



hms school **news**

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy • Founded 1882

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • FEBRUARY 2020

HMS students are Phanatical about the New Year!



In This Issue

President's Message	2
Parents' Corner	3
40 Years of Service	4
Board Profile	5
A Virtual Train Ride	6
Staff Presentations	7

Welcome to 2020!

This year brings exciting new challenges and adventures to our students! As I navigate my first school year at HMS, we all look forward to helping our graduates move on to the next phase of their lives. We are excited to share special trips and events with our impending graduates and to help all of our families prepare for the transitions to come. So far these have included trips to see *Hamilton*, dance parties and a staff- and student-wide baseball game on our playground!



Already the school year has brought exciting times with visits from the Mayor of Philadelphia, several local veterans and my favorite: The Philly Phanatic! I have been overwhelmed to experience first-hand the love and support of our staff as the HMS Family continues to celebrate one another. Mayor Kenney even invited several of us to share his box at a Flyers game!

As an approved private school with the state of Pennsylvania, ensuring that we have the ongoing support of our state representatives is vitally important. I have enjoyed hosting several of our representatives to provide them with a sense of the magic that happens here. There is nothing more special to me than seeing the look in our visitors' eyes when they fully appreciate

the quality and breadth of the programs that our school provides. When we travel the hallways, see our classrooms and therapies and most importantly, the smiles on our student's faces, the impact of our work hits home. I am happy to say we have several new fans among our law makers, and they will be advocates for us in Harrisburg!

Our fall 5K event raised needed resources for what lies ahead. We have exciting plans for the future that I look forward to sharing. As always, we are incredibly grateful for the support of donors and friends. We will continue to put your support to good work and I can't wait to share with all of you what is next. That's a line from one of my all-time favorite television shows *The West Wing*. The characters on that show always asked, "What's next?" Here at HMS we continue to do great work for our students, but are also looking to "What's next?" I think you will be inspired by what is next for us and I am looking forward to sharing that journey with you!

Wishing you the happiest of New Years and extending an open invitation for you to visit us and experience our magic first hand!

— Tom Quinn, President



HMS extends sincerest thanks to those who generously supported and participated in our fourth annual 5K race. The event raised \$23,130 to benefit children with complex disabilities.

Far Left: HMS Board Member Steven Bachrach, MD, receives his medal from Cheryl Molle, HMS Development Manager.

Gloria Shotz ran in memory of her son, Jacob, who was a student at HMS.

Parent's Corner: The Williams Family

Tell us how you connected with HMS.

Irene Williams: I passed by the HMS School on Baltimore Avenue for years. After Levi was diagnosed with several issues, I wondered if he might be eligible to attend there.

Several years later, we were waiting to see Santa at the Springfield Mall. There, I had a chance meeting with Shannon Ward's mother, Janine. She told me she was active at HMS and thought it might be the perfect place for Levi. She gave me the admissions contact, right in time for Levi to transition out of his Easter Seals Program.

Tell us about your family's experience here.

Irene Williams: We are thrilled with the progress that Levi has made at HMS. His teacher, Ed Contaldi, has been awesome! You can tell just how much the staff cares about Levi. He has developed a lot of trust, self-esteem and confidence at HMS, where he sees other kids who are like him. The reassurance has really helped.

What would you tell other parents about HMS?

Irene Williams: Make the extra effort to gain admission, and become a true partner with the HMS staff. For example, one of the therapists asked us what kind of music Levi likes. It was so



Levi at last year's end-of-school-year awards ceremony with his teacher, Ed Contaldi and teaching assistant, Nyadija Barbour-Hardin.

motivating for him to hear the music that he listens to with me at therapy!

Also, communicate with the staff and continue to support your child's development at home. Take advantage of the information available at HMS. I've learned so much about topics like transition to adulthood. We'll need this knowledge as we plan for the next phase of Levi's life.

For us HMS is not just a school, it's a family. Levi has grown up around this caring group of people. We are so thankful for their professionalism and love.



On our cover: HMS student Paige Neal-Jackson with the Philly Phanatic during the traditional school-year-opener, the Color Wars Baseball Game.

At left: HMS was pleased to welcome Jim Kenney as guest reader this fall. The Mayor read *The Wonky Donkey* to our students and answered their questions.

Christina Coia Looks Back, and Looks Forward

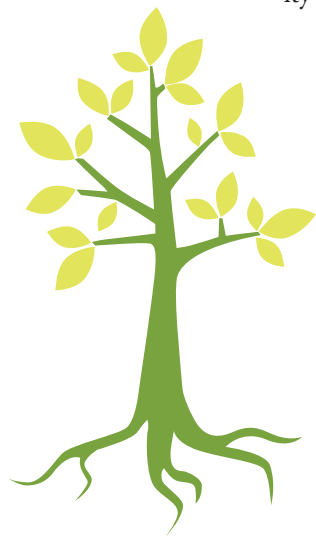
This year, Chris Coia, HMS Vice President of Educational Services, will celebrate an impressive milestone anniversary: 40 years at HMS. Chris, who came to HMS in September of 1979 as a classroom teacher, reflects on her years at our school:

“When I arrived, I was immediately impressed by my fellow teachers’ ability to modify the curriculum to fit each student’s needs. It was a very individualized approach to goal-writing and team collaboration—one that endures today and is the hallmark of HMS.

