New Homes, New Programs: Propelling Us Forward

Change is a necessary part of life. This past year brought many positive changes to the Achievement Center.

- The Erie office underwent a major relocation to a brand new facility, more than doubling the amount of therapy space and providing opportunities for future growth.
- The Warren office changed its address and landed in a new home with great potential to expand.
- The Crawford office is preparing for the addition of new services and just finished renovations.
- Agency staff successfully transitioned to a new electronic medical records system, providing greater internal efficiencies and collaboration among our clinical teams.
- The Achievement Center was recognized by CARF (the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) for providing exemplary clinical services and was awarded a three year accreditation.
- The number of summer therapeutic activity programs grew to include a second program in Warren County and a new program in Erie called Finding Courage, a service for children with anxiety issues.

Through all of these changes, the Achievement Center continued to propel forward. Every day we are reminded just how fortunate we are to do the work that we do. Whether it’s hearing positive feedback from the families and children impacted by our services, or the generous outpouring of support shown to us by our dedicated Board of Directors and community supporters, we are honored and humbled to serve the needs of children, teens and families throughout this region.

To all of you connected to our mission, thank you. We look forward to strengthening our communities together.

Rebecca N. Brumagin

Our Core Values:

RESPECT
Respect all children and adults as having intrinsic worth.

DIVERSITY
Acknowledge and seek to understand diverse values, beliefs and cultures.

COMPASSION
Exercise compassion and sensitivity when interacting with others.

INTEGRITY
Demonstrate integrity, honesty and ethical conduct in all activities.

WELLNESS
Support physical, mental and spiritual health.

COLLABORATION
Partner with families and other community resources.

INCLUSION
Accept and value the strengths and contributions of everyone.

RESILIENCY
Foster positive perspectives and assist with reducing the impact of risk and trauma.

Our Core Values:
Helping children increase independence and improve daily functioning so they can experience success at home, at school and in the community.

**Services include:**
- Physical Therapy - using specially designed exercises and equipment to help children regain or improve their gross motor skills; balance and coordination; endurance/conditioning; ambulation/mobility; and use of adaptive equipment.
- Occupational Therapy - works on activities of daily living like dressing, eating, and grooming. Addresses fine motor skills; sensory processing skills; and vision training.
- Speech/Language Therapy - works with communication skills via speaking, using sign language, or assistive technology; essential life tasks such as eating/feeding and swallowing; and cognitive strategies.
- Project Access
- Therapeutic Recreation – Services include:
  - Winners on Wheels (WOW)
  - Adapted Sports
  - Teen Group
  - Achiever’s Club
  - Family Program
  - Cooking Group

“Ethan began services with the Achievement Center shortly after being diagnosed with Infantile Spasms at his five month check-up. That’s how we first got connected to agency services. Following our involvement in the Early Intervention program, we transitioned into the Physical Rehabilitation Program, where Ethan received regular physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. Through our constant research, my husband and I learned that 70-90% of children with Infantile Spasms develop severe to profound intellectual and physical disabilities. We knew we had a long road ahead of us, but with the support of the Achievement Center clinicians, our family learned to recognize and celebrate every bit of Ethan’s progress. His clinicians have never given up hope.

Even when we feel frustrated, they model how to patiently wait for Ethan to progress in his own time. They have taught us to make every activity meaningful, looking for therapeutic opportunities during playtime, mealtime, diaper changes, playground visits and community outings.

With the patient assistance of his therapists and other clinicians at the Achievement Center, Ethan walks, runs, jumps and talks more and more every day. He continues to make progress.

We are eternally grateful to everyone at the Achievement Center and are excited to see what Ethan will achieve in the years to come. ” shared Karen, mom of Ethan.

