

# hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • JULY 2017

## Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

This month we celebrate with pride as seven students we've watched grow and mature graduate and move into their adult lives: Ryan Bonner, Eric Dreisbach, Heath Goldberg, Skyler Granville, James Hagins, Jr., Xzaria Jenkins and Rebekah Stanley.

These students have worked diligently to prepare to take their place as young adults, connected and contributing as active members in their communities, and we wish them great success. But we also worry because our students deserve the opportunities our school prepares them for, and proposed changes in federal policy threaten this.

You need only spend a few hours here to understand what is possible for our students when they are afforded the full continuum of services — occupational, speech and physical therapy, appropriate health care, and technological expertise — and supported in pursuing their interests through recreation, the arts and community collaboration.

For our students to live full lives as they learn and mature, we, who understand their potential, must advocate for the services they need both in school and as adults: waiver support, quality day programs, residential programs and full access to healthcare without modification, cuts or unnecessary restrictions.

This summer marks the official end of our graduating students' enrollment here at HMS, however, we encourage them to take advantage of the growing opportunities we provide for alumni, by remaining a part of our extended family.



## Parent's Corner

By Jenneen Jenkins-Smith

HMS has been a blessing to Xzaria and our family. The first thing that I would like to say is, ***“Never give up, anything is possible.”*** As I think back over the years that Xzaria has attended HMS, we are truly grateful. I remember when I first heard about a school just for children with cerebral palsy, and asking her early intervention program staff members at Easter Seals about HMS. Everyone told me how great it was, but they also told me it might not be easy to get her placement approved. At the time I lived in the Philadelphia area.

I decided to schedule a visit at HMS to take a tour. I have been a Philadelphia native all of my life and have passed by this beautiful historic building many times before, without knowing what it was. When I arrived for my tour of the school, I couldn't believe what I saw. I was amazed by all of the things the students were doing, the teachers' and staff's interactions with the students and the facility itself. Who would have known that there was a diamond in the middle of University City?

The person who took me on the tour was Diane Gallagher. I remember telling her over and over, throughout the tour that I wanted Xzaria to come to HMS. Diane looked at me and said “We would love to consider your daughter for admission, but in order for her to enroll, your home school district will need to agree that they can't provide the education she needs, and HMS can.” She told me, “you can try your best but that can sometimes be difficult.” I will never

...Continued on page 6

...Continued on page 5



# Meet our Class of 2017

## Ryan Bonner, 21

Hatboro, PA

Years at HMS: 13 • 7-Day  
Residential Student



**Favorite part of HMS experience:** At HMS Ryan was just another student. He didn't feel different. Each student at HMS is special, so Ryan felt safe and could just be himself.

### Most significant accomplishment:

Working closely with Ryan, HMS staff found a communication device and made the necessary modifications to it, to make it a good fit for him. Teaching Ryan to use it gave him a "voice". That "voice" gave him some control over his world. Control that he never had before.

**Plans for after HMS:** We applied, and Ryan was accepted for placement at the Margaret E. Moul Home. Our hope was that Ryan would be able to finish out his last year at HMS. We were advised

however, there was an opening for Ryan on January 18th. We moved Ryan in on January 25th. Ryan was warmly welcomed by MEMH staff and residents, including some former HMS graduates. Ryan's years as an HMS residential student helped prepare him for his new life away from home. Though he misses his old friends at HMS, he has settled in to his new home quite well.

**What makes Ryan special:** Ryan embraces life. His happy disposition and smile make him a joy to be around. We are always amazed that given all he contends with on a daily basis, he is always so happy and quick to laugh. His love of life is a gift.

### What Ryan will miss most about HMS:

Ryan will most certainly miss all of the wonderful people he had the pleasure to know and care for and the experiences he shared during his years as a student at HMS. You have all become family to Ryan and will always have a place in his and our hearts.

## Eric Dreisbach, 21

Chadds Ford, PA

Years at HMS: 8 • Day/Transitional  
Residential Student

### Most significant accomplishment:

The ability to use a power wheelchair. When Eric arrived at HMS he was using a one arm drive manual chair. HMS provided him with a trial power chair and the time to practice until he was ready for his own! Success! This ability has allowed Eric to feel more in control of his independence, make choices, listen, follow directions, have freedom, and dance in circles to



the music. He also has come to realize what his social needs are, how his special people are so significant in his everyday life. He knows how to pull them in with his charm, his few words, he's found ways to reach out. He has found a sense of security with his HMS community/family.

