



Best Chili Award went to Cj's Pizza for their "Meat Lover's Chili"



Red Barn won Best Chowder Award for the 8th Year in a Row!

## Lively 10th Annual Chili Chowder Challenge

A crowd estimated at over 1,200 filled the armory with buzz and excitement at the 10th Annual Chili Chowder Challenge on March 26, 2011.

Winning Best Chili Award was Cj's Pizza for their "Meat Lover's Chili" and winning Best Chowder (for the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row!) was The Red Barn for "Laura's Famous Seafood Stew."

The list of winners was rounded out by The Liberal Cup's "Mauna Loa Volcano Chili," voted "Hottest Chili," and winning three awards was the Maple Hill Farm Inn and Conference Center, snagging "Most Creative Display," "Most Creative Name," and "Most Original Chowder" with their "Creamy and Maine wisdom-isms."

Caribbean Coconut Conch Chowder."

As always, the family-friendly event had lots to offer everyone. The craft tables were surrounded by children of all ages throughout the event – decorating donuts, getting faces painted, creating crowns and paper masterpieces, and more. The Lithgow Library's Story Corner was also a popular spot.

The silent auction was humming all day, and the live auction was spiced with auctioneer Gary Crocker's wit and Maine wisdom-isms.



Thanks to the phenomenal dedication of ALL of the volunteers who work tirelessly to put together this event, and to the generosity of the sponsors, the participating restaurants, and of the entire community who turn out to support the Children's Center, this Challenge was the most successful ever, raising over \$35,000 for early intervention education and therapy services to benefit children of all abilities here in Central Maine.



### Carson



At a child-sized table by a window, a little boy stands listening intently to a C.D. When a favorite song comes on, he starts to dance, turns to look at the adults and his smile warms the room. His teachers smile back and give encouraging words. Carson basks in the smiles and music.

Carson came to the Children's Center eight months ago and will turn four in July. Mom Tara describes his early months and years: "It wasn't anything like I expected" - his delays and therapies were a brand new experience to the family.

Tara confides that being a first time Mom was a challenge from the start. "At two weeks we were told he had a hole in his heart. There were feeding problems and later, eye surgery.

"It has been a steep learning curve for both Shawn and me but we wouldn't change it for the world. After 6 months I UNsubscribed to the 'What your child is doing now e-mails.'

"Carson's milestones are often things unnoticed by parents of typically developing children. Climbing into a child sized chair without assistance and shouting "Woo-hoo," chasing the dog around the house with the biggest belly laugh you can imagine or pushing me out of the classroom door at drop off in the morning, because it's time to sing the Banana song with Miss Cindy.

"Carson is beginning to enjoy outside activities in spite of his eyes' ultra sensitivity to the sun. Depending on the season he'll now cruise around the property with Daddy on the lawn mower, 4-wheeler or snowmobile."

When Carson was 3 months

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"We see great things happening every day."

## Carson

old he went to a very small in-home child care. Tara explains, "It was a very difficult decision to move away from this intimate child care setting to a center based atmosphere. In seven months, Carson has developed wonderful relationships with all the staff at the Children's Center. In the morning we walk up the hall, stop and greet teachers, therapists and staff as we make our way to the classroom. Everyone at the Center has a way of mak-

ing Carson feel special. This nurturing environment has turned out to be much more than we could have hoped for."

Shawn expressed his pleasure at Carson's progress, "I can't believe the vast change in Carson's communication and social ability. He will now stand up for himself. He's building confidence and that will be a big help in transitioning him to public school."

"At the Children's Center we don't have to worry about coordinating Carson's therapies. It's easier for him: a

therapist meets him at the classroom door and they walk down the hall." Tara adds, "Carson's therapy team is exceptional. We see great things happening every day. All of the therapists are positive and caring. They set goals and expectations that Carson happily tries to meet. It makes us so proud to hear Carson referred to as a 'hard worker' and 'so much fun to work with'."



## Legislative Sentiment



Augusta Senator Roger Katz recently visited The Children's Center to present a Legislative Sentiment recognizing the Children's Center as the recipient of a 2011 Dirigo Award for Nonprofit Excellence for achieving "significant results by utilizing ingenuity combined with sound management prac-

tices." In the Sentiment, members of the Senate and House of Representatives congratulated the Center on its receiving this "well-deserved award."

Senator Katz engagingly addressed the staff and children at the Center on Provider Appreciation Day on May 6th.



## Caregiver Advisory Council

The Children's Center has a Caregiver Advisory Council that serves as an advisory body to the Children's Center Leadership Team and Board of Directors. Any caregiver with a child who attends center-based services or receives targeted case management from the Children's Center is eligible for membership. The Council meets once a month, reviewing processes, policies and documentation to improve quality of services. They also provide feedback about the events held by the center for families, assist in developing services and creating content of parent education curriculum, and create a forum for raising and responding to any concerns that may arise. If you have a child at the Center and would like to participate, please contact us.