"His clinicians have never given up hope.”

said Karen, Ethan’s Mom
Life is challenging. Blended Case Managers are here to help lighten the load. To better support the needs of children, adolescents and young adults with serious mental illness or emotional disorders, the Achievement Center’s Blended Case Managers help connect your child, adolescent or young adult to services that are right for them while also providing support for the entire family. This holistic approach addresses the following areas of service:

**Services include:**
- **Treatment** – helping identify and access services for your child, adolescent, or young adult’s needs. BCM’s assist you in making your appointments and will help arrange transportation if needed, to build your family’s stability. BCM’s will attend psychiatric and medical appointments with you for improved integration of care.
- **Education** – advocating for your child, adolescent, or young adult, attending IEP meetings and helping to make the best plans for educational success and transition to post-secondary education/ training.
- **Daily living needs** – Together, we’ll make sure basic needs are met for the health and well-being of the entire family.
- **Socialization** – emphasizing the development of healthy relationships at school, in your neighborhood and community, implementing natural support systems.
- **Housing** – maintaining a safe and affordable place to call home.
- **Transition age assistance** – assisting youth/young adults (16-22 years of age) as they move into the adult world. Helping to access resources needed to live independently in the community.

"Through the support of Blended Case Management (BCM) services, the Achievement Center has supported hundreds of children, teens and families. Our BCM’s work closely with each child and family to help them gain independence, strengthen their relationships and develop new skills. Pictured at right is Nate, who is experiencing success at home, school and in the community. Nate took an interest in being a part of his school’s football team and this past season, took on the role of team manager/water boy. Through this experience, Nate has grown socially, has developed new friendships, improved his grades and has a renewed sense of purpose. Our BCM’s are inspired by the children, teens and families in our program. We continue to be amazed as they work hard together to make positive changes in their lives. Our staff are honored to play a part in their success," Chris Colao-Nickson, Director, Blended Case Management Services.

Looking at the whole picture to provide the best possible care for children and their families
Every day there are families in our community struggling with their child’s mental illness or serious behavioral concerns. Although we are more educated today about mental disorders, the stigma of having one still exists. This stigma often keeps parents silent about their child’s own struggles.

At the Achievement Center, we support children and families that are struggling with mental illness. We offer a variety of mental health services that help families build strong relationships and equip them with skills and strategies to better manage their child’s behaviors. Listening to the family’s concerns and helping them problem solve together, they’re able to create more open communication and build a stronger foundation for success.

**Services include:**

- **Traditional Outpatient Therapy** - Supporting mental health needs through individual, group and family therapy.
- **Behavior Analytic Services** - Treating children with significant behavior concerns using a two-fold approach that helps to improve the child’s behaviors while supporting parents through the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).
- **Psychiatric Services** - Our team provides evaluation, treatment planning and medication management. We collaborate with other partners involved in your treatment to deliver the best possible care.
- **Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)** - Empowering parents of children with serious emotional and behavioral concerns, to make changes that improve their relationship with their child and the overall family dynamic.
- **Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT)** - Learning to manage thoughts, feelings and behaviors as they relate to a traumatic experience.
- **Play Therapy** - Supporting children with a wide range of mental health needs who are unable to express their thoughts and feelings with words.
- **SafeStart** - Helping young children work through a traumatic experience so they can focus their energies on being a child.

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**December 2015**
Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS): These services are driven by the unique values, strengths and needs of the child.

**BHRS includes the following supports:**
- Behavioral Specialist Consulting (BSC) – This individual works with the family, and other members of the treatment team to design and direct a behavior modification plan to best meet the needs of the child and family. Providing assessment, program design and monitoring of interventions, the BSC is supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.
- Mobile Therapy (MT) - A mobile therapist is responsible for providing counseling services to the child and/or family. Therapy is provided in the home, community or school setting. The services offered vary according to the individual needs of the child, whether it be emotional, social or behavioral support.
- Therapeutic Support Staff (TSS) – The TSS provides support and supervision to help the child meet treatment goals set by the BSC and/or MT.

“Ella began receiving services when she was just 4 years old. Our family needed help handling certain behaviors. Ella would tantrum if we changed her routine in the slightest, disrupted lines she built with her toys, or if she wasn’t able to wear the color of socks she preferred. Sometimes, these tantrums would last for hours. As a parent, it was exhausting. When we first started working with a Behavior Specialist Consultant (BSC), Ella had a rough time. She wouldn’t cooperate. As we approached the start of school, we were referred to the agency’s Blended Case Management services for additional support. Everyone worked together to help give Ella the best possible start for a successful school year.

We’ve learned a lot from our BSC. She helped get us through the difficult times and provided support when we needed it most. She often talked me through Ella’s tantrums and helped me build confidence as a parent. We are forever grateful for the staff at the Achievement Center for getting us where we are today,” shared Shannon, Ella’s Mom.

