



A school
as unique
as the
children
we teach.
2016-2017

Dear Stepping Stones Supporters,

The 2016-2017 school year has gotten off to a great start with some exciting enhancements to our curriculum and programming which we feel reflect the purpose and direction of our school. We have 108 students enrolled at the school, which I believe validates the outstanding instruction provided by our dedicated teaching staff.

We are currently the only private Marcus Model Classroom of ABA instruction in the state of Georgia. We are in our third year of offering an inclusion model lottery funded Pre-K class. The class this year has six children with special needs and eleven typically developing children. The beauty of this model of instruction is that it offers peer modeling for our special needs children and we strongly believe that it develops a level of compassion from our typically developing kids towards children who are "different", but actually are more similar than they are different. We see examples of these behaviors every day in the halls of our school.

As we close out the 2016 calendar year, I would be remiss without acknowledging the founding of this school by Bonnie Brown and Saralyn Fountain over twenty five years ago. These two ladies gave up their retirement and secure jobs to pursue a vision of providing an educational haven for children with special needs. The school has changed

its programming over the years, expanded the ages of the children we serve, but has never wavered from our vision for the school. At Stepping Stones our vision is "to educate children, challenging each child to reach his/her fullest potential academically, physically, and emotionally."

Lee Thomas

Executive Director



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Every child is a different type of flower
and altogether they make the word a



beautiful garden.



In August of 2016, our preschool was due for a three-year reassessment under Quality Rated Child Care. Quality Rated (QR) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care programs.

Using data and evidence collected for our portfolio, the Quality Rated Program measured our preschool department, ages infant to Pre-K, to ensure that we continue to meet or exceed five key standards: Director and Teacher Qualifications; Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity; Family Engagement; Intentional Teaching Practices; and Teacher: Student Ratios.

This reassessment was based on the fact that we were previously awarded a three star rating and had continued checking in with the program to maintain our status. Our technical assistant spent one to two days per month from June to October observing our preschool classrooms and consulting with teachers about QR indicators. After a comprehensive review of our portfolio, a review team spent one

day in two of our preschool classrooms to examine the integrity of our practice in meeting or exceeding QR guidelines. At the conclusion of the process, we were awarded three stars, the highest of quality ratings.

This has been a continuous process to meet a set of defined program standards and we are VERY blessed to have such a dedicated team who works together in providing our children with quality child care. We feel that holding a three star Quality Rated award aids in upholding our vision "to educate children, challenging each child to reach his/her fullest potential academically, physically and emotionally".



Rainbow Rehab, LLC is the exclusive therapy provider to Stepping Stones students. We provide comprehensive services which include Occupational, Physical, and Speech Therapy. All therapy is provided on a 1-1 basis in our state of the art clinic space. We contract with multiple equipment vendors and coordinate our services with the teaching staff to promote optimal carry-over of therapy programs. Enrolled students are always given priority scheduling and therapy is provided year round including school breaks and summer vacation. We consider it a privilege to have provided our expert services to Stepping Stones for over twelve years and look forward to continuing our professional relationship at this wonderful school.

Introducing: “The Twins” Kaleb and Kalyn Clark

By Michelle Clark

In 2006 my husband and I made one of the most important decisions we would ever make. We became foster to adopt parents, after 5 years of trying to have children. We were warned that it could take a while to get an adoptable child. Less than 3 days after being approved we received the best phone call we would get. There were 6 month old twins ready for placement. We immediately picked them up. We were told there were no problems and they anticipated the babies would be in a mainstream room in school.

