

hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy | Celebrating 125 Years | Founded 1882 | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | Fall 2007

HMS Turns 125!



The Philly Phanatic entertains guests at HMS's 125th anniversary community party in September.

It's a big anniversary year, and we're already celebrating. On September 29, we threw a community party for our neighbors to get to know us. We hosted an afternoon of live Caribbean music with the Steel Kings; children's activities--face painting, spin art, a clown, a magician and a moon bounce; and free refreshments--hotdogs, beverages, popcorn, water ice, apples and cotton candy. Several hundred guests enjoyed a relaxed afternoon in the school's backyard.

We're planning anniversary events to showcase HMS, and we'll be bringing a special twist to other activities throughout the year. Please join us when we cap our celebration with a birthday bash in May for the whole HMS family.

125th Anniversary Calendar

December 13 – Holiday Show with 125th anniversary theme

February 14 – Students deliver 125 valentines to children in need

March 12 – Student Art Show Gala Opening with celebrity judge

March/April – Student artwork on display at City Hall

April 4-5 – "Putting the Pieces Together," HMS-sponsored professional conference

April/May – 25th Anniversary of Something Magical

May 30 – 125th Birthday Celebration and Reunion

Bill Hunter, HMS recreation coordinator, smiles through his cotton candy veil. He and other staff volunteers manned the refreshment booths for the community party.

Throughout the year:

- 125 Special Visitors sign our anniversary memories book
- Time capsule—students create and choose items for inclusion
- Newsletter features anniversary memorabilia
- Historic photos on display
- 125th Anniversary Craft Project



Let's Talk: Giving Kids a Voice

Kids love to talk. They gossip, tease, argue. They share special news. They tell secrets and joke around. Giving kids a voice gets high priority at HMS. And communication devices play a big part in our effort.

Communication devices can provide a single, switch-accessed message or range up to sophisticated units that students scan for a variety of topic screens and messages. At HMS there are device users at all levels. Regardless of their abilities, the staff team work hard to increase their skills, and most important, to identify the motivators that encourage them to "speak."

Students motivate other students. Kevin Rafferty, who teaches teenagers, notes that following Elisheva's enrollment last year, his "students' output has increased dramatically in quantity and quality. They're initiating more and in more creative ways." Using her Pathfinder device, 17-year-old Elisheva likes to socialize. She engages classmates with comments or questions that demand a reply, and she has high expectations—she gets upset if a classmate ignores her.

Mr. Rafferty asks Elisheva how she feels when she sees a group of students sitting together and not talking. She says, "Sad. Please, let's talk." Her first words when she sees classmates in the morning are, "Hi, how are you?"

Emily Gureckis, a teacher whose class are much younger, agrees that peer interaction is a big motivator. "They want the friendship of others,

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Message from the Executive Director

Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

While construction debris is the most dramatic evidence of change at HMS, we've been working in less obvious ways to strengthen our organizational structure. We're building on strategic plans that we initiated several years ago with help from the Executive Service Corp.

Our updated organizational chart formalizes the four primary partners in HMS's functional structure--education, nursing, facilities and finance. Each area has responsibilities to the others and to the overall organization. Each comprises an entity with its own director and internal structure that clarifies lines of responsibility. We are formally acknowledging that safe, working facilities are as important as program excellence, nursing services as essential as financial viability.

We've created a Director of Finance position--described in this newsletter--a recommendation of our organizational plan. We have also strengthened the nursing department. With students' medical needs so much more complex, nursing is no longer an adjunct service at HMS, but is crucial to our capacity to care for and educate students. Hence, we trained Life Skills Assistants as Certified Nursing Assistants who report to the Director of Nursing Services, along with the registered and licensed nursing staff. A clearer departmental structure insures more accurate, up-to-date information on each student's health and daily needs.

We do not want to diminish the warm, collegial environment that we all appreciate at HMS. In fact, we believe that tweaking our organizational structure will support that atmosphere by making it easier for staff to communicate with one another and to know who is responsible for particular activities and whom to turn to for assistance. Twenty years ago, we served 37 students. Today we have 57 youngsters enrolled. We want to ensure that each student continues to receive the best that HMS can offer.

Construction Continues Apace



The administration building is gone! This shot overlooks construction from the west and toward HMS's main building, with 44th St. and Baltimore Ave. at the upper left.

