



Personal Reflections on Our Journey

Rewind to 1994, the year I first met Joanne Corless and her 4-year old son, AJ. This is when the journey that would lead to The AJ Foundation and The Comprehensive Learning Center began. I was 24 years old, a year out of graduate school, and new to the professional world of autism intervention. My passion for the science of Applied Behavior Analysis and excitement for my new profession were without measure! I was very fortunate to be working at a world-renowned program for people with autism, a program Joanne was pursuing for her son but was unable to attain due to a very long wait list.

Outside of my daytime job, I met Joanne through a mutual friend. I then began working with her son in the evenings for the next 3 years. The time I spent at the Corless home was full of both celebration and heartache. We celebrated while watching AJ learn at an amazing rate but it broke my heart seeing the constant turmoil in Joanne as she struggled to find the right school for her son.



So there we were, a parent who needed a program for her son and me, a new professional eager to build my career at a place that prioritized child and family outcomes, while also strictly adhering to science-based interventions. At that time, the only option that satisfied each of us was to create such a program. And so the journey began...

Fast-forward 23 years... The AJ Foundation has been successfully raising funds to benefit people with autism for over two decades! That missing school program, The Comprehensive Learning Center, was created where AJ would get the treatment and education he needed. Today, many others with autism and their families are getting the services they need to be successful at school, at home and in their communities.

Professionally, I was able to realize my vision of a career in a place where meaningful outcomes for people with autism takes precedence above all else! I now spend my days with a new generation of young professionals who hold the same passion and excitement for our science and the work we do as I did (and still do!) at their age.

As our journey continues, we have very exciting things on the horizon. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of many over this past year, CLC is expanding once again! We are relocating to a new building almost double our current size! We are so excited to continue growing our program to meet the lifelong needs of our current students and graduates, and to continue welcoming new students and young professionals.

As I reflect on how we started and where we are today, it must be said that everything accomplished thus far was only possible because of the overwhelming support of so many! Help for our individuals with autism comes in many forms. Of course, we couldn't have done any of it without financial support. A less-recognized but vitally important form of support comes from local businesses and professionals. These people create opportunities for and welcome our very hard-working students and graduates into their own professional lives. In this newsletter, we spotlight these amazing people and the businesses that work with us to create opportunities for people with autism that expand outside the walls of our program.

Sincerely,

Cindy Murphy, Executive Director
Comprehensive Learning Center

Expanding... Outside Our Walls!

Our school has been expanding since we opened in 2000. Not only have we grown to include more students, families, professional staff, programs and larger facilities, but we have also expanded through important partnerships in our local community. As part of both our **Transition Services** and our **Adult Program**, we have created strong alliances with many outside organizations and businesses where our young adults with autism gain real world, hands-on experience in the workplace.

On these pages, we highlight seventeen community organizations that provide volunteer, membership and/or employment opportunities for those in our Adult Program, as well as our current students working towards the transition to adulthood.

ADELPHI RESEARCH (Doylestown)

AJ has worked at Adelphi as a paid employee for six years. He has grown along with the company, taking on additional responsibilities over the years which he handles independently with little supervision. AJ successfully navigates public transportation to get to and from work, and has his own cubicle and computer to call “home” once he arrives. Among his many ongoing office duties, such as setting up email and phone extensions for new hires, ordering office supplies, and distributing mail, AJ has also been called upon to assist a colleague learning similar responsibilities.

“AJ has taught me, as a manager, that sometimes limitations are purely perception. AJ continues to surprise and impress us here at Adelphi. We look forward to his continued success with us.”

-Diana Frasco, Human Resources Generalist



BODY DYNAMICS FITNESS CENTER (Huntingdon Valley)

Connor has been volunteering at this fitness center for four years. Scott, the owner, is extremely welcoming and eager to have Connor involved in the care and upkeep of his business. The responsibilities include cleaning the exercise equipment every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon. The sense of purpose Connor achieves through his contributions at Body Dynamics is evident by his eagerness to be at work on his scheduled days.

“It’s a pleasure to work with Connor. He applies himself 100%, always has a smile and enjoys being around people.”

