



# CHILDREN'S CENTER

Augusta • Farmington • Skowhegan • Waterville

Winter Edition • 2020

## Finding Some Sun

It's dark out earlier, it's cold. The storm cloud of COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc. If "pivot" is the defining word of 2020, "uncertain and anxious" are the defining emotions. 2020 can pack its bags and go!

There's all of *that* and then a whole lot of this: Lily is walking; Parker's sign language is going gang-busters; Emmalynn is working on sitting upright without support; and 32 little graduates marched their way toward public kindergarten in August (pg 4).

Nancy donated a truckload of diapers (and more!), the United Way gave and gave and gave... (pg 14)

We're renovating in Skowhegan to meet program needs, we've expanded our space in Farmington to meet community needs, and we've established a program for the first time ever in Waterville (pg

3). We have a newly accredited Special Purpose Private School on site in Augusta. Event fundraising went virtual and went bananas with unprecedented dollars raised for unfunded early intervention services (pg 8).

Plans are in the works for the Children's Center 2.0 – an expanded site in Augusta with room for every special needs child previously relegated to a waiting list while their developmental window closes (pg 17).

Cold, clouds and coronavirus be darned – there is sun!

Indeed, **the joy of working at and for the Children's Center is the persistent sun that shines through the hard-working, relentlessly "kid" kids who come here.** They have challenges; they are

determined. They have fragile moments; they are funny. They have tantrums; they are curious. They explore, defy expectations and conquer preconceived notions. And they bring the sun.

There's no denying these are difficult times. As you read up about what's happening in our small corner of the world, we hope you feel some warmth and are heartened by the possibility embedded everywhere and empowered by kindness like yours.

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# From the ED Desk

Dear Friends of the Center,

These past several months have seemed to go on forever. COVID-19 has created so much sickness, death and other painful experiences in our community and communities around the world.

Let me bring you up to date on how it's impacted children and families at our sites in Augusta, Skowhegan, Farmington and now Waterville.

Because of COVID-19, all Children's Center sites closed center-base services mid-March. We immediately moved to provide telepractice services to our highest capacity--replacing face-to-face services with services via devices through Zoom and other electronic platforms. At the same time, we reopened our Augusta site to provide childcare services to MaineGeneral, Department of Health and Human Services and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention essential staff. We provided child care to those essential workers' children through May.

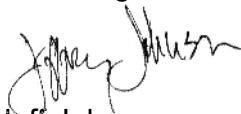
The first week of June, we opened again, providing all services at all sites. We have many safety protocols in place and continue to provide increasing amounts of telepractice services, all while keeping our fingers crossed there will be no further closings. Our site closing for center-based

and clinical services was devastating for many of our children with special needs. Some who were speaking in March, had lost that ability when they came back in June. Some who had significant social engagement and connection with staff and other children, had retreated back within themselves.

But there is much that is positive too. So many of our kids are thrilled to be back with their peers and staff. And the progress that's been made with so many children since their return is nothing short of remarkable—testament to our skilled, committed and passionate staff as well as the grit, determination and very hard work our children show us every day.

Stay healthy. Take care of yourself and each other. This too shall pass.

Warm regards,



Jeff Johnson  
Executive Director



# Children's Center Updates

The Children's Center continuously works towards monitoring, identifying and addressing needs in our communities, particularly as those needs relate to children with special needs and their families. Over the past year, these efforts have translated into the introduction and expansion of several programs within our organization.

## Children's Center Partners with Maine Children's Home for Little Wanderers in Waterville

We are thrilled to share a long-awaited expansion of our services to the Waterville area through a partnership with the Maine Children's Home for Little Wanderers (MCHLW). On Monday, November 16th, we opened case management services and a children's behavioral health day treatment classroom on the MCHLW campus. It will serve children two through five with an autism or mental health diagnosis and/or children who may be exhibiting not only significantly disruptive behavior, but other symptoms that interfere with their ability to learn and function in a typical classroom. As a result of their behavioral challenges, they may not be able to access a typical preschool or child care setting and require additional support or interventions provided by qualified professionals.

Overseen by Linda Riley, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Behavioral Health



Professionals (BHPs) will provide half-day or full-day specialized services in a highly structured setting with a high child-to-staff ratio. These children will also have access to a multidisciplinary team of specialists, including a board certified behavioral analyst (BCBA), pediatric therapists, social workers, and special educators, providing the most comprehensive and highest quality services to these children in central Maine.

