On a recent trip to the zoo, Casey ran off to pick up a stranger’s water bottle. Amazingly, when his mother said “Casey, Stop!” he understood what she was saying . . . immediately stopped, dropped the bottle and walked back over to her. That was real progress!

Like any parent of a child with special needs, Casey’s mother’s hopes and dreams for him are slightly different than what she initially anticipated. However, his ability to communicate and connect with others, in whatever manner possible, and live a more fulfilled life is what matters most to her now.

Providing a circle of care and hope for parents like Rebecca is what makes the Achievement Centers so special. “Prior to coming to the Achievement Centers, I wanted to take Casey and hide under a rock . . . I would just sit there and cry. But now I channel my energy into being an advocate for him and being his voice until he has one of his own. I’m so glad I found the Achievement Centers because he’s receiving the level of services he needs. But most importantly, Casey is a happy child, so why should I be sad?”

Casey’s mother, Rebecca Young, says, “He has such a sense of pride he can do more things!”

Raising twin boys can be a daunting task for almost anyone. But it can feel like your world is caving in when you discover one of those boys isn’t developing normally. Rebecca Young’s family experienced these feelings and more when her young son Casey received a diagnosis of autism last year.

Casey’s mother began noticing that something wasn’t right when he was about 15 months old. His twin brother was progressing as expected, but his mother said they couldn’t shake the feeling Casey was different.

The warning signs were all there. Casey has the singing voice of an angel, but his vocabulary developed and then disappeared almost overnight, becoming limited to 12–15 words. He didn’t make eye contact with anyone, and instead became fixated on his hand flapping in front of his face. Finally, while listening to a radio program about autism one day, his father came to the realization that Casey was displaying 5 out of the 5 characteristics of autism. At that point, Rebecca and her husband decided that they needed to find a way to help their son. Interestingly, once they told their family members about Casey’s diagnosis, everyone said that they always suspected something was different, but didn’t know how to tell Rebecca and her husband.

When she got the initial diagnosis, Rebecca said she was overwhelmed with how negative the information was about the expectations for a child with autism. But it was during her interaction with an Achievement Centers’ staff member through the Help Me Grow program, that her hope for Casey’s future was restored.

Shortly thereafter, Casey enrolled in the autism Pre-K classroom at the Achievement Centers for Children’s Highland Hills location. His mom is thrilled to report that within six months of starting to receive services, Casey has begun to show significant progress. He now makes eye contact, and has learned how to feed himself with a spoon and suck through a straw. Rebecca believes that Casey’s coming to the Achievement Centers has made a remarkable difference in his development. “Everyone here is so caring and empathetic. They are all so dedicated to encouraging the success of each child,” she said.

Casey is excelling within the sensory-rich environment of the autism classroom, and his level of comprehension has increased greatly. The Achievement Centers blends several teaching methods in its autism education program, and Casey has enjoyed tremendous success with the TEACCH, Floortime, and the PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) methodologies. His mother says she can see that things are starting to click for him. She was especially ecstatic about Casey’s new ability to respond to his name and follow simple commands. “He has such a sense of pride now that he can do more things.”
DEAR FRIENDS OF THE ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN,

During the past year, the Achievement Centers for children has continued our mission of providing a “circle of care” for the children and families that we touch everyday through our variety of programs and services. An extremely important part of that responsibility is to do everything possible to assure the safety and security found within our facilities.

In the last year, our Camp Cheerful’s unique and protected setting and the safety of our campers was threatened by a proposal to build a 5 story hotel on 4.3 acres of land immediately adjacent to our Camp in Strongsville. The hotel’s construction would eliminate the protected thickly wooded and hilly terrain that buffers Camp Cheerful from the heavily trafficked Rte 82. Without that buffer, Camp Cheerful and our campers could be directly seen from passersby on Rte. 82. In addition, the hotel would increase the number of strangers in the area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and many would be able to look down into our Camp from their rooms. Our children’s vulnerability, combined with the increased number of strangers in close proximity, and with a new ability to see camp and the campers, would pose a significant safety issue. In addition, the loss of the natural environment on one side of Camp would dramatically change the Camp experience, while also increasing the potential for flooding.