Over the summer, HMS turned into a dusty construction zone as the administration wing was demolished. Good weather has allowed foundation work to proceed for Harris Hall, the new residence, and we expect to see structural steel and building forms before the holidays. Construction is taking place at multiple sites around the building to maximize use of man power

and equipment.

Other work took place this past summer. We replaced an older, pre-1959 ramp leading from the physical therapy gym to the student entrance. The new ramp now complies with ADA requirements and provides a more graded descent, much easier for students to manage. Crews began to replace windows in the existing residence, the first stage of its renovation as the Gowen Classroom Wing, with double paned, insulated glass that will be much more energy-efficient. This project will continue during winter break and summer 2008 for minimal disruption.

HMS is coping well throughout this major renovation. All vehicles must enter from Chester Avenue, foot traffic enters through a pedestrian gate on 45th Street. We still welcome visitors! Please come to the reception desk facing Chester Avenue, and we will call your contact.

Our community Party!

Children chose from a variety of face painting designs, an activity much in demand at HMS' 125th community party in September.



Correction

We apologize for a photo-identification error on page 2 of the Summer 2007 newsletter.

Emily Aiello appears with the Philly Phanatic, not Shannon Ward.

hms school @ 125

HMS at 125: A Proud Tradition of Excellence

Emma came to us from Collegeville. She could not walk at all. Her limbs were all drawn up. A short time ago, this little girl had an operation performed on her limbs, the tendons were cut. She is now in bed with the weights on her feet, very patient and hopeful, for the doctors tell her that they hope to make her walk.

Robert, a most interesting boy of twelve years, couldn't walk at all. He is better, is on crutches, and is learning the trade of printing in our office.

Baby Anna, three years old, paralyzed in both limbs. One limb seems to be improving. One of the tendons of her foot was so drawn that an operation was necessary. Anna's happy, bright face shows that she does not suffer in consequence.

These case stories are taken from the Fifth Annual Report of the Home of the Merciful Saviour for Crippled Children in 1887. Early in the decade, Helen Innes and her husband, Robert, a minister, had custody of a boy with disabilities. "We sought in vain a Home for him throughout the city," she wrote, "but, outside of the Almshouse, there was none into which he could be admitted."**

Not one to be deterred, in 1882 Mrs. Innes founded the Home of the Merciful Saviour for Crippled Children, the first of its kind in the nation. Located at 45th Street and Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia, it initially served 18 children ages four to seven, who were discharged from hospitals as hopeless cases and "too poor to provide board or entrance fee." Within a few years, it would serve many others, including older youngsters.

The Home's original charter



Harmonica band

pledged the "care, support and maintenance of children crippled by disease, accident, or in other way" and admitted children from any city or state. Although affiliated with the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, the Home was nonsectarian and depended on voluntary gifts for support. Francis I. Gowen, whose descendants have continuously served on HMS's board, was one of its founding trustees.

From the outset, physicians from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania donated medical and surgical services. "Sister Sarah," known for charitable works among the poor, volunteered to give "the little ones a mother's care."





Helen Innes brought tremendous energy and dedication to the Home. She galvanized support from her many friends. A woman of deep faith, she believed that God would heed the applications flooding in from all over the country and the need for a larger and better-appointed facility. Clarence H. Clark, president of Centennial National Bank, stepped up to donate land near Baltimore Avenue, and with help from other donors, the trustees purchased an adjoining Baltimore Avenue lot. Friends of Mrs. Innes provided funds to build a new home and chapel that opened in 1886.

By the mid-1890's, the Home was able to purchase yet more acreage and to add three additional buildings for classrooms, dormitory space, and a medical and surgical annex. The children received the best medical and surgical treatment of the times. As their conditions improved, and if physically able to "take a trade," they were allowed to leave the Home to be self-supporting. Those children who could be moved spent the summer first at a New Jersey seashore inn, and within a few years, at a shore house

specially designed for children with handicaps.

With many educated and talented women seeking an outlet for their energies, Mrs. Innes recruited "a number of young ladies to be detailed each week for such instruction in the branches of plain education as suit the children...and the sympathy excited...led to many offers of service." Volunteers taught the girls housework, cooking, sewing and embroidery, and the boys printing and sewing "carpet rags."



Reverend Innes provided religious instruction.

