

Giving Hope.

"... he has accomplished so much because of his teachers and therapists. I feel like this school was a second home to my son because of how loving everyone is!"

- Mariela, Gavin's Mom

Before Gavin was born, his mother, Mariela, knew there was a chance that Gavin would have Down syndrome. Her doctor ran tests after seeing a heart defect on a sonogram, a symptom of Down syndrome. This diagnosis was confirmed when Gavin was born full-term in March 2014. When Gavin was six weeks old, Mariela was referred to Achievement



Gavin had heart surgery at four months old, Christine Gummow continued to provide interactive toys and activities to help increase his cognitive, gross and fine motor development.

Through encouragement from Christine and after taking a tour of the Bartow campus, Gavin was enrolled in Achievement Academy's Charter School at two and a half years old. He currently receives individual physical, speech and occupational therapies each week and small class instruction. Gavin

and his therapists continue to fine-tune his gross motor, fine motor and balance skills. He is now able to independently drink from a cup. Gavin is also using a Picture Exchange Communication System to help him express his needs and wants. "Gavin has transitioned from being shy to outgoing and engaging with his peers and adults. He loves circle time, music and dancing," states Gavin's teacher, Marisol Vega.



Academy's Birth to Three program. An Early Interventionist, Christine, began serving Gavin and his mom twice each month in their home. Even though Mariela had two older children, this was her first time as a mom to a baby with special needs and she was scared. "Christine helped me through a lot of issues," Mariela said. "Christine always made me feel like she wasn't just there for Gavin, but for me as well." After

Gavin is now five years old and will graduate in May. "I'm actually very sad that he is going to have to leave," Mariela explained. "It will be extremely bittersweet because he has accomplished so much because of his teachers and therapists. I feel like this school was a second home to my son because of how loving everyone is! The staff will be greatly missed!"

Grateful Parents.

A Letter of Hope: Tommy's Story

By: Melissa & Jay (Tommy's parents)

Our son Tommy joined the Achievement Academy family just after his third birthday. He was not independently mobile and wasn't able to communicate most of his basic needs. The staff worked incredibly hard with him in his first year and he accomplished so much. His expressive language has exploded. He has learned to use utensils and cups and is walking well with assistance. He has made good friends with his classmates and learned to interact with his peers.

Without the extraordinary help of all the staff at Achievement Academy,



Tommy's incredible progress in just one year would not have been possible. We are grateful that we are able to give back to Achievement Academy through their monthly giving program, "Partners in Hope." It is a simple and affordable way to provide the same opportunities that Tommy has experienced to other children.

We invite you to join us in setting up a monthly gift online. Visit www.AchievementAcademy.com & click on the "Donate Today" button.



One in Ten.

Early Intervention: Our Birth to Three Program



Did you know *One in Ten* babies is born prematurely (before 37 weeks gestation)?

Achievement Academy's Birth to Three Program provides free early intervention services to infants and toddlers throughout Polk County

who are at-risk for developmental delays and/or have been identified with a specific delay.

Over the past year, our Birth to Three Program has grown to serve 200 at-risk babies/infants each month in their homes with one-on-one early intervention services. With the new Carol Jenkins Barnett Pavilion for Women and Children's Level 3 NICU, premature babies are now being born in Polk County instead of surrounding counties. Our Early Interventionists have a weekly presence in the Barnett Pavilion which allow us to build relationships and trust with families before they leave the hospital. This provides a seamless transition from the hospital to home.

Premature babies are at-risk for many conditions such as developmental delays, cognitive/emotional disorders, speech and feeding problems and social concerns. The earlier these delays are identified and treated, the more likely the child will be able to reach their potential later in life.



Save the Date!

**"Top Chef of Polk County"
Monday, February 24, 2020
6pm - 9pm at the RP Funding
Center in Lakeland.**

Join us for a night of delicious food and fellowship while raising much-needed funds for children with special needs.

Chefs will create and prepare their signature dish (tapas style) accompanied with a wine or libation that complements the flavors of the dish. Guests will enjoy a cash bar, silent and live auctions and, of course, a tasting of signature dishes from Polk County's leading chefs. Guests will have the opportunity to try all of the chefs' signature dishes.

Here is a sneak peek at some of our participating chefs:



Chef William Ball
Cob & Pen



Chef Tina Calhoon
Frescos Southern
Kitchen & Bar



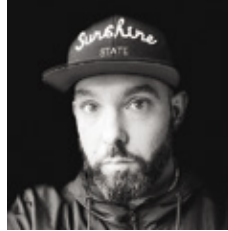
Chef Gene Gelb
Publix Aprons
Cooking School



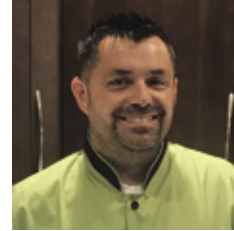
Chef James Lazaros
La Imperial Bakery



Chef Luis Melgar
1916 Irish Pub



Chef Matthew Oakley
Crave & Copper



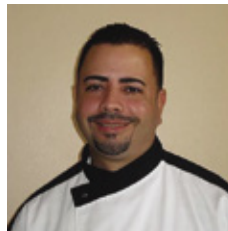
Chef Dean Riley
The Estates at
Carpenters



Chef Steven Rojas
Nutwood



Chef Patrick Schaefer
Patio850



Chef Jose Vicente
Brasa Latina

Sponsorships are available.
For more information, please visit
www.AchievementAcademy.com
or contact Stacy Williams-Myers, CFRE
at 863-683-6504.

TERRIE LOBB
CATERING

Lasting Impact.

Hope Revisited: John's Story

John was three years old when his parents enrolled him at the Achievement Academy. His speech and language skills were delayed and he had difficulty communicating his emotions, which would leave him easily frustrated. Because of John's tendency to become disruptive as a way to express himself, doctors told his parents activities such as team sports would be difficult. However his progress at Achievement Academy would prove the doctors wrong. During his four years here, John received weekly speech/language therapy and specialized classroom instruction. His teachers worked closely with him to develop coping skills and helped lay the foundation he needed to be successful in school. John eventually played

junior varsity and varsity baseball, football and wrestling. He later attended Harrison School for the Arts and then Ringling College of Art and Design. Today, John is 25 years old and a motion graphic artist employed by Feld Entertainment.

Recently, John and his mother, Wendy, returned to the Achievement Academy to visit Susan Shipe, his former teacher, and Cindi Parker-Pearson, principal. Entering the classroom where he spent some of his formative years brought back vivid memories. He visited with the next generation of students who were learning in the very place he once did. John shared some of the graphic designs and promotions he created for an upcoming Monster Jam event. One student, Jaxon,



John, former student and Jaxon, current student

developed a quick bond with John over monster trucks. Noticing his love for trucks, John later provided VIP passes for Jaxon and his family to attend a Monster Jam event that weekend. "It's important for children to be able to embrace their interests," John noted.

John and his family are so thankful to the teachers, therapists, staff and donors for providing the valuable service needed for his future success.



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John Burton, Executive Director
Cindi Parker-Pearson, Principal
Stacy Williams-Myers, CFRE,
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Thank You.

Thank you to the following community partners:

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| City of Lakeland | Libertore Fund for Children |
| Denis L. Fontaine Foundation, Inc. | The Glenn W. & Hazelle Paxson Morrison Foundation |
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