

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

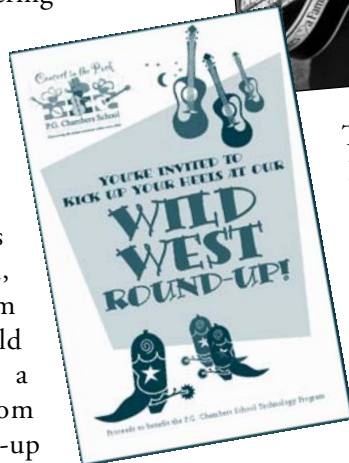
Help Our Children and Their Families Kick Up Their Heels

Sponsor P.G. Chambers School's Concert in the Park!

On Saturday, June 10th, P.G. Chambers School will host its third annual *Concert in the Park* at the School's location in Cedar Knolls, New Jersey. The Concert will be the first activity hosted in the School's new outdoor Performing Arts Pavilion. Please consider becoming a sponsor or making a donation to support this very special fundraising event (*form on page 7*).

Last year, over 400 school children, family members and friends participated in *Concert in the Park's* fun-filled activities, sharing family time and making memories. This year's festivities will begin with craft making activities, from bandanas to cowboy hats. Our guests can cool off with a cold beverage at the Watering Hole or wet their whistle with a little ice cream. Then hold onto your hats...Our Performing Arts Pavilion will feature a special performance by the students at P.G. Chambers School, a special welcome from Cowboy Roy to our Wild West Round-up, and a rousing invitation from Johnny the K to "kick-up your heels" and dance!

Proceeds from this year's *Concert in the Park* will be used to support P.G. Chambers School's *Technology Program*, enabling the School to purchase much-needed computers, adaptive equipment, software, and educational supports.



The *Technology Program* at P.G. Chambers School improves students' self-esteem, provides motivation, reduces frustration, increases students' participation in daily life, facilitates learning, and even changes expectations of a child's potential. Furthermore, technology can teach children with special needs that they have the ability to make choices in their lives. With technology, a nonverbal child can "speak" with the help of an electronic aid, a student with a learning disability can

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Staying on Top of Your Field

Professional Pursuits of Therapists at P.G. Chambers School

By Cathy Holden-Pope, PT, Director of Physical and Occupational Therapy Departments

Getting an entry level degree in physical, occupational, or speech/language therapy is just the beginning of a lifelong learning experience in a quest to be the best clinician possible. Working at P.G. Chambers School offers many opportunities to staff for professional development and growth.

Every new therapist is assigned a mentor in their department and there is direct supervision time with the director of the department on a weekly basis. In addition, each department has a weekly meeting where training takes place. Equipment vendors come to demonstrate their new products, staff share experiences and skills learned from recent courses, and professionals from other organizations such as local universities, share their knowledge. Meetings are dedicated to journal article reviews as well as peer reviews where suggestions from colleagues are always encouraged.

The P.G. Chambers School Conference Program brings at least seven nationally-known speakers to the organization annually to present one- to four-day conferences on the latest research and clinical applications in the field of children with special needs. The Conference Program is quickly becoming known throughout the United States for presenting high quality courses. In addition, staff are encouraged to attend pertinent continuing education courses at other venues. All professional staff need continuing education hours to maintain their certifications and licenses.



15 Halko Drive, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey 07927

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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.

Upcoming Professional Development Conferences

September 29-30, 2006 – “Visual/Vestibular Treatment to Improve Sensory Processing, Motor Skills and Behavior.” Presented by Debra Dickson, OT. Contact Educational Resources at 1-800-487-6530.

October 27, 2006 – “Pediatric Positioning with Tripplewall.” Presented by Nancy Altshuler, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

December 1-2, 2006 – “NDT for Infants and Toddlers.” Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

December 3-4, 2006 – “NDT for Pediatric Gait.” Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

Many therapists have pursued advanced degrees in their field (or related fields) with assistance from P.G. Chambers School. Some have chosen to work toward specialized certifications or training in specific treatment techniques and theories. Others have passed the necessary examinations to become certified pediatric physical therapy specialists.

One of the best ways to keep current with all the changes within the therapy fields is to participate in educating new therapists. Our therapy departments provide internships for at least six therapy students each year from various universities and colleges in the northeast, and occasionally from as far away as Florida. Many of the physical therapists are credentialed Clinical Instructors.

