



hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • Spring 2015

Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

This is the time of year when we all think about new beginnings and transitions. Here at HMS, we are undergoing some very important transitions. Board president James Gowen, II, recently handed over the reins to newly-elected board president, Marie Logue. We thank Mr. Gowen immensely for his years of service, bringing his business acumen to the board. Ms. Logue has dedicated herself to working with people with disabilities, and has a profound understanding of the nature and importance of our work. She has already become a fixture in our hallways and classrooms, with her hands-on style and deep interest in engaging with our students and staff. On the school side, there are positive changes as well. Mary Barrett, who is in her first year as director of nursing, continues to work to align our nursing services with the increasing complexity and needs of our students.



In this newsletter, you'll read an excerpt of an in-depth article we wrote for *Exceptional Parent* magazine, about how schools can work as a liaison to the medical team in meeting a child's nutritional needs. Our staff here has the expertise and experience to share valuable information with the child's pediatrician and gastroenterologist. The full version of this article, which can be found on our website, enumerates various ways for the school to contribute as part of the team.

As we increase services for our own students, we are also considering initiatives to support people with disabilities outside of our walls, particularly those over the age of 21 and those who are not enrolled at HMS. As part of our strategic plan, we look forward to creating opportunities for these individuals, to connect with some of our team of experts here.

Although change is in the air, there is always a sense of stability here at

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Working With Your Child's School Can Improve Her Nutrition

By Rachel Ezekiel-Fishbein

This is an excerpt from a full article that was published in *Exceptional Parent* in February 2015, for the full article please visit www.hmsschool.org/newsevents/in-the-news.



Fourteen-year old Shannon Ward loves to eat, particularly chocolate and, specifically, Nutella, which is what she asked for this Christmas, and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Yet, gaining weight has been difficult for Shannon since she was just over a year, and has been getting more difficult as she's been going through her adolescent growth spurt.

A gastrostomy tube (g-tube) inserted before she was two provides Shannon, who has spastic cerebral palsy, with nutrition and hydration, and helps her meet her nutritional needs for growth. Shannon's mother, Janine Blythe, is committed to sustaining her daughter's desire to eat orally.

So although eating is not Shannon's primary source of nutrition, Blythe works closely with HMS, where Shannon has attended since the age of six, to ensure that Shannon eats lunch here with her peers. At school, Shannon's g-tube feedings are scheduled so as not to interfere with her daily lunchtime date with her friends.



For students such as Shannon, eating is complicated. Multiple factors enter the equation, such as what textures they can tolerate (Shannon needs her food fork-mashed or pureed with a fork, chopper or blender), appropriate body positioning for eating, oral motor patterns, ability to swallow, motility and elimination problems, ability to thrive,

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Parents' Corner

By Susan Pinto

Tom and I were filled with mixed emotions when we received the news that Jack would be attending HMS School last spring. We were so happy because we felt that HMS would provide the mobility and communication support that Jack needed, but we were also apprehensive because Jack had never attended a full day program



and we were not sure how he would adjust. Jack had received Early Intervention services beginning at three months old and attended a half day preschool program since age three, but he had never been gone a full day. When our school district and pediatrician recommended HMS as a placement for Jack, we did not hesitate to visit. We were thrilled when we heard he would be attending and it didn't take long for us to realize that we no longer needed to worry. After the first week, we knew that Jack was ready for a full day program and HMS was the perfect place for him!

Jack has enjoyed HMS from the beginning and his transition has been seamless. He is eager to leave in the morning and when he arrives home it is apparent that he has had a great day! Jack's team has really taken the time to get to know him and they get excited when he accomplishes a new skill. His teacher Ed Contaldi knows how much Jack responds to music and Jack loves to play drums for him. His team works tirelessly on helping him to use a switch so that now he causes something to happen, but that someday he will be able to use the switch to select and send a message to communicate with us. We are thrilled that Jack can now feed himself a good portion of his meal and is more interactive with us at home.

It has been so comforting to know that all of Jack's needs are taken

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Meet Marie Logue President, Board of Trustees

At the Annual Meeting of the board of trustees in December 2014, Marie Logue assumed leadership of that group. Ms. Logue joined our board of trustees in 2010.

