

P.G. Chambers School – *Discovering the unique potential within every child.*

## Physical Therapy in Schools

### Teaching Students Independence

By Mary Carroll, PT and Rebecca Addo-Nartey, PT

Every student brings their own special gifts and challenges to the classroom and, at P.G. Chambers School, our teaching and therapy staff work together to discover the unique potential within each of our students. It is the role of our school and the therapy team to help children work past their challenges and develop their hidden abilities. This means discovering ways to help students with visual or hearing deficits, physical limitations, learning disabilities, and communication disorders participate as fully and as independently in the classroom and around the school building. Because each student has a unique set of challenges and abilities, there are a variety of people available to help. Working together, our teachers and therapists help each student overcome their challenges and develop new skills that will set them on the path to independence. Our physical therapists are an important part of this effort.

Physical therapy within the school setting focuses on educational goals. Often this is referred to as the “educational physical therapy” model, as compared to the “medical physical therapy model,” which is used in hospitals or

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*With assistance from her physical therapist, Molly leads her class in reciting the pledge of allegiance.*

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### Parent’s Corner

#### “I Can”

By Barbara Hollander

Each year, P.G. Chambers hosts an event which exemplifies the school. It’s called “I Can Day.” All the preschoolers gather outside and bowl, kick soccer balls, roll on mats and ride bikes. My son, Raffi, has special needs. He sits in a wheelchair and uses adaptive devices to color pictures and communicate his needs.

Yet on this day, Raffi is the first in line to kick the soccer ball. Standing with the help of a teacher, he awaits his turn. When the ball comes his way, Raffi is so excited that both his feet leave the ground at once. He is smiling and squealing in delight.

“You have to keep your feet on the ground, silly,” my son’s teacher says. “Then



*Our smiling Raffi with his friend and teacher Eileen.*

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# Handwriting “Writes” and Wrongs

By Karen Z. Kowalski, M.P.H., OTR/L,  
Clinical Supervisor of OT Department

Putting pencil to paper to write is not as simple as it may seem. It involves coordination of the eyes, arms, hands and fingers; grasp on the pencil; proper letter formation and body posture. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, “The development of a child’s handwriting can provide clues to developmental problems that could hinder a child’s learning because teachers depend on written work to measure how well a child is learning.”

In the spirit of back to school, the Occupational Therapy department would like to dispel some myths about handwriting and the approach that Occupational Therapists take to remediate such difficulties.

**Myth:** Learning how to write is boring.

**Fact:** The typical method of “practice, practice, practice” IS boring. However, when a sensory-motor approach is applied, children are motivated to learn and they learn faster because underlying difficulties are addressed. The phrase “sensory-motor approach” refers to the combination of sensory integration techniques in addition to movement-based activities. Activities are designed and modified with the child’s specific needs in mind. Activities may include obstacle course navigation, hokey pokey, “Twister” with letters placed on colors, kicking a large ball while sitting on a swing, navigating the rock wall in order to locate a specific word, or picking up pom-poms with tweezers to make a picture frame.

**Myth:** Occupational Therapists are handwriting teachers.

**Fact:** For children who are having difficulty, handwriting is often the functional end-product of an occupational therapy (OT) session. However, Occupational Therapists use different methods than regular education teachers to achieve these goals. The Occupational Therapist will often act as a detective and determine what problem is impacting the ability to perform handwriting. It may be improper grasp of crayon or pencil, inability to adjust the pencil within the fingertips or inability to remain seated and maintain attention. Some children may have difficulty understanding sound/symbol relationships, which impacts on the ability to understand that a specific form is actually a letter with a corresponding sound. A visual perceptual dysfunction may alter the way a child visualizes and understands the connection of strokes in order to form a shape or letter, and problems with eye-hand coordination may lead to difficulty writing within the lines and copying from a chalkboard.



