

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

## School Plans Memorial Construction Project

*Work to begin in Spring on Performing Arts Pavilion*

At P.G. Chambers School, “discovering potential” is an important part of our mission, which often means looking to new and creative methods to motivate and inspire the children enrolled in our programs.

For a number of years, our Art and Music Program has been a valuable adjunct to our more traditional therapy and educational programs. Our children have experienced the art of storytelling, learned to dance to the beat of native drums, staged musical and dramatic performances, and discovered more about themselves through these new experiences.

This spring, the School plans to build a Performing Arts Pavilion in its out-



*Construction of the P.G. Chambers School’s Performing Arts Pavilion, in memory of Jake Haskel, will begin in the Spring of 2006.*

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- ***The Transition***  
Page 2
- ***Delivering Helpful Holiday Cheer***
- ***Verizon Foundation Awards Grant...***  
Page 3
- ***Shake Off Those Winter Blues***  
Page 4
- ***Alternate Proficiency Assessment***  
Page 5
- ***“Turn It On”***  
Page 6

door Learning Park, to use for its Art, Music, and Recreational Programs, and for family events like *Concert in the Park*.

The Pavilion is a simply-designed, open-air stage and outdoor classroom, fully accessible to children with physical disabilities and children of varying ages. As a performing arts stage, we will use the Pavilion for school musical concerts and drama club performances, as well as our much-looked-forward-to *Concert in the Park*. But on a day-to-day basis (and in good weather), the Pavilion will serve as an outdoor classroom, offering new and exciting learning opportunities for the children enrolled in our School, Child Care, Early Intervention, and Therapy Programs.

Construction is planned for March 2006, and once again, our good friends

at The Gale Construction Company and area contractors are donating time and materials to help defray some of the cost of construction.

P.G. Chambers School is also launching a new Capital Campaign with a goal of \$65,000 to build the Performing Arts Pavilion. If you would like to know more about the project or make a contribution to the Performing Arts Pavilion Campaign, please contact the School’s Executive Director, Susan Seamans.

***The Performing Arts Pavilion is dedicated in loving memory to Jake Haskel, a student who opened our ears to music, our eyes to art, and our hearts to all children.***

# The Transition

## From Early Intervention to Preschool

Since the majority of children receive early intervention services at home, it can be quite an adjustment for a child to make the shift from a one-on-one home-based environment to a more structured classroom setting. Understanding the transition process from early intervention to preschool is very important in preparing a child for a successful experience.

At P.G. Chambers School, we offer several small group activities for children 2 1/2 to 3 years of age to help them adjust and separate from their parents, as well as develop social skills needed to successfully manage the transition process to a preschool program. These groups include:

- **Toddlers in Transition** is designed especially for children with speech and language delays. Under the direction of a special educator, the group fosters communication and social skills in a classroom setting.
- **Young Toddlers at Play** is designed especially for children with sensory challenges. This group utilizes the school's sensory gym and other specialized equipment under the direction of a certified occupational therapist and special educator.
- **Play Dates** is another group that is geared towards children with physical challenges. This group is facilitated by a physical therapist and family support coordinator. It enables both parents and children to interact and utilizes equipment in our Mini Motor Gym.

During these group activities, parents have the opportunity to meet with the social worker at P.G. Chambers School.

The social worker reviews information and options related to transitioning and responds to questions and concerns. While many children who receive early intervention services will be able to attend their in-district preschool program, P.G. Chambers School may be a viable option for children who need an inclusive preschool setting, as well as children who need intensive therapy and educational services.

When a child receiving early intervention services is between 24-30 months, the family's service coordinator arranges an informational meeting with the parents and early intervention provider to orient the family to the transition process. At this time, the family may give consent for the service coordinator to invite their local school district to a transition planning conference. This generally takes place as part of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and involves the parents as well as the early intervention provider and the service coordinator.