But due to so many of your efforts and a tremendous showing of community support for Camp Cheerful, a solution has been found. The Achievement Centers for Children has signed an agreement to purchase the property and we are well on our way to raising the needed funds, which of course, is a new expense for us. But again with such tremendous community support we have no doubt that we will raise the needed dollars. In addition to your many individual contributions already received, we are very grateful to The Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland MetroParks, Eaton Corporation, Allied Witan and several family foundations. We have raised $1 million in a relatively short period of time, but we still need to raise approximately $200,000. We are now requesting funds from the State of Ohio Capital Budget Bill to help close that gap.

Last year we celebrated the 60th anniversary of serving thousands of children and young adults with disabilities at our wonderful Camp Cheerful. This and all of our other achievements would not have been possible without the donors, volunteers, civic leaders, elected officials, staff, along with numerous kinds of support and participation from our community. Your belief in our mission, in us, and most importantly in the children and families we serve, helps enable our continued success, despite the challenges.

Inventor and philanthropist, Henry Ford, once said, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” I, the Board of Directors, the staff, and the thousands of families we serve at the Achievement Centers for Children extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who answered our call to action in our time of need. Through our collaborative efforts, we will continue to protect Camp Cheerful and our campers for decades and decades to come.

Very sincerely,

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
Executive Director

ACCREDITATION and LICENSURE
The Achievement Centers for Children’s programs and services are licensed and accredited by many entities, including:
American Camping 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
United Way Agency
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: The Achievement Centers for Children, 4255 Northfield Road, Highland Hills, OH 44128.
ADAPTED AQUATICS IS A SPLASHING SUCCESS!

In January 2008, the Achievement Centers for Children introduced an Adapted Aquatics program at its new facility in Westlake. The program is designed for children with neurological, developmental, and cognitive challenges and teaches them independent swimming and water safety. While enrolled within the Adapted Aquatics program, students learn American Red Cross Aquatics Level I and II swim skills. However, the ultimate goal is for these children to be able to one day join traditional swimming classes in their own communities.

Children with disabilities can be successfully integrated into traditional swim programs if they are introduced to the water gradually in a quiet setting that enables them to focus. The weightlessness that children experience in the water gives children who require physical assistance freedom from their confinements while pushing past their physical limitations. These children often excel in water therapy exercises because they learn to move in many ways that may be difficult for them on land. They work on building their strength, cardio-vascular and motor planning skills while learning some swim skills. Adapted Aquatics can also benefit children that are sensory-impaired by helping them to exert more control over their body’s movements.

Families, like those of 8 year-old Amanda who is visually and physically impaired, have seen how learning to swim contributes to their child’s overall development. Despite her physical limitations, Amanda’s swimming abilities have far exceeded her mother’s expectations. During a recent lesson, Amanda kicked and splashed her way through challenging arm and leg work, all the while proclaiming “I did it!” This sense of pride and accomplishment is what has kept so many children coming back and enrollment at its maximum capacity.

Currently, 30 children are enrolled in the program with participants ranging in age from 1 to 15 years old. Classes are held three times a week in a fully-accessible indoor pool, located in a quiet, sunny room that enables children to learn to swim without distraction. Individualized and small group instruction takes place within the therapy pool, with adaptations as needed. Each child receives a customized, progressive development plan that makes learning achievable, sensory integrative, and fun.

The Achievement Centers’ Adapted Aquatics program is led by Karyn Kaschalk, whose experience includes working in a pediatric hospital and teaching adapted aquatics for over 17 years. Children remain in the Adapted Aquatics program while they are demonstrating active learning behavior and acquisition of skills. Parents are kept abreast of their children’s progress and upon completion of the Adapted Aquatics program, they will have a thorough understanding of how to select effective swimming programs within their community.

For more information about Adapted Aquatics at the Achievement Centers, contact Karyn Kaschalk at 440-250-2520.

HIGH ROPES CHALLENGE COURSE TAKES CORPORATE TEAMBUILDING TO NEW HEIGHTS

Calling all CEO’s, corporate meeting facilitators and HR professionals! The High Ropes Challenge Course at Camp Cheerful in Strongsville is accepting corporate group reservations. Often described as “exhilarating”, “tough”, and most importantly “fun”, the High Ropes course is a custom-designed, professionally constructed, fully-accessible activity structure for children and adults with and without disabilities. The main attraction is a 50-foot high ‘Tango Tower’ which incorporates two climbing walls, over a dozen ropes activities and more than ten low rope initiatives. There are more than 35 ways to the top, and once there, participants are lowered safely on a rope or can speed down the 320-foot long zip line.