*Novej has fun practicing his handwriting with guidance from his Occupational Therapist.*

**Myth:** It is best to let children work thru their handwriting problems on their own.

**Fact:** *Write Moves* is a specially designed handwriting program that was designed by the Occupational Therapy department at P.G. Chambers School in response to the increasing number of referrals for “handwriting difficulties.” *Write Moves* is a six-week program scheduled during the fall, spring and summer sessions of our *AfterSchool Program*, and brought off-site to community schools throughout the area. Sessions are one time per week for one hour, and students from P.G. Chambers School, as well as students from other private and public schools participate in the program. The program uses the “Handwriting Without Tears” philosophy in addition to others to address both pre-writing and higher level handwriting abilities. Groups are formed based upon age as well as ability. All students are provided with supplies such as workbooks, wood pieces, small chalkboards, specially designed handwriting paper and/or adaptive writing tools as necessary.

For more information about the *Write Moves* Program, please contact Karen Kowalski at P.G. Chambers School at 973-829-8484.



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*This publication is designed to promote awareness of P.G. Chambers School programs, services, accomplishments and needs. For more information about P.G. Chambers School, call 973-829-8484.*

Come join us for this year's...

## Menus for the Mind Lecture Luncheon Series

**M**enus for the Mind, our signature fundraising event, will be held at Fairmount Country Club in Chatham, New Jersey. Featuring internationally renowned speakers, this year's lecture luncheon series will help support P.G. Chambers School's *Early Intervention Program* for infants and toddlers with special needs. This season's line-up of speakers begins on October 20th with



Mark Malloch Brown



Linda Ellerbee

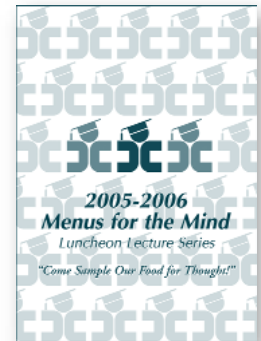


Nancy Grace

Mark Malloch Brown, Chief of Staff to Secretary General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; followed by award winning journalist, producer and TV anchorwoman, and breast cancer survivor Linda Ellerbee on March 30th; and the final lecture luncheon featuring Special Prosecutor, legal analyst and Court TV reporter Nancy Grace on May 18th.

Tickets are \$330 for the series which includes three lectures and luncheons. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. For additional information, please contact JoAnn Hansen, Director of Development at 973-829-8484, or register online at [www.ChambersSchool.org](http://www.ChambersSchool.org)

2005-2006  
*Menus for the Mind*  
is brought to you  
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### "I Can"

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kick with just ONE FOOT!" Raffi laughs and smiles at her knowing that she will give him another chance.

During the tumbling exercise, Raffi rolls down the mat. His friend Summer is waiting to cheer him on. When it's Melissa's turn, Raffi is on the sideline giving her a big smile as she rolls around giggling.

Last week, I visited Raffi's class during snack time. When asking for their snacks, each child said "please" and "thank you." Some used words and another signed. Some pointed to pictures or pressed buttons attached to recorded messages. And one just smiled. When they were finished eating, the children were at it again. Sabrina wiped the crumbs from Raffi's shirt and Kayla threw Katie's napkin away. They worked together as part of a winning team.

My son, Raffi, is a smiler. He smiles when he enters a room and soon, the world smiles with him. He also likes to move and even though his body doesn't always cooperate, he is more than determined to GO! One day, my son's physical therapist,

Kitty, noticed how happy Raffi was when he moved his chair. "Would you like to move again Raffi?" she asked.

Raffi smiled.

"Would you like to drive a car?" Kitty asked him.

Raffi kicked his legs in excitement.

The school had a motorized car that would fit Raffi with a few adaptations. Kitty, Raffi's occupational therapist Sarah, and his speech therapist Kim all worked together. One foam chair, two bungee cords, a cardboard table, an adaptive switch and an angled cardboard stand later, Raffi had his car – "The Raffimobile." My son can now be seen cruising down the halls in his new set of wheels.

As I experience life as Raffi's mom, I am amazed by how wonderful his world is and how fortunate I am to be a part of it. Whenever I visit my son's class, I am amazed at the camaraderie of the children. They see love – love for one another and for the world around them. The children know that "I Can" means "giving it a try." They know that they *can* ask for help when they need it. And, they know that they *can* help one another.

