“Everyone does an awesome job in helping children like Kai to progress and grow.”

—Kai’s mother

SURPRISING STEPS TO SUCCESS

More surprising progress than we could ever imagine” is how Mrs. Darby describes what her daughter, Kai, has achieved since she started coming to the Achievement Centers for Children.

Arriving into the world earlier than expected, Kai weighed just 1 lb. 3 oz. While in the NICU for 4½ months, she endured many surgeries and procedures. As a result of her prematurity, Kai has vision issues and developmental delays. When she started coming to the Achievement Centers at three years of age, Kai wasn’t crawling or walking, and her speech was very limited.

Kai is a very determined little girl though, and continues to surprise her mother and preschool teachers in our Child Development Center (CDC) with her progress. During the day, Kai’s therapists coordinate their treatments with her preschool teachers providing her with physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. “Kai’s Team” also includes social workers with our Family Support program that helps her family with questions and concerns, and ways to best help Kai at home. Our team approach fosters a nurturing, consistent environment so Kai can make the best progress possible.

In February, Kai took her first steps and began walking independently from her classroom to the gym right here in our halls at the Achievement Centers. Her teachers were thrilled, and staff throughout the building shared in their excitement. Kai’s mother was shocked and overjoyed at her rapid progress.

Kai will still need more surgeries, but she is talking more now, saying at least three-word sentences; she knows her teachers’ and classmates’ names, she’s climbing stairs, and it hasn’t even been a year since she started coming to the Achievement Centers for Children. Mrs. Darby related, “Everyone does an awesome job in helping children like Kai to progress and grow. Kai’s personality has been allowed to show; she lights up everyone’s day. It’s a blessing to have her at the Achievement Centers.”

Kai is thriving and learning at her own pace in her preschool class.
Dear Friends,

We have some wonderful news to share with all of you . . . and it highlights the immense generosity and depth of caring that is present in our community.

First, our largest fundraising event, Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine, held on November 9, 2013, generously presented by MAI Wealth Advisors, and honoring Ralph Della Ratta, raised a remarkable $540,000 for services benefiting children with disabilities and their families! Nearly 500 people attended this event. We are both thrilled and deeply grateful for this remarkable community support, coming from both individuals and corporations! It well exceeded our financial goal and is the largest amount we have raised at this event held annually for the past twelve years.

Secondly, in addition to the wonderful Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine event outcome, we were thrilled by a recent, phenomenal donation of one million dollars, from Ron and Paula Raymond. The Raymonds became impressed with the difference the Achievement Centers for Children makes in the lives of children with disabilities and their families. Their immense generosity and caring is humbling. The depth of our gratitude is difficult to express, knowing that this gift will change and improve the futures of hundreds of the children and families we serve.

Most of our donors and supporters may never meet the children that they are helping. They may not be able to witness a child’s first steps in therapy, or the smiles on their faces when they are having such fun at our Camp Cheerful. But that does not lessen the connection that exists between our donors and the children and families benefiting from their generosity. Every milestone we witness, every joyful tear that is shed by a parent who celebrates the progress of their child, underlines that magnificent connection . . . and the donor’s impact on the life of a child! Every donor wants to know that they have helped another family who is doing their best to deal with the overwhelming challenges that can accompany a child with a disability, but also need assistance in meeting those challenges. Our wonderful supporters exemplify “people helping people…people giving to people.”

I recently read a quote that reminded me of our donors and of all of you who support us in a variety of ways.

“Life is not a path of coincidence and luck, but rather an unexplainable, meticulously charted course for one to touch the lives of others and make a difference in the world.”

Thank you for touching the lives of children with disabilities and making such a difference in our part of this world!

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
President & CEO
Daniel Goes the Distance for Football

Daniel Creed, a 15 year old freshman in high school, was determined to play football. Watching him play on our Adapted Football team, you would never imagine he was born three months premature, has cerebral palsy, and just started to run when he was 11 years old. As a young child, all his toys were adapted to accommodate his gross motor and fine motor abilities which are not as highly refined, making it challenging for him to catch a ball. Though fully ambulatory, his balance is still not as good as he would like, and he has difficulty running on surfaces other than flat.

Daniel is not one to turn away from a challenge that appears too difficult. As an avid Cleveland Browns’ fan, he sought out information on area football programs that he could join. The nearest program that could provide competitive football for his abilities was 80 miles from his North Lima home, with the Achievement Centers for Children. His parents made the commitment to make the weekly trips to Bedford Heights for Daniel to be able to play on the team. By playing football, his mother, Charn, said, “He has increased his ability to run on uneven surfaces, he’s gotten stronger, and he’s improved his coordination.”

