

# the Achiever

**AT** Fourteen months old, Ivette's son Devin displayed all the classic signs of a child with autism. He had sensory issues, speech and developmental delays and engaged in repetitive self-stimulating behaviors. For Ivette and her husband Neil, realizing that their only child wasn't developing normally was heartbreaking.

While it took a while for some family members to accept that Devin had significant challenges, Ivette knew how important early intervention was to her son's future development. "We were running out of time" she said. After an extensive search, Ivette was introduced to the Achievement Centers for Children through a Help Me Grow Service Coordinator and Devin began receiving speech and occupational therapy shortly thereafter at age three.



Achievement Centers for **Children**

## Devin's Path to Success

However, another year went by before Devin finally received a formal diagnosis of moderate autism at the age of four. And even though Devin was working with the Achievement Centers' therapists, his mother said that she wasn't prepared for the overwhelming feeling and confusion that came with her son's diagnosis. "All of a sudden, there was all this paperwork and a ton of decisions to make. I felt like there were twenty different highways to take, but I had no idea which direction to go to get to my destination."

Fortunately, Ivette soon found out that she wasn't alone on this journey. An Achievement Centers' Family Support social worker, Cindy Dooley, was ready to step in and help Devin and his family find their path to success. "I call Cindy my GPS" said Ivette. "She told me about this program called ACCent and said that she would be there in whatever way I needed her. "

ACCent, which stands for Advocacy, Community resources, Coordination of services, Emotional support, Needs assessment and Teamwork, is a free service offered to parents of children currently receiving therapy services through the Achievement Centers. Designed to help families cope with the emotional aspect of caring for a child with special needs, ACCent staff are trained to help parents deal with difficult family issues, discover little-known resources and also educate them on how to maximize therapeutic benefits at home and in the community.

Like a lot of parents, Cindy said that Ivette didn't initially think that she needed ACCent's services. "I told her

I didn't have any issues!" Ivette said. But as their relationship developed, she started confiding in Cindy more and realized that the ACCent program was an integral part of her son's treatment plan. "The Achievement Centers' staff functions as a family" she said. "They're so interconnected and dedicated to reaching our common goal: making sure that Devin will grow up to be a person that can function in society."

Ivette feels more competent as a parent and she adds that "hearing someone say 'Let's make sense of this together' made me realize that I had someone taking care of not just Devin, but me too."

Ivette is ecstatic about the changes she's seen in Devin since he began coming to the Achievement Centers. "He's more articulate and loves to tell me about his day. And he has a wonderful imagination that didn't use to be there!"

Ivette says that she knows the Achievement Centers' staff are professionals, but she also considers them friends. Looking back at how far her son has come, she now has a sense of peace and confidence she didn't have before. "Devin is like a flower that

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*Ivette . . . knows the Achievement Centers' staff are professionals, but she also considers them friends.*

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didn't open when all the other little flowers did. At first, it was hard for me to accept, but now I realize that he's just as beautiful as all the rest of the flowers. He's just blooming at his own pace."

To hear more from Ivette and Cindy about ACCent, visit our website at [www.achievementcenters.org](http://www.achievementcenters.org).

## Message from the Executive Director

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA



### ACCREDITATION and LICENSURE

The Achievement Centers for Children's programs and services are licensed and accredited by many entities, including:

American Camp Association  
Certified Medicaid Provider  
Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities  
Cuyahoga County Early Intervention Collaborative member  
North American Riding for the Handicapped Association  
Ohio Department of Education  
Ohio Department of Health  
Ohio Department of Human Services  
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities  
Ohio Department of Mental Health  
United Way Agency  
Numerous agreements with area universities and colleges

For information and referrals  
216-292-9700

Visit our website  
[www.achievementcenters.org](http://www.achievementcenters.org)

If you would like to be removed from the Achiever mailing list please notify us in writing at: Achievement Centers for Children, 4255 Northfield Road, Highland Hills, OH 44128.

### SEASONS GREETINGS!

The upcoming year of 2010 marks the Achievement Centers for Children's 70th Anniversary! Over the past seven decades, we have blossomed into a thriving organization that serves as a place of hope and achievement for thousands of children with disabilities and their families every year.

