



hms school news

HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy | Celebrating 125 Years | Founded 1882 | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | FALL 2008

Harris Hall Marks Grand Opening



A view of Harris Hall just weeks before the building's grand opening.

Harris Hall, HMS's new residence and administrative wing, opens to students and staff this fall. Named in honor of Nancy Harris, long-time HMS friend and supporter extraordinaire, the building marks completion of a major phase of *Meeting New Challenges*, the school's capital campaign. Expanding and renovating the school's facilities will enable HMS to better meet the needs of today's students while maintaining program excellence.

The new residence can accommodate an increased number of resident students and provides state-of-the-art equipment for their personal care. Bright, airy rooms lend a homey feel, while large windows bring the outdoors in. The street front facing Baltimore Avenue offers an inviting, easily accessible visitors' entrance.

HMS is hosting a reception and ribbon cutting in October to celebrate Harris Hall's grand opening and to thank campaign donors.

Something Magical Reaches 25 Years!

Who would have guessed that an idea to bring together students from HMS and Germantown Friends School (GFS) would blossom into a successful 25-year collaboration! Each year youngsters from the two schools have met weekly as partners over several months to forge friendships and to rehearse an original musical. They have joked and played. And they have learned from one other.

Twenty-five years ago, Phyllis Dupuis, then a GFS parent and member of HMS's recreation staff, made the HMS connection with Teresa Maebori, a GFS 3rd/4th-grade teacher who wanted to expand her students sensitivity toward people with disabilities. Andrea Green Feigenbaum, an HMS music therapist, offered to write a musical

continued on back page



As a former HMS music therapist, Andrea Green Feigenbaum created seven original musicals for HMS and GFS partners to perform over the years. She has continued to work with the *Something Magical* project as a consultant.

125th Birthday Bash a Huge Success



HMS alumni Sarah Rich and Rachel Goldberg renew old ties at the 125th birthday party.

What a party!!! May 30th presented a perfect day for celebrating. Almost 400 staff and their families, students, board members and former students and staff gathered to mark 125 years for HMS—a small school with a big impact.

Live music by the Steel Kings enlivened the scene in HMS's backyard as party goers caught up with former colleagues and old school pals. The reunion gathering included a group of former students whose friendship at HMS dates back to the 1940's and 50's.

Conversation and hugs were rampant. A tasty supper, children's activities and the chance to browse old HMS photos added to the fun. Guests headed indoors to tour and to discover HMS's Memory Wall, a 125th anniversary project. Over 75 students, families, staff and friends of HMS created artistic expressions of HMS memories that included poetry, photos, drawings and favorite recollections. Protected in a plexiglass

continued on page 2



Executive Director's Message

By Diane L. Gallagher, PhD

Every school year starts full of expectations. As we prepare to move residential students into Harris Hall, their new home away from home, we've been energized by the special opportunities and even the challenges this venture represents.

Building Harris Hall has forged important new connections and relationships for HMS. Having never before embarked on a capital campaign, it is validating to discover that not only old friends but many new supporters believe in what we do and want to help. Without them, we wouldn't have been able to complete this new building and major renovations to existing space. We view these new relationships as vital to continued funding support and to expanding our reputation among a broadened community of volunteers, school districts and potential students and special education personnel with whom we can share our expertise in a unique setting.

Our specialized services continue to be relevant. This wonderful new facility will allow us to more widely serve school districts in our own region and beyond whose students' needs match our capacity. Our successful capital campaign makes it possible for us to build these new connections with educators, social service agencies and families seeking the best resources for their child.

With new opportunities come concomitant challenges. Raising funds for expansion in difficult economic times has been daunting. I applaud our board of trustees and dedicated capital campaign committee under the leadership of Lorine Vogt for their commitment to our vision. Trying to maintain a normal school environment while under construction and celebrating a major anniversary has not been easy. HMS's amazing staff succeeded in keeping all programs operational despite construction noise filling the halls and areas of the building being declared off limits.

Our architects have devised graceful solutions to the constraints of our site and to neighbors' concerns. Our bright, airy new facility will serve students well. It is already drawing positive comments from the community. And working with neighborhood groups has strengthened our connections for future collaboration.