Service coordinators play a lead role in working with families throughout the process. It is the service coordinator who notifies the school district at least 120 days prior to the child's third birthday. With parental consent, information about the child is transmitted to the school district's Child Study Team, which may consist of a learning disability teacher consultant, school psychologist, and social worker. Generally, one of these individuals is then assigned to function as the case manager.

A transition planning conference, which involves the service coordinator, early intervention provider, a member of the Child Study Team (CST) and the parents, occurs when the child is 30-32 months of age to review the district process of evaluation and to assess eligibility. When all evaluations and assessments are completed by the CST, the CST case manager arranges a meeting with the family to discuss eligibility. If the child is eligible, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed. As parents are partners in this transition process, children enter their preschool years filled with energy and excitement.

If you have concerns about your child's development and would like to have your child evaluated, contact your local Service Coordination Unit. For a listing of contact information and phone numbers, please see [www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/documents/rcic.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/documents/rcic.pdf).

### Sensory Integration Workshop

An orientation program on **How Sensory Integration Can Help Your Child** will be offered to families in the Spring of 2006 by one of our licensed Occupational Therapists. For more information on this program, our **Early Intervention Program**, or play groups for toddlers, please call Sarah Ehinger or Joyce Kwasney at 973-829-8484.



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.*

# Delivering Helpful Holiday Cheer

## Creative Occupational Therapy (OT)

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

The word “occupation” in occupational therapy refers to everything that one does within the course of the day. This includes such skills as the ability to dress, feed one’s self, drive a car, organize time and materials, care for family or pets, or write a letter to a friend. For a baby, work is play. For a school age child, it includes schoolwork. “Occupation” for teenagers and adults involves work-related skills.



*The Helpful Hunks in holiday action.*

Occupational therapists at P.G. Chambers School continue to meet the changing needs of our students as they develop new skills and mature. For example, during this past summer, one of our high-school-aged outpatients, Mark, worked at the School on a weekly basis. Mark’s Occupational

Therapists, Kimberly Meyers, MA, OTR/L, and Kimberly Crawford, MA, OTR/L, organized a program based on Mark’s abilities and the goals prescribed in his Individual Education Plan (IEP). Every morning, Mark was responsible for checking his email for requests from staff at the School. He was then responsible for filling the supply orders and delivering the requested materials. Mark also responded to requests from teachers and therapists for assistance in preparing materials for mailings and other classroom or therapy projects.

Prevocational groups are another method used in developing work-related skills while also assisting students in increasing their ability to cooperate with others in a work setting. One of our creative and fun prevocational groups, organized and directed by Karen Z. Kowalski, MPH, OTR/L is our *Helpful Hunks*. The Hunks meet one time per week for one hour and perform a variety of activities including:

- Reading supply order forms, stocking carts and delivering supplies to classrooms
- Shelving books in the library
- Folding/stuffing envelopes
- Simple food preparation (green salad, fruit salad)

Specific goals are worked on during the group, ranging from improving upper extremity strength/endurance and fine motor coordination to performing multi-step directions and problem solving.

The Occupational Therapy Department is actively searching for work-related tasks for students to perform. Examples may include folding pizza boxes, collating or preparing simple crafts. Please feel free to contact Karen Z. Kowalski at P.G. Chambers School at [kowalskik@ChambersSchool.org](mailto:kowalskik@ChambersSchool.org) to discuss and possibly organize such prevocational experiences.

## Verizon Foundation Awards Grant to P.G. Chambers School

The Verizon Foundation recently awarded more than \$500,000 in grants to charitable and non-profit agencies in New Jersey, including a \$6,000 grant that will support the *Augmentative Communication Technology (ACT) for Kids Program* at P.G. Chambers School. The *ACT for Kids Program* uses augmentative communication and assistive technologies to enable children with moderate to severe physical, communication and learning disabilities to accomplish daily living tasks, achieve greater independence, and improve their overall quality of life. Many thanks to Verizon for their support!