In the late ‘70s, all 40 HMS students were residential. We had only four classrooms and our therapy department consisted of just two physical therapists, two occupational therapists, two speech therapists and a chief of therapy. However, one thing that has always remained consistent at HMS is our focus on the development of each student’s communication skills and helping them to achieve the greatest level of independence possible.

In the 1980s, computers and technology were in their infancy. We actually constructed homemade wheelchair adaptations, sometimes with the help of our carpenter. They were primitive, but they worked and provided for the positioning needs that were recommended by the physical therapists. Our communication systems were also low tech and manual. For many years, our students used ‘eyes up’ to signal ‘yes,’ and ‘eyes down’ for ‘no.’

Although I have been here for 40 years, a long tenure is not unusual at HMS. Compared to other organizations, the longevity of our staff is exceptional. Like many of my colleagues, I find HMS to be a dynamic environment where no two days are the same. This, combined with the commitment and integrity of our staff, and the determination and fortitude of our students, has helped me build a career that has been fulfilling, challenging and inspiring.



Christina Coia with former student, Peter Deon.

Join us in honoring Chris’ superlative career by making a donation in her honor at www.hmsschool.org/donate. She has requested that your contributions be used to refurbish our busy Assembly Room, where students enjoy recreation therapy, host visitors and perform in a variety of plays, dances and holiday shows.

Board Profile

Rebecca Bradbeer

When did you join the board?

I joined the Board in 2005, having been inspired to do so by family friend and long-time HMS board member Susie Wilmerding. My Board experience at the time was in its infancy, and although having a physical disability and being familiar with HMS from childhood should have quelled my anxiety, I was nonetheless very nervous at my first Board meeting! These nerves would quickly dissipate as I was warmly welcomed and saw the unparalleled commitment to steward this tiny gem of a school.

How did you discover HMS?

As an infant born in the 1960s, I experienced a period of oxygen deprivation resulting in Cerebral Palsy with spastic quadriplegia. HMS (then known as The Home of The Merciful Savior) was introduced to my family when I was a child, not as a school for me to attend, but as the location of superior pediatric orthopedic care led by Dr. Burton Chance, the then-renowned Medical Director of the School. I have vivid memories of ambulating in my walker around the waiting area, as well as having adjustments made to my leg braces for optimal positioning by Dr. Chance. Little did I know that many years later, I would be a proud Ambassador to HMS.

What makes our mission meaningful to you?

As advances in medical technology continue to soar, thus increasing the survival rate of scores of critically ill babies, many of these children will need specialized education, support and care over the course of their lives. HMS is a leading provider of these services to school-aged students, utilizing state of the art technology and equipment to maximize each child's potential for success. But at the core

of its mission is *love*. This ultimately underlies all entities of HMS. As a woman with a physical disability, I am grateful to be associated with an organization whose reputation is based on not only expertise in the field, but the fundamental notion that all children are to be nurtured, respected and loved.

What about your educational experience makes your connection to HMS so important?

The image of belonging strikes me when pondering my educational experience and the importance of my connection to HMS. As a child and throughout my academic tenure, it was challenging to find that right "fit" – that sense of place and belonging. My intellectual capacity and level of physical disability were at odds with one another, thus creating an educational and social conundrum. Fortunately, I have found my way and live a life of independence and value – not without its stumbles, fortitude and grit, but a wonderful life nonetheless. However for HMS families, finding the right fit for their child can sometimes be fraught with seemingly insurmountable challenges. It is for this reason that I may be seen rolling the halls on any given day, just breathing in the pulse of the school and the overwhelming sense of joy and belonging that exists within these walls.

What have been your fondest/most memorable moment(s) during your association here?

As was stated above, I find great satisfaction in simply observing the life of HMS. I have been to countless Holiday Shows, graduations and other events that showcase student abilities and successes, and although my long term representation of the school is of paramount importance to me, my most memorable moments are those witnessing the transformational experiences that are the backbone of the School.



Road trip with Classroom G52

In special education teacher Chris Stern's classroom, one of the most-loved student activities is a virtual train ride complete with a switch operated adapted model electric train, flashing lights and melodic whistles. Students eagerly gather around the oval train track, enchanted by its sights and sounds. "We travel to lots of interesting places without ever leaving the classroom," says Chris. "It takes us on many adventures together, but it's also a valuable, multi-sensory experience that helps students learn."

Students may choose various roles such as conductor, engineer, whistle man or ticket collector. During the trip they can interact using adapted technology voice output devices to add "all aboard," "let's go," "tickets, please," or train whistle sounds. Students can also choose to get on and off the train at different stops along the route. At their destination, they will often view travel videos of the area on the large video screen in their classroom.

During the activity, Chris also plays the guitar, providing an added element of engagement. Staff will often gently rock wheelchairs from side-to-side to create the sensation of being a



Teacher Chris Stern takes students on a virtual train ride.

passenger on a slow-moving train.