“Our family needed help to handle her behavior”
Shannon, Ella’s Mom

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January 2016
In addition to occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy, the Achievement Center’s physical rehabilitation program offers a robust schedule of recreational therapy opportunities for children and teens with physical disabilities. With the guidance of a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, children and teens can get involved in a variety of activities that help to increase independence, promote health and well-being and reduce or even eliminate limitations. By further developing each individual’s skills in a variety of community based settings, participants not only build confidence but cultivate lasting friendships.

**Therapeutic Recreation Services:**
- Adapted Sports Program – the Achievement Center maintains a full calendar of activities offered throughout the year for children and teens participating in the adapted sports program. Some of these activities include:
  - Wheelchair basketball
  - Wheelchair soccer
  - Sled Hockey
  - Swimming
  - Baseball
  - Water sports
  - Bike Camp
  - Fishing
  - Track & Field
- Winners on Wheels (WOW)
- Achiever’s Club
- Teen Group
- Cooking Group
- Family Program

“The Therapeutic Recreation & WOW programs at the Achievement Center have been wonderful for our son, Henry. They have provided opportunities for him to experience new things, develop new skills and make new friends. These programs are like no other. They fill the gaps for kids who aren’t able to participate on traditional sports teams. But the program is much more than just athletics. These services provide a safe, accepting environment that has given Henry the confidence to explore his own abilities, stretching himself to try new things and experience achievement and success,” Monica, mother of Henry, a program participant.
**Family Based Mental Health**

When families experience challenges, parents and caregivers often feel their strength being tested. Working through difficult times with a child or teen that is struggling with a serious mental health issue or behavioral concern, can often leave parents feeling overwhelmed and alone. The Achievement Center’s Family Based Mental Health program provides support to families and is often the lifeline to helping families becoming stronger and more self-sufficient.

The goal of Family Based is to keep the family together. Services are often recommended if a child is at risk for an out-of-home placement or if they need support as they return home from a treatment facility. The Achievement Center’s Family Based Mental Health therapists are highly trained and experienced to work successfully with children and families in crisis.

**Services include:** Family Structural Therapy, Eco-Systemic Family Therapy, case management, 24 hour-a-day availability and crisis/safety plan development.

**Our teams work to:**
- Help strengthen and keep families together
- Help families learn new problem solving skills
- Improve coping skills of all family members
- Teach parenting skills and new ways to effectively manage behaviors
- Advocate for children in the school and the community
- Assist families in connecting with other needed services

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"Family Based Mental Health is awesome! It helps you understand and deal with your children better," said Erin, a mom whose family receives support through FBMH.

March 2016
The focus of the Autism Summer Therapeutic Activity Program (STAP) is to provide a structured and therapeutic environment to practice social skills and better assist families in learning new strategies to ultimately create a better quality of life. We pay special attention to build into our day, engaging activities that will help children and teens on the spectrum, to further develop their relationship building skills at home, in school and in the community.

The Autism STAP program has three main goals:
• Improve communication skills
• Improve social skills
• Reduce repetitive or otherwise challenging behaviors

Currently, the Autism STAP is offered to children and teens in Erie and Warren Counties, PA.

“My child enjoyed the program and made friends. I felt they genuinely worked on skills he needed to learn. There was structure and understanding. It was a positive experience.”

Parent of child in Autism STAP

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**Autism Spectrum Summer Therapeutic Activities Program**

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*Occupational Therapy Month*

*Autism Awareness Month*  
*Month of the Young Child*  

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April 2016
As an Early Intervention (EI) provider, we understand helping children at an early age can add to their success later in life. Early Intervention services provide the support some young children need to help reach important developmental milestones. Whether there is a diagnosis received shortly after birth or a concern about a child’s development at any point during the toddler years, our team of experienced therapists can help meet these individual needs.

Our EI team is comprised of occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech/language pathologists, nutritionists, behavioral therapists and specialized instruction staff. Together, we support the following areas of development:

- Physical Skills – reaching, rolling, crawling and walking
- Cognitive Skills – thinking, learning, problem solving
- Communication – talking, listening, understanding
- Social/emotional – playing, feeling secure and happy
- Self-help – eating and dressing

“We knew we’d choose the Achievement Center as our provider, they have great programs for kids! We’ve had a good experience with the program. We’ve been working with our therapist now for nine months and are happy with the results,” shared Ebony, whose son currently receives Early Intervention services.

