



Matheny Matters

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13-year-old Matheny student, James Wild, with his sister, Renee, left, and Brianna Bezzek, both of Bedminster.

One Fine Day

The weather was perfect, and more than 1,800 people participated, volunteered and cheered at the 10th annual Miles for Matheny, held Sunday, April 22, in downtown Peapack, NJ. The event raised more than \$250,000 to help support the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry, which provides outpatient services to people with disabilities in 12 New Jersey counties.

(More on Miles for Matheny, pages 2, 10-12)



Adult patient, Mark Riddle, with Morristown-Beard students, Menaka Dhingra, left, of Cedar Grove, and Kathleen Magner of Denville.



Adult patient, Ara Shamamian, and friends.



Bernards High lacrosse players run the 5K as a team.



CBS 2's Kirstin Cole emcees the Lu Huggins Wheelchair Walk.



Tyletha Blake of Budd Lake presents 13-year-old Matheny student, Raven Bennett, with her medal.

More Mileage



Wheelchair Walk namesake, Lu Huggins of Basking Ridge, assisted by her daughter, Carol Chirico of Boston.



Morristown-Beard students present Matheny president, Steve Proctor, with a check for \$1,500.



WCBS Newradio 880 anchor, Wayne Cabot of Glen Gardner, with his nine-year-old daughter, Amanda.



Bernards High participants, from left, Anthony Palma of Gladstone, Kate Watson Prins of Bernardsville and Hanson Gong of Bernardsville.



Former Villanova basketball star, John Celestand of Franklin Park, right, with Matheny trustees, Daniel McLaughlin of New Vernon, left, and Arnold Rosenheck, DMD, of West Orange.

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Brian Monahan and Jean Whaley of Bedminster prior to start of the 12-mile cycle ride.



Butler High School student, Mackenzie Miller visits with 12-year-old Matheny student, Shane Szott, and his mother, Andrea, of Morristown.



Reaching Out to Schools



10-year-old Jeremy Tsontson, center, a fourth grader at Benedict A. Cucinella Elementary School in Washington Township, enjoys a light moment with 14-year-old Matheny student, Aaron Turoulin, left, and 12-year-old Matheny student, Shane Scott, right.

Matheny therapists, teachers and students visited several public and independent schools this past spring as part of an expanding outreach program designed to give able-bodied students the opportunity to experience what it is like to live with a disability; break down barriers of fear and anxiety about how to relate to people with disabilities; and replace those barriers with a sense of camaraderie, understanding and friendship.



12-year-old Long Valley Middle School sixth grader, Jason Olmstead, tries out a power wheelchair.



10-year-old Far Hills Country Day School student, Grant Falvo, rides in a manual wheelchair.



11-year-old Long Valley Middle School sixth grader, Meghan Murray, takes a ride in a manual wheelchair.

Schools or parents desiring more information about how to get involved in this program should call Linda Silvia, director of therapies, at (908) 234-0011, ext. 226.



10-year-old FHCDS fourth grader, Matthew Dormer, uses a head pointer to play adaptive bocce.

Music Therapy, Horseback Riding & Arts Access Help Gregory Kuhrt Overcome His Disabilities

Karen Kuhrt's 15-year-old son, Gregory, can't walk, sit, talk or even hold a bottle. But he participates in a bell choir, goes horseback riding and has lots of friends. The opportunity to do those things, says Kuhrt, a resident of Flemington, NJ, is why she and her husband, Richard, decided to admit their son as a resident at Matheny.

Gregory, who is missing a small piece of his fourth chromosome (Wolf-Hirschorn Syndrome), began coming to Matheny's summer program when he was five years old. And, occasionally, he would be admitted as a respite patient. "We'd come back here," Kuhrt recalls, "and people would remember him; they would know who he was. That always made us feel very comfortable." He was enrolled as a regular day student when the Hunterdon Central School District no longer had a program for him. "He was too old for the elementary program," Kuhrt says, and "at an IEP (Individualized Education

things he never would have been able to do at home. The bell choir was wonderful for him and for us. [The bell choir is a special choir designed by Matheny's music therapy program for

der. I've never seen him do that before. It was really cute."