## Farmington Expansion

Shortly after opening, we recognized the need for additional space at our satellite site in Farmington. Like our other sites, this location often has a long waitlist for services and we also identified the need for child care options in the community. With these needs in mind, we decided to lease the

second half of the current building, increasing the capacity from five or six kids to 10 in the year ahead.

Incorporating a child care component to our Farmington program not only meets a need in the community, it gives us the opportunity to integrate typically developing children into our specialized programs, which aligns with our commitment to

providing inclusive experiences. Research and experience reveals that typically developing children become peer role models for their friends with special needs while they also learn empathy and that every individual has their own strengths and specific challenges.

*Continued on page 6*



# 32 Graduates March Toward Kindergarten!

Each year, the Children's Center holds a graduation ceremony to recognize children moving on to public school. We invite parents, caregivers and families as well as children, staff and supporters of the organization to join in the celebration. Complete with snacks, decorations, tents and seating for all, we acknowledge the significance of this momentous occasion.

This year's festivities looked a little different. While we couldn't gather together to applaud their success and wish them the best on their journey, we tried to make the experience just as memorable and meaningful for them and their families with classroom ceremonies, diplomas, treats and celebration from their peers! We snagged videos for mom, dad and family, however you define it.

These graduates have come so far and worked so hard during their time here, and their team has been there beside them every step of the way. Parents, direct staff, therapists, case managers

and community providers have all come together to identify the needs, make a plan and work towards goals day-in and day-out to help the child reach this very place.

We understand the importance of these critical years in development. **Research and experiences demonstrates that the sooner children with special needs receive specialized, early intervention services, the greater progress they can make in a shorter amount of time.**

They can develop the necessary neurotransmitter pathways easier and more quickly than if they began receiving these same services once they have reached school age. We can actually help create a foundation for stronger human connection and more meaningful relationships.

Cheers to these graduates! We wish them the best in their next chapters and hope to hear updates on how they are adding to the world around them, just as they did here.



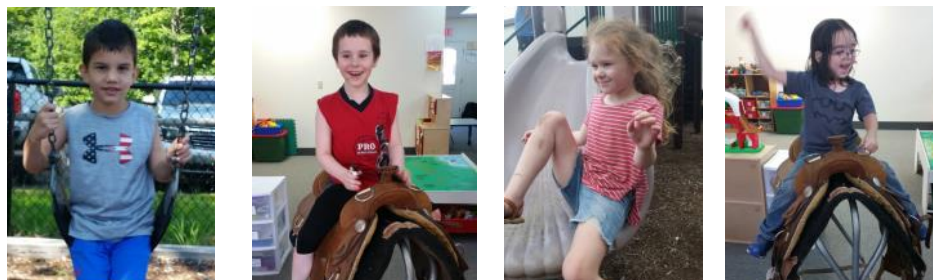
**Bursting Blossom graduates pictured left to right:** Adam, Alex, Cole, Declan, Harrison, Isabella, Jackson, Kaleb, Kingston, Landon, Lilly-Zoe, Noah and Shanaya!



**Birches graduates pictured left to right: AJ, Brayden, Daylan, Hayden, Liam and Parker!**



**Stepping Stones graduates pictured left to right: Elyse, Isabelle and Alicia!**



**Oak and Pine graduates pictured left to right: Alban, Johnny, Mila and Thomas!**



**Spruce graduates pictured left to right: Jaylynn, Trinity, Viktor and Warren!**





## Taking Center Services to Far Away Places

In November 2019, the Children's Center received a \$300,000 grant funded by the Rural Utilities Service through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These dollars support the implementation of a new telehealth program focused on rural areas in the state of Maine. The award allows us to purchase the technology and equipment necessary to provide telehealth services to children with special needs and their families who cannot access traditional center-based programming due to their location.

A multi-disciplinary team consisting of a board certified behavioral analyst (BCBA), licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), occupational therapist (OT), physical therapist (PT) speech and language pathologist (SLP), targeted case management and early childhood special education services will provide early intervention and family support services to children with disabilities and their families. Those families will have the opportunity to borrow a device from the program's technology library. These devices support videoconferencing and functional communication services; each equipped with security and cellular capabilities.

