

AT THE CENTER

CHRIST AT THE CENTER OF SPECIAL KIDS

"SEE, I AM DOING
A **NEW** THING!
NOW IT
SPRINGS UP.."

- Isaiah 43:19

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Letter from our *Chairman*

As a member of Murfreesboro since 1982, a resident and business owner, I am proud of our city and surrounding communities. Our area is the base of much strength and courage. The hearts of this community have blessed many and will continue to be a blessing to many and much work will be done.

As Philippians 1:6 says, “being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

I joined Special Kids a number of years ago confident that God has a calling for each of us and He gave me these people as mine. I knew that the work began in these special people will be perfected and I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to experience God’s presence in these children. I may not have the pleasure of working directly with them, but there is a strength felt through the whole of the organization. Second Corinthians 12:10 tells us, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” For this reason, all those at Special Kids have the “strength” which I too want. The children, the staff, and the investors radiate the power God gives us. As Chairman of the Board this year, I look forward to working for these people. I want to see the very best in service while also supporting the patients, their families, the staff, and the investors.

In 2019 we are making moves to increase our abilities, to improve patient and family support, and to grow Special Kids into the future. Within our own house, we will advance in every area to promote the strength of everyone we encounter. In our community, we want to increase our presence in this new generation. Opportunities exist to move further into advancing our story to help and support in a Christ-like fashion the many others who are in need. We want advancement to be our future. We want to strengthen and heal our patients and their families. We want to encourage our

investors and let them know the blessings God offers in supporting His Kingdom as seen through Special Kids. We want those with a heart to serve, to find the place of peace and rest at Special Kids.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

If you have special needs we want the community to know that we have a plan to help. If your plans to invest are failing, come prosper with us. If you need hope then visit our campus and see the glory. Special Kids has been given a future that will be driven by the glory of God, come join us.

If you’re not currently connected to this ministry, I invite you to partner with us today. Here are a few ways you can get involved:

- Pray for the children, families, and teams.
- Volunteer to provide help and hope.
Visit www.specialkidstn.com/volunteer
- Fundraise to make a difference.
Visit www.specialkidstn.com/impact
- Donate to change a child’s life.
Visit www.specialkidstn.com/donate

Together, we can make a difference for God’s precious children and their families!

God Bless,

Charlie Yates

Charlie Yates, Board of Directors Chairman



CHARLIE YATES & JADEN'S FAMILY

SPECIAL KIDS RACE *Recap*

Over 3,100 walkers and runners participated in one of Murfreesboro's largest races on Saturday, March 9, 2019, at Murfreesboro Medical Clinic & Surgicenter (MMC). The 8th annual race raised over \$250,000 to support the work of caring for children with special needs at Special Kids. It was a blessed day with thousands of smiling faces all there for the kids.

For each of this event's eight years, sponsors have covered all expenses which allows every dollar from registration to go toward providing therapy and nursing services at Special Kids.

We thank all of our sponsors, supporters, and participants who came together for the kids to make this year's race a success. The 8th annual Special Kids Race was presented by its founding sponsor Murfreesboro Medical Clinic & Surgicenter with Diamond sponsor Backer-Springfield and Platinum sponsors Walker & Dunlop and TwelveStone Health Partners. Gold sponsors included Ascend Federal Credit Union, Ole South Properties, Nissan North America, Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital | Ascension, Fleet Feet Murfreesboro, Jimmy John's, K-Love Radio, Project One Four a David Price Foundation, and Hillard Lyons Shea & Dugger Wealth Advisors. Silver sponsors were Bushido School of Karate, A Step Ahead, Smoothie King, Little Guys Movers, Hooper Fence, MaxShred, The Morgan Family, Rock Solid Security, Zaxby's, Wegmann Automotive, and Tasty Table. Bronze sponsors included Wax Family Printing, MobilityWorks, TrustPoint Hospital, Tennessee Orthopaedic Alliance, Murfreesboro Pulse, WGNS Radio, Swanson Companies, Tam Clark DJ Service, Franklin Synergy Bank, VIP Murfreesboro, Wild About Smiles Pediatric Dentistry, Murfreesboro Post, Murfreesboro Surgical Specialists, Murfreesboro Magazine, Murfreesboro Voice, Murfreesboro Pure Milk, Dunkin' Donuts, Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q, Kasai, Boys & Girls Club of Rutherford County, and Once Upon a Child.

