

WE COULD REALLY USE YOUR HELP!

YARD WORK & MAINTENANCE ARE ONGOING CHALLENGES AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER - IF YOU THINK YOU CAN HELP, PLEASE CONTACT US: JONATHAN LEACH, 626-3497

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Fun Times at the Chili Chowder Challenge

Crowds of people found a great way to enjoy the fine Spring weather on March 23rd, by including a stop at the Chili Chowder Challenge at the Augusta Armory, making it a very successful fundraising event for the Children's Center, grossing about \$35,500.

There was plenty of family-friendly entertainment, fun children's activities and crafts, and, of course, Central Maine's finest chilis and chowders for the tasting at the Children's Center's major annual fundraising event. Live musical entertainment was provided by Sam Shain, joined by his father, Brett Shain and his brother, Josh Shain, and bass player David Thibodeau. A very full



Photo by Jeff Wood

Silent Auction kept people busy, and Maine Humorist Gary Crocker entertained the crowd bidding in the Live Auction.

Master of Ceremonies for the day was Herb Bunker.

The Children's Center Staff wow-ed the crowd with a flash mob dance performed to "What Makes You Beautiful" by One Direction.



Competition among the 15 local restaurants and caterers was fun-spirited - and pretty intense! (See the winners on page two.)



Loads of family-friendly activities were offered: Arts and crafts tables for kiddos of all ages - including a "decorate your own donut" table sponsored by Tim Hortons; a story time for children sponsored by Lithgow Library; and parachute play time sponsored by the Children's Center staff.

Many thanks to the Chili Chowder Challenge Committee: Christine Devine, Karen MacGillivray, Kim MacKenzie, Glenn Gagne, Wes Littlefield, Patsy Crockett, Maria Hays, Matt Tardiff, Renee Clark and Suzie Yerrick!

Malaki

Malaki has a special way of making you feel all happy and warm inside.

His genuine excitement and eagerness to explore the world around him makes you pay a little more attention, and appreciate the little things in life.

Malaki started at the Children's Center in September, 2012 for Specially Designed Instruction, Speech Therapy, and Occupational therapy.



Malaki - thinking things over!

Upon starting at the Children's Center, Malaki had difficulties adapting to a classroom schedule and routine. He had limited language, and it was challenging for Malaki to express his emotions or frustrations to others.

Sometimes, these frustrations resulted in difficulties in sharing, taking turns, and back and forth peer interactions.

(continued on page 2)



A great big
THANKYOU to

all who continue to support the miracles that happen at the Children's Center! If you would like to fund a need at the Center, please send your donation/ monthly pledge to the following address:
Children's Center
1 Alden Ave.,
Augusta, ME 04330
(Make checks out to "Children's Center")
~ THANK YOU! ~

Malaki (continued from front page)

Today, Malaki is able to sit and enjoy music and songs, and most transitions for him are now effortless, giving him more relaxed opportunities for learning, and more positive experiences in the classroom.

What touches my heart as a teacher is to see Malaki's enjoyment around his peers.



His increased vocabulary and abilities to regulate his body and emotions have provided him with the tools necessary for social situations that

allow him to interact successfully with his classmates.

It has been magical watching Malaki grow and develop.

But watch out - Malaki's happiness and enthusiasm is highly contagious, and without a doubt will leave you smiling all day long!

(Submitted by
Kara St. Hillaire)



Children's Center Community

Those of you who were connected with the Children's Center in 2007-2010 certainly remember Bob Gross and his sweet certified therapy dog, Fraggie. Bob sent us a note to let us know that Fraggie died in February.

Fraggle was loved by all the children and staff at the Children's Center - we express our sympathies to Bob, and our THANKS to him and Fraggie for the joyful service they provided to the children of the Center for all those years!



Fraggle

2013 Challenge Winners

Winners this year were:

Best Chowder: The Red Barn, "Laura's Famous Seafood Stew"

Best Chili: The Liberal Cup, "Smokin' Pig" Chili

Hottest Chili: The Liberal Cup, "Level 7 Nuclear Meltdown"

Most Original Chowder: Maple Hill Farm Inn "Simply Gone WILD! Blueberry Chowder"

Most Original Chili: The Liberal Cup, "Smokin' Pig Chili"

Most Creative Display: The Liberal Cup

Most Creative Name: The Liberal Cup's "Level 7 Nuclear Meltdown"

But really, the winners are the children and families of the Children's Center -- thanks to everyone for your part in this fantastic day!





Learnings



A short while ago, I went to one of the best conferences I have ever attended. It was in Lewiston, and it was on the topic of "Collective Impact".

