

hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • JANUARY 2019

President's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

The New Year is a wonderful time to take stock of the many gifts for which we at HMS have reason to be grateful: a talented, dedicated staff, a student body that strives daily to reach new goals, the loving parents who support them and the many friends and donors who make these accomplishments possible. We are eagerly looking ahead to the possibilities that the new year holds. In 2019, our entire school is preparing for a transition: After 33 years leading this amazing school, I will retire at the end of the school year.



The transition planning is well underway. Our board has engaged Fairmount Ventures, the firm we collaborated with to develop our strategic plan. They are working with our Board and staff to consider how we can best prepare to welcome a new President and position that person for success.

Change is both difficult and exciting. In reflecting upon the past many years here I am infinitely proud of:

- The expertise of our staff and their unfailing commitment to finding better ways to assist our students and families;
- Our full transition program which prepares students for life beyond HMS;
- Our arts programming, which continually evolves to provide students with new forms of self-expression as well as opportunities to experience after-school and weekend activities; and
- The expansion of our residential program, which now offers full recreational programming and respite care services for eligible students.

...Continued on page 7

Parents' Corner

By Deb & Howard Shiber



The Shibers; back row, left to right: Howard, Debbie, Hope and Hilary. Front: Haley and grandmother, Jean.

Our family's story is like the back of a tapestry: many beautiful and colorful threads, some broken and needing repair, some bright, some that sparkle, some straight and some intertwined. In the end, it is a beautiful way to trace the many roads you have traveled, and the kind, loving people you've encountered along the way.

Our journey with our daughter Haley started on January 10, 1997 at Christiana Hospital. We didn't know if all would be well in our bright, shining baby girl's future. Along our journey we had so many ups and downs...until we found HMS. HMS proved to be a blessing...one we felt as Haley entered the lobby with a huge smile to conquer the world. HMS was our safe anchor.



Haley hit it off with her teacher, Kevin Rafferty, immediately. We had never met such a passionate, caring individual. He pushed

...Continued on page 7



Meet our 2018 Graduates...



...and their teacher, Kevin Rafferty

“These graduates shared a close bond and encouraged each other to reach new goals. I recognized how special they were, right from the start. They hit many milestones that made me and their families very proud.”



Kyle DeLeon

Good natured comedian,
hard worker,
influencer

Kevin says: Kyle pushed himself to a level of communication fluency far greater than expected, inspiring others to reach for the same goal.

Kyle says: My favorite thing about HMS is... “Janice” (one of our occupational therapists).

I am looking forward to... “Going to camp after HMS.”



Jordan Deary

The spirit of HMS, energetic and creative leader with a strong influence on school culture

Kevin says: Jordan, an HMS boarding student, was perpetually in the middle of the action. A two-time student government president, she always remained active in the events and day-to-day goings-on at the school.

Jordan says: My favorite thing about HMS is... “The Prom!”

I am looking forward to... “Seeing what is next for me.”



Haley Shiber

Political activist, naturally sweet, fastener of family bonds, a caring, supportive friend

Kevin says: Haley uses her communication device to its fullest extent: reading aloud to others, as well as emailing and texting.

Haley says: My favorite thing about HMS is... “Dance-movement therapy with Rachel.”

I am looking forward to... “Endless possibilities in the community and at the YMCA.”



Gregory Viola

Unofficial mayor of HMS, known by all, outgoing and friendly, the “icebreaker”

Kevin says: As Jordan was the spirit of HMS, Gregory was its face. Gregory threw himself into doing every job right. He gave back to the school by volunteering to deliver mail, greet at special events, and in so many other ways.

Gregory says: My favorite thing about HMS is... “All you guys! The staff treats me so nice.”

I am looking forward to... “Living on my own.”



Grace Vogel

Everyone’s valued sister, the social conduit, made social interactions possible and positive

Kevin says: Grace was quiet when she came to HMS, but over time she blossomed with a generous, outgoing personality.

She wanted more from her devices and classmates and pushed them to achieve. She supplied the peer pressure that helped make this a magical group of classmates.



HMS Gives Back

Sabina Heim was among several HMS students who enjoyed a rockin’ good time with WMMR’s Preston & Steve at their Campout for Hunger event at Xfinity Live in November. Our students collected a mini-van full of food to help Philabundance clients enjoy a happy holiday season.

