



hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy | Founded 1882 | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | FALL 2010

ESY: More Than Extending the School Year



Kristin McKeown, Classroom Teacher, and Kyle DeLeon, tag-team partners, flex their muscles in preparation for a wrestling match, a physical recreation activity devised during ESY by HMS Nurse Colleen Kennedy, who knows how much Kyle loves listening to wrestling music on his communication device.

When your mind is on summer vacation, Extended School Year—ESY—might not sound so enticing. But HMS staff promote skills development in an atmosphere that feels more like summer camp. Youngsters have a great time while working toward ESY goals.

ESY accommodates HMS students as well as youngsters from public schools and other settings who return to their home districts in the fall. And, for the first portion of ESY, HMS offers residential services.

This past summer, ESY included five children, ages seven to 17, not enrolled at HMS. Three partici-

pated in the residential program. Staff helped each student to settle in quickly, and in a short time, to make significant strides.

For Heath Goldberg, age 14, who uses a power wheelchair, Assistive Technologist Dawn Rainey says, “We switched him to a head array, swapped out his electronics and provided driver training that helped him hold his head up with better posture. We gave his team at home supportive documentation to submit to insurance, with recommendations for the components he would need and how to set up everything.”

Heath’s mother, Mindy Goldberg,

says, “He had just switched to power mobility a year ago, and we knew his access wasn’t right...that HMS has access to a variety of equipment to try out...that they could refine things so Heath could really work on his goals once he goes back to school...We have finally obtained all the equipment that HMS recommended for his chair, and we couldn’t be happier with how things went.”

“Our staff are natural teachers and collaborators with tremendous expertise,” says Christina Coia, HMS Director of Education. “We may be limited in how many

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Symposium Tackles Special Education Challenges



Keynote speaker Ron Cowell, President, Education Policy and Research Center

HMS’s fall symposium, “Meeting the Needs of the Student with Complex Disabilities,” attracted a diverse group of special education professionals from throughout Pennsylvania and beyond. Discussion was lively throughout the day as speakers and panelists presented a range of perspectives on how best to serve these youngsters.

Ron Cowell, President, Education Policy and Research Center and former state representative, focused his keynote remarks on the political and financial climate in Pennsylvania, particularly the likely impact of zero tax increases. He urged participants to help legislators, educators and community members understand and respond to the needs of children with complex conditions.

Janet Sloand, Executive Director of PaTTAN (PA Training and Technical Assistance Network) in King of Prussia, where the

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Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

The November elections confirm the likelihood of additional state budget cuts. If HMS and other Approved Private Schools (APS) throughout Pennsylvania can maintain our current funding levels over the next few years, we'll be doing well. Now more than ever, it is so important to educate our communities and our policy and decision makers about the needs and potential of our students.

Those youngsters with the most complex conditions, the most medically fragile, are not the first students that the public think about when they hear "special education." We need to help others understand these youngsters' capacity for learning, for achievement and for the joy that comes from mastering new skills and experiences. Whether in an APS or in a public school setting, students with this array of disabilities require coordinated intervention to maximize their successes and level of inclusion in their families and communities.

APS representatives strategize together on how to voice our students' needs. The Alliance of Approved Private Schools will soon launch a new website to better educate the public about our in-school services and our resources through outreach to public schools and other community-based programs, whether to assist in initiating a referral to an APS program or to provide consultation within the public school classroom.

We also met recently in Harrisburg—as we do on a regular basis—with representatives from the Bureau of Special Education and other public figures to continue building relationships and finding ways to influence decision making on behalf of our students. At HMS, we invite area legislators at the local and state level to visit the school and to see our programs in action. They depart with a deeper appreciation for our students' needs and accomplishments.

Please join us in educating your communities and your representatives. At HMS's recent professional symposium, Ron Cowell, President of the Education Policy and Research Center, exhorted that as good citizens we all have an obligation to bring our children's needs to the forefront.

