

## From Preschool to Preparing for Life

As we commemorate our 75th anniversary, we celebrate the thousands of children with disabilities and their families we have had the privilege of helping. It is heartwarming for us to hear from families who keep in touch with us long after their services are finished. The Millers are one such family. Their son, Jacob, was in our first autism preschool class back in 2000. Jacob's mother recently sent us the following letter:

We wanted to share Jacob's progress in life. He is now 17 years old, in 11th grade and is thriving physically, intellectually and spiritually. For two years, he's played on the JV football team and is working hard to be on the varsity team for his senior year. Jacob enjoys reading, drawing cartoons, writing stories and goofing around with his friends (he has a terrific sense of humor). He likes to keep fit with weightlifting and cardio workouts.



He attends a work-study program half-a-day in order to prepare him for employment as an adult. He finally understands that work equals money and money buys things you need or want. He wants to learn to drive a car (scary!) and he did very well when I (mom) took him driving for the first time in a vast empty parking lot. But his focus needs to improve in order for him to drive on the streets. In many ways he's a typical teenager who is constantly looking for food, generates tons of laundry, holes up in his room for hours, watches silly YouTube videos on his iPad, gets moody and snarky with his mom, and waits until the last minute to finish homework.

The last fourteen years since his diagnosis have been a whirlwind and flew by so quickly. It's an adventure we wouldn't trade in for the world. He's the child we were meant to have and is a blessing from above.

We attribute his tremendous growth to our friends, family and teachers who have supported us and helped him to become the wonderful person he is today. He went from a screaming, uncommunicative preschooler to a happy young man with great possibilities for his life. We sincerely thank everyone at the Achievement Centers for your early intervention expertise, care, wisdom and devoting your valuable time to ensure our son, Jacob, would become a functional member of society. He's an awesome kid and we're so proud to call him our son.

—Marilyn Miller

Autism was first described as a unique disorder in the 1940s, and in the 1990s, autism diagnoses began to soar. In the year 2000 when Jacob was in our autism preschool, the prevalence of autism was about 1 in 150. According to the CDC, currently that estimate is an alarming 1 in 68 children being identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In 1998 we expanded our expertise in autism throughout all of our programs and services, and last year we expanded our autism school to include 7th and 8th grades at our Westlake site. Last year, 685 children and young adults with autism were a part of our programs.



*“We sincerely thank everyone at the Achievement Centers for their . . . expertise, care, wisdom . . . and time.”*

—Marilyn,  
Jacob's mother



Sally Farwell  
President & CEO



**Achievement  
Centers for  
Children**

*Providing Services to  
Children with Disabilities  
and their Families*

HIGHLAND HILLS  
4255 Northfield Road  
Highland Hills, OH 44128  
216-292-9700

WESTLAKE  
24211 Center Ridge Road  
Westlake, OH 44145  
440-250-2520

CAMP CHEERFUL  
15000 Cheerful Lane  
Strongsville, OH 44136  
440-238-6200

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Contributors: Sally Farwell,  
Deborah Osgood,  
Katherine Henry

## Dear Friends,

We at the Achievement Centers for Children are thrilled to be celebrating our 75th anniversary. The agency was started in 1940 by three Rotarians who had a vision and a hope that every child would have an opportunity to reach his or her greatest potential. While we have seen many changes in the last 75 years, including the agency name (from the Society for Crippled Children to the Achievement Centers for Children), and the types of disabilities served, the essence of our mission and commitment to children with disabilities and their families has remained constant.

As we move into the future, we will continue to build on the agency's strengths, search for new program offerings, and new research based innovations and learnings to offer the greatest opportunities for the children and families we serve. We are so inspired by how new technological advances and expertise are giving life-changing benefits to individuals such as Sarah, who is learning to 'speak' for the first time in 18 years using an iPad. Sarah's speech therapist at the Achievement Centers introduced her to a communications application on her iPad that Sarah can access independently through a special connection on her wheelchair, and that 'speaks' the words she selects. Sarah's world has opened up! She now has a 'BFF' (best friend forever) for the first time, and can join conversations with friends through social media. What a difference it has made in her happiness, quality of life, and her future independence!

