



the Achiever

ROCK SOLID FRIENDSHIPS

Nathan, a 19-year-old “river rocker” in our River Rock Adult Day Program at Camp Cheerful, looks forward to seeing his friends each day. After he graduated from high school, Nathan and his family decided that our year-round program was the right one for him. He was welcomed on his first day by several young men he knew from his high school. He made new friends very quickly, and now especially likes hanging out with pals, Rachel and Jenna. They are quite a trio, joking and encouraging each other, and look forward to meeting up with each other as soon as they arrive for the day.

His mother, Angela, said “the most important part of the program is the excellent communication from staff, and the fact that we know he’s safe, and he wants to go each day.” They have a communication notebook that goes between home and the River Rock staff with notes about Nathan’s day. It allows Nathan’s mother and father to talk to him about what he did during the day. “It makes me feel better that he’s enjoying himself, especially with his

disabilities,” said his father, Daniel. “All the different activities keep him busy and his mind engaged, and he can go year-round. They have so many activities like singing, yoga, horsemanship, fishing, sports, and music, and they go on many field trips. Nathan’s favorites last year were seeing the Indians play, bowling, going to the mall and eating fast food there.”

Nathan’s father, Daniel, enjoys picking his son up in the afternoon. It gives him a chance to get to know Nathan’s caregivers. He said, “Everyone I talk to

when I pick Nathan up in the afternoon is such a golden person. They always take time to talk to me about Nathan’s day, and I can tell they truly care about him. Nathan loves all his caregivers and they switch off so he gets to know all of them.” Nathan and one of his direct caregivers, Jackie, have a special friendship and connection. Since Nathan is mostly nonverbal, Jackie picks up on his nonverbal cues intuitively, and asks questions to understand him better. Jackie said, “His smile and laugh are contagious. I like to see him interact with his friends. I know he’s having a good time, and I know his parents are able to feel he is safe and that he’s loved here.”



Friendships and fun abound in our year-round River Rock Adult Day Program. Here, Nathan participates in activities with his friends while having the supports he needs.

Our year-round River Rock Adult Day Program offers adults with disabilities meaningful and engaging social, recreational and educational activities customized to each individual’s special needs, abilities, and interests.

Give Shawn a call at 440-238-6200 to schedule a visit to tour Camp Cheerful and see our River Rock Adult Day program in action!



Jackie Drake, River Rock direct caregiver, assists Nathan with a variety of activities at camp, such as arts & crafts, nature walks, and going on special field trips in the community. She has also been helping him learn to use his new wheelchair more independently.





Sally Farwell
President & CEO

Dear Friends,

Communication is the cornerstone of relationships and society. It is the means by which we connect, problem-solve, and ensure that our needs are met. Unfortunately, for some children with disabilities and their families, the ability to communicate is not a given.

At the Achievement Centers for Children, our focus on communication is two-fold. First, we believe that every child should have a means to communicate his or her wants, needs, and feelings. As such, we employ creative strategies to help our clients connect to the world around them. These strategies take many forms depending on the particular challenges a child faces. Examples include the Picture Exchange Communication System, iPad apps, and sophisticated communication systems that allow individuals with physical disabilities and who are nonverbal to program their thoughts and needs into a device that speaks those thoughts for them.

Second, we believe that effective communication between our staff and the families we serve is crucial to success. As such, we have many means to communicate with families. For example, we encourage families to observe therapy sessions so the therapist can explain what's being done and why. Similarly, in our group programs, we send daily notes or a daily notebook back and forth to communicate what's happening in the child's or adult's life. We also send programs home with our families who receive outpatient therapy services so they know what to work on between sessions. Finally, we always encourage children and their families to ask questions and give feedback.

You can read more about our approach to communication in this newsletter. We hope that you will be as excited as we are about the progress our children and families make each day. Your continued support allows us to remain on the cutting-edge as we develop new and creative strategies to help the people we serve interact with the world on their own terms.

Thank you for being part of our community. Thank you for helping us give everyone a voice.

Sincerely,

Sally Farwell
President & CEO

ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS

New Strategic Plan for 2018–2020

OUR MISSION

We empower children and adults with disabilities and their families to achieve their greatest potential.

STRATEGIC GOALS

We will be guided by four core Strategic Goals focusing on our future and strengthening our mission.

Growth Generate demand for services based on unparalleled expertise

Leadership and Talent Attract the most passionate and talented people

Relationships Foster relationships to maximize impact for our mission

Operations and Infrastructure Optimize operational and administrative activities

For more information and additional details on our 2018–2020 Strategic Plan, please visit our website at AchievementCenters.org/publications

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People forget —
when your child
can't talk, they can't
communicate simple
things. I can't ask her
in the car, "How was
your day?" or "What
did you learn in
school today?"

— DESIREE HURT



SPECTRUMS OF POTENTIAL

Jayla (age 9) and Ja'Lynne (age 5) are sisters learning to reach milestones and goals through our programs at the Achievement Centers for Children. Both girls are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and use special communication devices to express themselves. Jayla is in our Autism School in Highland Hills and receives speech therapy; Ja'Lynne comes weekly for occupational therapy. Jayla and Ja'Lynne's mother, Desiree, knows firsthand the meaning behind Dr. Stephen Shore's quote, "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism." We work hand-in-hand with Desiree to find each girl's unique abilities, interests, and potential, and guide them to their next level of progress.

