

Children's Center News

Spring 2018



Meet Reid

According to his family and teachers at the Children's Center, almost six-year-old Reid Strout has never allowed his disabilities to slow him down.

His teachers describe him as fun, funny, kind, and so lovely to be around. "He has a great



sense of humor, loves to play with his siblings, and looks forward to playdates with friends," said his mother, Amanda Strout.

Reid was diagnosed with spastic diplegic cerebral palsy as an infant and mild intellectual disability about a year ago. He has always been determined to do things for himself in spite of his disability said Amanda.

He participated in the preschool program at Gilbert Elementary School for about a year before transitioning to the Children's Center in spring 2017. He enjoyed school but was "very shy and did not advocate for himself



or express his needs," said Amanda.

He could have attended kindergarten in fall 2017, said Sue Daniels, Early Education Coordinator at the Children's Center.

However, he met the criteria and his parents thought he would benefit from another year.

"Reid has grown a lot over the past year," said Amanda. She said he has improved his communication, become safer with his walker, and made friends he cannot

wait to see each day.

"He does very well listening and following through with directions. He has a positive attitude and he interacts so wonderfully with the other children," said



Andrew Oliver, his educational technician.

"I am happy that Reid has been able to attend school at the center over the past year," said Amanda. "I think that the way he has progressed shows that the center is a great place."

His teachers agree. "This child lights up the room when he enters it," said Andrew.

Pat Morais: Lead Teacher

"As I prepared for my career, I knew I always wanted to work with children," said Pat Morais, Lead Teacher in the Bursting Blossoms at the Children's Center.

In September 2010, Pat began her journey at the center as a substitute, which quickly

led to a full time position as a behavioral health professional in the toddler classroom. Shortly afterward, she assumed the position of lead teacher for the preschool classroom where she has stayed ever since.

"Pat provides an outstanding early childhood program to her children," said Sue Daniels, Early Education Coordinator.

"She truly cares for the children and they in turn love her. Parents also love and trust her. They can't wait for their child to be with Pat in Bursting Blossoms," Sue said.

"Knowing that I make a difference in their lives is what I love about this career," said Pat. "I love the support and feeling of appreciation that I receive from families."



Meet Freddy

Freddy Wagner was diagnosed with autism shortly after his fourth birthday. By the time he reached four-and-a-half in February 2017, he transitioned to the special education program at Children's Center.

"He has come such a long way since then," said Mariah Chenard, Freddy's educational technician. At first he struggled with following directions, staying on task, and initiating play she said.

"Before the Children's Center, Freddy was having trouble with his balance, behavior, and acclimating to his surroundings. He has always been happy and pleasant but not always so confident," said Bridgett Wagner, Freddy's mother.



Mariah said Freddy follows multiple step directions, sits for ten minute stations, and plays with all of his friends in his classroom. Bridgett said that, "the Children's Center helped Freddy blossom and give him the confidence to succeed in the classroom environment."

"We describe the Children's Center as the 'A team'," said Bridgett. "We believe that Freddy has had the best team of support available and it will be hard for us to move on," she said.

He will be turning six in August and transitioning to a public school kindergarten in the fall.

"Freddy has had the chance to begin his education with a good and happy experience," said Bridgett, which has created a positive foundation for future learning.



You are cordially invited:

Children's Center 4th Annual Dinner & Auction

Saturday, August 26th

5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Doors Open 5:00 p.m.

Dinner 6:00 p.m.

Auction After Dinner

Governor Hill Mansion

136 State Street

Augusta, ME 04330

Cost of Admission:

\$40 per person

\$300 per table of eight.

Please RSVP by:

August 10th

Katelyn Pushard

(207) 626-3497

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Catching Up With Abby

Abby Gray attended the special education program at the Children's Center when she was only three-years-old. Diagnosed with developmental delays, she participated in speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and specially designed instruction.

"She was very shy and quiet when she first began at the center," said Linda Coehlo, Speech Pathologist at the Children's Center. She struggled with directions, socialization, and coordination according to her providers there.

Pat Morais, Bursting Blossoms Lead Teacher, said that her favorite part was watching Abby

watch her friends sing during circle time. "By the end of her time here though, she was singing along with her friends," said Pat.



Now eight-years-old, Abby attends second grade at James

Bean Elementary School said her mother Jessica Gray. She



continues to receive speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and support in the classroom though no longer the shy, quiet girl who began at the center.

