

MEET CLC'S  
NEW STUDENTS!



# The AJ Foundation

2008 Newsletter

ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATION

NOVEMBER 2008

## CLC...Growing to Meet the Need

According to the CDC, 1 in 150 American children has an autism spectrum disorder. The demand for quality educational services is skyrocketing and the Comprehensive Learning Center (CLC) is expanding to meet this need. Since January, 7 new students have been enrolled at CLC with plans to add 9 more students in the next several years.

CLC also plans to open its Adult Life Skills Program by 2011. This program will serve up to 25 adults with autism and provide training in vocational, self-care, community participation, and other life skills. The problem is space; the current building is at capacity.

We are happy to announce that construction is underway for an additional building adjacent to CLC's current headquarters.

The building adds 6,000 square feet of leased space for the program. The two buildings at our 150 James Way location will meet CLC's needs for at least 10 years!



An artist's rendering of CLC's new building

The new building will house the Upper Elementary and Secondary Education programs, as well as the adult program. The additional space will include a conference/vocational education room, a new larger gym, and a full kitchen and laundry room.

"We are very excited about our

new building" explains Michele Jones, Co-Director of CLC's Education Program. "It provides much needed classroom space for our continued expansion, and many other features as well. For the first time, our students will have a real indoor gym that allows for a much wider variety of activities for our students. Bike riding, roller skating, and basketball skills can be taught year round. Our students can learn aerobics and yoga without using instructional time moving equipment to make room."

The new kitchen and laundry facilities are critical teaching areas in the new building. Preparing foods, setting a table, unloading a dishwasher, and doing laundry are skills many parents can take for granted, but represent

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## AJ Foundation Conference Jan 16-17

Do you want to hear the most current research findings on teaching children with autism? The AJ Foundation will be holding its 4th conference on ABA and autism on January 16-17, 2009. The conference, called *Evidenced-Based Interventions for Teaching Individuals with Autism*, will be held at Bucks County Community College. Nationally recognized experts in the field of

behavior analysis and autism intervention will share their expertise with parents, family members and professionals from Bucks County and the surrounding areas. Topics include:

- Effective intervention for adults with autism
- Teaching social skills, language, conversational skills and concepts

- Tolerance of health care procedures
- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Treating stereotypy and challenging behaviors

Act 48 and ASHA Continuing Education Credits will be offered for professionals attending the conference.

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# Meet CLC's New Students



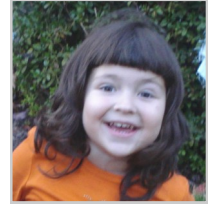
Connor (13), joined us in January. He is learning to fold laundry and shower independently.



Brandon (4), started in July. He is learning to interact with peers and play turn-taking games.



Alex (7), one of our newest students, has learned to follow a variety of activity schedules. He's also learning addition facts.



Katelyn (3), started at CLC in April. She made significant gains and is now in a typical preschool program.

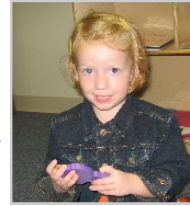
Ivy (12), began at CLC in May. She is learning to make inferences when reading passages.



Drake (8), joined us in July. He is completing his gym routine independently and learning to start conversations.



Bryn (3), began at CLC in September. She is learning to follow an activity schedule. She is also learning to sing songs.



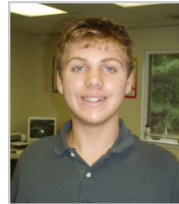
## So how are they doing?...



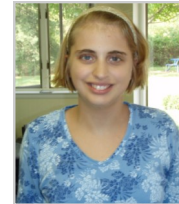
AJ (19), attends a county-wide vocational training program twice a week. He begins a job at a local accounting firm in January. He enjoyed hiking through Ireland with family this summer. AJ also placed 4th in his age group in the AJ Foundation 5K in May.



Dan (16), has become a very proficient typist. He is learning to type documents and input data into excel spreadsheets. Dan tracks the supply inventory for CLC. He works out at a local fitness center three times a week and takes tennis lessons. He also ran in the AJ Foundation 5K race for autism.



Louis (15), is learning a variety of vocational skills. Currently, he is learning to file documents alphabetically. Louis is independent in his home environment with food prep, self-care skills and household chores. He enjoys horseback riding, rock climbing & music.



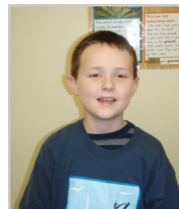
Alexis (15), has learned to shop for groceries, and make salads. She is learning to vacuum and sweep to assist in household chores. Alexis enjoys bike riding, swimming, listening to music and spending time with friends and family.



