

ANOTHER WAY TO HELP THE CENTER!

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Thank you!



Mary Nguyen

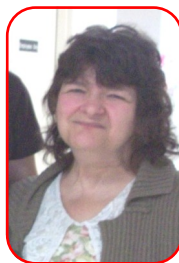
(see lead story)

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Thank you!

On June 7th, we held a 45th Anniversary Celebration and Supporter Appreciation Reception. The evening opened with guests enjoying hors d'oeuvres as they socialized and reminisced, reading the timeline of the Center that ran down the hall way, and participating in interactive displays set up in the classrooms and therapy rooms. Music, provided by Ed Desjardins, drifted down the hall as guests toured the Center.



Carmen Thomas

Guest of honor at the event was former student Carmen Thomas, who came to the Center in 1967.

Also a part of the program was a moving DVD presentation by Mary

Nguyen, the daughter of the founder of the Center, Priscilla Bryant Chavarie, and the first

student.

Executive Director Jonathan Leach welcomed the guests by setting a picture of the social environment in 1967: Thurgood Marshall was confirmed as the first African-American Supreme Court Justice. The Beatles released Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. And, in the basement of the Penney Baptist Memorial Church, the roots of the Children's Center were formed.

Unfolding the history of the Center against the backdrop of social movements, Leach pointed out that it wasn't until 1975 that Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act. It was December 2, 1978 that the doors opened to the new building on Alden Avenue. In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act – it was that same year that the Center's name changed to "Children's Center: Early Intervention and Family Support." In May, 2003 the Center officially cut the ribbon on the newly renovated and expanded

building; in 2008, childcare services were added; in 2009, programs for infants and toddlers were added. In 2011, the Center was recognized with the Dirigo Award for Nonprofit Excellence.

Leach then introduced the other speakers for the evening, Kaye Flanagan and Senator Roger Katz.

Flanagan, former chair of the Board of Directors and leader of the capital campaign committee in 2003, spoke to the shift in societal perspective over the years around children with special needs and the incredible amount of community support that allowed the Center to expand its building and programs to better serve the children and families who needed it.

Senator Katz emphasized the importance of the Children's Center to central Maine and credited Leach and the leadership of the Center for their out-of-the-box thinking and fiscal responsibility.

Thanks to all attending for a wonderful evening!

Darien

Darien is playing with the toys on the table in the lobby of the Children's Center, totally absorbed for about a minute before he looks up to see what else is going on around him. His teacher has walked up to him, and he smiles when he sees her. He turns to his little brother and gives him a hug before he follows his teacher down the hallway. "He never did that before," his Mom says through an emotion-filled smile. "We had given up all hope that he'd ever interact with his little brother any at all, never mind giving hugs – and now he



does that all the time!"

Darien, now 4, has shown great improvements since he began at the Children's Center just a year ago. He's been identified

as being on the autism spectrum only fairly recently. "I worried there was something not right, from pretty early on, and kept bringing it up at his pediatrician visits when we lived in Virginia," Mom recounts. "They just kept telling me I worried too much. It wasn't until we moved to Maine, and we went in to get his next round of immunizations that the nurse – whatever she saw in his behavior, I don't know what made her ask – the nurse asked if he'd been tested for autism. It was a shock, to hear someone just come out and say that, but it felt like a relief, too. We got

(continued on page 2)



Do you know all the services we offer here in the inclusive setting of the Children's Center?

- *Occupational Therapy
- *Speech and Language Therapy
- *Individual Specially Designed Instruction
- *Friends Express
- *Stepping Stones
- *Targeted Case Management
- *Childcare

Want to know more?

Call us, and come by for a tour!



Kids Day at the Whatever Festival
B*I*G bubbles!

Darien (continued)

him in for testing right away, and, sure enough, there it was, 'official': autism." One of Darien's biggest issues is food and eating. "The SOS group (see next article) has changed his life, and ours, as a family. He just wouldn't eat anything except one or two foods – and then he'd suddenly not want them anymore, but just wouldn't even try anything else. He was losing weight, and even the pediatrician was getting concerned. We noticed a huge improvement in the

first week that he started the SOS group. Right away he started trying a few new foods, he was actually eating more, and even his behaviors were shifting, he began interacting with others in ways he hadn't before." "I don't know how to explain in a way that anybody else not in this situation could understand how important this program, and the Children's Center, is to us. We can actually sit down for meals. Well, kind of..." she adds with a smile. "And Darien and his brother have developed a real relationship, which they just didn't have before." Mom gazes over at Darien's brother who's

been playing with some match-box cars while his Mom has been talking, pausing before she speaks again. "I have gotten more support, in more different ways from the Children's Center, than I have from any other place. You have a good support team here, for sure."