All of these opportunities develop highly-skilled therapists who provide the best quality services for children with special needs, and who are knowledgeable about the changes and developments in their field.



Congratulations to Julie Haggerty, PT, DPT, Mary Carroll, PT, DPT and Cathy Holden-Pope, PT, DPT, on their May 20th, 2006 graduation with a clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy from Simmons College, Boston, MA.

Sensory Integration

The Occupational Therapy Perspective

By Karen Z. Kowalski, MPH, OTR/L,
Clinical Supervisor of OT Department

Sensory Integration is a popular therapeutic technique used by therapists, teachers, and even parents, that helps children with certain neurological impairments. But, what is the basis for Sensory Integration (SI), and for which children is it most effective?

P.G. Chambers School's occupational therapists, Lisa Grau, OTR/L and Lisa Bruno, MA, OTR/L, experts in SI theory and technique, take a look at this specialized therapy tool.

Q: Just what is sensory integration?

Lisa G: Sensory integration is the brain's ability to take in, understand and interpret information from the environment through our senses. A person must then process and organize the information in order to use it effectively.

Lisa B: As occupational therapists, we use clinical observations and different evaluation tools to determine whether a person is under or over responsive to sensory input. We then use different treatment techniques to keep a person at his/her optimal arousal level. This allows him/her to function as independently as possible within their environment. Through sensory integration treatment, occupational therapists attempt to improve the brain's ability to process sensations appropriately.

Q: How long has this type of treatment been used within the occupational therapy profession and how was it discovered to be effective?

Lisa G: Jean Ayres, PHD, OTR/L first developed the theoretical framework from 1972-1980 that we now know as sensory integration. She performed a study on children who were having difficulty coping with everyday activities and were disorganized. She then discovered that these children had insufficient organization of sensory input.

Lisa B: Dr. Ayres videotaped many of her sessions to show the improvements made after using sensory integration treatment strategies. She also published textbooks and articles on this topic.

Q: Is this the only type of therapy that an occupational therapist provides?

Lisa G: No, it is one of many. Occupational therapists have the ability to provide a large variety of treatment strategies in order to achieve a goal with a particular student. As an OT, I have the ability to, not only pull from my sensory background, but also provide strategies for handwriting, improving perceptual and motor skills, and addressing issues with self care.



Swinging helps Katie become more organized within her body and works on strengthening her arms and trunk. Lisa G. is encouraging Katie to hold on a little longer.

Lisa B: Occupational therapists are trained to treat the person as a whole. We look at how the person's current abilities affect their level of independence.

Q: Can you explain what comprises the sensory system?

Lisa B: Our five senses, including tactile (touch), gustatory (taste), auditory (hearing), visual (sight) and olfactory (smell), along with our vestibular and proprioceptive systems, provide lots of information to our brains. The vestibular system takes information from our inner ear and sends out information about our changes in movement, equilibrium and gravity. The proprioceptive system receives input from our muscles and joints and adjusts to our body's position.

Q: What are some examples of problems that can occur when the sensory system is not functioning appropriately?

Lisa G: When the proprioceptive system is not working appropriately, a child may trip, fall to the floor or be described as "clumsy". They may lean on their hands or rest their head on their desk in school.

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The Importance of Play

The Building Blocks of Success

*By Carolyn Young, Director of Kids Count Child Care,
P.G. Chambers School*

Remember your childhood and the hours spent running, swinging, climbing, coloring, building with blocks, dressing up in your parents' clothes, making sand castles, putting together puzzles and a host of other activities too numerous to list?

You were doing what children do, you were playing. At the time, and probably even now, you had no idea just how important playing was and how it shaped you into the adult you are today.

Whether a newborn, toddler or preschooler, play is not only fun, it is essential to a child's development. It is their work, their way of learning about the world around them. Through play, a child develops new skills, explores their imagination and creativity, and learns about relationships with other people. It is the foundation for the tasks they will do in school and as adults.

*I tried to teach my child with books,
He gave me only puzzled looks.
I tried to teach my child with words,
They passed him by, oft unheard.
Despairingly I turned aside,
"How shall I teach this child?" I cried.
Into my hands he put the key.
"Come," he said, "Play with me."
Author unknown*

There are many journal articles, research papers and books devoted to the subject of play. For this article, a few areas have been chosen to illustrate what is learned through play, in essence, why it is important.

