

# Illuminations

A Bi-Annual Newsletter From Morgan Autism Center

Fall 2016

*As We Move Into  
Our New Home, A Look Back.*

## Breaking Ground

*By Brad Boardman,  
Executive Director*

Today I made a tiny bit of space in my day to look at prior Morgan Autism Center publications, including decades-old copies of the newsletters we published over the years. While the format of the Newsletter has gone through many permutations, the substance always shines the light on our students, clients and the meaningful growth and learning that takes place here at Morgan Autism Center.

One of the articles we unearthed was written by founder, Louise Emerson. The story was a fun re-telling of the genesis of the Center. In that story, Louise referred to herself and the first teachers as a band of "hippies." The unconventionality of the hippie mindset was conjured beautifully in her story. And it's true, our programming, our view of off task behavior, our drive to find student interests and strengths, our unwavering belief that all students can learn were all very unconventional back in the late



**MORGAN AUTISM CENTER'S NEW HOME:** After twenty-plus years of searching, we finally have a permanent home at 950 Elizabeth Drive in San Jose, CA. Originally St. Elizabeth's Day Home, the site is in the process of renovations to meet all of our student and adult client needs.

sixties. While, there aren't too many hippies around anymore (at least the bead wearing ones), that spirit is still the foundation of the work we do.

Yes, in all the best ways, nothing has changed at Morgan Autism Center. Our philosophy that "happy individuals will do the very best they can," has never been more true or more evident. Step on our campus and you will see people who are engaged, smiling, doing meaningful work, communicating in new ways and feeling a part of the community. We are still at the forefront of thought and best practices when it comes to programming and community engagement. Our staff truly understands autism and

behavior. In order to make everyone's (staff, students and clients) experience a positive one, we must make a cultural decision to cooperate, make work fun, view behavior differently, and support one another.

So...nothing new here. Oh, except one thing: Morgan Autism Center now has its very own, permanent home in Willow Glen. This may seem like a departure from the wandering hippie lifestyle we have lived prior to this (moving 5 times over the course of our history). It's a conventional move, it's true, but sometimes convention is a stabilizing force. Morgan Autism Center has never had a permanent home. This fact has been a source of worry to each of our Executive Directors,

*Please see page 5*

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## 26 Years of Service and Heart

Director of Student Services, Judi Campbell retired back in July, after a career at Morgan Autism Center that spanned three decades. Previous to her employment at Morgan Autism Center, Judi worked in the public school system as an Adaptive Physical Education teacher. Judi's understanding of autism and autism programming have left an indelible mark on the culture here at the Center. I recently had the chance to visit with her, after 6 weeks of retirement.

### **Q: Judi, what do you think makes Morgan Autism Center so special?**

If there is something to share about Morgan Autism Center, it is that we all know it is critical to understand why our students and clients do what they do and we also know that we owe them the support they need to be successful. Without that understanding, there are all kinds of opportunities to be negative or punitive. Because of Morgan Autism

Center's understanding of autism, the program focuses on successful strategies and positive interactions and supports, and that feels better for everyone involved. The understanding that these individuals have social deficits that require social support is just fundamental.

### **Q: Why did you stay here?**

My job in the public schools was great. I had a lot of autonomy. But on the other hand, I didn't have any systemic support or any emotional support. Morgan Autism Center is really different in that way. There was always support available. And one of the things I really appreciated was that I had some interests in things like body work. I really saw the students at the Center as a disregulated group and the administrators and faculty here had an openness to the possibility of me really exploring some of the things that I knew would be beneficial to this population. The philosophy of



**GRATEFUL EVENING:** Judi Campbell announced her retirement to families at Starry Starry Night and received a standing ovation.

our program really resonated with me: We (staff) are responsible, and if kids aren't successful, what can we do differently to make that child successful.

### **Q: What advice would you give parents?**

Embrace autism...to fight it is just too hard. Finding your community, your group, that is part of the joy of Morgan Autism Center for so many parents. It takes work and time, but the rewards of being a part of this community are great.

-B.B.

## Perfect Fit In Every Way

Dorothy Raab Ed.D., is new to Morgan Autism Center, but not new to the Morgan Autism Center model. She was the previous Senior Special Education Director of the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, and oversaw the Chrysalis Autism Program, established by Morgan Autism Center. I sat down with the new Director of Student Services for a few moments as she shared what led her to our school.

