

## Sharing Gifts!

The holiday season is upon us and it's easy to get caught up in all of the chaos with the shopping sales, enticing commercials, and desire to find that one perfect gift. This is especially why it is important to take time to pause and give thanks for the things that matter most in our lives. Year after year, it seems that the best gifts are the little things we receive every day from the ones we cherish most. In keeping with the true holiday spirit, FSRC wanted to reflect on the wonderful gift that having a child with disability can be and the joy that they bring into the lives they touch. Hopefully this will help you to take a moment to celebrate the unanticipated gifts we are given.

We asked some of the parents and siblings we work with to complete this sentence: "The best thing about having a child/sibling with a disability is..."

- *Learning new things like sign language and realizing how fortunate we are* — Nathan Kliewer, age 15
- *You're entitled to get on-going free trainings for how to be patient!* — Keiko Sasahira
- *The look in her eyes when she does something new. Knowing how much harder it is for her makes it even more special. The special bond they develop with their sibling.* — Adam and Pam Guess
- *Being first in line at Six Flags!* — Weston Knutson, age 9
- *Learning to appreciate the small things in life, always greeted with a huge smile, a swing in the park on a warm sunny day, warm sand trickling through your fingers. It's also nice to meet other devoted and loving people who care about helping children with special needs.* — Jennie Notstad, age 23
- *The opportunity to understand how vulnerability and imperfection can be both beautiful and enlightening.* — Eileen Ahearn
- *I enjoy watching people's reactions to the silly things Kyle says and does!* — Caralynn Knutson
- *The kind and compassionate service providers I would not have otherwise known, the experience of the whole family in loving and supporting the disabled child, the sibling education that typical sibs experience as they grow up with their disabled sib, the bond with other families raising kids with disabilities within the community and in internet groups, and last but not least, working with the wonderful folks at FSRC!* — Nancy O'Mara
- *The therapists do fun things with us!* — Isaac Knutson, age 5
- *Meeting warm loving caring people who also have or know someone with a disability and making new friends through my child's care.* — Deb Notstad
- *Showing them off to the world. In our eyes the boys are famous!* — Darcie W.
- *Heightens my awareness and compassion towards those who struggle with disabilities and or sickness and makes me more understanding and helpful towards them.* — Brian Knutson
- *The love he has is so genuine and pure. My son makes me laugh and little things in life make him happy.* — Sue Haffele



- *My daughter connects with people on a basic level of Love. Through her disability, we have met people that we may have never known. We found love and friendship through both professionals and others affected by disabilities. It has been a worthwhile journey of learning, sharing, and growing, personally and professionally. It's hard to understand how someone walks this path until you find yourself on it. I may never have wished for this, but now I see why God picked me for the job of raising this beautiful child. It's not always easy. More days are challenging than carefree, but the rewards make up for the difficulties. — Heidi G.*
- *Every day I am reminded that life is what you make it. You can choose to be happy or you can choose to be miserable. Owen is the happiest person I know! Not only is he happy, but his radiant smile and infectious laugh makes those around him happy as well. — Carrie Pomije*
- *We no longer take the little things in life for granted. Every small gain is special and celebrated. We see people with bigger problems, feel empathy for them and appreciate the loving boys that we have. No one should be so lucky! — Karen and Scott Witt*
- *We've learned to appreciate the little things. Watching our son tie his shoe for the first time independently, blending sounds to learn words as he is reading aloud, or learning math is such a joy. We celebrate every single milestone. — Anonymous*
- *The joy I see in my son's face when mastering a task that is very difficult with a child with Autism. Thinking about what we have had to go through, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. — Victoria Hahn-De Almeida*
- *It can reinforce the best things about having ANY child: slowing down, taking time to have fun together, delighting in a new achievement, appreciating the little things. For our family, having our daughter has also allowed us to meet the coolest, most generous and caring people in our lives. Having so many wonderful friends and supports has enriched us in ways we will remember and appreciate forever. — Beth Swedeen*
- *Most of the time I don't realize that my sister has a disability; she's the only sibling I've ever had and ever will have, and to me she is perfect. We fight like regular siblings, we laugh and play games like regular siblings, and we love each other like regular siblings. Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like to have a sister without a disability, but I would not be the person I am today without her, and I would not trade her for anyone in the world. She has a great sense of humor, and feels just like we do. — Kim Brown, age 18*
- *My daughter is my hero. She is such a fighter. She has a great attitude and a love for life in spite of all the challenges she faces. — Alyssa M.*
- *Learning how to think "outside the box". Learning to do things you never thought you could do. Having a life that is full of surprises and never dull. And last, but not least, it means finding out how many people there are who are willing to help if you make your needs known. — Judy*

## Local Organizations Brighten the Holidays

As in past years, many children and families served by FSRC will be receiving holiday gifts due to the generosity of members of **Unity Church of Madison**, employees of **Meriter Retirement Services, Capitol Insurance Companies, & American Transmission Corporation**, and shoppers at **Playthings** in Hilldale. Playthings will once again be sponsoring FSRC in the Hilldale Holiday Tree-Walk. Stop by to view the best of this season's toys.