Over this past year, we celebrated 125 years of HMS's contributions to the community. With the community's commitment to us, we see a bright future ahead for the next 125.



Phyllis Dupuis (center), former HMS recreation staff member and GFS parent, brought HMS and GFS together 25 years ago to create what became the *Something Magical* project. She is pictured here at the 25th anniversary *Something Magical* performance with Eiko Fan, HMS art instructor and Executive Director Diane Gallagher.

125th Birthday Bash a Huge Success

case, each contribution was mounted as one part of a larger display, rather like a community quilt.

Starting the night before, HMS

sparkled in the lights on the PECO building. And, of course, there was birthday cake, a sweet end to a memorable day.



HMS's birthday reunion drew many former staff members. Gail Lipstein (left), occupational therapist and Sally Greenberg and Addy Schultz, speech therapists, catch up while enjoying old HMS photos.



Sonia Claybourne (left), who came to HMS as a toddler in the 1940's, chats with guests at the party—(from left) board member Nancy Harris and the Tyson family: Christopher, Lilly, Liz, a board member who helped to plan the 125th anniversary events, Charles and Annie.



Party guests, including board member Rebecca Bradbeer (center), peruse the 125th Anniversary Memory Wall created by current and former students, staff, families and friends of HMS.





hms school @ 125

Meeting New Challenges

Recognizing Capital Campaign Supporters

As HMS prepares to celebrate the opening of Harris Hall, a wonderful new facility for residential students, we gratefully acknowledge the generous donors who have made this building a reality:

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Memories of Home of the Merciful Saviour for Crippled Children

HMS's 125th birthday party included a group of former resident students whose experiences spanned the 1940's to the early 1960's. Each had contracted polio during the epidemics that marked those decades and came to the "Home" for therapy and care. Some spent only a few years, others came as toddlers and remained until adulthood. For most, the Home had a major impact.

"It's a mixed feeling. The good thing is that we were there; the bad thing is that we were there," Mary Albanesi says of the 17 years she lived at HMS away from her family. She was three years old in 1945 when she left the hospital for the Home, having started life on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. It was difficult for her parents to visit often, and she feels that the family connection was missing. "I had two families," she says, "my biological family and the one at the Home."

She forged close ties to the other girls. They drew support from one another. "We're all the same age," she says. "We had common experiences—we also had a disability in common and an understanding about that."

Like other residents, Ms. Albanesi's early education was at HMS, followed by the upper grades at Widener Memorial, a school for youngsters with disabilities. As she matured, she wondered how she would function on her own outside the Home. Getting her driver's license through Widener's program opened up a different world. She continued to live at HMS for two years beyond graduation while attending business school. She is proud of the independent life she created for herself. Four years ago, she married and lives in Florida.

Sonia Claybourne's mother said, "I'll be back," as she placed the 2-year-old in a crib in HMS's Fest Ward (now the therapy wing) in 1942. In fact, Ms. Claybourne saw almost nothing of her mother or the rest of her family for the next 17 years. Unlike Ms. Albanesi who returned home for a month each summer,



Memories of early days at HMS remain strong for former residents. At the school's 125th birthday party in May, (from left) Mary Albanesi, Shirley Smith, Marty Simon, Fred Smith & Sonia Claybourne sing the "HMS Song," taught to them in the 1940's by older residents of the Home.

Ms. Claybourne felt abandoned. The Home became her life.

As children came from hospital contamination wards, they generally started out in the Fest Ward for intensive treatment before moving to dormitory wards. Later, they shared double rooms. The two young girls became roommates.

Miss Thompson, Superintendent of the Home for many years, was an important figure for these girls. She established the daily routines and, along with staff, provided the values that influenced their lives. Schedules encompassed play times, therapies, rest periods, crafts and school for the older children. Children played lots of board games; they watched television, enjoyed movie night on Fridays and took occasional outings for ice cream and special events. Everyone remembers the holidays as a special time--the parties, turkey dinners and lots of presents. Like all children, they also broke rules and carried out their share of pranks.

