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Morrison Developmental Center Celebrates the Ability in Disability

On January 24, Morrison Developmental Center hosted a fundraising dinner, *Celebrating the Ability in Disability*, with almost 400 guests in a beautiful ballroom at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks. Inspiring fans for over 30 years, Dick and Rick Hoyt brought tears to many eyes and the audience to their feet after telling their story of athletic and life achievement. Like many of Morrison Developmental Center's consumers, Rick Hoyt has Cerebral Palsy, utilizing a wheelchair and an augmentative communication device. Discovering Rick's joy at participating in a local running race in his wheelchair as a child, father Dick Hoyt committed the next three decades to marathon and triathlon training, making Team Hoyt a well-known and highly competitive presence in the athletic world. Their voice advocating the inclusion of people with disabilities into every day life illustrates the hard work being accomplished at Morrison Developmental Center.

Sharing the stage during the evening was master of ceremonies, Cindy Williams of WCSH Channel 6, and guest speakers Joan Benoit Samuelson, Governor John Baldacci and Bill Ryan. Jim DeCamillis and Stacey Ryan spoke on behalf of the Center. Host committee Christine Bartholomew, Katherine Buckley and Stacey Ryan worked closely with the capital campaign office to create a memorable event.

Board member Scott Wentzell reflected on the evening, "I could not have been more proud of my affiliation with MDC [last night]. The story of the Hoyts and everything they have been able to achieve was inspiring beyond words, and it was an evening I will not forget."

TD Banknorth's lead sponsorship as well as support from Unum, Prudential, Pape Chevrolet, and Martin's Point Health Care made the evening possible. Generous table hosts and individual ticket purchases are directly supporting Morrison's capital campaign for the construction of a new Center.

Photo provided by : Tsukroff photography



Christy Shake discusses the importance MDC's Pre-school Program and it's impact on her son Calvin

1. Tell us a little about Calvin?

He was born with cerebral palsy and is missing most of the white matter in his brain but no one knows why. Although he is almost four Calvin cannot speak or walk unassisted (yet) and he is significantly developmentally delayed. He suffers from intractable epilepsy and has cerebral and ocular visual impairments for which he wears glasses. Calvin takes eight different medicines, of which three are anti-epileptic drugs, for his various health issues.

2. What were your feelings when you discovered his disability?

We learned of Calvin's neurological issues during a sonogram two weeks before his premature birth, but we didn't know – no one knew - what was in store for us in the long term. It wasn't until later that we started realizing how profoundly Calvin and his health issues were going to affect all of us. We grieve our losses daily – and they are many - while at the same time we celebrate his accomplishments and delight in his loving spirit. And, like Calvin, we persevere.

3. How has it affected your lives?

Having a disabled child brings profound challenges that parents of typical children don't experience, and we all suffer many hardships as a result. Calvin cannot tell us when is hurting or frustrated, he can only cry. Calvin has to endure frequent blood draws and he has been hospitalized on numerous occasions. At times we were unsure if he would survive.

Our outlook on the world has changed, and although we always embraced simplicity we hold it close to our hearts more than ever because of Calvin. We have learned that the things most valuable to give your child are your love and patience and the things to wish for are his health and happiness.

4. What are the benefits of Calvin coming to the MDC preschool program?

Before we sent Calvin to the Morrison Developmental Center he was not involved in any peer group activities to speak of. He had all of his therapies in-home and not a lot of exposure to other environments. Now, while he still gets some in-home therapy, he enjoys PT, OT and SLP plus various other fun activities that Morrison offers. The teacher-student relationship is outstanding and the integrated environment rewards everyone. Sending Calvin to Morrison not only benefits him but it also allows me a chance to get important things done that I would otherwise have little time for, including some much-needed respite!

5. How do think he is doing in the program and have you seen any changes?

In the year that Calvin has attended Morrison he has changed a lot. His patience and attention span have improved greatly, particularly during group activities. He is beginning to interact with the other children and he loves the song singing at circle time. He is tolerating the therapies very well, having fun with the teachers and therapists and seems to be adjusting well to the pre-school environment. It is great to see the benefits of the integrated classroom. Calvin can observe the typical kids playing with toys, asking questions and singing songs while they, in turn, share toys with him, offer him friendship and compassion and give him encouragement. It is great to see his progress and we are so very proud!