"Abby has great confidence and is very independent. She always puts her all in everything she does. She is a happy-go-lucky little girl and is very kind and empathetic with peers," said Jessica.

Jessica said that "She had some amazing teachers and therapists that helped her so much and were amazing advocates for what Abby needed for services to be successful."

Jessica describes Abby as super creative and impressive with drawing and painting, or "creating works of art" as Abby might say. She said "Abby had so much support and love. They really cared at the center."

Where Are They Now? Mary Barnett

"Mary Barnett attended the Children's Center around 2001," said her mother Lorna Barnett. She began when she was almost two-years-old and continued at the center until kindergarten.

After years of testing at Boston Children's Hospital, she received the diagnosis of a rare genetic disorder, SCAR5, at the age of twelve. "This was extremely difficult," said Lorna.

"Having a child with disabilities is very frightening in the beginning. We were so scared and felt lost.

"The Children's Center became our family. The therapists and staff were usually the first people I called after a big doctor's appointment," said her mother.

Mary is now nineteen-years-old and recently graduated from Monmouth Academy. She re-



throughout her school years said Lorna.

"She always tries to do everything," said her mother. She has participated in the Special Olympics and even volunteered at the Children's Center for a few months last year.

Mary recently began vocational rehabilitation to help her find a job after graduation. She currently works for a daycare in Wales and a child's consignment store in Winthrop, Everything Kids.

"She loves children. She would like to work with kids, especially kids with special needs," said Lorna.

"Mary is just a joy to be around," said Lorna. She describes her as super fun and a social butterfly. Her mother said, "she does not have a poor me attitude."



If anything, Mary does not always know her limitations according to her mother.

Lorna said that she and Mary loved her going to the Children's Center. To this day, her mother said some of their closest friends stem from her time at the center so many years ago.

ceived special education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy

Mariah Chenard: Educational Technician



"After a week at the Children's Center, I knew I made the right choice," said Mariah Chenard, educational technician at the center.

Mariah began working at the organization two days after she graduated from the University of New England with a degree in pre-occupational therapy in May 2016.

"Mariah is very skilled as an educational technician. She is kind, crea-

tive, and fun but consistent with the children," said Early Education Coordinator Sue Daniels.

She provides special education services in an inclusive classroom, working with a variety of children with all abilities.

"Parents are comfortable talking to her and trust her with their children," said Sue.

"I am able to guide children and positively affect their lives. Watching children surpass developmental milestones is why I love what I do and what keeps me coming back day after day," said Mariah.



Congratulations to the winners of the Children's Center 17th Annual Chili Chowder Challenge



Best Chili: "Steerway to Heaven" - The Liberal Cup
Hottest Chili: "Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire" - The Liberal Cup
Most Original Chili: "To Hell & Back" - Capital Area Technical Center
Best Chowder: "Laura's Famous Seafood Stew" - Red Barn
Most Original Chowder: "Peachy Keen Creamside" - Maple Hill Inn & Conference Center
Most Creative Name: The Liberal Cup
Most Creative Display: The Liberal Cup
Overall Winner: Red Barn

A special thank you to Scolded Dogs & Maine Cabin Masters!
Restaurants

Augusta House of Pancakes • Black & Tan • Capital Area Technical Center
Damon's • Fat Cat's Café • Le Club Calumet • Lisa's Restaurant & Lounge
Litchfield Country Store • Pangea Catering/Papa's Roadhouse • Red Barn
The Liberal Cup • Ye Olde English Fish & Chips
Maple Hill Farm Inn & Conference Center

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♦ **Golden Pond Wealth Management**
♦ **Heather Allen with Keller Williams Realty**

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CHILDREN'S CENTER



General Updates

It is a challenging time at the Children's Center. We have more children receiving center based treatment services than ever before. And we have waiting lists. Despite our expansion into the Birches, we find ourselves in need of more space. We feel the urgency of those waiting lists—those lists are real children with immediate special needs.

Every spring, we find that some of our children could benefit from one more year with us before entering public school. So, we have decided to open a specialized kindergarten classroom this fall. These children may have significant communication delays, emotional and behavioral challenges, or medical needs that require more specialized education, support, and treatment.

The new classroom represents our ongoing commitment to provide services to children and families, which would not be possible without the strong support of our communities. We are very appreciative for all of the help and support.

Jeff Johnson, Executive Director



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