

hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • SPRING 2011

Spring is All About the Arts at HMS

This spring, our students were transformed into artists, musicians, dancers and actors, as our year-round creative arts curriculum culminated in a three-month series of events. These include: our first Expressive Arts Festival (an outgrowth of our Annual Art Show); the HMS fusion2 Dance Collaborative performance at the Painted Bride Art Center; our annual “Something Magical” musical theater collaboration with Germantown Friends School; our collaboration with the Walnut Street Theatre; and the



HMS fusion2 Dance Collaborative

HMS Drexel Dance Collaborative performance at Drexel’s Mandell Theater. We value the full spectrum of the arts as educational and therapeutic tools, which afford various means of expression and interaction. Our art specialist, Eiko Fan, is continually developing innovative ways to activate our students’ skills and desires. She has taught students to paint passionate abstracts by dancing with their bare feet. For those who cannot control movement of their feet, she has attached a marker or brush to a hat to allow the student to draw. These works show no sign that the artist cannot talk or move in the typical ways. They speak on the canvas with bright colors, and slight, but sure, movement.

Throughout the year, we collaborate with renowned regional performance companies. We draw upon the expertise of their professional dancers, actors and directors, together with the skill of our team of therapists, including Brad Biedermann, music therapist; Rich Magnuson, recreation therapist; Andrea Green, music therapist involved in the “Something Magical”

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One Family’s Perspective as a Son Prepares to Graduate

by Abraham & Helen/Haia Guttman

We have always believed that Sruly is more capable than meets the eye, and endeavored to provide him with the resources he requires to interact with and be more aware of his surroundings. Our early efforts,



though, were unsuccessful. After years of working with schools and resources in our immediate region of New York, we decided to look elsewhere.

Thankfully, we discovered HMS. At first, we were hesitant, because it meant taking Sruly away from home, where he’s loved by older siblings and parents who cater to his every whim and need. We were also

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Students Create Art to Benefit Japan

HMS Art Specialist Eiko Fan, a native of Japan, led HMS students, staff, and friends in designing and printing tee shirts that signify our school’s support of the Japanese people whose lives were so tragically disrupted by the earthquake and tsunami this spring. We raised more than \$4,200, which we donated to the American Red Cross and Friends of the Japanese House and Garden for the sole purpose of aiding the relief effort.

Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

Graduation is just days away. This year we are graduating our largest class ever. This class is so large that we will hold two ceremonies to provide us the time to honor each of our ten gradu-



ates, and we've had to expand the size of our newsletter. As we prepare for this milestone, it is important to think about what this event means to our students and families and to HMS.

Around the country right now, the success of many graduates is being measured by awards for academic achievement or sports participation, standardized scores, GPAs, and plans for work or college after high

school. For our students, success looks somewhat different. We mark success by the ability to engage with the world and to positively influence and be influenced by others, and by having the means and motivation to communicate with others as a way to meaningfully participate in their communities.

The outcomes by which a traditional education is measured don't fit our students well, but the outcomes by which we measure our success are critical. To succeed, the education we deliver must nurture and encourage the whole student, by building on all his strengths and accommodating to areas of need.

For the student with limited mobility who seeks the freedom and exhilaration of movement, providing daily opportunities for activity, whether on a bike or with a walker, is key. And for the child who is nonverbal but thrives on social interaction, education includes teaching strategies for communication that invite social connection. Only by working with children and families to understand what makes each student tick, and by providing the unique resources to help that student be focused and engaged, can we create meaningful change and build a platform for life success.

What are the outcomes we seek? Like any school, we place high value on effective communication, problem solving, and decision-making. These outcomes — indicators not of earning potential or professional status — but of having gained the education that will allow one to participate fully in life — are vital to the wellbeing of our students.

As we celebrate our graduates' achievements, I feel a tremendous sense of pride in the collaboration among student, family and HMS staff that will enable each of these ten individuals to live life beyond expectations. ■

Family Perspective/From page 1

concerned with committing to a five-day residency program, which would mean subjecting Sruly to weekly, four-hour, round trips to come home for weekends. However, we were ultimately won over by what we witnessed when visiting HMS.