### **Q: What experiences in your career have prepared you to be an asset to Morgan Autism Center?**

**A:** My son, Eric, has been my motivation for all I have done in my career, because I felt that I needed to know many aspects of Special Education. I have been a program

Specialist, Coordinator for teacher recruitment for Special Education, Special Ed. District Director, and ended my public education as the Senior Director for Santa Cruz County.

### **Q: What strengths/training do you have to support Morgan Autism Center families, students, and staff?**

**A:** Focusing my commitment to the success of our students is really important. My strengths include teacher support, problem solving, facilitating IEP training, working closely with families, and continuing to help new Special Ed. teachers in their training programs.

As a part of the community, Dorothy and her son, Eric have

been annual presenters to new teachers at San Jose State, working closely with Dr. Chris Hagie, in the Special Education Department of the University. Dorothy hopes to add to the amazing strengths of the Morgan Autism Center and is very happy to be a part of this great school environment.

-N.F.



**WELCOME ABOARD:** Director of Student Services, Dorothy Raab Ed.D., jumped in with both feet and is a welcome addition to the Morgan Center Family.



# Shining Bright: Student and Adult Stories

## Longtime Adult Client Moves and Leaves Her Mark

Once in a great while, we have to say goodbye to one of our beloved clients. One client, Wanda Wolfe, began her journey with us in 1972, when she was 7 years old. This past summer, she moved with her mother, Donna, to Mariposa, California.

As a baby, Wanda was first thought to be deaf. She then learned a few words, but around 15 months, she seemed to lose what little speech she had. At about five, she began speaking, but then only one or two words for several years. Throughout those early years at Morgan Autism Center, Wanda's speech improved dramatically. She was able to communicate and express herself through drawing.

As Wanda grew up, it was apparent that she was a gifted artist and photographer. In the School and Adult Program, it became important

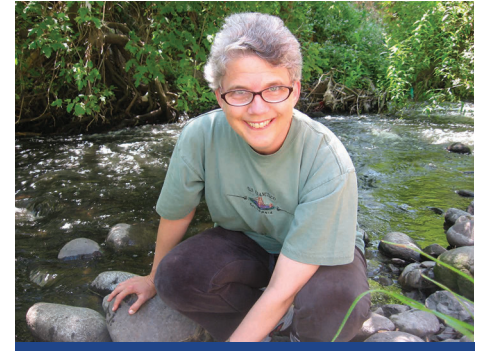
to help support her budding talent along the way. Wanda is very patient as she captures each and every detail of her subject. Wanda does nothing by halves and her artwork is no exception. Over the years, Wanda's art has been showcased and sold at Morgan Autism Center's Annual Starry Starry Night Fundraising Gala.

Many people at Morgan Autism Center have been here for years and have had the pleasure of knowing Wanda, watching her develop into a lovely, caring person who loves people and thoroughly enjoys her opportunities to chat with others. We all look forward to hearing about Wanda's latest artistic endeavors. We will miss her kindness and wish her well.

*-Sue Taylor, Adult Program Director*



**WANDA-AGE 7:**  
Young and full of energy, Wanda began her journey at Morgan Autism Center in 1972, Palo Alto, CA.



**44 YEARS LATER:** Helping with trail maintenance with the Adult Program at Guadalupe Creek.

## Growing By Leaps and Bounds in the School Program

Karissa Ramia began attending Morgan Autism Center in the summer of 2014. From the beginning, Karissa had difficulty riding in unfamiliar vehicles, going into unfamiliar bathrooms, and trying new foods. Participating in Independent Living Skills activities which are part of our classroom's daily schedule, Karissa has made great strides in widening the scope of her life's experiences.

Karissa loves working on academic skills and enjoys identifying common objects and words. She has started working on asking and answering questions using her Augmented Assisted Communication device.

She recently learned to ride a 2-wheel bike by herself. And loves to show off her new skill with pride.

A few of her favorite classroom activities include playing with putty, play-doh, and anything she can mold. Each Monday, Karissa goes to art class with some of her classmates. While she works with a variety of art materials, painting seems to be her favorite. On Fridays,



**PROUD MOMENT:** Karissa happily examines her certificate for learning to ride a 2-wheel bike.

she attends a drum circle led by Mark Farley. There, Karissa dances to the music and bangs on the drums with delight. She enjoys a variety of sports like basketball, bowling, relay races, and participating in P.E. with her classmates. Karissa delights all who meet her and will continue to do so as she grows.

