

HMS Recreation Partners: Building Community Resources



Left: HMS recreation therapists Rich Magnuson and Charlie Harris adjust the Independent Saddle supports for student Amanda Long at Pegasus Riding Academy. Pegasus purchased the saddle as a result of information provided by HMS staff, enabling some students to ride without another person's physical support.



Right: Amanda Long enjoys her first experience riding independently with the use of a special saddle. Recreation therapist Rich Magnuson offers encouragement while a Pegasus staff member leads the horse.

HMS is renowned for our therapeutic recreation program, with both individual and group sessions. Daytime and after-school activities include special events, theater groups, dance classes, song fests, gardening, sports, games and more. Students also participate in a wide variety of community outings.

Through these stimulating experiences, students explore leisure-time options, discovering what activities they enjoy. Staff get to know each youngster's interests and can work with families to utilize community resources. As students mature and approach graduation, they are better armed to make choices for themselves in their adult lives.

Often HMS staff work with

recreation providers to help them respond more effectively to students' needs. The therapeutic horseback riding program at Pegasus Riding Academy in Northeast Philadelphia illustrates this kind of successful partnership. When HMS first brought students to Pegasus, staff had to manually transfer a child from wheelchair to horse—difficult for both staff and rider. HMS provided Pegasus with information on lift systems and their benefits. Pegasus worked to obtain funding and several years ago installed SureHands—the same lift system in HMS's new Harris Hall—providing a safer, smoother and more comfortable transfer.

More recently, HMS occupa-

tional therapist Trish Hamilton read about "Independent Saddle," a support saddle with adjustable and removable head, back and arm rests for individuals with disabilities that can enable some riders to sit upright and ride independently. She shared the information with recreation therapist Rich Magnuson, who, in turn, brought the idea to Pegasus director Barbara Wortheimer.

"It's a real cooperative effort," says Ms. Wortheimer. "Rich came to us with the magazine article about the saddle, we researched it and wrote a grant request to get it funded—it's very expensive. We got the saddle this past year."

Excited about the saddle's

Harris Hall: New Space, New Opportunities



Melea Wise spends some time relaxing in her room with CNA Eva King before heading to after-school activities. Melea recently moved into her shared new room in Harris Hall, designed with a large window, state-of-the-art lift and many other conveniences.

In October, HMS celebrated the grand opening of Harris Hall, our new state-of-the-art student residence and administrative wing. Students have since settled into their rooms. Staff have adapted to the new layout and equipment.

Students are pleased with their new quarters. They've reacted with pleasure to the cheerful color palette of the rooms. They enjoy the large shuttered windows that open to views of their University City neighborhood. They like the tall cabiners that divide each room into semi-private spaces and provide cubbies for their belongings and personal treasures. One older student, who has shared a room with two or three other boys for many years, and who hoped for a private room in the new building, expressed pleasure with his semiprivate space and the way





Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

In 2002, the board revised HMS's strategic plan. Six years later, we celebrated our accomplishments across many fronts. It was time to revisit our goals and establish new priorities. The board is now focusing on three strategic goals that will direct our efforts over the next several years.

The first is to expand student enrollment to capacity in our new building—Harris Hall, calling for aggressive marketing of our residential program. Since we are almost at capacity for Pennsylvania day students, we will reach out to school districts throughout the area and beyond. We plan to clearly demonstrate the value of an HMS education, to pursue other accreditations that can expand our market and to explore additional ways to broaden our programs and leverage our staff's expertise.

Second, we want to maintain a stable financial position with sufficient operating funds to weather difficult periods. Expanding the residential program to full capacity will help. We intend to explore opportunities for additional revenue through a variety of sources, including fundraising efforts that build on our successful capital campaign. We will also strive for the most efficient and cost-effective ways to use our resources for maximum impact.

Our third strategic goal is to manage the changes—internal *and* external—that impact our efforts. HMS has grown more complex. Our students' increased medical fragility requires more staff and more formal procedures for handling day-to-day activities. We value the loving, nurturing culture that HMS represents, while acknowledging the need for a more structured operation. We are working to achieve additional certifications. And we must respond to increased governmental guidelines and demands for accountability in several areas.

Together the board and administration welcome these challenges. Change is unsettling, but also exhilarating. We look forward to sharing our thoughts and plans.

In Memorium Remembering those we'll miss

Demeetris Fife, son of Dynette Leonard of Lansdale and Lawrence Fife of Philadelphia, died at home November 17, 2008 at age 14. Demeetris came to HMS in September 2007 and was quickly known for his beautiful smile and great sense of humor. His teacher, Jennifer McNicholas, describes him as a very hard worker who always put forth his best effort in all activities. He enjoyed a good laugh and liked to make others laugh. He loved his family, and will be missed by all who knew him.