To be a part of next year's Race, stayed tuned at SpecialKidsRace.org



■ RACE PHOTO CREDIT: RUN HUNTSVILLE

Go *Emme*

Emme finished the one mile family fun run this year by herself with Mom and Dad cheering her on the whole way! As a family, this is their seventh year to participate.

Emme's mom shares, "This is Emme's favorite event that she looks forward to every year. She was a patient at Special Kids for three years and graduated before going into kindergarten. She just loves everything about the race. She loves the kids that are there, she loves everybody cheering, and she's getting faster and faster."

Emme was diagnosed with vacterl association when she was born and when she was a year old her parents started looking into peer modeling groups for Emme for socialization. Emme's mom tells us, "We were actually suggested Special Kids for feeding therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy and then we learned about the Nursing program you all have at Special Kids so we went in and toured and decided it would be a really good fit for Emme. She started off going one to two times a week in the beginning and from there we fell in love with the people, the nurses, therapists, everyone who worked for Special Kids became an extension of our family and Emme still talks about everyone there. She always wants to go visit when she has a chance. Of course at the race she gets to see everyone she worked with and I remember toward the end of the race one of her former recreational therapists stopped in the middle of her own 5K to give Emme a big hug and Emme thought that was the greatest thing ever. The race reminds her of all the fun she had while at Special Kids. Although she may not understand 100 percent the impact they had on her life, I think eventually one day she will and there's something inside her that knows how special these people are to her. Emme was at Special Kids from two to five years old. Today she is finishing the first grade and is seven years old."

When asked why their family chooses to come back to the race year after year, they said, "The atmosphere and the fact that 100 percent of the proceeds goes back to Special Kids is a huge plus for us. Everyone there is so cheerful, supportive, and happy to be there. Even runners who may not know fully what Special Kids is all about knows when they come to this race that there's something really special about it. It brings awareness to our community about special needs children. We will always come to race. We love it so much."

MEET *Jaden*

Jaden's mom, Marsha, beams and her eyes fill with joyful tears as she recounts the past months her son, Jaden, has spent at Special Kids and the remarkable progress he has made during this short time.

"My son, Jaden, is four. He is very smart and always happy. Jaden has a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and he's had a wheelchair for a couple of years now. Jaden received nursing services and has been at other schools in the past during the day before starting Special Kids but he never moved himself in his wheelchair until he was at Special Kids. He wheels himself up and down the hallway now and has learned to use his gait trainer/walker for mobility. He is gaining new independence through his newfound mobility. Special Kids really does help. It is awesome! I am so shocked at the progress my son has made. He's coming home and he's talking more and he's teaching me things. We have time to play...it's not all work, work, work. I can be his mother and he can be my son."

Marsha wants everyone to know, "If your child has special needs, this is the place. There's a range of children with different abilities here. They all can accomplish whatever they want to. They all are made to feel special."



New Drama Program

The Special Kids Nursing Drama Program first began with the Easter play in 2018 and ever since has been a popular ticket in town! Started as an extension of the recreational therapy program, the drama program now has four productions under its belt.

Children with disabilities are often excluded from drama or creative activities due to their perceived limitations. Here at Special Kids everyone is included and discovering a way for all the children to participate is at the forefront of every production.

The program focuses on the strengths and abilities of every child and helps to build communication, social, and self-esteem skills. Through the shared experience of putting a production on, the children now have a way to express themselves and have an outlet to develop their talents.

We recently had a chance to sit down with the founder of the drama program and Special Kids' lead recreational therapist, Tori Bivens, to discuss the program and all it has meant to the children.