*-Kendra Comstock, Room 17 Teacher*



**AWAY SHE GOES:** Karissa enjoying a ride on her bike during P.E.

# Welcome Home



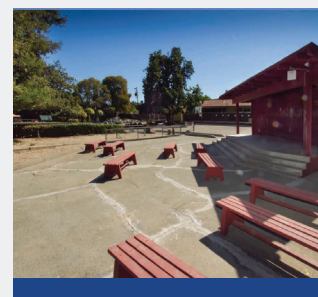
Bathrooms in their current condition.



Large open classrooms.



Adult Program's new space has a stage, kitchen, and restrooms.



A small outside stage with seating for music enrichment.

**A**nd here it is! In June, Morgan Autism Center closed escrow on its new, permanent home. We are now in the construction phase, preparing the site for our occupation. Our changes in use have precipitated the need to do extensive safety upgrades such as lead and asbestos abatement, creating fire safe corridors, installing sprinklers throughout, and upgrading all the bathrooms and some outdoor areas to meet ADA requirements. Please take a few minutes to check out the photos. We think you will agree, this property has endless potential for carrying Morgan Autism Center programming into the future.

While the property is ideal, it also has, how shall I say this...significant needs. No one is packing up the moving vans just yet. Because it is an older building, the change in ownership has kicked off a host of city required upgrades and improvements such as fire rated corridors, ADA bathrooms, abatement of harmful substances. Though the bones of the buildings are good, there is a need to do extensive remodeling and reconfiguration in order to suit the needs of our 8 classrooms and adult program...and as I write this, we are learning that investing in a new roof now might be a prudent idea in order to minimize programmatic impact

in the future.

The continued support of our community is crucial to the financing of these improvements. If you have ever considered supporting Morgan Autism Center and have not done so, right now is a wonderful chance to do so. Your contributions will go directly to funding the Dream Campus.

If you would like to come see our new property, send me an email. We will be organizing a few tours in the coming weeks and months. Our goal of having a place of our own would not have been possible without support from friends like you. We at the Morgan Autism Center hope your support will continue. Please help us achieve our vision of a Dream Campus where we will flourish and grow.

-B.B.

## Site Improvements Needed

**Total: \$1,517,500**

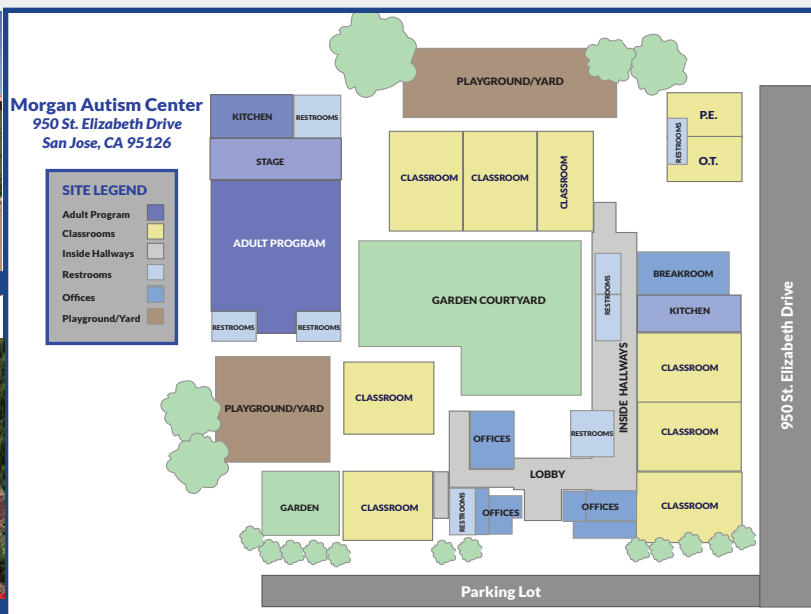
ADA Entry Upgrades	\$25,000
ADA Bathrooms	\$180,000
Fire Sprinklers	\$300,000
Fire Safe Corridors	\$90,000
Lead Abatement	\$36,000
Asbestos Abatement	\$120,000
Lighting and Lighting Controls	\$385,000
Parking	\$220,000
Paint Interior	\$42,000
Paint Exterior	\$32,000
Exterior Curb Demolition	\$7,500
Roof and Structural Repairs	\$80,000

## Dream Campus Campaign

To make a donation to support Morgan Autism Center's Dream Campus Campaign, visit <http://morganautismcenterdreamcampuscampaign.weebly.com/> or make a check to Morgan Autism Center **Attention: Dream Campus Campaign.** Contact Lisa Lemke at [lisa@morgancenter.org](mailto:lisa@morgancenter.org) for more information.