## Thank you to the Mayr Family!

October's Fall Festival at the Mayr Family Farm raised \$850 for Family Support & Resource Center. The weekend's activities included an amazing corn maze, a hayride to the pumpkin patch, a variety of animals to pet, games, campfire, and treats. Every year, the Mayr family donates part of the proceeds of this event to a non-profit organization, and this year FSRC was the lucky recipient.



**UW Band Director Mike Leckrone and attorney/political activist Ed Garvey take a break from their waiter duties to chat.**

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of our Board of Directors and many local businesses, our Families Can't Wait fund will be able to continue to provide assistance to families in 2007. Families Can't Wait funds go directly to families on our waiting lists to help them purchase respite care, home and vehicle modifications, specialized therapy and adaptive equipment, child care, recreation, and parent training.

Our Annual Celebrity Dinner and Silent Auction on November 13th raised more than **\$38,000** for the Families Can't Wait fund. **John Roach** as Master of Ceremonies, assisted by 30 celebrity waiters, made sure the evening was always lively and fun. We are grateful to FSRC Campaign Chair **Nancy Valentyn**, the businesses and individuals who sponsored tables at the event, the celebrity waiters, donors to our silent auction, and to the staff at **Nakoma Golf Club** for making the evening so successful!

## 2006 Table Sponsors

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 WI Council on Developmental Disabilities  
 WI Integrative Hyperbaric Center

## 2006 Partner Sponsors

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**UW Men's hockey coach Mike Eaves (left) and UW Women's hockey coach Mark Johnson brought along their 2006 NCAA championship trophies.**

## 2006 Celebrity Waiters

Nancy Christy & Neil Heinen  
 Michael Eaves  
 Suzy Favor Hamilton  
 Jean Feraca  
 Brad Fischer  
 Ed Garvey  
 Trent Jackson  
 Mark Johnson  
 Michael Leckrone  
 Tammy Lee & John Flint  
 Peter Leidy  
 Matt Lepay  
 "Westside Andy" Linderman  
 Patty Loew  
 Truly Remarkable Loon  
 Greg Marshall & Jeremy Bryan  
 Miss Madison Kimberly Pifer  
 Kitt Reuter-Foss  
 Ben Schumaker  
 Marsh Shapiro  
 Charlie Shortino  
 Pam Tauscher  
 Sue Ann Thompson  
 Pete Waite  
 Alando Tucker  
 Marcus Landry  
 Joe Thomas



**Opera star Kitt Reuter-Foss and UW Basketball players Marcus Landry (left) and Alando Tucker.**

**Master of Ceremonies:**  
 John Roach

Photographs by Jyothi Froemming



## Thanks to our 2006 Event Donors

A-1 Furniture  
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Gayla & Rich Divilbiss  
Down to Earth Pottery  
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Michelle Erschen  
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Fat Jack's Barbecue  
Suzy Favor Hamilton  
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Jan Byce  
Mark Janness  
Johannsen's Greenhouse & Gifts  
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Klein Floral  
Kramer Printing  
Larsen Photography  
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Westside Andy Linderman  
Lori's Flower Shop  
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New Leaf  
Ann Olson  
Orchids by the Ackers  
Pacific Cycle  
Park Printing  
The Parsonage  
Bill Pearson  
Kimberly Pifer  
Play It Again Sports  
Playthings  
Justin Polka  
Prairie Flowers & Gifts  
Princeton Club  
RZ & Company  
Pat Richter  
Rick Reilly  
Kitt Reuter-Foss  
Rufus DeMonde Pet Salon  
Ryan's Hair Designs  
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Ben Schumaker  
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Sentry Foods  
Marsh Shapiro  
Kathy Shenker-Powers  
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Sub-Zero Freezer Co.  
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UW Men's Football Program  
UW Men's Basketball Program  
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UW Women's Basketball Program  
UW Women's Hockey Program  
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Wegner LLP  
Woodworks Furniture  
Bonnie Ziemann



### **FSRC Presents "Friend of the Families" Award to Nancy Valentyn**

When Nancy Valentyn joined FSRC's Board in 1999, she made it clear that she was committed to successful fundraising. As the campaign chairperson for Families Can't Wait and the leading force behind our annual Celebrity Dinner, Nancy has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ask local businesses and celebrities to support FSRC. Largely due to her efforts, Families Can't Wait has raised over \$600,000 for families on our waiting lists. There can be no more deserving recipient for this annual FSRC award.



