

# Communicating with Kanaki

*1 in 10 children will experience a speech delay per the American Academy of Family Physicians*

Kanaki is a bright and precocious four-year-old little boy who attends school at our Bartow campus. Born at 40 weeks, he was full-term and an easy baby, sleeping through the night by the time he was 3 months old. His infancy was remarkable as he achieved milestones early, sitting up unassisted at 6 months old and walking at 10 months of age. He was a happy and engaging little boy: the complete apple of his parents' eyes.

When Kanaki was 18 months, his parents noticed he wasn't talking and wouldn't maintain eye contact or point to objects. His parents made sure to discuss this at his 24-month appointment with their pediatrician, who felt that the speech delay was due to Kanaki being raised in a multi-lingual home, where English, Spanish, and Greek are all spoken.

Kanaki started attending a daycare in the summer of 2021. His mother shared her concerns with his teacher and asked her to be attentive to anything that seemed unusual. His teacher observed the same behaviors: Kanaki wouldn't make eye contact, would parallel play but not engage with his friends in class, and didn't respond to his name. At this point, while Kanaki could identify the alphabet, count, and understand three languages, he was not able to express himself verbally and seemed to have no words at all. Jessica enrolled him in private speech therapy and scheduled an evaluation with a neurologist, who confirmed and validated their concerns about Kanaki's development.

Kanaki's Early Steps provider and the family's

special needs support group all recommended they explore Achievement Academy for Kanaki's Pre-K education; they decided to apply and checked the boxes to accept placement at any of the three campus locations. Receiving the call that Kanaki had a place at the Bartow campus was both terrifying that it wouldn't be a good fit yet exciting to imagine the ways Achievement Academy could help their child achieve his goals.

His mother describes enrolling Kanaki in Achievement Academy as the best decision they could have made. He currently receives individual Speech and Occupational Therapies to work towards his personal goals. Miss Cathy, his Speech Therapist, has introduced a voice output device into their sessions since Kanaki is still working to use words to communicate with others. The iPad has a special app that speaks when a picture is touched, allowing him to express his wants and needs through this assistive technology. His hard work in Occupational Therapy is paying off, as he continues to make progress and hone his fine motor skills.

Today, Kanaki and his family couldn't be happier to be at Achievement Academy and they can't wait to see how he will continue to grow!



# Top Chef of Polk County 2024!

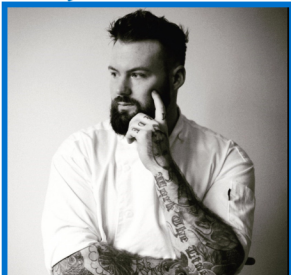
On Monday, March 4, 2024, ten Chefs will come together to compete for the title of "Top Chef of Polk County!" Celebrating our tenth year, Top Chef has become the premier foodie event in Polk County. You won't want to miss what the Chefs have in store!

Join us at the beautiful Bonnet Springs Park Event Center for an evening of incredible food, outstanding live music, and some awesome auction items, all in support of the children we serve through Birth to Three and our ESE Charter Pre-K. Guests will sample each Chef's signature dish with beverage pairing to vote for the Community Choice Award, while a panel of guest judges will conduct a blind tasting to determine the winner of the coveted Top Chef of Polk County Award. Last year, Chef Terrie Lobb swept both the Top Chef of Polk County title and the Community Choice award, serving up perfectly seared bay scallops and braised pork belly with pomegranate molasses and chili garlic drizzle that she paired with Vinos Sin Ley Alvarinho.

Most importantly, the evening provides the opportunity to share the impact and outcomes of our work and the ways we fulfill our mission to give children the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. You won't want to miss this spectacular night of food, fellowship, and friendly competition, all benefitting the children we serve!



## Meet Your Competitors!



Chef Patrick Baird,  
The Terrace Grille



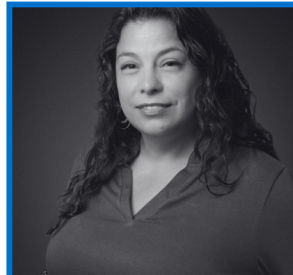
Chef Jason Boniface,  
Maritime



Chef Tina Calhoon  
Fresco's Southern  
Kitchen & Bar



Chef EJ Commons  
Essential Catering  
Solutions



Chef Cece Cortez  
Terrie Lobb  
Catering, Inc.



