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Bella's Story: Little Girl, Big Determination

By Julie Morgan, Occupational Therapist



"Bella has always been strong, determined, and vivacious. However, since having these (therapy) sessions, it seems she is more determined than ever. She tries harder than before, and realizes that she can do ANYTHING she sets her mind to. She is emotionally more balanced, and although she is aware of her differences, she doesn't let them get in the way of being an average four-

year-old." – Kristen Potter, Bella's Mom

Bella is an energetic and playful four-year-old girl who was born with a congenital condition called VACTERL association. This condition impacted Bella's left upper extremity resulting in a significant limb difference and use of only three functional fingers.

Bella's family first sought out occupational therapy services due to concerns with her ability to use both her hands to engage in play and to perform age-appropriate self-help skills. Bella also lacked confidence in her abilities and would often steer clear of challenging play activities such as climbing on playground equipment. Bella is now attending skilled occupational therapy services at the Wendell Foster's Campus to address hand use, strengthening, play skills, and self-help skills and has been a joy to work with. She is independent and persistent, and it is this persistence that does not let anything get in the way of her accomplishing her goals. After nine months of

therapeutic treatment, Bella is now able to use scissors with minimal assistance, dress and undress herself, take off and put on her shoes, climb play equipment, zip and don a backpack, open a juice box, and use both hands freely for play. Her overall balance and strength have also improved. She is progressing in her ability to catch herself if she falls and to operate fasteners such as buttons and snaps.

This summer Bella joined her sister's T-ball team. Bella decided that cheering on the sidelines was no longer her calling --- she was ready for some action. Bella's parents also came to occupational therapy with concerns regarding her social and emotional well-being. They wanted to provide their daughter with the tools to handle uncomfortable social exchanges such as when a peer questions her about her "uniqueness." They also wanted help in teaching Bella's siblings to understand that each person is different and special, and that as sisters, they are to be each others' cheerleader. The Occupational Therapy department created two



social stories to help Bella with these social situations. Bella embraced these stories and does an amazing job recalling them and utilizing them in her daily life. Through therapeutic intervention, an amazingly supportive family, and her own personal drive, Bella has acquired many of the skills needed to achieve her personal goals. Bella is truly an inspiration!

"Empowering People, Realizing Dreams"



Volunteer Spotlight

By Vikki Embry, Volunteer Coordinator

In 2005, George Vince traveled thousands of miles from his home in India to the United States to study electrical engineering at Tennessee Tech. George recalls his childhood in India as lacking the grand opportunities and conveniences found in America and states that volunteerism was not strongly encouraged in India, although a great need for volunteers existed. George recalled first being inspired to use his life to benefit others by a Catholic priest who encouraged him “to be a man for others for the greater glory of God.”

George began his volunteer journey as a community companion to Roger in November of 2008. The two spent time checking Roger’s email and working on his website, while making song requests to radio stations. George laughs as he remembers how insistent Roger was to never give up, no matter how many tries it took to contact a live person at the radio stations. George said he realized then that Roger has a strong spirit of determination because of how he lives daily; he refuses to let his disability or obstacles in his path prevent him from remaining active on Campus and in the community.

George says he feels that most of the time we seek out people who are similar to us and share our likes, dislikes, careers, or personalities. We tend to be around people that make us feel good, reaffirm that we are good people, and are able to express that to us verbally. George states that although Roger does express gratitude like his other friends may, his gratitude shows in different forms. Their friendship has taught him many things not only about Roger, but also about himself and human nature. “People can learn from volunteering with individuals with disabilities because these individuals have learned to never quit more than a typical person can ever learn... Many of us expect things to come too easily to us.”

George typically sees Roger about twice a week during which they spend time on the computer, chatting with each other, and hanging out at the



house with Roger’s roommates- all of whom George feels close to now. They have volunteered together at Pride Day, Celebrating Abilities, and other Campus and community events. George was recently trained by Supports for Community Living staff so he can be with Roger in community settings without staff assistance. They hope to be able to go to the movies, shopping, and out to eat now that George has obtained this additional training.

George has told his family in India about his friendship with Roger and now they often eagerly inquire about Roger. George shared that Roger also looks out for him affectionately explaining, “If I go around Roger and I do not have my glasses he always asks where are my glasses?” George said what he appreciates most about his relationship with Roger is that it is an ongoing process of continually growing and learning from each other. “My volunteer experience is not a one week experience such as a mission trip it is an experience . . . that continues on.”