## “No Limits” by Dennis Granzen



How do you respond when your eight year old daughter tells you she just had “the best day of my life”? What does it mean when that day was focused on having a sibling who has a disability?

If having fun, building intimacy and sharing experiences, thoughts and feelings is a measure of success, the 2006 SIBS Day was a runaway hit. Sponsored by Family Support and Resource Center, and planned and executed by FSRC staff along with a dedicated group of volunteer adults and teens, the day took place this past October 14 at the On Belay center in Oregon.

The day was a mixture of both creative and physical fun activities along with some targeted to explore what life is like having a sibling with special needs. The morning was spent with the On Belay staff on the



lower ropes course and rock climbing an old silo. The importance of the morning’s activities can’t be overemphasized. By having a chance to be vulnerable and stretch their own limits while simultaneously giving and re-

ceiving support, the sibs built trust and connections. They also were able to informally share experiences and details of their individual families. After lunch, they were ready for more formal sharing activities.

We adults who were present had many moments stand out for us, a few of which I’ll share with you here: The degree to which even the younger children were able to see both difficult and rewarding aspects of being a sib, and accept the contradictions of their relationships. The willingness to share both the challenges they face and possible solutions to deal with them. The bond that developed between the younger children and the older ones and teen volunteers, a bond that gave the younger ones a positive vision for their future and the teens a look at themselves from a few years before and a commitment to help those younger ones move forward with hope and knowledge. The incredibly diverse perspectives on similar issues. The desire to have fun, reflected in a giggly statement I overheard during the Treasure Hunt, “I feel like I’m on the



Amazing Race!” By the time of the teen panel and group sharing at the end of the day, it was as if everyone was old friends. The entire group reflected a wonderful mixture of wisdom and innocence.

For the mom of the girl who said it was “the best day of my life”, it was an opportunity to commit to paying attention to the friendship needs of their daughter as well as their son with a disability, and to doing more as an entire family, even with the challenges their son’s special needs bring. For all of us, we learned again how important human connection is in both facing our challenges and recognizing our rewards.

# Announcements



## HAPPENINGS AT IN GOOD COMPANY:

### COORDINATOR DEPARTURE AND HIRE

**Jeremy Sanford** left his position as Respite Coordinator on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006. He and his wife made the decision after the birth of their second child this past September that he will be staying home with his kids during the day and will be working part time in the evenings. He's unsure what this position might be and we hope it may continue to involve some work with In Good Company. Jeremy expressed his gratitude in working with FSRC and the community saying, "I want to thank you all for the amazing work you do with families in Dane County! It has been my pleasure to meet so many of you and work with you in meeting the needs of kids with disabilities in our community!" Jeremy was an amazing co-worker and support to providers and Dane County families. He will be truly missed!!

One gift of Jeremy's decision to stay home with his kids is that he can be called upon by us for consult on occasion. We took him up on this offer with regard to his replacement. He was involved in the interviewing and screening of applicants in order to assist in finding a strong match for his job responsibilities. We are happy to announce **Sara Stefka** will begin working at In Good Company on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Sara is from Denton, Texas and has great experiences related to the work she will be doing for us. Look for more from Sara in our next newsletter. Sara's email will be [sstefka@fsrcdane.org](mailto:sstefka@fsrcdane.org).

### SHAUNA FOSS'S NAME CHANGE

Following her September nuptials, Shauna Foss became Shauna Sendelbach. Congratulations to Shauna and her husband Josh as they start this chapter of their lives. Shauna's new email is [ssendelbach@fsrcdane.org](mailto:ssendelbach@fsrcdane.org).

### NEW APPROACH IS SUCCESSFUL

The change of approach to services implemented in 2006 has worked in increasing the number of families who have access to respite services from In Good Company. We have been able to move 78 families from the waiting list to active list in 2006. Thanks to everyone who supported our new plan!