Donations flowed in. Early annual reports provide detailed listings of cash donations and goods that ranged from two turkeys to a pound of butter, from clothing, toys and furniture to bolts of fabric and afghans. These records also include an annual medical report describing the children's illnesses, treatments and outcomes. Each report reflects the love and attention provided to the Home's charges, celebrating the children's improvement and accomplishments.

The HMS story unfolds in fascinating ways. For an institution that has been evolving for 125 years, remarkably consistent themes play out through the decades:

- Commitment to excellence
- Responsiveness and flexibility
- Cutting-edge care
- A compassionate, loving and nurturing environment
- Leadership by strong, capable women
- Determination to remain in an urban setting

We'll continue the HMS story in upcoming issues of the newsletter throughout this anniversary year. Following are some 20th-century highlights:

- 1920's A public school teacher instructs children at the Home up to 6th grade.
- 1930's A swimming pool is added and a study reports treatment for infantile paralysis in a hydrotherapy pool.
- 1940's Polio epidemics bring many children to HMS for shorter-term treatment and an outpatient clinic operates; HMS introduces the Sister Kenny treatment method.
- 1950's Salk Vaccine slowly eliminates the polio crisis and HMS focuses on children with cerebral palsy.

1960's HMS becomes a Pennsylvania Approved Private School and its reputation grows. HMS undertakes major new construction and renovations.

1970's HMS's state-of-the-art speech programs and nonverbal communication approaches gain national attention.

1980's The Women's Committee studies computers and their applications for children with special needs. The first computers and power-wheelchair technology are introduced. Diane Gallagher arrives as director. The Home becomes known as HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy.

1990's HMS continues to design and expand its specialized interdisciplinary programs.

***Quoted material is taken from a history of the Home written by Reverend E. Lee Richards, historian, Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, using information from the Home's annual reports, correspondence and news articles.*



Let's Talk: Giving Kids a Voice



A weekly communication device group promotes student socialization and expands their ability to express themselves through devices. From left, students Jordanna, Rebekkah and Elisheva enjoy a chat with encouragement from speech therapy assistant Jillian Bouchard and speech therapists Tonja Johnson and Meredith Cracknell.

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they want to be able to talk and joke with other students," she says. "It gives them the motivation to practice using their devices."

Some of Ms. Gureckis' students are new device users, others have had them for several years, and others use their voices, but all enjoy interacting. Ashley is eager to scan and choose from songs on her device. "She'll even play her favorite song in the middle of class to entertain her friends, and the other children react to it," says Ms. Gureckis. During weekly "show and tell," children proudly use their devices to share special home activities or to show off a favorite toy.

Since Ms. Gureckis is new this year, recreation therapist Karen Turek suggested playing an "about me" game. The children take turns using a switch-activated spinner that lands on questions about family pets, favorite colors, etc. Ms. Turek and the teachers pre-program students' devices with the answers. In this game, children love talking about themselves, but are also learning how, when they meet someone new, they can share their

interests and communicate with the other person.

Staff members invest considerable time and effort in programming students' devices with messages that are relevant, satisfying and compelling. Courtney Grimes teaches a group of older students who are beginning device users. One way she motivates her students is to give them control of classroom choices. "What do you want to do before therapy—go on computer? Listen to music? Read a book?" The student must go into his device to say what he wants.

She and assistant teacher Chris Curchin also try to invest messages with emotional content that reflects students' feelings. When they record the lunchtime song, they give that message the energy that the student feels when she wants to get going for the dining room. Mr. Curchin programmed "I'm so mad I could scream" into one boy's device, knowing that the teen was irritated with his teacher and giving him a chance to voice his feelings.

Staff make these same efforts in programs outside the classroom. Whether an after-school theater-

arts activity where students use their devices to play a role, a spa group where they choose a favorite sensory experience or a device group where they come together to chat, staff ensure that youngsters have appropriate messages to express themselves.

This commitment pays off, with devices becoming more meaningful and motivating. Students want to speak—even show frustration if their device is not plugged in. They're finding their voice.



Abigail Guthrie hits a head switch to activate her communication device during a classroom activity, while assistant teacher Nicole Campbell shows her delight.