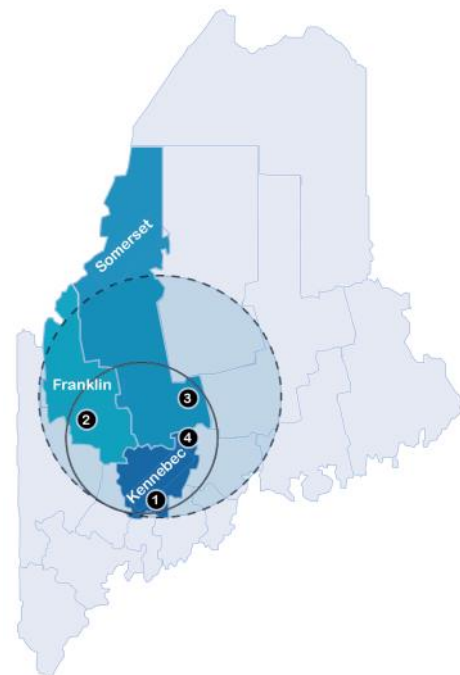
This is exciting for the Center and our families! Distance and/or lack of resources will no longer be a barrier for children in rural areas in need of specialized treatment services.

### Telehealth Expansion Phases

**Phase 1** will extend telehealth services to our satellite sites in Farmington<sup>②</sup> and Skowhegan<sup>③</sup>. This phase will serve an additional 25 children. **Phases II & III** will extend services to families within a 120 mile radius, growing telehealth support to 50 children in year 2 and 100 children in year 3.

① Augusta

④ Waterville  
(see pg 3)



Five-year-old Lily-Zoe accesses speech therapy services via telepractice with provider, Rhiannan Vigue. Lilly-Zoe picks a food, says it verbally or using her device and Rhi feeds the food to the kitty!

## Electronic Health Record

This winter, we will be implementing a new electronic health record (EHR). An EHR accurately and efficiently tracks data to drive treatment and alter interventions based on the individualized needs of the child in real time. This translates to a better experience and improved outcomes.

Across our four locations, our organization offers eight different types of services. These programs gather data on a daily basis, some minute-to-minute, for behavioral, communication, emotional, and/or functional living goals. Current processes involve staff generating, collating and aggregating information manually, which creates many opportunities for error and takes time away from the services themselves. An EHR will be essential in improving the accuracy, efficiency and quality of our work.



Five-year-old Elyse, a graduate of the Center's Stepping Stones autism program, loves water play, puzzles and tangrams. She is great at sorting and is working hard on counting!

Assistant Administrator, Denise, works with Elyse, the Center's first special purpose private school student!

## Special Purpose Private School

In recent years, we've encountered several situations in which a child receiving specialized services at the Center is not quite ready to successfully transition to public kindergarten. In an effort to meet the individualized needs of these children, we recently expanded our services to include a special purpose private school through the Department of Education.

We received full certification and created a specialized kindergarten classroom at our primary location in Augusta. We enrolled one student in September and anticipate the program will grow as educators become aware and we determine how best to accommodate additional students.

Denise Smith, Assistant Administrator of Special Education, oversees the program and provides direct support to help each child meet the goals and objectives outlined in their individualized education plan (IEP). So far, our pioneer student is illustrating just how important this extra year of specialized services can be. Next fall, we're confident she'll be ready to take on the world with her public school peers!

# Take Out, Dine In, Do Good: a Virtual Success!

Last spring, the arrival of COVID-19 up-ended our already overcomplicated lives. It changed the way we work, the way we socialize and the way our children access learning. It changed how we come together to care for one another – but it didn't change our determination to do just that!

The Children's Center realized immediately that our signature fundraising events, built around physically bringing our community together, were not prudent uses of time or resources and not safe for our children, their families and our supporters. With a sense of uncertainty and sadness, we put away our plans for the 19<sup>th</sup> Chili Chowder Challenge and started dialing our sponsors to relay the news. To a one, they stayed steadfast in their support, providing an unprecedented \$39,300 – 26% more than the prior year!

From there, we were determined to find a way to celebrate their kindness and meet the needs of the special kids in our care.

In an effort to maintain the giving we rely on each year to subsidize intervention expenses for the children we serve, we launched into the virtual realm of fundraising with our "Take out, Dine in, Do good!" virtual dinner series this past August.

We partnered with local restaurants to enhance the event experience *and* generate a few dollars for our friends who were also facing pandemic-related hardships. Over the course of six weeks, we hosted three events featuring State Lunch, Cushnoc Brewing Co. and The Maine House, and the Augusta Country Club. Each proved to be an incredible collaborator that delivered big time on being delicious!



