

The Newsletter of  
The Little Light House  
Central Mississippi



# THE Beacon

## BIG BEN

by Jennifer Smith

Our son Benjamin has been a student at The Little Lighthouse for two and a half years. He has grown and changed so much during that time, greatly in part to the love and hard work of the dedicated staff there.

We didn't expect any complications during my pregnancy with Benjamin, but soon after birth it became clear that he was not thriving. Benjamin struggled to eat and maintaining his weight was a great concern so he was tested for a broad range of problems. The doctors diagnosed him with neurological and vision problems that affect him physically and cognitively.

For the next year and a half we saw countless doctors and therapists. Life for our family was very difficult during this time. My husband, Chad,



and I were trying to find balance between these appointments, implementing the suggestions of the therapists at home, spending often 12 hours a day feeding Benjamin, and caring for our oldest child Amelia. Benjamin screamed when we fed him, during therapy and even when we picked him up. God showed us the depth of our need of Him and taught us more about His love for his children even when we didn't want to be loved.

Benjamin started attending The Little Lighthouse at 18 months old. Honestly, at first he didn't always like it. His teachers held him, played with him, sang to him...they even fed him! He would sometimes cry or put himself to sleep to avoid engaging, but his precious teachers and therapists did not give up on him! It took a while, but Benjamin has learned that these things are fun! He loves school: singing, listening to stories, practicing sign lan-

guage, playing with educational toys. I sometimes feel like I experience God's smile when I peek into his classroom after lunch and see him covered with icing and cupcake crumbs from one of his friend's birthday celebrations! Not too long ago Benjamin disliked anything near his mouth... times have changed! Benjamin didn't want to be touched, but now he will reach out for a toy or to pat a friend's back.

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It took years of work for Benjamin to come as far as he has, but I know that he could not have achieved these milestones without the coordinated, loving efforts of Benjamin's teachers, therapists, and volunteers. Before Benjamin started attending The Little Lighthouse I heard positive, encouraging comments about our daughter all the time, but never about

Benjamin. Ben's accomplishments are small, but they are mountains for him and the staff of The Little Lighthouse never ceases praising him and Jesus for them. The Little Lighthouse is a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ is seen every day. As Ben's teacher Carrie pursues Benjamin to make him welcome and included during circle time it reminds me of

Christ pursuing us and welcoming and including us in His story. When Jamie, the Occupational Therapist, practices the same skill she has worked on for a year with Benjamin with joy and patience she reminds me of how patient our Heavenly Father is with me in making me more like him!

Before The Little Lighthouse I felt like

Benjamin was sometimes seen as a medical chart or a set of disabilities, but they see him as a precious child created in God's image with much to learn and teach to others. Benjamin has many more challenges before him, but the love and early intervention The Little Lighthouse has provided has equipped him with skills to tackle them.

Booker T. Washington said that *success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which have been overcome while trying to succeed.* By this standard, the six children who graduated from the LLH in July are a great success story!

A parent of one child commented, "You gave me back my daughter." This little girl who came to the LLH crying, biting her hands, and with no communication skills, is now moving on to a public school knowing how to sing, sign, laugh, and communicate both with her eyes and with a communication board. Each one of the six recent graduates, despite the individual challenges they face, met most of the critical milestones for a child between birth and six years of age.

As we celebrate these children and their families, we also need to communicate that, like so many other non-profit organizations today, the economic challenges have taken a toll on our donations. With an ongoing shortfall of \$14,000 a month, and a projected cash flow deficit of \$40,000 fast approaching, the



by Maureen Harbinson, Executive Director

LLH Board reluctantly decided it was time to make some difficult decisions.

It was agreed not to lay off any staff, or cut any of the vital programs and services offered to the children. Instead, the staff agreed to take a 20% pay cut until the present financial challenges are resolved. This decision, of course, deeply impacts our dedicated team of teachers, therapists, administrators and

their families—a situation we hope to remedy, with your help, in the upcoming months.

### The Little Light House needs YOU!

Shortly after informing the Little Light House staff of this difficult decision, I received a phone call that energized us all to keep on trusting the one who said "be still and know that I am God." I was told that a faithful friend of the LLH had emailed to say he

was sending a check for \$50,000. Our immediate cash flow problem was resolved! God is so faithful.

With all of this in mind, we are praying that our biggest fundraiser of the year—*The Milestone Challenge 2010: Laps for Little Ones and Struttin' their Stuff*—will break all previous records.

In **Laps for Little Ones**, individuals and businesses are challenged to collect sponsorships and take to the track for a one-hour run (or walk). Prizes are awarded in the winning categories.

**Struttin Their Stuff** is a celebration of the students. Each child, dressed in themed costume, takes a victory lap around a mini-track, celebrating the milestones they have reached during the year.