The home away from home atmosphere we observed convinced us that we were on the right path. HMS enveloped Sruly in warmth, commitment and structure: exactly what we were seeking. Together with the after school programs and extracurricular activities for the residents, HMS opened up a whole new world of friends, shared experiences and belonging that we could never otherwise provide for Sruly.

Eleven years later, in retrospect, it was well worth the physical and emotional toll that Sruly and we experienced by enrolling him at HMS. Sruly now moves around on his own, using a power wheelchair. We still remember that feeling of amazement and pride seeing him navigate HMS's corridors for the first time. He has also learned to use a communication device and, indeed, is quite proficient at it. HMS made it all happen and is constantly working to fine-tune Sruly's power mobility and communication.

HMS's efforts weren't limited to Sruly's physical needs. It was evident whenever he arrived home from school that he was happy and well taken care of emotionally. His beautiful smile and sense of humor were acknowledged and much appreciated by all at HMS. We cannot forget the time he requested "gefille fish" for his birthday party and how the staff went out of their way to accommodate him. We love that Sruly has access to Skype, so we're able to communicate with him — and see him — when he's at school.

Sruly is now a seven-day resident. We had hoped that by the time transition period came around, HMS would have started a residence program for adults, so that Sruly could continue benefiting from this great institution. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. Nonetheless, true to their sense of caring, HMS continues to be most helpful in guiding and helping us through the transition. Graduation Day will be bittersweet for us, filled with pride in Sruly, appreciation to HMS for seeing the same potential in Sruly that we always have, and sadness that Sruly's time at HMS must come to an end. ■

HMS Arts/From page 1

project; and Rachel Federman-Morales, dance/movement therapist. This collaborative process empowers our students to break boundaries and find new ways to express themselves, using their bodies, faces, voices, and assistive technology. Students learn that their input matters, while those with whom they are collaborating gain new understanding of our students' strengths.

Whether they are collaborating to develop a performance piece, creating a piece of art or performing on a stage, our arts curriculum places the focus squarely on our students' abilities. ■



Expressive Arts Festival



Expressive Arts Festival



HMS fusion2 Dance Collaborative



HMS collaboration with the Walnut Street Theatre



"Something Magical"



Meet our Class of 2011

Elisheva Apple



Elisheva (Eli) lives passionately. The energetic 21-year old is a committed student, friend, volunteer and dancer, who has made a tremendous impact on HMS in the five years she has been there. Her impact, however, reaches far beyond HMS's walls. Says her mother, "Elisheva feels that she belongs in the world and has something to contribute."

Through HMS's expressive arts curriculum, Eli developed a love of dance and performance. Together with HMS Dance/Movement Therapist Rachel Federman-Morales, Eli auditioned for and secured a place on the city's largest mural, "How Philly Moves." Her likeness on the mural was unveiled this spring, a larger than life message that dance does not have to take place standing on two feet.

"When Elisheva dances," says Federman-Morales, "she shines brightly. Eli is enthusiastic, playful and social. The art of dance really speaks to Eli and helps her to know herself better and to move through life with grace and freedom."

Eli volunteers at both Please Touch Museum

and Magee Rehabilitation Hospital as part of her transition plan for the time after graduation. In addition to providing helpful information to visitors at Please Touch, Eli's active presence there provides many teachable moments, as she often encounters children for whom meeting a person in a wheelchair is a novel experience. At Magee, Eli is a positive role model for people newly diagnosed with brain or spinal cord injury.



After graduation, Eli will continue her volunteer work five mornings a week and spend her afternoons enjoying such leisure activities as horseback riding and visiting area museums. She will live at home with her family in Montgomery County and enjoy time with her extended family, including nieces and nephews for whom she loves to help babysit.

Olivia Charry



Olivia has an infectious enthusiasm that is guaranteed to lift the spirits of even the most melancholy visitor to HMS. Although she has only been at HMS for five years, she continues to make it clear what a good match it is for her. Just the sound of her teacher, Courtney Grimes', voice causes Olivia to light up and giggle. This joy is generously shared, according to assistant teacher Jessica Clay, who says that Olivia's zest makes you feel like "the best entertainer, even when you weren't trying to entertain."