6. What are your hopes and dreams for him?

The things we want most for Calvin are for him to be healthy, happy and feeling good. Beyond that I have hopes that he will one day be able to walk independently and it would be amazing if he could learn to communicate his needs and desires.



“It’s great to see the benefits of an integrated classroom”

An Interview with Lisa Tardiff

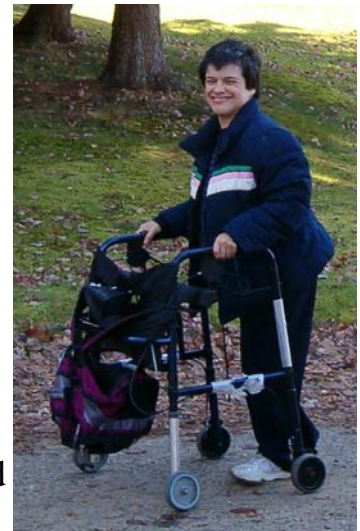
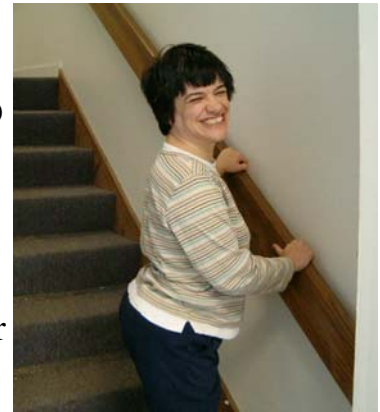
We sat down and had a conversation with Lisa who is a consumer of our services at our Scarborough site and wanted to discuss the importance of coming to MDC and how she has benefited from it.

When I started originally, I was in the greenhouse which I enjoyed. My doctor wanted me to have therapy and move around more because of my circulation. I had Cellulitis three times and hospitalized each time. So I moved to the AHEAD I program in Scarborough where therapy is offered there on a regular basis. I started off slow working on my muscles not used for a long time. I used my walker on more of a regular basis and eventually said “good bye” to my wheelchair of the past. I use a walker with a brake system now and am currently practicing with crutches, going up stairs. I was in my chair since I was seven, I am 40 years old now.

I like MDC program because we learn something new everyday. We work on goals, budgeting, exercise and cooking. I enjoy working on the goals the most, because I didn't have as much one-to-one time and encouragement in high school.

It's a change because if I couldn't come to program I'd be still stuck in my wheelchair. I would not be able to move around as much. When I first started out I would use my walker only when I was asked to, now I just use it all the time.

I was in my wheelchair since I was seven...and eventually said good bye to my wheelchair and now use a walker.....



Schedule of Events and Programs

February

February 8-9 Maine Osteopathic Association midwinter conference, Marriot Hotel, South Portland

February 16-18 Open house at Skillin Greenhouse Falmouth Maine

February 18—President's Day. All programs closed.

March

March 5-9 Portland Flower Show, *Urban Retreat*, Portland Company Complex

March 6— MDC private showing of Portland Flower Show 6:30-8:30

MORRISON
DEVELOPMENTAL
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Building for the Future



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*A learning place for people of all ages who
have developmental disabilities.*

Morrison Developmental Center in the Community!

Come Celebrate Spring with us!



Morrison Developmental Center
cordially invites you to
**The Second Annual Private Viewing of
The Portland Flower Show!**

*Thursday, March 6, 2008, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Portland Company Complex, 58 Fore Street, Portland*

Please RSVP to morrisoncampaign2@gmail.com or 874-1125, suggested donation, \$20 per person at the door

Morrison Developmental Center hosted an information booth at **Maine Osteopathic Association's Annual Midwinter Conference, *In Pursuit of Health***, February 8-10 at Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks. The Center was able to share program details and vision for the future with local physicians, residents, interns, UNE students and other health care providers.

In concert with Morrison Developmental Center's fundraising partnership with Skillins to honor John Skillin, founder of the Seedling Greenhouse, the Center displayed capital campaign and program information at **Skillins Open House** on February 15-18 on Foreside Road in Falmouth.

Before the holidays, Morrison Developmental Center Seedlings consumers and staff were proud to deliver 100 poinsettias to be sold at the Portland office of **Prudential**, new supporters of the Center's *Building for the Future* Capital Campaign.

