

THE AJ FOUNDATION

November 2011 Newsletter

AJ A GRADUATE'S STORY



AUTISM WITHOUT LIMITS....

The Comprehensive Learning Center sends their first graduate into the workplace.

At twenty-one years of age, AJ Corless is like many other graduates preparing to enter the workforce. For him, a position at Adelphi Research By Design in Doylestown awaits, along with his current position at Wouch, Maloney & Company.

Yet there is something that makes AJ different from the typical graduate. AJ has autism. What's even more intriguing is when he was diagnosed at the age of three, his parents were told his prospects were so grim that he should be institutionalized.

Fortunately for AJ, his parents refused to believe that was his future. It took many years of personal sacrifice, planning, and approvals before the Corless family, along with members of The AJ Foundation, proudly opened The Comprehensive Learning Center (CLC)--a pioneering school for children with autism that has become a pivotal piece in educating children

with autism in Bucks and the surrounding counties.

The AJ Foundation assisted in the development of program options in the public sector prior to opening The Comprehensive Learning Center.

As the number of diagnosed children grew, CLC expanded their facilities to help more of the 1 in 110 children diagnosed every year.

Today, The Comprehensive Learning Center serves 24 families, provides educational conferences for educators as well as parents, implements community and home programming for its students, and remains committed to serving families in need.

All because a boy named AJ has a family who always knew he "could" when they were told he "could not." Thank you AJ for giving hope, for persevering in the face of adversity, and for doing it all with grace and a smile.



AJ Corless

**First graduate of The Comprehensive Learning Center, surrounded by proud friends, teachers, coworkers, and family.
Hats off to our first grad AJ!**

**Challenging Topics in Autism:
Evidence-Based Procedures and Interventions**

FEBRUARY 24, 2012

The AJ Foundation will host its 5th Educational Conference at Pen Ryn Mansion in Bensalem on February 24, 2012. This one-day workshop will feature some of the nation's top behavioral specialists who will present on issues that families of children with autism face daily- at home, in school and in the community.

Dr. Mary Jane Weiss, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Endicott College where she directs the graduate programs in ABA and Autism, will focus on promoting language in her presentation '*Communication Training in Autism: How Do We Develop Effective and Efficient Communication Repertoires*'. Dr. Patrick Friman, Ph.D., Director of The Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health in Nebraska, will address elimination disorders in his talk '*Effective Management of Incontinence: Toilet Training, Enuresis, and Encopresis*'. Dr. Greg Hanley, Ph.D., Director of the Behavioral Analysis Doctoral Program at Western New England University, will present on sleep issues in '*Understanding and Addressing Sleep Problems of Persons with Autism*'. Dr. Bill Ahearn, Ph.D., Director of Research at the New England Center for Children, will address challenging behaviors in his presentation '*Assessing and Treating Problem Behavior While Promoting Functional Skills (Emphasis on Stereotypy)*'.

We are excited to offer this workshop for both parents and professionals. The price is \$100 per person and includes a continental breakfast and a box lunch. ASHA, Act 48, and BACB CEU's available pending approval. Visit our website www.ajfoundation.org for more details and registration.

**Your support helped us raise
\$313,827 last year!**



**...allowing us to
create a better
future for our
children with
autism.
Thank you!**

Did you know?

- * 1 in 110 births and 1 in 70 boys are born with autism in America.
- * CDC statistics suggest the rate of autism is growing 10-17% annually.
- * The costs of educating and caring for individuals with autism is 90 billion dollars a year.
- * These costs are expected to double in the next decade.



Have a vehicle to donate? CLC is enrolled in a program whereby individuals may donate used vehicles (cars, boats, motorcycles, etc). CLC will benefit from the sale of your donated vehicle either at auction or as junk. Motorized vehicles do not need to be in good running condition (a title is required). All donations are tax deductible. It's so easy and beneficial for both parties! If you have any questions on either a direct donation or on a vehicle donation, please contact Barbara Jenigen at CLC at (215)322-7852.

