



## Did You Know?

Cerebral Palsy is the most common major disability in childhood, occurring in about three in 1,000 school children. Cerebral Palsy has become more prevalent as medical science has become more adept at saving low birth weight and premature babies. The social, economic and personal costs of this disorder are very high. Conductive education reduces an individual's dependence on care-givers and other resources. ★

## Our Mission

To provide opportunities for preschool and school age children with motor challenges to achieve optimal physical, cognitive and social independence through the application and promotion of conductive education principles

The Conductive Learning Center is a Michigan Not-For-Profit Corporation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.  
The Conductive Learning Center admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.

*Newsletter Designed by A.E. Smith*

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# Conductive Achievements

2428 BURTON, S.E. ★ GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49546 ★ PHONE 616.575.0575 ★ FAX 616.285.1935 ★ WINTER, 2009

## \* Notes from the Directors \*

*Written by Andrea Benyovszky & Terry Stelter*

We are often asked to define conductive education and while it is nearly impossible to describe it in a few short sentences, we will attempt to give a basic idea of what it is. Conductive Education can be described as a system of teaching and learning in which children with motor disorders, most typically, cerebral palsy and spina bifida, learn motor skills and increase their independence. It is a method of education and physical tasks which are performed intensively during the program offered here at CLC. Most of our programs/groups run for 5-6

program last July. The population of children that we serve here at the CLC ranges in age from 3 months through age 21. We love to see the young babies get an early start. We find that in most cases our program will prepare the youngsters that have attended our Parent & Child and Early Childhood program to be mainstreamed by the time they reach school age. We also offer follow-up programs so that school age kids can attend regular school but be involved with conductive education on a part time basis.

In August, we hosted Dr. Franz Schaufhauser, the rector, from the International Peto Institute. Dr. Schaufhauser had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Balog, president of Aquinas College and Nanette Clatterback, Dean of the School of Ed, to discuss the conductor teacher training program. Dr. Schaufhauser also attended the ACENA (Association of Conductive Education in North America) conference held in Chicago.

Andrea and Terry traveled to Budapest in November to attend the annual Peto Days science conference on conductive education. Andrea presented an overview of our program to the international community. We were able to tour the institute and meet with the conductors that often travel to teach in our program.

Please notice the new look of our newsletter. We have reduced the page count of the newsletter and the number of newsletter issues that we produce per year in an effort to be both environmentally and fiscally responsible. We feel that the full color format will showcase more effectively our program

and children. *We hope that you enjoy it!* ★



CONDUCTIVE LEARNING CENTER



## \* Introducing Board Member Mike Best \*

Mike Best is currently the Vice President of Sales for BISSELL Homecare Inc. Mike has been with BISSELL in a sales and marketing capacity for over 16 years. Mike agreed to join the board last year to have the opportunity to give back to CLC. From a parent's perspective, Mike said he can see the need for improvement in community awareness, funding, and selling the program as a viable resource to the medical community. His experience and interest has led Mike to become chair for the marketing committee at CLC. Mike was involved first hand in the development of a relationship between Ronald McDonald House and BISSELL that is now in its 10th year!

Mike and his wife, Marilyn, have a son, Johnny in the Early Childhood program at CLC. He has been in the program for three years and has made significant progress. Johnny suffers from a rare genetic condition called Sjogren Larsson Syndrome, which manifests itself in a way that is very similar to cerebral palsy. They

enrolled Johnny at CLC after doing extensive research into finding the best way to help Johnny develop and become independent.

Marilyn and Mike moved to the Grand Rapids community over 12 years ago from New York, and also have a vibrant 8 year old daughter, Polina!



"This is a wonderful institution that provides amazing results, and I would like to contribute to further developing the opportunity for CLC to grow and thrive. We are so very grateful to have CLC here in the Grand Rapids community."

We look forward to working with Mike and developing a marketing strategy that will take CLC to the next level.

*Welcome Mike Best!* ★



hours per day, 5 days per week. The small groups promote interaction and fun while improving these children's ability to move and function as independently as possible. Conductive education was developed at the Peto Institute in Hungary nearly 50 years ago and now is widely established in Hungary and many other countries. The Conductive Learning Center was created in Grand Rapids in 1999, and it is the only Peto institute supervised, conductive education provider in the United States.

We will serve approximately 30 kids during each of our nine sessions offered during this school year. We were able to serve 31 students in the summer camp

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## Summer Camp 2008 - What a Blast!