Our mission has been a constant, but the services have evolved in response to the needs of the community and of children with disabilities and their families. Over the years, some of the specific disabilities have changed. But the Achievement Centers' strong commitment to children with disabilities and their families has been unwavering. Our dedicated staff, board members and volunteers deliver on this commitment every day by working together to provide the highest quality services to our families. And of course, I must acknowledge the individual donors, corporations and foundations that play an integral part in OUR success. Without YOUR commitment to us and generous financial support, many of the children we serve would not have access to services that are such a vital component of THEIR success.

Recently at our Sparkle, Shimmer & Shine event, our largest fundraiser of the year, the Achievement Centers for Children was overwhelmed with the depth of caring and generosity that came from our community, especially given this economy. Our community, both individuals and corporations, exceeded our goal, contributing a remarkable \$437,000 very needed dollars to our programs for children with disabilities and their families. A young man who has received numerous services at the Achievement Centers since he was six months old and who has significant mobility impairments, and his mom, were guests at our event. They said in a note afterwards—"Steve and I were as proud of our community as we have ever been. Football, baseball and basketball players are often portrayed as being heroes and role models. But the men and women who were at Sparkle on Saturday, and all your supporters, are the true unsung heroes to families like ours and to young people like Steve." . . . It needs to be added that Steve will be graduating from college, summa cum laude, and he and his family credit the services he received at the Achievement Centers for Children as a big factor in his successes.

Yes, it was truly an amazing evening because of our amazing community. So as we look forward to the next 70 years, the Achievement Centers for Children is confident that we will continue to evolve and grow because of support such as this. We have thousands and thousands of success stories throughout the past 70 years. We also know that we have very hard work ahead of us in order to continue to create thousands of new success stories. So we express our heartfelt gratitude for those who paved the way for us in our past, for those who continue to support us in our present, as well as for those future leaders and supporters who will carry on our mission for generations to come.

*"A man (woman) never stood so tall as when he (she) stooped to help a child."*

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia W. Nobili".

Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA  
Executive Director

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216-292-9700

**WESTLAKE**  
24211 Center Ridge Road  
Westlake, OH 44145  
440-250-2520

**CAMP CHEERFUL**  
15000 Cheerful Lane  
Strongsville, OH 44136  
440-238-6200

## ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS AND WEB 2.0!

The Achievement Centers is proud to announce our latest addition: a new website! Thanks to a generous grant from the William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neil Foundation, our website [www.achievementcenters.org](http://www.achievementcenters.org) has a new look and increased functionality! Visitors will see a host of new changes such as new video testimonials and pictures, an improved layout, links to our other social media sites and more. Also, you can now sign up to receive *The Achiever* and other communication from us electronically. Check it out and let us know what you think.

## Looking for Quality Child Care?

The Achievement Centers' Highland Hills Child Development Center has openings! We offer a full-day program for children with and without special needs. Our award-winning preschool boasts a low student-to-teacher ratio, highly-qualified staff and state-of-the-art playgrounds and equipment. Experience the Achievement Centers difference, as your child enjoys a challenging, age-appropriate curriculum in a diverse setting. Various forms of payment are accepted. Contact Donna McClure, Manager of Education at 216-292-9700 ext 289 for more information.



## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful relies on many hands to keep the Therapeutic Horseback Riding program running smoothly. But for several years, two very special helpers, twins Laura and Peggy, have given our horses, riders, staff and volunteers an extra boost. The twins, who have developmental disabilities and are now in their late 20's, began their work at Camp Cheerful as volunteers with their mother Daphne. They have always enjoyed



*Twins Peggy (left) and Laura (right) take a moment out of their duties as caregivers for Camp Cheerful's Therapeutic Riding Program to enjoy riding the horses they care for on a daily basis.*

coming to camp to help with the horses, and over time, they transitioned into becoming employees, as part of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Day Array employment program for adults with disabilities.

