THE STORIES THAT CONNECT US

Achievement Centers for Children
2009 ANNUAL REPORT
Dear Friends,

The Achievement Centers for Children is now in our 69th year of providing services to children with disabilities and their families. We have a very proud tradition of helping to make significant differences in the lives of children who have been given so many challenges so early in their lives, while also supporting their families through the many difficult issues they deal with on a daily basis. Although we have multiple funding sources, we rely greatly on community support and the charitable giving of our donors to help continue our mission and this proud legacy.

There are donors who may never meet the children they are helping, who may not be able to witness a child's first step in therapy. But that does not weaken the connection that exists between them and the children who benefit from their generosity. Every milestone we witness, every joyful tear that is shed by a parent who celebrates the progress of his or her child, underscores that magnificent connection … and the donor’s impact on the life of a child.

Demand for our services and programs has increased substantially over the past years. We serve families from all socioeconomic backgrounds and provide over $1 million in subsidized care each year. Many have lost jobs and/or health care coverage, yet their children’s needs do not wane. Research has taught us what occurs in the first five years of life has lifelong impact. The windows of opportunity to maximize brain development and functioning are wide open in these initial years, but begin to close as the child gets older. There are many things in life that can wait, but a child’s brain development waits for no one or no circumstance. If a child misses early intervention services in those early years, we cannot go back and make up for those losses. For every $1 spent on early intervention and education, it has been proven to save anywhere from $7 to $27 in future spending.

People give for many reasons. Some have a personal connection to our agency and our mission. Some donate in memory of a loved one. Corporations feel responsibility to give back to their communities. There are countless reasons – all that begin with caring. In this annual report, you will have a chance to hear from donors and meet a few of the 3,900 children and families we served this past year, who have directly benefitted from their generosity. The story of donor and child/family is a truly powerful one. One gift makes another possible.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have supported us in the past. But we all know in this extremely challenging economic time, families need us more than ever. Will you consider making or renewing your connection to a child or family?

Sincerely,

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
Executive Director

Timothy J. Lathe
President, Board of Directors

“For every $1 spent on early intervention and education, it has been proven to save anywhere from $7 to $27 in future spending.”
When Gulam Khan first met Kevin Owen in college, they were both focused on getting to the Rose Bowl.

The University of Michigan place kicker and wide receiver were teammates on a mission. Some things don’t change. Today, the two men still are joined in a mission to help children with disabilities and their families — which is very good news for the Achievement Centers for Children. An active Achievement Centers board member, Kevin invited his college teammate for a tour of our Highland Hills facility. One thing led to another, and soon Gulam and other U.S. Endoscopy employees began to raise money through company golf outings and bake sales. And annual corporate giving followed, that supported our therapy services program. As a parent of four, Gulam says he and his wife couldn’t imagine being in the shoes of some of the families the Achievement Centers serves. “The stories tug at your heart,” he concedes, “we just couldn’t sit on the sidelines.”

GULAM

A lover of music, especially classical, 13-year-old Nathan Shuffer directly benefits from the generosity of U.S. Endoscopy.

Nathan began to receive occupational and physical therapy at the Achievement Centers two years ago to help him overcome some of the many challenges he faces with cerebral palsy. Nathan is working on standing and bearing his own weight. He can now sit briefly unaided with supervision, is expanding his ability to transfer out of his wheelchair, and really enjoys interacting with his two sisters.

NATHAN

see photos of our therapy program in action at www.achievementcenters.org
Thanks to Chase and others, two 4-year-old boys in our Highland Hills Child Development Center have come quite a long way this year.

John Smith has developed an amazing sense of self and an equally impressive sense of humor. He knows what he likes and he'll gladly tell you. Among his favorites: blocks, superheroes, helicopters and playtime in the sand or water. His buddy, Jaxon Berenda, is a little unique in that his favorite TV show is "The Price Is Right." But, like other 4-year-olds, he also enjoys Elmo and playing in the water. Jaxon has spina bifida and when he first came to the Achievement Centers, he occasionally used his walker. Now, Jaxon uses his walker regularly, climbs the playground equipment and actively plays with the other children. His new glasses help him, too. Everyone can already see what a bright future lies ahead for both John and Jaxon.

As a banker and father, Jim Malz knows our community needs a well-educated workforce and that early childhood education creates the foundation for success in school.

Jim is the Northeast Ohio market president for Chase, which supports our Child Development Center. “We believe we can make a positive difference in the community by helping some of Greater Cleveland’s youngest residents get ready for school,” Jim says. “At Chase, we believe it’s important to ensure that all children have access to high-quality educational opportunities so Cleveland can thrive and grow.”

see more of Jaxon and John online at www.achievementcenters.org
Horseback riding, fishing and bonfires are made possible for children with disabilities at the Achievement Centers’ Camp Cheerful, thanks to people like Dick Friedman and his family’s foundation, the Sam and Esther Friedman Foundation.

Dick particularly understands how important it is for all children, especially children with special needs, to be able to experience the outdoors and the joy of camp. He also knows how much their parents need and appreciate the respite care camp offers. What’s most important, Dick knows that his support will help children with special needs continue to reach their potential for years to come.

First-time campers Julie and Allison Sanborn are big fans of swimming, ballet, sidewalk chalk and Rice Krispies Treats®.

And they clearly love each other. All the camp activities have helped the 18-year-old twins with their motor skills, verbal response and socializing. And, yes, they made the rope necklaces they are wearing all by themselves on the day of the photo shoot.

