

# hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • Spring 2012

## Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD



“Inclusion” is one of those buzzwords which causes great debate within the special education community. We believe our students are best served by receiving highly specialized intervention from a team of professionals who are expert in meeting their complex needs. Yet we are deeply committed to their inclusion in the broader community, and that means preparing our students for the world — and the world for our students.

Every decision we make, every service we provide, every collaboration in which we participate, is guided by the mission of preparing our students to engage as fully as possible outside our walls.

This month, we remember Phyllis Dupuis, a member of our team for 31 years, who died on December 30th. Phyllis worked tirelessly to provide our students with the same opportunities and experiences that children without cerebral palsy enjoy. Phyllis taught all of us to continually ask ourselves what more we can do to include our students in the broader community — not by doing things for them but by giving them the tools and opportunities to engage.

This spring, our halls are abuzz with the type of collaborations that do just that: “Something Magical,” our 30th anniversary theatrical collaboration with Germantown Friends School; our annual Expressive Arts Festival; dance collaborations with fusion2 and Drexel University, which culminate in performances at the Painted Bride Art Center and the university; “Artist Exchange,” our collaborative art show with PDDC at City Hall, which celebrated National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month; and our fifth year of participation as a team in Philadelphia UCP’s Life without Limits 5K Run/Walk.

These programs allow our students to present themselves like any

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## Collaboration Builds Bridges To the Community

One day a week, a 19-year old HMS student travels from school to his internship at the Veterans Administration Hospital in West Philadelphia. Like any other VA volunteer, he follows a dress code and underwent security screening by the federal



*Something Magical, 1987*

government. The student likens his role to that of a recreation therapist, helping with leisure activities, going for walks with residents, talking with them, and giving perspective.

“It’s important for me to work because it motivates me and helps me with life skills and work skills,” says the young man. “People see me working and it opens opportunities for them. Maybe they think, ‘I can do that too.’ It inspires them.”

He is the second HMS student to participate in the school’s internship program. The young program supports two of HMS’s key missions: preparing students for active participation in the community and preparing the community for including our students in it; and providing students with the same childhood experiences as their able-bodied peers.

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## Parents' Corner: The HMS-GFS Connection

By Richard Dupuis  
Germantown Friends School, 1975

I graduated from Germantown Friends School (GFS) in 1975; my daughter, Lilly, is a member of the Class of 2017. My mother, Phyllis Dupuis, a long-time HMS employee, had a knack for connecting



with people and for connecting people with each other. This is what she did for HMS and GFS.

Long after I had graduated from GFS, my mother stayed in touch with many of the faculty there. She became friends with Teresa Maebori, a lower school teacher. That relationship would forever change the lives of hundreds of students at both HMS and GFS.

My mother and Teresa conceived the idea of collaboration between Teresa's third/fourth grade class and my mother's beloved students at HMS. After overcoming some initial hurdles, they developed the musical project that has become known as "Something Magical." Every spring,

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## Welcome Peter McGuinness Director of Admissions

**Q** *What is your role at HMS?*

**A** As HMS's first fulltime director of admissions, I am part of an advancement team that includes marketing and development professionals. We work to increase enrollment, seek additional funds, and educate targeted audiences about HMS's services.

**Q** *Please describe your professional history.*

**A** I am professionally trained as a social worker but also have a background in marketing outreach. Over the past 20 years, I have worked in a variety of settings that include development of community homes for adults with intellectual disabilities, overseeing care management for children and adults with disabilities, and most recently, admissions at Melmark, Inc, another Pennsylvania approved private school.

**Q** *You've made a career out of helping people with special needs access care. What drew you to this specialty?*

**A** I find supporting people to achieve a better quality of life through greater access to services especially rewarding.

**Q** *What do you see as the greatest accomplishment of your career?*

**A** My greatest accomplishment is being a part of organizations that help change how others treat children and adults with disabilities.