Daniel’s mother feels their entire family benefits from his playing football. Traveling to the game, Daniel is very excited about what he will be doing; after the game, he relives the game, the plays and talks about his team mates. All the families at the games are supportive of each other and cheer for all the players, which they find so very important, especially for players facing extraordinary challenges and scoring real “touchdowns” in life.
A SMASHING SUCCESS
Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine
November 9, 2013

Our annual black tie gala was indeed a sparkling event again this year! It was a memorable night, with 490 guests attending as the Achievement Centers honored Ralph M. Della Ratta, Jr., Managing Director of Western Reserve Partners LLC. Thanks to our generous supporters, we raised a record $540,000 to benefit children with disabilities and their families. We are very grateful to all our Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine contributors for their caring and for making such an impact on those we serve.

EQUESTRIAN LEADERS HONORED

What a group of volunteers we have in our Therapeutic Horsemanship Program! Our dedicated volunteers are the heart of our program as instructors, side walkers, leaders and helpers in the barn. We recently had a celebration where we recognized all of our program volunteers, including those special volunteers who have logged more than 1,000 hours of service in our program. We are extremely grateful to all our volunteers for making this program possible for the 90+ riders each week who benefit year round!

We asked one of our volunteers why he is so passionate about our Therapeutic Horsemanship Program. Gene Lovasy commented, “I can think of no other program where a kid can experience that sense of independence and control, and I don’t think there’s anything more gratifying than that for a volunteer.” Gene expressed so well the passion and caring our volunteers have for our program, our horses and our riders.

Interested in becoming a volunteer in the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program? Volunteers age 14 and older are encouraged to call Marian Heyink at 440-238-6200 ext 242.

FALL FESTIVAL

A sincere thank you to all the wonderful guests and sponsors of our 21st Annual Fall Festival Dinner and Silent Auction held on Saturday, October 19, 2013. Over $61,000 was raised, benefiting the many Camp Cheerful programs.

Pat Nobili, President and CEO and Connie Boros, Vice President of Recreation and Sports with Fall Festival Committee members Mary Ellen Petras and Mary Lou Walsh.
Wanted: Outstanding Summer Camp Counselors

Looking for an excellent summer camp counselor experience this summer? Many of our counselors have told us that Camp Cheerful is where they really connected with their career choice by working with our campers with disabilities and special needs. Sure, it’s not for everyone—it’s challenging work and requires patience, commitment and caring, but if you’re up for it, the rewards are immeasurable both for yourself and the campers’ lives you are impacting. We are proud of the outstanding counselors our program attracts, many who return summer after summer.

Day camps are offered in Highland Hills and Westlake, and day and residential camps are offered at Camp Cheerful in Strongsville. In addition to traditional camp activities, Camp Cheerful offers horsemanship activities, canoeing, swimming, fishing, and our 50’ high ropes challenge course—all fully accessible.

Feel up to the challenge and the rewards of being a Camp Counselor with the Achievement Centers for Children? We’d love to talk to you. Please call Vicki Kinzy at 440-238-6200 ext 224.

THE ART OF CAREGIVING
Camp Cheerful’s River Rock Adult Day Program

Adults are enjoying their new program at Camp Cheerful, growing with new skills and experiences, making new friends, and having fun. New participants continue to join the group, and our staff is being recognized for outstanding care and professionalism.

We recently received a letter about the exemplary care provided by our staff.

“There has been an immense amount of commitment on the part of the staff at the Achievement Centers for Children that needs to be recognized. I have worked in residential and vocation services at providers throughout Northeast Ohio. I know the hard work and dedication this takes. A surveyor for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) once told me when she saw great interactions between caregivers and individuals, that this is truly the art of caregiving. This situation, with all you have done, all the flexibility, all the patience, and all the support . . . it is the art of caregiving. I personally thank each and every one of you for the commitment you have made to this family.”

—Support Administrator, Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities

For more information about our River Rock Adult Day Program, contact Portia Jones at 440-238-6200 ext 246.
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 services; 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 cares, schools, homes
216-292-9700

Help support our mission . . . join us! For details visit www.achievementcenters.org

Special Events

FAMILY FUN DAY
Saturday, May 17, 2014
Achievement Centers’ Westlake Site

CAMP CHEERFUL OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, May 31, 2014

BLUE CHIP BLUE TEE GOLF TOURNAMENT
Monday, August 4, 2014
Kirtland Country Club

FALL FESTIVAL
Saturday, October 18, 2014
Camp Cheerful

SPARKLE, SHIMMER & SHINE GALA
Saturday, November 8, 2014
InterContinental Hotel

A Most Excellent Race 2014
Presented by Majestic Steel USA
SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2014
www.achievementcenters.org/race
Join us on Twitter #ACCRACE for tips and info on the race

Editor: Katherine Henry; Contributors: Patricia Nobili, Deborah Osgood, Katherine Henry