THE POWER OF PEOPLE AND PLACE
Building a Foundation For Learning
PARA-EDUCATORS Seizing Teachable Moments • TO REFLECT AND REMEMBER A Memorial Garden

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HORIZONS
A NEWSLETTER FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF CROTCHED MOUNTAIN

THE POWER OF PEOPLE AND PLACE
Organizations are complex, dynamic organisms with unique belief systems and values. What we believe about ourselves and the people we serve is central to how we do our jobs.

Our overarching goal is to establish and maintain communities of mutual support with the people we serve so that they can be the authors of their own lives—which means having choices around how one's days unfold—what, when and with whom they choose. The values we hold establish a foundation of respect, compassion, partnership and opportunity upon which every Crotched Mountain service and program is built.

To support these values, we have integrated systemic supports proven to encourage an environment of mutual regard for both client and staff. In 2004, we adopted Gentle Teaching as the philosophical underpinning of our teaching and healing work. Gentle Teaching establishes a context of respectful, trusting and authentic relationships. In practice, Gentle Teaching guides the caregiver to consider environmental elements that can aid success, such as flow-of-activity, information and motivation.

Consider a trip to the dentist. In order to reduce anxiety, the appointment might be made for a time of day when a client typically feels strongest. The client would be provided information about why and how the appointment will proceed. What sorts of sounds and sights might the client expect? Who will be there to support him/her? What would motivate the client to approach this experience positively?

Another method incorporated into our organizational culture is the Mandt System®. Many individuals come to Crotched Mountain with behaviors that put themselves or others at risk. Mandt provides a framework based on trusting relationships that minimizes coercion and maximizes independent choice when responding to behaviors. Seclusion is never an option at Crotched Mountain, nor are medications used solely for behavior management. I invite you to read the story about CMS student Felix on the opposite page to learn how positive change happens in a trusting, respectful and safe environment.

The work of our students, patients and clients is to learn, heal and live within a supportive community that respects the narrative of their lives. We're here to support and enable their journeys with gentle awareness and best practices in every aspect of our service to them.

On the Cover
Crotched Mountain School (CMS) student Felix and his mother Eliza enjoy a moment of closeness in the classroom.
Story on page 3.

Thanks to Our Photographers:
Geoff Forester, Kristin Harris, Kevin Harte, Michael Havey, Jean Polovchik
Building a Foundation For Learning

Crotched Mountain strives to offer the right supports in the right place at the right time to the patients, students and clients we serve. And according to one parent of a Crotched Mountain School (CMS) student, we succeeded on all counts! Felix, an 11-year-old student diagnosed with cerebral palsy and autism, first came to our campus in August 2013 with his mother, Eliza, to take a tour and interview the school admissions staff to determine if CMS was the right fit for them.

Felix was referred to Crotched Mountain School when the school he attended in Manhattan could no longer meet his educational program needs. Felix’s frustration and intense discomfort led him to use self-harming and aggressive behaviors. His parents report that these episodes could last for hours and sometimes all day. His younger sisters were frightened and confused.

When Crotched Mountain was suggested as a residential placement, Eliza’s first thought was that it was too far away. When she expressed this to our school admissions director, she replied, “That’s too bad. Felix looks like he was made for our program.” Eliza was shocked. “No one had ever said that about Felix.” And even better, it was clear that Felix enjoyed being at Crotched Mountain that day.

Felix became a full-time residential student in the fall of 2013. Change happened, but not overnight. It took him a while to acclimate to his new residence and being so far from home. But it didn’t take long for his classroom teacher, Ami O’Keefe, and speech therapist, Susan Fass, to begin to introduce new techniques and tools to support Felix, including an augmentative alternative communication (AAC) device that uses picture icons to help him communicate. With an effective way to share thoughts and feelings came a new level of comfort for Felix, leading to his participation in group activities and a newfound ability to independently communicate choices. We soon learned how much he loves music and swimming.

“Felix’s tolerance levels improved and he started to trust and connect more than ever with others. His big blue eyes and radiant smile won everyone over,” notes student services coordinator, Lisa Sutter.

Physical challenges were addressed too. His physical therapist, Keith Wolsiefer, PT, addressed Felix’s posture. When he arrived at CMS, he would slump over facing downward. “Early therapy sessions focused on activities that would motivate him to look up,” recalls Keith. In addition, his mobility with a walker continues to improve. And, most recently, his sessions have included an adaptive bike that he pedals short distances under his own steam.

