



Hart Walker Newsletter



Volume No. 3

Issue No.3

December 2005 - March 2006

Who's New

Welcome, to our newest "Hart Walkers"! Alexis DelGuidice, Kaitlin Ford, Josh Drown Carlos Hernandez and Raphael Coelho are our latest deliveries. Josh, the son of Susan Drown was the first child John saw that could "back up" when asked to, very impressive! We are very happy you *finally* have your walker, you are so great in it!

We first saw Alexis DelGuidice with her perky pigtailed and beautifully warm, brown-eyed smile. In spite of some seizures, Alexis has proven to many that she can do so many things, we are so proud of her.

When we met Kaitlin Ford at her trial, she was *beyond* excited to try the Hart Walker and showed us all with her amazing smile and strong will she knew exactly what to do and boy did she do it! That girl needs a racetrack! Kaitlin has a great friend Taylor, that came along for her appointment, they had a sleep over the night before but didn't sleep much...big surprise! Speaking of friends, on the day we delivered Kaitlin's walker, Catherine Sullivan also had an appointment. They were both VERY excited to see each other because they became friends at camp last summer. They got caught up on school and such, it was wonderful to see them reconnect.

After Catherine's appointment, I went for a ride with her and her Mom in the elevator where she easily maneuvered her way out the door, to the parking lot where she proceeded to race around the parking lot, I was tired out, but she was raring to go!

When Raphael was delivered his walker, John said he was like the "Pied Piper" meaning, when he was walking down the hall in his new walker there was a trail of admirers, including John following behind. You can tell by his exuberance and smile that he loves his newfound freedom.

The smile on Carlos Hernandez face after taking several independent steps showed the

pride of his accomplishment. After several bouts of illness over the summer Carlos is on his way to recovering his strength and we know he will!

Zakary Mahoney, "Star"

On Sunday, October 30th Great Strides was the feature article of the Business Section in our local paper, The Record-Journal. This paper covers the Meriden, Wallingford, Southington and Cheshire, Ct areas. The article's headline was "This man has a Hart (Walker) for those with cerebral palsy". It was very well done and we have had wonderfully positive and supportive feedback. People we know fairly well commented "I didn't know that's what you did" and "What a wonderful service you provide". Both of us respond, "We are fortunate to be able to do this and have met the most amazing kids and families."

The article featured photos of Zakary Mahoney, 5 yrs young with his brother Tyler who is 9 and his Dad, Tim (age unknown). Mom, Linda did not have her photo in the paper but was interviewed and gave the article a great personal view. We SO appreciate the Mahoney's willingness to participate, especially since the photographer and writer visited them around dinnertime! Thank you for your graciousness Mahoney Family! Oh and by the way, John had never seen Zakary walk in the Walker before, he just didn't want to show John what he could do...but *that* day John got to see Zakary maneuver the walker, he was thrilled!! Thanks for being so accommodating Zakary you were and are awesome and that smile is too cute! Next May, Zakary will be a part of his Aunts wedding, maybe we could convince the Mahoney's to share some photos with us.

For photos from these articles,
see page 4



A few days after the article in the Record-Journal was published, we received a phone call from Gary Horn who hosts a local radio talk show. Gary read the article and asked us to do a 20-minute radio interview on the MK II Hart Walker and Great Strides. After speaking with Gary, I found out that his wife Debbie is very involved with Boundless Playgrounds®.

I'm sure many if not all of you are familiar with Boundless Playgrounds, I had heard a lot about it but shamefully, had never made an effort to learn more about them. I checked out their web site

www.boundlessplaygrounds.org and was immediately drawn into the incredible mission of this non-profit organization. I called (because I still prefer to speak to someone rather than e-mail) and had a very nice conversation with a wonderful woman who ended up being Debbie Horn, Gary's wife. After a lengthy exchange with a newfound friend, she promised to mail a package. Debbie sent me an incredible amount of valuable information on just about anything you want to know about Boundless Playgrounds. She also sent me an amazing book called "Accidental Courage, Boundless Dreams" by Amy Jaffe Barzach & Sandy Tovray Greenberg. Amy and her husband Peter's son Jonathan died at 9 months from Spinal Muscular Atrophy. The Barzach family with community effort developed a specially designed playground where children with or without special needs can play together, in honor of Jonathan. That special place was named "Jonathan's Dream" and is located in West Hartford, CT.

The impact of that, led the Barzach's with a group of many wonderful people to establish Boundless Playgrounds, the first national non-profit organization dedicated to building universally accessible playgrounds for children of *all* abilities.

Great Strides, LLC will now be supporting Boundless Playgrounds with annual donations and has plans to bang some nails and hang

some swings or whatever we and our kids, family and friends can do. If you would like to join us, let me know and I will call you when we know where/when they need help. For more information on Boundless Playgrounds call (860) 243-8315 or go to: www.boundlessplaygrounds.org There could be a Boundless Playground in your area and if there isn't, find out how there could be!

