A group of Matheny residents will visit Disney World sometime this year . . . Students in The Matheny School will communicate with the help of new iPads, SMART Boards and SMART Tables . . . A new Snoezelen sound system will enable Matheny’s therapists to provide our children and adults with gentle stimulation of their primary senses.

These are just some of the gifts provided this year to the students and patients at Matheny by The Friends of Matheny, a group of volunteers that has raised more than $3 million dollars since it was first organized in 1983. Each year, the group allocates funds for specific items submitted by Matheny staff members via a “wish list”. Wish list items are not covered by Matheny’s operating budget but are critical in enhancing the quality of life for the children and adults served by Matheny. This year’s gifts totaled nearly $80,000.

In addition, The Friends made sure that Matheny residents – especially those without nearby families – had everything they needed to enjoy the recent holiday season. The Friends placed holiday wreaths on the door of every residential room, provided new wooden frames to students and patients sending photos back home for the holidays, and wrapped all the presents given to Matheny residents on Christmas Day. The Junior Friends of Matheny, a group of local high school volunteers, wrapped the frames and also helped out with many of the holiday festivities.
“She’s the Happiest Person in the Room”

When Rishika Shetty enters her preschool classroom, “She comes in with a smile.”

“That wasn’t always the case,” says her teacher Dawn Williams, who remembers when “Rishu” first visited The Matheny School with her parents in 2014. Her mother and father warned the staff that she was startled by any type of noise and would scream at even small sounds. Now, says Rishu’s mother Sunitha, “She is much better. Because of the other students, she’s gotten used to many sounds.”

Rishu was born perfectly normal in India on October 1, 2011. But, 11 days after her birth, she began having minor seizures every day. Her parents learned that a brain hemorrhage had not only caused the seizures but also would result in developmental delays and respiratory problems. A year later, the family relocated to Bedminster, NJ, when Rishu’s father, Prashanth, transferred to a new position with the international technology company, Sapient Corporation. Rishu received in-home supportive services through the Somerset County Early Intervention System, but, at three years of age, it was time to select a school. “When we visited Matheny,” says Sunitha, “we knew this was the right place for her. We liked everything about Matheny.”

Rishu enrolled in The Matheny School in October 2014. In a little more than a year, says Prashanth, “She’s become more alert, and she likes interacting with people.” Adds Sunitha, “She’s very social! She looks forward to being in school where there is so much stimulation and many different kinds of activities.” At Matheny, occupational and physical therapy are incorporated into the classroom activities, and her parents have seen the results. “Her core is stronger,” Sunitha says. “She has better posture and balance.” But not all of Rishu’s progress takes place in the classroom. Says physical therapist Julie Budd, “During a recent home visit, her mother was shown some techniques to improve the movement in Rishu’s legs. Within a week, there was a noticeable difference in her range of motion.”

“Choosing the right school was so important,” says Prashanth. “It makes us feel better knowing she is well taken care of.”
“I am so very proud of the work being done here. No arts program is more unique than Matheny’s.”

With those words, Nicholas Paleologos, executive director of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and honorary chair of Full Circle 2015: Perspectives, welcomed those who had come to see a stage presentation of dance, drama and creative writing at the annual celebration of Matheny’s Arts Access Program, held November 7 in the Robert Schonhorn Arts Center.

The stage presentation, produced by dance facilitator Heather Williams, was accompanied by a visual arts exhibition, curated by Haeree Park, Arts Access project and event coordinator. It featured the work of more than 50 Arts Access artists. Arts Access is a unique fine arts program enabling individuals with disabilities to fully express themselves in the creative arts.

Eileen Murray, director of the Arts Access Program, emphasized that, “Every artist expresses a unique viewpoint. Art,” she added, “can change our perspective, or give us a new one.” Edana Desatnick, co-chair of Matheny’s Board of Trustees and parent of a Matheny resident, thanked everyone in attendance for their support of Matheny and the Arts Access Program.

ON THE COVER
Dani Urso-King performs “Zip A Dee Doo Dah”, a dance she also choreographed. At right is professional dancer Patty Romano.

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Top: Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation’s Donna Valente and her husband, Michael, looking at “Inkfish”, a pigment print by Cheryl Chapin.

Middle: Untitled pigment print by Lauren Nelson.

Below: Performance of “The Nutcracker”, choreographed by Cindy Shanks, 3rd from right.

Top:Untitled acrylic by Ellen Kane.

