

# hms school news

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

## Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

*"What was your child's greatest accomplishment here at HMS?"* we asked the parents of each of our eight graduating students. *"What are your expectations for your child here?"* we ask each parent when we meet during the application process. The time in between these two questions is filled with answers (and more questions), as we get to know each child, learn about his or her

strengths, interests and challenges, and ultimately prepare that young person for a new beginning, as an active adult participating in the world outside our school.

Our job is complex, because our students come to us with significant and varying needs. We are responsible for teaching and caring for the whole child

—her physical and emotional health, education that includes communication and socialization, functional academics, mobility, and for residential students, enriching out-of-school activities. Some parents don't know how to answer the question about expectations because they are not fully aware of the possibilities or they've never experienced a true multi-disciplinary team approach such as ours, which addresses and integrates every aspect of their child's development.

We seek to uncover each child's competencies, focusing on what he can do, to build that child's sense of self-worth and courage to tackle more challenging tasks. We watch the transformation as a child experiences success and gains confidence in his or her abilities. Along the way, we learn where we can expect continued growth and what coping skills we can teach for those areas that present life-long challenges for the child and parents.

Our plan for each child is different. Depending on how a student responds

...Continued on page 8

## Parents Corner

Thomas J. Miller

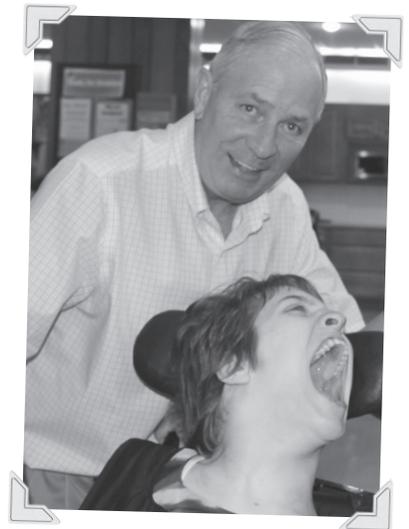
For the past 16 years HMS School has been my daughter Carolyn's place of education and her extended family. We were blessed to find our way there at age five on the advice of developmental therapists and other parents; it was a godsend. My beautiful daughter has multiple disabilities and needed expert help. We were disabled by the sadness of the situation and the troubling thoughts of what was to come.

From day one we found the staff at HMS to be compassionate, understanding and with unending patience. While their students lack some of the usual skills involved in walking, speaking and eating, HMS believes that each student is a uniquely strong, wonderful individual who is ready to push on and make the most of their many talents.

HMS was ready to make that happen with a devoted staff that has little turnover.

Through this continuity, my daughter grew to love and trust many of her therapists, aides and teachers. The feeling

...Continued on page 2



**Parent's Corner**/From page 1

was mutual. They pushed her to develop beyond the limited physical abilities she was born with and aided in the development of her confidence and expressive personality. They exposed her to theater through the HMS-GFS collaboration, horseback riding at Pegasus, music and bowling. Carolyn painted artwork featured in two separate Philadelphia City Hall exhibitions.

Carolyn made life-long friends at HMS with staff and students. She was the flower girl for her aide Judy Artis. Judy recently told me that Carolyn was "like my little sister," and I know Carolyn would like Judy to be her big sister.

HMS manifests the achievements of its students, not their failings, embracing students' unending possibilities. As a result, the students have amazing successes in many endeavors. Through its actions, HMS emphasizes to the world the similarities of individuals with and without disabilities. Dr. Dan Gottlieb, local NPR radio personality, noted this on his May 7, 2012 broadcast when he stated, "every school in America" should emulate HMS School in its approach to individuals with disabilities.

The children who come to HMS have already been mightily tested by illness or by physical and intellectual limitations. They have already proven their strength and resilience. HMS recognizes that strength and tries to build onto it the skills that will be needed for the next phase of life.