Lorraine Davis, an assistant teacher in Cheryl Leask's classroom died November 22, 2008. Ms. Davis joined the HMS staff in September, but in her brief tenure, she successfully connected with students and staff in varied departments of the school. "We all benefited from her warmth and extending of herself to others," says Christina Coia, HMS Director of Education.

HMS Mourns Lorine E. Vogt, Board Member

HMS lost a long-time friend and supporter with the death of Lorine E. Vogt on October 11, 2008 at age 80. A member of HMS's Board of Trustees, Mrs. Vogt first joined the Women's Committee in 1977, remaining active through the Committee's transition into the Board in 1986. She shared her commitment to HMS with her son, Peter, also a trustee.



Lorine E. Vogt

Mrs. Vogt, who served for many years on the board of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was instrumental in bringing the late Anne d'Harnoncourt to participate in HMS's 125th anniversary art-show opening. For 50 years, she also worked on the committee of the Community Clothes Charity, whose annual "gently used" designer sale benefits local organizations, including a generous donation of \$180,000 to HMS's Capital Campaign in 2006.

Most recently, Mrs. Vogt chaired HMS's Capital Campaign that successfully realized the school's vision of expanding its facilities to better accommodate today's students. The result of her efforts—Harris Hall—HMS's new residential wing, reached completion shortly before her death.

Anne Wilmerding, Board President, praised Mrs. Vogt's commitment to HMS and her hard work on the campaign. "It was a great tribute to her long friendship with Nancy Harris, for whom the building is named, as well as a wonderful show of her devotion to the school. She will be deeply missed by us all."

Nancy Harris cherishes her years of friendship with Mrs. Vogt, describing her warmth, her devotion to family, her loyalty and generosity to friends and causes she supported. "She lived life to the full, with wonderful family and friends. She had a lot of fun."

Mrs. Vogt's family designated HMS as a recipient of donations in her memory.



Becky Bradbeer (left), board member and stalwart supporter of the arts, made it possible for a group of HMS students to attend a performance of "Cinderella" at People's Light and Theater. Here, accompanied by her assistant, she receives a "Thank You" from student representative Ethan Jorgensen, assisted by recreation therapist Rich Magnuson.

Meet Nancy Hale: HMS's New Social Worker

While an undergraduate at Oberlin College, Nancy Hale spent an "Urban Semester" in Philadelphia as a Please Touch Museum intern. Although she grew up in Connecticut, she moved to Philly after graduation and never left.

Ms. Hale completed a Masters degree in Social Work at Bryn Mawr College to begin an over 20-year career working with families of children with special needs. This past September, she expanded the HMS social work staff on a part-time basis. She now works full-time, as Ellen Scharff reduces her hours.

Ms. Hale was previously Director of Temple University's

Family Friends Program that provides in-home respite and companionship for families of children with special needs. Prior to her years at Temple, she worked for 13 years at Children's Seashore House and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, serving families in numerous programs, including the cerebral palsy and cochlear-implant units.

Throughout her career, Ms. Hale knew of HMS and its commitment to helping students achieve the greatest possible independence. She likes working as part of an interdisciplinary team where all team members share a genuine concern for the families' and chil-

dren's emotional wellbeing. She hopes to grow HMS's social work program by developing a graduate-student intern program.

"It's wonderful to be working with such a strong and highly skilled staff. It is so apparent that at HMS there is a high level of caring and commitment to children with special needs," she says.

Ms. Hale is the mother of two children—Emily, age 20 and Christopher, age 15. She and her partner, Ellie Armsby, live in Germantown, where Ms. Hale is an avid gardener and enjoys playing the violin with the Lower Merion Symphony and singing in her church choir.



Nancy Hale, HMS Social Worker

Holiday Show 2008 Featured Music from Around the Globe

Clockwise from top left:

"Mulan" and fabulous drumming with Room 1—From left, Shanea Howell gets help from one-on-one Annie Wiggins Coleman, Andrew Dennin drums with OT Janice Barbour and Tom Porreca gets a hand from ST Marianne Gellert-Jones.

Jake Powers hits a switch to sing his part in "The Mexican Hat Dance," with encouragement from his teacher, Emily Gureckis.

Christian Baus looks intently at his teacher, Kristin McKeown, during his musical contribution to Room 3's "The Twelve Days Back at School," while CNA Terri Solomon offers her support.

Shawn Lee gets a "hello" pat from Annamarie DiLauro, his friend Frankie's mother, as he drums in Room 23's performance, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."





Parents Corner

By Frank and Janie Jorgensen

Over 14 years ago we visited 12 special-needs schools in 8 states to find the best fit for our son Ethan. Ethan has been a 7-day residential student at HMS for 12 years. Our home in rural West Virginia is 8 hours away.

