

# INSIDE THE CENTER

SERVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES OF THE CHICAGO SOUTHLAND SINCE 1963

SPRING 2009

Good Shepherd Center

## Parent Institute Day

### Brendan McCormick, Executive Director

I never realized when I was growing up how being a good parent could be such a difficult task. Since 1988 though, when my daughter Brigid was born, up to today, I have come to realize that being a good parent is the most difficult job in the world. It takes love, patience, bravery and a little bit of knowledge about many things to teach, encourage and steer her toward becoming a person that could be proud of herself.

When my son Brendan was born, my parenting skills needed even more improvement. Brendan was born with Aspergers Syndrome and he learned by mimicking my every action. I truly needed to stay on top of my game to be sure that each time I attempted to teach him something, I was sure the lesson was properly thought out and even at times researched, as I was sure he would jump on the internet and check my facts.

To assist you all in the difficult job of being a good parent or caregiver, Good Shepherd Center is proud to present the 18th Annual Parent Institute Day: *Strong Children, Strong Communi-*

*ties!* This is the second year that Good Shepherd Center has been the lead agency for the conference. The event has been moved to a new home at **Prairie State College**. This conference has been developed to provide parents, childcare workers and educators with needed educational and support information that targets topical issues regarding children with and without developmental disabilities. The goal of the program is to assist caregivers in becoming more aware of current issues and raise their confidence in their ability to face these challenges.

This conference is the largest bi-lingual event of its kind in the Chicago area. We will provide



NBC's Pam Oliver will host one of the panel discussions.

**Friday, March 27**  
**Prairie State College**

26 sessions in English and 17 sessions in Spanish as well as present a panel discussion on *Safety in the Southland*, and topics such as violence and bullying, with suggestions how to address the problems. The panel discussions will also be presented in both English and Spanish with ample opportunities for the audience to participate in the discussions. Pam Oliver from NBC television will moderate the English panel while Clara Lopez from El Valor will moderate the Spanish panel. We will also host exhibitors that present goods and services to support the needs of all children. "So come on out and allow us to assist you with the most difficult and rewarding job in the world!"

For educators we will also have CEU's, and CPDU's available as well as the opportunity for Early Intervention providers to acquire Credential hours.

To access a brochure you can go to the agency website: [www.goodshepherdcenteronline.com](http://www.goodshepherdcenteronline.com). For information on sponsorship or an exhibit table, call our Development office at 708-335-0020 extension 20.

## Elementary Students Make a Difference

Fourth and fifth graders at Navajo School in Palos Heights, reached deep into their toy boxes and came up with treasures for the children of Good Shepherd Center. Students supported this new event, held Valentine's Day week, to show their support of other children. Throughout the week, students collected new and gently used toys, videos and DVDs, to donate to children who receive services from Good Shepherd Center, an agency that serves children from birth to age three, with special needs. The quest to help Good Shepherd Center was celebrated at the

school's Valentine Party whose theme this year was a "Give Back Party."

Brendan McCormick, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Center, gave a short description of services provided at the Center, to Mrs. Ramsey's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. He said, "The best thing we can teach children is to help other children."

The drive to collect toys for Good Shepherd Center was spear headed by Mary Stevens and Joanne Gowaski, room-moms and parents.



Joanne Gowaski and Brendan McCormick pose with some of the toys collected from Navajo School.

*continued on page 2*

# A Plan for the Future

Over the past year the staff and Board of Directors of Good Shepherd Center, with the assistance of some of our current and alumni parents, have developed a Strategic Plan for work to be done at the agency over the next three years. In this plan, we examined the services that we currently provide and attempted to decide on other types of services we could offer to children and families in the future. Through this process we identified the need to involve all the agency stakeholders, especially parents; to be sure we continue to meet the needs of families in the community.