CASINO NIGHT - Delicious food and drink with a great night of gaming and PRIZES! On average our prizes total \$26,000. What could be better? How about a new twist? As each prize winner is announced we will put all the nights tickets, blue and red, in a massive drawing to be held at the end of the night. The winner goes home with an **iPad**! Sound exciting? Make sure you stay until the end of the night because that winner could be you!



Do you participate in The United Way?

Please consider designating
The AJ Foundation
as your recipient.
Put The AJ Foundation
For Children With Autism,
Wycombe, PA,
www.ajfoundation.org
as your designation.



Fundraising and Events for 2012:

Texas Hold' em



January 28, 2012

Conference



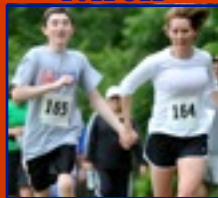
February 24, 2012

Casino Night



April 28, 2012

10K 5K



May 2012

AJF50 Bike Ride



October 2012

Golf-a-thon



TBD

For more details regarding upcoming events visit our website: www.ajfoundation.org

EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT TAX CREDIT

What is EITC?

The PA EITC Program allows you the option of diverting some of your tax dollars toward the creation of scholarships for the support of children's educational needs; specifically CLC families who may be struggling to pay privately.

Here's how it works. A business makes a contribution to CLC's scholarship organization and, in return, receives a significant tax credit from the state. Credit amounts depend on business type, contribution amount and number of years pledged. Eligible private paying families

are awarded the contributed funds by way of a credit toward their child's tuition. Questions regarding eligibility can be found at <http://www.newpa.com/eitc>.

Interested businesses can find the one-page application at www.clcschool.net/fundraising.html and submit the completed form to Jack Hee during the months of April through June.

Just 2 Steps - fill out the application and send it to CLC. We take care of the rest!!! This is an easy way to make a significant difference in a child's life.

"I participated in the EITC program last year - it's a wonderful cause and great for business!"

-Kissin Fresh Meats

Additional question's? Please contact CLC's Contoller, Jack Hee, at (215) 322-7852 or email at jhee@clcschool.net.

Need a reminder? Simply check the box for "Spring EITC Reminder" when you access the application page.

AUTISM MEETS TECHNOLOGY

There is a saying, "if you have met one child with autism then you have met one child with autism." Simply put, the spectrum is so vast it's hard to apply a universal statement that would encompass such a complex group of individuals.

Enter technology. Many children with autism respond favorably to visual modalities for instruction. As high-tech devices become available, the options are growing.

The personal computer provided vast opportunities for many children with autism. As the computer technology expanded, the availability of a wide array of instructional tools and rewards also expanded, with almost any topic or activity at your fingertips.

For many children with autism, operating the computer remains difficult. Those with fine motor difficulties or limited reading skills are at a disadvantage with the use of a mouse, hidden menus, and variety of commands.

The iPod Touch was a technological breakthrough in many ways. Gone are the written menus-replaced with icons. The mouse was no longer needed with the touch screen. The wide



variety of apps provided many new rewards, but also opportunities for education and productivity. The iPod Touch is small, portable, and powerful with ever-increasing memory to hold activity schedules, music, videos, and hundreds of apps. Many students type their daily schedules, set alarms to prompt transitions, and access rewards.

Then there is what the autism community is calling 'The Game Changer', the iPad! It has the same layout and touchscreen features as the iPod Touch, but it's considerably bigger. This, along with the addition of stands, keyboards, and other accessories, makes it accessible to many more students. Dozens of apps have been specifically developed for individuals with autism.

A CLC parent described the iPad "as if this technology were created specifically for my child." Remarkably the first time Michael used his iPad, he required little teaching. He quickly picked up on how to navigate through screens and various applications.