Gregory has two brothers - 17-year-old David, is a junior at Hunterdon Central High School, and 12-year-old



15-year-old Gregory Kuhrt and his mother, Karen

non-vocal students. It enables them to activate bells electronically via a head switch]. He also did therapeutic horseback riding. And the arts program here is wonderful. [Arts Access enables children and adults with disabilities to create fine art, assisted by professional artist-facilitators]. When he lived at home, in the evenings he would just be watching TV with his brothers. Now, he has a roommate, and they tell me he's got his friends at school. And it's affected him when he comes home. The other day, he was reaching out to put his hand on his older brother's shoulder

"He's doing things he never would have been able to do at home."

Program) meeting, a little over a year ago, they asked me what I saw for Greg's future, where did I want him to be? I said, 'I want him to be here [Matheny].'"

Requesting residential placement for Gregory, Kuhrt acknowledges, "was a very difficult decision, but he's doing

Nathaniel is a sixth grader at Readington-Flemington Intermediate School. Both ran the 5K for the second straight year at Miles for Matheny. "This was my third Miles for Matheny," says Kuhrt. "It's a great event. It's great for people to come up and see what a great place Matheny is."

Kuhrt is also a singer-songwriter, and she has written a song about Gregory, which she performs on a CD called "Heaven in your eyes." Purpose of the song, Kuhrt says, is to "somehow get our message out to more people. Instead of feeling sorry for children like Gregory, we need to see all that they have to offer."

Community Connections



Members of Congregation B'nai Israel and the Ridge Oak senior citizens center of Basking Ridge knitted lap blankets for Matheny patients. From left, Susan Horowitz, Bryan Desatnick, Edana Desatnick, Harriet Sheitelman, James Wild, Rachel Horowitz and Natalia Manning.

Matheny's Community Connections program continues to expand. Whether it's support for special activities, unexpected gifts or just a friendly visit, Matheny's patients' lives are continually enhanced by the thoughtfulness and extra effort extended by businesses, school groups and neighbors.

If you'd like to find out how you can become part of our Community Connections program, please call the Development Office at (908) 234-0011, ext. 260.



Seventy Butler High School sociology students visited Matheny, participating in school classroom and adult services activities. From left, Jessica Hurtado, David Miller and Anna Magalhaes



Kaleidoscope Hair & Body Artistry of Basking Ridge donated prom dresses and hair, makeup and nail services for the Matheny Prom. Deborah Link with Tatyana Manousakis, left, and Natalie Vogel.



Patrick McDermott of Red Bank performed for 14-year-old student, Mark O'Connell, during a concert by employees of Affinity Federal Credit Union, Basking Ridge.



Chris Saglimbene enjoyed a visit from the Rutgers men's basketball team.

Rehab Technician Faces Daily Challenges

As a rehab technician at Matheny, Bob Williams faces daily challenges that would seem daunting to most. In collaboration with therapists, the Lake Hopatcong, NJ, resident must formulate solutions that will improve the seating systems for patients with medically complex multiple developmental disabilities. “Each wheelchair,” he explains, “is an individual, just like the person who’s in it. Building that chair for an individual is a real challenge.”

Before joining the rehab technology staff of Matheny in 2002, Williams had spent 30 years in the electronics industry. But he never felt the kind of satisfaction he receives from his current work. “It’s very gratifying when you can see how happy the patients are with their new seating,” he says. “The biggest challenge is trying to find out what you have to do to make them happier. A lot of the credit,” he adds, “should go to the physical therapists and the occupational therapists. They communicate with us really well.”

The therapists feel the same way

about Williams. In 2006, he won a Matheny Employee Excellence Award,




Bob Williams adjusts the harness on the seating system for Matheny adult patient, George Bracken.

wheelchairs, making new and inventive contraptions and working with the therapists and staff to ensure the safety and well-being of each of our patients.”

Matheny’s seating, mobility and assistive technology clinic is a highly intensive treatment center requiring the services of at least three disciplines: occupational therapy, physical therapy and rehabilitation technology. All three disciplines are directly involved in the evaluation of individuals who need a wheelchair but who also require a system in which they can interact with their environment. The PT-OT-RT team helps individuals in choosing the assistive technology that best meets their needs and provides ease of care.

and one of those who nominated him was the director of physical therapy, Cynthia LaBar. “Bob continues to improve the seating systems of our patients,” she said. “Everyday, he works down in the basement putting new wheelchairs together, repairing old

Thanks to a grant from the Merck Company Foundation, Matheny’s new Workshop on Wheels will help bring its seating and mobility clinic to more locations throughout northern and central New Jersey. **For more information, call (908) 234-0011, ext. 722.** 

Wide Range of Experience Appeals to Matheny Nurse

In addition to her role as infection control practitioner at Matheny, Diane Lynch, RN, interacts with patients as a working nurse, meets with families and their infants and toddlers as a nurse in the Somerset County Special Child Health Services Early Intervention program and serves as a teacher for nursing students getting practical experience. It’s clear that, for Lynch, Matheny provides an opportunity to experience nursing in a wide range of settings. Plus,

unlike an acute care hospital, “you really get to know the patients,” she says. “You learn to appreciate their growth and you become an expert on their care.”