-Scott Kuczynski, Owner



AFC FITNESS (Feasterville)

AFC Fitness is a state-of-the-art facility which has warmly welcomed our students as members. They participate in a wide variety of activities such as swimming, group Zumba classes, and walking or running around the indoor track. This setting allows them to learn the importance of regular exercise which builds strong lifestyle habits and also creates new social opportunities.

“I see the excitement in the students’ faces every time they come in. They light up my day.”

-Shannon Grosso, Membership Consultant



BIRCHES SENIOR LIVING FACILITY (Newtown)

Throughout the week, several of our young adults with autism volunteer their time at this senior living facility where they set the dining room tables, clean furniture, refill condiments, clean and organize the staff kitchen and restock the food pantry.

“Birches of Newtown prides itself on giving back to, and being involved in the community. Working closely in dining services with CLC students provides them with value and purpose, which is what we strive to provide to our residents within our community, as well as our friends at CLC.”

-Martina Schmitt, Business Office Manager



BUCKS COUNTY FREE LIBRARY (Doylestown)

Dan spends his Wednesday mornings at the Doylestown Library sorting and restocking DVDs, CDs and books that are returned. In addition, he helps customers who are looking for specific titles or sections in the library.

“It’s volunteers like Dan that help keep public libraries running. His hard work has made him a definite asset to the Doylestown Library.”

-Margarita Hossaini-Zadeh, Assistant Library Manager



CHALFONT FAMILY PRACTICE (Chalfont)

Each Friday morning, Connor volunteers at this local family medical practice to assist with filing patient paperwork. The staff is always excited to see his enthusiasm for his work and his willingness to assist with other tasks when needed.

“Connor is extremely independent in this setting. He enters the building, heads right into the office, greets his co-workers and works diligently for his entire shift!”

-Patty Feeney, Mother



EPIC DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES (Trevose)

Remi and Connor start their Thursday afternoons having lunch in the staff kitchen of this local behavioral health organization. Afterwards, they go about their assigned tasks for the day which may include collating, making photocopies, filing client binders, preparing and organizing welcome folders for new clients, or organizing the evaluation room.

“Having the CLC students work at Epic has been a tremendous joy for the entire office and has resulted in unforeseen benefits for our company as a whole. The students bring a level of dedication and work ethic that has been a model for us all at the office.”

- Kathleen Stengel, Sr. Vice President - ABA



DAVISVILLE CHURCH (Southampton)

Connor has been volunteering at the Davisville Church for two years. When there in the off hours, Connor enjoys the quiet solitude of the environment, where he can attack his responsibilities for the day. By completing tasks such as cleaning the church activity center, vacuuming rooms and hallways, upkeep and cleaning of restroom facilities, and organizing and preparing the prayer room upstairs, Connor enhances the experience for all of the church’s parishioners.

“Davisville Church is more than being just “church.” Our relationship with CLC has allowed students like Connor the opportunity to practice some of the life skills they have learned, enabling them to become productive citizens in the community. It has been a win-win arrangement.”

-Bill Kern, Business Administrator



GIUSEPPE’S PIZZA AND FAMILY RESTAURANT (Richboro)

Giuseppe’s Pizza – the host of our annual Texas Hold’em Tournament each January – also provides volunteer opportunities for CLC’s young adults. Each Monday and Friday afternoon, Derek assembles pizza boxes and restocks the beverage cooler. Following his shift, he often enjoys a personal pizza compliments of Tony, the owner!

“It’s a pleasure to see Derek every week and I’m pleased at the way he has adapted to his job.”

-Tony Giaimo, Owner



GREEN PARROT (Newtown)

Two days each week, Derek volunteers at the Green Parrot Restaurant drying utensils and preparing them in a napkin roll, refilling salt and pepper shakers, folding and sorting menus, as well as cleaning tables and chairs when requested. Even during a busy (and noisy) lunch period, Derek enthusiastically completes his tasks and often asks for additional work when things slow down.

“Derek has been an inspiration to our staff! We look forward to working with Derek for a long time. We hope it’s been as rewarding to Derek as it has been for us at the Green Parrot.”