Today Michael's iPad holds his daily schedule, a calendar of events for school and leisure activities, and an increasing number of apps for rewards. He has learned to respond to emails on his iPad and uses this tool frequently to communicate with his parents while at school.

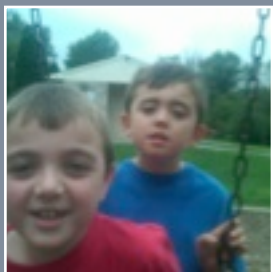
Michael's iPad travels between school and home every day. This portability provides many opportunities for him to practice and maintain skills learned at school, provides opportunities for the seamless use of his schedule, and keeps his most preferred activities available.

The iPad has meant a lot to Michael and his family. It has increased his independence, helped him learn new skills, and has been a great tool to help him participate in more family activities. The portability of activities and rewards on the iPad has made it possible for Michael to attend his sister's softball games and to join his family in other activities that were previously impossible.

Then there are those moments of delight when a parent gets to witness skills transfer into real life. Recently Michael and his father were driving in the car. Dad's phone buzzed alerting him he had a text. Michael took his father's phone and began typing his name in response to his mothers text! Mom and Dad were overjoyed with Michael's enthusiasm to participate in things he once ignored.

For Michael's family, the iPad represents hope. Things once unattainable are now within reach; a simple message to mom, knowing its time for lunch, or watching his sister play ball. With the help of his dedicated teachers and this technology we can only wait to see what he can accomplish.

MODULE “A”



Sean S & Brian S

“Sean & Brian are siblings that attend CLC. Before that, the boys had little awareness of each other. They would often go to opposite ends of the house to avoid interaction.

Now they love hanging out together. They are true friends and adore each other in a way that only brothers can. We are so touched and grateful for this gift.”

-Michele S, Mother

MODULE “A”... These early years are a profoundly meaningful time. We are just beginning to discover all the wonderful skills hiding behind these beautiful faces. So much will change during these years. Both parents and teachers will look back in disbelief and say “remember when”? For now we can share what’s occurring presently. **Ethan** welcomed a new baby sister this year and is learning to set the table. **Julia and Bryn** are learning to play games, take turns, and socialize with each other. **John** is learning to follow an activity schedule and complete puzzles. **Connor**, who started in September, is learning to identify adjectives and is participating in a phonetic reading program.



Ethan P

Connor B



John M



Bryn B & Julia B

MODULE “B”



Luke H

“At a young age Lucas was gifted with technology.

We were recently delighted with his new interest in cars. It seemed unlike our tech driven child until the phone calls began. Twelve car dealers over the course of 3 days wanted to discuss recent inquiries made on high end vehicles designed by our son. Many sheepish explanations would follow...

secretly I was very proud.”

-Courtney H, Mother

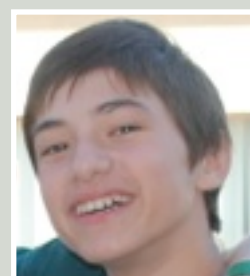
MODULE “B”... is buzzing with activity. Science, Social Studies, group activities and outings are just a few things that can happen in a single day here. Our students are emerging from children to adolescents and with that comes exciting growth. Most importantly, these individuals are learning to work together during both academic and leisure activities, and having fun doing it! Let’s check in with them... **Madison** is learning to participate and remain appropriately engaged in family events such as vacations and shopping with mom. **Jack** is learning to write a book report and use a dictionary to complete grammar lessons. **Alex** is learning to use digital photography as a leisure skill. **Michael** is learning to answer the phone and navigate the internet. **Pat** is learning science skills including completing science experiments. **Drake** is learning to use a cell phone. He uses the iTouch to keep his schedule at school and at home.