SAVE THE DATE

April 4-5, 2008

HMS School presents
*Putting the Pieces Together:
Empowering Children with
Complex Medical & Educational
Needs*

A 125th anniversary conference for educators, therapists, healthcare providers and parents/caregivers

- ♦ Keynote speaker: Steven Bennett, President and CEO, United Cerebral Palsy, Washington, D.C.
- ♦ Register for either or both days. Saturday morning's session is particularly geared to parents and caregivers.
- ♦ Watch for a detailed brochure in January 2008.
- ♦ Contact Suzanne Zimmermann at suzannez@hmsschool.org for further information.

HMS Students Present Voices of HMS

HMS's after-school theater arts group performed on October 30 at Walnut Street Theatre during "Independence Starts Here: A Festival of Disabilities Arts & Culture." Voices of HMS, an original student work, was developed as part of an ongoing partnership between HMS School and Walnut Street Theatre's teaching artists.

More on this expanding HMS program in a future newsletter!



Parents Corner

Daddys, Diapers and Daughters
by Dwight Whiteman

It's time to change my daughter's diaper, and we are in a restaurant in the city. I leave her at the table with her sister and my wife while I check for a functional and private place. There is no changing table in the men's room, and most of the floor is wet. I ask the hostess if there is a changing table in the ladies' room. "Yes" she says, and she seems somewhat puzzled about why I would ask. I send my wife in to check, and it looks good.

There is one more small issue. My daughter is almost 14 years old and weighs over 95 pounds. My wife can't lift her from her wheelchair onto the changing table by herself. With the help of Emily's sister, my wife is able to lift her, change her diaper and tidy up in a few minutes. They return to the table as lunch arrives. The whole family had a nice time. Thank god we didn't have to go all the way out to the van to change Emily like we did last week at the local church bazaar.

Having a daughter in diapers presents problems for fathers. I have learned to ask for private changing areas from people in all places. I haven't yet had to bring Emily into a men's room to change her. I am prepared physically with underpads, diapers, sealable plastic bags, feminine hygiene products, wipes and a big beach towel for privacy.

My mental preparation has yet to be tested. The thought of my 14-year-old daughter lying on a table or floor of a crowded men's room with her pants and diaper even momentarily off is something I push out of my mind. I have practiced changing her with a big beach towel over my shoulders for privacy. I'm pretty sure that I can do it but am still horrified at the thought. Will some pervert try to look? Will someone call security? Will a pickpocket grab my wallet as I am focused on the task? Even if all goes well, how will my daughter feel? I always fall back on the simple thought that I will do anything for all my children--even changing a teenager's diaper in public.



Fall Festival Rocks

At left, Samantha Crossfield hits the ball out of the park at the T-ball booth, with help from her teacher, Michelle McPherson.

Above, Emily Whiteman and her dad, Dwight, show off their festival finery.

Director of Finance Expands HMS Staff

HMS has created a Director of Finance position in response to the growing complexity of its finances. Alvin Wadler, a specialist with nonprofit organizations, joined the staff in February 2007, and he is already making an impact.

"Excellent work was being done here," he says, "but with so much growth, including the construction project and the capital campaign, this is a \$7 million entity, and it needs daily oversight."

Diane Gallagher, Executive Director, notes that HMS has clearly outgrown a part-time finance position. Even prior to the capital campaign, the school had become much more active with fund development through both grants and individual donors. Further, the state's mechanism for funding Approved Private Schools has changed, creating new demands for fund management and both state and federal reporting. And Pat Costa, Administrative Assistant, is much busier managing the school's participation in Pennsylvania's School Based Access Program and National School Lunch.

In addition to providing general

financial management, Mr. Wadler has put in place guidelines for cash flow and oversight procedures to insure safeguards in handling funds. He is helping to develop a centralized purchasing system and other cost-savings efficiencies. He attends all meetings of the board and its executive committee, works closely with the treasurer and regularly reports on the school's financial status. "The ability to have the best-available information readily at hand provides a huge benefit for daily decision-making about expenditures and other issues," says Ms. Gallagher.

Mr. Wadler came to HMS after five years with the Maternity Care Coalition and 15 years with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. "My personality is more tempered to nonprofits," he says. He finds HMS staff wonderful to work with and receptive to new ideas. Mr. Wadler points out that when construction is complete, HMS will be able to serve double the number of residential students. Having improved systems in place will prepare HMS well for a more complicated financial picture.



HMS School News Fall 2007

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.