HMS encouraged Ms. Claybourne's interests and potential. She cites the opportunities at HMS she would never have experienced with her biological family, who were quite poor--a good education, piano lessons and training at Fleisher Art

Memorial. She received her first "art box" from a member of HMS's Women's Committee. Even when she later attended Moore College of Art on scholarship and lived in the dorms, HMS sent her an allowance for incidentals.

"We were also given a certain social status by example," Ms. Claybourne says. "Miss Thompson and the house mothers taught us the best of manners...and how to behave in a social setting."

Echoing Ms. Albanesi, she says, "The girls from the Home were my family—we grew up together and we stayed together. The connections are unbreakable." Ms. Claybourne has her own children and grandchildren, but still cherishes her HMS ties. She has been gathering materials for a book about her HMS experiences.

Shirley Smith, who came to the Home at age 12 in 1950, has been instrumental in keeping the group together through the years. She and her husband Fred, who was at HMS for only a few years as a young child, met at a Widener alumni function, married and raised a family. For 40 years, they have hosted a Memorial Day picnic for old friends from Widener and HMS.

Ms. Smith made a good adjust-

ment to HMS. She saw her family throughout the year and went home in the summer. As a "big sister" to Ms. Claybourne and Ms. Albanesi, she, in turn, was mentored by the older girls. "Seeing them coping helped me adjust to walking with braces and crutches," she says. "They also gave us something to emulate, in watching them go to work and have a life outside the Home." Ms. Smith went on to teach special education at Widener for much of her career.

Marty Simon spent only a few years at HMS as a preschooler. He remembers being carried into the Home by his family and sleeping in a ward with children of other ages. His family, who visited regularly, felt he got good care. "I still see the Home as a crucial building block in my development because of the age when it happened and how good I felt about everything since then," he says. Most of his memories of HMS are sketchy, but he's certain that Mary Albanesi was the first girl he had a crush on.

After spending their childhood in a group setting at the Home, the young women all craved their independence. Each achieved it in her own way, and they credit HMS with giving them the determination to make a life for themselves.



Graduation 2008: Four Young Adults Say Goodbye

HMS graduation in June was full of emotion. The four graduates and their HMS friends had a hard time saying goodbye. Like all HMS graduations, the ceremonies celebrated the strengths of these young adults as administrators, classroom teachers and other staff offered warm remarks and anecdotes about each graduate's development.

Taylor Fina, of Mount Carmel, NY, came to HMS as a 7-day resident in 1995, immediately winning hearts with his wide smile. His teacher, Kevin Rafferty, describes him as a young man of positive passions who, in turn, attracts passionate people. The four F's—food, fashion, friends and family—are among his passions. Taylor served as student govern-

ment president and worked hard to communicate clearly.

Philadelphian Malia Fluellen grew up at HMS. She arrived at age three, ultimately living at HMS as a 5-day resident. Renowned for her wonderful artwork, her line drawings grace the walls of the HMS dining room. She sets high standards for her work, and she is also a loyal friend, maintaining relationships over a long period. Malia regularly mentored younger students, offering them affection and comfort.

Timmy Marks, a Philadelphia day student, attended HMS since 1995. Cheryl Leask, his classroom teacher, describes him as a 100 percent participant who enjoys everything, funny and unpredictable, social and charis-

matic. He has always loved anything related to theater and music—many at HMS have watched him “feel” the rhythm—and more recently he also discovered a love of art.

A 7-day resident student from Pottstown, PA, Kristin Young has attended HMS since age eight. Kristin made huge strides in being able to express her needs and desires while at HMS. She now has the maturity to stand up for herself and to know when and when not to compromise as situations arise. She is a cheer leader for other students, applauding them when they've done a good job. Everyone has enjoyed watching her fun-loving side emerge.

HMS wishes each graduate the best in this next phase of their lives.

HMS Receives Art-Reach Award

HMS School will be honored this fall by Art-Reach with the organization's “Commitment to Cultural Access Award.” Art-Reach, a Delaware Valley nonprofit cultural service organization that helps underserved audiences to experience arts and cultural programming, will present the award at its 17th Annual Jazz Brunch on Sunday, November 2 at the Park Hyatt at the Bellevue in Philadelphia. Lisa Nutter, first lady of Philadelphia and president of Philadelphia Academics, Inc., will also be honored for her work on behalf of the arts. Art-Reach is recognizing HMS for the school's commitment to integrating the creative arts in curriculum and in school life and for offering students opportunities to experience the arts both as performers and audience members.



