

Remembering Lu Huggins

In the late '70s and early '80s, Lu and Bob Huggins of Basking Ridge, NJ, would host semiannual parties for Matheny students and patients so they had a chance to experience "what life was like in the real world". That was the inspiration for Miles for Matheny, which has grown from a small wheelchair walk and cycling ride in 1998 to this year's 13th edition, which attracted close to 2,000 walkers, wheelchair participants, cyclists, runners and volunteers to its new location, Natirar Park in Peapack.

Lu Huggins died in August 2009, so Miles for Matheny 2010 was held in her honor, with a special ceremony preceding the wheelchair walk. Her brother, sister and two daughters were in attendance and they saluted Lu's unwavering determination to lead a normal life despite being in a wheelchair. They also thanked Matheny for helping to give her life a special purpose.



Photo by Tizazu Alamreaw

From left, WCBS-TV's Don Dahler with his daughter Callie and son Jack; Matheny board chair Dan McLaughlin, Lu Huggins' daughters Debbie Lieberman and Carol Chirico (between them in yellow cap is Lu's brother, Leon Martel).

Kaila's Krew: relatives and friends of Matheny student Kaila Jones.



Photo by Debbie Weisman

Going the Extra Miles

Sponsorships, registration fees and pledges from Miles for Matheny netted \$110,000 to help support the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry, which provides medical, dental and therapy care to Matheny inpatients and people with disabilities in the community. Title sponsor for the fifth consecutive year was sanofi-aventis, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies whose U.S. corporate headquarters is in Bridgewater, NJ.



Start of the 5K run.



Sanofi-aventis volunteers Alfredo and Laura Turci of Piscataway and Maribel Alguacil of Somerset.



From left, 12-year-old Amanda Cabot of Glen Gardner; her father, WCBS Newsradio 880 anchor Wayne Cabot; six-year-old Molly Parker of Bedminster with her father, Steve Parker and her three-year-old sister Erin.



16-year-old Matheny student Raven Bennett with Carole Reifsnyder of Mendham.



Janice Kriegman, Matheny acting director of philanthropy, 3rd from left, and Matheny president Steve Proctor, far right, thanked the Bedminster Flyers Cycling Club for their support at post-event celebration. BFCC members, from left, are: John Kinsey, president; Brian Horowitz, Lee Brush, Nathan Weisman, Lynda Brush, Joe Delulio, Kathy Hale and Gina Calleo.



5K winner Heather Gracie of Peapack with her six-year-old son, Dustin.



Kids fun run.

'Matheny Bowl' Honors Annie Brady

“Thank you for making Matheny a part of your lives.” With that simple statement, Annie Brady, a resident of Far Hills and past chair of the Matheny Board of Trustees, accepted the ‘Matheny Bowl’ honoree award at The Friends of Matheny fundraiser held May 22 at the New York Jets Training Center in Florham Park, NJ. More than 300 people attended the event, which included a tour of the facility and the opportunity to meet several of the Jets, along with head coach Rex Ryan and general manager Mike Tannenbaum. Since its inception in 1983, The Friends of Matheny has raised more than \$3 million to support Matheny’s programs and services.



Eighteen-year-old Matheny student Bryan Desatnick with his mother Edana Desatnick of Basking Ridge, New York Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez and head coach Rex Ryan.



From left, Jim Slater, MD, of Basking Ridge, Annie Brady, Fiona Slater and Jim Brady.



Friends of Matheny president Pam Cembrook of Bernardsville, left, presenting awards to event co-chairs Andrea Szott of Morristown, center, and Cathy Wild of Bedminster. Szott and Wild are the mothers of Matheny students, Shane Szott and James Wild.



Brenda Boszczuk of Stewartsville with NY Jets tight end Dustin Keller. Boszczuk's 14-year-old daughter, Tammy, is a Matheny student.

Junior Friends of Matheny, from left: Ridge High School student Sammi Weber of Basking Ridge and Bernards High students, Emily Quintana of Bedminster and Emily Katz of Bernardville.



