

# Children's Center

Fall 2009

# NEWS

## Annie and Gabriel

Annie and Gabriel entered the Children's Center this fall as their older sister Grace entered kindergarten. Mom Janet and dad MacGregor visited many child care providers. "Only one," MacGregor says, "could meet our needs."

MacGregor works at the Maine State Planning Office, working on land use throughout the state. Janet is a law clerk at the District Court. The family has lived in many other states and has a wealth of experience. Janet advocated on behalf of children in foster care in Philadelphia, ensuring that special education laws were applied fairly. Janet and MacGregor found themselves in a new role when their



infant son Gabriel was diagnosed with Potocki-Shaffer Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that results in developmental delays, vision problems, and hypotonia. "I have talked about IFSP meetings to countless parents," Janet recalls, "but the experience is entirely different when you're the parent." Gabriel attends the Center's

newest classroom, Seedlings, for babies from 6 weeks through 18 months old. His therapists visit him in the classroom.

3-year-old Annie has made herself at home in the Growing Buds classroom. "I love that Annie comes home talking about friends she has made, some of whom have special needs," Janet says, "It's important to us that she learn to treat all people the same."

"Staying home isn't feasible for us, and we feared that we would never find the care, preschool, and specialized services in one place. We are so grateful to have found the Children's Center."

## Learnings



The past couple of months have been marked by some significant transitions in my life, some happy, some not so happy, some bittersweet. The most significant among these are the start of a new academic year (happy!), and the passing of my grandmother (sad), and our fall graduation ceremony (bittersweet).

My grandmother, Evie, was born in Blue Hill on Halloween in 1912. She was a lady of grace and style, loving, smart, and funny. A thoughtful woman, she was always able to frame her words and actions based on how they would impact the people close to her, and it seems that everyone who knew her was close to her.

In August, we had 35 children graduate, some of whom we had known for years. It was sad to say 'farewell', yet fun to reflect on the growth we had seen in those years. Now we have a whole lot of new faces here, including in our newly opened 'Seedlings' classroom for infants. It is a great joy to have babies in the building, and to offer supports to young children in a place where they will be around peers from their earliest days.

So, what have I learned from these transitions? I've learned that our choices, actions, and commitments can have lasting impact. The person who my grandmother was, shaped who I am through her modeling of caring and integrity. We saw the children who graduated change because we believed they could. And now, we have a lot of new lives to share in. We look forward to seeing them grow, and to someday saying 'farewell', knowing that we will have offered them our best.



## Parent Trainings

### At the Children's Center in Augusta

What Does the Future Hold?  
October 15th

Demystifying Interventions for Children with Autism or Challenging Behaviors  
October 21st

Where Does My Child Fit?  
November 12th

Deep Breath: Stress Management  
December 9th

### At the Eskelund Community Center in Waterville

Advocating for your Child:  
A Panel Discussion  
October 7th

Positive Perspectives on Children's Explosive Behavior  
November 4th

### At the Federated Church in Skowhegan

Double the Challenge: Developmental and Emotional Health  
October 8th

The World of Tantrums  
October 29th

Make It Fun For Me: Overcoming Physical Challenges  
December 3rd

All workshops are free for families and include dinner and child care. To register, call 626-3497, x 130

## The Grandest Parents of All

The Children's Center's newest program, a series of workshops for grandparents raising grandchildren and other nontraditional families, began on September 15th. In a partnership with Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation and Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, the Center supports grandfamilies in the Waterville area. Fourteen families will attend the series. The stories shared at the initial meeting illustrated the strength and commitment of these families to the well-being of children. This program is funded by the Maine Children's Trust and the Brookdale Foundation.