Q *Why did you first get involved with HMS School?*

A I was asked to join the HMS Board by Anne Wilmerding, a good friend and former President of the HMS Board. On a personal level, getting involved was a no-brainer because I had a brother who lived with CP his whole life and I know firsthand how challenging and fulfilling his life was, I felt I could honor him by giving my time and energy to HMS. He was a remarkable person and every time I come to HMS for a meeting or function I see my brother, Stephen, in the children and young men and women we serve. The fact that I am able to work with so many talented people in an effort to improve the lives of our students and their families is something I cherish.

Q *What is your vision for HMS under your leadership, do you have specific goals that you would like to see the board accomplish this year?*

A I come to this position with very simple objectives. They are to lead the board and the senior management team in carrying out HMS's strategic plan and doing all that we can do to adequately and effectively serve our students and their families today and in the years ahead. I am not suggesting this will be easy, as these are challenging times for all non-profits and particularly educational institutions. We face budget constraints and fundraising pressure, but I am an optimist and I believe by working together across all departments and constituencies we will be successful in meeting our objectives.

Q *What do you see as the strengths of HMS?*

A There are so many: our students, their families, our staff, our board (current and former), our history, our supporters and our mission. If we could figure out a way to have our current and prospective donors visit HMS, watch our students and teachers in action and learn firsthand about all of the amazing things we do



each and every day, I am certain our future will be secure for years to come. Clearly that is a tall order, but we can continue to do the things we do well, improve in areas where we need to improve and never shy away from accepting the challenge of taking HMS to the next level in everything we do. I am excited to lead the board in this effort.

Q *Do you have specific skills, qualities and expertise that you feel you can bring to your new role with HMS?*

A The short answer is “maybe”. My career in the for-profit world was in the senior living industry where I served in many different capacities, including as an “Area Manager” in the Philadelphia/Mid-Atlantic market with responsibility for thirteen properties. I had thirteen Executive Directors (and their management personnel) as my direct reports and I had a reputation for being an organized, disciplined leader and team player. My husband frequently tells me that I am an expert at addressing conflict (while never seeking it) and never “coming to the meeting” with a personal agenda. I appreciate his perspective, but I leave those judgments to others. I am an open-minded person and I believe in reaching consensus on difficult issues whenever possible. I enjoy constructive discussion and, when necessary, debate and I look forward to both in this role. Those of us who are fortunate to serve on this Board have a fiduciary duty to our constituents and I am always cognizant of that duty in everything I do on behalf of HMS.

Q *What are the greatest challenges faced by HMS in the coming year? In the coming decade?*

A As I noted above, like most non-profits today, our biggest challenge is having the financial resources to deliver on our mission in both the short and long term. We also face challenges in updating our technology, hardware and software, and physical plant in an economical and efficient manner. We need to work in partnership with our faculty and staff to ensure they have the best resources available, and the training to be industry leaders in best practices, in educating our students. If we are successful, we will be able to “make the case” to donors, foundations and current and prospective business partners that HMS is deserving of their support and partnership. I believe we will succeed because the cost of failing is far too high across too many levels. We are unique and we need to dare to do more for our students while they are here, but also after they move on. I look forward to the work.

Staff Highlights

HMS would like to recognize the following employees for their years of service anniversaries:

5 Years

Sarah Sydney | *Teacher Assistant*
 Vanessa Wilkins | *Certified Nurse Asst.*
 Cinthia Hernandez | *Feeder*
 Pat Schneider | *Registered Nurse*
 Jon Esposito | *Teacher Assistant*
 Melissa Manning | *Registered Nurse*

10 Years

Ciera Hinkson | *Certified Nurse Asst.*
 Lisa McCauley | *Nursing Support*
 Helen Carter | *Registered Nurse*
 Rachel Federman-Morales | *Dance
 Movement Therapist*
 Cheryl Leask | *Teacher*
 Regina Dupree | *Housekeeping Supervisor*

15 Years

Cherise Murphy | *Certified Nurse Asst.*
 Lillian Cunningham | *Housekeeper*
 Heidi Kecskemethy | *Dietitian*