Mealtime Miracles

Sometimes in a child's life, an event connected to food may occur that leaves a very strong negative reaction around a food, or all food in general. It could have been something clear like a gagging or choking event or something subtle like a stomach ache during or after eating something.

The Sequential Oral Sensory (SOS) Approach to Feeding is an intervention strategy used at the Center that attaches the experience of foods and mealtimes with pleasant, calm, and happy feelings and a slow and gradual approach to eating new foods. In addition, techniques are practiced to improve chewing and swallowing. Foods are presented to children in a very thoughtful way, using tiny steps and positive reinforcement the whole way. SOS therapy is a

happy, fun time with food! It is a slow process, and over two to three 12 week sessions facilitated by specially trained therapists children begin to welcome a wide variety of nutritious foods. And then, finally, when at this calm point, a child can try new food items confidently and happily.

Some of the children coming to the SOS group display such a severe reaction to food that they refuse to eat or even touch most foods. This is much more severe than the more common "picky eater" phase many parents are familiar with. These so-called "sensory aversive eaters," make up approximately 10% of the general population. Of children with a diagnosis of Autism Spec-

trum Disorder, approximately 90% are found to be "sensory aversive eaters."

The "why" behind sensory aversive eating patterns can be a challenge to identify, especially in children with autism. Families with children in this program just care that it works!





Learnings

As the Center celebrates its 45th anniversary, I am suddenly aware that the first kids that attended the Center are my own age. It is my hope that the most recent graduates from the Class of 2012 will experience a different world from that of the first class in 1967: One where inclusion is an expectation and acceptance of difference is a given. I hope that the parents of today's kids will be a support to each other as they move into different academic settings, and that their time here will be a strong foundation as they move forward.

In terms of anniversaries, the 45th anniversary is the "Sapphire" anniversary. We are all familiar with gold and silver anniversaries as being special times, but the sapphire anniversary has special meaning, too.

Sapphires are often referred to as "stones of destiny". They bring mental clarity, and clear per-

ception. It has been believed that they also bring financial independence and even abundance. Speaking for the leadership of the agency, this is our goal: to clearly understand the vision of the agency, to assure its financial



stability, and to seek abundance of resources for our staff and our services.

The sapphire has long symbolized truth, sincerity, and faithfulness. I believe these values were established in our roots as a parent-driven organization, from our

first days in the basement of the Penney Baptist Church to the present day.

Sapphires open the mind to beauty and intuition, and bring with it the hope of fulfilling your dreams and desires of the heart. My hope is that all of us who work for the Center see this as our role, and use our work as a way to fulfill our own calling.

Sapphires draw protection and prophetic wisdom to the user; and attract and oversee one's divine destiny or "mission" in life, instilling hope, faith and joy during the journey. We do our best to provide this every day to the families we are privileged to serve.

Sapphires can focus healing, loving energy on anyone needing it; each day we do our best to focus our healing, loving energy on each child who comes through our doors.



Jonathan



"Each day we do our best to focus our healing, loving energy on each child who comes through our doors."



You Power Miracles!

With your financial support of the Children's Center, you DO help make miracles happen. Is "miracles" too strong a word?



Ask the dad of the three-year old boy who said, "I never dreamed we would see him walking any at all—never mind walking so much, and without his gaiter!"

That is surely a miracle for one family.

And the Children's Center's story is the story of many such families, from founder Pricilla Bryant Chavarie's

experiences with her daughter, Mary, to this young father and his son.

Please help us continue to power miracles for the young children of Central Maine—especially those whose hopes may be fragile.

Make checks out to Children's Center, and send to

1 Alden Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04330.

And Thank You!



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Graduation Excitement!
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Summer Fun at the Center

CC alumna earns blackbelt!