The High Bridge, NJ, resident has been at Matheny for nearly 10 years and says the patients ‘have taught me over and over about overcoming obstacles and about the strength of the human spirit.” Lynch recalls one patient in particular who “had done a painting in our Arts Access Program (which enables

people with disabilities to create fine art, assisted by professional artist-facilitators). He had sold the painting and donated some of the proceeds to a charity organization that helped children. He had just gotten a letter from the organization thanking him for his contribution, and he was very excited. I thought that was very neat.” **For more information about nursing opportunities at Matheny, call (908) 234-0011, ext. 236.**

Teachers and Therapists Work Together Seamlessly in the Classroom

The Matheny School is committed to a multi-disciplinary, collaborative team approach to teaching medically complex students with multiple disabilities. The expertise of speech-language pathologists, physical, occupational, music and recreation therapists, social workers and psychologists is always available and is provided in partnership with classroom teachers.

“We mix our therapy with what the individual teacher’s lesson plans are,” explains speech-language pathologist Mary Heavey, MS, CF-SLP, a resident of Hackettstown, NJ. “We usually try to go into the classroom when they’re having language arts,” she adds. “If they’re doing a book, we can tie our activities in with that, instead of just doing some abstract therapy that is not necessarily related to the curriculum.”

Heavey had never really planned to be a speech-language pathologist. After graduating from Hackettstown High School, she received a B.S. in liberal arts at College Misericordia in Dallas, PA, and planned to pursue a graduate degree in special education, but she was exposed to speech therapy by a friend who was studying it, and changed directions. In January, 2006, while pursuing her M.S. in speech therapy at Misericordia, she started a 13-week internship at Matheny and quickly realized, “this was

exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to work with kids and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.” She graduated in May and started working at Matheny as a full-time speech-language pathologist in July. Speech therapy, she says, “is very rewarding. The kids bring a lot of joy. They’re a lot of fun to work with, especially when you see them progress.



Speech-language pathologist, Mary Heavey, watches as 14-year-old student, Aaron Turovlin, uses his Dynavox speech-output device.

When you see even the smallest amount of progress, you can say, ‘I made a difference.’”

Many students at Matheny are non-verbal, and they are provided with state-of-the-art assistive technology including a variety of augmentative and alternative communication systems and power mobility. Computers are used extensively in each classroom with a full range of specialized switch access hardware and appropriate software. In addition, a complete assess-

ment of speech and language is provided and a program is developed and implemented to meet each student’s individual need. The assessment and treatment includes: oral motor speech, respiration and articulation; pre-linguistic skills; receptive language abilities; expressive language skills; voice and articulation; augmentative and alternative communication assessment; and feeding/dysphagia.

Matheny’s full education program is available to residential and day students, ages 3-21, and is designed to provide academics, combined with functional life skills. Individual education Program (IEP) goals are addressed in all major areas: activities of daily living, leisure/recreation, community and vocational. Matheny students, in addition to their primary diagnoses, such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, have a long list of associated medical conditions and chronic illnesses. These include such conditions as: vision and hearing deficits, seizure disorder, mental retardation and dysphagia/aspiration problems. All programs are approved by the New Jersey and New York Departments of Education, and Matheny is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. **For more information, call (908) 234-0011, ext. 237.**

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

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Thanks Frank!



Every year, more than 80 Matheny patients attempt to raise money for Miles for Matheny by creating their own personal web pages on the Miles for Matheny website. And every year since 2003, Frank Allocca, a resident of Chester Township, has made sure that each of them meets his/her fundraising goal.



This year, Allocca donated \$5,600 to make that happen. In appreciation, Matheny patients created thank you cards, which were presented to Allocca by Lateefah Stewart, left, and Annie Paloff.