Unfortunately staying at HMS School forever is not possible. As the students reach 21, they must graduate and face another painful ordeal. Our daughter Carolyn is now a resident of Good Shepherd Home in Bethlehem. This transition was agonizing for our family, but Carolyn adjusted easily due to the confidence and coping skills gained while a student at HMS. I believe with God's help and the unique and wonderful program at HMS, our children and we parents will better be able to face the uncertain future with increased strength and hope. ■



**Skyler and his GFS partner performing in "On the Other Side of the Fence"**



**Kristin enjoying a field trip to Heinz Wildlife Refuge**



**John and Greg in the Painted Bride performance with their fusion2 partners**



HMS Team Shot at the UCP 5k



Kyle and Charlie beginning the race



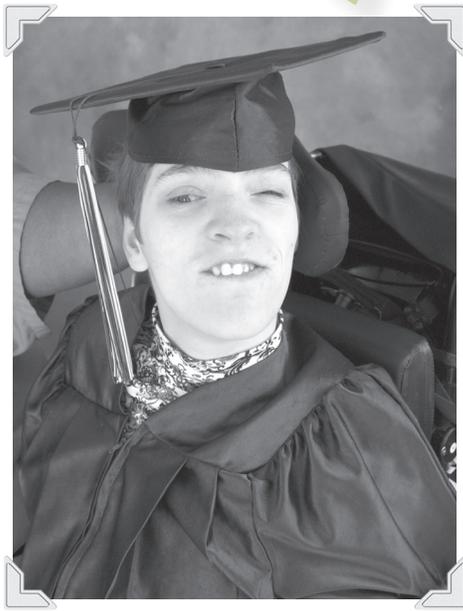
Josh and GFS friends in the performance of "On the Other Side of the Fence"



Ryan playing his part in "On the Other Side of the Fence" production

# hms school Meet our Class of 2012

**Carolyn Miller, 21**  
Maple Glen, PA  
**Years at HMS: 16**  
*Residential student*



*Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Learning to communicate her needs in an effective way. Carolyn uses a communication device. She also knows how to get someone's attention verbally and can answer questions by signing "yes" or "no" with her right hand.

*Favorite extracurricular activities:*

A gifted artist, Carolyn enjoyed participating in the Artist Exchange/Art in City Hall program. She also enjoyed interacting with her partners from Germantown Friends School and the excitement of the "Something Magical" project when she participated several years ago.

*Unique experience at HMS:*

Carolyn was the flower girl in the wedding

of Judy Artis, one of her HMS CNA's.

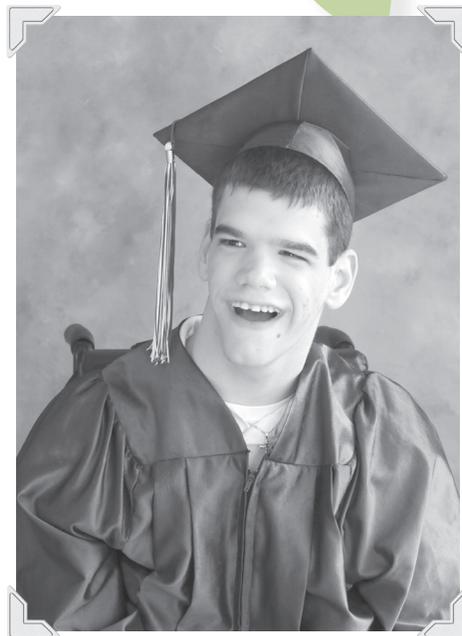
*Plans after HMS:*

Carolyn just recently moved to the residence at the Good Shepherd Home in Bethlehem, PA.

*What makes Carolyn unique:*

Carolyn loves people, has a great sense of humor and is very empathetic. She has a weakness for gossip! It's not uncommon for Carolyn to hear others telling a story, stop what she's doing to listen, and laugh appropriately at just the right time. She has a big heart and gets very concerned if she accidentally hits someone with an uncontrollable movement. Any time another a student cries, you see the concern on her face.