Leading up to the event, LLH parents will seek sponsorship donations from family, friends and the community, working together to support the programs that benefit their children. You can find more details and contact information on our website at [www.llhms.org](http://www.llhms.org).

We need to reach our goal of over \$100,000 from this event. For this to happen...

**The Little Light House needs YOU!**

# Spotlighting Volunteers: Sandy Davis

I have had the opportunity to volunteer with The Little Light House for four years. During this time, I have been able to witness God's work first hand. I will never forget seeing one of the students (who had very limited expressive language) sign the entire song of "Jesus Loves Me". To this day, when I hear this song, I picture her signing with all her might.

Watching all of the children

interact with one another during worship time also brings me joy. It is truly a remarkable sight to see them together singing of God's love. I suppose the main reason that I enjoy volunteering at the Little Light House is not only because I get the opportunity to watch them learn new things and grow, but because I know the children need me— to know that, makes it all worth it.



*Sandy works with Caleb Underwood*

## Tees For Tots 2010

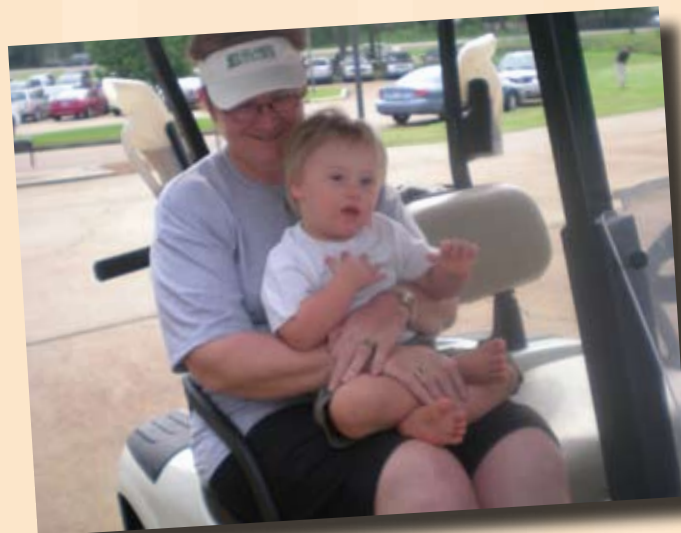
We are pleased to announce that the 2010 Little Light House Golf Tournament was a great success! It raised over \$20,000 and thirty three man teams participated in the event. After several rainy days the golf tournament committee

together and then the tournament began. The players played 18 holes of golf, played a good ole game of "Ball in a Boat," and also challenged their swing for a \$500 gift certificate to Dick's Sporting Goods. After a day of fun in the sun, LLH hosted a mini banquet with amazing food donated from our local community: Chick-Fil-A, Michael Moore with Your Personal Chef, Bruce Putts with

Fresh Cuts, Gatti Town, and Kroger. It was a great day filled fellowship, fun and food all to celebrate the work God is doing at The Little Lighthouse!

If you haven't already, we hope you will consider participating in this event next May!

was very thankful for sunny, pleasant weather. The teams arrived at Castlewoods Country Club at noon and were greeted by the smiling faces of the students at The Little Lighthouse! The families, players, volunteers and staff enjoyed hamburgers



# Student Spotlight: Graduation 2010

The 2009-2010 school year brought us the largest number of graduates ever: 6! They were: Ace Speihler, Breanna Moss, Caroline Pittman, Ella Miller, Gabriel Parker, and Gandy Hester. Each of these children has been a tremendous blessing to us and we are so proud of their great progress during their time at The Little Light House. The ceremony began with all of the children on stage singing some of their favorite circle time songs. Breanna and Ella used unique communication devices to choose a song to sing! Then the children who were not graduating went to sit with their families and watch a video celebrating each of the graduates. As "Pomp and Circumstance" played, our graduates, in adorable graduation gowns and mortar boards, processed to meet and hug their teacher, receive a diploma and a Bible from Maureen and meet their teary-eyed



Gandy Hester



Ella Miller



Breanna Moss



Gabriel Parker



Caroline Pittman



Ace Speihler

parents on the other side of the stage. Ace expressed the feelings of each graduate when he shouted, "I did it!"

as he walked off the stage. Each of these precious children has accomplished many things from walking to com-

municating through words, an eye gaze or sign language, to reading. And we are so very proud. Way to go!