The HMS after-school staff—nurses, CNAs, recreational therapists, cooks—are great! An unexpected bonus is the after-school and weekend recreational program that includes fun and stimulating activities—concerts (Neil Young recently), sporting events (Eagles and Phillies games), theater performances, musicals, New Jersey Aquarium, bowling, movies, dining out, horseback riding, swimming, music, wheelchair dancing, art projects, games, shopping and more.

We visit Ethan some weekends and stay at HMS or area hotels. We participate in these activities and value the wonderful HMS staff. Our family get the opportunity to visit great cultural and tourism events in Philadelphia.

We notice when Ethan is home in West Virginia, he gets bored if we do not provide “field trips” and fun activities! When we return Ethan to HMS, it warms our heart to see the joy he and his fellow students—and staff—have when they see each other again.

The new Harris Hall is unbelievable! The large, functional spaces, great views, perfect bedrooms, spacious bathrooms, ceiling lifts and wonderful architecture offer the perfect “home away from home.”

Important to us when we are not with Ethan, is that he has dedicated HMS staff who become his “parents, grandparents, friends” to care for him and bring him joy, plus, fellow students who become his “brothers and sisters.”

HMS staff respect parents. There is an open two-way sharing of their vast experience with many children and listening to our experience as Ethan’s parents. We can call staff 24 hours a day, and we know they will call us promptly if anything needs to be shared. We totally trust them.

HMS Staff Volunteer South of the Border

Two HMS physical therapists volunteered time last summer to work with children in Latin America. Mary DeLuca spent a week at Camp Hope, a school and daycare program in Quito, Ecuador that serves many children with disabilities. She describes the program as the “HMS of Ecuador” because of its caring, dedicated staff.

Ms. DeLuca paid her own way as part of a team through Global Volunteers. A senior PT, Ms. DeLuca used her expertise to assist the physical therapist on staff, whose time is stretched among 70 youngsters. She adjusted wheelchairs to accommodate children’s growth, demonstrated chair features, provided PT treatments and brainstormed with the staff, who welcomed her ideas. She also delivered body jackets and a walker not being used at HMS.

The visit fulfilled a dream, and Ms. DeLuca would love to return. “People were so appreciative that we were there, that we would give up vacation time to volunteer,” she says. “It was a great experience.”

Fallon Shriner, who joined HMS’s PT staff in July, worked for four weeks in Guyana, the only English speaking country in South America. One of two students selected as part of a special course offered by Misericordia University, Ms. Shriner worked in the stroke unit of a nursing home, the ICU at a public hospital and at the Ptomley Rehab Center for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities.

Like Ms. DeLuca, she found local staff friendly and welcoming and patients appreciative of her attention and assistance. She worked with individual patients and shared PT techniques with staff. She says, “I was helping, but the impact was more on me rather than how much I was able to contribute...It was so humbling. The people there are so happy for what they have—and they have so much less than we do.”



Mary DeLuca, HMS senior physical therapist, works with one of the children at Camp Hope in Quito, Ecuador, where she volunteered for a week last summer.

HMS Recreation Partners

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potential, Mr. Magnuson emphasizes how the Pegasus program is growing in its ability to serve people with severe disabilities. “It’s so important for our students to find out what’s out there for them and for the community to learn about our students and how to accommodate them,” he says.

Because horseback riding is a time-intensive activity—half a day for three youngsters—it has been offered only to residential students. HMS is exploring ways to expand the program to other students nearing graduation. But the goal this activity represents, to promote positive exchanges between HMS and community recreational resources, holds true for many of the other activities that HMS students experience.

As Ms. Wortheimer says, “We have an absolutely wonderful relationship with HMS. They have a great interest in the kids and what their needs are. I’m always willing to learn and share—we look to always improving the experience here.”

Harris Hall

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the cabinets create a cozy sleeping area.

Funding Harris Hall and making it operational has been a major effort. But expansion also presents opportunities. It can accommodate 24 students, approximately one third more than are presently enrolled. HMS will actively market the new facility to school districts in the greater Delaware Valley and beyond. As part of this effort, two open houses this spring will introduce professionals to the new facility and the strengths of HMS’s residential program.

As more students enroll and move into Harris Hall, HMS will face the challenges of growth. Opening Harris Hall marks an exciting time for students and staff alike.



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HMS School is nonsectarian, admitting children from any locality without regard to race, religion, gender or country of origin.

The Mission of HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy is to educate, nurture, and care for children and youth with motor impairments who may also have other disabilities resulting from brain injury with the goal of assisting each individual in achieving his or her maximum potential. HMS School aims to facilitate independence and improve the quality of life for its students in a safe and secure environment so they can lead fulfilling, stimulating lives in their present and future environments.