### Favorite extra-curricular activities:

Music: Music with Brad, musical performances, assemblies containing music, theater with music, Peter playing music, Peter packing his musical instruments away, anything with music!

Art: Eric will pinch his fingers together and motion them back and forth on his tray as though he is painting. Art has taught him to express himself through color! It's wonderful to walk the halls of HMS and see all of the expressions of color through art from each student. His room at home is filled with all of his beautiful artwork titled by his interests!

### What Eric will miss most about HMS:

Eric will miss his community of people, his

friendships and all of his people. He will miss the everyday, no two are the same, he's always learning, it's always fresh, exciting, fun and exhilarating.

**Plans for after HMS:** Eric loves to be social and he loves music. So for now, he'll be going to a program called Centerpoint for 2 days a week, a local adult daycare center 2 days a week, and then a day of music, art and exploration. One day, due to having a successful residential experience at HMS, we're hoping for him to go to a residential facility that cares for him as well as HMS did.

**What Eric would tell a new student coming to HMS:**

From the moment you enter HMS and are greeted at the front desk, you see all that the facility has to offer, from the beautiful residential facility to the state-of-the-art equipment, and take in the staff. The Staff are professionals—from the receptionist, to the cafeteria and facilities staff, PCAs, nurses, teachers, therapists, and administration. I can honestly say each and every one of them is exceptional. They are good-hearted, caring individuals properly placed in this school to show love and respect to each and every one of the students. Over the past 8 years, from the first IEP meeting to the last, I have felt Eric's team is his extended family. They know him, they listen, observe, they've challenged him to become who he is today at 21, prepared. Prepared to take his next adventure.

**Heath Goldberg, 21**  
Washington Crossing, PA  
Years at HMS: 6 • 5-Day  
Residential Student

**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:** Heath learned so many great things it is hard to choose. It could be learning



how to drive through the halls, communicating with his device, or understanding the importance of using his voice so people will get to know him.

**Plans for after HMS:** Heath has already moved to Mary Campbell Center in DE and met many HMS alumni. He is enjoying all of the visitors and new faces as he gets familiar with his new routines. Watch out, because he has learned how to Face-Time, and you never know when he will decide to check in.

**Favorite extra-curricular activities:**

Sporting events are Heath's favorite outings. He loves watching the 76ers and the Flyers in action. There is nothing like his laugh when the buzzer goes off and he jumps. Now that he is in DE, the plan is to become a Blue Rocks fan and watch them play baseball.

Heath's also an iPad expert and can often be found searching for fun YouTube clips to watch.

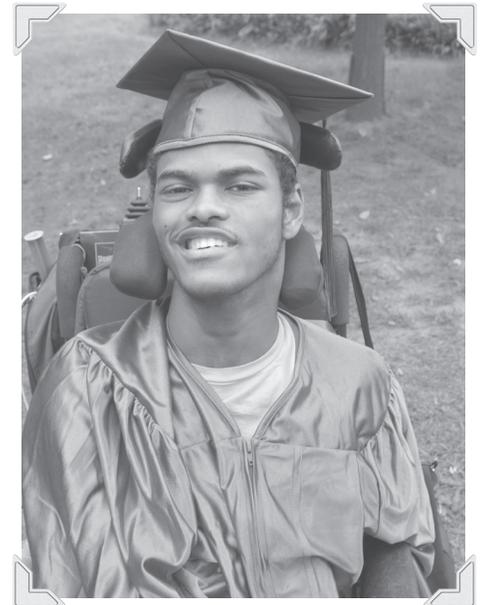
**What makes Heath special?** Heath's smile and fun personality are incredible. When he calls out your name to say "hi" and smiles (or laughs) he is irresistible.

He is the perfect example of how to live, love and laugh.

**What Heath will miss most about HMS:**

Heath will miss seeing all his friends, hanging out in Harris Hall, and getting to be with the amazing staff at HMS.

**Skyler Granville, 21**  
Bensalem, PA  
Years at HMS: 14 • Day Student



**Favorite part of HMS experience:**

Skyler enjoyed his experiences working with his first teacher Nancy Barrow and his last few years with Kevin Rafferty. He also particularly enjoyed riding an adaptive bike around the hallways.

**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:**

Skyler's most significant accomplishment is learning to drive around in his power chair, he especially enjoyed driving his chair on field trips with Charlie. Skyler also learned how to use his communication device and is capable of advocating his

**Class of 2017**/From page 3

needs at school, home and in the community.

