

CHILDREN'S CENTER

Building a Brighter Future
One Small Step at a Time

F A L L 2011

www.childrenscenteraugusta.com



Kennebec Valley Garden Club started our raised beds for us.



Harvest Time!



Family Night Carnival was lots of fun!



Cony High School Day of Caring

UNITED WAY
STUDENT
DAYS OF CARING
Young Leaders at Work!

Snapshots of Summer



Colby C2IT Team

built our new nature walk



Graduation oohs and aahs!



Friends on the New Nature Walk



Key Bank Cares

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Cheyenne



Cheyenne discovers herself in the mirror.

Cheyenne's story is impossible to tell without telling her mom's story, too. Cheyenne's mom, Dorette, adopted Chey, her granddaughter, as a baby. Dorette talks about raising her older daughter, Cheyenne's mom, in the 60's, when there were no supports or resources available for children with special needs. "When my daughter was classified as 'MR' (having mental retardation) and 'unteachable,' that was it. They were just going to push her through the system, through high school and that was it." Fast forward to 2008. Dorette describes her experiences with Cheyenne. "When Cheyenne was 4-5 months old, she just

wasn't doing the things that children do at that age - she couldn't even roll over. Rolling over, crawling, walking - the things most parents take for granted - for us, it turns out, involves a lot of hard work with therapists. And thank God we have the support of everyone who's helping us. It's a good feeling to realize I have help." "Cheyenne is three now. The Children's Center started helping us out when I had put Chey into childcare at Miss Kelly's Learning Loft in Skowhegan, so I could work. The Children's Center has an office, right at the same location. So when Cheyenne started having problems with

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Cheyenne

aggression and lashing out at other children, Kelly York - 'Miss Kelly' - sat down with the Children's Center staff to see what could be done." Certainly removing a child with special needs, in desperate need of socialization with other children, from the one opportunity she had to have those experiences, was not in Cheyenne's best interest. The Children's Center was able to provide a Behavioral Health Professional ("BHP") to work one-on-one with Cheyenne, so she was able to stay in the child care program, and receive the added support she needed.

The Children's Center Family Services/ Targeted Case Management staff worked diligently with Dorette, Miss Kelly's, Woodfords, KVCAP, and Child Development Services (CDS) to get the necessary supports in place for Dorette and her daughter.

Cheyenne currently receives Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, and has the support to help build her behavioral and functional skills with her BHP. The difference in Cheyenne's life is profound. From saying only the word "up" in February, she is able to speak on a limited basis, while also using sign language and pictures. From being isolated and excluded, she is now sought out and greeted with affection by her

peers. She does still get overwhelmed and strikes out at the people around her, but with her BHP she is learning to express her wants and needs without frustration.

"It's been a long road, but the rewards are priceless. To hear her first words, when we never knew if she'd be able to communicate; watching her dress herself. Parents usually take these things for granted. These are a very big deal for us!"

"Really," Dorette concludes, "All a child wants is a chance, and love. Most of all, Love."



"All a child wants is a chance, and love. Most of all, Love."

"Thank you all so much for the wonderful graduation ceremony."



I was glad to have the opportunity to thank the people who have done so much for my son over the years he's been fortunate enough to attend. I can't possibly express the depths of my respect and gratitude for you all. Your commitment to the children you serve has a profoundly positive impact. Never change.

Thank you again "

-Kate Downs

Graduation 2011

Twenty children graduated from the Children's Center on Monday, August 22nd to the cheers, applause, and beaming smiles of their families, friends, and teachers.

Children of all abilities receive preschool, child care, and specialized therapy at the Children's Center to prepare them for success throughout their school-age years, and throughout their lifetimes.

For the past 45 years, the Children's Center has been creating nurturing environments for young children, some of whom have special needs. This year's graduating class included children who are typically-developing and received child care, and children with diverse abilities

and challenges who received specially designed instruction and therapy services. Children of all abilities learned kindergarten readiness skills in an inclusive setting, and developed friendships along the way.

The children worked earnestly with the guidance of a team of teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, to achieve developmental milestones. For each of them, an individualized plan for success in kindergarten will be implemented in September.

With families gathered to celebrate this milestone in their children's lives, a slide show played, chronicling moments in time of the graduating children's experiences while at the Center. Families and Children's Center staff alike were clearly moved.

