FRIENDS FOR CASEY

Casey is a delightful boy who loves music and loves to move. He enjoys swimming and going down the Lazy River at Geauga Lake, visiting the zoo, and bowling with his friends and his twin brother, Tyler. Casey has been a student in the Achievement Centers for Children Autism Program in Highland Hills for six years, starting as a preschooler. What difference has Casey’s specialized education made in his life and his family’s?

When Casey was initially diagnosed with autism and did not speak, his parents feared he would never have friends and never be a friend. Casey is now 9½ years old, and he and his classmates are more than just classmates; they are his friends. As his mother, Rebecca related, “It is just so nice to see—to see Casey go from this scared person living in his own world, in almost isolation, with us having to force our way in—to see him now being this bold, charismatic personality that can command a room, and see him interact with his friends. He has made such a huge transformation. To have everyone come together to give him the foundation and skills he needs so he can be who he is, and give him a place where he can learn, grow, develop and he can flourish, and be proud of himself. It’s just been wonderful to get all that from the Achievement Centers,” said Rebecca.

“...It’s just been wonderful.”

—Rebecca, Casey’s mother

Our autism program provides a partnership with families navigating a seemingly uncertain life journey with their children with autism. We offer a program for students in preschool through sixth grade, and will be expanding to include seventh and eighth grade next year. The autism program not only provides specialized classrooms and expert, caring teachers, but students receive a high level of therapy services such as speech therapy and occupational therapy during the day. Our parent educators provide a link between home and school, with helpful parenting suggestions, emotional support and resource referrals for families. Parents learn more about their child, ways to guide them effectively, and together they appreciate the unique abilities of their child.

Casey is excelling within the sensory-rich environment of our autism program, and has had tremendous success using an iPad with a communication app that replicates speech and gives him “his voice.”
Dear Friends,

One of the strengths of the Achievement Centers for Children is being in continual touch with families who have children/young adults with disabilities and seeing first hand that we must never assume what a person’s potential can be. We see children’s and families’ tremendous courage and perseverance in the face of immense challenges. We also see potential, progress and wonderful achievements! We build on the potential, while working to minimize the impact of the disability. Through special learning techniques, family support, education, therapies, recreation and adapted sports and more, the individuals we serve have opportunities that help them become all that they can be. We expand programs, create programs and even discontinue or downsize programs, according to the needs of the families, the updated clinical research and knowledge, while incorporating the constant changes in the external environment.

With a focus on creating and expanding opportunities, we are excited to tell you about the following activities: 1) our specialized classrooms for children with autism, which start with preschool (3 years old), will now be expanded through the 8th grade; 2) our Early Intervention Mental Health Program has been expanded due to increased support from the ADAMHS Board; 3) our Infant Massage Instruction program has been recognized as an innovative addition to early intervention, and a video of our program is being used statewide for replication; 4) our new River Rock Adult Day Program, a year round day program for graduating high school seniors with disabilities offered at our Camp Cheerful, is growing at a significant rate, with support from the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities; and 5) as a result of continued growth in recreation, adapted sports and our River Rock programs, we will be replacing one of our older buildings at Camp Cheerful with a much larger and updated “Club House,” with significant support from the Cleveland MetroParks.

I once read that “the greatest good we can do for others is not just to share our strengths and gifts with them, but to enable them to discover their own.”

Thank you for helping us create and expand opportunities that enable children with disabilities to discover their abilities and take pride in their achievements!

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
President & CEO

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA
President & CEO
SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

Isaiah Johnson was born with an abundance of motivation and attitude. At 12 years old, he is an aspiring Olympian in Wheelchair Basketball. He is an athlete whose focus is clear.

Isaiah, born prematurely, and weighing only 2 lb. 8 oz. spent the first two months of his life in the NICU at Akron Children’s Hospital. At five months old, he was diagnosed with spastic dysplasia, the most common form of cerebral palsy. It mostly affects his legs, and to a lesser degree his arms. He learned to walk with crutches when he started kindergarten. The stronger he got, the more determined he became to build his strength and reach his full potential.

After joining our Junior Wheelchair Cavaliers team last year, Achievement Centers’ Manager of Sports Services, Mike Urban, recommended they see Josh Palcic, a physical therapist at the Achievement Centers. Isaiah’s short term goal was to make a basket at the 10’ regulation height. Josh understood that Isaiah’s motivation to play basketball would also help him attain greater overall body strength and coordination. He explained to Isaiah how important it was for him not only to develop his upper body strength, but also to build his lower body strength to provide extra stability for sitting and shooting the high hoops. In addition to traditional therapy techniques, Josh customized his plan to include activities that would translate to improving his basketball skills. These include shooting hoops in the gym, and racing around cones for agility, balance, and endurance, all under the coach-like direction of his therapist. His mother provides encouragement at his therapy sessions from the sidelines calling out “no shortcuts to greatness!”