**Q** *What attracted you to HMS?*

**A** The history and excellent reputation of HMS's services to children attracted me here.

**Q** *What is your vision for HMS?*



**A** My vision is to make HMS's comprehensive services known to families who can benefit from our expertise, and to potential funders who will support our services.

**Q** *What do you see as HMS's strengths?*

**A** The staff who care for and serve our students see them for the unique individuals they are. They dedicate themselves to the extensive planning and treatment that is integral to addressing the needs of each child, and provide treatment in a manner that communicates to each child how truly special he or she is.

**Q** *What do you see as HMS's greatest challenge in fulfilling our mission?*

**A** Obtaining diversified funding for programs and maintaining student enrollment in an environment of fiscal cutbacks pose huge challenges. Adapting to these fiscal changes and seeking new admission referral sources presents a unique opportunity for growth.

**Q** *Any final thoughts?*

**A** It is a privilege to work with professionals on a skilled team towards a common goal of caring work.

## In Memoriam to Someone Magical: Phyllis Dupuis

On December 30th, our school lost a great friend and our students, a tireless advocate, Phyllis I.K. Dupuis, 93. Many of the collaborations that help our students form relationships in the community began with Phyllis. She was an avid champion for inclusion of children and young adults with disabilities. She fervently believed that our students deserved the same opportunities and experiences as typical children, and she created our Recreation Program to fulfill this mandate.

Phyllis joined HMS as a speech therapist in 1966. During her 31-year tenure here, she transformed our Recreation Program into a force for building bridges. Phyllis was an idea person, but she was also a doer, turning her ideas into reality. She initiated our Guest Reader Program, which has brought notable Philadelphians, such as the Honorable Edward Rendell and radio personality/therapist Dr. Dan Gottlieb, to HMS. She connected us with Germantown Friends School, and, working with GFS teacher Teresa Maebori and our music therapist Andrea Green, created “Something Magical,” the annual collaborative theater production intended to forge bonds and understanding between our students and their peers at GFS.

“Phyllis was always thinking about what our students needed and making it happen,” says HMS Executive Director Diane L. Gallagher. “She knew of so many resources throughout the region and would travel to learn about how we could bring some of those experiences here for our kids — Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, flower



and butterfly gardens, adapted playgrounds, music, art and interesting people from all backgrounds.”

A talented gardener, Phyllis also set the wheels in motion for a backyard garden with water fountain and pergola, by reaching out to the AIA’s Community Design Collaborative and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. A mahogany bench in the garden was dedicated to her on the occasion of her retirement in 1997.

Says Gallagher, “It would be hard to find an aspect of our extensive recreation program that doesn’t have Phyllis’ mark on its creation.”

What is miraculous is the gift she had for recognizing what each person had to offer, whether that person was a member of Philadelphia’s elite or a neighbor in our West Philadelphia neighborhood. She fostered relationships with all of these people and organizations that enriched the day-to-day lives and education of our students. She introduced our art specialist, Eiko Fan, to HMS, where the arts continue to hold a prominent place. Other people she brought to our school joined our community as volunteers. At least one of these volunteers, Vince Gallo, continues with us to this day.

Although she was a powerhouse, Phyllis was unassuming. “Her resolve and her spirit were remarkable,” says Gallagher. “She was truly an inspiration.”

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other child. They let them take a bow, hear the applause and feel pride in their performance. They create a means for even those with very limited mobility to express themselves through art and display it for all to see. By opening these performances and exhibitions to the public, we educate others about what people with complex disabilities can accomplish, thereby preparing them for our students’ inclusion in the larger community. By joining together with others, we reinforce the message that we can all participate at some level.

Year-round, our internships and school trips also take our students outside this building, giving them typical experiences, allowing them mastery, and introducing others to their abilities.

These opportunities necessitate careful planning and support, which is extensive and expensive. This month, we introduce you to our new development associate, Erica Cheslock, who will be seeking private sources to help fund our special programming, and re-connecting with our faithful friends and funders. You will also meet our new admissions director, Peter McGuinness, who is introducing the world beyond Philadelphia to our school, helping us to fill the vacancies left by this year’s large graduating class.