**Shawn Lee, 21**  
Philadelphia, PA  
**Years at HMS: 15**  
*Day student*



*Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Learning to manage food orally and propelling his manual wheelchair.

*What else:*

Shawn has grown tremendously socially. As he's matured, he has become far more outgoing.

*Favorite extracurricular activities:*

Shawn is pure boy, full of energy and enthusiasm. He relishes being out of his chair and enjoys roughhousing. Shawn loves music and will make every effort to play the drums, especially bongos, and the keyboard. His favorite TV shows are musical competitions. At home, he likes to swim and watch movies, particularly those with puppets.

*What makes Shawn special:*

Shawn is an exceedingly happy young man with a bright smile. He is completely engaged and attentive throughout the school day. Although he uses few words, he finds ways to connect with people and to communicate his desire to interact. One way he shows his enthusiasm and interest is by reaching out to someone, clapping the other's hand and saying "yeah" at exactly the appropriate time. Says his teacher, Nicole VanArtsdalen, "I'm going to miss him a lot. Each morning, I get a huge 'hi' and a handshake from him."

**Francesco (Frankie)****DiLauro, 21**

Philadelphia, PA

**Years at HMS: 15***Day student**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Returning to HMS after an extended medical absence and immediately re-acclimating and readjusting here. Frankie adapted to his new challenges, learning new ways to communicate his needs and to remain part of our community. He also learned patience and the meaning of friendship.

*Nickname:*

Rocky. Frankie's teacher, Kristin McKeown renamed this South Philly boy Rocky, because "He's our comeback kid with immense inner strength. He's very funny, and even though he's had to change his means of communication, he continues to socialize with peers and staff by joking around," says McKeown.

*Most important life lesson learned at HMS:*

Patience and the meaning of friendship

*Extracurricular activities:*

A Renaissance man, Frankie enjoys the arts, including literature, dance/movement therapy and music (particularly Lady Gaga and '50s Doo Wop). He is a talented painter, using an adapted hat with a paintbrush or marker to create his works. Frankie also likes using the computer to play games.

*What makes Frankie special:*

"Frankie is a fighter," says his mother.

"With all he has been through, he always retained his great sense of humor."

McKeown agrees, "On his return to HMS, Frankie once again demonstrated his good humor and ability to make others smile."

**John Bailey, 21**

Curwensville, PA

**Years at HMS: 11***Residential student**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Discovering his ability to communicate with other people with his device. Says his teacher, Courtney Grimes, "John now has

a voice and makes sure he's heard." One of John's favorite things to say to his parents is, "I love you." He has also developed strong socialization skills.

*Favorite extracurricular activity:*

Swimming, because he can be free to do what he wants like kicking, standing and feeling weightless. An outdoorsman, John also enjoys walks around Clark Park and spending time on the back porch.

*What makes John special:*

"John has a way of bringing out the best in others. Once you know him, you can't help but love him," says John's mother. Within minutes of meeting someone, John will try to engage them by using his device, smiling at them or laughing so hard he has to catch his breath.

*How does John spend his weekends:*

At home, he enjoys the simple things — going for rides in the truck or in the woods on the trailer he helped his dad build, working in his dad's shop, reading with his mom, swinging on his swing on a summer's day and going to the drive-in. Upon his return to HMS, he loves to share news of his weekend with his HMS family.

*Plans after HMS:*

To spend time with his family, helping his dad in the shop, meeting new friends and possibly moving to a group home.

**Michael Kelly, 21**

Bristol, PA

**Years at HMS: 13***Day student*

The family spends time together gathering things from his neighborhood for Michael to bring to school, often large quantities of soda can tabs to benefit Ronald McDonald House. Mrs. Kelly also supplies general household items for art projects at the request of Eiko Fan, HMS's art specialist.

*"Happy Days":*

"Michael has a million dollar smile and is always in a great mood," says his teacher, Cheryl Leask "I've never met anyone who's so consistently upbeat, even when he's uncomfortable. He draws people to him." When people say "hello" to Michael, he puts a lot of effort into a warm response, and says "heyyyy," sounding just like Fonzie from "Happy Days."