Olivia's father, Mark, credits much of Olivia's enthusiasm at school to the opportunity it has given her to communicate better and build friendships. At HMS, Olivia has thrived on being surrounded by her peers and participating in the many recreational opportunities offered, particularly dance and theater.



Prior to coming to HMS, Olivia depended upon her family to be able to read her cues to understand what she needed. Five years ago, the family learned during an evaluation at duPont Hospital for Children that Olivia had the potential to master an assistive communication device. Further research brought the family to HMS, which was the only school they deemed qualified to provide Olivia with the training to learn and access this technology.

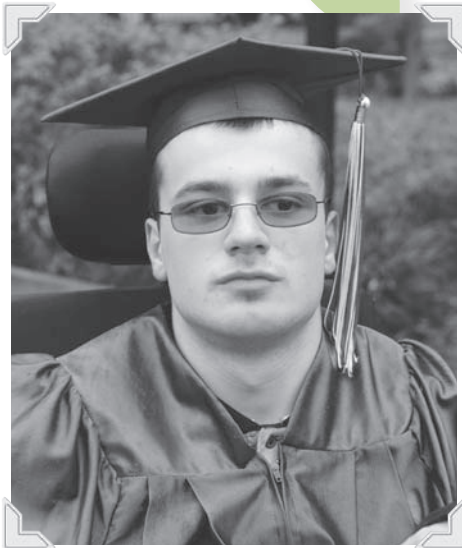
Olivia now accesses her device with an elbow switch. Finding a way for her to use the technology was very difficult, due to her tight muscles.

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Mark Charry admits that it is much quicker to read Olivia's cues than to wait for her to communicate using the device, but he heeds advice given by Speech and Language Therapist Marianne Gellert-Jones. She reminded the family that the goal is to help Olivia become as independent as possible and give her the ability to communicate her needs and feelings in the outside world.

Upon graduation, Olivia will continue to live with her family in the Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia. They are currently researching day programs for Olivia, with a long-term plan of finding residential care. Key to any program is the desire and ability to help Olivia continue to move forward with her use of technology.

Michael Evans



Michael entered HMS in 1996 at the tender age of five. Next month, he'll turn 21! Michael's positive presence will be sorely missed at HMS. He can always be counted on to greet everyone he encounters with enthusiasm and an infectious smile. His keen sense of humor can fill any room with laughter – and often does.

At HMS, Michael has gained a sense of connection with other people. He greatly values the everyday gestures many people take for granted – a warm hello, a hug or a smile.



Michael's greatest love is movement. Although Michael is non-ambulatory, the team at HMS has ensured that he experiences the thrill of movement every day, whether on his bike or with a walker. Michael has also benefited greatly from HMS's participatory music program. He has an intense love of music, from Simon & Garfunkel to Andrea Bocelli, and enjoys singing and moving to a variety of genres, says Music Therapist Brad Biedermann.

According to Michael's mother, it is the warmth and love Michael has received at HMS that have facilitated his learning. Michael's teachers credit his success to his work ethic, people skills, and persistence, saying he is, "a hard worker, who is always ready to communicate and relate with other students and staff."

After graduation, Michael will continue to live at home in Northeast Philadelphia and enjoy time with his family.

Yisroel Guttman



Yisroel (Sruly) has the kind of smile that makes everyone he meets fall in love with him. He acknowledges a greeting from a visitor or new acquaintance with his open, beautiful smile, and immediately they feel welcome. With some encouragement, he will tell that person about himself. If they're lucky, he'll show them his sense of humor.

Sruly's engaging personality has enabled his relationships with his family to thrive, even though he has lived more than 100 miles away from the family home in Brooklyn since the age of 10. The youngest of seven in his observant Jewish family, Sruly is the darling of his three sisters and a favorite among his nieces and nephews.



Sruly's father believes that each child teaches you something new. He credits Sruly with introducing his wife and him to a warm and welcoming community of parents of children with disabilities. In turn, acceptance is a value that is being passed down *l'dor vador* (from generation to generation) in the Guttman family, as Sruly's siblings build their own families.