Running, swinging and climbing – outdoor play is one of a young child's favorite activities. It refines their gross motor (large muscle) skills. Right arm/left leg and vice versa cross lateral movements are critical to a child's later success in reading and writing.

Coloring, painting, manipulating clay and cutting with scissors develop imagination and creativity and fine motor (small muscle) skills. These skills can be generalized and result in mastery of cutting with a knife, buttoning a shirt and printing.

Building with blocks is a very popular childhood activity and one that teaches many concepts. These include, but are not



An example of our Kids Count "Architects At Play" building a solid foundation for tomorrow.

limited to, gravity, stability, balance, inductive thinking, depth, weight, height, length, volume, classification, shape and patterns, all of which are mathematical and scientific concepts.

Dressing up in parents' clothes, playing make-believe, allows children to take the complicated grown-up world and bring it down to their size. Research suggests that children, who pretend play, grow up to be more joyful, cooperative, sharing and have larger vocabularies than less imaginative children.

Making sand castles is soothing; it encourages exploration and learning about cause and effect. There is no right or wrong way to build a sand castle so every child can experience success.

Putting together puzzles elicits abstract thinking; being able to see a space and envision what belongs there. Precision fine motor control is also developed by placing the pieces into the appropriate slot.

And the illustrations could go on and on. Next time you observe a child playing, give some thought to how he is setting the foundation upon which everything in his life will be built. Remember, whether playing involves a toy, another friend, a book or make-believe, it should always be FUN!!

AblePlay toy rating system website

The National Lekotek Center has developed "AblePlay" which is a toy rating system and website that provides comprehensive information on toys for children with special needs. The AblePlay examines toys and rates them according to their usefulness for children with varying degrees of disability. The website gives tips for choosing toys, and where to purchase them. It rates them according to disability categories: physical, sensory, communicative, and cognitive. The website is: www.ableplay.com.

Sensory Integration

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Q: What types of techniques or strategies can occupational therapists provide to help an individual adjust to the needs of the sensory system?

Lisa B: Treatment may focus on giving input to muscles and joints by jumping, crawling through a tunnel, or by providing deep pressure.

Lisa G: Also, providing “heavy work” activities such as carrying weighted backpacks, pushing and pulling help to improve body awareness.

Q: Is there such a thing as a perfectly functioning sensory system?

Lisa G: All of us require some level of sensory input. For example, chewing gum, taking a drink of cold water, and moving are all activities that help us become more alert.

Lisa B: I use different techniques when I need to calm down, focus, or become more alert. I feel calmer after taking a hot bath or lying under a heavy blanket. I also feel more energized after taking a spinning class or going for a walk.

Q: Who can practice sensory integration?

Lisa G: Almost all occupational therapists can provide sensory integration. We are provided with basic training in school. However, many people who are interested in this type of therapy may choose to attend continuing education courses and seek a mentor who has experience with applying this form of therapy.

Q: Is there advanced certification in sensory integration?

Lisa G: The SIPT (Sensory Integration and Praxis Test) Certification is an advanced course in sensory integration. The goal of the course is to teach the theory behind this particular treatment as well as how to administer the SIPT. This test is a seventeen-part battery of tests designed to evaluate specific areas of difficulty. I am currently SIPT certified.

Lisa B: I am in the process of becoming certified.

For additional information about sensory integration therapy services offered at P.G. Chambers School, please contact Karen Kowalski, Clinical Supervisor of the OT Department.

You Can Sign Too!

By Kelly Bretz, M.S., CCC-SLP

We use our hands and facial expressions every day to communicate with those around us; pointing to objects, gesturing “let’s go, go, go” as you jingle your keys, yawning to say you are tired, smiling to indicate you are happy, waving hello and goodbye. **Would it surprise you that 55 percent of the messages we communicate to others is through visual cues alone?**

We are born with an innate desire to communicate. Between 9 and 30 months of age, this desire to communicate outweighs a child’s ability to say words. Babies communicate without words and can be prompted to use gesture and sign language. Who benefits from sign language? Everyone! Using sign language or gesturing can speed up the process of learning to talk. It also helps to stimulate intellectual development, enhance self-esteem, and strengthen the bond between parent and child.