They perform a wide range of tasks at the barn, including feeding and grooming the horses, and cleaning the stalls and barn areas, which is a big help to the therapy riding staff. However, they also give the horses a level of attention that they might not otherwise receive. Tim Fox, Director of Recreation Services said that "this is really a win-win situation for everyone. Laura and Peggy receive training and services which are consistent with our mission, while the staff and horses benefit from having the extra help around the barn."

Through their work in the barn with the horses, Peggy and Laura are not only improving functionally, but they are learning skills that can carry over into their everyday lives and help them become more independent. Best of all, they're making friends. Their supervisor, Michelle Bailey, says that they bring sunshine to the barn, and that the volunteers also benefit from having the girls around. "They just bring out the happy in people!"





## DO YOU HAVE A SECRET?

As the financial demands of providing services for children with disabilities and their families continue to grow, we encourage our friends and supporters to consider making a lasting gift to ensure the long term financial security of the Achievement Centers for Children. An estate gift will help make sure that the important work of providing critical services to the children and families we serve will continue for years to come.

Have you made plans for a gift to the Achievement Centers in your will, trust or other document, but have not yet notified us? If so, please share your secret! We encourage you to let us know of this arrangement so that we may count you as an Oak Tree Society member so that your gift can be acknowledged and we can thank you in a way that is meaningful and appropriate for you. We are available to answer your questions about Oak Tree Society membership or to consult with your financial advisors to assist in making your legacy gift to support the Achievement Centers.

You can become a member of the Oak Tree Society just by including us in your will or estate plan. Adding a codicil to your will naming the Achievement Centers for Children as the beneficiary of a specific dollar amount or as a residual beneficiary is one of the simplest ways to make a planned gift.

If you have questions, need additional information or would like to discuss your gift intentions, please call Deborah Osgood at 216-292-9700 or contact her via e-mail at [Deborah.Osgood@achievementctrs.org](mailto:Deborah.Osgood@achievementctrs.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GIVE

As the holiday season approaches, people are often looking to help those in need through year-end giving. Many prefer to give directly to organizations such as the Achievement Centers for Children, in the form of a check, an online cash donation or stock gift. However, there are also other ways that you can make a difference and support the Achievement Centers:

- Host a holiday party or sponsor a dress-down day at work. Be sure to see if your company will provide a matching gift for any money raised through fundraisers and payroll deductions. You can double your gift and provide twice the holiday cheer!
- Make an in-kind donation of books, camp equipment, arts & crafts supplies or items from our wish list that can be distributed to families or classrooms. Check out [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org) to see what's on our wish list.
- Shop for a cause! Many sites, such as [GiveBackAmerica.org](http://GiveBackAmerica.org) will donate a commission to participating organizations, such as the Achievement Centers for Children, when you complete your online purchases with one of more than 300 participating online retailers through their shopping portals. It's easy, and best of all, it's a FREE way for you to show your support!

To see a complete list of all the ways you can make a difference at the Achievement Centers, visit our website at [www.achievementcenters.org/donate](http://www.achievementcenters.org/donate). Remember, most charitable donations to 501(c)3 organizations are tax-deductible. Looking for an idea on how to get your friends, family and colleagues involved? Contact our Development Department at 216-292-9700 today!



# Achievement Centers for Children Special Events



## FALL FESTIVAL

An enchanted, crisp autumn night provided the perfect setting for a fabulous Fall Festival on October 24 at Camp Cheerful. Fall Festival, which benefits the Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful raised over \$53,000 for recreational programs at camp. Members from the Strongsville community and beyond came out to show their support. Fall Festival patrons enjoyed an evening full of festivities, including a reverse raffle, silent auction, live entertainment by Time Trax and a delicious dinner prepared by Chef O and his culinary students from the Polaris Career Center. A big thanks to our committee members, volunteers and generous support from our Presenting Sponsors Baird, Catan Fashions and Brunswick Auto Mart for making Fall Festival a night to remember!