While at HMS, Sruly has mastered the technology that allows him to assert his independence and communicate more clearly. He is adept at using his communication device and his power wheelchair. As a result, according to his parents, Sruly has become more attentive and a far better listener, both skills that are critical for success in the larger community.

After graduation, Sruly may move into a group home, where he will be able to continue to build and maintain new friendships.

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A'drienne Hazard



A'drienne Hazard knows her own mind. Since she came to HMS 12 years ago, she has shown incredible resilience and determination in working to communicate what's on it.

Occupational Therapist Janice Barbour laughingly recalls a session where she asked A'drienne to choose an activity by sustaining her gaze on one of several pictures. When A'drienne appeared to be disengaged, Janice was puzzled. Then A'drienne looked away from the board of options in front of her, triggering an ah-ha moment for Janice, who asked her, "none of the above?" A'drienne turned, looked directly at Janice, tilted her head and raised her eyebrows, seeming to say, "You finally got it!"



"In that interaction," Janice explains, "A'drienne not only persevered in relaying her message, but also reinforced the truth that things aren't always what they appear."

A'drienne has an impressive ability to use her eyes and facial expressions to communicate. A'drienne is also very adept at using her feet to communicate ... artistically. A'drienne's art, created by painting with her feet, has been included for many years in HMS's Art Show. She also painted a piece, called "Princess Flowers," which was hung in the Children's Seashore House at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In recent years, A'drienne has begun to use an iMac eye gaze-controlled device to communicate, a tool which has greatly enhanced her life and her ability to form relationships.

After graduation, A'drienne will continue to live with her family in Abington. Her parents hope she will be attending a day program nearby.

Shanea Howell



Shanea entered HMS only four years ago, but the influence of HMS on Shanea, and Shanea on HMS, is profound. She has forever changed the life of her behavioral technician, Annie Coleman. Each day Annie waits for Shanea's bus to arrive, to be greeted by the vision of Shanea through the window, elated and bouncing with excitement to be at school. When Shanea enters school, according to Annie, "her perfect smile lights up the room, affecting everyone around her."

Annie, who calls Shanea, "the most energetic person I know," is not the only person to be drawn to the young woman. This year her peers elected this happy-go-lucky, upbeat young woman Secretary of HMS's student government. Part of her winning campaign bid was a striking election poster.



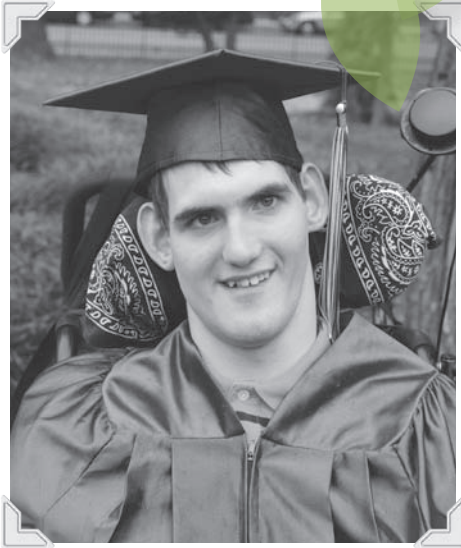
Shanea's artistic talent has drawn attention outside of HMS. A regular in the school's Annual Art Show, Shanea won the School District of Philadelphia's Art Show Award several years ago with one of her paintings. She created the piece by painting with her hands.

Working with the therapists and teachers at HMS has helped Shanea to become more focused and better able to listen and perform a task when asked. She has also more fully developed her social skills. Always a jokester, Shanea now laughs out loud with her friends.

One special friend at HMS is Nikkimah McLaughlin, with whom Shanea has gone to school since the two were little girls. Shanea enjoys bowling and attending school dances with her friends.

Shanea currently lives with her family in Northeast Philadelphia. They are considering several residential and day programs for Shanea for after graduation. Shanea's mother's only regret about her daughter's time at HMS is that it was so short, given what a powerful resource it has been for Shanea.