“ Our students, clients, staff and families deserve to have the stability of a permanent address. ”



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

Thank you so much to Stantec and Lowe's "Heroes Project" for volunteering their time, energy, and resources towards upgrading the garden and playground areas of the site. We greatly appreciate everything they have done for us.

### SITE LEGEND:

Adult Program	Offices
Classrooms	Kitchen
O.T. / P.E.	Garden Area
Lobby/Hallways	Playground/ Yard
Restrooms	

### GARDEN AND PLAYGROUND UPGRADES: (Photos top to bottom; L to R.)

- 1.) Lowe's "Heroes Project" volunteers transformed the quad area at our new site into a beautiful outdoor lunch and meeting space for our staff and students.
- 2.) New picnic tables donated by Lowe's. Drought resistant plants finish off the beautiful space.
- 3.) Stantec upgraded the playground with new bark.
- 4.) Executive Director, Brad Boardman, and the Stantec group.

## Continued from page 1

parents, clients, students and staff for the entirety of our existence. In fact, I remember a very scary time in our history when former Executive Director Jennifer Sullivan spent most of her waking hours roaming the streets and tracking down leads on a new site due to the surprise news that our school would be reclaimed by the district.

Our students, clients, staff and families deserve to have the stability of a permanent address. The security

that comes from knowing we will have a permanent home will alleviate anxiety across the board, and alleviating anxiety is one of the things that quality autism programming should aim to deliver. The school site in Willow Glen is perfectly suited to our needs and is situated in the center of the community in a quiet neighborhood with plenty of outdoor space and even access to the Los Gatos Creek trail. And... there is potential for the Center to expand services in the

coming years. The effort to get here spanned over twenty years and started with Jennifer Sullivan. Many supporters, parents, staff and the larger community contributed to the search. We are very appreciative for all the support we have had over the years and hope you will continue to follow us on our journey.

## SAY "CHEESE"

*Students and Adults benefit from enrichment activities thanks to generous In-Kind donations.*



**MUSIC TO MY EARS:** Room 9 students enjoying a catchy song played by music teacher, Marya Stark.



**SAY IT OUT LOUD:** Speech therapist, Krystle Wright, works with Marino on her AAC device.



**PASTEL PORTRAITS:** Leticia creates a portrait of herself at CSMA in Mountain View.



**ART TIME:** Adult clients learn to refine their drawing techniques at Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View.



**BUDDING ARTIST:** One of our youngest students paints a watercolor garden during his weekly art class.

## Ernie Els for Autism Golf Clinic

Seven of our lucky students and clients participated in the Els for Autism #GameOn Golf Clinic on Thursday, September 1st at the Silver Creek Country Club in San Jose. The Els for Autism Foundation was established in 2009 by world class pro golfer, Ernie Els and his wife Liezl, to focus on the issue of autism. We are extremely grateful to the Els for Autism Foundation for including us again in this wonderful event. Students and clients had a blast at the course where they spent an hour learning how to putt, drive and play golf.

The Els for Autism #GameON Golf Clinic is designed to build self-esteem and confidence in a fun,



**HAPPY GOLFERS:** Adult clients and students from the School Program, take a group picture with their coaches at Silver Creek Country Club golf course.

welcoming and supportive environment; encouraging participants to learn golf skills while practicing specific autism learning concepts. Our new Director of Student Services, Dorothy Raab, spent time at the end of the session with parents as they watched their adult children show off their new

skills. It was also a perfect time for parents to socialize with each other and the coaches.

Thank you to The First Tee of Silicon Valley for coaching the clinic and a huge thank you to the Els for Autism Foundation for another wonderful day of sunshine and golf.

-L.L.



