

UPCOMING EVENTS:

11th Annual Chili Chowder Challenge

March 24, 2012 at the Augusta Armory

For more info, check out the chili chowder website:

www.chilichowder.com



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Year End Recognitions

This has been quite a year at the Children's Center. When you walk into the front entryway, you will see the staff's unofficial motto: "Miracles Happen Here" on the reception desk. This isn't a hope or an idea—this is what we see happening everyday: the miracles that occur when caring people come together to support children!

Every December, the Children's Center Board of Directors hosts a gathering for staff during the holiday season. The Directors acknowledge the staff and hear about the highlights of the year. They also celebrate individuals and organizations who have been especially supportive of the mission of the Center. This recognition is called the "Friends of the Children's Center."



2011 Friends of the Center :

Kim MacKenzie is a former Board Member, having served for two, three year terms, the maximum allowed under Board by laws. She has also been a major player in our Chili Chowder Challenge fundraiser, coordinating the participating restaurants and being a regular dynamo behind the scenes all day long at the event.

Terrie Kee is a long-time supporter of the Children's

Center and the Chili Chowder Challenge, bringing her musical talents to the stage to entertain and delight, and being a strong supporter of the mission of the Children's Center. Terrie's song "Look at Me" (available on CD) was written for the Children's Center,

Bruce and Karen MacGillivray support the Children's Center year round, and are a tremendous resource to us during the Chili Chowder Challenge. Karen's "can-do" enthusiasm and Bruce's "just get it done" approach helps us keep reaching new heights for our annual fundraiser.

Thanks to **EVERY** supporter of the Children's Center—

You are making a huge difference in young children's lives!

Guy

Walking into the Little Sprouts classroom, a visitor is dazzled by a big, bright smile, and greeted by "HA!" and a wave. This is Guy, just before his second birthday.

Guy's story is a story of community support, and everyone working together to help a child reach his greatest potential.

He came to the Children's Center for childcare. The classroom teachers wondered how they could best support his development and his needs. Then 10 months old, Guy was dealing with



a rare birth defect that affects muscle tone and joint development, resulting in severe weakness and significantly delayed motor skill development. He was not

able to even hold his head up, didn't reach or grasp for things, and didn't make eye contact or interact with the adults or children in the classroom. The simple motion of picking him up from the crib seemed to cause him distress.

Realizing that he could benefit from so much more than "just" the child care offered here at the Children's Center, the classroom teachers invited the Center's therapists into a conversation about how Guy's needs could be best served. With the guidance and support of Physical Therapist Deb McSweeney, a plan for

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Guy (continued from front page)

physical and occupational therapy was developed along the medical model. The Center for Community Inclusion helped make services possible when Guy first arrived at the Center.

When that funding was eliminated, the Center continued to provide services, at our own expense, to honor our commitment to Guy and his family that he would be well-served by the Center. *(Your donations help to cover those expenses – Thank you!!)*

Guy is also receiving case management services as well as school-based support services

from our Family Services department.

With intensive services in the year since he's been here at the Center, and the loving support and commitment of his family at home, Guy is making significant progress. Today you see that bedazzling smile as he is sitting in his adaptive stroller, holding his head up for brief periods of time, communicating (with sign language as well as verbalizing), playfully interacting with adults and his classmates, feeding himself, holding and drinking from his own cup – Guy is a testament to community support!

Here's what Mom says: "Guy has bloomed so much in the recent months and I know the care he

receives at the Children's Center has had a tremendous impact on that. The staff there has worked so well with the therapists coming in from other organizations to better support Guy and creating his 'team'. Guy and I are very grateful for everyone at the Children's Center (as well as the therapists coming in). There isn't a better place that he could be. Thank you all so much!!!!"

Guy at two years old has a veritable entourage – in addition to his family, he's got a medical team, a therapy team, an education team, a behavioral support team and the support of his case manager. And he's leading them all, with his smile.



Thank you to all who have contributed to our current Annual Appeal!

If you have not yet sent in your donation, please do - by mail, or on our website via Paypal...