*A Most Excellent Race provided a fun-filled day for families and friends alike. Teams like 'Kevin's Crew' (shown above), came out to show their support for our Camp Cheerful campers and the Achievement Centers for Children.*



## *A Most Excellent Race Finishes Strong*

The Achievement Centers' 19th Annual A Most Excellent Race finished strong last June, raising an amazing \$96,700 to benefit the Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful, Ohio's first barrier-free camp for children and adults with disabilities. Featuring 10k and 5k competitive races and a family fun walk, A Most Excellent Race brought over 800 people together for a great cause. The day was kicked off by the Camp Cheerful Classic, a 100-yard dash featuring campers from Camp Cheerful. After a spirited race, participants had a chance to enjoy some family friendly fun including face painting, drum circles and balloon creations from Flower Clown! Our sincere thanks to our major sponsors: Elk & Elk, Majestic Steel USA and Edgepark Medical Supplies. Mark your calendar for next year's race on June 27, 2010 at Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights.

## *Blue Chip/Blue Tee Golf Outing*

On July 27, some of Cleveland's best golfers paired up for a day of golf and charitable giving at the 25th Annual Blue Chip Blue Tee golf outing at the Kirtland Country Club in Willoughby. Participants enjoyed a competitive round of golf while generating much-needed financial resources for the children with disabilities and families served by the Achievement Centers every year. The event, co-chaired by

David Dunstan of Western Reserve Partners and Hank Centa of Chase Bank, also featured a silent auction and raised more than \$84,000 for the Achievement Centers' programs and services. We also send our thanks to Lexus Champions for Charity for their continued support!



## CAMP CHEERFUL HORSE EXPO & BOOT GIVEAWAY

**O**n October 1, the Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful hosted the third Annual Horse Expo & Boot Giveaway. More than 50 participants in the Therapeutic Riding program showcased their skills in front of a delighted audience of friends, family and supporters. An evening full of activities, the Horse Expo featured face painting, a riding demonstration from the Cleveland Metro Parks Mounted Unit, rides on Sparky the Miniature Horse and more!



To top off a day of fun, riders were presented with a free pair of new Timberland riding boots, courtesy of Timberland Boot Company and Lucky Brand Shoes. In addition to providing over 50 pairs of boots and thermal socks to the riders, including children and adults with special needs, Timberland/Lucky Brand Shoes employees also pitched in to clean up the barn, plant flowers and do boot fittings for riders as part of their national Day of Caring. Thanks for a job well done!



*Therapeutic rider Zachary (shown above), displays his new riding techniques during the third Annual Camp Cheerful Horse Expo & Boot Giveaway.*

**T**he Achievement Centers' Executive Director, Patricia Nobili, accepts the EP Maxwell J. Schleifer Distinguished Service Award from Ken Vinikoff (pictured on left) of MassMutual Financial Group during Lake County Captain's Disability Awareness Night in honor of the Achievement Centers' advocacy for people with disabilities and special needs.

## Volunteer Groups Keep Camp Cheerful a Cheery Place!

**T**he Achievement Centers' Camp Cheerful has been a favorite destination for corporate and civic groups looking to give back to the community. Throughout the year, we welcome scores of volunteers for days of service, which provide the Camp Cheerful staff with help to prepare camp for the summer and restore its beauty at the end of camp season. This past spring, among other groups, employees from Intuit Real Estate Solutions and Turner Construction brought much-needed cheer to camp.

Intuit brought out seventeen staff members who dug right in and assisted with cleaning, weeding, cutting grass and they even lent a hand to our Therapeutic Riding classes. Turner Construction brought their building expertise to camp as they repaired storage sheds and replaced doors on our cabins.

Through the hard work of volunteer groups such as Intuit, Turner Construction and many others, the Achievement Centers is able to cut costs on labor expenses around the agency. Thanks for lending a helping hand!



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

**I**s Therapeutic Riding giving your child never seen before confidence and strength? Perhaps you're an adult fondly reliving your memories of your days at Camp Cheerful. Or, maybe you're a Therapeutic Riding volunteer that has witnessed the joy a child experiences as they reach a new goal. The Achievement Centers wants to hear your story! The more than 3,900 children with disabilities and their families we serve every year are our greatest advertisement! We're looking for current and former clients, their family members or volunteers to participate in our new blog and give testimonials that can be used for our newsletter, website and more. If you'd like more information on how you and your family can participate, please contact Cariss Turner, Marketing Coordinator at 216-292-9700 ext 284. You can also check out our current blog at [www.achievementcenters.wordpress.com](http://www.achievementcenters.wordpress.com).