## Event Fundraising Summary

Each year the Children's Center relies on the kindness of our communities to help fill the gap of unmet needs for early intervention services. Events typically raise \$65,000 for that purpose. **Here's a snapshot of our unconventional COVID-year events and what you did — *break records!***

## Sponsorship Support

- **\$39,300 (26% increase over last year!)**
  - Sponsors maintained their giving, even as hopes for in-person events were dashed.
- Their kindness outpaced the prior year and brought our **overall event fundraising to an unprecedented \$78,399 (21% increase over last year!)**

## Virtua Dinner Series

- **Goal • \$30,000** across all three
- **Amount Raised • \$39,099! (31% more than goal!)**

## Revenue for local restaurants: more than \$9,000!

- Augusta Country Club (Manchester)
- Cushnoc Brewing Co. (Augusta)
- State Lunch (Augusta)
- The Maine House (Hallowell)





Participants picked up their meal the day of the event, then tuned into a livestreamed hour of programming that evening. Programming included education on the Center, an introduction to some of our superstar kiddos and entertainment from local musicians and beloved Maine humorist, Gary Crocker. Tickets included entries into raffle drawings; additional donations equaled more chances to win. There was a little something for everyone!

Our hope was that the rising tide of goodness would lift at least a few boats and, indeed, it did! In fact, the rising tide of your goodness gifted more than \$39,000 to the Children's Center and \$9,000 to our restaurant partners.

If your jaw isn't on the floor just yet, let's put things into perspective and look at this another way: in a pandemic year and in virtual circumstances, you gave to our event efforts in an unprecedented way, exceeding last year's event totals by 15%. That's *incredible!* You are *incredible!* And these children are better off because of your kindness.

Thank you to those who joined – for being brave with us as we embraced the new and, hopefully, temporary, normal. Thank you for giving the gift of services today that will prepare these special children for success in everything that follows.

Thank you for coming together in such an inspiring way in spite of the need to be apart.

Special thanks to our generous sponsors who maintained their support during some pretty tough times. If you see them around, give these folks a grateful elbow bump on our behalf!

### Event Series Hosts

Charlie & Nancy Shuman

### Sponsors



Peter & Sandra  
Prescott



Bangor Savings Bank • Healey & Associates, Inc. • Ganneston Construction Corp  
Purdy Powers & Company • Mattson's Flooring & Window • 94 Design

American Awards • Connected Credit Union • Evergreen Dental Associates  
Golden Pond Wealth Management • Heather Allen with Keller Williams Realty  
Kyocera Document Solutions Maine, LLC (PCCI) • Le Club Calumet • Pine State Trading Co.  
Plummer Funeral Home

**We couldn't see your faces — but we knew you were with us! Here's what participants had to say during each event!**

**Peter & Norm made a donation**  
2 months ago

**\$5,000**


YOU DID IT! You met the match!  
Don't let that stop you...these kids need all the help we can give them. Thank YOU for doing good!

♥ Loved by Travis and 5 others

Peter Prescott and Norm Elvin issued a \$5,000 match to help bring our fundraising goal home during the final event. Guests stepped up to meet the match and add \$10,000 to our total!

**The Passel of Garofalos made a donation**  
2 months ago

Thanks for a wonderful program.  
So glad we can help!



♥

**The Dionne's made a donation**  
2 months ago

Thank you, Norm and Peter!!!!

*You're Awesome!*

**amytee**  
2 months ago



♥ Liked by stephgarofalo and 50 others  
amytee #childrenscenter dinner is making our Saturday!  
View all 4 comments  
pennieshorette I approve of anything with olives 🍴

**Mark & Judy Johnston made a donation**  
3 months ago

Happy to donate to such a worthy cause!

♥ Loved by Travis, Lara M Walsh and 2 others

**Charlene Bridge made a donation**  
2 months ago

It does your heart good to support these kids. Keep up the good work.

♥ Loved by Travis and 1 other



**\$29,728** by 78 people

Children's Center

We were joined by adults, kids and puppies alike! Carver, Estelle and company watched their classmate, Parker, show off his sign-language skills on screen!

**The Cummings made a donation**  
2 months ago

Carver and Estelle



**David & Kaye Flanagan made a donation**  
3 months ago

What an easy and fun way to support the work of The Children's Center.