(Make checks out to "Children's Center"- send to 1 Alden Ave., Augusta, ME 04330)

Children's Champion 2011

Each December, the staff of the Children's Center reviews the year and looks at the people who make great contributions to the Children's Center. There are so many who do so much for the children! This year, the staff awarded the Children's Champion recognition to Deb McSweeney.



Deb McSweeney receives the Children's Champion award.

Deb is a physical therapist who works with many children in

the Center. Staff comments make it clear why the award this year went to Deb:

"She watches out for the best interests of every child in the Center, making sure that every child gets the support they need." "Deb is a fierce advocate for children, and provides an exemplary level of care." "Deb is an amazing woman!"

Congratulations, Deb—and Thank you!!

Around the Center

Amazing things happen at the Children's Center all year round, for sure. And the holidays just ramp up that amazing-ness that much more.

This year, our Holiday Giving Tree helped 17 children have a brighter winter, thanks to employees' and supporter's donations.

Targeted Case Management helped 6 families at

Thanksgiving and 8 families in December have healthy, plentiful holiday meals, thanks to a donation from Trademark Federal Credit Union and the United Way.

Generous donations from the community made it possible for us to sponsor families in need to get clothes, personal items and toys for their children for the holidays, and link them to other community resources.

Caring hearts work here at the Center, and caring hearts support the young Children in central Maine – during the holidays, and every other day of the year.

You can feel proud about supporting the work of the Children's Center!





Learnings

Shortly after I started at the Center five years ago, I noticed that one of the fir trees along Alden Avenue had been cut off a few feet up from the base. (When the building here was renovated, landscaping had been done around the parking lot, including planting a few firs.) Since it was early winter, I can only assume that this was not a random act of vandalism, but that someone thought this little fir would make an excellent Christmas tree. (I wish they instead had asked for help; we would have been more than happy to make sure that that family, whoever they were, would have had a tree for the holidays. But what was done was done.)

As I write this, Christmas is a few days away. For the past few years, our employees have helped an increasing number of families in need provide a happy holiday for their little ones, this year providing gifts for 17 children whose families would other-

wise not have had the experience of seeing smiles as their kids opened gifts on Christmas morning.

Like many, I find the commercial-



ism that is increasingly part of this season to be somewhat saddening...but seeing the bags and bags of assembled presents in our conference room yesterday reminded me that this time of year also provides opportunities to bring out the best in the human spirit. For every gift, there

has to be a giver...someone who cares enough about others to put them first.

Back to that little tree and five years ago. The base of the tree was still alive. It was perhaps not as attractive as it might be, and some people may have wanted to remove it for that reason, but I decided to let it go and see what happened. I look at it now every day as I drive back and forth to work and home, and realize that I made the right decision. That tree now has two thriving, growing trunks, where it had only one before. True, it may look a little different than its mates out front, but it is beautiful, healthy, and its uniqueness makes it stand out from the crowd.

Not everyone celebrates Christmas, and those who do, celebrate in many different ways. But what I think can bring us all together is the idea that all of us are unique and valuable, not despite our differences, but because of them.

Jonathan



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Support from the Business Community

The Children’s Center began with community support, and has grown to offer all the services and programs we do, with the on-going support of the community.

The business community in the greater Augusta area, as well as in the greater Skowhegan area, step up and support the children and families we serve, in so many ways. Our big fundraiser each year, the Chili Chowder Challenge (March 24, get your tickets early!) (see

page 1) is as successful as it is thanks to the participating restaurants, the sponsoring businesses, and all the donors of auction items for our live and silent auctions.

We also have businesses and organizations that offer us support throughout the year,

For all of your support, we extend our appreciation—and encourage everyone in our community to support the businesses that support

the children of Central Maine.

Great big thanks to The Red Barn, Ground Round Sports Grille and Maple Hill Farm (who all also participate in our Chili Chowder Challenge!) for helping us host our recent Business After Hours and thanks to all the local businesses who came by to learn more about what we do here.



Red Barn—HUGE supporters of the Children’s Center!



Children's Center

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