**Sam Wheaton, 21**

Mauricetown, NJ

**Years at HMS: 14***Residential student**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Independence through mobility and augmentative communication. Sam now uses his device to communicate

independently with staff and let them know in which activities he wishes to participate, to engage with others, and to let people know his preferences.

*Sam's journey:*

"I've watched Sam grow from a little boy into a young man," says Bill Hunter, coordinator of Recreation and Expressive Arts Therapies. "Sam is nonverbal, which can lead to a lot of frustration. He has worked very hard to learn how to be patient while waiting for his needs to be met, and how to calm himself when he's feeling frustrated. This was a big challenge for Sam and I'm very proud of his accomplishments."

*What makes Sam unique:*

Sam has a winning smile, which draws people to him. He can be very friendly when he's engaged.

*Favorite extracurricular activities:*

Sam has a passion for music – listening to it, watching music videos, and singing. He has learned to control the radio and CD players, and to use his communication device, which gives him greater independence. Each Friday, as he waits for his father to pick him up, he sits and listens to the radio, checking for his dad every few minutes.

*Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Using his device to communicate his needs and desires, for recycling (his job at school), and for interacting with his classmates.

*Nickname:*

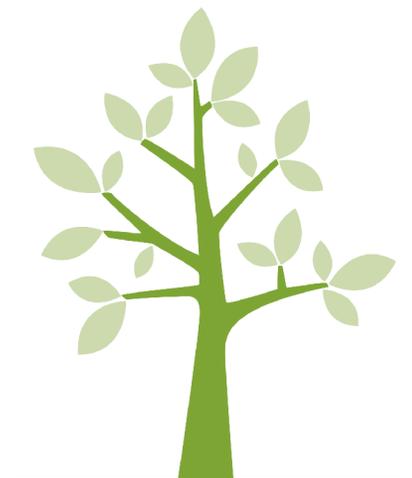
Michael Recycles

*What makes Michael unique:*

Michael has brought a keen awareness of recycling to HMS, and his work on this issue has given his team a meaningful way to build Michael's skills. Michael uses his communications device to remind people to recycle, picks up the recycling throughout the school, and sorts it with his classmates, using his elbow to knock the items into the appropriate recycling bin.

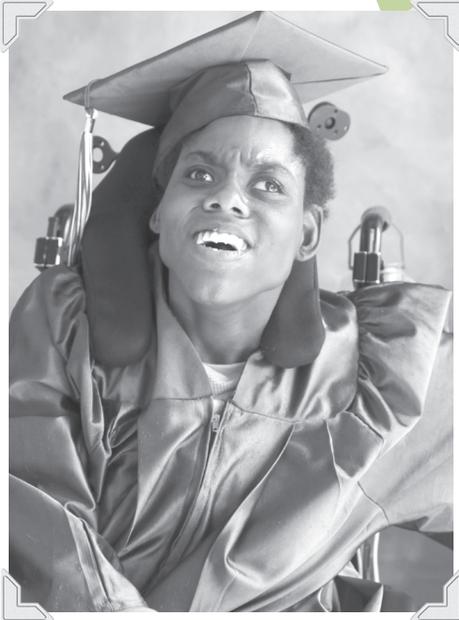
*A family affair:*

Michael's mother has embraced Michael's passion for recycling, helping Michael to connect his home and school communities.



**Taniesha Woodley, 21**

Philadelphia, PA

**Years at HMS: 8***Day student**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Learning to communicate using augmentative communication methods. When Taniesha started at HMS she rarely used her basic communication device. She has made significant progress with a more sophisticated, speech-generating device which allows her to independently access a larger vocabulary. Throughout the day she often uses this to inquire about her schedule. She also uses her device to ask the staff to call the nurse when her tube-feeding pump needs attention or she needs other types of care.