Six great reasons to support our students with a gift to HMS

1. Our **expert staff** of teachers, therapists, social workers, health care professionals and caregivers
2. A **comprehensive transition program** that prepares students for an engaged and more independent adulthood
3. A **nurturing learning environment** tailored to each child’s needs
4. Our **boarding program** where students enjoy **expanded activities with peers** and **opportunities to make choices and advocate for themselves**
5. An **Extended School Year program** that helps HMS students, and those from other schools, **to work towards their goals** in a learning-based environment that *feels* like a vacation
6. **Consultation and training services** for teachers and therapists, as well as comprehensive evaluations that benefit children within their local school setting

HMS is able to provide program extras not covered by state funding, through the generosity of our donors. To make your gift, visit

www.hmsschool.org/donate or call

Cheryl Molle, Development

Manager at 215-222-2566, x205

5K

On October 14th, HMS School participated in its third annual 5K in Fairmount Park in conjunction with Generosity Philadelphia. Walkers, runners and their thoughtful supporters donated their time and money to benefit children with complex disabilities. Thank you to the family, friends, donors and staff who made the day such an enjoyable and rewarding event!



HMS staff member Faatimah Curry warms up for the race.



HMS Vice President of Finance and Operations Al Wadler welcomes Chris Darpino, father of student Sabrina, and Anthony Visconto to the 5K.



And they're off!



Kyle Sheaffer with daughter and HMS student Mary Grace at the awards podium.



The Roberts family gathers at the completion of the race. Daughter Helena is an HMS student.



HMS Welcomes New Board Members



Nannette Fromm

As Associate Dean for Student and Academic Affairs at Thomas Jefferson University's College of Rehabilitation Sciences and College of Health Professions, Nannette Fromm provides leadership for Deans' Office initiatives. Additionally, she serves as Assistant Provost for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement for the University.

Nannette also has a background in Therapeutic Recreation, through which she worked with individuals with spinal cord injury, and as a faculty member at Temple University, teaching adapted sports and assistive technology. She lives in Wayne PA.



Steve M. Highsmith

Steve Highsmith is Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Cabrini University. As a broadcast journalist, Steve served as morning news anchor and news director of WCAU Radio and news anchor of the NJN Nightly News before joining "Inquirer News Tonight" on WPHL-TV as chief political correspondent and anchor. He also served as NBC10 political correspondent and host of NBC10@Issue. Steve broadcasts the Mummers Parade and is Treasurer of the Mummers' Museum Board of Directors. He is also a board member of CADEkids, which delivers prevention programs to school children in underserved areas of Philadelphia. Steve lives in Bucks County.



Gerald Kitzhoffer

An experienced educator with expertise in the field of blindness, visual impairment, and multiple disabilities, Gerald Kitzhoffer is the former Executive Director and CEO of Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia. Prior to that, he served as Chief School Administrator at St. Joseph's School for the Blind in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Jerry's background also includes leadership positions with a national accrediting body for organizations serving persons with visual impairments. A resident of Point Pleasant, New Jersey, he has also held graduate-level faculty appointments in Special Education.



Marilyn B. Long

Marilyn Long is a process improvement professional with expertise in Lean and Six Sigma methodologies. She is a continuous improvement black belt in the IT Organization at Air Products in Allentown, PA, and previous owner of BrightStar Care of Lehigh Valley, a private duty homecare/medical staffing agency in Bethlehem, PA. Marilyn is the mother of four grown children (one, a former HMS student) and lives in Center Valley, PA, with her husband Jim.



Nora Vizzachero

Nora Vizzachero of Wyndmoor, PA, is the Lead Advanced Practice Nurse at the outpatient Women's and Children's Institute at Cooper University Hospital. Prior to that, Nora was a pediatric nurse practitioner in Cooper's Division of Pediatric Neurology and Development, where she cared for patients living with disorders including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, among others.

A Note from Nick



HMS was thrilled to receive an email from Nick Mykytyn of Oneonta, NY. Nick was a residential student in our Extended Year Program in each of the last two summers and wrote to tell us how it affected his adjustment to being a young adult with Cerebral Palsy, and his ability to advocate for himself:

To the Unbelievable HMS Team:

You guys have meant a lot to me and will always have a place in my heart. Thank you for helping me with my daily activities and my new power chair.

For two years in a row, you gave me something I never thought I'd be able to have: a bit of a college experience. I like having made new friends and being treated as a young adult. It made me feel very happy.

— Your friend, Nick

HMS Happenings



HMS students give back with a \$1,165 donation to Alex's Lemonade Stand this fall. They raised this amount in just four weeks by selling lemonade in front of our school! First row, left to right: HMS students Nicolas, Raymond, Devon, George and Shannon. Behind Shannon, HMS recreation therapist Kevin Kramer stands with Alex's Lemonade staff.