# Autism Strides

## Combating Autism Act of 2005

By Christina Stoddard, Development Assistant

Just a few decades ago, autism was an almost unheard of topic and a rare diagnosis. However, today it has become a current issue as the number of children diagnosed with autism has skyrocketed, forcing the federal government to take a closer look.

Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder, whose symptoms vary widely in severity. Conditions can cause repetitive behavior, and impair communication skills and social interaction. The degrees of impairment have a diverse spectrum, and are inclusively known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The challenge we face is how to deal with the present situation - that 1 in every 166 children in the United States is being diagnosed with this disorder. This number has called attention to the issue and a new bill is currently pending which could make huge strides towards conquering this mysterious affliction. On April 18th Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum (Republican) and Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd (Democrat) introduced the Combating Autism Act of 2005 (S.843) to the Senate. Another, almost identical, bill (H.R.2421) was then presented on May 18th to the House of Representatives by Congresswomen Mary Bono (Republican) of California and Diana DeGette (Democrat) of Colorado.

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***“Right now, autism is a disorder that leaves families with far too many questions and far too few answers... That is why it is so critical that we put the full weight of the federal government’s scientific resources behind efforts to develop better ways to diagnoses, treat, and hopefully cure autism.”***

*– Congresswoman Diana DeGette.*

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The Combating Autism Act of 2005 calls for the government to allot a sum of \$860 million in federal funding to be used towards autism research, screening, intervention and education. This funding would span a five year period and in effect double the current level of financial support for the National Institutes of Health’s autism efforts.

Securing federal funding for research and prevention lies at the foundation of the advancement of this cause, and perhaps the Combating Autism Act of 2005 can provide the final impetus to eliminate this disorder for good. Both Houses of Congress must secure sponsorship in order to put this piece of legislation into effect. To help, please contact your US representatives and urge them to co-sponsor this bill. For more information on how to do this and the bill itself visit [www.autismbill.org](http://www.autismbill.org).

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## Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

### How It Impacts You

By Heather Gilliland, Assistant Principal

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) was signed into law on December 3, 2004 and became effective July 1, 2005. This act is federal legislation that governs the provision of special education and related services and guides the development of procedures in each state. Here are some of the changes being made to New Jersey’s procedures and administrative code as a result of the IDEA Act of 2004:

- Each student’s Individual Evaluation Plan (IEP) written after 7/1/05 must indicate present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. Prior to 7/1/05, a description of present levels of educational performance was required.
- Each IEP must contain measurable academic and functional goals. The requirement for functional goals has been added.
- For transitions from Early Intervention to Preschool, IDEA requires that the Early Intervention Service Coordinator or representative participate in the IEP meeting to ensure a smooth transition.
- Beginning at age 16, the IEP must include appropriate, measurable, post secondary goals based on age appropriate assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living. New Jersey will continue to require transition planning by age 14 with in depth assessment and goal planning by age 16.

For more information, please visit [www.state.nj.us/njded/specialed/idea/reauth/](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/specialed/idea/reauth/).

# Concert In The Park – June 11, 2005

*P.G. Chambers School's Concert In The Park provided a wonderful venue for families ...inspiring them to share in the laughter, the music and the joy of living.*



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and Applause  
to This Year's  
Sponsors!***



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## ***2005-2006 Professional Development Conferences***

Conferences are conducted on-site at P.G. Chambers School, 15 Halko Drive, Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927

For more information and online registration, visit [www.ChambersSchool.org](http://www.ChambersSchool.org).

**November 4-5, 2005: Intro to Neuro-Developmental Treatment for Pediatrics.** Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

**November 6-7, 2005: Neuro-Developmental Treatment Approach for Infants and Toddlers.** Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

**December 2-3, 2005: Auditory/Language Processing Disorders.** Presented by Gail Richard, Ph.D, CCC-SLP. Hosted by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Educational Resources at 1-800-487-6530.

**January 20-21, 2006: Apraxis: Evaluation and Treatment of the Clumsy Child.** Presented by Barbara Connolly, PT. Hosted by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Educational Resources at 1-800-487-6530.