Ethan Jorgensen



Ethan arrived at HMS as a small child, and he has grown and developed into a delightful, happy, engaging young man. When Ethan's family set out to find a school for him 16 years ago, they had to rely on snail mail and the telephone; the Internet was in its infancy. After writing to 50 schools, Ethan and his parents embarked on a weeklong tour of 10 schools.

What they discovered was that the right fit was located a full eight hours away from their West Virginia home. Luckily, Ethan discovered a second family at HMS, many of whom remain at the school today and still care for him. In fact, it was this second family who offered to train his new stepmother to take care of Ethan during his visits home. (And it was two of these caregivers who traveled to West Virginia to see him participate in the wedding, alongside his brothers.)



Ethan is a social butterfly and bona fide flirt. He connects with staff, family and friends through eye contact, smiles, laughter and touch. Ethan is one of those rare individuals who always seems to be happy, and his HMS family counts on his smiles and laughter to brighten their days. Something that brings Ethan particular joy is HMS's extracurricular offerings. He loves to dance, sing, horseback ride, and bowl, and participated in the fusion2 and "Something Magical" collaborative performance programs throughout his years at HMS.

Since enrolling at HMS, Ethan has come to fully appreciate the social opportunities offered by sharing meals with his friends, making choices, and using his Step-by-Step Communicator to share news and make comments throughout the day.

The Jorgensens are hoping that after graduation, Ethan will transition to a residential community that will offer the same opportunities to learn and interact with his peers.

Nikkimah McLaughlin



Nikkimah is a born leader ... or perhaps she just loves to be in charge. She is most definitely responsible.

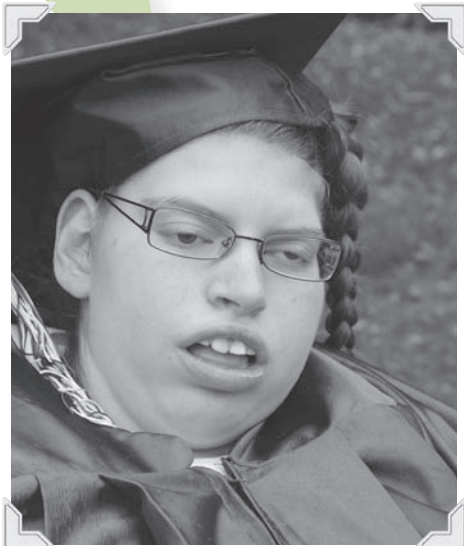
Nikkimah is President of HMS's student government. She served as vice president and secretary in previous years. Nikkimah has told HMS Director of Residential Services Dee Avegnon that she has her eye on her job, because Dee "gets to boss people around." Nikkimah is, in some ways, another set of eyes and ears of HMS, eager to know what's going on, take charge and get involved. Each day, when Nikkimah returns to her Overbrook Park home, she regales her mother with stories about, "everyone else's business."



Nikkimah didn't always have the skills to be so engaged in her community, as both a leader and a friend. Since coming to HMS five years ago at the age of 16, Nikkimah has worked diligently, and with much success, at improving her skills with her eye gaze communication device. She has also moved from a manual to a power wheelchair, giving her far more autonomy to go where she wants to when she wants. These new skills and the independence they have afforded Nikkimah have paid off huge dividends when it comes to community involvement. A friendly and talkative young woman, Nikkimah has become even more sociable.

After graduation, Nikkimah will continue to reside at home and hopes to enter a local day program where several HMS alumni are enrolled.

Tara Stern



Tara entered HMS at the age of 19, after graduating from an inclusive high school in New York City. Although Tara has only been at HMS for two years, she has made a strong impression on those around her with her sweet disposition, sense of humor and love of music. One of her caregivers has been talking for months about how much she will miss Tara and her easy laughter when she graduates.

Having Tara away from home for school was not an easy choice for her father, Steve. Just two years earlier, Tara's mother died. As Steve Stern considered next steps for Tara, he discovered HMS, and hoped its nurturing environment could help ease the coming transition to residential care for both his daughter and him.

Her father also chose HMS for its expertise in assistive technology, with the goal of helping his daughter master a communication device and become more independent. In just two years, Tara has made significant strides in working with a communication device that provides all options auditorally and allows her to respond when the desired option is presented.