"When children of all abilities grow up playing together...the possibilities are boundless!" (quote from Boundless Playgrounds) Thank You, Amy & Peter for sharing your story, changing lives and making children smile and laugh.

Keep this information handy:

Clinic Dates for December 2005 – March 2006

Saturday, December 3
Saturday, December 17

Saturday, January 7
Saturday, January 21

Saturday, February 4
Saturday, February 18

Saturday, March 11
Saturday, March 25

*Remember all Clinics are held at our Cheshire location, check out our website for directions or call us.

Website: www.greatstridesforecp.com
Phone: 203-272-7862
Fax: 203-272-3834

As always I welcome your thoughts, pictures, stories, ideas for the Newsletter. Send them on!



Parents and Guardians

You may be tired of us gushing about all of you parents and guardians. But as I said in the last Newsletter, I write it and I put what I want in it. So I *might* just dedicate a space called “Gushing Time” in each Newsletter to keep on gushing...

Alexis Delguidice’s guardian is her Great-Grandmother Patricia McSally. Patricia epitomizes the meaning of Unconditional Love. I wish Patricia could see herself as we do...a brave, strong, selfless woman that Lexi is lucky to have in her life.

Kaitlin Ford’s guardian is her Grandmother, Cathy King. Cathy is also a strong, courageous woman who is a huge advocate for her granddaughter. It is obvious she cherishes Kaitlin and would do anything for her.

Another very important person in Kaitlin’s life is Don who supports Kaitlin in so many generous ways.

Watching Catherine Sullivan’s mom, Meghan, put Catherine in her walker really put things in perspective for me. She amazed me with her adeptness. The analogy my mind immediately went to, is the first time I diapered my first child, to when he was 2 and I could do it while he was standing up *and* in full sprint mode. It takes her no time at all. Heather and Alan Conway just sent us some wonderful photos of Brian; at the grocery store, bowling, playing floor hockey, mini-golfing, at the Maritime Center and more. Dawn Connolly often sends us great mail, the last a photo of Jared in his Halloween Costume. We LOVE getting mail from you, whether it be about the Hart Walker, or what your family did on vacation, invitations to events (thank you Christine & Greg Huhn & Julie Hasselberger) we appreciate you sharing your lives!

Most of you probably never imagined having a child with special needs, but your courage led you to become more and accomplish more than you ever thought. We think you are all amazing! ...Gushing over



Physical Therapist and Doctors

We’d like to voice our appreciation of many Doctors and Physical/Occupational Therapists that have been so supportive of your children and the MK II Hart Walker. Because the Hart Walker is still so unknown, many times they have had to jump through hoops to help us and you get the necessary documentation for insurance companies. Some PT’s like Usha Kanithi go above and beyond as she did with Josh Drown. We appreciate how you support us in so many ways! Samantha Blazer, Yolanda Vasquez, Haley Walen and Cathy Montgomery have been great advocates of the Hart Walker, thank you. The PT’s that use the Hart Walker in schools are really helping the children make improvements. The more they are able to use the Walker, the better.

A special thank you to Dr. Edwin Cruz-Zeno and Dr. Maria Pici. Having all of your support is helping open doors and minds to the many benefits children are experiencing because of the Hart Walker.



Hart Walker Study

Last year we were approached by three Physical Therapist students from New York Medical College who all share a special interest in pediatrics. They heard about the MK II Hart Walker through Tamara Weinstein, the physical therapist of a couple of children who use it. They became interested in pursuing the Hart Walker for their doctoral project, which they will complete in May 2006. Erin, Natalie and Daniela met with us and were also able to meet “Hart Walkers” and their families. They have since been involved in case studies that will include information of the children before they began using the Hart Walker and then chart their progress since that time. Their goal is to publish these case studies as a means of enhancing the medical community knowledge regarding the MK II Hart Walker. **YAHOO!!** Thank you to those parents who are giving your time and sharing your kids for the case studies. This is a huge help in so many ways.

Photos from Who's New and Zakary Mahoney a Star

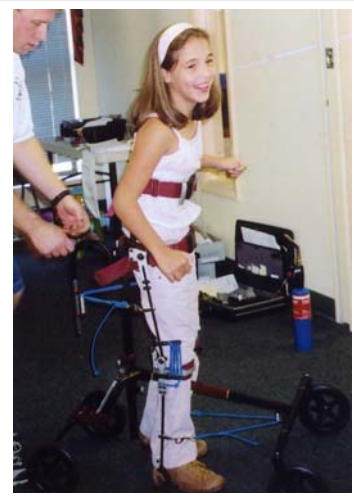
Please check out our web-site for our photo gallery...If your child's photo isn't there, call me! It would be great to have all the "Hart Walkers" show off their stuff!



Alexis DelGuidice



Catherine, Meghan, Kaitlin & Taylor chat.



Kaitlin Ford



Josh Drown



Raphael Coelho



Carlos Hernandez



Zakary's brother Tyler and his father Tim, play ball with him as he uses the MK II Hart Walker.