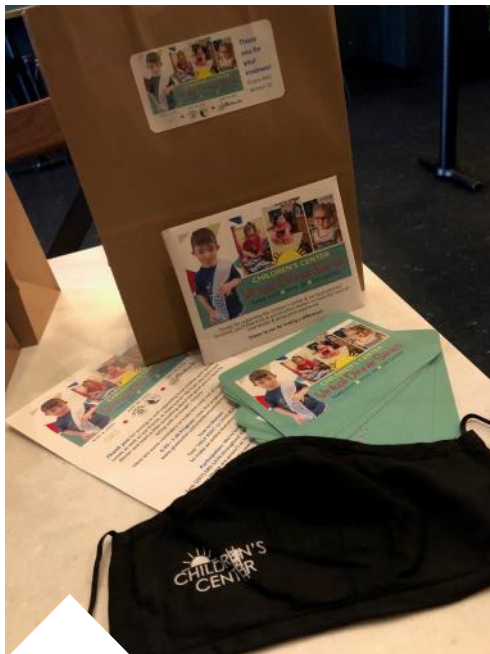
♥ Loved by Karen and 1 other

**Chevy & The Shuman Family made a donation**  
2 months ago

Very happy to support in such a fun and yummy way! 😊 Chevy says hello to all his friends at the Children's Center! 🐕

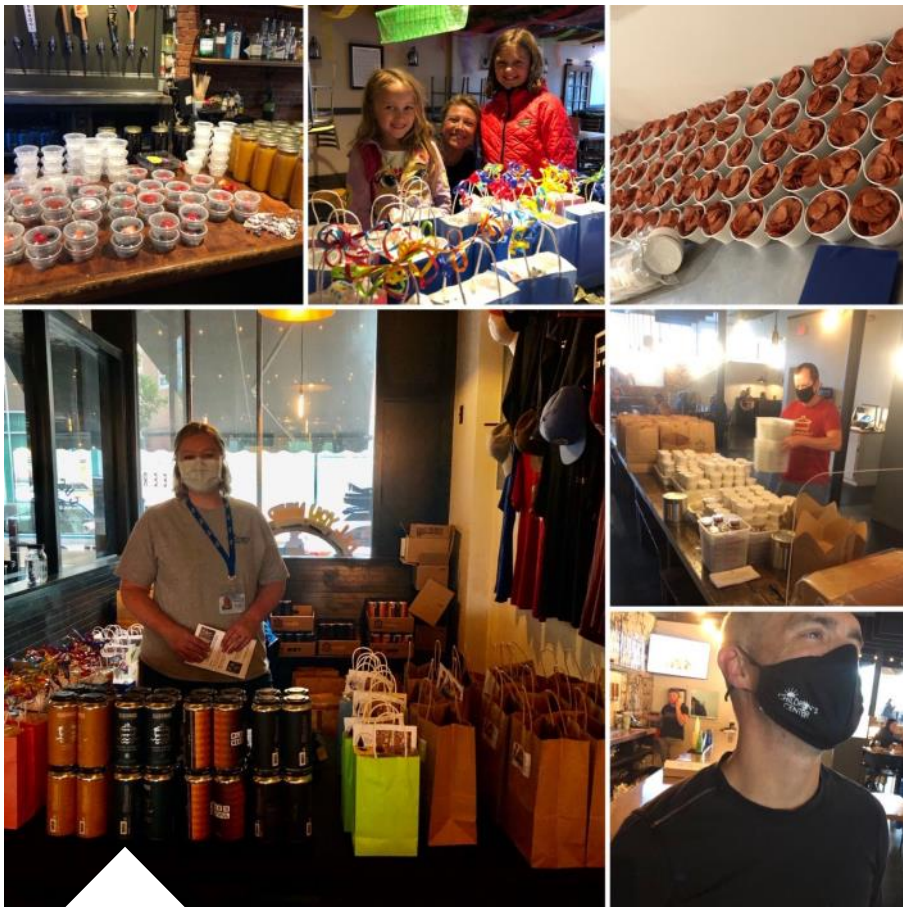






Each attendee got a goody bag including program reminders, Children's Center trivia cards, face masks — our way of saying "thanks" and stay well out there!

Below is what it looked like behind the scenes. Cameras, iPads, iPhones, laptops, microphones and more. We had a blast virtually connecting with you in the comfort of homes, on boats and in backyards!