At left, Achievement Center Physical Therapist, Becca Osiecki, DPT, encourages one year old Dominic to walk independently. Walking was one of the skills Becca had been working on with Dominic during his weekly sessions.

“We knew we’d choose the Achievement Center as our provider” said Ebony, Dominic’s mother
For more than 10 years, the Achievement Center has offered a Summer Treatment Program for children with an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis. The evidence based program created by Dr. William Pelham of SUNY Buffalo, provides treatment for children, ages 6-12, using a combination of behavior modification techniques, mental health therapy, recreation, art, and parent education. The ultimate goal is to help each child learn coping skills to experience success at home, school, and in the community.

“My nephew has attended the ADHD summer treatment program for several years with the Achievement Center. He has always enjoyed the program but this summer was different. Not only did he come home and tell me about all the fun things he did, but I noticed he was now able to attach words to the skills he was practicing during the day and could apply them at home. One day I happened to notice that he was getting frustrated. He told me he was practicing yoga and deep breathing, one of the many relaxation techniques he had learned at STAP. He also shared that he had new strategies to help when he’s feeling upset. This carry over of skills is so important. Being able to transfer what he learns at STAP has really made a difference in his life,” shared Karen, whose nephew attended this summer’s ADHD STAP program.

“Community integration activities, or “field trips,” are an important part of our program. Community outings with peers help kids improve impulsivity concentration and cooperation,” said Cassie Dundon, Director of Strategic Initiatives & STAP Supervisor.
The team at the Cleft Palate Institute cares for children born with cleft lip, cleft palate or other craniofacial anomalies. It is their goal to restore individuals physically while providing every opportunity for the best outcomes for speech and communication skills.

Through regularly scheduled clinics, the team helps to establish a comprehensive diagnosis, develop coordinated treatment plans, provide follow-up care, make appropriate referrals and provide support to the family.

The team is made up of highly qualified medical and non-medical volunteers representing the following specialties:

- Plastic Surgery
- Oral Surgery
- Pediatric Dentistry
- Orthodontics
- Prosthodontics
- Speech/Language Pathology
- Nursing
- Feeding Specialists
- Audiology
- Support Staff

The team approach encourages the coordination of care and promotes the social, emotional and physical wellness of the child and family.

To find out more or to view the clinic schedule, visit online at www.eriecleftpalate.com, or call 814-314-0048. Clinics are held at the Achievement Center, 4950 West 23rd Street, Suite 100, Erie, PA 16506.
The Anxiety STAP is the newest addition to the Achievement Center’s summer program offerings. The six-week program, Finding Courage, was created by the Center as a way for children with an anxiety disorder, to learn and practice problem-solving and coping skills with help from trained staff. After seeing an increase in the number of children referred to the Center for anxiety, the summer program was started as an effort to provide another avenue for children with anxiety to work on skills and strategies. Each of the program’s six weeks highlight a different theme, with activities ranging from self-awareness projects to problem solving scenarios.

“When you have anxiety, your brain is a bully, and it’s constantly sabotaging you. You want to do new things and take chances, but your brain instead is telling you the ways you can get hurt and fail. This program is great in helping him find ways to stand up to that bully,” shared Joanne, mother of Ian, who attended this year’s Finding Courage program.

Anxiety Summer Therapeutic Activity Program: Finding Courage

August 2016
Project ACCESS provides a variety of services to support children with hearing loss and their families. Together, we’re raising awareness about hearing loss so children who are Deaf or hard of hearing may have ACCESS to educational programs, community events and social gatherings.

**Services Include:**
- Signing Circle Time – teaching young children, their siblings and parents/caregivers, basic signs through songs, stories and play. This exposure and practice helps provide ACCESS to language and early communication skills necessary for social and literacy development.
- Hear Me Out! – helping individuals with hearing loss gain awareness into their own hearing loss and the impact it has on their experiences in the classroom, in social situations and in their community. The program empowers children and teens with hearing loss to self-advocate, improving the quality of their education and social relationships.
- American Sign Language (ASL) Class for Parents and Professionals – educating others through offer ASL classes, helping others learn basic sign vocabulary and vital information about the Deaf culture. Weekly sessions focus on themes and activities that practice day to day conversation skills.
- Regular Parent Get-Togethers – Giving parents an opportunity to ACCESS other parents who are experiencing similar challenges. This Parent Group meets regularly to talk, commiserate, advise and celebrate the challenges and successes of parenting a child with hearing loss. Additionally, parent group participants often lend a hand with special events that help to promote our mission and the services offered through Project ACCESS.