Bottom: Alan and Linda Martin with their son, Arts Access artist Michael Martin.
Internship at Camp for Children with Disabilities Shaped Teacher’s Career Path

To complete her coursework in 2004 for a bachelor’s degree in psychology at Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ, Stacy Lafargue did an internship at Camp Merry Heart which is run by Easter Seals New Jersey to provide a wide variety of recreation and activities to people of all ages and all types of disabilities and special needs.

The experience was an eye-opener. “I loved it,” Lafargue says, “and decided I wanted to work with special needs students.” She began as a teaching assistant at The Matheny School in the spring of 2005, took an alternate route to an education degree at New Jersey City University in 2008, and became certified as a teacher of students with disabilities at Centenary in 2010.

The Washington Township, NJ, resident is currently leader of the elementary team at The Matheny School.

“It’s rewarding to witness the pride of non-verbal students when they answer questions.”

The best parts of her job, Lafargue says, “are the interactions with students. It’s unbelievably rewarding to witness the pride of non-verbal students when they answer questions, write a story, or share ideas with peers.” Last year, the school staff elected Lafargue “Educator of the Year”.

Teaching, she believes, is not just about getting the final result, but about the process it takes to get there. “Whether it’s choosing which color marker they want to use on their worksheet, picking their favorite snack, or answering questions on an assessment,” Lafargue facilitates the students’ interaction with the world and tries to make it just a little easier for them to exist in it each day. She recalls one time when the class was preparing for a camping trip. “How do you explain camping to someone who’s never been camping?” she asks. “One of the teaching assistants took out a paper plate, folded it, and demonstrated what a tent was. That’s an example,” she says, “of how the elementary team is open to anyone who has an idea.”

Lafargue uses large moving visuals to help student Katherine Gaudio understand the lesson in a life skills class.
Physical Therapy Assistant a Finalist in ‘Paraprofessional of the Year’ Competition

When Donna Hoehn is working as a physical therapy assistant in a Matheny School classroom, her goal is to get as many students as possible “to experience life outside their wheelchairs.”

Sitting in a wheelchair all day, Hoehn points out, is a little like “sitting in your car all day. Though you can move from one place to another, your position in relation to others never changes—you are still in your car.” Hoehn has been working at Matheny for more than 16 years. “My grandfather and his family were from Peapack,” she says, “so growing up, I often came to this area to visit.”

Last year, Hoehn was nominated by her Matheny School peers as their “Paraprofessional of the Year”. She was one of four finalists in the statewide competition in that category held by ASAH, a not-for-profit organization that serves the private special education community in New Jersey.

Three years after she joined Matheny, Hoehn unexpectedly lost her husband. Shortly after that, a young boy who had been a victim of shaken baby syndrome was admitted to Matheny, and he stole Hoehn’s heart. She eventually applied to become his foster parent and later legally adopted him. Her son, George, now 17, attends the Midland School in North Branch, NJ, and, in Hoehn’s words, “is flourishing. He uses an electronic communication device for verbalization; he plays many sports; and he has worked at many different job locations and types of career exploration.

“I work with an exceptional staff. They are innovative, considerate, helpful and truly caring . . .”

“His patience when trying to learn or master a new skill always reminds me how important it is to give each of the students the time and support they need to accomplish what they need and want to do.”

Hoehn was honored to be recognized by her peers for the ASAH award. “I work with an exceptional staff,” she says. “They are innovative, considerate, helpful, and truly caring about the students and patients. One of the aspects of Matheny that is very special,” she says, “is a system that enables students with significant disabilities to learn in the classroom while, at the same time, continuing to work on physical activities to improve their function.”
Teaming Up with the ‘Most Amazing People Imaginable’

Torn ACL Sparked Interest in Physical Therapy

If Glenn Stackhouse hadn’t torn his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) while playing for his Air Force squadron football team in 1988, chances are he wouldn’t be a physical therapist today.

“While rehabbing from surgery,” he recalls, “I became interested in what I was learning about my knee. Shortly after that, our squadron was volunteering for the Special Olympics, and we were asked to sign up to help. It was there I met a 32-year-old Navy veteran who was a physical therapy student at Southwest Texas State University.”

