

Going Home: Animals Help 'Our Kids' Prepare For Change



Everett's experience with Cody the therapy dog is easing his transition from Cedarcrest Center to home.

Some children with complex medical conditions are able to transition to the family home after a long-term stay at a residential care home.

It's not the same as returning for a weekend visit, though. Often the To-Do list will include modifications to the physical environment and a lot of legwork to ensure continuity of health care.

Emotional Skills Are Important

Patty Farmer at Cedarcrest Center in Keene, NH, says it is equally important to support the children emotionally and teach them how to approach unfamiliar experiences as they prepare to leave the sheltered nursing home setting and the caregivers that have

been a big part of their daily lives.

"Fear is a very appropriate emotion to have when facing something new and different," she said.

Over the past year, Cedarcrest staff have slowly introduced their young people to a variety of animals as way of teaching them to manage their fears.

At Freedom Reins Therapeutic Riding Center, youth interact with and sometimes ride on horses. When Wildlife Encounters visits Cedarcrest the children see, smell and touch small reptiles, birds, and animals they may not have encountered previously.

Periodically during the three years of the

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The Ripples of H.A.L.O.'s Gifts Have Far-reaching Impact

Dear Friends,

Our family established the Help A Little One Foundation to provide quality of life programs and comfort items to young people with neurological impairment and complex conditions.

At first glance our gifts may appear too small to be life changing, but even small items can be significant. For example, H.A.L.O. recently funded an adaptive stroller for Anthony, right.



Positioning is important when a child is confined to a wheelchair. Proper seating can relieve pressure on painful joints, provide support necessary to maintain an upright position and enable optimal positioning to administer medication or to provide suction tube access.

An appropriate seating system can also affect a child's frame of mind, easing the transition to school, activities and medical appointments. If he is comfortable, he may be more sociable, cooperative and willing to participate.

When the health system denies requests for items such as an adaptive stroller and families are overwhelmed with the extra costs associated with disability, our small foundation is here to help them help their children.

The Dalai Lama said "Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects."

Thank you for your continued interest and support in making ripples for our "Little Ones."

Sincerely,

Animal Friends Help Kids Manage Their Fears

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pandemic, kids have been able to build relationships with Cody, a trained therapy dog, and his handler, Christine.

At first, the size of some animals, especially the horses and dogs, or the way the creatures behave, smell or feel to the touch can be daunting.

Staff members support each child one-on-one during the new experiences. They describe physical traits, such as eyes and ears; they guide the child's hands to gently touch fur or feathers; they explain special characteristics such as bird calls or habitats. As part of his transition preparation, Everett S. has enjoyed a steady

progression of contact with animals. The exposure has increased his comfort level with new experiences, and his family sees an emerging relationship with the family dog.

Recently, when Cody the dog returned to Cedarcrest for a visit, Everett helped hold his leash as Cody walked around and even gave him some pats when he behaved gently with Everett's friends.

Other Transition Supports

Cedarcrest helps smooth the transition to home in other ways too. The Speech and Language Pathologist and staff prepare "social storybooks" that include photographs and descriptions

of the children's new surroundings.

The staff also trains families and caregivers on activities of daily life, nutrition, gastronomy tube care, tracheostomy care, medications and therapies. They assist with individualized issues such as navigating stairs, how to order supplies and overall care management, Patty Farmer said.

Cedarcrest Center in Keene, NH offers a comprehensive medical, therapeutic and special education services for children who are medically and developmentally complex. For information please visit:

Cedarcrest4kids.org

Aquatics Program Frees The Body, Enhances The Senses

The Aquatics program at New England Pediatric Care is thriving in it's 10,000-gallon salt water, heated lagoon pool.

For the past four decades, the Therapeutic Recreation Department has offered this unique sensory experience to young people who live at NEPC or attend its special education day school.

The 80-bed facility is a nursing home and school designed for children who are medically complex and have severe cognitive and neurological impairments.

The feeling of weightlessness in the water is a contrast to restrictions of every day life in a wheelchair.

"The best part is the freedom it gives our residents to interact with their environment," explains Alaina Steed, Assistant Director of Therapeutic Recreation.

"They get to take off their adaptive equipment and feel the weightlessness the water provides."

The experience is tailored to the resident's preferences. Some



A resident enjoys a swim in the pool at New England Pediatric Care in Billerica, MA.

individuals prefer the lights low and for the pool to be quiet, others enjoy up beat music and colorful lights.

