

“For over 45 years, the Children’s Center has been here for our children and our families— supported by the community, and supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community - working miracles with our children, everyday.”

~from the nomination submitted by parent Lisa Lawson

## A Tall Honor

Maine Children's Alliance



The Children’s Center is honored to have been

nominated to be recognized as a champion for the children of Maine by parent Lisa Lawson.

Adding to the honor is having been chosen to receive the 2012 Giraffe Award by the Maine Children’s Alliance.

On October 10, 2012, Executive Director Jonathan Leach accepted the award on behalf of the Center at the Children’s Champions award event held in Freeport, ME.

In his engaging acceptance speech, Leach, after first expressing his disappointment upon learning that there was not an actual, live giraffe involved in the award, spoke of the 45 years of history of the Children’s Center, all founded on one mother’s dreams for her child.



Long time supporter Kaye Flanagan (far right) and current board members (left to right) Lori Fowle, Patsy Garside Crockett, Julie Shephard, Dana Hamilton, and Diane Smith Howard join Executive Director Jonathan Leach to receive the Giraffe Award

He spoke about the importance of the role of the community in the history of the Center: the donated land for education and recreation where the Center is located; grant funding for the building; and all of the community support for expansions to the Center over the years.

Leach went on to underscore that “the Children’s Center is not a building... it is every person who has worked there or

given their time to the Center; every ally at other agencies that join us in our work; every business person that has supported us; every legislator that has acted to give children what they need to succeed; every family that has placed their trust in us; and every child that has gifted us with their presence.”

Thanks to ALL who have made the Children’s Center ALL that it is!

## William



A little blond boy sits facing the door of his classroom. In comes the young woman who works with him and he lets out a satisfied sigh. William is 3 1/2 years old and lives

with his dad (Paul), sister, and grandparents. He came to the Children’s Center in April of 2012 and is part of a classroom that includes children who are developmentally delayed and children who are typically developing. Dad says “William has made more progress in the sixth months he’s been at the Children’s Center than he made from the time he was born ‘til he arrived here.”

William’s days at the Children’s Center are very busy. He receives a full range of services under one roof to help

address the multiple challenges this young man faces, including cerebral palsy, and many complicating factors.

A typical busy day includes physical therapy, to develop strength and flexibility and to isolate muscles—among other goals.

Then the occupational therapy team helps William develop skills for many tasks—everything from grasping small objects for 20 seconds to a specialized eating skills group.

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### DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE?

The Children's Center currently has a few child care openings!

Do you know someone who'd love to have their young child in a nurturing, inclusive environment?

Have them contact our Director of Early Education, Karla Busmanis at 626-3497, extension 155



The Three Amigos!



## William (continued)

He even gets on-site intensive personalized therapy to engage, desensitize, relax and strengthen muscles, to increase the movement of his tongue and lips and encourage him to eat more.

When William is not in therapy sessions he works with a 1:1 instructor from our rehabilitative school based services, reinforcing therapy goals.

And to help coordinate all of these services, William and

his dad access the services of a Children's Center Case Manager.

There are challenges for William's dad, such as keeping up with external appointments.

"We live with my parents," Paul explains, "They're a very big help, watching him. It's huge—they're so supportive!"

Dad goes on to say "It's outrageous—he's made constant progress with consistent therapies and playing with him. He's a completely different guy than he was before coming to the Children's Center. Before, he

was constantly fussy. After we got on board with the Children's Center, things changed so much. He's starting to enjoy his toys and being upright."

At the end of the day, Paul drives to the Center and hustles in with a friendly smile. When William sees that his dad has arrived, he makes singing sounds. Dad scoops William up in his arms, giving him a warm hug and a tickle.

William responds with a contented giggle.



## SAVE THE DATE!!



Yes! It is time to be thinking of the Children's Center's

### Chili Chowder Challenge

Saturday, March 23, 2013 11 am-2 pm

Tickets will be available for sale in November if you're looking for great little holiday gifts.

Sponsorships and Donations of Auction items now being accepted!

Contact Elizabeth Barron, Director of Development for more information:

626-3497



## Staying Power: 35 Years at the Children's Center

Congratulations to Lisa Brackett, Director of Finance at the Children's Center, on observing her 35 year mark with the Center in September. A Center-wide celebration was held in Lisa's honor, with a surprise party held in the Bursting Blossoms' classroom.