Of the 2011 Graduating Class, seventeen will be attending their

local public kindergarten or pre-k schools, with six of those seventeen entering into living skills or behavior programs. Three children will be attending the Wayne Regional Autism Program.

The Children's Center is honored to have provided a foundation for success for these twenty children. The children and their families were clearly delighted with their achievements, glowing in pride as the children received their diplomas.



Learnings

Recently, I was invited to attend a meeting of the Augusta Kiwanis Club and share information about the Children's Center.

Knowing that capturing the mission and vision is best done by the families and children we serve, I shared the video about the Children's Children, which has great images of the kids and features one family's story about our impact on their lives (if you haven't seen it, I encourage you to take a few minutes to watch it on our website at www.childrenscenteraugusta.com).

I was able to take a few minutes after the video presentation to explain a little bit about what we do and why. Thinking that this was a great opportunity to engage Augusta's business community, most of my comments were geared towards the soundness of investing in early intervention as a business strategy.

I mentioned James Heckman's equation (each dollar invested in good early intervention returns seventeen dollars in savings over the life of the child). I talked about how the local community really created and built the Center, from our beginnings at Penney Memorial Church through the building of our Center at its present location through the capital campaign that resulted in our expansion. I tried to encourage people to think of ways that their businesses could support the work of the Center, through contributions and our fundraising efforts.

After I was done talking, a few people stayed to ask me questions. One gentleman approached me, with what I thought was going to be a follow-up question about his business. Instead, he wanted to thank me for what the Center was trying to do for his nephew.

All too often, we think of people in simple categories: businesswoman, legislator, caregiver, colleague. I have learned that very often these overlap, and that is the strength of our community. The people I was talking to that day aren't just businesspeople, they are the friends and families of the children we are here to serve. In our little world of central Maine, divisions of 'them' and 'us' just don't work. We are all one community, interwoven and interdependent.



Jonathan



"We are all one community, interwoven and interdependent."

Family Services

Family Services are offered at both our Augusta and Skowhegan locations.

Families can access Targeted Case Management, Respite, Rehabilitative Community Support Services, and Parent Education Programs through the Family Services office of the Children's Center.

In **Targeted Case Management**, Case Managers help parents understand their

child's needs and will advocate for effective services for the child.

Respite care gives parents of children with special needs a supportive, short-term break. (Visit www.respiteforme.org for more information about this program.)

Rehabilitative Support Services provide skill development to help children ages two to six years old who have identified needs, learn essential skills to succeed in life.

Parent Education and Provider Education programs are designed to support the caregivers of young children of all abilities, helping them to better understand the children in their care, and to help them be successful with a child who needs extra support.

For more information on any of these programs, contact our Family Services Coordinator at 800-894-6264 or 207-626-3497, ext. 125.



FALL 2011

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Upcoming Events ~ will we see you there?

Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce Business to Business Expo at the Civic Center, Augusta - October 12, 2011 ~ Visit our exhibit at Table 6! For more information: www.augusta.com

Maine Autism Alliance Conference at the Civic Center, Augusta - October 15, 2011 ~ Members of our Family Services department and Leadership Team will be at our display, to answer questions about the services we provide at the Children's Center. More details: www.maineautism.org

Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours at the Children's Center, Augusta location - October 26, 2011 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm ~ Contact Elizabeth Barron at the Children's Center: 626-3497, ext. 130

Parent Education Program at the Children's Center, Augusta - Tuesday evenings, once per month ~

Upcoming topics: "Understanding Behaviors in Young Children" (Oct. 25)

"Developing a Family Support System" (Nov. 29)

"Stress Management for Parents & Children" (Dec. 13)

Contact the Family Services Coordinator at the Children's Center: 626-3497, ext. 125 for more information

Provider Education Program at Redington Fairview General Hospital, Conf. Rm. 4, Skowhegan ~

A series of workshops for child care providers to identify specific details in creating inclusive environments for children. Contact the Family Services Coordinator at the Children's Center: 626-3497, ext. 125 for more information

Grandest Parents of All Program at Educare, Waterville ~ A support group for grandparents and other relatives raising young children.

Contact the Family Services Coordinator at the Children's Center: 626-3497, ext. 125 for more information