- Chris McLean, Assistant Restaurant Manager



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE (Chalfont)

Each Tuesday morning, the CLC “team” of Derek, Colin, Patrick and Drake bring their collective energies to the table at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore. There they work diligently to sort donations, set up displays, break down empty boxes, sweep floors, restock/reorganize sale shelves and do whatever other tasks that are requested of them.

“The staff and students from CLC are awesome. We are so impressed with their support and professionalism. It is our goal to engage diverse learners in our ReStore to afford them the opportunity to build interpersonal and work skills. This is a partnership that we cherish.”

-Colleen Brink, Volunteer & Outreach Director



Expanding... Outside Our Walls!

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JESUS FOCUS MINISTRY FOOD PANTRY AT BETHANNA (Southampton)

The Jesus Focus Food Pantry feeds 1,600 clients a month, relying solely on the help of volunteers. Dan is part of that group of hardworking volunteers who tirelessly donate their time to receive the thousands of pounds of donations, weigh the donations, stock the shelves and prepare bags of food for the pantry's clients.

"Dan is a helpful volunteer who cheerfully works to serve the clients. It is a joy to have Dan as a part of the volunteer team."
-Marcy Barnes, Coordinator of Program Support Services



NATIONAL GREYHOUND ADOPTION PROGRAM (Philadelphia)

Our students get so excited when it is time to walk the greyhounds. Not only do the greyhounds get to stretch their legs but our students get to learn about the responsibilities of dog walking and caring for animals. For those with pets at home, this experience also creates a learning opportunity that can transfer to helping mom and dad with pet care, making it a win-win for all!

"Dog walking is an important part of profiling our dogs. Having CLC students walk them is wonderful."
-Pat Thomas, Volunteer Coordinator



REPLAY TOYS (Warminster)

Lucas plays an important role at RePlay Toys, a consignment/thrift store for gently used toys. Before a game, toy or puzzle can go on sale, Lucas carefully takes inventory of each piece (sometimes upward of 100!) to ensure the item is complete. When it's not complete, Lucas records the missing pieces and organizes the games.

"We love to watch Luke work as he helps us count and sort through our donations. We have a special bond working together to give back to our community."
-Emily Roach & Antoinette Alpart, Owners



MURRAY'S RICHBORO MARKET (Richboro)

AJ is a steady and trusted employee at Murray's Richboro Market where he works diligently to restock and organize shelves, assist customers with questions and directions, and serve as an inspiration to his co-workers and managers.

"It's been so wonderful having AJ work here for the past eight years! He is a very kind young man and very productive. Everyone loves him here!"
-John Brown, Store Manager

REGIONAL CARDIOLOGY CONSULTANTS (Trevose)

For over five years, our young adults have been assisting the staff at this cardiology practice by scanning and inputting patient documents and information into the server on the computer, and helping out with inventory. This experience has led to paid employment for one of our graduates and socially, Remi has learned the art of crochet from her co-worker during their breaks!

"The kids working at RCC take pride in their work, have a strong sense of accomplishment, and are a welcome addition to our office."
-Dr. Jeffrey Weisman



WOUGH MALONEY & CO., LLP (Horsham)

For more than eight years, AJ has worked at the accounting firm, Wough, Maloney & Co. From the moment he arrives until the end of his shift, AJ is hard at work sorting and collating various documents, updating a large database of accounting documents and records, identifying and restocking needed inventory and distributing mail. The staff is always amazed at his quiet determination to get the job done and his kind demeanor towards his co-workers.

"We are very happy that AJ is here working with us. His willingness to learn and help us with any and all tasks makes him a valued team member."
Stephen W. Wough, Managing Partner



Expanding... Inside Our Walls!



CLC's New Home - Coming Summer of 2018!

The year 2018 will see the entire CLC/AJF community turning the page on a new chapter in our program's growth and success over the past 20 years. With a student body and instructional staff that is beyond the capacity of our building at 150 James Way in Southampton, we began searching for a location early this year that could accommodate our needs both now and in the future.

This search lead us to 444 Jacksonville Road in Warminster, approximately 4 miles from our current location. The two-story 21,000 square foot building was originally built in 1973 but was completely renovated in 2003 to modern construction standards. Working with the amazing team of **Cerminara Architect** (Architect), **Iron Hill Construction Management, Inc.** (Builder), and **J.G. Pertrucci Co., Inc.** (Owner/Developer) to transform the space into our ideal school, CLC has found its new home!

