PAYTON’S PASSIONS

Payton Light is a “fashionista,” a ten-year-old twin to Jillian, and is passionate about playing sports and participating in activities with her peers. She enjoys playing defense in our Adapted Football program, loves scoring goals in adapted soccer, and has been riding horses at Camp Cheerful since she was five years old. Payton does not let having cerebral palsy and using her wheelchair or her purple walker define who she is.

Payton and Jillian were born at 29 weeks and weighed only 2 pounds 13 ounces. Professionals reassured her parents the twins were tiny but healthy. They said don’t worry. At 18 months old, however, doctors diagnosed Payton with cerebral palsy and told them she might never walk or talk. Her parents were devastated. They researched her condition and traveled to find the latest, greatest surgeries and therapies to help their daughter accomplish as much as possible.

“Once I stopped putting time frames on when she was going to accomplish milestones though, I started enjoying the little things that she could accomplish and the amazing girl she is,” said her mother, Carrie.

For the past three-and-a-half years, Payton has been coming to the Achievement Centers for Children in Westlake for physical therapy with Josh Palcic. Carrie said, “We like the dynamics the two of them have. Josh can get her to do things that she won’t do for us. He knows when he needs to get tough and how to motivate her. Every time she grows taller, it’s more difficult for her. It’s harder for her to hold her body up straight since her core muscles are pretty weak. Josh works with her to adapt through those kinds of changes as she grows. Her overall strength continues to improve, she’s more confident, and she is finding ways to be more independent.”

Carrie offered this advice to parents. “Let your kids ask questions of children who are different. I love it when parents let their kids come up and ask questions, and I let Payton answer them. After the child asks why she is in a wheelchair, they play as friends. It’s no longer a barrier between them. Discouraging children from asking questions reinforces the feeling that the child is different. I want Payton to have friends and to be a friend. Who she is is key. It’s not what she can or can’t do—it’s who she is. Our Payton is feisty, funny, competitive, and awesome.”

Pediatric physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapies at the Achievement Centers are very personalized to meet the needs of each individual child. Our pediatric therapists make sessions productive and fun to achieve the greatest outcomes, and sessions are dedicated exclusively to each individual. Generous donations made to the Achievement Centers help offset the cost of providing pediatric therapy sessions.
Dear Friends,

At the Achievement Centers, we view those we serve as more than clients. They are family. We meet them where they are on their sometimes unexpected, unfamiliar, and often difficult journeys. Because we personalize our programs and services, we are able to walk hand-in-hand with children with disabilities and their families to help them navigate uncertainty, provide resources, and offer programs and services that make a difference. Families learn they are not alone in their journey with their child, and we are honored to be there as they experience the hope and joy children of all abilities can bring.

Because starting services early in a child’s life is key for maximizing potential, our goal is to reach families as soon as possible. When asked what advice they would give families just starting out on their journey with a child with disabilities, many of our current families mentioned speaking candidly with their doctors about their observations and not being afraid to advocate for their child in their school, treatments, and community. Our caring staff members support our families as they navigate this often unfamiliar territory. As one parent said, “They’re that hand on your shoulder that says, ‘come on. I can help you through this.’”

Charitable donations help us provide services and support to children and adults regardless of their financial circumstances. We feel that no child should go without what they need to enjoy life and reach their full potential. Your generous donations make this possible for the families we serve today and those who will need us tomorrow.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Sally Farwell, M.Ed.
President & CEO

ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018–2019

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At a year old, Artist LeSure was saying simple words such as “mama” and “no no” and took his first independent steps at his first birthday party. Soon after, he abruptly stopped talking and interacting with others. At his two-year-old check-up, when he still was not speaking, his doctor became concerned that Artist may have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). His mother, Chardi, became dedicated to researching as much information as possible about autism and ways she could help her son. She searched resources on the internet, and found the Achievement Centers’ website. There she read stories about the achievements of other children with ASD, and found it reassuring.

When Artist was officially diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder at 3½ years old, she had already been helping him at home with his sensory challenges. “We practically turned our apartment into a preschool,” said Chardi.

When it was time for Kindergarten, their local school district suggested the Achievement Centers, and Chardi was thrilled based on what she already knew about the Achievement Centers. After visiting our Autism School in Highland Hills, and meeting with our teachers, aides and staff, Chardi knew her son would thrive here. Chardi related, “our journey with the Achievement Centers for Children has been amazing! It has worked for Artist so well, especially with the year-round program. I can do nothing but thank the amazing team of teachers and aides at the Achievement Centers!”

WHAT DO ARTIST’S PARENTS WANT FOR HIS FUTURE?