*Camp Cheerful's Main Hall (at left) provides a picturesque camp setting as one of the facilities available for private rental through the Achievement Centers.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- You can host your next corporate retreat, holiday party, shower or wedding at Camp Cheerful. Camp's main hall, Key Community Center or High Ropes Tango Tower are all available for private rental. We welcome individuals, community groups, schools and corporations. Additionally, your rental fees help support the many recreational programs and services we provide to children with special needs and their families. For more information, please call 216-292-9700 or visit [www.achievementcenters.org](http://www.achievementcenters.org)
- The Achievement Centers for Children was recognized as a World Class Customer Service Award Honoree by Smart Business Cleveland Magazine in June. One of only 30 organizations to receive this prestigious designation, the Achievement Centers was chosen for our commitment to hiring passionate employees, serving as an advocate for our families and maintaining a strong corporate culture of high expectations and going the extra mile for clients. We are proud to have won this distinction!
- Achieve Consulting provides both consultation to teachers and school professionals working with students with autism and behavioral challenges. The consultants will work with your child's school district to address specific needs such as conducting a functional behavioral assessment, developing a behavioral intervention plan and intervention materials individualized for the student, making classroom environment recommendations, curriculum modifications, strategies for enhancing social skills interactions and more. Our consultants also conduct trainings to educate teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals working in public school districts with students Pre-K–high school diagnosed with autism. For information about Achieve Consulting, please contact Mary Beth Koss at 216-292-9700 ext 243.
- Adapted Aquatics is now offered five days a week at our Westlake site! Fun, yet challenging, Adapted Aquatics (*pictured at left*) is a great option for children with neurological, developmental, and cognitive challenges and teaches them independent swimming skills and water safety. The next session begins January 4, 2010. Call 440-250-2520 for more information.
- Our annual report has gone digital! "The Stories That Connect Us", our 2008–2009 annual report is now available online. This year's report highlights just a few of our generous donors and the people who directly benefit from their charitable giving. After reading their stories, get another glimpse of their stories through video on our YouTube channel ([www.YouTube.com/AchievementCenters](http://www.YouTube.com/AchievementCenters)).

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## ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN Services by Location

*The Achievement Centers provides services through a variety of locations, including schools, child care centers, homes, and at the Achievement Centers' three facilities. The following is a list of services according to location.*

### Home and Community Services (offices at the Highland Hills and Westlake locations)

ACCENT, Early childhood mental health counseling, early intervention program for children ages birth to three with special needs; Help Me Grow Service coordination for children with special needs and at-risk, ages birth to three; child care Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

### East/Highland Hills

Child Development Center preschool for children with and without special needs; preschool for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; kindergarten through fourth grade classroom for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; social work and counseling; physical, speech and occupational therapy; Champ Camp and Sensational Day Program (summers only); parent support groups

### West/Westlake

Preschool for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; kindergarten through fourth grade classroom for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/PDD-NOS; social work and counseling; physical, speech and occupational therapy; Champ Camp and Sensational Day Program (summers only); Adapted Aquatics; parent support groups

### South/Strongsville/Camp Cheerful

Social work and counseling; recreational activities; residential and day camp programs; Sensational Day Program; therapeutic riding; High Ropes Challenge Course

## About the ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN

Founded in 1940 as the Society for Crippled Children, the Achievement Centers for Children provides a wide variety of therapy, recreation, education and family support services for children with disabilities and their families. We serve over 3,900 children with disabilities and their families each year.

Our mission is to work with children with disabilities and their families to strengthen abilities and create opportunities for lifelong achievement in society.

*The Achiever* is published by the Development Department of the Achievement Centers for Children.

Editor: Cariss Turner; Contributors: Patricia W. Nobili, Deborah Osgood, Rebecca Bendlak, Cariss Turner



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