In our new location, we will be enjoying:

- **Larger classrooms to accommodate new students and the growth of our adult program**
- **Additional office space for staff** (no more shared desks)
- **More conference room and meeting space**
- **Two separate gyms to accommodate simultaneous classes**
- **Two kitchens conducive to teaching various home living skills**
- **Extra private showers and two laundry areas to teach self-help and independence**
- **A dedicated nurse's office**
- **Expanded storage areas**
- **An elevator connecting the first and second floors**

You'll be receiving an invitation to our Open House after our move in June, 2018. Assuming we don't experience any unforeseen delays, we'll be prepared to open our doors to our students on July 5th, 2018!

How You Can Place Your Mark on Our New Home!

A Special "HELP US MOVE" Campaign will be Part of our Annual Drive this Year

During our Annual Drive, we will be offering sponsorship opportunities for our generous donors and supporters to help us attain our campaign goal of \$300,000. All campaign funds will go towards the many expenses anticipated for the move into our new location at 444 Jacksonville Road.

If you would like to celebrate a life event, acknowledge an achievement by someone special, or make a dedication in memory of a loved one, CLC has varying levels of sponsorship opportunities for you to express your thoughts, well wishes, gratitude and memories.

All sponsorships levels have dedication pieces that can be engraved with a special message to make your donation more personable.

(Continued on back cover)



AJF Fundraising Events 2017: Year in Review

Annual Drive: December, 2016

Each winter, we conduct our Annual Drive Campaign by mailing holiday cards to more than 7,000 individuals and organizations who have been generously supporting our mission for many years. The 2016 Annual Drive raised over **\$45,000** which was used towards facility expenses needed to accommodate our growing student population.

As the wonderful holiday season approaches, be on the lookout for our 2017 Annual Drive Card. We thank you in advance for your continued support and generosity. And, as always, we wish you and your family much happiness and many blessings throughout the holiday season and in the New Year.



Texas Hold ‘em Tournament: January 28, 2017

Our first fundraiser of the year always promises high stakes, tons of suspense, great camaraderie and a hootin’ hollerin’ good time. Once again, our host, **Tony Giaimo of Giuseppe’s Family Restaurant** in Richboro, and tournament director, **Tumbling Dice Entertainment**, put together a fantastic evening for a sell-out crowd of 100 players on January 28th. When the dealin’ was done, there were five winners standing, with **Wayne Puro** as our 2017 Grand Tournament Champion, followed by **Tom Martin** (2nd place); **Darryl Presti** (3rd place); **Gary Purpura** (4th place); and **Mike Moser** (5th place). The event raised **\$24,000** which was the second-highest yielding AJF poker tournament yet!



AMRAP: April 1, 2017

Although one of our newer fundraising events, AMRAP (which stands for As Many Reps As Possible) is quickly gaining momentum within the AJF/CLC community. This year, 72 teams gathered at **Central Bucks Crossfit in Warminster** on Saturday, April 1st, to dig deep and make a difference in the lives of individuals with autism at The Comprehensive Learning Center.

Competitors did a rotation of high-intensity exercises for 20 minutes each, mastering rowing, deadlifts, air squats and box jumps.

Kudos to all competitors, volunteers, and donors who helped make this the most successful AMRAP 4 Autism to date, raising over **\$10,000**. This year’s winners for the *Male/Male Advanced*: **Nathan Trimmer** and **Bryan Garlick**; *Female/Female Advanced*: **Jess Sims** and **Gaylemarie Kolb**; and *Intermediate*: **Aidan Feeney** and **Patrick McCabe**.



The 20th Annual Casino Night: April 22, 2017

The AJF’s 20th Annual Casino Night held April 22nd at **St. Bede’s Parish in Holland**, was another resounding success. After enjoying dinner from Giuseppe’s Family Restaurant of Richboro, players lined up their chips and threw down their bets at table games, craps, poker and roulette to win raffle tickets for prizes and a Silent Auction.