Madison K



Michael W



Drake P



Alex K

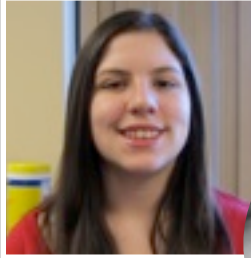


Pat L

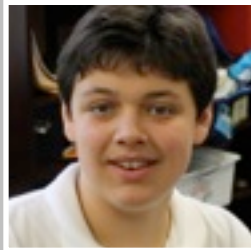


Jack J

MODULE “C”... is participating in many of the things most teenagers do - social networking, emailing, using cell phones, computers and iTouches. They are also beginning to learn some of the pre-vocational skills that may lead to paid employment opportunities. They are a lovely diverse group of individuals that continually surprise and delight both teachers and family members with their rapid maturing and growth. Let's see what's happening...**Ivy** participates in group instruction to learn social studies concepts such as American history, important landmarks and monuments. **Ryan** is learning to take inventory and restock items. **Will** is learning to complete addition problems without the use of a calculator. **Colin** is learning to keep appointments and maintain a daily schedule using an iTouch. **Remi** is learning to input data on the computer.



Remi W



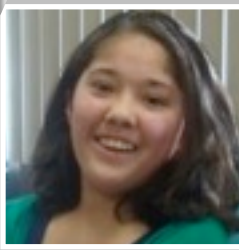
Ryan Q



Will B

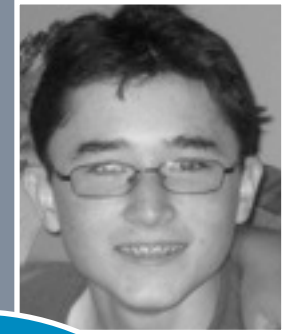


Colin M



Ivy C

MODULE “C”



Connor F

“Connor

is an active athlete who participates in long distance running, basketball and CrossFit. His teachers developed a program to teach him to wear contact lenses which makes it easier to participate in these sports that he has come to love. CLC is always open to working with parents and students to improve the lives of our kids!”

-Patty F, Mother

MODULE “D”... is all grown up. You are seeing young adults learning vocational skills, life skills, becoming more independent, and entering the work place for the first time. They are trailblazers creating the path for our students that will follow. You have set the bar high Mod “D”! Congrats to you and your families. Now let's get the details.... **Connor** is learning to re-shelve books. **Dan** holds a part-time paid position three days a week at a local grocery store bagging groceries, re-shelving items, and collecting carts and baskets. **Alexis** is learning to file medical records.



Connor M & Dan L



Dan L



Alexis P

MODULE “D”



Louis E

“We were thrilled when Louis joined the family business. It made him the 4th generation in our 100 year old shop, Esposito Meats. More significantly, I am able to work along side my son and proudly share in his progress and the hard work both he and his teachers have committed to this transformation.”

- Lou Sr, Father



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Website: www.ajfoundation.org

Tax ID# 23-2887692

The Comprehensive Learning Center
(215) 322-7852

For information or to make a donation:

The **AJ** Foundation

For Children With Autism

P.O. Box 234

Wycombe, PA 18980

2011 AJF50 Ride for Autism

The children, families, and volunteers of The AJ Foundation would like to thank everyone who participated and/or donated to our 4th Annual AJF50 Ride for Autism. Our annual ride, held in October, hosted the usual 50 mile advanced ride along with the 12 mile family ride. Both rides took advantage of the winding paths and hills of beautiful Bucks County. It was a huge success raising over \$30,000. We would like to thank all of our sponsors and volunteers for making the day possible especially Cognizant Technologies, Giuseppe's Family Restaurant in Richboro, Tanner Brothers, and Bicycle Pro. Congratulations to Jerry Schussler of Team Julia for winning the raffle for the GIANT bike donated by Bicycle Pro of Bordentown, NJ. Speaking of teams, a special thanks and congratulations goes out to Team Carosi for winning the AJF50 Cup this year by raising the most donations. Team Carosi raised over \$4,000 for The AJ Foundation! We hope you enjoyed the ride and look forward to seeing you next year!

Thank You All !

THE **AJ** FOUNDATION

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