Good Shepherd Center was founded to meet the needs of young children and to this day our reputation in the community continues to be one of caring for young children. As we all know, the State has decided that services for young children in the Early Intervention program should be provided in the "natural environment," meaning the family home or the child's Day Care Center. Because of this theory, our school that so many families came to love, was put in jeopardy and the number of children that were referred to us dwindled to very few. The staff, as well as our alumni families are well aware of the fact that the school setting was very important in providing social opportunities for the children, while the parents were able to provide support for each other. In many cases, lifelong friends were made in that environment.

With all this in mind, Good Shepherd Center shall embark on a three year plan to raise the necessary funds to open a Day Care Center for children with and without developmental disabilities. This will allow us the chance to serve our families again in a group environment. The ultimate goal will be to acquire a site that will have ample room to expand into other services including; before and after school care, pediatric therapy and a pre-school to name a few.

In order to make this dream a reality we will need to accomplish many tasks. We have initiated committees made up of Board Members, agency staff and friends of Good Shepherd Center to assist us in the process of making this project a reality. We welcome new volunteers to serve on a committee and share opinions and expertise for the good of all our families. The following explains the various committees that are open to new participants.

- The Facilities Committee is established to assist in the building needs assessment process, the real estate search for an agency home site, address any plant alterations to sites as needed and the Capital Campaign to finance these concerns.
- The Development Committee shall assist the Development Department in agency fund raising events. This includes helping acquire needed items for events, participating in the actual running of the events and assisting in the recruitment of volunteers to assist at agency events.
- The Program Committee will assist on the day to day services offered, the incorporation of new programs, as well as review agency policies / procedures and Human Resource needs.

Again it is our goal to assure that you, the stakeholders of Good Shepherd Center, provide us with input that enables us to continue our history of high quality services for families. So please take a moment to consider how you might help us continue our mission of assisting those in need. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, *"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."*

For more information on serving on agency committees, our Board of Directors, or ways to assist us, contact **Brendan McCormick, Executive Director** at **708-335-0020 extension 26**.



Elementary Students continued from page 1

Joanne said, "When we talked about the toy drive, I immediately thought of Good Shepherd Center. Not everyone knows about Good Shepherd Center and I wanted to increase awareness because I know the State keeps cutting back their budget." Mary said, "We wanted it to be something the students could do themselves."

In addition to enjoying their "Give Back Party," the students had a lot to say about their mission to help other children from their own neighborhoods. Vinny said, "It felt good to help others." Alex offered, "It made me feel good that I was helping someone out who needed it. . . and I had fun doing it!" Steve commented, "It felt good to share with others less fortunate."

## We Continue to Meet the Needs of Young Children

As I mentioned earlier in this newsletter, the State Department of Human Services has decided that Early Intervention services must be provided in the "natural environment," thus causing Good Shepherd Center to close our school in Homewood. **This does not mean that we have stopped serving children in the Early Intervention program.**

Quite the contrary, Good Shepherd Center still employs some of the area's finest Occupational, Physical, Speech and Developmental Therapists who serve over 100 children throughout the south suburbs. We are currently recruiting new therapists that would like to join our fine team. We also still provide a program for children with and without developmental disabilities at the SPEED Cooperative building in Chicago Heights, which is being taught by Barbara Johnson our longest tenured Developmental Therapist. *There are a few openings still left in this classroom program.*

So feel free to contact us if your child needs assistance or refer your friends and neighbors to us as the high quality of service that children received in the past is still available at Good Shepherd Center. For more information please contact **Brendan McCormick** at **335-0020 extension 26**.

## Quality In Child Care **Maggie Keane, Director of Community Partner Program**

We are well into the New Year and what has happened to those resolutions you set? Ah, the New Year. That's right, the New Year always seems to evoke plans to change and re-define our personal and professional goals. As Americans, we set goals to lose weight, begin exercising or go back to school. But did you know that research shows that only 20% of us will actually reach any of these goals we set at the beginning of a new year?