Therapists and aides slowly introduce the "swimmers" to the pool, fitted with appropriate flotation equipment to ensure a successful experience.

"My favorite memory of the pool is when we got a resident who has visual impairments in the water. We knew he was going to love it, but as soon as he realized where he was, he started singing, splashing and giggling. It was amazing to watch," recalls Megan Harris, Director of Therapeutic Recreation.

"When swimming or floating our residents do not have to bear weight which can be so helpful for all types of pain relief. I remember taking a resident in the pool who experiences chronic pain. He was able to get in different positions and the warm water allowed him to fully relax.

He was so happy," notes Nancy

Hawkins, Director of Rehabilitation.

The aquatics program also helps

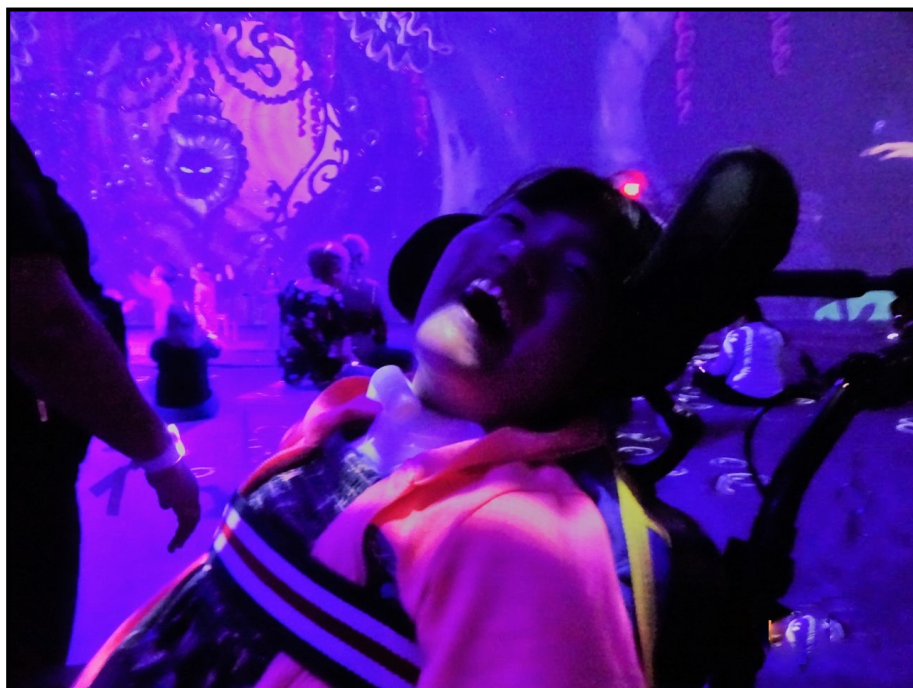


individuals who are hypertonic. The relaxation enables staff to stretch their shortened muscles with less discomfort and achieve better range of motion, according to Lisa Troy, physical therapy supervisor.

For more information about NEPC, please visit nepc.org.



Who Doesn't Love a Field Trip?



When Tricia Warren heard about the great time her neighbors' kids had at the Disney Animation: Immersive Experience in Boston, the Special Education teacher knew it would be the perfect field trip for students.

Plus, it would be a BLAST!

Abraham, Jayden and Anastasia were excited to make the 40-mile trip from Seven Hills Pediatric Center in Groton. An occupational therapist, a school nurse and Tricia accompanied them. Space was limited by the number of wheelchair hookups and backup staff to fill in at school.

"We try to give all of our students typical experiences, like other kids in the larger community," Tricia said.



Once situated inside the Lighthouse warehouse/theatre, the trio and their carers were treated to a fabulous sensory experience. The lights dimmed and flashed, while scenes from animated Disney films were projected onto the walls and floor and familiar theme songs from Frozen, Encanto and others movies delighted the crowd. Kids wore light-up wrist bands and experienced awesome bubbles all around them.

"The kids were super happy. They may not be verbal, but they chortled their appreciation. Abraham vocalized the whole way home," said Tricia.

The outing provided fresh motivation to work on sensory goals, such as eye contact, head movement and control.

"Logistics are always complicated when we go on field trips, but it is totally worth it," Tricia said. "I would do it all over again."

To learn more about Seven Hills Pediatric Center and the Special Education Academy please visit:

www.sevenhills.org/programs/seven-hills-pediatric-center

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 2
SPRING 2023



A Foundation for Children with Neurological Impairment

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