**Favorite extra-curricular activities:**

Skyler loves dance movement, Walnut Street Theatre group and art.

**Plans for after HMS:** Skyler plans on attending The Kardon Center for Arts Therapy at Settlement Music School as well as taking a continuing education class at Bucks Community College.

**What Skyler will miss most about**

**HMS:** Skyler will miss all the teachers, as well as the staff at HMS, especially Kevin Kramer. Skyler will also miss all his fellow classmates, but looks forward to staying in touch with all his friends after HMS.

**James William Hagins, Jr. (Billy), 20**

Bryn Mawr, PA

Years at HMS: 12 • Day Student

**Most significant HMS accomplishments:**

Although it's difficult to single out just one, we'll try. Billy started HMS at age 9. At that time he had no exposure

to adaptive switches or communication devices. With the collaboration of teachers and therapists, Billy has learned alternative methods of communication. He can now use his device on a more consistent basis to relay things like his feelings, yes or no, his wants, his likes and dislikes, and yes, he has jokes to tell.

**What makes Billy special:** Billy is special because of his never-ending commitment to try his best. He has matured into a good-natured young man that we're very proud of. He has a very gentle spirit. He rarely complains. He's always ready to listen and be attentive to others. He enjoys life and is happy to participate as much as possible. He likes to keep the peace with his calm demeanor.

**Favorite part of HMS experience:** Billy enjoyed participating in annual productions with GFS when he was younger. Now he enjoys the spring dances. He loves getting dressed up, and he especially enjoys the company of his beautiful dates.

**Favorite extra-curricular activities:**

Billy enjoys spending time with his family. He loves going to the movies. His favorite so far this year was "Beauty and the Beast." He enjoys the museums, especially The Franklin Institute where he saw the Jurassic World exhibit. He also loves music and reading books.

**Plans for after HMS:** Billy is looking forward to new adventures. He has his whole life ahead and plans to continue his education through an assortment of cultural and artistic activities. He hopes to stay connected to HMS alumni.

**Xzaria Jenkins, 21**

Collingdale, PA

Years at HMS: 11 • Day student



**What makes Xzaria special:** Xzaria has learned to communicate with her eyes. When you look into her eyes, you are able to tell what she likes or doesn't like. She will be sure to let you know exactly how she is feeling on any given day. She enjoys being the social butterfly and the diva of the school. When she rolls into a room she loves to let people know that she has arrived by saying "Hello" to everyone.

**Favorite part of HMS experience:**

Xzaria's favorite part of HMS is giving the daily weather report on her device. She also enjoys listening to Emily and Ed play their musical instruments in class or just break out with a jam session. She also enjoys playing on the computer and in the Sensorium. One of her most memorable moments is when she was honored by Fresh Artists at the Philadelphia School District building for a piece of art that she created which was displayed in an office building in downtown Philadelphia.

**Favorite extra-curricular activities:**



Her favorite extra-curricular activity is painting. She enjoys making paintings, sculptures and t-shirts with Eiko. She has learned to use adaptive paint tools to help make painting more accessible. While painting you will find her very quietly and intensely focused on her masterpiece.

### What Xzaria will miss most about

**HMS:** Xzaria will miss all of her classmates, teachers, therapists, nurses and staff who have shown her that life for her has no barriers. HMS has shown her that she can do anything, even with some of the challenges she faces. They have given Xzaria the tools to be creative and made adaptations for her to do anything she wants to do. She will miss the school spirit, the love they show and the care they give, and all of the cool fun and creative activities that the school does on a daily basis. She will truly miss hearing her HMS nickname “Za-Za” being called throughout the hallways of HMS.

**Plans for after HMS:** Xzaria is planning to attend CADES day program throughout the week. In her spare time, she will continue to attend the YMCA for swimming and also visit her favorite museums, aquariums and trips to her grandparents during the summer. She will continue her painting and plans to sell them at exhibits and online. She is designing her own line of capes as we speak, so please look for her name or even her down a runway near you. (The Diva must go on)

### What Xzaria would tell a new student

**coming to HMS:** You have just won the lottery. You have been blessed enough to be one of the lucky ones to receive the best education and care from around the world. Give it your best, and take all the advice and information this school has to offer. Be informed, involved and plan for the future because the time really goes fast when you're having fun.

## Rebekah Stanley, 21

Aston, PA

Years at HMS: 14 • Day Student



### Favorite part of HMS experience:

Bekah's favorite part of the HMS experience was taking part in all the plays and performances, particularly the HMS/GFS Something Magical collaborations, as well as the Walnut Street Theatre Group. She also liked interacting with her friends and teachers.