What Tara's father didn't foresee was the impact the social and recreational opportunities at HMS would have on Tara. She loves being surrounded by her peers. Tara thrives on the camaraderie of simply hanging out, even when it is just to watch a movie. An appreciation for performing arts that was nurtured at home has grown as Tara has embraced the chance to participate in dance, music and theater, and perform alongside her schoolmates.

Tara is on several waiting lists for residential centers where she may join other HMS graduates and continue to build strong relationships.

Danny Tomeo



Danny has an indomitable spirit. He joined his family just before entering HMS, first as a foster child and then as their adoptive child. When Danny first came to the Tomeos and to

HMS, he had a lot of catching up to do physically, emotionally and socially. Although he was initially very anxious, Danny has truly found his comfort zone here at HMS. Danny's enthusiasm and joy for life and learning have contributed to his flourishing in every way.



Danny is a very social person, who thrives on his connections with his peers and has made many friends at HMS, since coming here in 2005. He has a particular affinity for other students who are verbal and enjoys nothing more than being with friends and chatting.

Danny loves physical comedy, which has made his care a lot of fun for his one-to-one nurses and for him. One of Danny's favorite activities is a game where he activates a switch-operated message device to call his nurse from her "hiding" place. She then pops out and rolls towards Danny on a stool, while he sits in a bolster swing, laughing contagiously. He has found it similarly engaging to find favored staff in the darkened Sensorium, while wearing a finger light.

Danny brings a spark of joy to everything he does, and his sense of fun and mischievousness has lit up many days at HMS.

Danny's mother, Fran, is grateful to HMS for seeing Danny's potential and continually helping him try new things and to Danny for bringing his family constant joy and happiness.



HMS Staff is Leading the Way to Innovative, Better Therapies

Our therapists and educators are involved in state of the art treatment and research inside and outside of the classroom. Throughout the year, they speak at professional conferences and publish findings in peer journals. What they learn helps children far beyond our walls. Here's a sampling of what they did this past school year.

Heidi Kecskemethy, RD, CSP, LDN



Heidi Kecskemethy

HMS Dietitian Heidi Kecskemethy is a clinical research associate at the A. I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, DE. She and HMS Medical Director Steven Bachrach work together on projects involving bone research in children with cerebral palsy. The two obtained a grant from the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine to study the feasibility of using Low Magnitude Mechanical Stimuli (LMMS) while in standers in a population of children with CP who are non-ambulatory, like our students.

Lack of weight-bearing causes children's bones to become thin and weak and prone to fracture with minimal trauma. As a result, even normal handling and standard therapies to improve range of motion can lead to painful fractures. LMMS — a form of vibration therapy — provides mechanical stress on the bones which is believed to stimulate them to grow stronger. While LMMS has been proven beneficial in other populations, few studies have examined the benefits to children with CP and no one has studied the use of LMMS vibration in a solely non-ambulatory population.

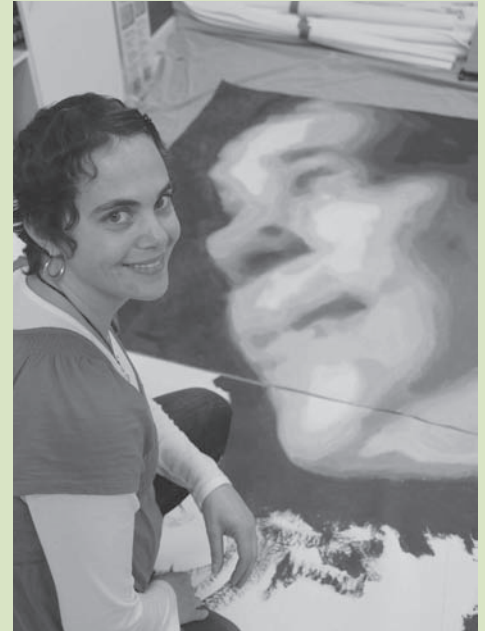
The two researchers are in the second phase of the study which examines the feasibility of using this device for these children, either at home or in a therapeutic setting. HMS is one of the research sites included in the study.