## Events

The First Annual Spaghetti Dinner to benefit the families of the Children's Center was held on Wednesday, September 16th at the Manchester Lions Club. The Lions kindly allowed us the use of their dining area and their kitchen. The Center's own chef Ann Elliott, her husband Junior, and volunteer Amanda Callahan prepared a delicious meal using products donated by Hannaford at Cony Circle and Target. Terrie Kee and Friends played music that inspired the crowd of teachers, parents, and children to dance and celebrate. A tribute slide show to parents and caregivers as heroes was presented. Money raised will fund continued parent involvement and family fun at the Center. Thank you to all who participated!



Target donated delicious food and sent hard-working volunteers.



Volunteers from the Children's Center pose at the Manchester Lions Club, who donated use of their space.



Children couldn't help but dance to the wonderful music of Terrie Kee and Friends.



Junior and Ann Elliott prepare sauce and pasta generously donated from Hannaford.

The following week at the 2nd Annual J&S Oil Family Fun Fair, the Children's Center sold unique works of art created by children in our classrooms. Baked goodies and kid's activities were also shared with the community during this exciting event. Children enjoyed the festivities, such as the bounce house and the hay ride, and community members came together to support the Center and other worthy organizations.

## Fundraising Update



Home Depot awarded the Children's Center a \$4,000 grant to build two new shade structures to enhance the sun safety on our playground. An additional \$1,000 grant from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention helped fund the project. Home Depot assigned the task of designing and building the gazebos to carpenter Steve Kent and Brad Galbreath of Team Depot, pictured above. The two structures, one in the toddler area, and the other in the main space of the playground, will feature Maine weathervanes at the top and provide space for picnics and play in the safety of the shade.

Irving Oil selected the Children's Center as the recipient of its New England Neighbor Initiative for the Central Maine area, and awarded us a grant of \$2,000. Past Board member Sandra Royce wrote the winning nomination. The volume of support the community exhibited for the Center was also a factor in our selection. Thank you to everybody who nominated us!



The newly renovated playground inspires active play, and made summer a blast for our kids.

## In Our Classrooms

September was the beginning of a new school year at the Children's Center. We have welcomed many new children into our classrooms and we opened an infant room. Teachers are introducing concepts such as colors and shapes, which are being reinforced during circle time and through art activities.

Lessons about community are incorporated into the classroom curricula as well. October is fire safety month, and children will enjoy a visit from a truck from the Augusta Fire Department and a lesson in home safety from Shawn Spadea of Liberty Mutual, a dad of one of our Bursting Blossoms.

Children are learning about fire fighters and police officers, and are encouraged to explore concepts through creative and dramatic play. See some of our aspiring law-enforcers below.



## Children's Center Online

Would you like to know more about what's happening at the Children's Center? We have many exciting projects ahead, and would love to share our progress with you as we move forward! Go to [www.childrenscenteraugusta.com](http://www.childrenscenteraugusta.com) and look for the "Join Mailing List" box on the right hand side of the home page. Send us your email address, and we'll keep you in the loop. The Children's Center is on Facebook too! To keep up with events, discussions, and photos, use the "search" field on the upper right of your screen, enter "Children's Center: Early Intervention & Family Support."





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**Children's Center**  
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## Wellness



Each week, children of the Children's Center take a trip to Goranson Farm to help pick out organic locally-grown produce. Tomatoes, corn, potatoes, and other yummy ingredients from the farm are included in the children's menu and served family-style during lunch and snacktime. During visits to the farm, the kids get to see farm animals and ride on the mini-tractor too. This partnership of community supported agriculture is just one of the many initiatives of the Children's Center's wellness committee.



To celebrate the first day of fall, the children had a field trip to Lakeside Orchards in Manchester. After a hayride to the orchard made festive with a cheerful rendition of the apple song, children picked perfect apples. In addition to promoting community involvement, this activity allowed children to practice their gross motor skills of reaching and jumping and their fine motor skill of grasping. Some apples were eaten right away, and a good haul of apples came back to the Center for use in the classrooms. In Growing Buds, children made apple sauce and in Bursting Blossoms, children enjoyed apple pie. There is no better way to celebrate the season, and encourage healthy eating habits at the same time.