## HAPPENINGS IN THE FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM:



**Emily Peterson**, a senior at Stoughton High School received a gold medal in her Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> Special Olympics bowling tournament, sending her to State Special Olympics for Bowling this Saturday, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> in Milwaukee. Emily is 17, and although she has received ribbons before in Special Olympic swimming competition, this is her first ever medal or first place award. Congratulations, Emily!



### It's a Boy!

Congratulations go out to Family Support case manager **Amy DeWald** and her husband, who announced the birth of their first child, **Gabriel Nolan**, on the morning of November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Both Amy and Gabriel are doing well and have already stopped by the office to visit staff. We are very happy about Gabriel's arrival and are looking forward to more visits and watching him grow up!

### A message from Chris Benson:

Hi everyone,

I want to express my thanks for the cards, calls and good wishes you have sent while I have been off on medical leave. Your positive thoughts are greatly appreciated. I am feeling better and doing well.

Sadly, I have learned that in order to maintain my health, I need to make some changes in my life. The most difficult change requires leaving the Family Support and Resource Center. When I started with FSRC 16 years ago, I couldn't have imagined the number of dedicated families and professionals I would get the chance to know. I will always be impressed by the strength that comes when people work together toward a shared goal. I will miss working with all of you.

I'm not sure yet, what I will be doing next but I will be staying in Madison. I'll look forward to seeing many of you out and about in the community.

I say good-bye with many fond and inspiring memories.

Good Wishes to you all,

*Chris Benson*



## DECEMBER 2006

- Now - Dec. 31**      **Olbrich's Holiday Express—Flower and Model Train Show**  
Enjoy the large-scale model trains among the lights and poinsettias! For non-members, admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for children ages 3-12. Children under 2 get in for free. For more information, call 608-246-4550 or see [www.olbrich.org](http://www.olbrich.org).
- Dec. 31**              **2006 New Year's Eve - A Family Celebration, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Madison West**  
Family buffet dinner, kids entertainment (including swimming at the indoor waterpark, face painting, karaoke, music and dancing, a scavenger hunt, and more!) Festivities start at 5pm with a balloon drop at 11pm. Call 608-826-0500 or email [wiscohotel@aol.com](mailto:wiscohotel@aol.com) for more information.
- Now - Jan. 1**        **Holiday Fantasy in Lights, Olin-Turville Park**  
Drive-thru the park and see the lights! 24-hrs a day and FREE admission. See [www.fantastyinlights.com](http://www.fantastyinlights.com) for more information.

## JANUARY 2007

- Jan. 7**                **Free Family Sunday, Madison Children's Museum**  
Explore the museum, free of charge! 12:00pm-5:00pm. The next Free Family Sunday is Feb. 4, 2007, same time. For details, see [www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org](http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org) or call 608-256-6445.
- Jan. 28**              **Celebrating Youth! Hoopla Circus, Monona Terrace**  
Three stages featuring youth performance, lots interactive arts and activities, exhibitors, and much more. Event is free of charge. To learn more, call 608-276-9782 (ext. 23) or go to [www.celebratingyouth.org](http://www.celebratingyouth.org).

## FEBRUARY 2007

- Feb. 11**              **Leo Lionni's Swimmy, Federick & Inch by Inch, Overture Center for the Arts**  
See three of Leo Lionni's award winning stories performed on stage. Recommended for ages 3-5. Call 608-258-4141 or see [www.overturecenter.com](http://www.overturecenter.com) for more information.
- Feb. 16-18**        **Zor Shrine Circus, Alliant Energy Center**  
Performances on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Reserved seats are \$15.00 and general admission seats are \$12.00. Go to <http://shrinecircusinfo.com/> or call 608-267-3976 to learn more or to order tickets.

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Madison, WI 53713  
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**Website: [www.fsrcdane.org](http://www.fsrcdane.org)**

## Camera Day 2006

On November 5, 51 children & their family members were able to try out their photography skills at Camera Day at the Kohl Center. Participants joined other kids and youth and their mentors through the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program for a special event, which included free disposable cameras and developing, photo opportunities related to UW athletics, and attendance at a UW Women's basketball game. Everyone had a great time.

Thanks to Big Brothers/Big Sisters for organizing this event and including FSRC families, and to United Way, Badger Pals, and Stuart Stair.

### A Reminder about Deadlines for End-of-Year Requests

**Due at FSRC by noon:**

12/18 for checks mailed 12/22

1/3 for last 2006 checks mailed 1/10

1/10 for first 2007 checks mailed 1/17

Deadline for last 2006 **fiscal agent** forms is: 12/15