Chef Kaelani Leone  
Good Thyme



Chef Nik Minadakis,  
Charm City Seafood



Chef Matt Oakley  
Crave & Copper



Chef Phil Robinson,  
The Catering Company  
of Central Florida



Chef Patrick Walley,  
Publix Super  
Markets, Inc.





# Meet Your Community Leaders!



Paige Campbell  
CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP



Dorcas & Darrian Crumbley  
Essential Catering Solutions



Hamilton Hooks  
The Heritage Group at  
Morgan Stanley



Ashley Leggett  
Low and Slow  
Smokehouse



John Loute  
SpringHill Suites  
by Marriott



Liz Plemons  
Publix Super Markets, Inc.



McKenzie Richardson  
Tinsley Creative



Dennis Ross  
Former U.S. Congressman



Caroline Sharpe  
MEGG Homes



Heather Willis  
Boring Business Systems

## Benefiting from Both Programs!

Sawyer had the opportunity to receive home visits through our Birth to Three Early Intervention program after being referred to Achievement Academy by USF Early Steps. Miss Tina, one of our Infant Toddler Development Specialists, worked with Sawyer to engage her in activities that would promote her development towards appropriate goals.

Sawyer's Birth to Three sessions truly became an activity for the whole family, with her parents, grandparents, and older brothers all helping Sawyer master various skills. She was extremely motivated by her brothers, often completing tasks for them that she resisted doing for others.



In August, Sawyer started her Pre-K journey as a student in Miss Laura's classroom. She loves circle time and engaging with her friends through play. Sawyer receives individual therapy sessions as a part of her regular school day, and Miss Laura is able to reinforce Sawyer's therapy sessions in her classroom.

One activity that is a particular favorite is the saucer swing! Sitting and swinging in the saucer helps Sawyer engage and strengthen her core while she develops her balance, skills she has been working on with her Physical Therapist. To incorporate speech and language skills, Miss Laura periodically stops the swing to encourage Sawyer to communicate her desire to continue, either using her words verbally or using her sign language to request *more*.

What appears to be simple play is helping Sawyer master skills and establish a strong foundation for her continued development and education. We are honored to be a part of Sawyer's story!

## Thank You to our Community Partners!

We are grateful for the organizations who partner with us to fulfill the promise of our mission. Thank you for creating brighter futures for children with special beginnings!

- Camp Margaritaville Auburndale
- Camp Rotary Foundation
- City of Lakeland - Community Planning & Housing Division
- Disney Worldwide Services, Inc.
- Enterprise Holdings
- Fish City Grill
- George C. Forsythe Family Foundation
- GEICO Philanthropic Foundation
- GiveWell Community Foundation
- Gail Handel Family Foundation
- George Jenkins Foundation, Inc.
- Glenn W. & Hazelle Paxson Morrison Foundation
- Harper Family Charitable Foundation, Inc.
- Hilda Sutton & William D. Blanton Charitable Foundation
- Iron Horse Family Foundation
- Kiwanis Club of North Lakeland
- Knights of Columbus Council 7091

- Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine
- Margaret McCartney & R. Parks Williams Charitable Foundation
- Publix Super Markets Charities
- Skipping Bear Foundation, Inc.
- Target
- United Way of Central Florida
- Vogel Foundation, Inc.
- Walt Disney Company Foundation







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*  
Cindi Parker-Pearson, *Principal/COO*



United Way  
of Central Florida

## Swinging “Fore” a Good Cause!

Our inaugural Topgolf friend & fundraising event in August was a swinging good time! More than 100 guests took a break from the Florida heat to tee up for Achievement Academy and the children we serve. Guests had the opportunity to Beat the Pro or simply get some pointers to elevate their personal game.

The evening began with a brief message about the power of our programs in support of Polk County’s most vulnerable children. Through early intervention, education, therapies, and family support, we are able to give brighter futures to children with special beginnings. This last program year alone impacted more than 300 children to help give them the foundation upon which their future education will be built.

We are thankful to our sponsors for this great evening and for their partnership in our mission!



## Thank you to our 2023-2024 Board of Directors

### Executive Committee

Mike Brossart, President

Trish Buchanan, 1st Vice  
President

Adil Khan, 2nd Vice President

Zelda Abram, Treasurer

Karli Hughes, Secretary

### Directors

Paige Campbell | Steve Earley

Heath Frederick | Joe Furnari III

Jill Haladay | Matt Hinton

Janice Jones | Ana Kalman

Brant Masters | Haley Ross

Nicholas Sellars

Sheilitha Williams