"In addition to the multi-sensory benefits, this activity helps the students better understand and experience basic movement concepts such as 'stop-go,' and 'fast-slow,'" says Chris. "It also provides a highly engaging platform for promoting cause-and-effect switch use and early communication skills."

During the experience, the joy in the room is palpable. Students who love the auditory components of music and train noises respond by using their switches to keep the sound effects going. Those who enjoy visual stimulation will carefully track the progress of the train and express enthusiastic verbal responses and gestures. They especially enjoy the lights and lit decorations when overhead lights are dimmed during the nighttime portion of the train ride. Students who like movement and vibration show that they're engaged using facial expressions and sounds. Many of the students respond enthusiastically to all components of the virtual ride.

So if you pass by teacher Chris' classroom during your next visit to HMS, don't be surprised if you hear him say, "Where should we travel to today?"



A Treasured Gift

The adapted Lionel model trains in Classroom G52 were a gift of songwriter and guitarist Neil Young. Neil, a frequent visitor to HMS in the 1990s, is an avid model-train collector. He created a 700-foot model train track in his home, which eventually grew to 3,000 square feet, as a way to interact with his son Ben. He also developed special controllers for the train set, which allowed Ben to independently manage switching and power. In 1995, when the Lionel Train Company faced bankruptcy, Neil formed an investment group to purchase it, allowing him to continue his research and development.

Over the years, HMS staff have worked hard to keep the trains in top condition. Brian Connelly, husband of recently retired Occupational Therapist Millie Connelly, put his technical expertise to work to completely refurbish the trains and build a platform. After an accidental derailment, Arthur Swain of the HMS Facilities Department cut, sanded and installed Plexiglas guard rails to protect the train on its travels.



Staff Presentations



1

1 Laura Boyd, MSW, LSW

Social worker

Importance of Family Support During the Transition Process; PA Community on Transition Conference; Penn State, Pa., July 2019

Panelist: *Multi-disciplinary School-based Clinics for Children with Cerebral Palsy: An International Discussion*. American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine Annual Meeting, Anaheim, Ca., September, 2019



2

2 Marianne Gellert-Jones, MA CCC-SLP

Speech Language Pathologist/Clinical Feeding Specialist

Invited member: Complex Care Committee Pre-Conference Expert Panel

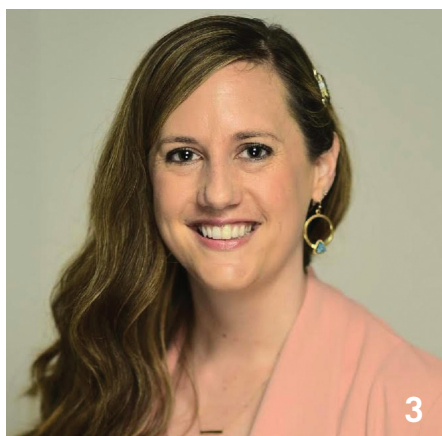
Seminar: *F.E.A.S.T (Feeding Eating And Swallowing Team) Boot Camp*, American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine Annual Meeting; Anaheim, Ca., September 2019

Seminar: *Ready to Eat? Training Caregivers to Feed Children with Complex Medical Needs*, Division of Early Childhood Special Needs Conference; Dallas, Tx., October 2019

Seminar: *Feeding Children with Medical Complexities in the School Setting: Imagining More for a Challenging Population*

Poster Presentation: *Hear It, See It, Read It: Multi-sensory Supported Reading Promotes Literacy in Young AAC Users*, American Speech and Hearing Association Convention; Orlando, Fl., November 2019

Book chapter: "Assessment and Treatment of Feeding in Children and Youth with Cerebral Palsy" in *Cerebral Palsy*, Edited by Miller, Bachrach, Lennon, and O'Neill; published by Springer Publishing



3

3 Julie Conway, MS, CCC-SLP

Speech-Language Pathologist

Facilitating Holistic AAC Outcomes through Interdisciplinary Care Coordination across Pediatric Practice Settings, Closing the Gap, Minneapolis, Minn., October 2019

Facilitating Holistic AAC Outcomes through Interdisciplinary Care Coordination across Pediatric Practice Settings, American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) Convention, Orlando, Fla., November 2019



4

4 Tom Quinn, M.Ed, M.EA

President

Using Theatre to Teach Social Skills to Adults and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder, The Philly Autism Project Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pa., October 2019



4400 Baltimore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #117
SOUTHEASTERN PA
19399

HMS School News | WINTER 2020

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*

Tom Quinn | *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 student who might benefit from an HMS Education?

Consider enrollment in HMS' **Extended School Year** program this summer! It's a great way to tap into our expertise in **education, therapy, adapted technology, and power mobility** while having fun in a summer-themed environment.

This program is **open to all students who qualify** based on their physical needs...**even if they are not enrolled in HMS' regular school year program.**

Residential and day-only options are available.

To inquire or apply, contact Diane Taylor at dtaylor@hmsschool.org or at 215/222-2566. ext. 211