



inner strength

The Newsletter of Cardinal Hayes Home for Children

Spring/Summer 2013

Who are Maggie and Wilha? Therapy dogs bring new joy to Cardinal Hayes School

What could be good about January 2, 2013? It's bitter cold, holiday fun is over, it's back to work and back to school. But, wait a minute – step inside Cardinal Hayes School for Special Children. There is nothing gloomy here as the sun shines brightly through the many windows, sparkling and dancing off the snow. And from down the hall comes the sound of a child's delighted laughter.

Following the sound, we enter one of the classrooms – not a traditional classroom understand, there are no desks but there are some children in wheelchairs and some therapy mats on the floor. And on one of the mats is Cheyenne with Maggie, a beautiful yellow Labrador Retriever dog, next to her. Maggie leans over and gently licks the side of Cheyenne's face as volunteer dog-owner Lois Apers makes sure Maggie remembers her manners and doesn't get near Cheyenne's mouth. Cheyenne giggles excitedly and reaches out to try to pet Maggie.



Here comes another girl, inching her way across the floor on her stomach, which may look strange to a first-time visitor to CHS, but is actually very good for children who cannot walk as it uses many muscles and teaches coordination. Logan is

finally face-to-face with Maggie and they begin to get acquainted. Logan reaches out to touch Maggie who patiently waits while Logan brushes her hand across the dog's face. Lois brings out a tennis ball that Maggie takes in her mouth and lets it go, rolling it toward Logan. As teacher and aides watch amazingly, Logan gives the ball a little push and now it goes back and forth between the dog and the child.



Is there a special bond between children and dogs? Are there special dogs who somehow “understand” special children? How do these dogs know to be extra gentle with these kids? Lois explains that dogs with the right temperament are trained – it takes 12 weeks. The first 6 weeks are to teach general obedience; the second 6 weeks, training to be a therapy dog. These dogs bring much joy to individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, schools and other facilities.

Entering a second classroom brings forth greetings of “Hi Maggie” from school staff. Obviously, Maggie has been here before and is loved. Small hands are guided to reach over and pet Maggie. A boy who looked sad as we came in, begins to smile as he watches Maggie. And it's not just the

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Therapy dogs bring new joy to Cardinal Hayes School

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interaction between dog and students that makes one smile. It's the way the staff treats these kids so lovingly – talking, soothing, encouraging each one to touch Maggie and get to know her. Another window to the world has opened for these youngsters with such special needs.



There is a second therapy dog who visits Cardinal Hayes School – Wilha and his owner, Cindie Kish, volunteer at the school every two weeks, spending about an hour with CHS students. Cindie has been a resident in Millbrook for 15 years and has this to say about her initial visits to CHS with Wilha:

“It’s a wonderful experience because you see the children trying to reach out and when they are able to touch the dog, there is a great sense of joy and accomplishment. Some of the kids were not familiar with dogs – one boy backed away when Wilha put her nose up to him but after a while he tentatively reached out to touch her. For me, it is extremely rewarding to see the kids smile, to watch them experience something they hadn’t done before. Wilha is a Tibetan Terrier, just a little over a year old, and even though she had completed the training, I wasn’t sure how she would react with the youngsters at Hayes. But Cardinal Hayes School has so much warmth and love, I think Wilha

sensed this and was very calm. Dogs are very intuitive and sensitive to people’s feelings. It is very inspiring to visit Cardinal Hayes School – you feel the happy environment when you come in, there’s a lot of caring there.”

Cindie spoke of the training that Wilha had with the Canine Link organization. Its Executive Director and Trainer, Susan Fireman, has worked with therapy dogs for many years, but Canine Link is a new organization operating in the Hudson Valley, Manhattan, and areas in Connecticut. Therapy dogs are used in many different settings, providing emotional support and improving people’s lives in health care, educational and other community facilities. Therapy dog visits have been shown to positively impact critically ill patients, children learning to read, individuals with developmental disabilities [such as the students at Cardinal Hayes School] and veterans returning home from service.



When the youngsters at CHS say goodbye to Maggie and Wilha, you just know there will be more visits and the dogs will nuzzle and the kids will giggle and smile and there will be a wonderful form of communication between special dogs and special kids.

— Betty Thurst, Retiree

Advocating to Restore Budget Cuts (in the words of Jessica)

We received news in the early part of 2013 that the proposed 2013/2014 budget for New York State called for a 6% reduction in funding to voluntary providers of services to the developmentally disabled. Our agency falls into that category as do many others. Advocacy efforts began to encourage our legislators to restore the cuts. When the final votes were counted the funding cut remains at 4.5%, still a devastating amount. One of our young people decided she wanted to join the efforts to convince our state legislators to restore the funding cuts. Her letter to our state senator is below:



My name is Jessica and I am 20 years old, and I live at St. Martin, Cardinal Hayes Home. If you cut the budget, who's going to take care of us? We need someone to provide for us and our group home and staff do that for us. We love going out; we thrive on going out. I even thrive on getting my hair done so I feel pretty good.