Fast forward to 1992 when Stackhouse, working as a physical therapy aide at Dover General Hospital, applied for physical therapy school at Kean University. His first job after graduation was at the Mercer Medical Center in Trenton, but, in 2000, he joined Matheny as a physical therapist in the community services program. He provided PT services to adults in the community with developmental disabilities and worked for 10 years bringing PT services to the Mendham Township School District. “I provided in-class support and worked to develop adaptive physical education strategies for district students with special needs.” While Stackhouse was working in the Mendham Schools, one of the classes was planning a field trip to Waterloo Village and was concerned that a student who was in a wheelchair wouldn’t be able to make the trip because of the rough terrain. Stackhouse contacted Matheny’s rehab technology department and came up with a wheelchair with high density wheels that could be used both as a power chair and manually. The Mendham Resource Center teacher was trained on how to use it, and the student was able to make the trip.

As part of Matheny’s community services program, Stackhouse also worked at the Morris and Sussex County Arcs, providing staff training for safety, back care basics, and adaptive equipment while also working as a physical therapist. In May 2005, the Morris County Arc presented him with its Healthcare Provider of the Year award. He also spent nine years as a Matheny physical therapist in the New Jersey Early Intervention Program, “working with the families of children under the age of three with developmental delays.”

Since 2008, Stackhouse has worked full-time in The Matheny School, and last year his colleagues voted him “Related Services Provider of the Year.” “Each day,” he says, “I am privileged to team up with the most committed, creative, and amazing people imaginable. Everyone works together for the benefit of the families and individuals we serve.”

Stackhouse with Matheny student Kim Alarcon, who uses a specialized Rifton gait trainer to help her maintain balance and safety while improving her walking skills.
Halloween is a holiday highly anticipated by Matheny students and patients, and every year seems to outdo the previous one. This year was no exception, as the creativity was off the charts. It’s also a day in which many families visit to dress up themselves or just push their sons, daughters, and siblings in the afternoon parade, which was preceded in the morning by a trip to a haunted house, created by Matheny staff members.

Throughout the year, Matheny’s recreation therapy department provides a variety of recreation opportunities and resources to not only entertain students and patients, but to improve their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being.
“There’s no place like Matheny. We’re dedicated to all of you in this room.” That was the welcome from Tim McLoone, founder and leader of Holiday Express, the all-volunteer band that helped kick off the holiday season with a November 22nd concert at Matheny.

The Robert Schonhorn Arts Center rocked to sounds of Holiday Express favorites such as “All I Want for Christmas is You”, “Nobody Ought to be Alone on Christmas”, and “Run Run Rudolph.” The Matheny Choir joined the Holiday Express band for two songs, “Jingle Bells” and “Let it Snow”, and reappeared with Holiday Express on December 10 at its annual benefit concert held at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.
Holiday Cheer

CARS Group has been Visiting Matheny for More than 40 Years

In 1974, auto racing photographer Ace Lane, Jr. and three other car racing enthusiasts founded the Committee of Auto Racing Supporters (CARS). For the past 41 years, the CARS organization has not just been dedicated to car racing; its members have gone out of their way to bring joy to the children and adults at Matheny during the holiday season.

Every year, CARS volunteers throw a Christmas party for residents of Matheny and its group homes, bringing presents for those who do not have strong family connections during the holidays. The most recent CARS Christmas Party was held on Saturday, December 19, and the dining room at Matheny was filled with the Christmas spirit as the CARS members, from all over New Jersey and neighboring states, brought gifts and holiday cheer to Matheny’s students and patients.
2015 Honor Roll of Donors

We are honored to recognize individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations for their generosity during Fiscal Year 2014. Your compassion and commitment to our mission truly makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the children and adults we serve.

Thank You!

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If you have included Matheny in your estate plans, please let us know. We would like to thank you for your generosity and include you in our 1946 Society.
Friendly Hoops
Delbarton Basketball Players Adapt Their Game

There were three-point attempts from several rows back in the auditorium, layups and jump shots on the stage, and a helping hand for Matheny students and patients, who were playing adapted basketball games. It was all part of the annual visit to Matheny by members of the Delbarton School varsity basketball team.

Participation in sports is very important to Matheny’s students and patients, who compete in Special Olympics, play a variety of adapted sports, and often attend high school, college, and professional games as part of Matheny’s recreation therapy program. The Delbarton visit is greatly anticipated every year, stoking competitive fires and resulting in a lot of fun and camaraderie. Delbarton is an independent college preparatory school in Morristown for boys, grades 7-12.

Dan Cimaglia helps Matheny student Ryan O’Connor shoot a basket.

Davis Bell, left, gives Matheny student Shane Szott some tips while teammate Kevin Schroeder looks on.