

Aiden's Achievements

Two years ago, Sue and Carlos thought their family was complete: their children ranged in age from 25 to 10 years old when they were surprised with the news that they were expecting another child. Due to Sue's age, her pregnancy was considered high risk and she was closely monitored. She took medications throughout the first trimester to save her pregnancy, and her second trimester went smoothly with the usual symptoms.

As she entered her third trimester, her blood pressure began to elevate. At 34 weeks, Sue was diagnosed with preeclampsia and her physician prescribed medications to try and delay the baby's arrival. Unfortunately, Sue's condition worsened and it was necessary for the health of both Sue and her baby to induce labor.

On October 3 at 10:04a.m., little Aiden made his way into the world. At 5 pounds 3 ounces, he was by far Sue and Carlos's smallest baby and it took him a moment to start breathing at birth. It was frightening to see the nurses and doctors surrounding Aiden to check his vital signs and make sure that he had the supports he needed. This was a very different birth experience than Sue and Carlos had ever had.

Despite his early arrival, Aiden was healthy and handsome baby, and was able to leave the NICU after just five days. When he was discharged and ready to go home, the nurse sent a referral to Achievement Academy to refer Aiden to the Birth to Three program. Early Interventionist Tina LeVasseur contacted Sue to introduce the

program and share the ways in which it could help Aiden's development, giving him the greatest opportunity to succeed.

From the very first session, Tina's expertise as an Infant Toddler Development Specialist was evident. Tina worked with Aiden and his parents to help him progress towards appropriate developmental milestones, teaching them the importance of proper crawling as a stepping stone to walking and demonstrating safe feeding habits as he transitioned to solid foods.

Today, Aiden is a bright and happy baby who has exceeded the developmental milestones for his age. His parents credit their work with Miss Tina for helping them learn new ways to care for and play with Aiden to positively impact his development. He loves books, cars and balls and enjoys playing and listening to music – his love for country music and Luke Combs just might shape a future career path! Sue and Carlos are thankful for Miss Tina's role in helping their extraordinary, wonderful surprise of a baby achieve his maximum potential!



Top Chef of Polk County 2023!

What an incredible Top Chef of Polk County, presented by Publix Super Markets Charities! More than 350 guests joined us at Bonnet Springs Park's beautiful Event Center for a night of impeccable food, music, and fun in support of our mission!

After adopting a modified format for the event out of precautions during the pandemic, the evening was one of unbridled celebration of being together in one venue. The Chefs put forth a fierce competition with their signature dishes, and the auction brought out the guests' competitive side as they bid to win on some great items. Chef Terrie Lobb's Seared Bay Scallops and Braised Pork Belly with Pomegranate Molasses and Chili Garlic Drizzle came out on top with both the guests' popular vote for Community Choice and the professional judges' vote for the Top Chef of Polk County. Team Charm City Seafood and Community Leader Benny Robles, Jr., Bartow Ford, took home the award for Top Philanthropic team.

Throughout the evening, Willie Shaw and his band members kept the guests entertained and Brynn Summerlin did a masterful job as auctioneer. Special thanks to parents Haley and Shane Ross for sharing their parent perspective, Patrick Spinosa, AgAmerica Lending, for serving as emcee for the evening, and to Adam Walkover, Gordon Food Service, for the delicious dessert display.

We are grateful to our sponsors for their continued partnership that helped make this our best event yet!

Save the date for Top Chef of Polk County 2024 which will take place on Monday, March 4, 2024!



Thank You to Our Teams:

Chef Tina Calhoon, Frescos Southern Kitchen and Bar, teamed with Alexandra Lee and Mary Stephenson, Citizens Bank & Trust

Chef Lucy Cortes-Castaneda, Red Door Lakeland, teamed with Ginny Sigle, Boring Business Systems

Chef Gene Gelb, Publix Aprons Cooking School, teamed with Hannah Herring, Publix Super Markets, Inc.

Chef Terrie Lobb, Terrie Lobb Catering, teamed with Adam Riley, Hatcher Insurance, Inc.

Chef Nik Minadakis, Charm City Seafood, teamed with Benny Robles, Jr., Bartow Ford

Chef Matt Oakley, Crave & Copper, teamed with Stacey Oakley and Julie Williams, The Florida Brewery

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Perfecting Skills in P.T.

At the beginning of the school year, Ethan lacked postural strength, balance and body awareness, and struggled to sit upright safely in a child-sized chair. He required a special supportive chair to prevent him from falling out. Ethan has worked hard with Ms. Trista in Physical Therapy to develop the skills needed to safely sit in a typical chair. She engaged him in a variety of activities, such as sitting on an exercise ball and on a swing. This allowed Ethan to work on correcting his balance and strengthen his core muscles that help him sit upright.

Ms. Nicole and Ms. Diana carried over the activities each day in the classroom to help Ethan practice the skills and make the changes needed to gain grow stronger. He has now met his goal of sitting upright safely for circle time, joining his friends in songs and movement while maintaining his balance. He has moved on to working on carrying a tray with various objects placed on it, which will help him get ready for his graduation to Kindergarten next year.

We are thankful for our skilled therapists and the role they play in helping each child in our program achieve their maximum potential!





716 E. Bella Vista Street
Lakeland, FL 33805
Phone for All Campuses:
863-683-6504
Fax: 863-688-9292

AchievementAcademy.com
Kristin Aiken,
President/CEO
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United Way
of Central Florida

Teacher & Support Person of the Year

The Teacher of the Year and Support Person of the Year are determined by popular vote from the entire staff, making it a very meaningful award.

Our Teacher of the Year is Ms. Missy Kopp, who teaches at the Lakeland Campus. Missy joined Achievement Academy in 2014 and is a dedicated educator. She goes above and beyond for the children in her classroom. She is compassionate, kind, and committed, setting the standard for her peers and her colleagues.

The Support Person of the Year is Ms. Destiny, who is also based at the Lakeland campus. Destiny has been an integral member of our team since 2002 and plays a crucial role in supporting our most medically fragile students.



Congratulations to both Missy and Destiny on this well-deserved recognition. We are fortunate to have them on our team!

Thank you to our 2022-2023 Board of Directors

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