Thinking about change... child care program staff need to think about goals for continuing to provide the best possible services to the children they serve. After all, learning begins at birth. All young children deserve to be in quality programs. Those of us in child care programs, are challenged to write grants and engage in self study tools that challenge us to strive for quality services. But I wonder, thinking about how we influence the lives of children, have we put the lessons we have learned into practice?

So this leads me to think deeper about quality care. We talk about quality all the time. The level of quality has grown with the Quality Rating System that began in Illinois in July of 2007. The main goal of this system is to support child care providers receiving subsidy funds, to offer higher quality care and education. This program actually offers a higher rate to providers who implement higher quality services through a self study improvement process.

Research states many of us do not keep our resolutions because we fail to plan and act in the moment. Another reason we lose sight of our resolve and motivation is we often overwhelm ourselves and try to do it all at once. This year has just begun... plan to complete just one goal at a time. When you complete the first goal you can move on to the next one. Think about it... is this the year you step-up your parent involvement component, or work

on improving your environment, or perhaps implement a new curriculum or accreditation? Whatever your resolve may be, improve your program for you and your families and you will be happy you did. Get focused and be practical. Keep track of your progress. Little successes will be the catalysts for a quality program. Begin the Quality Rating System and a way to get yourself on track. For more information contact our Carriageway office at 708-957-2600.

This is the year of action. Meet your goals and commit to stepping up your quality. Good Shepherd Center is here to support you. Give us a call and let Good Shepherd Center help you in your work and new resolve. The children and families will be glad you did!!!



*Good Shepherd Center's Community Partner program is provided to the community through a grant from Illinois Action for Children.*

## Resource Library Available

Good Shepherd Center has always maintained a Resource Lending Library for families and providers. Over the years this library was maintained at our school site, but when we moved this past year we moved the library to the Main Office, in the hallway outside of the In-Home Respite Care office. We have resources on all forms of child development and an especially nice set of resources on Autism that we acquired in conjunction with a group called I-CARE; Illinoisans-Curing Autism through Research and Education. Please feel free to come in and review the items we have any time, Monday through Friday during the hours of 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Please call in advance to 708-335-0020 to assure that a staff person is available to assist you in your search.

## Staff News

Welcome back to **Cathy Kilbo** as a new Lekotek Leader.

**Chris Hacko** has transferred to the In-Home Respite Care Department as a Respite Coordinator.

Welcome new Director of Development, **Cheryl Assise**.

Welcome to **Sandi Jones**, Computer Network Specialists, Inc., a new Board Member.

Congratulations to **Carolyn Williams** who celebrated ten years in February as a Child Care Nurse Consultant at our Community Partner Program. Carolyn is assigned to Good Shepherd Center but is employed by Cook County Department of Public Health. She is appreciated by all child care providers whether in-home or center based, because of her wealth of knowledge and passion to help children and families.

## Staff Profile **Leslie Engstrand-Guca**

Leslie Engstrand-Guca is one of the most enthusiastic people you could meet. She clearly loves her job as a Speech Therapist with Good Shepherd Center. Leslie has her Master of Arts degree in Audiology from Northern Illinois University and a Master of Health Science in Communication Disorders from Governors State University. Before coming to Good Shepherd Center, Leslie worked at Sertoma Speech and

Hearing Center, Children's Memorial Hospital and the Hearing and Speech Institute in Oregon. According to Leslie, "These children have such huge potential. The parents are key to any successful therapy program. I don't teach children how to talk, they learn through exposure. I believe in empowering the parents with the right tools. They are the ones who will have the biggest influence on the language and hearing

abilities of their child. As a pediatric therapist, my philosophy is to help the parent incorporate listening and language learning into everyday activities. Learning language can be so "normal" and so fun, the child won't even know they're doing it."