One year on, Felix has met all his initial academic goals. He uses his AAC voice output to comment on lesson content and interact with other students and housemates, as well as to initiate interactions. “I realize our family could never have made Felix’s progress possible on our own. No individual or family could,” Eliza says.

Eliza visits Felix frequently and they spend a great deal of time outside around the campus. “He never minds returning to his group home; I can often hear him giggling as I walk out the door.”

And that’s a sound that any parent would love.
The para-educator is the point person for information on how a student is feeling on a given day. He or she reports any overnight difficulties to the teacher and others so that accommodations can be made to provide the best supports possible.

Many students need to take sensory breaks during the day. The para-educator knows the student, and can initiate the right activity at the right time to support that student’s specific sensory and behavioral needs.

CMS student Joe and para-educator Alice Cutter have worked together for the past year. Joe, 18, is diagnosed with...
pervasive development disorder and sensory integration issues. His previous school was unable to meet Joe’s behavioral needs. As a result, he didn’t attend school for several months before enrolling at CMS. Since then, Joe has been on track to meet his educational benchmarks every quarter. His goals currently revolve around mastering a variety of vocational skills through his housekeeping job at Monadnock Community Hospital in Peterborough. Mail and package deliveries on the CM campus hone his counting and number identification skills.

Anita Martus, Joe’s teacher, says Alice promotes the positive in every task. “They have a great student-teacher relationship,” Anita observes. She says Alice’s attitude and humor break through Joe’s occasional reluctance and “she has a gift for brainstorming and helping students come up with ideas on their own.”

Alice says that when she first met Joe, it was clear his anxiety had much to do with his behaviors. “As our communication improved, I could recognize when his anxiety increased. When this happens, we go for walks or do another activity that calms him,” says Alice.

Alice knows what motivates Joe and she provides what he needs to feel confident. “He responds well to encouragement and praise, and that enables him to accomplish more and more on his own before asking for help,” says Alice. She notes that Joe is successful at CMS because of the great team of individuals who work with him. “Anita and all the para-educators in the classroom create a fun and positive atmosphere. We are quite structured and expectations are high for everyone—we reach for the stars,” she adds.

But the best part of Joe’s support team is his family. “To talk about his many family members is a great way to connect with him,” Alice observes. Joe’s mom, Stephanie, notes how welcoming and engaging Alice and other staff are, and recalls a particular interaction she witnessed one morning during snack time. “Joe’s sensory issues make some foods unappealing to him. Alice was eating yogurt, and with a big grin said, ‘Hey Joe, you ate all my yogurt last week—how about having some more today?’” Stephanie reports Joe declined the offer, but she was impressed with Alice’s humor and gentle persistence. “Joe might say ‘no’ nine times to something, but on the tenth time, say ‘yes.’”

“Joe is happy. He runs for the bus in the morning. Knowing he’s at Crotched Mountain, we can relax. It means so much.”

What’s a para-educator?
Alice and some of her fellow para-educators brainstormed a list of qualities and skills that make a successful para-educator:

- team player
- flexible
- positive
- patient
- professional
- caring
- honest
- dependable
- respectful
- sense of humor
- data tracker

Joe removes the batt from the drum carder.
Crotched Mountain’s Master Plan encompasses a broad range of projects to provide accessible outdoor recreation activities to people of all abilities. Our accessible trails, a keynote project within the plan, stretch over three miles through forest, fields, wetlands and mountains. They are designed to universal accessibility standards so that everyone is welcome to enjoy nature up close—people in wheelchairs, seniors and families with children.

In September 2013, Crotched Mountain hosted a reception to thank John C. Madden and Thomas O’Reilly for the donation of scooters for use by accessible trail users with mobility needs. At the event, CMF President and CEO Don Shumway announced plans to create a Memorial Garden near the trail entrance to provide a place for contemplation before and after hiking, and to honor family and friends whose lives are and were touched by the beauty and bounty of the outdoors.

Inspiration for the Memorial Garden was the dedication of a plaque memorializing Brandon Mills, close family friend of a dear friend and donor to Crotched Mountain and an outdoor enthusiast. With thanks to landscape architect Joseph E. Thompson, we now have a vision for a beautiful, contemplative and accessible Memorial Garden to be enjoyed by all.