After visiting several schools for children with autism, Desiree felt Jayla would make the best progress here. "What I like is that the Achievement Centers uses a variety of teaching methods. Her teachers find what works for Jayla, and they don't try to limit her." Since starting in our Autism School last August, Desiree has seen many positive changes in her daughter, such as being more attentive, using more eye contact, and she is showing more independence in her self-care. Her sister, Ja'Lynne, is benefiting from a "sensory diet," an activity plan from her occupational therapist with

sensory activities, such as swinging, that help her calm down and focus more. These are milestone achievements for Desiree and her daughters.

"I absolutely love the communication with the teachers and therapists because it gives me peace of mind," said Desiree. Jayla's teachers use a daily log book that lists all the activities in great detail that Jayla did throughout the day; what therapy she had, whether she needs additional supplies, even what percentage of her lunch she ate. "It helps me feel a part of her day, gives me confidence knowing about her progress on a daily basis, and it gives me comfort. I attend Ja'Lynne's occupational therapy sessions so I can support her better at home, and coordinate with her teacher. This communication is even more important to me since my daughters can't speak for themselves."



Jayla enjoys her weekly music therapy sessions where her therapist and teacher encourage her to participate using instruments and song.

The Achievement Centers for Children Autism School is a licensed, alternative public school for students K-8th grade. Here, we engage one-on-one with students and through small group activities designed to meet the unique needs of students with significant social, sensory, and communication challenges.



Augmentative and Alternative Communication Clinic

Through a specialized speech therapy program, we are helping children and young adults improve their communication skills through access to a variety of options in devices and methods. Some individuals find success in using an iPad, while others

engage better with pictures. Together with families, we develop customized solutions to help improve communication skills. For more information, visit www.AchievementCenters.org/speech.



Time to Register for Summer Camp!

Whether it's a week of day camp, several nights in our overnight camp, or our Sensational Day camp for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it's time to register online at AchievementCenters.org/campcheerful.

THANK YOU

to our generous sponsors for the Adapted Sports Program

PARTNERS



GOLD SPONSORS

Padua Franciscan High School Vana Family Foundation

Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine Gala

Our Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine Gala held on Saturday, November 11, 2017 honored KeyBank and Beth E. Mooney, Chair and CEO of KeyCorp, for Key's decades of support of children with disabilities and their families, and for their commitment and dedication to improving the quality of life in our Northeast Ohio community.

Through the support of over 440 business, community, and civic leaders, the event raised over \$516,000. Over 82% of the event's proceeds go directly to the programs and services of the Achievement Centers. We are so very grateful to all our Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine contributors for their caring, and for making a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

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Sally Farwell (left), President and CEO of the Achievement Centers with Sparkle honoree Beth E. Mooney, Chair and CEO of KeyCorp

ACC Awarded Charity Navigator 4-Star Rating

In December of last year, the Achievement Centers for Children was honored to be awarded the coveted 4-star rating (the highest possible) for the third year in a row from Charity Navigator, demonstrating our strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency. Charity Navigator is the nation's largest independent evaluator of charities.



"Only 18% of the charities we evaluate have received at least three consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that the Achievement Centers for Children outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Achievement Centers for Children apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness" wrote Charity Navigator President and CEO Michael Thatcher in his congratulatory letter. At the Achievement Centers, we are proud of our mission and how we operate, and are delighted to once again earn such an excellent rating.

Charity Navigator, itself a non-profit organization, offers donors a wealth of resources and information to help individuals make good philanthropic choices. An example of one useful article on their website is Five Steps to Informed Giving. To see the full Achievement Centers' rating and get donor information, visit www.charitynavigator.org.

Staff Accolades



"2017 Staff Member of the Year" Awarded to Josh Palcic

Josh Palcic has been a physical therapist at the Achievement Centers for the past ten years. He is a source of hope for our families, a source of motivation and achievement for our clients, and a mentor and role model to interns and other staff. Clients and families trust his expertise, and he has developed life-changing abilities in so many clients. Help us congratulate Josh on this well-deserved award!

Welcome Lori Oliver, Ph.D. Executive Vice President

The Achievement Centers for Children is pleased to welcome Lori Oliver as their new Executive Vice President. Lori will be responsible for the development and delivery of quality driven, fiscally sound programs and services. She brings over 26 years of behavioral health and development disabilities industry experience to the agency. Lori has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and is a graduate of the Mental Health Executive Leadership program at Case Western Reserve University.



FAMILY INFORMATION SERIES

Learn more about issues, and programs that benefit children with special needs and their families. Classes are offered the second Tuesday of each month from 6:00–7:30 pm by our Family Support Department. For more information, call 216-292-9700 ext 297.

April 10, 2018 — "Understanding and Writing the IEP"

May 8, 2018 — "Financial Planning for a Child with Special Needs"

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



the Achiever

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



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OUR MISSION is to empower children and adults with disabilities and their families to achieve their greatest potential.

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 and adults 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



BLUE CHIP BLUE TEE
GOLF TOURNAMENT
Monday, August 6, 2018
Kirtland Country Club



A MOST EXCELLENT RACE Sunday, June 24, 2018

Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights

- Timed 10K and 5K races
- One mile and 5K walk
- Family activities including Flower Clown, bounce house, DJ, and refreshments

Register, form a team, or donate online at:

achievementcenters.org/race