Q. How did the drama program come to fruition?

A. It's really true recreational therapy and an extension of it. It's still working on their fine and gross motor skills. It's an additional positive, fun activity we can do with the children and they feel so good about. It gives these kids an opportunity to do something they may never get to do anywhere else and we want to provide that for them. They can share it with their families too, and it gives the families a chance to come in and see what the kids have been working on. They have loved it. Presently the program is part of our Nursing program which includes our EQUIP peer modeling children as well.

Q. How has it helped the children overall?

A. The biggest thing has been the boost I've seen in their confidence. They get so excited about it and they're really great now that we have a few under our belt. They know what's expected at practice now, that they need to learn and know their lines. For the children who are non-verbal, you can just see the look on their faces. They light up and it has helped them in so many new ways. For example, one of our children uses an eye gaze device to communicate. I was practicing her lines one day with her leading up to one of our plays and she would not do it. She was looking up and down, side to side, and just wouldn't cooperate with me. So, I had a conversation with her and told her, "You are valuable and you have a voice. People don't know that and for those that don't understand disabilities may look at you and think, 'oh poor her, she doesn't know how to make choices for herself and she can't talk,' but that's not true" and I told her all those things. I told her that she is smart and has something to offer the world and I want people to see and know that. I want people to know that she is a person that can be in a play and say her lines, even with an eye gaze device. And you know what? She did it and she did it perfectly. It made me cry. She got it and understood what I was telling her and she stepped up to the plate and did it. She had such a confidence about her that day.

Q. You have found a way that all children can participate. Tell us more about that aspect.

A. We knew that people from the public would see these shows and that it could, and would, bring disability awareness, and help them see and get a better understanding of how these kids use assistive devices to help them overcome certain obstacles. Before we started, the nursing therapists and I wrote out a list of all the devices our kids use and we incorporated those into all the shows. We did that because we want people to see these assistive devices, we want them to see different positions we can put the kids in for movement and to be able to see what day-to-day life is for these kids. It's incredible, the devices and equipment the kids use and the way they have to use them to do what we so much of the time take for granted.



What is your favorite thing about being in a play?

"That I can just tell people about God." - Sebastian

"Clapping and dancing!" - Jaden

"I loved being with everybody." - Holland



Q. Has it helped any of the children meet any milestones or accomplish a goal(s)?

A. I have seen several kids accomplish goals we have set for them. I think of one young boy in particular who delivered a line in last year's Easter play. It was a huge accomplishment for him to learn when to walk on the stage, memorize what to say, and then return to his original place. The fact that he did that was huge. It was very hard for him to follow directions and memorize what to do and that he accomplished this was amazing. There are other kids too that come to mind that memorized dance motions, their lines, and even the kids using assistive devices that they learned to wait their turn and knew when to push a button to communicate their lines. It has incorporated life-skills too such as changing in and out of costumes. It has helped them overall to not be ashamed of who they are and be proud of what they have accomplished.

Q. What have you learned throughout starting this program?

A. The biggest thing I've learned so far is the boost in confidence it has given these kids by simply providing this opportunity. Kids want the opportunity to do stuff. Just because they can't walk, talk, or say what they desire to do doesn't mean that they don't deserve the chance to. For me, I've learned I need to be more creative and learn ways to give them opportunities to experience new things. It's very hard work on our staff to put these productions on. However, that doesn't matter because they got to smile and had this opportunity where they were the star. Some of these kids are very medically fragile and if we can provide an exciting experience for them, it's all worth it.

Q. What do you think this program means to the children and their families?

A. I have received a lot of positive feedback. I think of one Mom who has cried at every show and she has said to me, "It's so amazing to see my daughter be a part of something I never thought she'd get to be a part of." For the families to see their kids in a production is awesome. They have loved the chance to see their children in this way and to be able to invite additional family members to come see their children too. It's a chance for everyone to see in real-time everything we work on with the kids while they're here at Special Kids and be able to share it with the world. It is so beautiful.