On hand were over \$30,000 of donated items including Philadelphia pro-sports team tickets, Lady Gaga concert tickets, a stay at the Great Wolf Lodge, a Go-Pro Camera, an Apple iWatch and a deluxe getaway package for the Borgata Hotel, Casino & Spa.

At the end of the evening, the 20th Annual Casino Night proved to be the most successful Casino Night in AJF history, raising over **\$82,000!**



The 10th Annual Ride 4 Autism: September 9, 2017

Despite the threat of inclement weather from Hurricane Irma, our loyal riders – over 350 this year – took to the trails and rode up a storm through scenic Bucks County, raising over **\$97,000** to beat last year’s record!

Riders were treated to a delicious breakfast before starting their ride and rewarded with a hearty lunch (courtesy of Giuseppe’s) after crossing the finish line! Rest stops throughout the courses offered hydration, snacks and camaraderie with other riders, as old friends reminisced of past rides and new friendships were made!

Team ISI Benefits (captain – Michael Jacobson) came in first place in the AJF’s Team Challenge 2017 for raising \$11,000; **Team Blackthorn Rugby** (captain – Allan Corless) followed in second place by raising \$10,200; and **Team Anna** (captain—Tiffany Dimedia) took 3rd place honors by contributing \$8,700 toward AJF’s fundraising goal.



AJF Golf 4 Autism: November 6, 2017

The 21st Annual AJ Foundation Golf 4 Autism was held on Monday, November 6th at the Philmont Country Club after Mother Nature postponed play, not once, but twice! November golf is a hard call, but given this Fall’s great weather, participants lucked out with an unseasonably warm day of play, against a backdrop of gorgeous foliage colors.

Building on the success of last year’s event, 120 golfers took to the links to raise **\$102,000** for The Comprehensive Learning Center’s Education and Adult Programs – making it AJF’s most successful fundraiser to date. Marathon golfers teed off early to play as many holes as daylight would allow. **Michael McCormick** completed 146 holes and was again, this year’s top fundraiser raising over \$10,000!

Players enjoyed a delicious lunch buffet before taking to the course for a day of spirited, competitive fun. All participants and volunteers worked up an appetite for a well-deserved dinner banquet, with awards given for the top foursome, closest-to-the-pin and the longest drive.

A very special thanks to players, corporate and hole sponsors, volunteers, and raffle and silent auction donors who continue to make this a stellar annual event.





AJ Foundation

Empowering the Autism Community

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Mark Your Calendars for our 2018 Events!

Texas Hold'em Tournament:

January 27, 2018

Casino Night:

April 28, 2018

AMRAP 4 Autism:

April 2018

AJF Ride 4 Autism:

September 8, 2018

Golf 4 Autism:

October 8, 2018

A Letter of Thanks from a CLC Parent

Hi there,

As you know, Sammy had to have an EKG and blood work done recently. When hearing that your child (especially one with special needs) requires these tests, a certain level of panic and anxiety settles in for the parent(s).

It took no time at all for CLC to spring into action and start practicing with Sammy to ensure success. Team Sammy (Meghan, Ali, and Aileen) worked diligently to make sure Sammy was comfortable and calm during each one of these procedures. They even reached out to Quest Diagnostics so the team could go in and practice with Sammy beforehand. This was so thoughtful and simply amazing.

Without the assistance from CLC, the process would have been more stressful and difficult. Knowing CLC has patience, control and complete confidence in Sammy is priceless. We are so grateful and this is one of the many reasons we love CLC.

Sammy did **AWESOME** and was successful with both procedures.
THANK YOU to CLC with special kudos to Meghan, Ali, and Aileen!!!

With much gratitude,

Marcia & Doug



How You Can Place Your Mark on Our New Home! *(Continued from pg 5)*

The sponsorship dedication pieces include engraved plaques installed outside the sponsored room, an engraved leaf added to CLC's Giving Tree, an engraved brick placed in the Friends and Family Walkway, or an engraved "Piece of the Puzzle" added to CLC's group plaque.

We have always been able to count on the AJF/CLC community to provide their wholehearted support as we continue to fulfill the vision of our programs which began 20 years ago. Thank you for your continued generosity and support. Please be on the lookout for our Annual Drive Card coming to you by the end of the year.