High Ropes is an exciting option for companies that are seeking an alternative to the traditional hotel conference room for their group’s annual meeting or team outing. Group packages can be customized to include everything from catering to curriculum development. High Ropes is also available year-round to residential and day campers, non-profit organizations, scout troops, universities, birthday parties and other groups.

To learn more about the high ropes course or coordinate a group team-building activity, contact Tim Fox, Manager of Recreation at 440-238-6200.
Get Acquainted with the Achievement Centers for Children

Join us on Thursday, July 17, 2008 at 8:30 AM for a “Get Acquainted Breakfast” at our Highland Hills site. 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 continental breakfast. Call 216-292-9700 ext. 235 to reserve your seat now!

A “MAGIC” ENVELOPE . . .
Continually give, continually gain – CHINESE PROVERB

Carefully stapled inside this newsletter is a “magic” envelope. “Magic?” you say, “What is so special about a simple return envelope?” This envelope is special not because of its paper, ink or design, but because of what it represents. This envelope represents hope, achievement and potential. It represents a week at camp, a speech therapy session, support for an autism classroom or support for the work of a skilled and caring social worker with a family needing assistance.

The magic of this envelope is revealed when a caring donor like you takes the time to write a check or use your credit card to make a financial gift to the Achievement Centers for Children. Its power is only unleashed when someone decides to make a difference in the life of a child with disabilities and uses it to support our programs and services. The magic envelope works only in partnership with generous individuals. Did you read a newsletter story that inspired you? Then you can help turn this simple envelope into magic for a child with special needs—we look forward to hearing from you!

Pre-School Student Wins Wine Label Design Contest for Children with Autism

One of the Achievement Center’s own unveiled his prize-winning work of art at the 2nd annual “Rock the Puzzle” fundraising gala at the House of Blues on April 26, 2008. The piece on display: a wine label designed by three year-old Michael, a former student in the Achievement Centers’ pre-school classroom for children with autism.

Michael was one of two winners in the annual coloring contest sponsored by Grand Rivers Cellars and the Northeast Ohio Autism Group (NEOAG). Michael’s winning label will be featured on Grand Rivers’ ‘wine for autism’, a fundraising effort in which $1 of every bottle sold will be donated to NEOAG.

The winners of the label design contest were chosen in February of this year, with a preview of the winners’ artwork being featured on WKYC’s morning talk show “Good Company.”

Interested patrons can pre-order bottles of wine online by visiting www.GrandRiverCellars.com or by calling 440-298-9838.

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CHAMP CAMP EXPANDED TO WESTLAKE

Champ Camp is an inclusive day camp for children with physical or developmental disabilities, sensory impairments or communication delays as well as typically developing children. Now being offered at both the agency’s Highland Hills and Westlake locations, Champ Camp features a variety of daily activities, including music, field trips, arts & crafts, and nature study. Campers also enjoy special guest performers throughout the summer and a beautiful wooded environment.

Champ Camp is offered in one-week sessions, Monday through Friday, from mid-June through mid-August. The camp day operates from 9:00 AM–4:00 PM with extended care available from 7:30–9:00 AM and 4:00–6:00 PM. Campers can register for multiple sessions. For more information, please contact Barb Fields at 440-238-6200 ext.222 or barb.fields@achievementctrs.org
On November 3, 2007, more than 400 business, community and civic leaders gathered to honor Sandra Pianalto, president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, for her community service and advocacy and support of early intervention services for children. The Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine gala, which was held at the InterContinental Cleveland, benefitted the programs of the Achievement Centers for Children. The evening was a huge success, with net proceeds exceeding $375,000. Along with a tribute to Ms. Pianalto, the program featured the thoughtful comments of Eileen Pech, mother of seven-year-old Kevin who has autism. Eileen spoke about the positive impact the Achievement Centers has had on the growth and development of her son and family. The debut of the agency’s new video was also part of the program. Another highlight of the evening was a silent auction including a private wine tasting and dinner, Vail and Hilton Head vacations, a high ropes adventure for 20 at Camp Cheerful, and a raffle featuring an elegant diamond necklace by Goldmax by Diana.

We would like to acknowledge our Platinum Sponsors: Jack and Mary Jane Breen; Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP; The Cleveland Foundation; Ernst & Young LLP; Fifth Third Bank; FirstMerit Foundation; Forest City Enterprises; Gries Financial LLC; Huntington National Bank; Jones Day; Key Bank; National City Bank; RPM International; Swagelok Company; and Towers Perrin.