Cindy Parish, VP of Supports for Community Living, states “I have never been around George when he does not have a smile on his face. He has been a true asset in Roger’s life and we are so fortunate to have such a dedicated volunteer as we have in George. We wish we could clone him!”



CEO Corner - What Do You Say?



Terry Brownson, CEO.

What do you say when you meet a person who has an obvious disability? Do you avoid eye contact, or any other potential for interaction? The answer to these questions is likely dependent on how you were raised and the experiences you've had interacting with people who are clearly different from yourself. If you're an adult and

have not had many of these experiences, or perhaps have had a difficult experience, it is likely that you will need to make a special effort to overcome your fears and prejudices.

One of my proudest moments as a father came when I asked my then pre-school aged daughter about her favorite friends at school and one of those listed was a boy

who had Down Syndrome. Of course, at age 4 she had no understanding of disability. She was only interested in the person and whether he was fun to be around. Like learning a foreign language or how to play a musical instrument, it just seems so much easier for children to drop their self-doubts and move forward in their learning without preconceived ideas or fears of potential outcomes. We should learn from them.

Author and humorist Evan Esar once said, "You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth." There's some real truth in that when we think about opening our lives to people who are different, including those who have disabilities.

What do you say when you meet a person who has an obvious disability? "Hi, how are you today?" is a good start!

Giving and Living

By Maggie Price, VP Development

How Ya Doin'?

I ran in to a friend of mine the other day at the grocery. We exchanged the usual pleasantries but then with a serious look on her face she asked, "How are you all doing...really?" I had to stop for a minute to think about what she was asking, and realized that she wasn't just being polite. I answered that we were doing fine...but as she wandered away I really started analyzing "how are we?"

I knew that my friend was talking about money... as in contributions. I also knew that working in a non-profit environment herself, she was well aware of the excruciating belt tightening going on in many agencies. Even though my natural comeback was just to say fine, the more I thought about it, the more I realized the truth was that so far we had dodged a bullet... and we were fine!

Now, please understand that I say this with a large dose of humility, and a heart full of gratefulness. Since 1947, this community has advocated, prayed for, and supported this Campus and the people we serve. Even during economically tough times for many across the Commonwealth, the Campus has remained consistent and actually enhanced several of the programs we offer for children and adults. This was all because of your generous support.

Last month donations secured the purchase of new equipment for the speech department. This equipment, called "Vital Stim Therapy", treats people with swallowing disorders. Some of these folks are eating food for the first time in their lives as a result of this therapy. I still get teary-eyed when I remember the story of the little guy that had been on a feeding tube during his first two years, but ate Cheetos by his third birthday.

And then there is the money that came in to re-furbish an older home in the neighborhood so that families visiting the Campus will have a place to gather and visit uninterrupted...A place where they can share a meal around the table or relax and catch up on life's activities. What a blessing that will be!

Many of you are not only aware, but have played a large role in the creation of the Sensory Park and Garden. This project continues to move forward through generous contributions from people and organizations across the country. I cannot believe the number of people who have shoveled mulch, dug up weeds, watered the flowers, spread rock in the creek, put together outdoor tables, swings, and benches... the list is endless. And of course there are all those who have supported us financially. Please know that your efforts are paying off, and the celebration of completion is getting so close.

So how are we doing? We're feeling FINE!





The Essential Pieces 6th Annual Benefit Dinner and Auction September 12, 2009 6:00 PM

What do you get when you combine a great cause, delicious food, flowing wine, camaraderie, and fun with the opportunity to take home beautiful artwork, vacation packages, and tickets to the best sporting and theatre events in the area? The Essential Pieces: Wendell Foster's Campus Sixth Annual Benefit Dinner and Auction!

Don't miss out on this amazing evening of food, fun, and generosity. At this year's auction you'll have the opportunity to take home some seriously unique items-

- Antique Collectibles
- UK Football Tickets
- Stunning Original Art
- Titans Football Tickets
- Beach Vacations
- Vineyard Dinner Party
- Once-in-a-Lifetime Flights
- Handmade Quilts
- House Party for 15 People
- Unique Children's Gifts



Just to mention a few!

And this year, if you can't make the event you can find a special collection of items reserved for a new ONLINE AUCTION. Visit www.wfcampus.cmarket.com to bid from the comfort of your own home on getaways to Myrtle Beach, Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles, celebrity memorabilia, collectibles and MUCH MORE!

Visit the online auction now at www.wfcampus.cmarket.com and refer friends to enter to win a \$10 Gift Card to Kroger!



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