



### Trivia Night to benefit young people with autism

Saturday February 27, 2010, 7:00 p.m.  
St. Ann Community Center

### Winter Olympics Theme General Interest Questions

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> place cash prizes  
50/50 drawings

Raffles & Silent Auction

Winter Olympics Costume Contest (optional!)

Admission includes snacks, soda, water & beer

\$20 per person or \$160 for a table of eight

Call Giant Steps at 314-395-7445  
To reserve your table

### TRIVIA NIGHT EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

**EVENT SPONSORSHIPS: \$150**

**RECOGNITION ON WEBSITE, TRIVIA NIGHT SIGNAGE AND PROGRAM**

**CATEGORY SPONSORSHIPS: \$50**

**RECOGNITION ON TRIVIA NIGHT PROGRAM AND SCORE SHEETS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**314-395-7445 OR [development@giantsteps-stlouis.org](mailto:development@giantsteps-stlouis.org)**

### ... OPEN HOUSE (continued)

Giant Steps Director Betty Berger welcomed the crowd: "We are so pleased to have you in our new home ... to celebrate 17 years of service to children and families with Autism Spectrum Disorders. At Giant Steps our purpose is to provide the level of service to our students that insures they maximize their potential.

"We are proud of our talented staff who rise to the challenge every day to guide and educate our students.

"We like it here in Maryland Heights. We have found good neighbors, including Team Central Gymnastics, where Director Ray Overmann has welcomed our students to use their gymnastic center filled with trampolines, rope ladders and foam pits, all for minimal compensation. Our children grow and flourish from their experiences using Team Central twice daily.



Senator Schmitt addresses the Open House audience

"The Printing Center loaned us their green field behind their building so our summer campers could have a place to run and play. Zion Church welcomes our students as groundskeepers and rewards them with pizza parties and lots of tenderness. Finally, two of our young men work at Safety Shoes and O'Reilly's Auto Parts at the end of the street.

"Especially we would like to thank our board members who keep showing up year after year, our board family Bob and Julie Wallace, and all the parents at Giant Steps who willingly cater, raise funds, drive and support us through every hurdle and milestone. Thank you ALL for everything you continue to do and have done for us. "

### GIANT STEPS OPEN HOUSE DRAWS ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD

Last March, with a lot of help from parents, staff and our friends at Way Technology, Inc., Giant Steps moved from Chesterfield to Maryland Heights. Our new quarters – formerly office and warehouse space – have proven even more adaptable to our program than we could have imagined. Smaller classrooms reduce anxiety and distractions for our students and lend themselves to our specialized one-on-one academic and therapeutic approach. Opportunities for exercise, vocational and recreational activities are available within walking distance, and our gym is large enough for indoor bike riding!

In December, we hosted an Open House to show off our new facility to more than 80 family members and friends. Special guests included Missouri Senators Scott Rupp (R-Wentzville) and Eric Schmitt (R-Glendale) and Representative Dwight Scharnhorst (R-St. Louis County-93). These legislators are leading the effort to pass the Autism Insurance Bill in Jefferson City. All three spoke eloquently of their personal experiences with autism and of their commitment to fairness: treatment for all other neurobiological disorders is covered by most health insurance plans. The same, they said, should hold for autism.

## SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

At the beginning of the 2009-10 school year, Giant Steps introduced “New Heights,” a specialized academic and social skills program for upper elementary and middle school students with Asperger Syndrome or high-functioning autism. The New Heights students, who named their group “the Fantastic Five,” share daily instruction in Math, Science, Reading and Language Arts. The program aims to keep students working at grade level in preparation for a standard high school curriculum. Students also participate in Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Education and Community Service.

Social, rather than academic, challenges typically bring students to New Heights. A Social Skills curriculum specifically designed for this student population is integrated into every class and activity. Acquiring meaningful and effective social communication prepares students to transition to a general education setting. New Heights provides wraparound support for transitioning students.



Sharing a break between classes in the New Heights classroom

### Language Arts teacher Diane Valencia shares an inside look at the program:

Middle school years can be tough for some students with Asperger Syndrome. Social awareness heightens during the teen-age years for all students. For AS students it might be the first time that they even desire to be with peers and so disappointing to find out they don't fit in. New Heights creates an atmosphere of comfort and acceptance. Classes include teaching social skills by using a systematic approach, the study of anxiety, depression and character building along with a strong academic curriculum. We embrace that our students have great minds and are creative thinkers. Our students have been busy this month enjoying the novel, *Eleven*, engineering robots, writing biographies and having fun evaluating how they have spent the last 100 hours!

## CELEBRATING 100 DAYS

Allaina, Student Reporter

I enjoyed the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school. There were many special activities. My pod, the Fantastic Five, had a contest to see who could build the highest stack of cans in 100 seconds; Maddi won. I tried to pop a small sheet of bubble wrap in 100 seconds (I didn't make it.)

I borrowed a fun book, *100 Recipes for Brainy Kids*, from Mrs. Diane's Library. Some of the recipes (especially the fruit gels) look so tasty! Maybe my family could make them at home.

I loved the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school so much!

A towering feat: stacking 100 cans in 100 seconds



## PASSING IT ON

Catherine L. Gansmann, MT-BC  
Music Therapist

Over the past 14 years, Giant Steps has become a vital resource for local universities educating the next generation of Speech, Music and Occupational therapists. Giant Steps provides therapists-in-training with an opportunity to put theory into practice while gaining experience with the diverse range of therapeutic techniques we use to engage children with autism.

In return for the training they receive at Giant Steps, many talented interns have shared their own musical and performance gifts with our Giant Steps students. One only needs to see the face of an awe-struck student as he listens to the soothing tones of a live cello performance to know something extraordinary is taking place. One intern shared her expertise in ballet, bringing a heartfelt dance performance to a packed roomful of admirers. Yet another example of extraordinary gifts shared can be found in the brass lessons presently taking place with several GS students. The sounds of trumpets and tuba can be heard drifting throughout the building as the current intern, Mr. Adam Jenkins, conducts his lessons.

Like Adam and all those who preceded him and those sure to follow, the university intern continues to make great contributions to the Giant Steps community. They willingly share with only the promise of getting to know and understand autism in return. The Giant Steps therapist meets that promise with a willingness to pass on all that has been learned from experience. Maybe the greatest good of all is that our next generation of teachers and therapists will be better equipped to serve the individual with autism.

**REGISTER ONLINE TO WALK, RUN OR ROLL FOR GIANT STEPS!**  
**314-395-7445 for more information**

A promotional banner for the 6th Annual Walk Run 'n Roll event. The banner features a photograph of a man in a red baseball cap and a woman smiling. The text on the banner includes "Saturday, April 24 Tower Grove Park", "6th ANNUAL Walk Run 'n Roll For People of All Abilities", "walkrunroll.org", and "Honorary Chairs: Albert and Deidre Pujols". At the bottom, it says "Together we make a difference for people with developmental disabilities".