Providing our students with the opportunity to function independently in the community takes a great deal of forethought, support and money, but it is always, always worth it in the end.



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the two schools produce an original musical that pairs HMS and GFS students in a joint venture, using music and story to illustrate the similarities among all people, regardless of superficial differences.

At the time, I was fully absorbed with my own life as a medical student and only vaguely aware of this flurry of activity. But every year, my mother would mention "The Show" that HMS and GFS were putting on under the guidance of music therapist/playwright/director Andrea Green.

Fast forward to spring 2008. Much had changed: my mother's health had deteriorated. I had been married to my wife, Marj, for 17 years, and our daughter was a third grader at GFS. Her teacher? Teresa Maebori.

Finally, I experienced "Something Magical" for myself, as a proud parent...and son, because they were honoring my mother that year. The kids were oblivious to the historical significance; they were happily immersed in the moment, in the performance, in their friends. My daughter couldn't get enough of her partner. I, too, was caught up in the moment. But looking back, what I witnessed was not just two schools getting together and having fun. These were children with different school experiences, developing personal relationships, and maintaining a connection. A connection that had started many years before and has been changing lives ever since.

**Collaboration**/From page 1

"These experiences challenge our students at a higher level than our school setting where they have much in common with everyone else," says life skills teacher Kevin Rafferty.

"Our students are changing the world simply by being a part of it. They're ambassadors," says Christina Coia, HMS's director of education. "They can't hide their disabilities. That's almost the first information someone encounters when they meet our students. We want them to move past that and to realize that this is a person who has a disability and who also has interests and talents just like everyone else ... and depending on where you see them — like the theater or work — they're there for the same reason you are."

Changing the world has been a goal of our Recreation and Expressive Arts Therapies Department since it was established in the 1970s as the Recreation Department by Phyllis Dupuis, a visionary who strove to provide our students with typical everyday experiences. Together with music therapist Andrea Green and Germantown Friends School teacher Teresa Maebori, Phyllis was the catalyst for the creation of the "Something Magical" project, our annual theatrical collaboration with GFS.

Now celebrating its 30th year, "Something Magical" had a rocky beginning. The initial idea was to bring Teresa's GFS class to spend time with HMS students, to increase their comfort with children who appeared different from them. That first visit was not as expected; the GFS kids were uncomfortable at HMS, seeing no common ground among the students.

Out of this encounter emerged the concept of producing a musical, in which each GFS student would pair up with an HMS student. The first show, "On the Other Side of the Fence," cast the children as farm animals separated by a fence. Green developed the script and score with a music therapist's keen attention to the abilities of the HMS students. The parts were cast to enable each HMS student to fully participate with the support of his or her GFS partner.

"Phyllis had this idea about an HMS/GFS partnership and believed it would be easier than it was," says Coia. "The first try didn't work, but once the kids had a common goal — a meaningful piece of work — there was a unifying factor, which grew into a relationship."



*Art in City Hall*

Our Expressive Arts Festival is another spring tradition that highlights collaborative, inclusive programming, while students experience typical childhood activities. The Festival showcases the students' yearlong arts creations, including the performing arts collaborations with the fusion2 dance ensemble and Walnut Street Theatre.

Under the guidance of HMS dance/movement therapist Rachel Federman-Morales, HMS students work with fusion2 dancers to develop a dance piece. Federman-Morales challenges the students to express something from inside them, based on a consistent theme. This year's piece, performed to Rusted Root, incorporates all of the expressive arts: dance, poetry, art and music.

Last year, Federman-Morales and one of her

**Collaboration**/From page 4

students were painted as dancers on the City's biggest mural, "How Philly Moves," a larger than life example to the public that people in wheelchairs can dance.

HMS first teamed up with Walnut Street Theatre eight years ago, under the direction of recreation therapist Rich Magnuson and the theater's education director, Susan Nicodemus Quinn. The program began as an experiment, as no one knew what our students might be capable of in this context, and no one at the theater had experience working with children with complex challenges.