Jonathan and other staff spoke of Lisa's generosity of heart, underneath the "gruff" exterior of "Finance Director," and presented Lisa with gifts and cards.

Afterward, staff had a gathering complete with Eeyore cake. (Eeyore, A.A. Milne's forlorn gray stuffed donkey is a favorite character of Lisa's.) Executive Director Jonathan Leach even dressed in Eeyore garb to celebrate the day!



Jonathan asks for a show of hands: who had been born when Lisa started working at the Children's Center (1977!) ? (oops—not many hands went up!)



# Learnings

In honor of National Bosses' Day, I'd like to take a moment and thank my boss. Many of you reading this might be a bit surprised: "But I thought you were the boss?!" Actually, I have thirteen bosses, and they are collectively called the Board of Directors. Over the years I've been in my role, the people on that board have changed, but they have always been committed people invested in the success of the Center, who care deeply about the future of the children we support, and who are supportive and helpful to me as a leader.

The nice thing about having thirteen bosses is the depth and breadth of experience those people bring to the agency:

Having questions or concerns about the system for early childhood in



Maine? I can turn to pediatrician Lara Walsh, Board president Dana Hamilton from

Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, or Lori Fowle, past representative to the Vassalboro schools and Project PEDS.



Sheriff Randy Liberty is a respected champion for children in many areas, with a particular focus on

the prevention of abuse and the power of early intervention.

If a legal issue arises, the expertise of Diane Smith Howard from the National Disability Rights Center, or Fern LaRochelle, former attorney with the Maine Attorney General's Office. For guidance on an emerging legislative matter, or how to influence change in our public policy, I can turn to the Hon. Patsy Garside Crockett, former state representative and lobbyist.

Stymied by information technology? Danny



Burgess, Vice President of Information Technology at MaineGeneral is ready to share the technical expertise he has gathered over the past 30 years.

For counsel on business development or financial matters, Julie Shephard from Key Bank and Elisa Paylor from Darling's are masters.

Personnel matters? Don Lemieux has seen most of them

before from his years in management at the Department of Health and Human Services .

Much of our work is teaching, and I am fortunate to be able to lean on



Betsy Pohl, executive director of the Lithgow Library and

Maria Hays, professor at Central Maine Community College for resources in education and in our community.

Of course, being surrounded by all of these experts keeps me on my toes. Over the years, the individuals change, but the commitment remains. While I have only touched on one thing each of these gifted people brings to the Center, they are all community builders, with overlapping areas of expertise. And, perhaps most importantly, most are parents and grandparents (some of children who have come to the Center, recently or years ago), and have a deep personal commitment to the quality of the services we offer.



Happy Bosses' Day!

*Jonathan*



Over the years, Children's Center Board members "have always been committed people invested in the success of the Center, who care deeply about the future of the children we support..."





**Current Board Members:**

**President  
Dana Hamilton**

**Vice President  
Patsy Garside Crockett**

**Treasurer  
Elisa Paylor**

**Secretary  
Don Lemieux**

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**Betsy Pohl  
Fern LaRochelle**

**Randy Liberty**

**Maria Hays**

**Diane Smith Howard**

**Lori Fowle**

**Julie Shephard**

**Danny Burgess**

**Dr. Lara Walsh**

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*In their own words...*

*The people who work at the Children's Center share their stories...*

The girls were having a "Tea Party" and J. pulled



up a chair to sit down. The girls automatically gave J. a doll, and explained to her it was her baby. This interaction lasted a good 10 minutes!.. It was very touching to watch the girls in-

clude J., a peer who is unable to communicate with them, in their pretend play. ~ Kara

During childcare last night, G. was laughing at the boys running around with their trucks.

So, I sat him in one of the ride on toys. He pretty much supported himself as he sat there, watching and laughing with his peers. The boys would stop in front of him and laugh along. I would count them down again, ready, set, go. They all took off and he belly laughed some more! I was inspired by G., who is a very strong little boy who amazes me every day, And by his peers who did not see him for what he is physically, but, just as their peer and their friend. I feel so blessed to be able to come to work every day and see true miracles happen! ~ Bethany

