

Summit receives \$1 Million from Mother Cabrini Health Foundation

Stephen R. Anderson, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of The Summit Center, has announced the receipt of a \$1 million grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, the largest gift ever received by Summit.

The grant supports Phase 2 of the agency's \$3.7 million *Building Hope* Capital Campaign to expand its Summit Academy campus at 165 Creekside Drive, Amherst, NY, by opening an autism assessment and treatment center for children and youth who demonstrate severe behavior disorders. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2020 with completion scheduled for winter 2020/21.



The assessment and treatment center, comprised of five specialized classrooms, will be the first of its kind in Western New York and only the second in New York State. "In Western New York, children with intellectual/developmental disabilities with severe behavior disorders who are in crisis are often hospitalized or sent to out-of-state facilities for treatment," Dr. Anderson explained. "Our assessment and treatment center will provide a proven treatment model to conduct behavioral diagnostics, develop effective interventions, and train caregivers in recommended best practice."

The campus will be created by joining Summit's 165 Creekside Drive property with an additional 19,295 square feet of adjacent space on Woodridge Avenue via a connector between the two buildings. The new classrooms will serve children who, due to their disability and severe behavior, are challenging to serve in an educational setting and require significant support. This move will also allow Summit Academy to serve additional children from its growing waitlist. Summit Academy currently serves 350 students ages 3-21.

"With the prevalence of autism now at one in 59 children and a growing waitlist for Summit's services, it's critical that we expand our physical space to address the growing need," Dr. Anderson said. "We are extremely grateful to the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation for recognizing the merits of this important project and sharing our vision to provide comprehensive services and supports for WNY children with autism and their families."

This generous gift brings the *Building Hope* Capital Campaign to the \$3.3 million mark. Phase 1 of the campaign funded the renovation of 14,500 square feet of space at 75 Pineview Drive in Amherst to house The Summit Center's Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic, Pediatric Feeding Clinic, Conference Center, and offices for the agency's Adult and Community Divisions.

The grant received by Summit is one of many announced on March 3 by the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, which awarded \$150 Million in grants to more than 500 programs across New York State.

"We are honored to support a wide range of organizations doing critically important work to improve the lives of New York's most vulnerable communities," said Alfred F. Kelly, Jr., Chief Executive Office of Visa and Chair of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation Board.

The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation was formed after the 2018 sale of Fidelis Care, a nonprofit health insurer created by the Catholic bishops of New York State. For more than 25 years, Fidelis Care expanded under the bishops' oversight to become one of the highest rated and most successful insurers operating in the state. The Foundation – named in memory of a tireless advocate for immigrants, children, and the poor – provides flexible support for new and innovative approaches that enhance health and wellness across New York State.

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Kickin' It With Kameron

"That kid is fast!" said Kameron Plotner, Behavioral Support Technician at The Summit Center.

He's referring to Ben Piazza, a participant in The Summit Center's Leisure and Family Fitness Socialization (L.A.F.F.S.) Program. Ben's parents signed him up to play soccer at the Village Glen in Williamsville and asked The Summit Center for some assistance so that their son could fully enjoy and learn from this recreational experience.

"When we signed up our son Ben for his first soccer experience, we knew that staying focused and listening to directions in the big open area of a soccer field would be a challenge for him," said Ben's mom, Kari Piazza.

The Summit Center's trained L.A.F.F.S. staff helps parents learn how to better use praise to motivate their child, manage challenging behavior, and build acceptance in the community.

Plotner first talked to Ben's mother to determine what goals needed to be set. Then, it was time to play! And both Ben and Kameron have had so much fun.

"He has a great sense of humor. I've seen improvement and it's been a joy to watch him grow. Not only have his soccer skills improved, he's more calm and fits in with the team more now," said Plotner.

"With the L.A.F.F.S. program through Summit, Ben has the 1:1 support that he needs to stay on task and be less distracted. Kameron helped us to select appropriate goals for Ben and has been great at supporting him and redirecting him as needed. Kameron has been a joy for Ben to work with and Ben absolutely adores him," said Piazza.

Piazza hopes to continue improving Ben's soccer skills with the help of a L.A.F.F.S. provider. "Our family is so grateful for the L.A.F.F.S. program provided by Summit as it has allowed Ben to explore soccer at his own pace while having fun," said Piazza.



About L.A.F.F.S.

Is your child's behavior a barrier to community activities? Is your child interested in a sport or activity but challenging behavior stands in the way? Would you like to take your child to the mall, a restaurant, playground, or museum but you need a hand? The Summit Center can help!

Our Leisure and Family Fitness Socialization (L.A.F.F.S.) program will give you the skills you need to support your child (ages 5-18) in community activities. There is no waitlist and the program is free!

Learn more at www.TheSummitCenter.org.

Pro Tips: Overcoming Resistance to Change

Children with autism often dislike changes to set routines. Some examples of change include doing things in a different order, taking an alternate route to school, eating new foods, change in clothing due to weather, and switching between activities.