Isaiah continues to push himself. “My goal is to be on the Olympic team for Wheelchair Basketball.” He really likes his Achievement Centers Junior Wheelchair Cavaliers Basketball team because “they are supportive and they were probably like me when they first started playing.” His mother says, “he wants to be a star.” Isaiah made his first basket last week after working for a full year. There is no stopping this motivated and driven athlete!

“Ability is what you’re capable of doing.

Motivation determines what you do.

Attitude determines how well you do it.”

—Lee Holz

Isaiah’s physical therapy plan incorporates activities that will also improve his basketball skills.

Thank you to our generous sponsors for the ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAM
FANTASTIC FAMILY FUN DAY

Our 6th Annual Fantastic Family Fun Day was held May 17 at our Westlake site. There were rides, activities and cookout lunches for families. Each year, our staff volunteers organize this event, which has special activities suitable for children with autism or other special needs to enjoy together with their family.

IN HONOR OF THE RAYMONDS

We were honored to recognize and express our deep appreciation to Ron and Paula Raymond at a special reception recently. Their exceptionally generous gift will change and improve the futures of hundreds of the children and families we serve. In their honor, our Highland Hills’ Education Wing has been named “The Paula & Ronald Raymond Education Wing.” Their connection to the Achievement Centers for Children was through a very special girl, Maggie Koehler, who has benefited from services here since she was a baby, along with her family. In Maggie’s honor, she now has a therapy room named after her. We are so very grateful for the Raymond’s inspirational gift and their caring hearts.

Ron and Paula Raymond lorem ipsum dolor non sequitur. Dolor lorem ipsum dolor non sequitur lorem ipsum dolor non sequitur lorem ipsum dolor non sequitur lorem ipsum dolor non sequitur.

Barb Obiaya Honored

Congratulations to our own Barb Obiaya, LISW-S, MSSA, Director of Family Support Services, for winning the ADAMHS Board Mental Health Professional of the Year Award! Over 350 people attended the ADAMHS meeting and community awards ceremony in June, where Barb was recognized for her outstanding leadership, expertise and advocacy for early childhood mental health services and early intervention! She has been with the Achievement Centers for 38 years, starting as a social worker at Camp Cheerful. We and all those we serve are so fortunate to have Barb on our team!
These are a few of my favorite things
AT CAMP CHEERFUL

We did an informal survey through our Achievement Centers for Children’s Facebook page to find out what campers and parents enjoyed most about Camp Cheerful.

Trish went to camp in the 60’s and 70’s. Here’s what she told us:
“It was the most exciting time of my youth. I loved the opening and closing campfires, all the singing, but I loved swimming a lot, and the nature. I was raised on horses, so I would ride a lot. OHH AND THE CAMP OUTS—WOОHOOO, what fun. I look back now and the way they get all the kids involved with all kinds of camp things that the other kids do. It is just so awesome. I could go on forever here. Thanks for taking me down memory lane, which is right by Cheerful Lane I hear.”

Michelle is a mother with a son that attends Camp Cheerful each summer. Here’s what she told us:
“I love that my son can try new things in a fun and friendly environment. Things that are normal for a typical child to do are available to him. Never did I think my son would be able to canoe, fish or hike, and love it as much as he does. He is looking forward to camp. The second the seasons start to change, he is asking how soon his school will be over and when can he go to camp.”

Campers who attend Camp Cheerful are subsidized through charitable donations, which insures that any child, teen or adult with disabilities can enjoy all that camp has to offer regardless of their family’s income. Your charitable donations of any size are greatly appreciated by campers and their families.

Day camps are offered in Highland Hills and Westlake, and day, weekend and residential camps are offered at Camp Cheerful in Strongsville for children, teens and adults of all abilities. In addition to traditional camp activities, Camp Cheerful offers horsemanship activities, canoeing, swimming, fishing, and a 50’ high ropes challenge course – all fully accessible.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

$5,000
Adopt-a-Horse Stall at Camp Cheerful.

$765
Sponsor a week of overnight camp for a child or adult.

Variety of Levels
Sponsor an Adapted Sports Team.

PRICELESS
Volunteer to help in our Adapted Sports or our Therapeutic Horsemanship Program.

No experience needed—training is provided.

Visit our website for more information www.achievementcenters.org
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

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

A Most Excellent Race 2014 — Presented by Majestic Steel USA
HELD SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2014
Thank you to our participants, supporters and volunteers for another successful race!
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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
Honoring Bruce Higley Chairman
The Albert M. Higley Company
Saturday, November 8, 2014
InterContinental Hotel