To see the most recent Easter play, visit <https://tinyurl.com/SKEaster2019>.

SUMMER *Drive*

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Our inaugural Special Kids Summer Drive is kicking off in June to grow our annual fund during our typical financially dry months of June and July. This drive will provide an opportunity to help investors and businesses come together to make a greater impact, all for the kids.

The money raised during the Summer Drive will be used to support the general funds of Special Kids so that we can continue to serve every child that walks through our doors. We bill insurance, but many of the families we serve do not have benefits or are limited in the number of visits their insurance will grant them. When this happens, we work on a sliding scale in order to lower the cost of the services we offer. For example, it may cost an average of \$100 for us to provide a therapy session – we may serve a family that can only afford to pay \$20 – and that’s where our investors come in. They help to meet that \$80 gap so that we can continue to serve every family, regardless of their income. When you support our Summer Drive, you are helping to fill in that gap so we can continue to serve every child that needs our services.

We can’t continue to serve these children and their families without you. **Together we can fuel their hope!**

Special Kids is growing quickly and our needs continue to grow. **Would you consider partnering with us by being a sponsor as a matching donor or as a supporter?**



■ PHOTO CREDIT: SHELBY FANNIN PHOTOGRAPHY

For more information, visit www.specialkidstn.com/summerdrive or contact Kelly Sharp at 629.207.1285 or ksharp@specialkidstn.com.

To make a direct gift you can text “SKsummerdrive” to 41444, mail your donation in the enclosed envelope, or give online at www.specialkidstn.com/summerdrive.

New Director of Therapy

We are pleased to introduce our new Director of Therapy, Cameron Campbell. Cameron recently shared with us about himself and his goals in his new role. Welcome, Cameron; we’re thankful to have your serving at Special Kids!

Q. Tell us about yourself. What is your background? What led you to Special Kids?

I grew up in the rural town of Columbia, Kentucky and attended college not too far from home in the nearby town of Campbellsville. In December 2013, I graduated from Campbellsville University with a Bachelor’s of Science in Chemistry—accepted to, and bound for, medical school. I attended the University of Kentucky College of Medicine for one year, when I felt an undeniable call to step away from school and enter pastoral ministry. It wasn’t that I didn’t like medicine or the field I was entering; I had spent years preparing for this career. But very clearly, the Lord directed me to leave.

This was perhaps the most difficult decision I’ve ever faced, but throughout the process the Lord kept bringing a certain scripture to my mind. Isaiah 30:21 says, “Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, ‘This is the way you should go,’ whether to the right or to the left.” I did not know where my path was leading, but God was reminding me through this verse that He had a plan.

I served for about a year as the executive pastor of the church I had grown up at in south-central Kentucky before being redirected again and led to enter state government. This career move didn’t make sense to me, but I again felt the Lord was calling me into this arena. After serving there, a position was made available to me as the office manager of a rural small faith-based family practice clinic in Kentucky whose mission was to minister the love of Christ to all in body, mind, and spirit.

Throughout all this time, I had been attending (as often as my schedule would permit) The Belonging Church in Nashville. Many friends knew that for quite some time I was looking to eventually relocate to Tennessee. When a friend told me about the Director of Therapy position at Special Kids, I jumped at the opportunity. The chance to partner with an organization that so clearly shows the love of Christ every day by caring for His children, while being near the city I have grown to love, was something I could not ignore. After interviewing with the staff, it was clear we shared the same mission. They have a heart for caring for these children and I gladly accepted the offer to join them.

To read Cameron’s full interview, visit www.specialkidstn.com/therapydirector.

Q. What are some of your top goals as the new Director of Therapy, and what will be your focus?

I plan to bring the pastoral, administrative, and healthcare management skills I’ve gained over the last several years and apply them at Special Kids in every way I can. I love seeing Christ-centered healthcare organizations flourish and reach their goals and I’m excited to be a part of that.