Worrying about how your child is going to react or respond if an event does not go as planned can be anxiety provoking and stressful!



Below are some strategies to help your child tolerate change in routines and activities!

Small Changes. Children with autism, especially those resistant to change, often become overwhelmed and easily stressed when faced with something new or outside of their typical routine. Due to this, children will often engage in tantrum behaviors, refusal behaviors and/or aggressive behaviors. For these children, it is important to make small changes to their routines before introducing larger changes. For example, for a child who is a selective eater and brand specific, present a very small piece of the non-preferred food as opposed to a placing a whole portion on their plate. Once the child is comfortable and accepting small amounts, gradually increase the size of the bite/portion and reinforce tolerance of the new food. The same principle can also be applied for children who become upset with changes in their daily routine. Start by making a small change and gradually increase the number of changes you make in their daily routine once the child can cope with the small changes.

Offer Choices. Some children respond better to change when they have a choice. Choice allows the child to feel a sense of control. For example, if the weather has changed and the child becomes upset having to wear pants instead of shorts, allow the child to pick between two pairs of pants and reinforce the selection of a new clothing item. Too many choices can also be overwhelming for a child with autism. When providing choices, make sure they are specific choices and provide no more than 2 or 3 options.

Prepare Ahead of Time. Children with autism have difficulties with abrupt change. These children often do better when they know what's going to happen ahead of time. While we cannot always anticipate change, it is recommended that families plan for the changes that they do know about in advance. Some ways include developing a social story or video to help your child understand some of the changes that might occur or how to perform a new task, provide warnings prior to transitioning to another activity and plan visits to new places prior to an event.

Reward Appropriate Behavior. It is important to provide a child with praise or small rewards when they successfully cope with unexpected changes. This will increase the likelihood that the child will engage in those coping behaviors in the future. When doing so, make sure the expectations are clear ahead of time, be consistent and follow through with providing praise and rewards when the child demonstrates flexibility and tolerance of change.

Pro Tips provided by Dr. Jennifer Felber, Director of The Pediatric Feeding Clinic at The Summit Center



Free Resistance to Change Training

Join us on Monday, April 27, from 6 - 8 p.m. for a training on this topic. This presentation will be led by Jennifer Felber, Ph.D., BCBA, Director of the Pediatric Feeding Clinic at The Summit Center. Dr. Felber is a licensed psychologist and board certified behavior analyst in New York State with a Ph.D. in School Psychology. Dr. Felber's areas of specialty include pediatric feeding disorders, parent training, and the development and implementation of academic and behavioral interventions for children with developmental disabilities.

Free and open to the public. To register, please visit www.thesummitcenter.org/register

The Summit Center's 2020 Autism Walk

Thank you to our sponsors!



Saturday, April 25, 2020
(Check-in at 8 a.m. | Opening Ceremony
at 10 a.m.)

Register today at
www.SummitWalk.org

*Can't participate? Make a donation or
register as a Virtual Walker.*

Support Summit at your work!



Does your business want to help support Summit? These puzzle pieces are available to sell at your organization to customers or coworkers for \$1 each.

After they are purchased, display them to show your support during the month of April, Autism Awareness month.

If you'd like to sell these puzzle pieces at your business and support Summit, please e-mail us at autismwalk@thesummitcenter.org or give us a call at 716.629.3423.



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family today!
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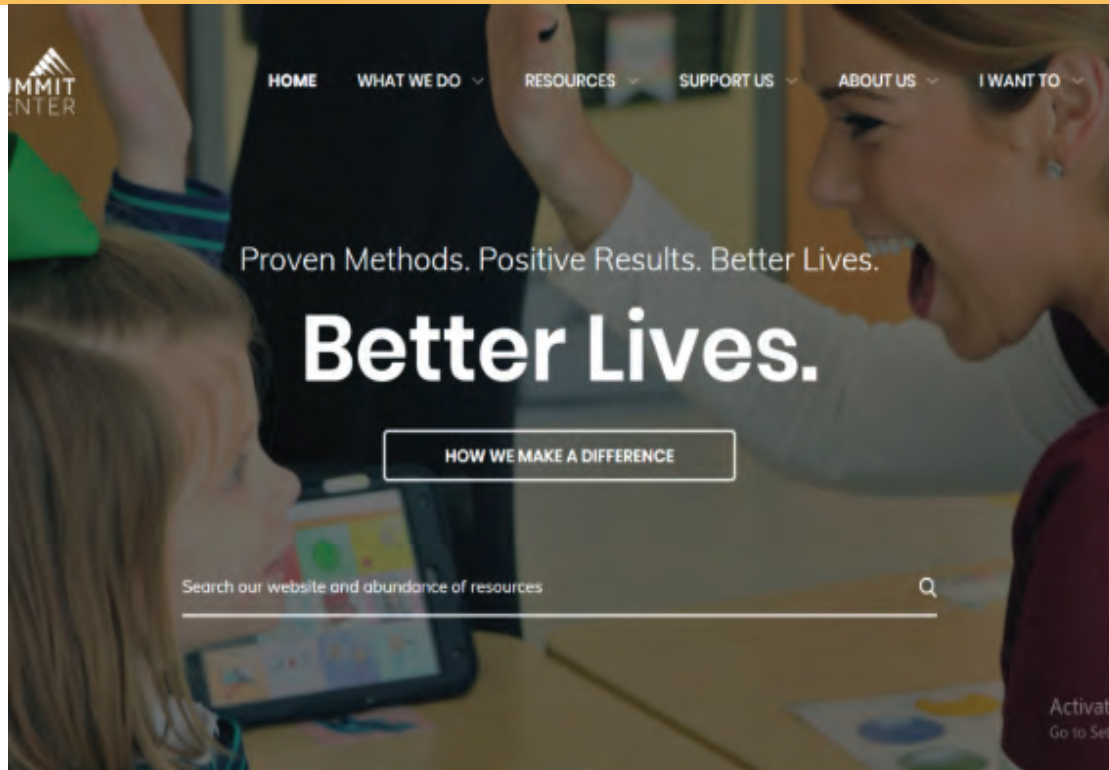
A Brand New Look