We hope that you will join us as we celebrate the successes of the past 75 years and step forward into the future with an unyielding commitment to enable and empower children with disabilities and their families to grow, learn, play and prepare for lifelong achievement in society. Your continued support makes a world of difference to the many children with disabilities, like Sarah, and their families. Thank you!

Sally Farwell  
President & CEO



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Physical Therapist, Trish Swiderski (left) and Speech-Language Pathologist, Holly Emmons Miltner (below) motivate Chase through fun, effective therapy activities.



## STEPS TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Chase, five years old, feels completely at home at the Achievement Centers for Children in Highland Hills, and has huge smiles for his therapists who have become his friends. After being diagnosed with cerebral palsy when he was just nine months old, he was referred to us for physical, occupational and speech therapies. Through the years, Chase has surprised his family, his therapists and his doctors with his progress. Soon after starting therapy, he started rolling, trying to push himself up, and greatly improved the muscular control of his head. “For you and I to learn a new skill, it’ll take maybe a couple

hundred times doing it. With Chase, it takes thousands and thousands of trials,” said Trish Swiderski, one of the Achievement Centers’

physical therapists. To Chase, therapy is play as he reaches for toys and thrives on the encouragement he receives hearing “you did it!” by his therapists and mother.

Chase’s mother, Janae, proudly shared the most memorable day for her at the Achievement Centers when Chase was four years old. Chase was ready for his “walking” session in physical therapy using a gait trainer. Trish warmed him up by starting to move his legs and feet, and then enthusiastically directed him by saying “take a step, Chase!” He took off moving his legs and walked across the room, much to his mother’s delight. From that day, he’s been excitedly taking steps using his gait trainer, and is now using a treadmill to continue to build his strength and coordination. “We never thought walking would click with him, but he gets it,” said Janae. “He’s really motivated and smart.”

Chase is in preschool now, and looking forward to starting kindergarten. He likes to ride the school bus and loves to be around other kids. His infectious smile

welcomes everyone he meets as a friend. Janae said, “Even though he can’t walk independently or talk, the other kids come to him, play with him, and help take care of him.”

“I think he’ll walk and talk with all of us helping him—it will just take a little longer. Chase continues to surprise us with his progress, and I know it is because we brought him to this special place,” said Janae.

**EARLY INTERVENTION programs and services for children like Chase are critical to their long term abilities. Research has shown that 90% of brain development occurs by the age of five. We were a pioneer in offering early intervention services beginning in 1979. Generous contributions from donors help us to provide early intervention services regardless of a families’ ability to pay, and can make all the difference in a child’s future.**



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Thank you to our generous sponsors for the ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAM



## Dr. Stephen Shore Speaks at The City Club Forum

In honor of Autism Awareness Month and our 75th anniversary, the Achievement Centers together with The City Club of Cleveland and KeyBank hosted Dr. Stephen Shore, international speaker and professor specializing in autism at The City Club Forum on Friday, April 17. His thought-provoking and very timely presentation, part of the KeyBank Diversity Thought Leadership series, was titled "Rethinking Autism: Opening New Doors in Education and Employment for Lifelong Success." Visit [www.cityclub.org](http://www.cityclub.org) to watch the video of Dr. Shore's presentation.

# New Camp Cheerful Clubhouse Opens Doors

A new modern 4,030 square foot building, the Camp Cheerful Clubhouse, has risen to replace an original arts and crafts cabin built in the late 1940s. Growth of recreation programs at Camp Cheerful and the year-round River Rock Adult Day program called for a larger, more modern "home." "We are grateful for the generous community support we have received for Camp

Cheerful to make this important capital improvement," said Sally Farwell, President and CEO of the Achievement Centers for Children. Major funders include the Cleveland Metroparks, the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities, individual major donors, local companies and area foundations. GE Lighting generously provided LED fixtures for the clubhouse.

Like any new home, we are in need of several items. Can you help with donations of new or like new items?

