

Meet Jaxon

When Jaxon first came to the Children's Center at three-years-old, he didn't eat very much. He only ate ice cream, yogurt, pudding and lemonade. He had to use a baby spoon because his teeth were brittle, and he used a divider plate because he didn't want the different foods to touch each other. Meals took hours out of his day and included screaming, crying and hitting.

In June of 2016, Jaxon transitioned to Busy Bees, a classroom in the behavior support program.

Children in Busy Bees generally have behavioral challenges during all aspects of their lives. The purpose of the program is to learn about their emotions and healthy ways to express or deal with those emotions without aggression. The program teaches children social skills or ways to create and maintain relationships with peers and adults.

For Jaxon, meal times were the most difficult, so staff focused on these challenges. They weighed and tracked each plate of food, which still consisted of only yogurt, ice cream, pudding and lemonade.

Each day he ate a few more ounces with fewer tantrums or behavioral overreactions.

"The staff and I wanted his food choices expanded, so we began pureeing and adding fresh fruit to his yogurt," said supervisor of Busy Bees, Amber Stubbs. "At first, he wasn't thrilled. With persistence and support, he began eating it with less screaming and less resistance, and over time, eating different foods."

Fast forward to now. Jaxon is five-years-old, eating what the other kids are eating and using regular silverware and plates. He eats French

toast (his favorite), fiber bars, applesauce, sandwiches, ground turkey, bread, bananas, carrots, crackers, chips, and of course, yogurt but with peanut butter.

"Every day is not perfect. He still sometimes points and says 'no like it' but he is motivated to eat. He chews and moves foods around with his tongue. He is not gray in color anymore and has some pink in his cheeks. Staff have worked extremely hard to help Jaxon overcome his fear of eating. He has a ways to go, but is headed in the right direction," said Amber.



Catching Up With Harrison

Harrison was two-years-old when he began at the Children's Center.

He often hid under the table, and he threw items when upset, said supervisor Krista Smith. Harrison was hard to understand and only ate particular foods. He sometimes ran around the classroom when he was overstimulated.

Harrison was eventually moved into Hummingbirds, a classroom in the behavior support program.

A child in the Hummingbirds program generally presents with deficits in communication as well as

delays in social skills, said Krista. Some children also display rigidity and other behavioral challenges due to Autism or Anxiety.



"By the end of his time in Hummingbirds, Harrison was running circle time for the whole classroom," said Krista.

"He became a role model for the other children by following rules and the routines of the classroom. His food list grew and he tried more foods with less reactions. He was aware of other children and when they weren't following the rules."

Because of his success in Hummingbirds, he was able to graduate into Kindergarten. He is now six-years-old, in the first grade, and doing great. He loves to play basketball and hang out with his friends.

Staff Spotlight: Get to Know Ruth

Ruth Eastman began working at the Children's Center in fall of 2016. She brought with her a unique perspective that helped her connect with children and families on a different level.

Ruth's younger sister was diagnosed with autism when she was two-years-old and



Ruth was thirteen-years-old. She witnessed the journey only experienced when you or a loved one receives a diagnosis like autism.

She met the extensive team of providers, family, and friends involved in her sister's success. The experience inspired her to play a different role in a team for a child with special needs.

Ruth has worked as an Educational Technician III at the Children's Center for three months now. She works one-



on-one with children who have varying behavioral and cognitive abilities.

On a typical workday, Ruth helps her assigned child on specific skills, often involving communication and behaviors.

She helps them work through everyday challenges.

Ruth says she really enjoys her job. She likes that the Children's Center meets the unique needs of each child. They have a huge window of opportunity to make enormous developmental gains at this age, she says.

"I have never had a job



before where I was excited to wake up in the morning and go to work," she said. "I enjoy walking down the hallway to get to the entry way to wait to see the children's faces when they come in to the building."

"I enjoy watching the children achieve their goals whether small or large," said Ruth. "Being able to hear a child's voice for the first time is something you will never forget."

Coming Soon: New Playground

For the past three years, the Children's Center has spent countless hours fundraising to replace our very well used and very tired playground in Augusta. We are excited to announce that we are approaching our fundraising goal!

With the addition of the funds raised at the Chili Chowder Challenge this

month, we hope to be within \$5,000 of our \$175,000 goal. We will be working hard this spring to raise the remaining funds and possibly even surpass our original goal.

Thank you to all that have been involved in the project. Your hard work and generous donations have us almost there.

In anticipation of reaching our goal, the playground committee has been work-

ing with BYO Recreation to design the new and improved play space.

By all accounts the playground will be extraordinary. Each area, activity center, piece of equipment, color, texture, and experience has been designed with two goals.

The first is to create a playground that is inclusive, where children of all abilities can play together in all areas. And second, to create experiences on that playground where the special needs of all of our children are the focus.

The result has been the creation of a playground that consists of many different components – two customized elevated play structures, adaptive swings, adaptive see saws, sand tables, water centers, log tunnels, specialized peek and play panels – and so much more. Forty-two of the forty-three new components are inclusive.

The Children's Center will have a playground that all children will benefit from enormously and something our community can be very proud of for years to come.



Childrens Center of Maine - Custom Structures 5052-PP & 4759-PP

Signature: _____

Note: Colors above are for representational purposes only. Actual colors may vary slightly.





2017 Children's Center

Chili Chowder Challenge

Saturday, March 25, 2017

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Augusta State Armory on Western Avenue

Tickets: \$10 /Adult (18 and older) & \$5 /Youth (12 - 17)

Children 11 and under are FREE!

Tickets are available at the door and at the Children's Center.

PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS/CATERERS:

Augusta House of Pancakes ~ Aunt Gin's ~ Damon's

Ground Round Sports Grille ~ Le Club Calumet ~ Liberal Cup

Lisa's Restaurant & Lounge ~ Maple Hill Farm Inn & Conference Center

Pangea Catering ~ Quarry Tap Room ~ Red Barn ~ Red Robin

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Manchester Lions Club ~ Mattson's Flooring & Window Treatments ~ Perry, Fitts, Boulette & Fitton CPAs

Pine State Trading, Co. ~ Plummer Funeral Home, Inc. ~ Purdy Powers & Company

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All proceeds go to benefit

Children's Center: Early Intervention and Family Support, Inc.

1 Alden Avenue, Augusta ~ 21 Bigelow Hill Road, Skowhegan

12 Plummer Street, Gardiner ~ 508 Fairbanks Road, Farmington

General Updates

The Children's Center has entered the New Year with much excitement and change. On January 9th, we successfully opened a new center in Farmington. We are excited to be offering services to the children and families in Franklin County.

At our location in Skowhegan, we will be offering a twelve-week "Health and Wellness Parent Education Series" in collaboration with Somerset Public Health. The program shares information on healthy eating, physical fitness, and relevant strategies for parenting children with disabilities, all on a limited budget. The free series offers dinner, child care, travel and attendance stipends, and certification upon completion of all classes. Please contact myself or Erin Sevey, Training Facilitator and Site Supervisor, at (207) 592-3497 for details.

In an effort to incorporate new technology into our programming, we are using more iPads for learning purposes in the classroom. All of our programs are flourishing and we continue to accept referrals for all sites! For more information on referrals, please contact Shelley Livie, Intake Coordinator, at (207) 626-3497.

We are excited to announce renovations to our playground in Augusta in the spring! This playground will include inclusive equipment and experiences for children of all abilities. Read more on page 2.

Lastly, the Children's Center is happy to announce the addition of two new board members: Joan Marson, R.N. and Donald Devine, Ph.D. Welcome!

Linda Riley, LCSW
Associate Director

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