*JoAnn Hansen, Director of Development for P.G. Chambers School of Cedar Knolls, accepts Verizon Foundation’s grant from Peter J. Ventimiglia, Vice President, External Affairs.*

# Shake Off Those Winter Blues

## *with a Fresh Take on Indoor Play*

By *Maureen Kwiatkowski, MPT*

It is no secret that, here in America, we are in the throws of an obesity epidemic. As parents, we're doing our best to teach our children healthy lifestyle habits, and physical activity is at the top of the list. But what to do in wintertime? Snow blankets our backyards and playgrounds. Ice sheets our sidewalks and driveways. Blustery winds and frosty air limit time spent outdoors. On the coldest days, it's all we can take to rush from the car to the front door! We're going to have to be more creative to keep our children in good health.

Cabin fever is in peak season until "Old Man Winter" ships out. Children need to move, and when they're confined within four walls, it can spell disaster. Here are some suggestions to keep your whole family active and sane.

Yes, there is work to be done, but giving our children just a few short periods of our undivided attention during the day, rather than a small slice of our attention throughout the day, will make them more apt to entertain themselves during the down time. In other words, more "time-ins" lead to fewer "time-outs." Here are some suggestions for gross motor activities you can include in your "time-ins," as well as some things children can do with minimal involvement.

1. **Set a Good Example.** Children learn what they live. If we live a healthy and active lifestyle, they will model our behavior. Let's show them that winter doesn't mean endless hours in front of the TV.
2. **Designate a Space.** Is anybody using that sitting room right now? Does the car really need to be in the garage? Set up a hopscotch board (you can buy foam or plastic ones at the toy store or draw your own on a piece of cardboard). Teach your child to hula hoop. Revive old jump rope games and songs. Would those houseplants mind being relocated? Why not make a "road" for your child to ride his tricycle or hippity-hop in circles around your house? Make it more fun by creating road signs or traffic signals along the way. (Just make sure that he can't ride down any stairs or into anything breakable.) How about an obstacle course in his bedroom (think "over, under, through")? Why not designate the front hallway as the "Jump-only Zone"- anyone who wants to pass has to jump, hop on one foot, skip, or crawl...and that includes adults!
3. **Set the Mood.** Use upbeat music to let your children know when it's time to be active and more soft, repetitive music or sounds when it's time to be calm.
4. **Bundle 'em Up.** Okay, so it's true that it can become an aerobic activity to properly don your child's boots, snow pants, mittens, hat, scarf, earmuffs, and coat. Half the time, you're ready to walk out the door when you realize you're not wearing shoes. But it's worth it. Even 20 minutes of walking, sledding, or making snow angels or a snowman can do wonders to burn off excess energy and keep everyone on a more even keel all day long.
5. **Don't Be an Old Dog Who Can't Learn New Tricks.** Seek out a new opportunity for yourself, then teach your child something new (juggling, Irish Step or Hip Hop dancing). This is also a great opportunity to teach them about accepting a new challenge, patience with themselves, and the importance of practice, among other things.
6. **Rock Out.** Look for CD's that include activities. "Mousercise" is an old favorite of mine that includes dance and fitness-type activities. There is also Ernie's "Tiger Hunt" or Bert's "Pat Your Tummy." Let's not forget classics like the Hokey Pokey, and sometimes just dancing free-form is exactly what the doctor ordered.
7. **Play a Game.** Revive old favorites like Simon Says, Leap Frog, Ring Around the Rosie, or Duck-Duck Goose.
8. **Shake it Like a Salt Shaker.** There are lots of videos out there that encourage movement. Keep your eye out for dance, exercise, yoga, or other movement tapes made especially for kids.
9. **Pack 'em Up.** Need to get out of the house? Avoid fast food restaurants with playgrounds. When was the last time your family went ice skating, skiing, or bowling? Many facilities have modifications so that even the littlest member of your family can be included, as well as special prices for families or children.
10. **Call in the Pros.** Your child (and maybe even you) can have a blast and gain valuable skills from a weekly class. Kids can now choose anything from rock climbing to karate to yoga to soccer! If your child has special needs, ask their teachers or therapists to recommend a program that will bring out the best in them.