Believe it or not, another CLC summer camp has come and gone! A total of 31 students participated in this year's summer program, which ran from July 7th- August 1st. The students were members of one of three groups for the 5-6 hour conductive education program. Each group had their own individualized topic that was featured throughout the various physical and self-care activities. The Early Childhood group had fun going "Under the Sea" and learned about sea creatures through a number of ocean themed stories. A combined Lower Primary and Elementary group tested their brains and bodies by participating in a "Game Show Bonanza." The Adolescent group became "Myth Busters" and created a number of science

experiments to test the validity of many popular myths and rumors. The four weeks came to a close with each group's capstone performance showcasing highlights from each topic, as well as new physical skills learned throughout the program. We were also proud to acknowledge 11 children at our closing performance that have participated in our summer camp since we began offering a camp 10 years ago. One of our veteran students, Sarah McCabe says, "I have enjoyed coming to the summer camp for so many years because it keeps you busy in the summer and the topics are always a surprise, fun and interesting". **We look forward to seeing everyone again this year for another fun-filled summer!** ★

Andrew learned to walk with single canes!  
Bravo Andrew!



Max learned how to jump independently! Keep jumping Max!

## A Great Big Thanks to Share a Smile!

A Michigan based nonprofit, charitable organization has made it possible for many children from all over Michigan, to attend our program by funding a major percentage of their tuition. Share a Smile is committed to helping seniors, women in transition, the chronic or terminally ill, individuals or family struggling to maintain or obtain basic human needs, and children with special needs and their families. "We are pleased to be able to help families of children with physical impairments, so that their children are able to attend the Conductive Learning Center. We are impressed with the work that is done at CLC and we are thankful that we have been able to work with this organization to help these families and their children." Susan Moscarello, Executive Director, Share a Smile. **Thank you Share a Smile!** ★

# An Evening of Inspiration

CELEBRATING THE CHILDREN OF THE CONDUCTIVE LEARNING CENTER

A great success! It was an "Evening of Inspiration" for everyone at the 5th annual fall benefit to help the children of the Conductive Learning Center. On Tuesday evening, October 21st, over 225 people filled the ballroom at the Cultural Center of St. Nicholas in Grand Rapids. The night began with hors d'oeuvres



as people had a chance to linger over donated items that would later be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Forest Hills high school student Matthew Bacon played the piano donated by Keyboard World.

Guests enjoyed dinner which was prepared by West Michigan Catering. The program portion of the evening was kicked off with a few words from CLC Board President, John Ritch, who introduced the Master of Ceremony for the evening, news radio WOOD 1300's own Gary Allen.

CLC students, Mason Biernat, Mitchell Case, Alyssa Jepson, Sarah McCabe,

## Snowmen at Christmas

Our kids did a marvelous job with the annual holiday play. The audience loved the performance of "Snowmen at Christmas". The children were awarded with a surprise visit from that jolly old elf - Santa Claus. **There was no coal handed out this year since all of our kids were such good boys and girls!** ★



K.J. Anderson and Roger Swets mingled with the guests during the cocktail hour. Matthew Smith, Gramm Hulst (with dad, Shawn), and John Agar, all spoke about their accomplishments, made possible by attending CLC, as well as their dreams for the future. All the kids in attendance received a standing ovation. A short video gave our attendees a glimpse at the challenges our children face on a daily basis and how the Conductive Learning Center has helped them on their road to independence.



The evening concluded with CLC's very special guest speaker, Jim Morris, the former major league pitcher and inspiration for the Disney movie entitled "The Rookie". He shared his inspirational story to those in attendance and inspired them to never give up on their dreams.

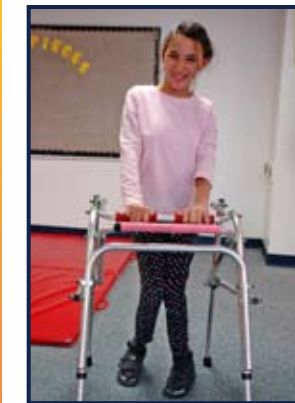
The night was a tremendous success. \$125,000 was raised which will help support the operations of the center. **Thank you to everyone who helped make this evening a success.** ★

Matt learned to walk up and down the stairs independently!  
Nice job Matt!

## Meet CLC Student Alisa Silvestri

Alisa is eleven years old and is a 6th grader at a regular school in Canada. She has a one-on-one assistant at her school. Her sister, Victoria, attends the same school.

When Alisa is not at school she talks with her friends on MSN by typing with her nose. Alisa says, "I love riding my adaptive tricycle and swimming. I am the #1 Jonas Brothers Fan in all of Canada and have been lucky enough to see them twice in concert".



When Alisa was six months old her parents, Lucy and Carlos, received the diagnosis that Alisa has Cerebral Palsy. Alisa first came to CLC five years ago. She attends the program for the 4 week sessions, three times a year, in the Elementary Intensive Group. Alisa took her first steps assisted by her walker while at CLC. She loves being with the friends that she has met while attending this program.

Alisa really likes the conductors at CLC even though she often complains "you're killing me" because they make her work so hard. Her mother Lucy Silvestri reported, "This hard work has paid off; she has become much more vocal and more confident in school and social situations." **Alisa and her family are thankful for conductive education and The Conductive Learning Center.** ★