The Happy Hour event served up 85 pizza kits • 46 four packs of beer • 22 cocktail kits • 19 mocktail kits • \$3,000 for Cushnoc & The Maine House • \$5,700 for the Children's Center and SO MUCH GOOD!

State Lunch delivered a delicious spread to kick things off on August 8th. From soup to sangria, everything was a hit!





# Center Welcomes New Board Members

The Children's Center board is comprised of community members with an array of skills that strengthen our ability to best serve our children and families. In addition to long-time servants of this mission, we are thrilled to have welcomed a number of newcomers in recent months and happy to introduce you to them here!

## Officers



**Maria Hays, President**  
Instructor, Central Maine  
Community College  
Initial election to Board: 2011



**New • Terry Brann**  
Chief Financial Officer,  
MaineGeneral Health  
Election to Board:  
August 13, 2020



**Karen Kearney**  
**Vice President**  
Realtor, Laflin & Wolfington  
Initial election to Board: 2015

"I am excited to serve on the Children's Center board. It combines my love of helping those in need within the community and, in particular, influencing the lives of children that struggle in so many different ways."



**Ronald Trahan, Treasurer**  
General Manager/Account  
Executive, Quirion  
Insurance Agency  
Election to Board:  
April 26, 2018

**New • Heather Carson**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker,  
Kennebec Behavioral Health  
Election to Board: September 24, 2020



"I believe every child deserves to have all the support they need to meet their full potential and I truly feel the Children's Center offers them this."



## Directors

### Don Devine

Clinical Psychologist  
Election to Board: January 26, 2017



**New • Michelle Bragg**  
Administrative Director,  
Maine Dartmouth Family  
Medicine Residency  
Election to Board:  
May 28, 2020

"I joined the Children Center's board because of the similarities between it's mission and that of the Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency. Both organizations are working to meet the needs of families in this community and are certainly caring for and providing services to the same patients."



**New • Mary Dionne**  
Adjunct Faculty,  
Kennebec Valley  
Community College  
Election to Board: May 28, 2020

"The tools acquired in early childhood equip not only the children, but the families, with skills, language, knowledge, and experience to navigate the challenging system of public education. It is this ability to lighten the load of families, who are already dealing with so much, that I am honored to be a part of as a member of the board."



**New • Craig Garofalo**  
Executive Vice President, Chief  
Operating Officer & Chief Loan  
Officer, Kennebec Savings Bank  
Election to Board:  
October 22, 2020

"I grew up in central Maine, and now am raising my own family in central Maine, so I am deeply invested in making the area a great place to live, work, and play for years to come. The Children's Center fills a great void in terms of services for our children, and it is something that I am proud to see, help expand and sustain over the years to come."



**New • B.L. Lippert**  
High School Teacher  
Augusta School Department  
Election to Board:  
September 24, 2020

"I have two sons the younger one, Lincoln has autism. He attended the Children's Center for two plus years and it gave him so much. Advocating for special needs children in this community has become a passion of mine."



**New • Carolyn Plant Neilson**  
Former Provider Engagement Specialist, Martin's Point Health Care  
Election to Board: May 28, 2020

"The Children's Center is committed to the well-being and the value of ALL children of ALL abilities – to the idea that each of us is unique and makes a special contribution to this world. That mission resonates with me profoundly."



**New • Amy Tardiff**  
Vice President and  
General Counsel,  
J.S. McCarthy Printers  
Election to Board:  
October 22, 2020

"I firmly believe that every child deserves a chance to be their best self...I am inspired by the work the Children's Center does to level the playing field for kids and their families, who might start out lacking resources, to tackle life's obstacles."



**Dr. Lara Walsh**  
Pediatrician, Kennebec &  
Winthrop Pediatric &  
Adolescent Medicine  
Election to the Board:  
June 21, 2012

In fact, there are three wonderful children in my life: Madeline, Bella and Ashton who would benefit so greatly from the work of the Center.  
**I am serving in their honor."**



We are always humbled by the support of our community, but particularly so during these trying times. As we navigate uncharted waters, we have been fortunate enough to receive assistance from several organizations, including Kennebec Savings Bank, Maine Community Foundation, United Way of Kennebec Valley (UWKV), United Way of Mid Maine (UWMM), and United Way of Tri Valley Area (UWTV).