When all is said and done, it takes only a little time and creativity to create opportunities for our children to remain active all year round. And if they have more focused opportunities to spend all that wonderful energy on, maybe everybody will be happy next time we hear those words: "No School Today!"

# Alternate Proficiency Assessment

## State Standards for Children with Disabilities

By Judy Gallante-Hooper, BA, Certified in Special Education and Early Childhood, P.G. Chambers School Curriculum Coordinator

This academic school year (2005-2006), twenty students at P.G. Chambers School will participate in the New Jersey Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA). The APA is a state assessment that measures the educational progress of students with disabilities who are not able to participate in the regular statewide assessments, even with accommodations. It is submitted in a portfolio binder containing samples of each student's academic work collected during a four-month period.



Connor and James practice their math and learn how to use a calculator under the instruction of their teacher Gail Parizo.

Students participating in the APA do so at the same grade level as their typical peers who are required to complete state assessments during grades 3, 4, and 8. Children in grade 3 submit APA binders that include samples of their academic performance in the subject areas of language arts and math. Children in grades 4 and 8 submit binders that include samples of their academic performance in the subject areas of language arts, math and science.

The alternative assessment format of developing a portfolio allows teachers to demonstrate their students' progress using a variety of measurement tools (homework sheets, classwork, graphs, photographs and descriptions of class activities, and writing samples, etc.). Learning opportunities with typical peers are also an essential component of successful alternative assessment.

Testing results for P.G. Chambers School students for last year showed that many of the students who participated in the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) exhibited "Substantial" progress during the school year and received a proficiency level of "Advanced Proficient." Scoring of our program's quality, related to indicators such as opportunities for social interaction, independence or generalization of skills, resulted in a "Commendable" grade on many of the reports.

These results are proof of the dedication and talent of P.G. Chambers School's teachers and of the hard work of their students. Collection for this year's student binders is already underway and we anticipate that the results for the 2005-2006 school year will be just as positive as in previous years.

## Workshop for Therapists

### "If You Can't Breathe, You Can't Function"

On March 23-25, 2006, Dr. Mary Massery, PT, DPT, will present the conference, "*If You Can't Breathe, You Can't Function*," at P.G. Chambers School. Mary Massery has given over 450 professional presentations, nationally and internationally, on ventilation impairments. She currently teaches at several universities and has published her works in many journals and textbooks. Dr. Massery will challenge therapists to look beyond the traditional approach to treatment planning. Participants will learn how every muscle of the trunk has a dual role in postural control and respiration. Clinical skills will be taught to evaluate and treat the pediatric trunk and respiratory

system from a multi-system and multi-disciplinary approach. Therapists may attend just the first day of this course, which will be lecture format, or all three days which will include intensive lab sessions on the last two days. This course is recommended for Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists who work with pediatric clients with neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, or medical impairments. Our staff is looking forward to expanding our knowledge in this area of expertise. Please visit [www.ChambersSchool.org](http://www.ChambersSchool.org) for a complete brochure on this course, as well as information about other course offerings. For questions, please contact Nancy Altshuler, P.G. Chambers School Conference Coordinator, at [AltshulerN@ChambersSchool.org](mailto:AltshulerN@ChambersSchool.org) or at 973-829-8484.

## “TURN IT ON”

### *Augmentative Communication at Home*

*By Kelly M. Bretz, MS, CCC and Arlene Sklow, MS, CCC*

Your speech-language pathologist has many ideas for helping your family set up simple, exciting, repetitive activities that can be shared day after day and year after year, to help your child be a more active participant in celebrations, whatever the time of year.



*Kelly Bretz, one of our Speech Language Pathologists, makes use of a voice output switch, which enables Alexandra to tell Kelly when it is time to turn the page.*

Looking at photographs and home videos of past activities and gatherings can set the stage for planning this year's activities. Assisting with cooking traditional foods is a great language, memory and sequencing activity. Using simple pictures or a voice output switch, your child can make choices, tell what comes next, and repeat phrases that happen over and over throughout a song, verbal story, or book.