Graduation 2010: An Emotional Good-Bye



This year's senior class may have been small, but emotions were intense as HMS said goodbye to Christian Baus and Joseph Bodick, two young men who transitioned from childhood to adulthood over their many years at the school. As always, graduation was personal, incorporating videos of each graduate's development and of their senior music and dance project, affectionate reflections from their teacher and others who worked closely with them, their own prerecorded farewell remarks and of course, presentation of awards and diplomas.

Christian Baus (top photo) received his diploma from Scott Engler, Special Education Supervisor for Southern Lehigh School District. Joseph Bodick's presentation included "Wheel of Fortune," his favorite TV show. His teacher, Kristen McKeown, holds the letter board while Director of Education Christina Coia applauds.

Following graduation, Chris and Joe shared a celebratory lunch with invited guests and in the evening, joined schoolmates and alumni for a fabulous formal dance.

Dramatic Flair: Theater Arts Flourish at HMS



Michael Kelly's face reflects his role as the "Happy Dream" during his group's performance of Tale of the Dream Catcher, a native-American story that also features spiders like Assistant Teacher Jonathan Esposito.

Over the past six years, theater has taken an increasing role alongside music, art and dance to provide opportunity for students' self-expression through the arts. Younger students participated in the long-standing theater collaboration

with Germantown Friends School (GFS), but there was no similar program for older teens.

Recreation Therapist Rich Magnuson initiated a partnership with Walnut Street Theatre's (WST) education outreach staff

who performed at HMS for many years. They wanted to engage students in hands-on theater activities that over time would explore expressing emotions, taking on roles, developing story lines, using props, rehearsing and ultimately performing. No one knew quite what to expect.

The new program, one small after-school group meeting weekly with a WST teaching artist, had such a positive impact it has expanded to involve 44 students—everyone who is not part of the GFS collaboration—small groups working each week with WST artists or interns and HMS staff.

Activities vary based on students' abilities, but regardless of each group's

process, everyone participates in a culminating performance. Mr. Magnuson says, "Every child should have that exhilarating experience of stage fright and excitement. Now we have more opportunities for them to do that."

Many students attended a live performance last year at either WST or People's Light and Theatre, and talked with cast members after the show. Staff then incorporated this experience into HMS theater activities.

Susan Nicodemus Quinn, WST Director of Education, says, "It's been a real partnership over the years—taking the best of the knowledge of all the people involved and doing what's best for the kids... It's had a profound impact on us at WST, opening our eyes to what children who have disabilities can do."

Even prior to the formal program, HMS teachers have used elements of theater in the classroom—props, costumes and theatrics—to motivate students and to teach skills. During ESY 2010, staff selected four popular movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean* to develop a weekly theme for fun learning activities that culminated on Fridays when students watched the movie and used language, costumes and props that they created throughout the week. In theater arts, students can experience these teaching tools in a different way.

Ms. Quinn describes a student who struggles to show movement with his face and hands. "When we do our imagination exercises, you can see his engagement level shift," she says. "At the end of one exercise, he clapped his hands. It was a wonderful moment."

HMS Changes Corporate Name

HMS, founded in 1882 as Home of the Merciful Saviour for Crippled Children, has been doing business as HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy since 1987. The state has now approved our request to officially change the "dba" name to our corporate name.



GO PHILLIES!

Ethan Jorgenson enjoys a session in the new art room with instructor Eiko Fan as they create a life-size figure of Jayson Werth, Phillies outfielder.



Parents Corner

By Janine Blythe

Summer is a time for fun and relaxation, and though we may dread those long hot days with seemingly nothing to do, we do enjoy the ease in routine that dictates the rest of the year. As a parent of an HMS student I know how hard it is to balance summer fun with working towards our children's goals. So it is a relief to be part of an established ESY program that maintains the goals and structure of the past nine months while presenting them in a fresh and more carefree manner.

The change from school year to ESY is palpable. The atmosphere has a lightheartedness found only in the summer, and in the blink of an eye HMS shifts from school to "camp." This creates an environment where our children have the much deserved fun of summer coupled with commitment to their goals, growth, and overall well being.