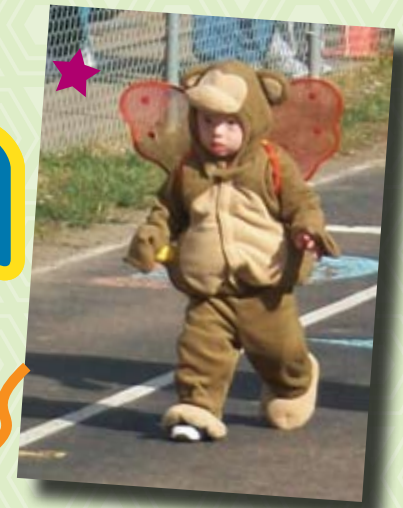
*What All The Cool Cars Should Be Wearing This Year!*

## Show Your Support With A Custom Little Light House Auto License Plate!

We must have 300 tags pre-sold before the Tax commission will permit the sale of customized Little Light House car tags. Not only will this be an important tool in our fundraising efforts, it will be a great way to show your support!

If you're interested purchasing a custom Little Light House automobile license plate, please call us at 601-829-3446.

# Help Us Raise Some Walking Around Money.



## Laps/Struttin' 2010

Just a few laps around the track will help support the Little Light House.

If you want your heart to be forever changed, join us October 16, 2010 at University Christian School Track/Field in Flowood, MS for our 5th Annual Laps for Little Ones/Struttin' Their Stuff Fun Run. This 2-part event will begin with a one-hour walk/run. Participants will then have an opportunity to cheer on the students of the Little Light House as they "strut their stuff" around the track.

Pre-registration begins at 7:45 a.m. The Walk/Run starts at 8:00 a.m.

### This year's event will feature:

- National Anthem performed by Ms. Catherine Clark (a young lady from Brandon, MS, who has an amazing voice to match her spirit).
- The Treasure Squad (Rankin County cheerleader squad that showcases the talents of children with special needs)
- Prizes and medals will be given to the top finishers in the walk/run.
- Door prizes donated by generous area businesses.

To register for this incredible event, contact our office at 601-829-3446 or go to our website [www.llhms.org](http://www.llhms.org) to download the brochure with the registration form under "Struttin' Their Stuff".

# Facts at a Glance

## Your Gifts:

- Allow every child to attend tuition-free without government funding.
- Directly impact our students through special education, one-on-one instruction, and specialized therapy.
- Provide a unique Christian curriculum designed specifically to meet the needs of children with developmental delays.

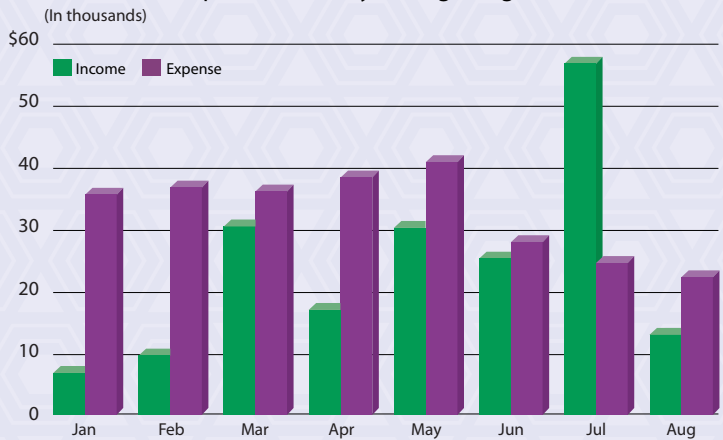
## Our Needs:

- Average cost per child per day: \$200
- Average cost per child per month: \$4,000
- Average cost per hour of therapy: \$55

## Monthly Giving:

- Monthly giving is currently \$2,500.
- Our monthly giving goal is \$5,000.
- Typical monthly giving amounts range from \$20 to \$250.
- Becoming a monthly contributor is one of the easiest ways to support The Little Light House

## Income and Expenses: January through August 2010



As shown by the above chart, the expenses for the Little Light House have exceeded the income each month during 2010 except for July. In order to attempt to compensate for this deficit the board and staff are working on cutting the annual budget by 30% to 40%. We have temporarily reduced the number of hours worked by staff members and adjusted compensation to meet this reduction. Please continue to pray for us we journey together in our mission to glorify God by ministering to these children.

*(Note: Since writing this information almost \$20,000 has been raised toward Struttin' Their Stuff/Laps for Little Ones!)*

The Little Light House Central Mississippi is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit Christian Developmental Center for children with special needs, age birth through six years of age. The Little Light House Central Mississippi does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, color, national or ethnic origin, or medical diagnosis (unless it affects the child's ability to attend on a regular basis) in the administration of its educational policies, and other school administered programs. Some behavioral conditions may be evaluated on an individual basis. The Little Light House Central Mississippi assures that all children's records will be maintained as confidential. All gifts to The Little Light House Central Mississippi are tax-deductible, less goods and services received

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