# Learnings



It has been fun and rewarding on many levels to be back at Colby for several events recently. My trip through life so far has taken me from Waterville and back to Augusta...via Washington D.C., California, and Pennsylvania.

I was fortunate enough to go to Colby on the 'poor kid from Maine' ticket, and also lucky enough to grow up in the town Esther Wood called home (she provided financial support for many kids from Blue Hill).

I was back at Colby to attend the annual conference for the Maine Association of Non-Profits, where our former board chair Glenn Gagne was one of the people commended for his philanthropic efforts for the people of central Maine.

He's a great guy, tireless in his efforts to support kids.

I was there to hear Ben Hewitt speak about his book The Town That Food Saved and the power of local agriculture to transform local economies (and good health, too!). That speech reinforced my belief that our support of local farms through community supported agriculture is good for kids, farms, and our communities.

I was there to receive a grant, sponsored by Doris Buffet, based on an application written by a group of Colby students participating in a class taught by Professor Tom Morrione. The hard work of Sara Ramsey, Caitlin Hewett, and Cameron Cox will result in the purchase of adaptive seating that will allow all children to more fully participate in classrooms and floortime.

I was there to be the proud recipient of the Dirigo award

(see the article on the back page). Being recognized as one of three out of 5,000 non-profit organizations in Maine to be so acknowledged was a tremendous compliment on the work of this agency. When I graduated, I never thought I would be back at Colby accepting such an award.

As I said on that day, it was a great privilege to accept the Dirigo award on behalf of the people who have done the valuable work of this agency for decades. If you see one of them, please congratulate them. Every day they do all they can to 'make the world a better place...one small step at a time'.

**"When I  
graduated  
from Colby  
I never  
thought I  
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*Jonathan*



## Chili Chowder Challenge Yard Work Team

For those of you who attend the Chili Chowder Challenge, you know that one of the popular annual items in the auction is three hours of yard work by the Children's Center. The yardwork crew is typically made up of members of the Board of Directors, members of the Chili Chowder Challenge Com-

mittee, and dedicated Children's Center Staff.

This year the happy winner of the Yard Work was Sherry Trafton, who had the crew come and rake her camp property. Sherry's comment:

"I can't tell you how many hours and aches and pains you've saved me. A really great Auction gift — hope to

bid again next year!"

So watch for this favorite when it comes around again next year—the bidding is sure to be fierce again!!



SPRING 2011

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## Children's Center

1 Alden Avenue  
Augusta, Maine 04330

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PERMIT NO. 81

Executive Director: Jonathan Leach  
Phone: 207-626-3497 or 800-894-6264

Newsletter Editor: Elizabeth Barron  
Fax: 207-621-6211

Contributor: Jenny McKendry  
email: info@childrenscenteraugusta.com

On the web at  
[www.ChildrensCenterAugusta.com](http://www.ChildrensCenterAugusta.com)



## Children's Center Honored with Dirigo Award

The Dirigo Awards for Nonprofit Excellence in Maine are presented annually by the Maine Association of Nonprofits (MANP) to the three Maine nonprofit organizations that have achieved significant results by utilizing ingenuity combined with sound management practices.

This year the Dirigo Awards for Nonprofit Excellence were focused on three key components of MANP's mission, "Leadership, Voice, and Organizational Effectiveness." MANP believes all three facets not only contribute to a healthy and vibrant organization, but are also critical for nonprofits to achieve high mission impact.

"For 45 years, the Children's Center has been providing services to families of children with special needs, adapting as the community's needs have shifted, but always in alignment with its mission: to meet the needs of children of all abilities by offering quality programs that encourage individual growth, provide support for their families and promote the inclusion of ALL children in the community."

**Leadership:** "Three years ago, the Children's Center adopted inclusion as its service model, establishing this expectation for the children attending the Center, their families, and the employees. They embrace this concept in their management, and they model this value in the community, in turn becoming a model for other providers."

**Voice:** "The leadership team of the agency advocates for children in their work with several statewide advisory organizations, working with a deliberate focus on advocacy for all children with special needs."

**Organizational Effectiveness:** "With its model of inclusion, the Children's Center works to create an environment where everyone is supported to achieve their greatest impact on mission. This model is not just an ideal; it is the basic principle they use in their approach to everything they do."

Attending the presentation luncheon were Center supporters Rep. Anna Blodgett, Kennebec County Commissioner Beverly Daggett, Judy Griffin, Kaye Flanagan, Glenn Gagne, Mac and Janet Stocco, the Center's Director of Development Elizabeth Barron and Executive Director Jonathan Leach.