Ryan (13), is learning to type his daily schedule on the computer & to keep appointments.



Will (11), is learning to prepare a hamburger and chicken nuggets for lunch, and to clean up.

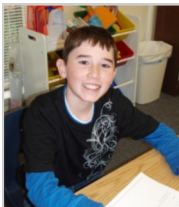


Lucas (8), has learned to use a calculator. He is learning keyboarding skills on the computer.



A.H. (5) is learning to follow group directions and initiate to his peers.

Connor (11), has learned to converse with family by phone. He is learning to use a dictionary.



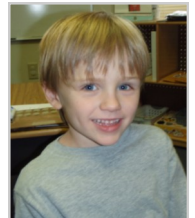
Colin (10), has learned to brush his teeth independently. He is learning to help out at home by setting the table.



Michael (7), has learned to tolerate haircuts at a salon. He is learning to make his own sandwich for lunch.



Ethan (5), is learning to make sound combinations and to initiate activities with others.



# Fundraisers for 2009

Your participation in AJ Foundation fundraisers raised over \$278,000 this year.

Your generosity has allowed us to make CLC's program available to more children with autism. Thank you!

Check our website [www.ajfoundation.org](http://www.ajfoundation.org) for updates on fundraisers

*CLC is very grateful for past and current grant support provided by Ronald McDonald House Charities, and the TJ Kavanagh Foundation*

Access your holiday-shopping sites through GoodShop and donate up to 30% to the AJ Foundation



**February 2009**  
**Texas Hold em'**



**April 18, 2009**  
**Casino Night!!!**



**May 30, 2009**  
**10K/5K run**



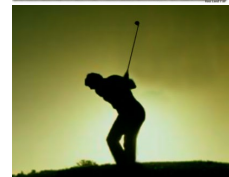
**July 18, 2009**  
**Rugby Festival & Pig Roast**



**October 2009**  
**AJF 50**  
**Bike Tour**



**October 2009**  
**Golf-a-thon & Tournament**



## Pursuing Grant Funds for CLC

In June CLC will be doubling its space, which will allow us to provide even more children with autism with the education they need. The expansion is costly however, and we have begun actively seeking additional corporate and private foundation grants to assist with those costs. **If you work for a company that has a grant program or you have a**

**connection to a private foundation that would fund a program like CLC's, please contact us.** Many corporations give preference to organizations their employees recommend when making funding decisions. And connections can make all the difference when pursuing a private foundation grant.

Your employer may also have

a matching gift program, where they will match your donations to the AJ Foundation dollar for dollar. Generally all that is required is completing a form. Check with your Human Resources Department.

You can also designate The AJ Foundation for your United Way contributions at work. E-mail: [info@ajfoundation.org](mailto:info@ajfoundation.org) for more information.

## GoodShop for the Holidays

Did you know you can donate to the AJ Foundation just by shopping online? All you have to do is access your favorite shopping sites through Good Shop, part of the Good Search website. By accessing your favorite online shopping sites, like Ama-

zon, Lands End and Toys R Us through GoodShop, 1% to 30% of what you spend is donated directly to the AJ Foundation. It's so simple:

1. Go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com)
2. Click on the icon for Good Shop. Be sure to enter AJ Foundation For Children With

Autism in the space that says "Who do you shop for?"

3. Find the vendor you want; click on their icon and shop as you normally would. The vendor will donate up to 30% of what you spend directly to us.

The gifts you buy can be a double blessing!

# Running the Race to Win! The 10K, 5K, & mile

Over 300 runners came out for the AJ Foundation Run for Autism on May 31st. Many of CLC's Students participated, along with the general public, raising nearly \$8,000. Special thanks to CB South volunteers!



*"It was great to see the kids from CLC running right along with us. I figured if they could make it, I could too!"*  
**Rob McCrory**

# Casino Night...Always a Winner!

Wheels were spinning, dice were rolling at AJ Foundations 11th annual Casino night. Over 475 came out to try their luck at winning fabulous prize packages raising over \$68,000 for AJF and CLC.



*"The prize packages they put together are incredible, each worth \$200 to \$500. There was table after table of them!"*  
**Cortney Spina, 2008 attendee**

# AJF 50...Biking for the Cause

On October 4th, the AJ Foundation held its inaugural Bike Ride for Autism in Lower Makefield. There was a 50 mile bike trek, and a 12 mile family fun ride. Cognizant, a software company, donated \$10,000 and enthusiastic volunteers. Giuseppe's provided a wonderful lunch for the riders, and Tanner Bros. provided nutritious snacks and drinks. Bicycle Pro of

Bordentown, NJ donated a \$400 Giant Sedona men's bike to raffle off at the event, and were on hand to tune up bicycles. Join us next year for a beautiful ride through scenic Bucks County!