After the adoption was final we began to notice the babies were not meeting their milestones. At 5 years old we placed them in the special needs pre-k program in our school system. As we slowly began to receive diagnoses on the children, we were scared, nervous, blamed ourselves as parents and were frustrated with the world. We had never been around children with special needs and didn't know what to do or where to begin to find treatment for them. Kalyn has been diagnosed with high functioning autism, a behavior disorder, extreme anxiety, and ADHD-Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Kaleb was diagnosed with high functioning autism, ODD-Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and ADHD- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. They were in the public school system for around 4 1/2 years, when we noticed they were not meeting goals set in the IEP's. Although, the school system meant well, they were not equipped to address Kalyn and Kaleb's needs to the degree necessary for them to improve. Due

to not meeting their goals, we realized that they were not in the best environment possible for them.

Since Kalyn was having more difficulties than Kaleb, we chose to find a different school setting for her first. We were so excited to see the progress Kalyn was making at Stepping Stones, so we chose to move Kaleb soon after. Remembering the day we toured Stepping Stones we felt at home. Stepping Stones relieved us of the stress and pressure of dealing with the IEP process. We were very impressed with the education of each individual teacher at Stepping Stones. Their knowledge of disabilities and how to work with each child is unbelievable! We were thrilled to find a compassionate, caring, nurturing and quality environment where we felt safe leaving our children. During the past 3 years, we have seen Kalyn and Kaleb accomplish many goals that the doctors said they would never do. It makes my heart smile to see that my children now have a desire and love for school. Without Stepping Stones our children would not be getting the education they are entitled to. Stepping Stones is the best decision we ever made. We couldn't have chosen a better environment to watch them flourish to their highest potential.



Introducing: Logan Morris

By Melanie and Aaron Morris

When Logan was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder shortly before his fourth birthday, our family knew we needed to find a preschool program to meet his unique needs. Our pediatrician encouraged us to contact Stepping Stones. We understood a little about ASD, but we had no idea exactly what to expect as far as schooling and therapy were concerned.

Having a child diagnosed with special needs is bewildering for most parents. We were no different. We had no idea what to expect and were left with more questions than answers.

From the first moment we walked into Stepping Stones, we felt we had made the right choice for Logan. The progress he has made over the few short months he has been at Stepping Stones and in therapy at Rainbow Rehab has been nothing short of remarkable!

He has improved in verbal communication, social interactions, and a myriad of other ways too numerous to list. The change in him we have been privileged to witness has been unbelievable.

Logan loves his teachers and therapists. He has truly found his place among his peers and classmates. Our family has been blessed with peace of mind knowing that Logan and his unique challenges were met by the most qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, and therapists in the field. We had struggled with the knowledge that not everyone understood Logan and ASD. Enrolling him at Stepping Stones has been like coming home. The teachers and staff accepted him without hesitation and loved him just as if he was a child of their own. We cannot adequately express our gratitude, love, and admiration for the work done at Stepping Stones.



Introducing: “The Roberts Boys”

By Mary Coffee

This is my boys' first year at Stepping Stones, and they love it!

Wyatt was diagnosed with mild ASD April 2016. He attended speech therapy within Rainbow Rehab, where we saw improvement. Wyatt's speech and communication skills have improved even more since his classes started in the fall. He loves his classmates and his teachers. Rainbow Rehab is able to give his weekly speech therapy visits, without disrupting his normal schedule. Ms. Lesia & Ms. Savannah make a wonderful effort to include Wyatt's individual goals in their daily lesson plans for the class. He was already intelligent, but he has surpassed most of the goals that we set for him at the beginning of the school year. My only regret is that I didn't enroll him sooner!

Maverick LOVES his Pre-K Class with Mrs. Brittany, Ms. Jenna and Ms. Hannah. He talks constantly about the new things he learns and his new friends. His teachers do a great job of keeping him motivated to want to go to school every morning. He wakes up at 5:00am excited to go to school. I love receiving the weekly email updates with pictures of the classroom activities. It makes it easier to talk about his week at school while we're going through the pictures that Mrs. Brittany sends out.



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Stepping Stones Educational Therapy Center

141 Futral Road
Griffin, GA 30224
770-229-5511
770-233-0995 (fax)
info@steppingstonesschool.org
www.steppingstonesschool.org