“...look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” Mr. Rogers

Kennebec Savings Bank generously provided \$450 in pandemic relief through their “Lend a Hand” program. The Maine Community Foundation granted us \$10,000 towards an electronic health record and then allowed flexibility with the funds once the coronavirus situation reached our communities. On top of that, they added another \$5,000 to address upcoming expenses during the pandemic. We are grateful for their incredible kindness and sensitivity to shifting needs.

The UWKV's COVID-19 Fund was instrumental to the Center's ability to reopen successfully amidst the pandemic. They contributed a total of \$17,799 towards a substantial amount of cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, thermometers, and a desk barrier; devices needed to connect children, families and providers for telehealth services; HIPAA protected Zoom licenses so we could offer confidential interventions electronically; and most recently, the



unfunded and unanticipated additional cleaning position at the organization.

The UWMM's Community First Fund donated a total of \$3,300 to our program in Skowhegan. These funds supported the reopening of that program through the purchase of a substantial amount of cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, and thermometers and contributed towards an upcoming renovation to replace partitions with floor-to-ceiling walls to adequately and appropriately separate individual client and staff spaces.

To ensure the health and safety of children receiving services and the staff providing them, the UWTVA supported the costs of a substantial amount of cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, and thermometers for the program in Farmington. These additional dollars relieved strain on an already stretched budget focused on providing as much services to as many children with disabilities and families as possible.

And an extra dose of kindness was gifted to our 32 graduates in August by the UWKV and Greater Augusta Area Back to School Program (GAABSP). Although the graduation celebration looked different than in previous years, we were able to recognize each student in a special way and provide them with tools for success in their milestone next step: public kindergarten! They also gifted additional supplies to our center-based classrooms. Thank you to the UWKV and GAABSP for equipping these kiddos, not only with supplies, but the pride that every kindergartner feels when they put their first backpack on to trek into school.



## Kindness by the Carload!

The holidays came early and *twice* this summer when Nancy Shuman and her partner in crime, Jan, rolled into the Children's Center parking lot. Each time, Nancy was beaming and the vehicle was brimming with much needed items for the Center and our families. Diapers (and diapers and diapers!), wipes, shoes, pants, dresses, shirts, socks, underwear, toiletries... you name it, Nancy brought it!

Donations like these go a long way in meeting the needs of Children's Center kids both during the day – we never have enough socks and underwear! – and in homes. Thanks to Nancy, kids started kindergarten with a new outfit and new shoes and budgets were eased by access to diapers. Sometimes, it's the littlest kindness that can make any season bright. *Thank you, Nancy!*



Alicia, Parker and Michael celebrate a mountain of good!

“The look in my families’ eyes when they saw the items donated by Nancy was priceless. They were extremely grateful. A little boy, who’s being raised by his father who didn’t have extra money to purchase clothing for the start of kindergarten, cried with joy that his son was going to school with clean sneakers and new clothes.” Case Manager



Congratulations to Stacy Shuman and her kid-loving ham of a sidekick, Chevy. As part of the Kennebec Valley Love on a Leash chapter, these two recently reached the milestone of 50 visits with children. Each week, Center kids are just as eager to see Chevy as he is to see them. Thanks to this dynamic duo for all their heartwarming, smile-making work!



Thank you Dr. Martyn and Mrs. Margaret Vickers for gifting these adorable antique dollhouses! It will provide limitless hours of creative play for our kiddos!

# Year End Giving — That's a Wrap!



If you're looking for somewhere to do some good this holiday season, please keep the Children's Center in mind. Each year we serve over 250 children whose clinical needs are often not fully covered by insurance. Gifts like yours help fill those gaps, ensuring kids the recommended number of services for optimal outcomes. Community support also helps meet unanticipated needs at the Center as they arise – a busted boiler, broken occupational therapy swing, etc.

There are many ways to give and do good here at the Center. We hope one feels right for you!

**Give securely online:** And think about making it monthly! Visit [Givebutter.com/childrenscenter\\_thatsawrap](https://givebutter.com/childrenscenter_thatsawrap)

**Gifts of Stock:** Donating appreciated stock is a great way to give to your charities of choice, providing additional tax benefit. And the year-end is a great time to do it. Please contact

us for more information on how to make your gift today! Chelsea Moeller (207) 626-3497; [cmoeller@childrensctr.org](mailto:cmoeller@childrensctr.org).

**Giving Tuesday:** Tuesday, December 1, we'll join with others in celebrating this global day of giving. Visit [Givebutter.com/childrenscenter\\_givingtuesday2020](https://givebutter.com/childrenscenter_givingtuesday2020) to add your kindness to that of others.