### Most significant accomplishment

**at HMS:** Bekah's most significant accomplishment at HMS is becoming more independent, especially with her communication device and carefully driving her power wheelchair.

**Plans for after HMS:** While we would love if she could re-enroll at HMS, we know that's not possible. Instead, we will continue our search for an adult placement facility that will continue to help her grow in many of the ways she has been able to at HMS.

### Favorite extra-curricular activities:

Bekah's favorite extra-curricular activities

were being the “self-proclaimed” assistant nurse, participating in the plays, prom, Student Government, art, and anything else she could volunteer for.

**What makes Bekah special?** Her smile and her friendly, outgoing personality and her desire to care for other people's needs.

### What Bekah would tell a new student

**coming into HMS:** Bekah would say, “Hello. The teachers are very nice. I like HMS”.

### What Bekah will miss most about

**HMS:** Bekah will miss the teachers, her friends and the plays. Mom and Dad will miss the support from the teachers and other staff members.

## Parent's Corner/From page 1

forget, I looked at Ms. Gallagher and said “My daughter will come here. I don't know how, but she will come to this school one day.” Ms. Gallagher gave me a smile and said to me “You are your daughter's voice so be prepared to advocate for her.” That day when I left there I knew that some way, somehow it was going to happen.

I remember driving home and praying to God asking Him “Please allow her to attend here because I want nothing but the best for her and I know you do too.”

A couple of years went past and my family was growing. We now had 3 children, and we were running out of space. We had the opportunity to move to a bigger home in the Delaware County area. Once we moved, Xzaria attended a school called Summit in Delaware County for one and a half years. Not long after she started, we received a letter stating that the school was closing at the end of the school year. I was worried

...Continued on page 8

## Sibshops

By Christine Cuvo, HMS Social Worker

Siblings are some of the most important members of the support team for children with special needs. In many cases, they'll have the longest relationship with the individual with special needs. They provide important peer socialization, opportunities for play, and engagement. However, having a brother or sister with special needs brings its own unique joys and challenges to the lives of young children. As part of my role here of providing support to our families, I feel it's crucial to provide support to our students' siblings and allow them to connect with each other. For many sibs, they don't know anyone else who has a brother or sister like their own.



Last summer, I was trained in the Sibshops model, created by Don Meyer of the Sibling Support Project. As a "first generation facilitator", I've attended a training lead by Don Meyer himself, and can run my own Sibshops and train others to co-facilitate with me. It was a two-day training at the Tennessee School for the Blind in Nashville, TN. This comprehensive training focused on sibling concerns across the lifespan, with a panel of adult siblings who spoke about their experiences with their brothers and sisters into adulthood. Some were Sibshops alumni, and could speak to what their experience was like as children and through their teenage years. In addition to learning about sibling concerns in more detail, the training covered the running of and planning for Sibshops.

Sibshops are events for siblings of children with special needs. They mix peer support and discussion based activities with fun and exciting games. In addition to providing chances for siblings to meet each other and interact, another goal of Sibshops is to provide age-appropriate information to siblings about their brother or sister's special needs. This includes information about their diagnoses as well as the services they receive and equipment they use. This can help siblings interact with each other, particularly if the brother or sister with special needs uses AAC to communicate or requires switches or other adaptations to play games.

In preparing for the Sibshop training, I gathered some information on the number of siblings we have in the HMS community. Our students have over 90 siblings, ranging from infancy to adulthood. I hope to find some way to reach as many as possible, to help foster good relationships between our students and their brothers and sisters, and provide support to our families.

There's more information on the Sibshop model on the Sibling Support Project's Website ([www.siblingsupport.org](http://www.siblingsupport.org))

## Director's Message/From page 1

Our Alumni Saturdays offer a means to reconnect with friends, a space to hang out, and time to enjoy the recreational activities that were such a large part of their years at HMS. Each spring, we welcome alumni to get decked out and join us for our annual Spring Dance. Staying connected to us via social media and our website can also keep alumni involved with the HMS community.

In addition to providing some continuing opportunities for our graduates, which emerged from our last strategic plan, other goals are being addressed, including: expanded outreach to our own community as well as the larger cerebral palsy community, and better communication within and with parents.