The feasibility study will be complete by September. At that time, Heidi and her team plan on applying to the National Institutes of Health to fund the next stage of their research which is an intervention trial where the effect on bone density is quantified.

Rachel Federman-Morales, MA BC-DMT

It's uncommon for schools in this country to include a program of dance/movement therapy in working with students with severe disabilities. As a result, new and innovative resources for dance/movement therapists are scarce.

When our dance/movement therapist, Rachel Federman-Morales, presented, "Patterns of Connections: A Dance Mosaic," at the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) National Annual Conference in New York last September, she was providing



Rachel Federman-Morales looking at artist's rendering of How Philly Moves mural

her colleagues with a blueprint for working with students with mild to severe disabilities. The presentation was so well received that Rachel was asked to speak this October at a joint conference between the ADTA, the National Dance Education Organization, and the International Guild for Musicians in Dance.

Rachel's presentation focused on the process and benefits of HMS's collaborative dance curriculum with Drexel University which brings together dancers with and without physical disabilities. Through dance/movement therapy techniques, Rachel choreographs and teaches movement phrases and provides structured improvisation exercises, all of which ultimately get woven into one dance piece, created together by the teacher and the students. At the conference, Rachel explored the patterns of connections, which grow out of this collaborative process.

Technology and Therapies Advance to a New Level

A hallmark of our program is the stability of our staff and the expertise they have acquired over the years. Many of our therapists began working here when the technology to help our students was in its infancy. What we can offer today in the way of assistive technology makes the communication devices and wheelchairs of a decade ago look practically vintage.

At the same time, our student population has changed. Many of today's students have more significant disabilities than in the past. These students' complex needs have driven advances in our program, and indirectly, have driven advances in the development of assistive technologies.

Read on to hear from long-time staff members about how the technology and therapies have changed since they joined HMS.

Trish Hamilton, Senior Occupational Therapist,

It's all about how the student is going to access his or her environment and by which means — the power wheelchair, the communication device, the computer — we can give the student the most independence and control.



Trish Hamilton with Ryan Bonner

Typically we use a lot of switches, because most of our students have high muscle tone, which impedes their ability to use a joystick. When I started at HMS in 1991, we used to have to make our own switches with wires and a solder gun, because there weren't many commercially

available. There was no such thing as an electronic switch; they were all mechanical. We would hold switch-making workshops in the OT room!

Now there are almost limitless options for switches for computers, communication devices and power chairs. These new switches allow for better access to power mobility. Sometimes we work with proximity switches, where you don't even need to touch the switch. You just have to be in close proximity.

Vicki Vanartsdalen, Physical Therapy Assistant



Vicki Vanartsdalen with Eubie Hodges

A significant part of what we work on in PT is power mobility. It has been demonstrated that movement enhances cognitive development, and we've seen how gaining autonomy for controlling their movement empowers our students to strive to be independent in other ways. We want to give the kids the ability to move to where they want, when they want, and to not have to depend upon their caregiver as they would with a manual chair. Our challenge is to take children with very little control over their own physical movement, and find a spot on their body which they can use to move and stop that chair.

Seventeen years ago, when I came to HMS, the wheelchair industry was very limited in what it

could offer children with multiple disabilities, so we had very few options for power mobility training. Today there are myriad new switch and programming technologies that allow us to individualize the chair to the child.

Some of our children now use head arrays, which have three electronic switches embedded into a head support to allow the student to control all of their assistive devices — their power wheelchair, communication device and computer — through head movement. Fiber optic switches, made of a beam of light, enable students with the most limited mobility to control their chair through a minute movement, as slight as that of one finger or thumb.

Joysticks have been around since I came to HMS, but we used to have to try to adapt their mountings ourselves. Now the mountings are much more adaptable, so we can mount a joystick anywhere, from the feet all the way up to the head, depending on the needs of the student.

Marianne Gellert-Jones, Clinical Feeding Specialist & Speech Language Therapist

We have many more students who have significant medical and feeding needs than when I joined HMS in 1998. Our students' needs dictate the scope of this program, so we've changed to adapt to their complex feeding requirements. These changes have been across the board and involve training and technology, even renovations to the building.