Leslie also has a passion for dogs. She has adopted rescue dogs and has four dogs herself, three of which are Certified Therapy Dogs. She visits hospitals, nursing homes, schools and rehab centers. They have also been part of the *Reading with Rover* program where children with reading difficulties read stories aloud to the dogs. Leslie says, "Dogs are non-judgmental, kids just read to them and don't worry about how they sound."



## Meet the Board **Steve Nemitz**

Good Shepherd Center Board President, Steve Nemitz, has been a life long resident of Homewood. He attended college at Western Illinois University. Steve and his wife Jan, have a 12 year old daughter, Kasey Lyn. As owner/operator of three local restaurants, *Shannon's Landing in Lansing*, *5th Quarter Pressroom Eatery in Homewood* and *Northwood's on Coyote Run golf course in Homewood*, Steve keeps very busy. Between managing his restaurants, Steve finds time to serve on Good Shepherd Center's Board of Directors. According to Steve, "Involvement in the community and giving back has always been important to me. Good Shepherd Center is a good cause with good people." Steve has been an active member of the Board since 2003 and has been serving as Board President for the last four years.



**Good Shepherd Center**  
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[www.goodshepherdcenteronline.com](http://www.goodshepherdcenteronline.com)

**Community Partner Program**  
17512 Carriageway, Hazel Crest, IL 60429  
(708) 957-2600 • Fax (708) 957-2622

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Brendan McCormick, Executive Director

# The Joy of Toys



## Ask the Experts

**“My daughter is turning three soon and I am both excited and worried. Do you have any ideas on making a smooth transition from home based Early Intervention Services to a school based Early Childhood Program?”**

*Sheryl, Tinley Park*

Making the transition from Early Intervention to Early Childhood presents every family with both promises of future progress as well as concerns about leaving old friends and supports that have been so important in the early years of your child's life. As Early Intervention has a family focus and Early Childhood is strictly educationally based, families need to switch gears in terms of their expectations of professional/family relationships. Early Childhood personnel only want the best for your child and are happy to be supportive to the best of their ability. Be aware however that contact with your child's teachers and therapists may be less than when your child was receiving services at home.

Be open and honest with your child's new teachers and let them know how involved you want to be in your child's education. Be gentle but insistent on establishing a system of communication that works for both home and school. This might be a daily notebook where you and your child's teacher can share information. Weekly phone calls can sometimes be warranted and arranged. Understand that your child will no longer get one-on-one attention for long blocks of time but will instead be taught for the most part in a group setting. Teachers have lots to do and only so many minutes in their day. Your kind understanding of their challenges will go a long way toward making them feel like extending themselves to give you what you may need.

Above all, be assured that your child will change, learn and grow. Your continued involvement will be

key in your child's overall development. Good Shepherd Center has information that explains the entire transition process step-by-step for anyone interested.

*Barbara Johnson, Developmental Therapist  
Teacher, Lekotek Program*

Transitions can be strange and wonderful things. To begin with, the school concerns itself with your child's performance as she presents herself as a student. Some of your child's needs will not be addressed in school, as they do not represent your youngster's needs in her "educational world." For example, school physical therapy will address safety on stairs, getting on/off the bus, and hallway ambulation with assistive devices, but probably not something like an awkward gait pattern, if it doesn't affect his/her ability to maneuver at school.

Early Intervention programs in the past decade have stressed home based, individual therapy. While

public education for the special needs student is guaranteed as "free and appropriate," it may not be necessarily the 1:1 instruction that was offered in Early Intervention. But do not fear! Many of the therapeutic activities are the same. The class may be team taught with the therapists as consultants. For example, crayon and scissor use (fine motor/OT), climbing, running, jumping (gross motor/PT), vocabulary, turn taking (communication/Speech Therapy) are all valuable components of the school program even without individual "therapy."

*Joann Zona  
Speech/Language Pathologist*

Lastly, remember "You get more flies with honey than vinegar." If you approach the therapists and educators as allies rather than adversaries, you will fare much better. As in all aspects of life, you may not get everything you ask for, but compromised solutions and creative thinking are always possible. It will be strange to hand over so much of your child's education to the school, but the next few years can be a wonderful experience.