Malia Fluellen presents her graduation speech.



Taylor Fina receives his diploma from Diane Gallagher, Executive Director.



Timmy Marks shares a moment with art instructor Eiko Fan.



Kristin Young reacts to remarks by Dee Avegnon, Program Operations Manager.

Your Support Makes a Difference!

Please consider a gift to HMS School through your organization's United Way campaign by designating HMS as the recipient. HMS is #00240 on the donor choice form for the United Way of Southeastern PA and is listed on the UW website, www.uwsepa.org. HMS is also eligible to receive United Way funds from other regions.

Your gift will help us to continue valuable creative arts programs and other special projects that enhance students' development.

Thank you for your generous support.





Parents Corner

By Kerri Hanlon

Relationships. To me, building relationships is one of the hallmarks of HMS. A common thread during the 125th anniversary celebration and the 25th anniversary of Something Magical was seeing the relationships that have flourished through the years.

I think most parents want the same thing for their children: health, happiness and the blessing of friends. As many parents of children with cerebral palsy know, health can so quickly be compromised, which is why, perhaps, expressions of joy and nurturing of friends are so vital.

And that is why HMS is so very special. I honestly can't recall a time I accompanied Sean down the halls of the school without being stopped by staff with a big hello. Not only did they take the time to say hello, they took the time to wait for Sean's greeting in return. This type of patience, dedication and understanding of how challenging it is for Sean to coordinate his response is indeed unique.

But what helps build relationships the most is the recognition of just how much each and every student contributes to the well being of the school. Each student is expected to share his or her unique gifts and work hard to give back to the school to their fullest potential.

Over the years, we've watched Sean ham it up with classroom buddies at holiday shows, sing with his GFS partners, share his birthdays and sacraments with classmates and teachers. Sean has developed beautiful friendships with people of all ages and abilities—from classmates to therapists to bus drivers. Each relationship brings something new to his life, as individuals so graciously share their special spirit.

At HMS, Sean isn't just learning to communicate and use technology to improve his life. He's learning the importance of friendship, trust and compassion. Isn't that what teaching our children should be about?

Kerri Hanlon is a mother, writer and marketing consultant. She lives in Conshohocken with her husband, Brian, and children Kyra, Connor and Sean.

Something Magical Reaches 25 Years!



Xzaria Jenkins (right) sings out with her GFS partner Addie McKenzie during *Lookin' Out My Window*, the 25th anniversary *Something Magical* performance.

show that would engage the two groups of children in a joint enterprise. *Something Magical* was born.

Ms. Feigenbaum went on to create seven original musicals that alternated through the years, each with a theme that stresses friendship and how our similarities outweigh our differences. The shows spawned a host of favorite songs and characters and lots of great memories. For most participants, the experience had a deep and lasting impact.

For this anniversary year, Ms. Feigenbaum created *Lookin' Out My Window*, a musical review focusing on the children's experiences with *Something Magical*. The two schools also solicited feedback from students and alumni about their *Something Magical* memories that was incorporated into the show. The first performance at GFS featured a reunion reception and opportunity to celebrate 25 years of friendship between the two schools.



HMS School News Fall 2008

A publication of HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy, dedicated to reporting about student life, school programs and important events.

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HMS School is nonsectarian, admitting children from any locality without regard to race, religion, gender or country of origin.

The Mission of HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy is to educate, nurture, and care for children and youth with motor impairments who may also have other disabilities resulting from brain injury with the goal of assisting each individual in achieving his or her maximum potential. HMS School aims to facilitate independence and improve the quality of life for its students in a safe and secure environment so they can lead fulfilling, stimulating lives in their present and future environments.



Last spring HMS dancers performed once again with dancers from *fusion2*, a University City student company. Choreographed by HMS dance/movement therapist Rachel Federman-Morales around the theme of "shapes," the project also incorporated student poetry and art. Here HMS dancers are on stage using swimming noodles that they decorated as props: (from left) Ethan Jorgenson, Kristin Young, Taylor Fina, Elisheva Apple, John Bailey and Melea Wise.