When we planned for our new Harris Hall, we included an additional, smaller dining room. Now in use, that room creates a perfect quiet space for the students who can't be fed in an overly stimulating environment. This room serves an additional, emotionally driven purpose; it allows our residential students a more intimate, familial mealtime experience at breakfast and dinner.



Marianne Gellert-Jones with Marlee Luckinbill

Today, many more of our students are receiving at least part of their nutrition through tube feeding. We look at feeding as interactive, focusing on how the student and his or her feeder are working together. We are training more feeders than we used to, while heightening staff awareness of students' feeding needs.

For students who can receive part of their meals orally, we place a strong emphasis on giving the child a pleasurable oral experience. Our kitchen has kept pace with our needs to provide pureed food and foods of various textures that meet a variety of tastes and nutritional needs.

Dawn Rainey, Assistive Technologist

When I joined HMS in 1998, the technology was primitive. Early communication devices were huge black and white screened machines. Power chairs had limited electronics, and everything was bulky and cumbersome. A chair would have multiple boxes on the back to do what we can now do with one component. Internet access was dial up.

Today, everything is streamlined. Communication devices have changed the most, allowing for much greater independence. One of our graduating students uses an eye gaze communication device. She looks at a location on her device and her device speaks the word or words signified by the icon at which she is looking. It's

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Staff Innovations/From page 9

The curriculum exposes our students to new people in the community, while teaching decision-making, creative thinking and problem solving. It empowers the students to assert themselves and their ideas into the creative process. The students from Drexel University learn how to build a therapeutic relationship by finding ways to empathize, interact, support, guide and help their partner from HMS.

Kristin McKeown, M.Ed., ATP & Dawn Rainey, BS, ATP

Attaining increasing independence is critical for the self-esteem and emotional health of any child. Most of our students need assistive technology to function independently. As a result, HMS has invested in staffing resources to ensure that our program is evolving as quickly and efficiently as the technology allows. Assistive Technologist Dawn Rainey, who possesses a BS in engineering, keys into the functional side of the technology. She works with staff to make sure they have the right equipment, trains them on its function and use, and makes sure it is in working order. Special Education Teacher Kristin McKeown, who earned an M.Ed. in curriculum, instruction and technology, is also an assistive technologist. Her focus is on utilization of technology.



Kristin McKeown & Dawn Rainey

Last October the two presented, "Ten Things I Can Do For Myself," at the Closing the Gap: Changing Lives with Assistive Technology Conference in Minneapolis. Using the concept of "a day in the life," the two provided concrete, detailed directions for helping children with multiple disabilities, including intellectual impairment, to function more independently at school and at home. Because children with severe disabilities are often underrepresented at conferences, the information provided was well received by the teachers and parents in attendance.

The presentation began with how a child can interact during morning circle time, and moved through student jobs (such as delivering messages), participation in school activities, after school leisure time, family game night and even a birthday party.

Throughout, the focus was on how to use technology to support independence. Some of the information provided included: using a fan and switch to enable a child to blow out his or her own birthday candles; playing musical chairs with children who use wheelchairs; setting up a child to be the DJ at a school dance, so that he or she can still participate even if they are not interested in dancing; using a communication device to share news during circle time; and adapting a spinner so that a child can take a turn in a game.

The presentation provided a very specific roadmap to parents and teachers looking for tools to better include children with severe disabilities in their classroom or their own home, while encouraging and teaching independence. ■



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HMS School News | Spring 2011

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/serving students from any locality without regard to race, color, religion, disability [except as limited by PDE program approvals], ancestry, national origin, age [within school ages] or gender.

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.

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much faster for her and better suited to her needs.

All of the new communication devices are computer-based, which makes them easier to program. They have larger vocabularies and more features are built in. Like power wheelchairs, they're also much lighter than their predecessors.

The only things that have gotten bigger are the computer monitors. All of our students are using 22" iMacs, with large monitors to accommodate their vision impairments, and adjustable screens, which can be angled to suit their needs. Today, every classroom and therapy area has high speed Internet. ■