At P.G. Chambers School, we work with children with a variety of speech disorders. Sign language is used throughout the day by staff members, from teachers and therapists to our nurses and administrators. Our speech therapists and teaching staff work closely together to ensure sign language is a part of the daily routine. We use sign language as we are verbally giving a direction, asking a question or labeling a new picture. Constant exposure helps our children understand and use communication. Use of sign language can reduce their frustration in learning how to speak. It allows for successful communication between teachers, students and peers. Sign language also helps expand a child’s expressive speech, giving them more independence in communicating at school and at home.

If you are interested in learning to use sign language with your child at home, please contact your child’s speech therapist. If you would like to see examples of sign language in action, log onto www.signingonline.com or www.sign2me.com.



Legislative Update

Thimerosal and Mercury in Vaccines

On February 22, 2006, a bi-partisan letter was sent to the Director of the National Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES) by members of Congress. The letter highlighted language contained in the FY06 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education Appropriations conference report which urged the NIEHS to work with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and expert independent researchers on research that could identify or rule out any association between thimerosal exposure in pediatric vaccines and increased rates of autism.

Congress included in the FY06 Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations the following report language:

“The conferees urge NIEHS to work with CDC and expert independent researchers on research that could identify or rule out any association between thimerosal exposure in pediatric vaccines and increased rates of autism. The conferees believe that the Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD), a CDC constructed database that follows 7 million immunized children from 1990 to present, could be helpful in the research, especially regarding pre-2001 VSD data and post-2000 VSD data, since thimerosal was removed from most childhood vaccines in 2001. The conferees urge NIEHS and CDC to organize a workshop by May 2006 to explore the research possibilities and scientific feasibility of such a study and report back to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees soon after.”

To read the entire letter, visit:

<http://www.a-champ.org/Congressionalletter2-22-06.html>

Welcome New School Physician

For the past 23 years, Martin Diamond, M.D., Director of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Children’s Specialized Hospital, Mountainside, has acted as School Physician for P.G. Chambers School. During his regularly-scheduled visits to our School, Dr. Diamond provided medical management for many of our students and valuable consulting services for our nurses, therapists, and teachers.

Now, Dr. Diamond has returned full-time to his demanding work at the hospital and, although we will miss working with Dr. Diamond, we are delighted to announce that JenFu Cheng, M.D. will succeed him as our school physician.

Dr. Cheng is a graduate of Princeton University, the University of California-Santa Cruz and the University of

Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey where he received degrees in Psychology/East Asian Studies; Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology; and Medicine, respectively. He completed a Residency Training Program in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and a Pediatric Rehabilitation Fellowship under the direction of Dr. Diamond at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Additionally, Dr. Cheng is Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and an attending physician at Children’s Specialized Hospital. He has his own private practice, is founder and president of Peak Potential, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides adaptive, therapeutic rock climbing programs for children with disabilities. He also serves as Medical Advisor for Stay-Focused, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides an adaptive SCUBA program for young adults with disabilities.

It is with pleasure that we welcome Dr. Cheng to P.G. Chambers School!

Many Thanks to our Menus for the Mind 2005-2006 Sponsors



MCJ Foundation

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Special thanks to Cathy Walsh, Menus for the Mind Chairperson for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 seasons – for her generous heart, her warm smile, her contagious enthusiasm, and her creative leadership.

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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 a 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.

Help the Children and Their Families Kick Up Their Heels

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master math facts with a computer game, and a child with a physical disability can bypass a conventional keyboard with a touch screen.

Today's technology can provide a voice for children who cannot speak, and independence for a child with physical deficits. **Please help us to raise funds to support this important program by sponsoring or donating towards this year's Concert in the Park using the sponsorship/donation form below.**



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Questions? Please contact JoAnn Hansen, Director of Development at (973) 829-8484 or hansenj@ChambersSchool.org.

Online donations can be made at www.ChambersSchool.org/your_help/donation.html.

Send form and check payable to: P.G. Chambers School, Concert in the Park, 15 Halko Drive, Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927

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Kelly Bretz, Karen Kowalski, Cathy Holden-Pope, Carolyn Young – Contributing Writers

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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 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 Jillby Mullen at P.G. Chambers School.

BirthDay Book Club Honorees and Donors:

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 - AbleNet iTalk2 communicator – \$125
 - Enabling Devices MiniCom (single switch communicators) – \$55
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