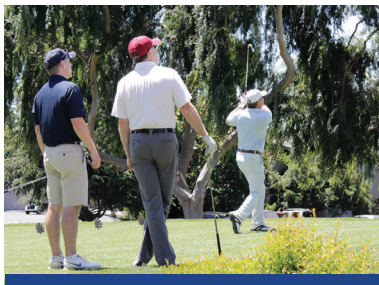
# FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

*How to get involved at Morgan Autism Center*

## Tenth Annual Golf Classic is a Hole-in-One

Morgan Autism Center hosted its 10th Annual Golf Classic on Monday, July 18th at San Jose Country Club. Forty-nine participants spent a beautiful day golfing for a great cause. The tournament raised over \$12,000 for our School and Adult Programs.

We would like to thank our sponsors for making it a successful day: Maryann Garcia, Milani, Lee & Associates, Clay Goodman, Chris and Lisa Marchese, Concept Part Solutions, Daylight Foods, Curtis Heinz, Service by Medallion, and Sease's Auto Services. Additionally, we would like to thank Mark and Amy Milani, our Event Chairs, for putting on another wonderful tournament. Events like these are



**BEAUTIFUL SHOT:** Golfers enjoyed warm weather and a round of golf at San Jose Country Club.

made all the more special when volunteers get involved. We would like to thank Geoffrey Hird, Linda Novak, and Morgan Autism Center Board Member, Reuben Zarate, for volunteering their time to come out and offer us their support.

-L.L.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT

### Annual Gift /Stock & Planned Giving

We gratefully accept monetary, in-kind donations, stock donations, and planned giving. You can donate online or mail a check. For stock donations and planned giving **contact Lisa Lemke at (408) 241-8161 or [lisa@morgancenter.org](mailto:lisa@morgancenter.org)**.

### Amazon Smile

Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of the cost of your Amazon purchase after selecting Morgan Autism Center. For more, visit **[www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)**.

### Employee Gift Matching

Ask your employer today to join you in supporting in Morgan Autism Center.

## Starry Starry Night 2016 Recap

On Saturday, May 7th, over 375 parents, families and community supporters came out to celebrate Morgan Autism Center's 9th annual Starry Starry Night Fundraising Gala at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Palo Alto. Over \$212,000 was raised for enrichment activities including art and music programs, speech and language therapy, technology and programmatic support. These services are the cornerstone of the Center's program and will directly benefit the students and clients we serve.

Guests were treated to dinner and delicious wines from local vineyards. Bernard Smith kept the mood lively with pop tunes on the piano as our guests enjoyed bidding on auction items, including beautiful artwork created by our talented students and clients. Guests took their chance at a raffle and a thrilling Heads or Tails game in which a lucky winner took home an Apple Watch. Highlights of the



**SILENT AUCTION:** Paintings and ceramic vases created by Morgan Autism Center students and clients.

evening included testimony from Jessica Cuellar, a sister of one of our students, a retirement farewell to Judi Campbell, Morgan Autism Center's beloved Director of Student Services, and three student and client profile videos. The evening concluded with a fund-a-need and an exciting live auction.

We presented this year's Outstanding Leadership Award to Animal Assisted Happiness, a non-profit that enriches the lives of children with special needs through animal interaction. AAH brings their mobile barnyard to the Center once a month and students and clients are given the opportunity to

hold, pet and relax in the company of furry friends.

We would like to thank this year's generous sponsors and in-kind donors for their support. For a full list of these individuals and businesses, please visit **[www.morgancenter.org/donate](http://www.morgancenter.org/donate)**.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to our Starry Starry Night Event Chair, Franca Cozzitorto, and to our dedicated committee members who worked tirelessly to ensure the event's success. And, finally, a huge thank you to our wonderful staff and community volunteers - we are eternally grateful for your support and could not have done this without every one's support.

-L.L.

*Save the Date*  
**Starry Starry Night**  
**May 6th, 2017**

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Palo Alto



2280 Kenwood Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95128-1332

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#### **BUTTERFLY GARDEN** by Kayden Perrizo

Kayden is an energetic and happy teenager who enjoys being with his classmates and playing 'tag' and 'hide-n-seek' on the playground. He participates in different classroom activities such as typing, tracing, matching, and sorting. Each week, Kayden happily joins our weekly art group where he paints with a smile.

### **Mission and Vision Statement**

Our mission is to help children and adults with autism or other developmental disabilities maximize their potential in a dignified, positive and loving environment.

Our vision is for our students and clients to remain in the community and lead a productive and happy life. We work to increase awareness about autism and to promote sharing of the latest research and information.

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### **Connect with us at:**

**[www.morgancenter.org](http://www.morgancenter.org)**