**March 23-25, 2006: If You Can't Breathe, You Can't Function.** Presented by Mary Massery, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

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# Folic Acid in the News

## A Health Update

By Dawn Fontana, RN BS CSN, Director, Nursing Services

**T**he National Council on Folic Acid (NCFA) initiated a campaign, “Folic Acid: You Don’t Know What You’re Missing!” Its focus is on nutrition and overall health, making people aware of the importance of folic acid in their diet and its many lifelong benefits.

The issue of folic acid is especially important today with the popularity of low-carbohydrate diets on the rise. NCFA is concerned that people who are consciously curtailing their intake of carbohydrates, such as fortified grains, are probably unaware that they are not getting essential vitamins and minerals, such as folic acid, necessary for health and well-being.

Folic acid is a B vitamin that aides the body in making new cells. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the significance of folic acid is especially vital for women because of its link to the prevention of certain birth defects affecting the brain and spine. Neural tube defects occur when the neural tube, which will later form

the baby’s spinal cord, brain and skull, fails to close properly. This can cause anencephaly or spina bifida. Although it is not certain exactly how, folic acid greatly helps reduce the risk of such neural birth defects, as well as enhances tissue formation and embryo development.

Yet, folic acid’s health benefits are not advantageous to child-bearing women alone. Folic acid also reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes, and might protect against bone fractures, colon cancer, breast cancer, Alzheimer’s disease. And that’s just the beginning! Researchers keep finding new ways that folic acid helps us to stay healthy.

It is easy to get enough folic acid! Just eat super-fortified cereal (any cereal that contains 400 micro-grams of folic acid per serving) such as Cheerios Plus and Total, or take a multivitamin everyday. Dark green leafy vegetables, orange juice, and beans are also sources of the essential nutrient. U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona reminds all women of child-bearing age to consume the recommended amounts of folic acid (400 micrograms) daily. Check out the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) to find out more about Folic Acid and other health and safety tips.

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## Back-to-School and Year-round Shopping

# Earn Points for P.G. Chambers School

### Office Depot

Help P.G. Chambers School get free supplies all year long! When shopping at Office Depot for your back to school supplies, simply give the following ID number to the cashier when checking out or type it in the appropriate box when shopping on-line. School ID 70065874. Office Depot will then donate 5% of your purchase back to P.G. Chambers School in the form of gift cards for future purchases.

### Box Tops for Education

The Box Tops for Education Program offers three fun and simple ways in which you can support the P.G. Chambers School in its mission to help special needs children. It can be as easy as cutting and sending in the box tops of your favorite participating Box Top brands. Each box top earns the school 10 cents! You may also sign up to become part of the Box Tops Booster Club online at [www.boxtops4education.com](http://www.boxtops4education.com) to receive special updates, and money-saving coupons. While online you can browse through the over 200 stores in the Box Tops Marketplace. You’ll find top name brand companies such as JCPenny, L.L. Bean, and Office Depot participating in this great program. A total of 8% of purchases made here will be donated to the P.G. Chambers School.

### Target: Take Charge of Education

Raising funds for the P.G. Chambers School has never been so easy! When you are shopping at Target, simply use your REDcard (Target Visa or Target Card) at the store or online, and a percentage of your purchase will be given to the school as a cash donation. To take part in Target’s Take Charge of Education Program visit [www.target.com/ecoe](http://www.target.com/ecoe) or call 1-800-316-6142 and designate the P.G. Chambers School to benefit from your purchases. This is at no extra charge to you. Join with over 8 million cardholders and participate in this terrific program so you can do your part to help the school as you do your shopping.

### Campbell’s Labels for Education

Campbell’s Labels for Education program is an easy and fun way that you can assist the children of P.G. Chambers School. The labels and proofs of purchase from your favorite Campbell products can help earn the school free merchandise such as computers, books, and musical instruments. Simply send labels or proofs of purchase from Campbell’s soups, Prego pasta sauces, V8 Splash juices, Pepperidge Farm cookies, etc. to the school via your child or by mail. Enlist friends and neighbors to pitch in too! Together we can make a world of difference in childrens lives.

## Physical Therapy In Schools

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rehabilitation centers. The educational model provides children with ways to move about their school environment, allows access to their school equipment (including playground equipment) and fosters participation in classroom activities.