CLC Students Dan Lehner and AJ Corless join employees from Cognizant who graciously volunteered their time to direct riders along the route.

## Dentists, Doctors and Hospitals...Oh My!



A visit to the dentist can be terrifying for the child with autism

For parents of children with autism, a visit to the dentist, a blood draw or lab test can be a harrowing experience.

“Our last dentist visit left me bruised and bleeding,” one new CLC parent recalls, “He scratched and pinched, and nearly bit the dentist. Before we came to CLC it had been 7 years since we could get a full set of dental x-rays, and I was growing very concerned.”

Unfortunately this is the case for many children with autism. Insurance companies do not want to pay for a hospital visit and anesthesia for routine dental exams, lab tests and

blood draws. Yet, this is often the only way to ensure these children will tolerate these procedures. Without the benefit of dental x-rays or detailed lab tests doctors are often forced to make an “educated guess”.

Recognizing this dilemma, CLC has developed programming to ensure their students can tolerate these kind of procedures without anesthesia.

Education Co-Director Amanda Heller explains, “It’s a gradual process where the child is reinforced for appropriate behavior during short simulated exams. As he is

successful, the duration of the procedures is increased.”

This mom has seen it first hand. “They diminished the fear for him. Within 2 months at CLC, my son could tolerate a complete dental exam and x-rays. He actually reinforced himself through the procedure! I now know with certainty that my son has no cavities.”

Other students at CLC have learned to tolerate full dental treatment, blood draws even daily insulin shots. “We program to what our students need. All kids need adequate medical treatment; we make it easier for them to receive it.”

### Expansion!

#### New Gym



#### Vocational Training



#### Life Skills



### CLC Expansion

(continued from page 1)

important instructional goals for CLC’s students. The same is true for showering, dressing and personal hygiene. The new facility provides areas for learning these skills—designed in a similar manner to the environments found in typical homes to promote skill transfer.

Future employment requires that vocational skills training begin early for individuals with autism.

“We designed the new building so that nearly every area serves multiple purposes,” explains Amanda Heller, Co-Director of CLC’s Education Program. “One room designed as a small meeting room will be used to teach interview

skills. It also includes a computer for teaching word processing and data entry, and a table that provides space for assembly work and preparing mass mailings”.

Larger assembly tasks will be completed in the conference room, in addition to holding staff/parent meetings, workshops, and training.

CLC’s new building will expand educational opportunities for current and future students. They anticipate the needed furniture and equipment purchases will run about \$90,000. CLC is pursuing grants and seeking sponsors to assist with these costs. If you’d like to sponsor some of the purchases, please contact CLC at (215) 322-7852 or e-mail: [clcschool@clcschool.net](mailto:clcschool@clcschool.net). Planned move in date is June 2009.

### AJF Conference (continued from page 1)

Since the incidence of autism has dramatically increased and the need for effective treatment options for children with autism is so great, The AJ Foundation is very excited to be offering this conference once again.

“There are so many children with autism in our community;

we want to help as many as we can,” explains AJ Foundation President, Joanne Corless. “Not every child can attend CLC, but we can share what works best with parents, teachers and therapists.” Watch [www.ajfoundation.org](http://www.ajfoundation.org) for more details on the January 2009 Conference.

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## Coming soon...Adult Vocational Program

The Autism Society of America estimates that it costs \$3.5 to 5 million to care for an individual with autism throughout their lifetime. While programs using early intensive intervention can reduce that cost by 2/3's, few children receive effective early intervention, like that provided by CLC. Many children with autism reach adulthood without the vocational and life skills training required

for productive living.

Currently there are no ABA based vocational and life skills training programs for adults with autism in the state of Pennsylvania. CLC plans to be one of the first when it opens it's program in 2011. The Adult Life-Skills Program will accommodate students graduating from CLC at age 21 who continue to require services,

as well as individuals referred by parents or government agencies.

The Adult Life-Skills Program will teach daily living and vocational skills. CLC staff will provide on-the-job training and support. Clients will still receive home programming, and support to independently participate in the community. Stay tuned for more in future issues of the AJF newsletter.

**Autism** is a lifelong developmental disability that usually appears in the first 3 years of life. Symptoms of autism can vary among 4 categories:

- Disturbances in the rate and appearance of social and language skills;
- Unusual response to sensory stimuli;
- Abnormal ways of relating to people, objects or events;
- Severely impaired language acquisition and comprehension.

If you suspect autism in your child, contact your pediatrician as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and intervention are crucial to your child's future.

### Contact Us

For information or to make a donation:

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