Many thanks go to our Gold Signature Sponsors: Findley Davies, Inc.; GE Consumer & Industrial; Hahn Loesser + Parks LLP; The Albert M. Higley Company; Invacare Corporation; JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.; Dr. Michael and Michelle Koehler; Linsalata Capital Partners; Mansour, Gavin, Gerlack & Manos Co., LPA; Marcus Thomas LLC; Merrymeetings, Inc.; Parker Hannifin Corporation; Sandra Pinalto; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP; Resources Global Professionals; The Sherwin-Williams Company; Tata Consulting Services; Thompson Hine LLP; University Hospitals, Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital; Watson Wyatt; Weber Wood, Medinger; and Western Reserve Partners.

We are also grateful for the underwriting support of Stephanie and Juan Antunez; Brush Engineered Metals Inc.; Cleveland Cavaliers; and the Ferro Corporation.
Achievement Centers for Children honors Autism Awareness Month with a special storytime

ON April 5, 2008, the Achievement Centers, in conjunction with Barnes & Noble Booksellers at Crocker Park presented “Let’s Be Friends” Storytime in recognition of Autism Awareness Month. More than 20 children and their families gathered for the reading of the book “Since We’re Friends: An Autism Picture Book.” The book encourages children to befriend those with autism, through understanding what makes them special and unique. Achievement Centers staff member, Mare Canter, led the group on an interactive journey through the everyday challenges a child with autism may face. Along with the storytime, the afternoon was completed with an activity table and sing-along session from the Music Therapy Enrichment Center.

Wacky Wear Fashion Show

On February 8, the pre-school classes in our Child Development Center debuted their inner fashionista at the 1st Annual Wacky Wear Fashion Show. Staff, family and friends gathered as the students worked the runway in their original designer duds. Simply Fabulous!
STAFF NEWS
The Achievement Centers for Children welcomes Scott Peplin to our management team. Scott will assume the position of Director of Finance and Operations and comes to us with broad financial and management experience. He will assume his new role in July, following the retirement of Steve Chapin who has had a very successful 13½ year tenure with the agency.

We wish Steve the very best in his new phase of life and look forward to our future work with Scott.

A Local Group Gives an Extra Special Gift to Families
Several years ago, a group of ladies dubbed the Penfield Quilters, partnered with the Achievement Centers for Children to provide one-of-a-kind quilts for newborns and their families that enroll in the Centers’ Early Intervention Supportive Home-Based Services program. Now they are expanding their efforts to include quilts for families in our new Westlake facility.

The Quilters’ group, which actually formed in 1940 at the Penfield Community Church in Lorain, came to the Achievement Centers a few years ago through member, Linda Chapin, wife of current Director of Finance & Operations, Steve Chapin. Their beautiful creations can be used as a play mat, blanket, or hung in the homes of their numerous recipients.

Several of their quilts are also on display at the Highland Hills and Westlake facilities for all to enjoy. The Quilters’ generosity has touched many families and is very much appreciated.

SUMMER ADVENTURES ARE BACK!
The Achievement Centers for Children is pleased to offer expanded Summer Therapy Programs for 2008! Available at both our Highland Hills and Westlake locations, Summer Adventures provides structured, goal-oriented programs which address the varied needs of the children we serve. Summer is a time for play and recreation! Our highly skilled therapists provide a structured environment designed to help children achieve their goals with a healthy mix of fun.

This year, our programs target the development of social skills, language, play skills and handwriting skills. We will also focus on increasing alertness levels and self-regulation in the classroom for school-aged children.

Contact Darla Motil at 216-292-9700 for more information and to register.

DID YOU KNOW?
- The Achievement Centers for Children provides over $1 million annually in charitable and subsidized care to more than 3,100 children and families throughout Northeast Ohio area.
- Our 2007 annual report featuring our Highland Hills mural received a 2007 Ohio Public Images Award of Excellence.
- 20% of the agency’s revenue comes from charitable gifts.
- The Achievement Centers for Children offers training for Pediatric Occupational, Physical and Speech Therapists and Therapy Assistants. Upcoming sessions are planned for October and February 2009. For more information, contact Bonnie Boenig at 216-292-9700.
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)

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; 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); parent support groups

South/Strongsville/Camp Cheerful

Social work and counseling; recreational activities; residential and day camp programs; Sensational Day Program; therapeutic riding

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 3,100 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, Karyn Kaschalk

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