Specifically, I look forward to working with current staff and learning the processes already in place so I can help develop ways that we as a team can streamline care, continuously improve quality, and make sure the spiritual climate is one that is welcoming to peoples of all backgrounds and walks of life. As a growing organization, I believe a few critical keys to sustained success are communication and teamwork. Broadly, my initial focus will be looking at ways to enhance team communication, collaboration, and continue to cultivate a faith-filled atmosphere so that our therapy services are offered with utmost excellence. Specifically, down the road I’d love to see ways we can continue to build a strong-knit team and enhance our care through additional services such as with telehealth technology.

Q. What are you looking forward to most about serving as the Director of Therapy at Special Kids?

What I look most forward to as Director of Therapy is championing individual staff members to be the best versions of themselves in the unique roles they play in providing care for special kids. Christ’s Body, the Church, functions best when each member performs the role it was designed to play. Special Kids, a faith-based center, is like the Body of Christ. Every receptionist, therapist, volunteer, and director each have unique roles to play if the Body is to effectively minister the love of Christ and meet the needs of our community. I am most looking forward to working closely with the staff to uncover ways everyone can shine their own light the brightest they can as we serve the community.



GOLF *Classic*

Our 20th annual Golf Classic was a very successful event with a record number of sponsors and players! Presented by Ole South Properties, the two day tournament was held on Thursday and Friday, April 25 and 26, at Indian Hills Golf Course in Murfreesboro.

The annual event hosted 57 teams with over 228 players participating to help children with special needs in middle Tennessee. The golf scramble allowed participants the option to play in the afternoon hours both days, or choose to play on either Thursday or Friday. Golfers enjoyed lunch and snacks provided by Chick-fil-A Murfreesboro, The Alley on Main, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Slick Pig BBQ.

The Special Kids Golf Classic was presented by Ole South Properties. The Experience sponsor was Chick-fil-A Murfreesboro. Ace Hole-In-One sponsor was Nissan North America. Albatross sponsors included City Tile & Floor Covering Company, Tri-Star Title Co., LLC, and Yates Services. Eagle sponsors were Famous Footwear, Stanlick Chiropractic, H A Beasley & Company, Redstone Federal Credit Union, Middle Tennessee Electric Co., Haynes Brothers Lumber Co., Backer EHP, Taylor Thigpen | Aflac, SEC, Inc., Murfreesboro Young Professionals, Budget Blinds, and Syndicate Design & Construction. Birdie sponsors were Body & Face, Dr. Elizabeth LaRoche, Adabra, Inc., First Bank, Smyrna Lions Club, Morley, CRF Properties, Blake Finney with Shelter Insurance, Atmos Energy, A Step Ahead, Wax Family Printing, Bott Radio, and The Very Idea. Par sponsors included Precision Ladders, LLC, Huddleston-Steele Engineering, Inc., Thigpen Hearing Center, Shelbyville Pencil Co., Ogles Electric Co., LLC, TennStar Fire Protection & Safety Co., The Pope Family, Tedder Company, Wilson Bank & Trust, Slick Pig BBQ, The Alley on Main, and Buffalo Wild Wings.

Our mission is to serve Jesus Christ by caring for His children.



WANT TO GET *Involved*

Special Kids was founded on the pillar that no child would ever be turned away because a family could not afford services.



Help a child learn to speak, write, or walk for the first time. Donate today to change a child's life.



Have a funny idea, a fun idea, a crazy idea, or a tried and true idea? Your creativity + our online tools = making a difference.



Want to use your talents to serve the kids? Find your place to pitch in a hand and join in the mission.

“Jesus said, Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

— Matthew 19:14



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WHAT'S NEW

Our new podcast - His Children - is based on our mission to serve Jesus Christ by caring for His children.

His children. Their stories.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer Drive
June/July 2019

Special Kids Car Show
August 17, 2019

Special Kids Banquet
September 12, 2019

#FORTHEKIDS

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SPECIALKIDSTN.COM