20 Years

Millie Connelly | *Certified
 Occupational Therapy Assistant*
 Vicki Vanartsdalen | *Physical Therapy
 Assistant*

25 Years

Terri Solomon | *Certified Nurse Asst.*
 Kate Paul | *Physical Therapist*

30 Years

Pat Costa | *Business Operations Manager*

35 Years

Christina Coia | *Director of Education*

Director's Message/From page 1

HMS. One valuable aspect of our school is the longevity of our staff. We take great pride in having a majority of our employees choose to spend much of their careers here. Students who enter HMS as young children can form long-term relationships with their educators, therapists and nursing care providers, many of whom will still be here to wish them well when they graduate at 21. In this edition of our newsletter, we honor our long-term staff members.

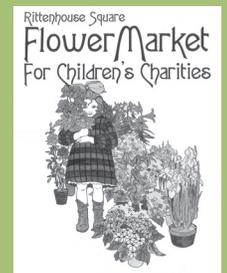
As we are going through transition, so is the educational environment in which we function. This year brought a new governor, a new acting state secretary of education and a new director of the bureau of special education. We are hopeful that these transitions in Harrisburg will improve our state funding and assure that we continue to be a resource for the 500 school districts throughout the state. Highly specialized schools like ours require exceptional levels of funding and support to allow us to meet our students' needs and to innovate for their futures. It has been six years since we received an increase in our state allocation, and without appropriate funding, we cannot provide our students with the tools to fulfill their potential.

We are encouraged by what we've read about Pennsylvania's new acting secretary of education, by the support for public education we heard from Governor Wolf during his campaign, and by the new director of special education's openness to Approved Private Schools like HMS. We are actively involved in the important conversations in Harrisburg about students with significant disabilities, at which we can share our expertise and communicate our needs.

Spring is here, and with it, new leadership at HMS and for the Commonwealth. We invite you to read these pages and learn about the ideas taking root here at HMS, and how we blend what has worked for us historically with fresh, new thinking to address the changes we see in our students and our world. Happy Spring!

Rittenhouse Square Flower Market Selects HMS School as Beneficiary

Each year, The Rittenhouse Square Flower Market for Children's Charities hosts a French-style flower market to benefit four organizations that provide health and welfare services to children. Each year, RFSMCC, volunteers and the beneficiaries themselves sell flowers, herbs, related crafts and paraphernalia to raise funds and showcase the amazing work local organizations are doing. Now in its 101st year, the organization has selected HMS School as one its beneficiaries for 2015.



Please join us by visiting the HMS booth either Wednesday May 6th or Thursday May 7th in Rittenhouse Square. Come rain or shine, we will be selling student artwork, notecards and floral crafts and hosting activities for children from 9am to 6pm both days. These crafts will make excellent Mothers' Day gifts, so make sure to stop by and stock up!

If you would like to attend the formal launch of the Flower Market — RFSMCC's Garden Party at Chima Steakhouse in Philadelphia on April 19th at 2pm — please contact Rachel Calvarese-Donovan by email at rdonovan@hmsschool.org or by phone at 215-222-2566, so she can mail you an official invitation and response card. All proceeds from this event will support the 2015 Flower Market and its beneficiaries (including HMS School).

hms school



Save the Date! Spring Open House

Thursday, April 30th
9:30-11am and 1-2:30pm

Questions and/or RSVP to Annie Oberfield at aoberfield@hmsschool.org

Nutrition/From page 1

and medical conditions such as reflux that can make eating challenging and painful and can often dictate food choices.

“The medical complexities of our students mean there are a lot of concerns around eating and nutrition,” explains HMS pediatric dietitian Heidi Kecskemethy, RDN, CSP, LDN. “We have a cadre of specialized therapists and we routinely send information to families and healthcare providers, but any school can contribute to a child’s medical care team.” A common area of concern is growth. At HMS, growth is tracked through thrice yearly height/length and weight checks. Weighing some children requires specialized equipment, like a wheelchair scale.