Our community includes our students' siblings, who face their own joys and challenges in their role as brothers and sisters to those with special needs. In collaboration with the Sibling Support Project, the first national program dedicated to the concerns of the siblings of people with special health, developmental and mental health concerns, we launched SibShops. Our first SibShop – offering fun and supportive activities – was geared towards younger siblings, using activities and games to engage them, while the second SibShop involved teen-aged siblings where a deeper level of conversation was able to take place. We plan on offering SibShops regularly as a resource to families and to help nurture the relationship between our students and their siblings.

This year we drew upon technology to strengthen our communication with parents and offer better and more frequent information. We opened a parent health services portal with 24/7 access to student health information and initiated a monthly e-health newsletter. Education and therapy

team members committed to increasing the quantity of photos, videos and updates they send to parents with meaningful information about how and what their child is doing day-to-day.

We welcomed a second full-time social worker to better support students and families. Laura Boyd, M.S.W., brings to HMS more than a decade of experience working with children with special needs and their families; first in the special needs unit at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, and more recently, helping families access coverage for special needs with an insurance provider. This unique combination of experience will provide families needed insight into navigating the health system.

As we end our school year, we are heartened by the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, which affirmed the right of students with special needs to access a meaningful education. This decision affirmed that a school district must provide a "more than de minimis" (defined by Merriam Webster as so minor as to merit disregard) education to a child with autism underscores the value of our work and gives us hope.

As we move forward in this uncertain environment, we will continue to look for wins such as this Supreme Court decision, that remind us that our children are valued, and we will commit to continuing to advocate for our students and develop programming that helps them grow into the futures they deserve.



## HMS Awards and Recognitions

### Award for Teaching Excellence

HMS teacher Kevin Rafferty was selected as "Educator of the Year" for 2016 by the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC). Kevin has been working at HMS with our older students as a special education teacher for 15 years. Kevin prepares his students for navigating the world and deriving pleasure from daily life. While he is working with his students, he is also educating the community about accommodating their environment to allow full access. In his IEP meetings Kevin speaks to the student about what they are learning from classmates and what classmates are learning from them, and he empowers his students to direct their own meetings. Kevin works to develop executive functioning skills with students to aid with reading and math. His approach is to provide experiences that enhance skill development to promote self-esteem and mental health, and to enable students to actively direct their day to day future lives. We're so grateful to have Kevin's expertise and warm heart as part of our team.



### Award for Caregiving Excellence

This year's winner of the HMS School "Mary Ann Wilson Award for Caregiving Excellence" went to Cherise Murphy, who is a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) at HMS and has been here for 17 years. Nominated for many reasons, from consistently providing safe, caring and profes-

sional personal assistance, to training new staff, Cherise has worked every shift in the Health Service Department throughout her many years of working at HMS. She has become a resource for valuable information which she consistently utilizes to provide quality services to our students. Cherise is known for arriving early and for her flexibility in being willing to cover whatever shift is needed, which makes her an incredibly valued team player and an integral part of the interdisciplinary team.



### 2017 Teacher as Hero Award

Philadelphia's National Liberty Museum has selected our long-time Art Specialist, Eiko Fan, as a recipient of the 2017 Teacher as Hero Award. The Museum's annual Teacher as Hero Awards program honors outstanding educators from across the region who leverage their excellence in teaching to make a difference in the lives of their students. Eiko was nominated by an alumni parent and received this honor in early May at a reception for winners and their families.



**Congratulations to everyone involved!**



4400 Baltimore Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

## HMS School News | Graduation 2017

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*

4400 Baltimore Avenue, 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, 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](http://www.uwsepa.org). HMS is also eligible to receive United Way funds from other regions.

## Parent's Corner/From page 5

so I contacted my Special Education Director. He told me we could take a few tours of other special education providers within Delaware County. I went out to visit every school that provided the specific services that Xzaria needed. None of them could ever measure up to HMS. I wrote a letter to my district expressing my concerns and stating how HMS could tend to all of her needs: educationally and therapeutically, as well as nursing. I continued to be Xzaria's voice.

One day, the Special Education Director call to tell me that the district had approved Xzaria's enrollment at HMS School! That was one of the best days of my life!!! Who would have thought that what I claimed years ago would come to fruition?

I encourage everyone to take advantage of the wide array of knowledge and skills that the HMS family has to offer. Be appreciative of all of the staff members at HMS. HMS is a family, and like every family, everyone plays a part and should be appreciated so that the family continues to flourish. One thing you should remember; everyone isn't as fortunate to be a part of such a wonderful school family, so be thankful that we are.

The last and first thing that I stated is, ***"Never Give Up! Anything is possible!!!"***