**Amazon Wish List:** Our kids love our toys, sometimes into needing new ones! Visit our wish list to see what our classrooms and therapists are hoping for this holiday season in service to these special kids.

**Amazon Smile:** This is an easy way to support the Children's Center while you shop. Simply go to the Amazon Smile page and select "The Children's Center" as your chosen charity.

## Qualified Charitable Distribution: A great way to give!

Did you know that, if you are at least 70½ years old, you can make tax-free charitable donations directly from your IRA? By making what's called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), you can benefit your favorite charities while excluding up to \$100,000 annually from gross income. These gifts, also known as "charitable IRA rollovers," would otherwise be taxable IRA distributions.



# Children's Center Expansion Plans Underway

For a decade, an expansion to the Children's Center's primary facility in Augusta has been looming on the horizon. Persistent waiting lists for both center-based and outpatient services have weighed heavy on our hearts; there are children who need the early interventions we can provide *if only* we had the space.

Five years ago, we started to dream. How much space do we need and what type? What could we offer to our community that we can't currently? What would this expanded Children's Center world look like, from the inside out? How would those pieces support enriched futures for the kids, families and communities we serve?

We've been hard at work answering those questions ever since and, earlier this year, we took important steps toward making this dream a reality for the kids and families who are waiting.

In June of 2020, we engaged WBRC, a Maine-based architectural firm, to help design this future. We've hired Lajoie Bros., a local construction company with decades of experience, to put a budget behind that design and, eventually, to build it.

And, soon, we'll be working with you, our community, to help fund it.

The Children's Center "Champion in Every Child" *capital* campaign is rooted in the same **core belief our services are – that every child is special, has potential and purpose; that every child deserves a chance.** We can help provide that by making room that allows us to say "yes" to every family in need of the crucial early intervention services we offer.

The first five years of a child's life are crucial. In fact, by the time a child turns six, 95% of their neurotransmitter pathways have developed. These pathways determine our ability to move, communicate, express love, joy, frustration, anger and pain – to trust. They enable us to relate to and function in the world around us and they enable kids with special needs to live a life beyond their initial limitations.

We've got five influential years to help these kids prepare for success in everything that follows. It's a small window, in the scheme of a lifetime, with very big implications.

Like most things involving kids, it will take a village to realize this future for the Center. **We look forward to sharing our plans with you in the months ahead and hope, when the time comes, you'll consider joining us in celebrating all our little champions!**



For more information contact Chelsea Moeller at (207) 626-3497 ext 222; [cmoeller@childrensctr.org](mailto:cmoeller@childrensctr.org)



## Holiday Giving Tree Help Needed

The Children's Center has been busy preparing for our Holiday Giving Tree, a collaborative effort to support children and families in need of assistance during the holiday season. The project provides an excellent opportunity to give back in a small way that will make a big difference!

Each year, we send the Holiday Giving Tree Application home with every child at the Center and ask that parents and caregivers needing holiday season support complete it for their child and/or siblings. The application requests information regarding the three most significant needs and wants of each child within a specific budget. Staff use this information to create ornaments with the requested items and specifications along with an identification number that links to the application.

We usually display the decorated tree in our lobby so staff, parents, providers and community supporters can take ornaments and purchase the listed items. **Things are definitely different this year.** In keeping with COVID-19 precautions, visitors are not allowed into the building and our friends, Sam Shain and the Scolded Dogs, were unable to hold their typical concert that raises funds to help us purchase whatever gifts are left on the tree.

**Some things are the same –** we're getting help from our great friends at Darling's Augusta and Cony Student Council and we'll still have ornaments relaying the needs and wants for the kids we serve. **These families still need help to provide a merry holiday season for their children, perhaps this year more than most given the impacts of the pandemic.**

Tags are available starting November 20th; gifts are due



back at the Center by December 11th. **If you or your business want to help, please contact Melodie Rand at (207) 626-3497 to see how you can get involved in the project.**

Every year our hearts are warmed when your kindness rolls in and again when grateful families load their trunks with clothes, gifts and hope that they and their children otherwise may not have had during the holiday season. We can't do it without tremendous, compassionate community partners like you. Thanks for being amazing!

## Contact Us

For more information on Children's Center programs or ways to support our mission, please contact us at:

**Children's Center • 1 Alden Avenue • Augusta, Maine 04330**

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