Debbie Duris and Sarah Jones serve as past president and chair of philanthropy for the Sherwin-Williams Women’s Club.

Over 100 years ago, female Sherwin-Williams employees got together to sew and make dolls for charitable causes. The club now has a membership of more than 300 women who lend a helping hand to the community. The club members have ice cream socials, hold martini basket raffles, and even donate the vending machine profits in order to make regular contributions to local charities including the Achievement Centers’ Camp Cheerful, which the company then matches. Visit us online at www.achievementcenters.org to hear more about the Sherwin-Williams Women’s Club.

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Mike and Sue Clegg’s son, Scott, is 36. Born with Down syndrome, Scott now lives quite independently.

But Mike and Sue remember well the daily challenges they encountered (and still face) as parents of a child with disabilities. That’s part of the reason they give so generously of their resources to Achievement Center’s Family Support program. “What differentiates the Achievement Centers is its comprehensive services,” explains Mike. “The staff has the ability to do so much more for a family in distress than any other organization we’re aware of.” Sue couldn’t agree more. “We feel fortunate to have the resources that allow us to support the Achievement Centers and the critical services they provide.”

MIKE AND SUE

BRUCE AND CAROLE

Bruce and Carole Giberson were on vacation when their 1-pound, 5-ounce daughter was born. She was bleeding in her brain, they learned, as their daughter was life-flighted away without them. “We call her Amazing Grace,” says Carole with abounding motherly pride at all her daughter has accomplished. Grace, now 20, has been through countless hours of occupational, speech and physical therapy. Bruce and Carole are especially appreciative, though, of Achievement Centers’ Westlake parent support group. “I have to go there to survive,” says Carole. “These people know what it means when I say another surgery was cancelled or a procedure has to be redone,” she adds. “They understand like no one else can possibly understand.” Bruce enthusiastically agrees. “We can laugh there,” he says, “plus the cookies are so good!”

hear more from the Cleggs and Gibersons at www.achievementcenters.org
We thought you’d like to know...

The Achievement Centers has been serving children with disabilities and their families since 1940. Part of what makes us successful is our ability to collaborate with other organizations that complement our programs and services. For over 30 years, the Up Side of Downs has provided community resources to people with Down syndrome. Over the past year, the Achievement Centers worked with Up Side of Downs to develop joint programming for children with Down syndrome and their families through parent education programs.

Family Support introduced two new programs this past fiscal year to better serve our children and their parents and siblings:

- ACCent, which stands for Advocacy; Community Resources; Coordination of Services; Emotional Support; Needs Assessment and Teamwork, is a free program (partially funded through United Way Services of Greater Cleveland) that provides families with a wide range of resources and support from our social work staff.

- Infant Massage classes, which can be especially beneficial for babies with special needs, were taught in small group settings and may be scheduled at our Highland Hills and Westlake locations, or can be arranged on-site upon request.

The Adapted Aquatics program is a splashing success! This new Therapy Services program is designed to teach swim and water safety skills to children with special needs. Offered at our Westlake facility, the Adapted Aquatics program has proven to be a favorite among clients and parents alike. The program has gained media attention on local news station WEWS Channel 5 and in Westlife newspaper, which highlighted several success stories and testimonials. The program’s popularity continued throughout the year, as the Achievement Centers hosted an Adapted Aquatics course in collaboration with the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation. Adapted Aquatics is now being offered full-time.

Another program growing within the Therapy Services department is the Intensive Therapy Clinic. The program offers clients of various ages customized individual therapy that achieves specific goals. When tuned to coincide with developmental growth spurs or coupled with other ongoing therapy programs such as Adapted Aquatics, clients of the Intensive Therapy Clinic have experienced remarkable results.

We’re proud to announce that our Early Childhood Mental Health program received a perfect audit score from the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County.

In honor of Autism Awareness month, the Achievement Centers hosted a Family Fun Day at our Westlake facility in April. More than 70 percent of the individuals served and their families came out to enjoy a fun-filled day of activities, including arts and crafts, games, open swimming, sibling workshops and more.

In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, many of the clients served by the Achievement Centers participated in or received multiple programs and services. Over the past year, the agency provided more than 6,376 programs and services to 3,933 individuals and their families. More than 70 percent of the individuals served in our non-camp programs were birth to age 5, and more than 60 percent came from low- to moderate-income families.

Expenses

Therapy $ 1,484,025 20%
Child Development 1,473,302 20%
Camp 1,364,329 18%
Family Support 1,529,368 20%
Autism Consulting 397,591 5%
Transportation 36,763 1%
Management 824,623 10%
Development 438,316 6%
TOTAL $ 7,548,317 100%

Depreciation $ 506,696

* Preliminary Audit Report

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The Senior PGA Championship scored for the Achievement Centers for Children by naming us as one of the recipients of this year’s Pro-Am tournament proceeds, held in Cleveland in May. As one of the beneficiaries, we received a charitable contribution from the PGA, grandstand tickets for the tournament, and incorporated a golf-themed weekend at Camp Cheerful. Thanks to the St. PGA Community Relations group for this support.

In recognition for providing exemplary customer service, the Achievement Centers for Children was one of 30 local organizations to be named as a 2009 World Class Customer Service Award Honoree by Smart Business Cleveland.

Congratulations Gaynell Stewart! Gaynell was named our 2008-2009 Staff Member of the Year. As the main receptionist at our Highland Hills site, Gaynell’s warmth and welcoming spirit can be felt by everyone who comes through our doors.