The educational model focuses on therapeutic interventions that encourage the acquisition of gross motor skills which allow students more participation within the classroom setting. For example, school begins as soon as children come off the buses. It is important for children to be able to get off the bus and move safely to their classroom. In order to accomplish this, exercises need to focus on improved endurance and strengthening, and refined problem-solving skills throughout the school environment. Physical therapists can be seen helping children transfer in or out of a chair, achieving balance in sitting and standing, and moving between activities by walking, pushing or driving a wheelchair. At times, special equipment is required such as orthoses or braces to help support the feet, and walkers or crutches to provide extra balance and upright stability.

Within the classroom, children need to be able to sit up and attend to their teachers, so exercises that encourage head and trunk control are important, along with activities to keep joint alignment optimal so that sitting posture is appropriate. In addition, physical therapists work on improving shoulder strength, trunk control and eye-hand coordination

which enables a child to be upright during tabletop tasks (i.e. drawing, writing, art projects). Appropriate seating or standing positions are just as important so students can participate fully in their classroom activities. Stenders offer children who have difficulty standing alone, a chance to be up and about with their classmates. Floor sitters can be used to allow students an opportunity to play with their classmates in circle time or during free play time. Classroom mobility devices, such as walkers, wheelchairs, canes, or crutches, may be recommended to increase mobility within the school environment.

Ultimately the focus of physical therapy, within the educational model, is to provide children with the following opportunities in a typical school day; get off the bus, travel to and from their classrooms as functionally as possible, sit in a chair at a desk, move about the classroom for a variety of activities, get to the library, gym class, art class, or music class, take part in recess, and pack up a school bag to get back on the bus at the end of the day. It is an exciting day when a child learns to move about the school as functionally and independently as possible. As a result, many children progress from individual therapy to group sessions, adapted physical education classes, recreational, or community-based gross motor therapy activities.

For more information about P.G. Chambers School's physical therapy program or the education physical therapy model, please contact Cathy Pope, Director of Physical Therapy at 973-829-8484.

## P.G. CHAMBERS SCHOOL TRIBUTE FUND

### *Building Our Future*

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*Gifts to our Tribute Fund are a thoughtful way to remember or honor a friend, associate or relative, while providing needed funds for the programs offered at P.G. Chambers School. Whether it be a birthday, anniversary, birth of a child, wedding, memorial, or thank you, we will send an acknowledgement to the person that you would like to recognize, as well as a confirmation to you that your gift is tax-deductible. Your name and the purpose of your gift is also listed in this newsletter, our very own **Connection**. Thank you for helping to build strong communities and brighter futures for families and children with special needs.*

## **P.G. CHAMBERS SCHOOL BIRTHDAY BOOK CLUB**

The *Birthday Book Club* invites families and friends to honor their child's birthday or other special occasion by purchasing a book for the P.G. Chambers School's Library/Resource Room. The child's name is permanently inscribed on each book that is donated. A special thank you to parents who have supported the *Birthday Book Club*. For more information about *Birthday Book Club*, please contact Jilby Mullen at P.G. Chambers School.

### ***Birthday Book Club Honorees and Donors:***

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**Jadeliz Garcia** from Jessica and Frederico Garcia

**Raffi Hollander** from Barbara and Larry Hollander

**Kyle Lien** from Heidi Chao

**Abbie Lepow Macario** from Linda Macario and Jackie Lepow

**James MacFarlane** from Stacey and James MacFarlane

**Michael Sirota** from Michelle and Eric Sirota

## **WISH LIST**

### **Physical Therapy**

- Toy cash register (\$50)
- Plastic trapeze (\$45)
- 3 green medium therapy balls (\$90)
- Two medium therapy rolls (\$500)

### **Occupational Therapy**

- 10 mats for the Sensory Gym for safety (\$2000)
- 2 CD players for The Therapeutic Listening Program (\$60)
- 2 CD belts to hold CD players as the children move around (\$30)
- Intellikeys keyboard and software (\$1500)

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- 7 Level Communication Builder (\$300)
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- Ablenet - Step By Step Communicators with Levels (\$175)

*If you find it more convenient, we would be happy to use your contribution to directly purchase a Wish List item in your name.*



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