Parents don't need to be alone with their worry. A visit to the school with the child to see the program and join in for a short time is great. A notebook back and forth for questions is helpful to both teacher and parent. Tucking a picture of the family in the child's backpack is often helpful for the child. Some families drive their child to school for the first few days. Try not to linger at the door. Sometimes a favorite toy is nice to take along but may be a problem as other kids may want to play with it or claim it as their own. Be positive. It's a growth step!

*Mary Kay Brooks  
Physical Therapist*



# Thank You

The following individuals, corporations and service groups, have donated to Good Shepherd Center during the period of December 1, 2008 to February 28, 2009.

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### **Gladys Sonntag**

*Doris & Ed Sweeney*

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*Sandi Jones/Computer Network  
Specialists, Inc.*

Parent Institute Day donors will be listed in the next edition.

# Back by Popular Demand!!

## Good Shepherd Center's Annual Candlelight Bowl & Annual Raffle/Silent Auction

May 16, 2009



- 3 Exciting Games of Bowling
- Late Evening Dinner & Cash Bar
- Raffle tickets \$5 each

Grand Prize: **\$1,000**

1st Prize: **\$500**

2nd Prize: **\$250**

3rd Prize: **\$100**

- Silent Auction

Silent auction items include sporting tickets, sports memorabilia, home décor, toys, entertainment, dining and much more! Special auction items include:

Tickets and preferred parking for  
ARCA ~ NASCAR Truck ~ IndyCar Series Races  
August 28 & 29  
Chicagoland Speedway

Event registration going on now! For registration, raffle tickets or more information—

Call **Cheryl Assise** in the Development Office at **708-335-0020 x 20** or email [cassise@goodshepherdcenteronline.com](mailto:cassise@goodshepherdcenteronline.com)

Tickets **\$30 per person**

## Company Matching Gifts

Did you know that you can double your gift to Good Shepherd Center by taking advantage of your company's matching gift program? Check to see if your company has a matching gift program or call our development office for more information **(708) 335-0020 x 20**.

## Volunteer Spotlight

Sandi Jones, the newest Good Shepherd Center Board Member, may be new to the Board but she is not new to Good Shepherd Center. Sandi has been involved with Good Shepherd Center for eight years. She has helped with various computer issues, and is now incorporating a new agency website for Good Shepherd Center.

Sandi got involved with Good Shepherd Center when she heard Brendan McCormick, Executive Director, give a presentation at Rotary. From that moment on... she was hooked. She said, "I love kids and old people. I like to give back. It's good to be involved and I do what I can."

Sandi was born and raised in Chicago and moved to Homewood in 1975. She started her company, Computer Network Specialists, Inc. in 1997. A naturally creative person, Sandi started designing web sites five years ago and it has blossomed into a very busy component of her business. According to Sandi, "I like doing start-up businesses... its fun to watch dreams happen!"

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*Good Shepherd Center*  
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Send us your email address and we will send you our quarterly newsletter via email. Help us save resources and get the same great news about happenings at the Good Shepherd Center.

[cassise@goodshepherdcenteronline.com](mailto:cassise@goodshepherdcenteronline.com)



**United Way  
 Metro Chicago**

**Good Shepherd Center Fundraiser**

**Wednesday, April 15, 2009 11:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.**



**Shannon's Landing**

Burnham-Glenwood Lansing Road  
 Lansing Municipal Airport  
 708-418-1467

**5<sup>th</sup> Quarter Pressroom Eatery**

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 708-957-5600

Enjoy a delightful lunch or dinner at any of the three restaurants above. Good Shepherd Center will receive 20% of any food and drink purchased. Just bring this coupon with you. They are not available at the restaurants. Thank you Good Shepherd Center Board President Steve Nemitz!