“I want Artist to be able to share his story, and to have him accepted in the world. I want to let other kids and families know it’s ok to be different. Artist is remarkable and I’m looking forward to all he will offer the world,” said Chardi.

At the Achievement Centers for Children, we advocate for all individuals with disabilities, including autism, and help families learn to advocate for their children. Families are a critical part of our students’ “team.” For more information about the Achievement Centers Autism School, visit our website or give Lisa Cooper, Director of Education, a call at 216-292-9700 ext 243.

* Artist’s parents, Chardi and Albert, offered this advice to parents of children with autism spectrum disorder.

1. BE YOUR CHILD’S ADVOCATE.

Chardi learned to be her child’s spokesperson and teacher, and learned ways to help Artist with his occupational therapy. “Be everything you can be for your child. Learn from those helping your child,” she said.

2. BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM AND BE YOUR OWN CHEERLEADER.

Friends and family became even more important to Chardi and Albert for their support through difficult and sometimes frustrating days.

3. PUSH THE BOUNDARIES FOR YOUR CHILD, THEN PUSH THEM A LITTLE FURTHER.

Artist’s parents learned through experience that the more you encourage a child with new interactions, the better they do. “Don’t keep them from anything any other child would do.”
We love our volunteers!

We are grateful for the many dedicated volunteers that help in so many ways each year. Last year, we had 1,016 volunteers that provided immeasurable assistance in our adapted sports and therapeutic horsemanship program, with special projects and events, and as members of our Board of Directors and Associate Board!

Thank you Grace!

Grace Loudenstein has been a dedicated volunteer in our development office for four years. She’s part of our development team and happily takes on projects to help.

“I was impressed with the remarkable accomplishments that the children were achieving at the Achievement Centers. After I retired, I started volunteering and now come two days a week performing a variety of tasks. I couldn’t ask for a better group with whom to work.”

Thank you Ohio Desk!

Volunteers from Ohio Desk worked at Camp Cheerful to prepare for our Respite Weekend. The group cleaned cabins, moved beds, picked up debris, and landscaped in front of our River Rock Clubhouse.

Volunteers also help with our Therapeutic Horsemanship program, Adapted Sports, and with our special events. Check out our website and see how you might lend a hand! AchievementCenters.org/volunteer.

Thank you to our generous sponsors for the Adapted Sports Program

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Sparkle honoree, Brian Zimmerman, CEO of the Cleveland Metroparks with Sally Farwell, President and CEO of the Achievement Centers

Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine Gala

On November 10, 2018 at our Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine gala, more than 300 guests gathered to honor Brian Zimmerman, CEO, and the Cleveland Metroparks for their longstanding partnership with the Achievement Centers for Children and our Camp Cheerful. Their significant support for individuals with disabilities has had a positive and meaningful impact on the entire Northeast Ohio community.

Through the support of our sponsors, guests, and donors, the event raised over $430,000. Over 83% 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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Ways to Give

- Join our Monthly Giving Circle
  - It’s easy and automatic
  - Provides continuous support
- Tribute or memorial gifts are thoughtful ways to honor loved ones
- Start a fundraiser on Facebook, select “Achievement Center for Children”
- Shop on AmazonSmile.com, designate the Achievement Center for Children, and the AmazonSmile foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to us!
- Donate online at AchievementCenters.org/give

STAFF ACCOLADES

“2018 ACC Award” to Cory Ramsey
Congratulations to Cory Ramsey, our Manager of Equine Programs at Camp Cheerful! Cory has been with the Achievement Centers for eleven years managing the Therapeutic Horsemanship program at Camp Cheerful. She shows the ACC spirit of caring, compassion and expertise with over 190 volunteers, 139 riders and their families, and eleven horses in the program last year. Help us congratulate Cory on this well-deserved award!

Barb Obiaya Retires after 43 Years
As the Director of our Family Support Services department, Barb has had immeasurable impact on the many families she has helped, and the staff members and social work interns she has mentored throughout the years. With grateful appreciation, we congratulate Barb on her retirement on March 15, 2019!

Simira Wilson Joins Staff as New Director of Family Support Services
Welcome Simira, who will directly oversee our Behavioral Health, Help Me Grow Home Visiting, Early Childhood Mental Health and ACCENT programs.

TIME TO REGISTER FOR SUMMER CAMP!
Whether it’s a week of day camp, several nights in our overnight camp, or our Sensational Day program for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it’s time to register online at AchievementCenters.org/campcheerful.

Achievement Centers for Children
Providing Services to Children with Disabilities and their Families

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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, sports and adult day program.

LOCATIONS
Highland Hills
Westlake
Camp Cheerful in Strongsville
Child care centers, schools, homes
216-292-9700

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