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Creative Therapy Approach Generates Results for Day Student

Five days a week, eight-year-old Jenna Poleyeff travels from West Orange to Peapack to attend the Matheny School. Jenna, who has Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a severe form of epilepsy, is on the waiting list for residential placement at Matheny, although her parents aren't certain how they'll react when and if her name comes up.

"I'm not sure I can really let her go," says her father, Jacob Poleyeff, "although I know it's probably the best thing." Adds her mother, Lauren, "Ultimately, it will be a harder adjustment for us to make than for Jenna." What they do know, however, is that everyday when their daughter returns home, the private nurse who

accompanies her reports that, "Jenna had a great day." "Medically, I feel comfortable at Matheny," says Lauren Poleyeff. "They don't panic when she has a seizure. They keep their cool; they work around her seizures. She's been coming home day after day really happy."

Jenna was born at 36½ weeks and went home from the hospital with everything supposedly fine. "She was about four months old," recalls Lauren, "when we realized she wasn't holding her

head up." Adds her husband, "We were getting a couple of clues. After awhile, we'd see the equivalent age kids,

having what her mother describes as, "little tics. They were subtle, but they were happening frequently."

An EEG uncovered the Lennox-Gastaut diagnosis. The most difficult aspect of caring for Jenna, says her mother, has been managing her seizures.

"We had her on a high fat, low carb diet, which stopped her seizures for about three years. Then the seizures came back again."

The therapists at Matheny, she says, "are doing a great job with her. They had this contraption on her, and she was walking up and down the halls on her own." The device, says physical therapist Erin Leach, occupational therapist Veronica Armellino use a mechanical



Physical therapist Erin Leach, left, and occupational therapist Veronica Armellino use a mechanical duck to help Jenna improve her posture and work on her balancing.

and we realized she was definitely behind." When she was one year old, an

**"She's been coming
home day after day
really happy."**

MRI revealed she had some brain malformations, and by the time she was 18-20 months old, she began

trainer that seemed to work really well. There was a brace on her hips, called a swash, that helped keep her feet wider apart. She has been progressing really well." Adds Poleyeff: "They worked really hard to find just the right setup that would support her. They're very devoted. They're creative, and they don't give up. That's what I've noticed about the therapists at Matheny. Jenna's not a simple kid to figure out, but they continue to try different things."

Matheny Social Worker Helps Patients Become Advocates

When Kelly Haldaman was attending Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA, she had a dual major – education and social work. She chose the latter and has never looked back. Haldaman went on to earn her masters degree at the Columbia University School of Social Work. She has been a social worker at Matheny since 2004, and last year she received Matheny's Employee Excellence Award.

Haldaman selected social work over education because she says she wanted to have, "more of a connection with people on a different level." And it appears she is doing that. The Bethlehem, PA, resident was nominated for the excellence award by adult services psychologist Evelyn Callahan who emphasized her "common sense" and "problem-solving abilities". Haldaman has been instrumental in helping patients and students advocate for themselves. She coordinates Matheny's advocacy group and spearheaded the effort in 2008 to take four patients and students to the SABE (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered) National Self Advocacy Conference, which was in Indianapolis. The conference is only held every two years, and Haldaman is now working to generate funding so Matheny can be represented at this year's conference in September in Kansas City.

The advocacy group meets regularly to discuss issues within Matheny as well as to get involved in state and national



Kelly Haldaman with three members of the advocacy committee, from left: adult patient George Bracken, 17-year-old student Yasin Reddick and adult patient Dion Alston.

issues, working with The Arc of New Jersey's New Jersey Self Advocacy Project. "It might be going to Trenton for

"Nothing's impossible here. No matter how crazy the idea sounds, everyone works together to figure out how we can do it."

a rally," Haldaman says, "or getting involved in letter writing campaigns. One of the big issues NJSA is working on is getting rid of the 'R' word – 'retardation' -- in our everyday language."

Attending the SABE conference, she says, was enriching for the Matheny


students and patients. "From morning to night, they had all sorts of things going on – speakers, breakout sessions and some downtime for fun in the evening." That trip, Haldaman says, symbolizes what she likes best about Matheny – "the atmosphere, the patients, the staff. The staff care deeply for the patients, and the patients are just so warm and welcoming.