At HMS, a multi-disciplinary team comprised of Nutrition and Food Service, Speech and Occupational Therapies, Education, and Nursing develops an individualized nutrition plan for each child, based on multiple factors, including growth, need for weight gain or loss, elimination patterns and frequency, food choices and desires, and presence of physical disorders such as reflux.

According to HMS speech pathologist and clinical feeding specialist Marianne Gellert-Jones, MA, CCC/SLP, children with neurological impairments can become more likely to need the help of a tube for supplemental feeding during adolescence. “We can see a student come back to school after summer vacation and look totally different, because they’ve grown several inches or their positioning needs have changed.”

“Physical changes due to growth can be really challenging and disheartening if they adversely influence positioning and safe oral feeding,” says Gellert-Jones, “A student who was a good eater can suddenly find themselves in a situation where they can no longer fully support their nutritional needs by mouth. We may discover that through physical changes they have become unsafe or unable to completely accept their nutrition orally and thus may need to have a feeding tube. The child hasn’t done anything, but grow. This is the time when our team approach and our relationship



with the child’s medical team is crucial. We can pull together therapeutic services and their medical team to brainstorm ways to maintain the child’s positioning and structural integrity, but our best efforts are often not successful when challenged by the child’s ever changing body.” For a family that has resisted placement of a feeding tube, there is often comfort in knowing that every intervention has been attempted.

“Eating is hard for many of our students. We focus on finding the enjoyment in food, from taste to the personal experience of eating with a group of people,” says Doreen Deola, director of food services at HMS. “Making food appealing, delicious and fun is a way we can ensure our students get their nutritional needs met. Our students are no different than any other students; when you make food fun for them, they’ll want to eat it.”

As Janine Blythe recognized for Shannon, the importance of socialization while dining can’t be overemphasized, particularly for students for whom communication is difficult. Socializing at meals teaches these students to ask for what they want, communicate discomfort, and interact with peers and caregivers.

Visitors to HMS cannot miss its dining room. The tempting scent of cooking food emanates into the entryway. What transpires in the cafeteria is integral to the school’s programming. Students and staff eat lunch together each weekday, enjoying much the same menu. Pediatric dietitians collaborate with the food services team to develop a menu that is adaptable to the individual needs of each student.

“There are various modifications we make, including grounding and pureeing. A huge part of what we do is to make sure the students’ modified food tastes identical to the regular food. If you’re eating a pureed meal, it should taste exactly the same as it does in its original form,” emphasizes Deola. “Taste is everything in eating, so this is critical. It relates to our guiding philosophy of providing our students with as typical a school experience as possible”.



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

Marie Logue | *President of the Board of Trustees*

Diane Gallagher Ph.D. | *Executive Director*

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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, including limited English proficiency, age [within school ages] or gender.

HMS School educates, nurtures, and cares for children and young adults with complex physical disabilities resulting from cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury or other neurological impairments, with the goal of enabling each to reach his or her maximum potential. We promote independence and improve the quality of life for youth in a safe and secure environment so each can lead a fulfilling, stimulating life now and as an adult.

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 Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey and is listed on the UW website, www.uwsepa.org. HMS is also eligible to receive United Way funds from other regions.

Parent's Corner/From page 2

care of while at school. Having his team fully involved in recommending a new wheelchair for him has also been so wonderful because they know what he needs; they are the experts who work with parents to identify what is best for Jack at school and at home. At HMS, parents are truly part of the team and this is evident through the daily communication that helps us get a glimpse into Jack's day. You can't imagine how comforting it is for us to see his face light up when we talk about his teachers, therapists, and classmates, and the things he's been doing during the day. His CNAs are very special to him, and to us, because we know how lovingly they attend to his needs. Parents' Evening, Brunch with Santa, and the holiday show are perfect opportunities to meet other parents and witness first-hand the love and support among the HMS community.

The parent support that we have received from the beginning has been amazing. From the home visit in the summer, to the notes, phone calls, and emails, it is evident how much the staff at HMS care for the students and want them to reach their very best potential. The staff is truly dedicated and it is so plain to see how much the children are loved. I often tell people that HMS is a magical place...what happens behind those walls is awe-inspiring and very much appreciated!