- iPads
- Flat Screen TV
- Washer dryer unit (stacking)
- Dishwasher
- Microwave
- Couches
- Recliners
- Office chairs
- Computers (laptops and printers)
- Craft Supplies

Please contact Connie Boros, VP of Recreation and Sports at 440-238-6200 ext 223.



*Become a  
"Community Achiever!"*

Businesses, organizations and individuals can support the work and mission of the Achievement Centers for Children by becoming a "Community Achiever!"

Community Achievers raise funds that underwrite critical programs for children with disabilities and their families, and allow us to provide many of our services regardless of a family's ability to pay.

Community Achievers have raised funds in a variety of fun and creative ways, including business Jeans Day, golf events and even BLT sandwich sales! If you are interested in raising money to support the children and families we serve, please call Deborah at 216-292-9700 ext 224.

# Celebrating 75 Years

## 1940s

Founded on July 7, 1940 as The Society for Crippled Children of Cuyahoga County, Inc. by three Cleveland Rotarians to address the needs of children with polio and cardiac disorders.



1940s

## 1950s

Camp Cheerful, the first residential camp in Ohio designed especially for those with disabilities was established in 1947. One of the area's first preschool and homebound service programs for children with disabilities began.



## 1960s

A new facility was built on Cleveland's east side on Buckeye Road, and headquarters were relocated.



1960s



1980s

## 1970s

By 1979, the agency was offering social services, early intervention, preschool, and physical, occupational and speech therapy.



## 1980s

The agency name was changed to the "Achievement Centers for Children." The Technical Assistance Program (TAP) was established to facilitate inclusion of children with special needs in community child care and education programs. The first adult camping program began at Camp Cheerful.



## 1990s

In 1994, Patricia Nobili joined the agency as Executive Director and the first agency Strategic Plan was developed. The first A Most Excellent Race was begun to raise funds for Camp Cheerful.



2010s



2000s



1950s

## 2000s

The agency built a new, larger headquarters, the Breen Family Center in Highland Hills. Many new programs began for children with autism, including the Early Childhood Mental Health program, adapted aquatics, Therapeutic Horsemanship, and Achieve Consulting Services. Our west side services relocated to Westlake in 2007 providing four times more space for growth.

## 2010s

New programs were added including the Intensive Therapy Clinic, home visiting prevention program, an adapted sports program and the River Rock Adult Day year-round program at Camp Cheerful. Camp Cheerful was designated as one of only four camps in the nation as a Blue Ribbon Camp by the National Association of Special Education Teachers.

## 2015

Sally Farwell was promoted to President and CEO. Sally has been an inspiring leader at the Achievement Centers for the past 19 years.



# the Achiever

Achievement Centers for Children  
4255 Northfield Road  
Highland Hills, OH 44128



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OUR MISSION is to enable and empower children with disabilities and their families to grow, learn, play and prepare for lifelong achievement in society.

## HELPING CHILDREN BE "ALL THEY CAN BE"

Founded in 1940 as Society  
for Crippled Children

A non-profit organization providing support, services and programs for children with disabilities and special needs and their families.

Programs include education and autism school; physical, occupational and speech therapy; Intensive Therapy Clinic; family support services; recreation, camp and sports programs.

## LOCATIONS

Highland Hills  
Westlake  
Camp Cheerful in Strongsville  
Child care centers, schools, homes  
216-292-9700



# Special Events

Help support our mission . . . join us!  
For details, visit [www.achievementcenters.org](http://www.achievementcenters.org)



Achievement Centers for Children  
CAMP CHEERFUL

Presented by



- HELD SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2015
- Thanks to our participants, supporters and volunteers over \$115,000 was raised!
- Special thanks to:
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- BLUE CHIP BLUE TEE
- GOLF TOURNAMENT
- Monday, August 3, 2015
- Kirtland Country Club
- FALL FESTIVAL
- Saturday, October 24, 2015
- Camp Cheerful
- SPARKLE, SHIMMER & SHINE GALA
- Celebrating 75 Years!
- Saturday, November 14, 2015
- InterContinental Hotel Cleveland