Trying to summarize eight hours of thought-provoking information is really hard, but in a nutshell, the main idea is that large-scale social change (like building a well-funded, effective early intervention system) requires broad coordination across different sectors (like education, child care, and human services), yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

Individually, there are lots of state offices, agencies, and private organizations, but rarely do we truly work together on solving a common problem. At present, I think our biggest problem could be stated: "How do we work together to make sure that every kid shows up for

school ready to learn: living in a safe home, healthy, well-fed, and able to meet the expectations of the kindergarten setting?"

An example of limited coordination: I am an appointee to the Maine Children's Growth Council. Through the work of that group, I have learned that within state government alone there are **forty-three different** offices or agencies who somehow focus on or have some oversight of early childhood services. In addition, between these state-level agencies, there are **thirty different oversight bodies or panels** to assure that each is operating in accord with laws and regulations.

I would encourage each of you to share this information within your community. Our elected officials and business leaders need to know that we expect an early intervention system that directs our resources where it can do the most good: in direct

services to kids and families, not in supporting offices. We need a system with one door where families can tell their story once and have their children's needs met comprehensively, not a 'system' with many doors leading down different halls.

Collectively, we could make this happen. It might mean tearing down some walls, simplifying organizational structures, and creating an expectation of cooperation. But we built this thing, and together we could rebuild it.

It can be done, together. *Jonathan*

"It can be done, together"



Community Support:



Each year, our Chili Chowder Challenge is so successful because of the generosity of local businesses: sponsorships, items for live and silent auction, donations of hotdogs, soda and ice cream, and the enthusiastic support of the local restaurants who participate.

For all of your support, we extend our appreciation - and encourage everyone in our community to support the businesses that support the children of Central Maine!

Many thanks to the sponsors of the 2013 Chili Chowder Challenge:

- Charlie's Family of Dealerships
- KV Federal Credit Union
- MaineGeneral Health
- Kennebec Savings Bank
- Darling's
- Judy Griffin
- Carl Weston

Also: Augusta Fuel Company, G&E Roofing & the China Dine-ah, Kennebec Technologies, Key Bank, Quirion Construction, Main Security Surveillance, Lajoie Brothers, Betsi Jane Taylor/State Farm Insurance, Tim Hortons, Al's Certified Auto Repair, Le Club Calumet, Combined

Benefits United, Evergreen Dental Associates, Pine State Trading, PFBF, CPAs, Golden Pond Wealth Management, Lipman & Katz, Kleinfelder, O'Connor Auto Group, Pat's Pizza of Augusta, J.S. McCarthy Printing, Sonny's Museum and Gift Shop, and Sprague & Curtis Real Estate. Participating Restaurants were: Al's Pizza, Augusta House of Pancakes, Capital Grill, Le Club Calumet, Cohen on the Meadows, Damon's, Ground Round Sports Grille, Hi-Hat Pancake House, the Liberal Cup, Lisa's Restaurant & Lounge, Maple Hill Farm Inn & Conference Center, Red Barn, Red Robin, Senator Inn and Wings Hill Inn.



Award Winning Chilis and Display by the Liberal Cup - photo by Jeff Wood

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Children's Center

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Augusta, Maine 04330

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In their own words...

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

"I have been working at the Children's Center for over 6 years now. I have seen hundreds of families come and go and have been blessed to have helped a large number of those families in some way. I often sit and wonder how those families/children are doing once they leave the 'cocoon' that is the Children's Center. As some of you may know, I have had the unique opportunity of being related to 2 former students - one being Malcolm, my nephew with Autism, and the other being Aliyah, my daughter, who is diagnosed with ADHD and depressive disorder.

For those of you who don't know Malcolm, he started at the Children's Center in 2001, when he was 2 years old. He had severe needs at that time: he would scream for HOURS on end, pound on the windows until his 'Memere' came back, refuse to walk down the hall, dump EVERY bucket of toys out into one pile, and had extremely limited language (he mostly just said, 'digga, digga'). It has been 8 years since he has been a student here and it is incredible how far he has come. He won his race in the regionals at the swimming Special Olympics last summer. He even attends HIGH SCHOOL now!!!! He holds intelligible conversations, he has a great sense of humor, and is a very loving boy (to most people!). I truly and honestly believe he would be NOWHERE near where he is now if it weren't for the Center. The Children's Center changed Malcolm's path in life. I believe he will be a constructive member of society, he will have a job, get married, have a car... I believe all of those things will now be possible for him because of attending this center.



These are the things that I think about when I wake up in the morning and come to work. I try to put any chaos or uncertainties in the back of my mind, put my teacher hat on :, and go into Busy Bees and change a child's path: give them a new perspective, and put a smile on their face. I think 'Because of me, Mike J. will live independently; because of me, Landon will have a job; because of me Lucas will get married!'

Thanks for all you each do to support the Children's Center, every day. I thank you as a parent and an aunt of a child with a special need. :)"

~ Amber Stubbs