I love going to Lake Taconic and my Advocacy group meeting and going out with Diamond and Verna and my friend Lisa. If money is taken out of our program we won't be able to do all the stuff we love to do like go to watch meteor showers or the movies or to go get things like clothes, and I love going to Albany for my self-advocacy conference. It's only once a year but it's the one time I get to go to a hotel and hang out with my friend Ora.

If we only have a couple of staff in the house, it will be hard on staff because we can't take care of ourselves. The staff will have to do extra kids and sometimes they can't get to everybody quickly. We might have to wait to get the attention we need. And it's like this big world of ours, it's unfair to people like us; we're in wheelchairs but we still have feelings too.

If you take all this stuff and give us a couple of staff cause we live in one group home it won't work. We are many kids and the staff keep us safe. We

need our overnight staff to put mats down next to our beds to keep us safe. You know somebody's always got to be walking that floor. Because people always say we got to put the kids first, so please don't cut the money to our programs.

Jean always says I should express myself, so if we can't go to our advocacy meeting because of staff or gas money for the van, my voice will be nowhere. When I was a kid, nobody listened to me. Without my mom, no one listened to me. I was like a shadow; I was there but I wasn't. I now actually allow people to help me. Now everybody can hear me, so please just don't cut us.

Better Use for an Existing Campus Building

We have an existing building on campus (3280 sq. ft.) which has served as support offices for staff, back-up laundry and a maintenance shop. The building is very sound and was situated in the woods quite a few years before our campus development of cottages. It now encompasses the exact center of our east and west loops of our campus residential zone. The building begs a new use and we are making preparations to convert the facility to a center for recreation and leisure activities. We are planning to relocate the maintenance shop away from the center of campus. Program offices will remain at 714 sq. ft. This proposal would allow the remaining 2566 sq. ft. as a dedicated recreational space for our multiply disabled youngsters. There will be a fully accessible bathroom and kitchen, air conditioning, appropriate interior lighting and new windows and doors for improved natural light. We are planning to do a majority of renovation work in house, as we have very skilled tradesmen on staff. All building materials and equipment costs are being offset by grants received from The Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation and Millbrook Tribute Garden Foundation.

SMART Boards Are in Place at Cardinal Hayes School

In 2012, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the SMART Board for Smart Kids Program offered by the Autism Society of Hudson Valley which helped offset the cost of two SMART Boards purchased for Cardinal Hayes School for Special Children. Both are mounted on portable stands so they can be shared among the classrooms. These SMART Boards have become a tremendous addition to our school. At first, they were quite intimidating to both staff and students due to both the size and the technology itself. However, the comfort level has grown and the Boards are a big hit.

Several classrooms are using the SMART Board as part of their morning circle to take attendance, review the calendar and check on the weather. Due to the versatility of the SMART Board, attendance is taken by having the students choose their own photograph, their name in print or for the students who are able to write, they can actually write their name on the board. One teacher has created a calendar that is self-correcting, which turns into an errorless learning experience for the students. Due to the interactive nature of the SMART Board, many of the students are able to sit longer and be more attentive and engaged while waiting their turn.

The SMART Boards have been great for exploring all types of topics. One class “traveled” to New Zealand and while traveling they saw the countryside as well actual video clips of the animals and birds that are indigenous to the country. This type of interactivity holds the attention of many students who would otherwise not be paying attention. Since many of our students are visual learners often our “theme” activities come alive through the use of the SMART Board. Classes have enhanced their studies of the Seven Wonders of the World, Polar Animals and St. Patrick’s Day to name just a few of the topics that have been viewed through video and website exploration on the SMART Board.

Activities have been created and used that reinforce many of the basic skills that we are working on regularly with the students. These include color recognition, letter identification and sound correlation, shape matching, counting and simple cause/effect skills. With the SMART software, fun engaging activities are created and used to engage the students in learning while having fun.



The Therapy Department has incorporated the big screen in several classes for Yoga and has found it to be both engaging and attention grabbing for many students. While in standers and various pieces of therapeutic equipment, students access a variety of activities which require reaching in all directions to activate the Board. For a number of students, the sheer pleasure of interacting with the SMART Board has distracted them from the equipment and the various tasks they are asked to perform.

The SMART Boards and the technology they represent is a fantastic asset for the school program. We are only beginning to see the possibilities and potential they have to offer.

— Dara Russell, Curriculum Coordinator

Garden Club

It must be spring! The robins are back, the crocuses are in bloom and the Cardinal Hayes Garden Club is gearing up for another great year! Preparations have begun at our greenhouse to ready it for the season. Our children and young people, with the help of staff, have started planting flowers and veggies. In just a few short weeks they will transplant the seedlings into our raised beds. If this year is anything like last year, our residents will again enjoy the fruits of their efforts!

