



LIVE



LEARN



WORK



PLAY



Access & Ability

Increasing independence and maximizing opportunity

easterseals.com/esep

A publication of Easterseals Eastern Pennsylvania

FALL 2021

REACHING *NEW* HEIGHTS

Our outpatient therapy center in Reading has a new feature to challenge and motivate children while adding an element of fun to their therapy. An adaptive traverse climbing wall was recently installed, thanks to a \$14,328 grant from The Neag Foundation. The climbing wall introduces a modern method of therapy that provides an entirely new mechanism to focus on different aspects of physical and occupational therapy. It looks more like a piece of playground equipment than a therapeutic tool, and that is exactly how children see it. They light up when they come into the room and look forward to their chance to climb it.

A traverse wall is climbed horizontally, so the fun and challenge of it is making it from one side to the other, rather than to the top. Children are never more than a few feet off the floor as they make their way across the wall. No ropes or harnesses are used, and we have the highest rated safety mats in place.

The wall features large handholds, grab bars and wide ledges to place feet, providing stability, extra support and a feeling of control. Removable hand/foot holds of different shapes and sizes create changeable routes and challenges for all ages and skill levels.

Incorporating the wall into our therapy program will help children with varying disabilities build confidence and sense of accomplishment as they practice physical coordination, build body awareness, increase muscle strength, develop gross motor skills, develop spatial reasoning and problem solve. Climbing also provides proprioceptive input to improve sensory integration.

Children with disabilities often require a variety of therapies, and we strive to offer the latest interventions to meet their needs. We are incredibly pleased to have the opportunity to incorporate this equipment into our therapy program after wanting it for many years.





JOIN OUR TEAM:

Easterseals Introduces New Fundraising Campaign

We are excited to launch a new fundraising initiative beginning in January 2022. Our “teamwork” campaign celebrates the families, caregivers, therapists and staff that together support each of the 3,600 individuals we serve annually. Teamwork has never been more critical to the success of our programs than it has been during the past 20 months.

As part of our team, everyone from families and staff to businesses and community partners are invited to join

together in raising the funds necessary to grow the inclusive and innovative programs for which Easterseals is known. With fun and easy activities including peer-to-peer asks, corporate sponsorships, mini fundraising events and dedicated giving days, there is no shortage of ways to get involved! **Watch your mailbox, our website and our Facebook page for more information soon, or contact Ann Marie Surovy, CFRE, at asurovy@esep.org.**

Easterseals raises \$17,216 through the Highmark Walk

Thank you to everyone who donated to this year's walk in support of our mission. All of the money raised by Easterseals friends and families goes directly to help individuals with disabilities in our community. Special thanks to our lead sponsor Wawa; Kriegman and Smith, Herbein & Company, Mosteller and Associates, Riverview Bank, and Sarott Design for their generosity!



NEW RESPITE PROGRAM INTRODUCED

It's like a weekend of summer camp! We modeled our new respite program after our successful overnight camp to provide two days and nights of respite for families. This is also a great way to experience camp on a smaller scale before committing to a full week away from home. **Join us in November for overnight fun in the Poconos. Visit our website for more information.**

Nancy Knoebel, CEO, retiring in January 2022



After twenty years of visionary leadership and unwavering dedication, Nancy will be retiring as chief executive officer of the agency. Her tenure as CEO began at the time when the Pennsylvania Easter Seal Society reorganized several regional agencies to form one unified organization

known as Easterseals Eastern Pennsylvania. Under her leadership, the agency has transformed from an always dedicated, but financially at-risk nonprofit into a thriving, innovative organization with the stability necessary to adapt and respond to the needs of the community. She has strategically positioned us to be strong, yet agile, with the ability and resources to expand into new areas, develop innovative service models, and create essential partnerships with other stakeholders to meet the critical needs of the individuals and families we serve. Nancy's time at Easterseals will be remembered with gratitude and fondness for her commitment to our mission and values, and the many contributions she has made to our past, present and future.

The board of directors has formed a transition committee that is leading the search for the new CEO and you can expect to hear more from us about the transition as it unfolds.

Employment program benefits high school students

LEAP is our employment preparation experience for youth with disabilities, ages 16-21, who attend school and are eager to work and earn a paycheck. It combines paid work experience with curriculum instruction to provide participants with the skills they need to transition successfully into adulthood. Groups meet for five Saturdays from 9am-3pm for interactive curriculum and coaching in the morning followed by an afternoon of paid workplace experience in the community. We offer sessions in the fall and spring, and have expanded the program with two worksites in the Lehigh Valley, and one each in Berks County and Pike County. This fall, work experience locations include OppShop (Reading), Wildlands Conservancy (Lehigh Valley), Project Paw (Lehigh Valley) and Pocono Environmental Education Center (Pike County). LEAP is offered at no cost to participants thanks to a grant from Wells Fargo Foundation and donations made to Easterseals through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program. Visit our website for more information.



Wells Fargo Foundation supports LEAP and financial literacy

A new grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation is supporting LEAP, our employment preparation program for high school students. The grant will also allow us to incorporate financial education curriculum into LEAP and our Community Supports/Habilitation program for adults.

People with disabilities need the same financial knowledge and skills as those without disabilities, and if they receive a public benefit, they also need to understand the impact increasing their income or assets may have on their benefits. Financial education is the first step on the pathway to achieving financial wellness, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to enhance our programs in this way.





1501 Lehigh Street, Suite 201
Allentown, PA 18103

EVERY DOLLAR MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

You can support our mission
by making a gift today.

Visit our website,
call 610-289-0114 x205
or send your gift to:

Easterseals Eastern PA
1501 Lehigh Street, Suite 201
Allentown, PA 18103

easterseals.com/esep/donatenow



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lehigh Valley, PA
Permit No. 161



Story of Hope: **MEET EZRA**

Ezra met his developmental milestones until it was time for him to sit up and crawl. At 10 months old, he was referred to Easterseals for Early Intervention services to receive physical therapy. Soon after, his mother, Stacy, noticed some issues with Ezra's feeding skills, so occupational therapy was added. Stacy notes, "As a mom, I had intuition that something wasn't right in Ezra's development, but it was until after he began occupational therapy at Easterseals that his therapists and I became aware of his sensory differences." Special instruction and speech therapy were added to help Ezra communicate and play. When it was determined that he would benefit from specialized equipment to accommodate his sensory differences, Easterseals assisted Stacy in obtaining what he needed. Ezra now enjoys jumping on a mini trampoline and he uses a beanbag chair to sit independently and read books. He has a yoga ball and a cozy cocoon to calm him, and a weighted vest and weighted blanket that provide comfort and allow him to go to sleep more easily.

His mother states, "As a mom, there are times that I become frustrated or doubt myself, but meeting with Ezra's therapists weekly has given me more confidence. I am now more aware of how he is progressing and understand the ways he learns best. I like the fact that all of the therapists work together as a team to help Ezra and they give me new ideas of how I can work with him. I'm so honored to be a part of Easterseals and I am thankful for all of their help."