

Children's Center

Summer 2009

NEWS

The Playground is Ready for Active, Creative Play!

The pouring rain did not stop the Children's Center and its many supporters from celebrating the unveiling of its new playground on Friday, June 19th. The opening was attended by First Lady Karen Baldacci, Senate President Libby Mitchell, Representative and Children's Center board member Patsy Crockett, Augusta Mayor Roger Katz, and Center supporters David and Kaye Flanagan among many others who gave thanks to the many businesses, groups, and individuals who contributed to creating the most unique playground in Augusta.



Kaye Flanagan dedicates the Enchanted Forest to Robert and Moira Fuller.



Karen Baldacci proclaims June 19th Children's Center Day.



Jim MacDonald designed and built the unique moose slide.

The newly expanded playground represents the Center's commitments to inclusion, imaginative play, and healthy outdoor activity. The Maine Outdoors theme resounds throughout the features of the playground.

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"Hello. I am a mom writing to express my enthusiasm and gratitude for the Stepping Stones program at the Children's Center. My son, Eric, was diagnosed at two years old with autism.

CDS made its recommendation to place him at the Center, and I remember being so impressed by all the individual attention my son was going to be getting. All of the sudden we had a 'team,' a group of people all dedicated to helping Eric. They explained ABA, the developmental, occupational, speech, and physical therapies he would be getting.

Eric



When Eric started, he was almost completely nonverbal. With the mysteries of autism, my we had no idea what we should expect or hope for. Therapists found that the Picture Exchange Communication System was a good fit for Eric and he learned to communicate his needs. Then words came and to this day his language skills improve constantly.

Eric is now in an integrated class at the Center, and to our amazement will be attending kindergarten this fall in a mainstream class. His future seems so much brighter than we'd ever dreamed!" -Paige



The 2009-2010 season of parent and caregiver education will begin in September!

Thanks to the United Way of Mid Maine, the Center will host evening workshops for families in Augusta, Waterville, and Skowhegan. Look for a collaboration with the GEAR Parent Network to offer the topics and speakers most relevant to the lives of our children and families.

Thanks to the Brookdale Foundation and the Maine Children's Trust, the Center will partner with KVCAP and SKCDC to host a series of workshops for grandparents raising grandchildren and other nontraditional families. The series will offer support in identifying community resources, information about child development, and an opportunity to make new friends.

Playground (continued from front)

New features include a moose slide, a lighthouse, a mountaintop climbing structure, an expanded bike path, and a barn, which join the stone waterfall, raised gardens, and lobster boat. The biggest achievement, an "Enchanted Forest" featuring cedar play structures in a stand of white birch, elm, and sugar maple was dedicated to Center supporters Robert and Moira Fuller.



The new tree stump starfish in front of the excavator on a workday of this major development project.



Volunteers from Home Depot pose in front of Wilbur's Barn.

The playground was the project the 23rd class of the Kennebec Leadership Institute. Additional supporters include Sam's Club, Toby & Kelly Thompson, Matt Hunter, Longfellow's Greenhouse, Quirion Construction, Jim MacDonald, Kennebec Technologies, the Kennebec Networkers, Leonard's Landscapes, Target, Colby College, Home Depot, JD Landscapes, Cony High School, Victor Caprara, Wingate Landscaping, Capital Area Technical Center, Hammond Lumber, and Jenny McKendry.



The kids want to help!



The lobster boat, designed and built by Matt Hunter.



The moose gets a kiss.

It was truly inspiring to see businesses, groups, and individuals of the Augusta area come together to realize the Children's Center's vision. More than \$8,000 worth of donated materials and 800 hours of volunteer labor were donated to this large-scale expansion and development of a Maine-themed outdoor space for children of all abilities. The Children's Center deeply appreciates those who contributed to the project and the spirit of our community that these contributions reflect.

Learnings

The Center held its annual staff retreat last week. After a morning spent in reviewing the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations with a panel of experts from Child Development Services, the Disability Rights Center, and the Maine Parent Federation, I asked the staff to shift gears from ‘what the work is’ to ‘why it is so important’.



This ‘view from 30,000 feet’ is critical to keep always in mind. The children and families we support are among Maine’s most vulnerable, not only in the present, but what the future holds in store. We believe the work of the Children’s Center is not only to help create the ‘little miracles’ in development we see every day, but to prepare children and families for long-term success.

Our inclusive model helps to build relationships, between kids and between families. The single biggest thing that assures safety for vulnerable people is having someone that truly cares about you in your life.

Being accepted for who you are (not treated or seen only in terms what you ‘can’t do’) helps to build a positive self-image and confidence. We recognize the gifts and strengths of every child, and help them and their families see the important contributions they make to this world.

We work towards building potential, and also interdependence, as we realize that no one is ever “independent”: we all deeply need others in our lives. Knowing how to advocate for yourself and where to find the resources you need is important, but perhaps not so much so as having meaningful choices in your life.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we value and teach the importance of play for everyone. It is how children learn, and how adults cope. So, have some fun today! If you think you’ve forgotten how, please come see us. We have a nice new playground.

Jonathan

Fundraising Update

The Augusta Kiwanis Club, an organization changing the world one child and one community at a time, selected the Children’s Center to be the recipient of its 2009 community grant. A grant of \$6000 will allow the Center to provide child care to infants as young as six weeks old! The Augusta Rotary Club, who encourage and foster the ideal of service, awarded the Children’s Center a \$2000 grant to enhance the security of our child care program with a video and remote door system.

Learning begins at birth. A good foundation provided by early care and education makes it easier to learn, enhancing a child’s cognitive performance, language ability, and social skills. Thanks to the Kiwanis Club and the Rotary Club, the Children’s Center will provide that good foundation to babies.

The Red Barn’s Pancake Breakfast on June 7th raised \$1600 for the Children’s Center. Thank you!



Renee Randazzo presents original artwork by a talented Children’s Center child to thank Peter Benedict of Red Barn for a successful pancake breakfast.

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 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.”



Current Board Members:

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 Warren Bartlett

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 Kimberly Mackenzie

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**Children's Center
 1 Alden Avenue
 Augusta, ME 04330**

Wish List

- Exersaucers
- High chairs
- Pack 'n' Play
- Baby swings
- Mobiles
- Soft blocks/toys
- Boppies
- Infant/toddler books
- Board games
- Blocks
- Art supplies
- Train set
- Multi-cultural books
- Dress-up clothes/costumes
- Cookie sheets
- Puzzles (toddler-age 5)

*Gently used is okay.

Sewing the Seeds of Music



Ellie Libby will provide a week-long residency this summer at the Children's Center to encourage creative ways to incorporate music and movement into the daily routines of our classrooms. This exciting opportunity is made possible by an Early stARTS grant from Maine Roads to Quality, matched by VSA arts of Maine.

Ellie Libby is an early childhood, music, and movement specialist and early intervention educator who has worked with children for 22 years. She will focus on helping Children's Center staff become more confident in providing children with developmentally appropriate musical activities and weaving music into their day.

A gardening theme will shape this exciting week of music, which will conclude with an opportunity for families to come in and join in the songs and dances, and learn fun ways to include music and movement at home.