evening. Patrons are also treated to an array of delicious entrees courtesy of Chef Chris Olszewski of the Polaris Career Center's Chef Training Program as he provides invaluable hands-on experience for the culinary students that assist him every year with preparation and food service for the evening. Entering its 17th year, Fall Festival benefits the Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful, and raised over \$58,000 in 2008.

Save the date for this year's Fall Festival which will take place on Saturday, October 24, 2009 at Camp Cheerful in Strongsville.



Fall Festival patrons danced the night away and bid on great items including Cavs jerseys and weekend getaways during the silent auction.

STAFF UPDATES

IN January, Donna Hefner McClure, M.S., joined the Achievement Centers family as our new Manager of Education. Donna has a background in family support and comes to us with many years of early childhood experience, including being an evaluator for the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We are excited to have her!



Get LinkedIn to the Achievement Centers

Show your support of the Achievement Centers for Children and help us raise awareness by joining our cause . . . virtual cause that is! You can now find the Achievement Centers on social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Simply do a search for “Achievement Centers for Children” to view our group pages, then invite your friends and family to join our cause too!

And if you're looking for a little inspiration, view our agency video on YouTube or check out pictures from last year's Most Excellent Race on Flickr.com.

Are you interested in receiving *The Achiever* electronically in your inbox or simply want to help us save a few trees? Please send your contact information and email address to info@achievementctr.org and we'll add you to our electronic mailing list.

A FANTASTIC, FABULOUS, FAMILY FUN DAY WAS HAD BY ALL!

N celebration of National Autism Awareness Month, the Achievement Centers hosted its first Family Fun Day at its Westlake facility on Saturday, April 25, 2009. Families enjoyed a full day of activities including: a cookout, movies, family swims, Euclid Beach Rocket rides, arts & crafts and more! Over 250 people came out for a fabulous good time!



The Lake Erie Monsters' mascot Sully C. Goal had a fabulous fun time with participants in the Scooby Doo bounce house during Family Fun Day.

The Achievement Centers welcomed the Honorable Marcia L. Fudge (center), from the 11th Congressional District and Joe Cicero, Mayor of Lyndhurst (right) to our Highland Hills facility for a tour and up-close look at all the programs and services offered to the families we serve.



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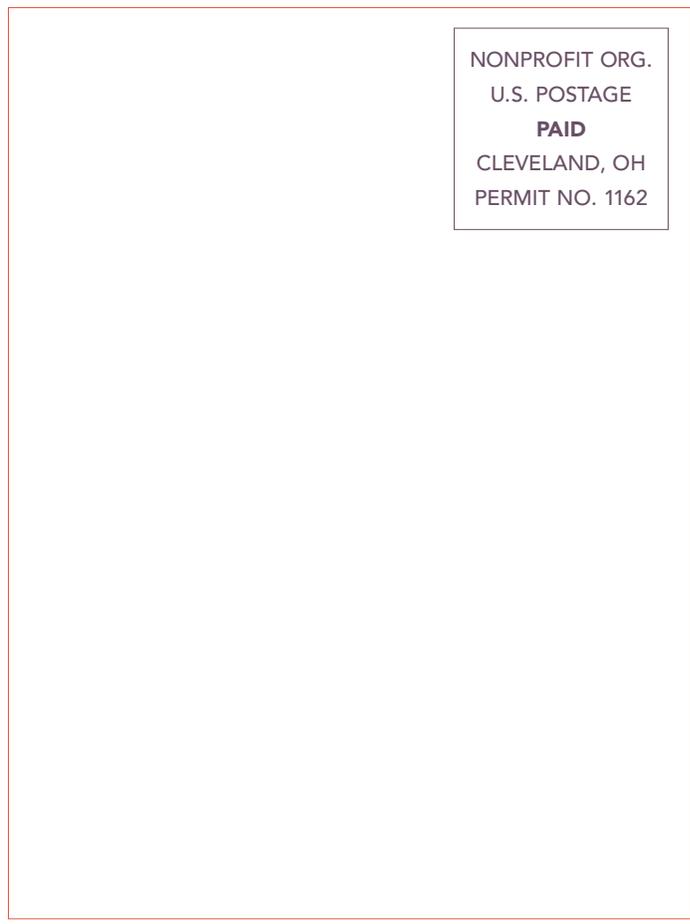
About the ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN

Founded in 1940 as the Society for Crippled Children, the Achievement Centers for Children provides a wide variety of therapy, recreation, education and family support services for children with disabilities and their families. We serve over 3,500 children with disabilities and their families each year.

Our mission is to work with children with disabilities and their families to strengthen abilities and create opportunities for lifelong achievement in society.

The Achiever is published by the Development Department of the Achievement Centers for Children.

Editor: Cariss Turner; Contributors: Patricia W. Nobili, Deborah Osgood, Cariss Turner, Bonnie Boenig



ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN
Services by Location

The Achievement Centers provides services through a variety of locations, including schools, child care centers, homes, and at the Achievement Centers' three facilities. The following is a list of services according to location.

Home and Community Services
(offices at the Highland Hills and Westlake locations)
 ACCENT, Early childhood mental health counseling, early intervention program for children ages birth to three with special needs; Help Me Grow Service coordination for children with special needs and at-risk, ages birth to three; child care Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

East/Highland Hills
 Child Development Center preschool for children with and without special needs; preschool for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; kindergarten through fourth grade classroom for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; social work and counseling; physical, speech and occupational therapy; Champ Camp and Sensational Day Program (summers only); parent support groups

West/Westlake
 Preschool for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; kindergarten through fourth grade classroom for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; social work and counseling; physical, speech and occupational therapy; Champ Camp and Sensational Day Program (summers only); Adapted Aquatics; parent support groups

South/Strongsville/Camp Cheerful
 Social work and counseling; recreational activities; residential and day camp programs; Sensational Day Program; therapeutic riding; High Ropes Challenge Course