Scout Program at Cardinal Hayes Home

Through the generosity of the Whalen family and Tribute Garden Foundation here in Millbrook, (whose support continues to today), our scouting program at Cardinal Hayes Home began in July of 2002 with a Flag Raising Ceremony held outside of our original official meeting place at Cardinal Hayes School for Special Children. This site



served us for some time, seeing us through our first night of creating bird houses, and many subsequent meetings of crafting, singing, planting, creating weather stations, and the running of our first Space Derby. Once the new gymnasium was constructed at CHS, we moved our enterprise there. The high vaulted ceilings better accommodate our rambunctious attempts to collect sports pins for volleyball, basketball, and soccer. We tied in our sports adventures with trips to see college and professional teams, including Marist basketball, the NY Mets, and the Hudson Valley Renegades. We even camped out at Dutchess stadium during their special "Scout Night" event.

Our original group included a Cub Scout Pack for the boys and a Venturing Crew for the girls, and we now also have a small Boy Scout Troop as well. We have fluctuated from 24 to 34 scouts at a given time and at least a dozen of those individuals have been with us since the very beginning. Many of our activities are based on the Cub Scout Model and incorporate the standard scouting activities, including Pinewood Derby, Rain Gutter Regatta, and our own indoor Eskimo Run. These events are adapted as needed to fit the unique skill set of our young people. For example, since January days are too cold for our scouts to participate outdoors with traditional homemade sleds, we adapted our run by creating indoor sleds out of laundry baskets and had the scouts practice their knots by tying their pull ropes to the basket "sleds," as they moved between stations. When we worked on skills to earn the geologist pin,

instead of bringing everyone out to dig, we purchased kits from the Smithsonian which included gemstones embedded in plaster. The scouts had a great time digging out their treasures.

The needs of each of our individuals are as varied as their interests, which was clearly evidenced when we worked on our "collecting" belt loops. Individual collections ranged from swimming medals, to Disney movies, to an assortment of 30 plastic cups, collected from outings.

Over the years, we have participated in summer camp day programs, the scout Camporall, camping out at our main campus for those not accustomed to overnights away, and at Hershey Park for Scout Weekend. Last summer one scout did a Cub Scout/Partner Weekend, a 3 day, 2 night trip to Camp Nootemeing, chocked full of activities. The tool session was his favorite part of the weekend, along with the 6:45 wakeup call shouted throughout camp by Cowboy Bob each morning announcing, "TEN MORE MINUTES" until the daily Eskimo plunge.



Other highlights over the years include having our scouts earn participation ribbons, several second place ribbons, and even some first place blue ribbons at the Dutchess County Fair for photography, artwork and craft projects. We have led a flag ceremony and the Pledge of Allegiance to welcome Cardinal Timothy Dolan to the dedication ceremony for the new classrooms at Cardinal Hayes School.

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Scout Program at CHH

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We have planted starter gardens, run an Olympics with activities geared for both those on foot and those on wheels, had campfires, cooked indoors and out, baked for our scout cafe, sang karaoke, played volleyball, basketball, and hockey. We have learned about first aid, flag etiquette, and how to be a good citizen, and celebrated our successes annually at our Blue and Gold Dinner. The best part of that event is handing out patches and pins, all symbols to recognize the accomplishments of our scouts. Each and every member is recognized at this event and cheered roundly whether they receive one or numerous achievement awards.



The most poignant memory for me in our eleven year history happened years ago when we lost one of our youngest scouts. His mother chose to have him buried in his scout uniform. To me it symbolized how each of our participants is somebody's child, a member of the group, a true member of a larger community. It brings tears to my eyes to this day when I reflect on it, but that moment also stands out as a source of tremendous pride. Our scouting program truly had an impact in the life of that young man and his family. We hope to continue that tradition for many years to come.

— Jean Dreaper,
Treatment Specialist and Scoutmaster

A Message from Fred Apers, Executive Director

Spring/Summer 2013

Dear Friends,

A rather unique and telling story in this edition of Inner Strength is Jessica's letter containing her thoughts and feelings as one young adult in our care. Jessica is expressing her own personal real life concerns regarding reductions in funding programs for individuals with disabilities.

Please be assured for Jessica and all the individuals in our care that we are working very hard to minimize the impact of pending governmental funding cuts. No one is immune from the financial stress throughout our country. Budget difficulties have become a way of life for so many not-for-profit organizations. At Cardinal Hayes Home, we are certainly challenged by this current economic environment but with the support of our donors, we never feel alone in addressing the future.

While Jessica is expressing her awareness of her situation in her young life, she also reminds us of our stewardship responsibilities. Yes, we are closely monitoring our budget, examining efficiency of operations and administrative costs. We will guide our decisions based upon our values, agency culture and faith that our Mission will continue our legacy of care to children and young adults who cannot advocate for themselves.

Thank you, Jessica, for your reminder that we are all in this together!

Fred Apers
Executive Director

Embracing the Inner Strength of People with Disabilities

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Sponsored by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
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Visit our website:
www.cardinalhayeshome.org



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