"They want to give so much even though they are people who need so much. And Matheny does a great job of letting them do what they want to do. I never hear 'no'. Nothing's impossible here. No matter how crazy the idea sounds, everyone here works together to figure out how we can do it."

‘Chefs Café’ Imports International Cuisine, Culture to Patients and Staff

As part of its “Chefs Café” series, which brings different world cuisines to patients, students and staff, the Dining Services department at Matheny recently presented “India Day”, a combination of Indian food, dance and music.

The menu, served at “Café Taj Mahal”, consisted of a variety of Indian dishes including tandoori chicken, naan baked bread, alu gobhi (potatoes, cauliflower, onions, tomatoes and spices) and balti dahl (legumes with onions, tomatoes and ginger). The food was accompanied by several Indian dance performances, Indian music performed by the music therapy department and displays of Indian art and books. The festivities were coordinated by Aruna Dasika, chief clinical dietician. Other Chefs Café days have highlighted cuisine and culture from Ethiopia, Mexico and Spain.

Purpose of the Chefs Café program, according to Mary Bradley, food service manager, is two-fold: “We want to showcase our chefs because we have a very talented staff here; and we’re trying to make it a learning experience for the students. We try to tie the country in with what they’re learning in education. We tell education what we’re going to do, and they try to bring the cultural aspects into the classroom.” 



Teacher Darlene Tammara helps 18-year-old student Gregory Kuhrt learn about India.



Alu gobhi, top left, and balti dahl top right. In foreground are pureed versions of these dishes for students and patients who can’t eat regular food.

Bharathanatyam, south India classical dance, performed by Rutgers Prep student Geeta Ganti.

Aruna Dasika performing the dandia garbha dance.

Early Childhood Struggles Motivated Matheny Teacher to Pursue Career in Special Education

As a child growing up in Summit, NJ, Christina Cupo struggled with reading and writing and was often pulled from her regular classes at Washington School for extra help. That gave her an extra appreciation for special education. "When I graduated from Summit High School," she recalls, "I realized that special education was the only way I would be able to pass the patience and understanding I had gained onto a new generation of students."

Cupo, who still resides in Summit, received her bachelor's degree in special education and obtained her master's degree in elementary education from the University of Scranton. She began applying for teaching jobs in 2005, and the Matheny School, she says, "just kind of stood out. I kind of connected with the students."

She started at Matheny in July of 2005, teaching kindergarten age children.

For the past two years she has been instructing high school age students. Matheny, Cupo says, is "an extremely special place. Of course, the students make it really special, but the staff just feel like a whole big family. We all care about the students so much that we just help each other out."

According to Sheryl Gavaras, who is

Matheny's principal, Cupo, "exemplifies commitment and passion for the special education community. The students, faculty and the school at large

to implement and adapt the "creative curriculum" to meet the needs of the students with complex developmental disabilities. This curriculum, Cupo

explains, "is primarily used in general education settings and is a center-based method of teaching that focuses on small group instruction while promoting discovery-based learning." The idea, she says, is to "just let the students learn by themselves, with the teacher being a facilitator."

**"Matheny is
an extremely
special place."**

With our students, it's kind of difficult, but we see progress throughout an entire year where someone else might see it in one day. As long as I see that progress from September through June, that's extreme gratification for me."

Sometimes, though, there are unusual surprises. Cupo recalls her second year of teaching kindergarten.

"One of my students," she says, "started walking. All of a sudden, he just got up and walked, which was amazing. And with that, he became a lot more focused, and his communication skills developed so that we were able to start a whole new picture communications system."



Christina Cupo, in her classroom with 16-year-old Michael Taurozzi.

find her to be one of the most caring and dedicated professionals they have the honor to work with." As a result, Cupo has been nominated by Matheny as "Educator of the Year" in the annual competition sponsored by ASAH, the association for the private special education community in New Jersey.