We are excited to announce the launch of Summit's new website!

Everything that was on the old site, is on the new site. In case you get lost, there's a search function in the top menu to help you find what you're looking for. The top menu also features an "I want to" drop down which directs visitors to the pages that are viewed most frequently.

We hope you love it as much as we do!

Visit Our New Website:
www.TheSummitCenter.org



Summit Fundraiser!

NACHO
AVERAGE
FUNDRAISER

Thursday April 2nd

TCB Buffalo 4PM to 7PM

20% of all proceeds benefit
The Summit Center Autism Walk

TCB Buffalo
6449 Transit Road
East Amherst, NY 14051



Family Survey



As a funder of local programs and services for families of youth with intellectual and/or learning disabilities, the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation has commissioned a survey to learn more about these families' needs and experiences. They are in the process of collecting a second round of data to help us understand change over time in the communities they fund.

Families can complete the survey here.

If you have any questions about this survey or the Foundation, please contact Don Matteson, the Tower Foundation's Chief Program Officer, at dwm@thetowerfoundation.org or 716-689-0370 x207.

All participants completing the survey will receive a \$20 gift card from Amazon, Target, or Walmart.

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A Q&A With Summer Programs Director

The Summit Center offers two specialized summer programs to improve your child's social, emotional, behavioral, and academic skills. These programs run from Monday, July 6 to Friday, August 7 at Willow Ridge Elementary School. Read our Q&A with Summer Programs Director Dr. David Meichenbaum to learn more!

What do parents say about the program?

Three common comments I hear from our parents each summer are that they value the positive nature of our program, that they are impressed with the endless enthusiasm and care of our counselors, and that they will see us next summer.

What successes have you seen?

There are so many examples of "success" within our summer program. Beyond all of the skill acquisition, reinforcement earned, and improved social confidence our kids will demonstrate, the greatest success I see is the excitement our children feel about coming to our program. Some of our "campers" have unfortunately had less than positive experiences in previous "camps." So to see the daily smiles, the friendly fist-bumps, and even the tears because the program is over, highlights that we have created a positive summer experience for our children. And to think we will see many of these same kids next summer because they want to return- that says it all.

What is a typical day like for both programs?

The kids spend their day participating in recreational, social-cooperative, and art activities. Highlights include our life-sized board games, backyard games, the end of summer celebration, and of course - Fun Fridays. All the while, each summer, we are providing close to 200 hours of behavioral intervention and skill building supports. Additionally, kids will participate in daily skill streaming groups and class periods to work on acquiring key skills to be successful once they return to school in September.



David Meichenbaum, Ph.D., is a NYS licensed psychologist who consults with school districts throughout WNY, offering behavioral and educational strategies for students with autism, ADHD and severe behavioral challenges.



Learn more about the Summer Programs at www.TheSummitCenter.org

Is my child eligible?

Community Connections is designed for children and adolescents entering grade 1- age 16 with social interaction difficulties related to high functioning autism spectrum disorders or other disabilities (involving underdeveloped social abilities).

The Summer Treatment Program is open to children and adolescents ages 7-13 with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), learning problems, and related behavior problems.

With a staff of 500 professionals and expertise in autism and social/emotional development, The Summit Center is Western New York's leading provider of evidence-based educational, behavioral health, adult, and community programs to 1,350 children and adults each year with developmental, social and behavioral challenges.

This newsletter was written and designed by Marketing Communications Coordinator, David Goodwin. Feedback is appreciated. Please email dgoodwin@thesummitcenter.org.

Visit Our Website: www.TheSummitCenter.org