“My wife and I have volunteered here and there with Project Access. It offers networking; we get to spend time with other parents who have been through what we’ve been through and then we get to turn around and help other parents. It gives us a sense of camaraderie with people who are dealing with the same challenges. It makes it work for us. It makes us feel special that we can push for things in the community to get access for our sons,” shared Dave, father of two sons with hearing loss in the program.

"Building and supporting relationships, educating parents and treating the whole child."

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September 2016
With renovations complete, the Achievement Center’s satellite office located in Meadville, PA., has expanded in response to the needs of children, teens and their families in the Crawford community. With the addition of mental health services, the Achievement Center is prepared to provide the support needed by children and teens who are struggling with a variety of mental health concerns. With a fully equipped psychiatric team, our experienced staff will provide quality care for significant behavior or mental health concerns. We can help children develop skills and strategies to self-manage challenging behaviors and move toward a healthier, more positive lifestyle.

**Services include:**
- Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS)
- Family Based Mental Health
- Summer Therapeutic Activity Program for children and teens with ADHD
- Mental Health Services - Traditional Outpatient and Group Therapy, Psychiatric Services, Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), and Play Therapy.

Thank you Achievement Center for helping the world see our unique child for the smart, talented and funny boy that he is,” shared Sean and Jenny Singer, of their son who receives support through BHRS.

“The Achievement Center invests in the Crawford community every day by supporting the needs of children and families. Our experienced staff helps children and their families discover their own strengths and build new skills together. We are proud to be a part of their success!” Tara McQuaid, Regional Director.

**Crawford County**

October 2016
Having settled into a new home at 305 State Street, the Warren office continues to evolve as more families seek out the support of the Achievement Center’s services. With a strong emphasis on meeting the behavioral and mental health needs of the community’s youth, services offered include: Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services, Family Based Mental Health and Summer Therapeutic Activity Programs.

Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) are driven by the unique values, strengths and needs of each individual child. BHRS offers the following supports:
- Behavioral Specialist Consulting (BSC)
- Mobile Therapy (MT)
- Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS)

Family Based Mental Health - a team of two therapists works with the child and family to enable children with serious emotional and behavioral concerns to remain at home with their family through intensive treatment and support.

Summer Treatment Activity Programs (STAP) – the Achievement Center currently offers two summer therapeutic opportunities for children, one specifically for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and another for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The ADHD STAP works with children, ages 6-14, to improve self-regulation, social skills development and emotional functioning.

The Autism STAP provides a structured and therapeutic environment to help children hone social skills and help children learn and practice new skills and strategies to help create a better quality of life at home, at school and in their community.

“Jayna was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at a young age. The BHRS staff at the Achievement Center supported us by teaching our family about her diagnosis and showing us strategies that we now use daily to increase her communication and social skills. She has made significant gains and we are very proud of her accomplishments,” shared Danell, Jayna’s mother.
"We don't just look at our financials in terms of revenues and expenses, we take into consideration the day to day work of our agency and the investment we make in the lives of the children & families we serve," said Jim Garlick, Board member and Chair of the Achievement Center’s Finance Committee. Jim is pictured at right with his wife Connie and daughters Stephanie and Kimberly.
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The support we received from the Erie community was an integral part of our efforts to create a new and improved home for the Achievement Center. Our new location at Westport Centre provides us with the improved opportunity to fulfill our mission to children and families in the Erie community. In this new and well equipped space, we now have the ability to meet the individual needs of children and their families while providing increased therapeutic services. Our excellent staff has the necessary space to work with our clients in a comfortable environment with the benefit of room for growth. The generosity of our community has made this dream a reality for the Achievement Center which allows us to help improve the lives of the children and families we serve,” said Carol Blake, Board President. Pictured above are (left to right) Mary Anderson, Jeffery Blake and Carol Blake.
Special thanks to the children,