Teaching artists help the students develop a storyline for improvisational pieces. "There are no wrong answers," says Magnuson. "We get input from a student about something they want in the show, and whatever comes from them goes in. They recognize that and when it is performed, there is ownership of their contribution and how things evolved. Frequently, they are reminded of what they can't do, so this becomes an avenue for them to demonstrate what they can do. I've had parents come up to me after the show, surprised about what their children could accomplish. It's eye opening for them."

The Festival grew out of HMS's Annual Art Show, initiated by art specialist Eiko Fan. Fan recently formed a new relationship with PDDC's Cultural Arts Center, which offers adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities ways to express themselves through the arts. Together, PDDC and HMS artists created an exhibit of life-size sculpture and large murals celebrating National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month for the Art in City Hall program. "Artist Exchange" is on display through May 4th.

"The works showcase how two groups of people with physical and communication challenges can communicate by doing art together," explains Fan.

**Welcome Erica Cheslock, Development Associate**

Erica Cheslock joined HMS this winter, after spending the last eight years in development at Cornerstone Christian Academy. Erica brings to HMS a depth of experience in grant writing and philanthropic partnerships. She is working closely with our marketing and admissions staff to seek charitable funding sources and fully develop relationships with our individual donors.



As a resident of West Philadelphia, Erica is no stranger to HMS. "I had seen the students on trips to Clark Park," says Erica. "I wanted to be a part of the team that is helping students with their education, development and growth in this wonderful environment. I'm looking forward to getting to know our donors, and exposing more people and foundations to the work that we're doing here."



"Art in City Hall built a bridge with PDDC, an organization that our graduates with an interest in art could access," says Coia, "and it created a new venue to introduce the public to our students' abilities."

Both society's perceptions of people with disabilities and the students we serve have changed dramatically since the first production of the "Something Magical" project. Thirty years ago, our students didn't have the significant needs that we see today. Changes in education laws and increased capacity of local schools have moved more students into public schools, and we began to attract students with more complex challenges. As people with disabilities entered the classroom and the job market, supported by the Americans with Disabilities Act and similar legislation, society began to adapt, removing physical barriers and creating greater opportunities for inclusion.

"The students we served years ago would barely be perceived as having a disability today," says Diane Gallagher, HMS's executive director. "Now we're pushing the envelope to allow our kids to be included and viewed as individuals...children with interests, abilities and rights."

The increased complexity of our students' needs makes including them more difficult, but it's important for our students to be involved with other people, to recognize what is expected behavior in various environments, and to experience all of the things that make a life full.

Bill Hunter, coordinator of recreation and expressive arts therapies, plans field trips for our students, telling the children it's a time to make new friends. It's also a time for others to learn how to make their world hospitable to our students.

"We took our graduating students on the Spirit of Philadelphia last year," remembers Hunter. "We explained that we needed an area to puree the buffet food, and they set it up for us. I think that's going to help when they have other people with disabilities on their boat."

"Our student population is still not very visible in the general community and may be misunderstood," says Rafferty. "When others have consistent, regular exposure to our students, they accept them and see them just as other people. When they go out on internships and excursions, our students become the teachers."



4400 Baltimore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

## HMS School News | Spring 2012

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James E. Gowen, II | *President of the Board of Trustees*

Diane Gallagher Ph.D. | *Executive Director*

4400 Baltimore Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
215/222-2566; fax 215/222-1889  
[www.hmsschool.org](http://www.hmsschool.org)

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.



hms school

# Open House

## Thursday, May 31

9:00-11:00 a.m. &  
1:00-3:00 p.m.

### Your Support Makes a Difference!

Please consider a gift to HMS School through your organization's United Way campaign by designating HMS as the recipient. HMS is #00240 on the donor choice form for the United Way of Southeastern PA and is listed on the UW website, [www.uwsepa.org](http://www.uwsepa.org). HMS is also eligible to receive United Way funds from other regions. Your gift will help us to continue valuable creative arts programs and other special projects that enhance students' development. *Thank you for your generous support.*