*What makes Taniesha unique:*

Taniesha is a warm and social person. She knows how to support her classmates by reaching out to touch, comfort or calm them when one gets upset. During her years at HMS, she has formed strong bonds with a number of staff members, and will be missed greatly, particularly by Meredith Cracknell, her speech therapist.

“Her face lights up when she sees certain people, and her smile can brighten any day!,” says Cracknell.

*How does Taniesha spend her leisure time:*

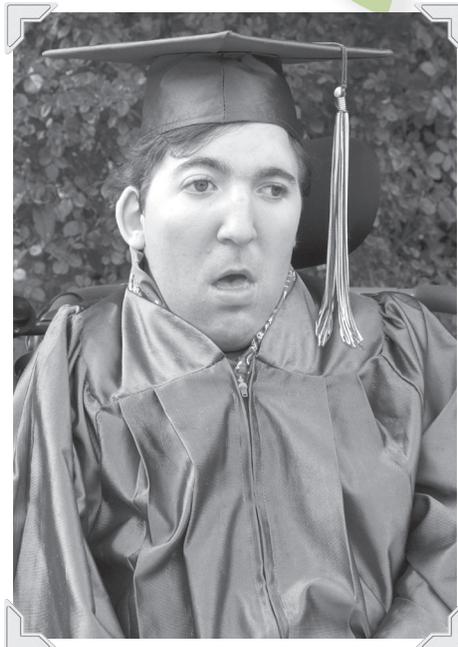
Taniesha is very interested in the world around her. She has fun watching music videos of her favorite musical artists and paging through magazines, catalogs and books.

*The home and school connection:*

Taniesha has a very close bond with her family. She loves to talk about them when she is at school and to call her mother from school.

**Andrew Dennin, 21**

Maple Glen, PA

**Years at HMS: 16***Residential student**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:*

Developing the social skills to interact in groups of people, despite having significant visual impairment. He can now patiently

wait his turn. Andrew has learned to try, accept and even enjoy new experiences and activities. He has shown great improvement in using his communication device and his facial expression to interact with others. With all of these skills, he can participate in more activities and enjoy himself.

*What makes Andrew unique:*

“Andrew has a quiet, yet strong presence,” says his occupational therapist, Janice Barbour. Easygoing and calm, Andrew is aware of everything happening around him, and uses his voice and/or device to contribute. When he’s enjoying himself, Andrew becomes animated and shares his beautiful smile! He truly loves going to school to spend time with his friends, teachers and the team at HMS.

*Internal strength:*

“Andrew is quite resilient,” explains Barbour. “Upon returning to school after an extended absence following surgery and complications, he was back to himself in short order.”

*Extracurricular activities:*

Andrew loves horseback riding and swimming. His movement in the water allows him a sense of freedom, and the riding relaxes him. Andrew also enjoys music and is an appreciative viewer of musical and theatrical performances — smiling, vocalizing and moving his arms in applause. When he listens to music while resting in bed, he often ends up laughing and moving to the music. ■



4400 Baltimore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

## HMS School News | Graduation 2012

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

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.

### Director's Message/From page 1

to one aspect of our intervention, we adjust course with consensus among the team about how we can best help her develop to fulfill her potential as a student, a family member, and a part of the community. We draw out interests and skills, setting goals and looking for ways to motivate for continued progress. Throughout this process with its successes and missteps, the family begins to more clearly foresee possibilities and develop expectations for their child that are often different from what they could have envisioned when we first met. And with the quickly and ever changing landscape of assistive technology innovation, there are always new possibilities. Right now, we are working with a bioengineering class at the University of Pennsylvania whose students are testing prototypes of adapted cameras and musical instruments with our students, opening up new opportunities for our students.

In this newsletter, we celebrate our Class of 2012 – eight unique, resilient, loving individuals, each of whom has been preparing for the challenges that await them outside of our school. And we look forward to their visits back to us, to learn about the ways in which they've become engaged participants in their community, to share their successes and give us a glimpse of how their world of opportunities continues to change. ■