The same changes that allow for a camp-like feel during ESY may bring some variations within your child's routine. However, in my experience, these changes have only had a positive impact on my daughter Shannon. For example, Shannon had the opportunity to work with Assistant Teacher Kristi this summer. Kristi had a profound impact on Shannon's focus and motivation which helped elicit Shannon's 100% positive response to story and question sessions. And the addition of other students into the class affects the dynamic, encouraging children to delve into new and exciting areas. Shannon has seen how the "big kids" incorporate their communication devices and drive their power chairs with such proficiency, and it has impressed upon her the need to do the same. Not to mention the fun that comes with new friends and faces!

There can be no greater testament to the success of the ESY program than my daughter happy and excited to wake up and go every day.

ESY: More Than Extending the School Year

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students we enroll, but part of our mission is to share that expertise and affect a positive change in the lives of youngsters, including those not enrolled at HMS."

HMS first evaluated Jeremy Black, age 17, for outreach services in his public school setting at his district's request. Prior to the start of ESY, HMS staff conducted a check-up evaluation to plan for Jeremy's arrival. While at HMS, he received intensive support for his communication device, computer access and ability to drive his power chair.

Ms. Rainey says, "A big accomplishment was getting Jeremy more independent on the computer. He already had a fiber optic switch, but his occupational therapist set him up with hardware and software to use it more effectively. Once set up, he can now run a program, like a computer game, by himself."

Nicholas Black, Jeremy's father, says that Jeremy had an incredible experience at HMS and was motivated to work harder and more effectively than previously. "Jeremy can only move his eyes and make a small thumb movement—he's been locked in all his life...He's now initiating conversations, using prepro-

grammed buttons on his screen that he never did before." Mr. Black also speaks highly of the staff's skills and spirit. "They went out of their way to say 'Hi' to Jeremy, good to see you here." Jeremy felt like a 'somebody' at HMS."

Attending a program with other students using technology can be a big motivator, even during the short span of ESY. Jeremy worked especially hard when around a particular HMS student, and staff built on that relationship.

Teachers and therapists prepare carefully to promote ESY achievement. One adolescent, who lives at a distance, made considerable progress in only 11 days as a residential student at HMS. Based on her pre-ESY evaluation, staff had already arranged loans of power chair and communication device equipment. They set her up with a functional head-access system and used every opportunity for her to practice driving, including the school's July 4th parade.

Offering a residential program makes ESY a possibility for youngsters who live too far to commute. Kristin Stauffer, a seven-year-old from Birdsboro, PA, was scheduled to enroll at HMS in September when she came to ESY as a 5-day

residential student. Staff worked toward her ESY goals—evaluating her skills in depth for fall classroom placement and getting her acquainted with the school. As a secondary benefit, Kristin became comfortable with the residential program.

Mary Anne Bayne, Director of Nursing Services, says that the residential staff helped Kristin to adjust to this major life change, encouraging her to bring photos, her own quilt and a "lovey" toy from home. She got used to living at HMS for a few days and returning home for weekends.

"She was like a pro when she returned in September," says Ms. Bayne. "She zoomed into the residence in her power chair like, 'I'm back!' Kristin met her ESY goals, and in addition, gained confidence, trust in the staff and readiness for the fall."



HMS School News Fall 2010

A publication of HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy, dedicated to reporting about student life, school programs and important events.

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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.

Symposium Tackles Special Education Challenges

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symposium was held, described the Bureau of Special Education's increasing focus on the population of youngsters with the most complex needs—identifying them and accepting responsibility for engaging them actively in appropriate education programs. During lunch, Annie Steinberg, a child psychiatrist, advocated for child centered decision making—how can we reach each child, making choices that respect all the components of his world—family, school and culture.

Three panels of parents, educators, administrators and medical specialists focused on different education challenges that also prompted audience members to share their perspectives: working models that bring services to the student in a variety of school settings; collaborating to keep the medically fragile child in school; and school districts' efforts to find an appropriate placement for the child with complex special needs while balancing parents' expectations with funding and physical constraints, differing philosophical viewpoints and other factors.