Cupo was the first teacher at Matheny

Philanthropy Notes

Dear Friends,

It was *A Field of Dreams*. We built it and they came. All 2,000 strong. Friends and neighbors, clients and families, staff, volunteers, supporters, and the local community. They all came to Miles for Matheny 2010. As I watched the wheelchair walk stretch long and wide across the fields of historic Natirar, I was reminded of the dreams that are Matheny. Where miracles are performed everyday by our dedicated and talented staff who create the opportunities for each one of our students and patients to achieve their greatest potential.

After 12 years at Liberty Park in downtown Peapack, our Miles event moved this year to Natirar, a Somerset County Park Commission property in Peapack. This larger venue nicely accommodated our growing number of participants and proved to be a welcome change by many who had never visited this former estate of the of the once and famous King of Morocco. Some 120 of our patients, residents and students accompanied by 400 family, friends and volunteers, participated in this year's Wheelchair Walk which was led by the daughters of Miles founder, the late Lu Huggins for whom we dedicated this year's Miles. The entire event – cycling routes through Somerset Hills, a USATF sanctioned 5K race, Kids Fun Run, the aforementioned Wheelchair Walk, and post-event celebration – combined to create, as some put it, “the best Miles ever”, “awesome”, “a good time by all” “a fantastic venue”.

The title sponsor of Miles for the 5th year in a row was sanofi-aventis. How fortunate we are to be recipients of their very generous monetary and volunteer support. All our major sponsors – Peapack-Gladstone Bank, Porzio, Bromberg & Newman, Pfizer Inc., the Druskin Family Foundation, Affinity Federal Credit Union, WCBS-TV Channel 2 and WCBS Newsradio 880, Delta Dental of New Jersey, Partlow Insurance Agency, and Wakefern Food Corporation/ShopRite – have repeatedly supported Miles for Matheny year after year. We are so grateful for their ongoing support. Please see pages 10 -11 for a complete listing of all the sponsors, in-kind donors, supporters, volunteers, and friends who make this event possible. They along with you – the individual donors, participants, solicitors, and teams – helped us raise \$110,000 for the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry.

The large numbers of participants, volunteers, families, friends, Matheny staff, and the community at large were a heartening demonstration of support for our patients and students. This was their special day, and we appreciate the efforts of everyone who helped make it an extraordinary morning and afternoon.

With sincere gratitude,
Janice Kriegman
Acting Director of Philanthropy

Our Special Thanks...

A tribute to recognize occasions like birthdays and anniversaries, to honor a friend, or in memory of a loved one takes on special meaning when it also helps the many children and adults at Matheny.

When you make a gift, the honored person or the family of the deceased receives a personal letter

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Thank You for Volunteering Your Time!

Bonnie Brae Drum Corps
Civil Air Patrol
Cliff Delaney
Dave Miller
Friends of Matheny
Girl Scout Troop 653

Jr. Friends of Matheny
Peapack-Gladstone Fire Department
Peapack-Gladstone Police Department
Pfizer, Inc.
Rotary Club of Bernardsville
Securitas

We hope to see you again next year for
Miles for Matheny 2011!
And Thank You to the Event Volunteers,
Event Staff, Participants, and Solicitors.

Save the Date!
Full Circle 2010: The Human Condition
Saturday, November 6, 2010



Matheny *Matters*

65 Highland Avenue, P.O. Box 339
Peapack, NJ 07977
(908) 234-0011 • Fax: (908) 719-2137
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Team Mount Prospect

Team Mount Prospect, a group of students, teachers and parents from the Mount Prospect Elementary School in Basking Ridge, NJ, raised \$2,655 to support Miles for Matheny. Some of the team members gathered for a photo at the post-event celebration.



Students in front row, from left: Jake Russo, Dillon DiDario, Gabe DiDario, John Mullins, Jr., Christopher Au, Alexa Russo, Colin Lee-Au, Andrew Lee-Au and Nicholas Manduley (far right in black jacket). Parents and faculty in back row, from left: Elaine DiDario, Athena Lee, John Mullins Sr. (cap), Kairon Mullins, Tom DiDario, Michelle Russo (white cap), Alan Au, Bob Russo, Lori Manduley and Robert Manduley.