Members of the Jefferson Service Training in Advocacy for Residents and Students (Jeff STARS) program, Jeffrey Minuk and Stephanie Santana, MD, toured HMS to learn about our educational, therapeutic and recreational programs. Above, Jackie Pittam, SLP (at left), describes how speech therapy helps students communicate, and eat more safely and effectively. The program helps residents and medical school students become acquainted with the work of community organizations.

Director's Message/From page 1

This note is far longer than my usual newsletter messages, and I've saved the best for last: My words about this year's graduates. Five students left us in 2018. Each is an interesting, confident young adult undefined by their disability. My wish for them is my wish for every student, that is, that they harness the energy they have demonstrated here, the competence they have forged, and the relationships they've built to find their place in the world—a world where they feel valued and loved, in which their gifts continue to grow, and a place from which they can continue to contribute to their communities.

My wish for this school—one that I know will be realized—is that it continues to provide the education our students need to live their fullest lives.

Parent's Corner/From page 1

Haley to talk more and to converse with her peers who became her friends. Howard and I left that day feeling that at last Haley would receive the education and therapy that she deserved.

During those four years, we began to see life through Haley's eyes. As a family we began to allow her to spread her wings and fly. She began to advocate for herself and others, learn life skills, travel on public transportation, go to concerts and read books, all the while building her self-esteem and happiness. Our family transformed as well.

One important factor in Haley's development occurred when her team helped her to conserve energy. They adjusted her access to her driving and communication switches, giving her more stamina throughout the day. Her occupational therapist suggested that a daily nap might help. In physical therapy, Mary DeLuca found ways to strengthen Haley, concentrating on head control. Rachael Morales taught her deep breathing and adapted yoga for relaxation. Janice Barbour and Dawn Rainey gave her the tools she needed to use technology. At home, we also began to give Haley what she wanted and operate on a schedule she designed.

HMS became a happy, joyful place for her, which made it a happy and joyful place for our family. When Haley encountered some rough seas, HMS, Haley, and our family adjusted our sails and weathered the storms of illnesses, surgeries, and more. Through it all, HMS remained an anchor for Haley and our family, and a port that always provided provide a safe and secure place to land.

The HMS staff has made a lasting impact on us. We thank them all,

Professional presentations by HMS staff

**Julie Conway, M.S., CCC-SLP,
Speech Therapist**

Social Language and AAC: Accessing Social Language Intervention for School-Age Children with Complex Communication Needs: At: ISAAC (International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication) Biennial Conference: Gold Coast, Australia; July 2018; and Closing the Gap 2018 36th Annual Conference: Prior Lake, MN; September 2018



**Marianne Gellert-Jones, SLP,
WIGCC, Clinical Feeding
Specialist, Speech Language
Pathologist**

Right to Eat: Can Training Caregivers Improve Participation in Feeding for Children with Cerebral Palsy; Time to Eat: Risk Management to Improve Participating in Eating for Children with Cerebral Palsy. At: AACPD (American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine) 72nd Annual Meeting, Cincinnati, Ohio; October 2018.

Ready to Eat? Training Caregivers to Feed Children with Complex Medical Needs. At: ASHA (American Speech and Hearing Association) National Convention, Boston, MA; November 2018.

with a special thanks to her teacher, Kevin, who taught her how to converse, speak for herself, and find her passion of reading to children. The compassion and love of the HMS staff will remain with Haley, and our family, for the rest of our lives.

Now, our family must again adjust our sails and hopefully, another sparkling thread will be added to the tapestry. As we look to the horizon, we will always gratefully remember the safety, security and joy that HMS has provided.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

— Haley, Hope, Hilary, Howard, Debbie
and Nana in heaven.



4400 Baltimore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID
PERMIT #117
SOUTHEASTERN PA
19399

HMS School News | Graduation 2018

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. | *HMS School President*

4400 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104
215/222-2566; fax 215/222-1889

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. HMS is also eligible to receive United Way funds from other regions.

Do you know a child with multiple disabilities who might benefit from our expertise?

Admission to HMS takes place on a rolling basis throughout the year. We accept students age 5 through 20 from throughout the US and occasionally, from other countries.

Contact Christine Cuvo,
Admissions
Coordinator, at:
ccuvo@hmsschool.org
or 215-222-2566,
ext. 211.