Traditional activities and gatherings with family and friends present us with exciting opportunities for communication!

There are so many choices and motivating things to talk about, from constructing a holiday gift list of pictures from store newspaper flyers to singing traditional songs, participating in ceremonies, repeating verbal stories, reading books, decorating, and preparing gifts for others.

What things really excite your child? These are the rich opportunities P.G. Chambers School Speech Therapists want to use to encourage your child to communicate. Weekend news about all the people you have seen and places you have been can be communicated through an object or picture that your child brings to school on Mondays. It can be as simple as a placemat from a restaurant or a free brochure from a store or a zoo. Being able to share exciting past experiences with family and friends at school is what communication is really all about! Please feel free to contact our Speech Therapy Department to set up a program for your child or to answer general questions that you might have.

## Applause

We'd like to especially thank the **Rotary Club of Morris Plains** and the **P.G. Chambers School Auxiliary** for their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to helping children with special needs.

For more than 30 years, the Morris Plains Rotary Club has hosted a joyous holiday celebration for the children. There is much singing and dancing – and even Santa, who is a member of the Rotary, takes time out of his busy season to come and visit with the children. This is such a special holiday time for the children, a time for laughter, giving and a renewal of spirits. We are grateful to the Rotary, and its planning committee members Mary Buckley, Eileen Claffey, Mark Luithle, and Betsy Malone, for their unwavering commitment to this event and to the entire Rotary Club of Morris Plains for their generous annual gift to support our school programs.



*Santa finds out that everyone has been nice this year!*

# More Applause

The P.G. Chambers School Auxiliary was created more than thirty-five years ago when a small group of dedicated volunteers joined forces to form an auxiliary to raise money to fund therapy programs for children living in Morris County. That handful of people has grown to more than 80 members. The Auxiliary meets once a month and focuses on fundraising activities, which include theatre parties, Entertainment Books, annual New York City Lights Tour, tribute/memorial cards, and luncheons, as well as many other creative projects. Their activities provide members with social connections and the opportunity to spread some goodwill to those who need it. We are so grateful to these members who are an inspiration to us all.

Anyone interested in joining the Auxiliary or being a guest at an event can contact Auxiliary member Fran Schwartz at (973) 540-1268 or franschwarz@prodigy.net for additional information.



*President of the Auxiliary Rookie Friedman presents Susan Seamans, Executive Director of P.G. Chambers School, with an annual gift.*

## P.G. CHAMBERS SCHOOL TRIBUTE FUND

### *In Honor Of:*

#### **Anniversary**

**Patricia and Raymond Chambers**

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#### **General**

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The Carlson Family

#### **Happy Birthday**

**Patricia Chambers**

Noele Jencarelli

#### **Happy Holidays**

**Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Walsh, Jr.**

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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.*

## **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:***

**Leanne Beyer** from Joyce, William and Brian Beyer

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**Matthew Reto** from The Reto Family

**Hannah Solomon** from Jacob and Lily Solomon

**Isabella Tate** from Becky Tate

**Jilby Mullen** from The Solomons

## **WISH LIST**

- Positive Parenting Practices for Young Children with Autism—Trainer's Manual @ [www.ttoolbox.com](http://www.ttoolbox.com) \$40
- Action Lotto - Early Intervention product at [www.beyondplay.com](http://www.beyondplay.com) \$30
- Moving Mouth Farm Puppets – Early Intervention product at [www.beyondplay.com](http://www.beyondplay.com) \$50
- Basketball hoop for PE classes so older children can use age-appropriate equipment \$100
- Digital Video Camera for recording progress for families and for analysis of walking, reaching, and speech \$300
- Hop N Pop for teaching jumping and motor coordination \$100
- Mats for the Sensory Gym for safety \$2000
- Symbol Communicator for the Blind \$330
- 35 Millimeter Camera \$85
- Compact CD/Cassette Player with AM/FM Radio \$35
- Electric Potter's Wheel \$800

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

# Connection

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