The $25,000 Memorial Garden Campaign, headed by Wayne and Terry Mills and Chris Burns, invites you to consider a number of dedication opportunities.

- Stone benches, with permanently carved inscription;
- Paving stones, with permanently carved inscription;
- Memorial rock wall plaques, with permanently carved inscription;
- Landscaping, with signage.

For more information, please contact Kathleen Brittan, vice president of development at 603.574.1485 or kathleen.brittan@crotchedmountain.org
DANCERS COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE

Active Ingredients, the CM adaptive dance group, hosted its annual fall recital in collaboration with the Peterborough Dance Theatre and performers from New England College (NEC) Theatre Department. Members of Active Ingredients and NEC students performed a dance and movement piece choreographed by NEC adjunct theater faculty member and performer Kelly Doremus Stuart. “The adaptive dance program allows students of all abilities to perform alongside experienced dancers in a highly expressive and joyful performance,” said Bonnie Arpin, CMS music teacher. In addition to Arpin, Active Ingredients is led by CMS dance coordinator Pat Martin and adaptive dance instructor Lisa Moran. The collaborative residency program is supported by NH State Council on the Arts and the John A. and Carol A. Hubbard Charitable Foundation.

BRIEFLY NOTED

CM AUDIOLOGY RELOCATES

Crotched Mountain’s audiology department relocated its Peterborough office on December 12 from the Bond Wellness Center at Monadnock Community Hospital to the offices of Bard Chiropractic Practice located on Route 202 North, across from the South Meadow School. Crotched Mountain’s clinical audiologists will continue to offer all the same hearing services at both the new location in Peterborough and on the Crotched Mountain campus in Greenfield.

BUSINESS BLACK BELT EARNED

Lisa Perales, RN, BSN, MBA, NHA, CDONA, vice president of nursing at Crotched Mountain Specialty Hospital, has earned the Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, one of the highest levels of honor for process improvement and efficiency, through Villanova University. Lean Six Sigma is a process improvement program that combines efficiency and quality improvement techniques to enhance the customer experience and improve outcomes. “This is an incredible acknowledgement and distinguished recognition of the hard work and dedication that Lisa brings to our Specialty Hospital,” said Michael Redmond, CM senior VP and COO. “We are so fortunate to have her on our team.”

SPEAKING OF THE WEATHER

The CMS weather station reporting live weather statistics from Crotched Mountain is up and running online at Weather Underground. Users can see current weather as well as the forecast for the week. The instruments are located on the roof of the school to report actual conditions on the campus—which we all know can be very different from the weather anywhere else! To learn more about how students are using the station and to download the weather app, visit: crotchedmountain.org/weather

HOLIDAY SALES SUPPORT AUTISM PROGRAM

A huge thanks to Ed Cyr, founder of Evergreens for Autism, who donated a portion of its proceeds from holiday tree and wreath sales to benefit Ready, Set, Connect!, Crotched Mountain’s ABA program for young children with autism. Ed presented Kathleen Brittan, Crotched Mountain VP of development, with a check for $2,250 at his Seabrook location. Ed has two children with Asperger’s syndrome and made this donation to support a cause that is near and dear to his heart. Thanks to everyone who purchased their holiday trees and wreaths from Evergreens for Autism, and thank you to Ed and his entire staff for their support!
GLEANING HAS ITS GIFTS

CROTCHED MOUNTAIN STUDENTS GIVE BACK

LEANING is an ancient tradition of collecting leftover crops from farmers’ fields and sharing them. This past fall, Peg McLeod of Norway Hill Orchard in Hancock invited students in the CMS Farm School program to glean her orchard after it closed for the season. Students collected 824 pounds of apples, which they weighed, sorted, packed and delivered to three local food pantries, an after-school children’s program and to the Sunnyfield Farm horses. Crotched Mountain School’s dining and dietary staff made apple crisp and apple sauce for student lunches, and students made delicious apple butter. We’re pretty sure our students would say they got a lot more than they gave!

Top: Farm School staff Beth Simpson, Jean Polovichk, student Seth and para-educator Russell Wells sample the fruit of their labors. Bottom: CMS students Ian and Michaela make apple butter; Brett sorts the gleaned apples for delivery to food pantries.