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TOPICS

2007, ISSUE 3

Music to a mother's ears



"The early—and more intense—intervention he's received at Turnstone has set him fantastically well for his future transition into mainstream education," says Abi Ajisafe.

Zhane Tolulope Inko-Tariah is talking, much to the delight of both his family and the staff at Turnstone's Robert Kimbrough Early Learning Center.

Abi Ajisafe was nearly at her wit's end. Her son Zhane was demonstrating speech delay, and despite her best efforts, Abi wasn't having any success finding the right combination of TLC and therapy she knew was essential to Zhane's development.

Abi finally found that perfect combination, although it was nearly 4,000 miles away, right here at Turnstone.

While Zhane (pronounced *Zane*) was born in Fort Wayne, Abi was born and raised in London, where she holds a very demanding position with a large international investment-banking company. As Zhane turned 3 years old, it became clear that he wasn't reaching the milestones in speech development typical for his age. Speech delay is sometimes, but not necessarily, a precursor to autism.

"There aren't many childcare centers in London that incorporate speech therapy and occupational therapy on site, and it was hard for Zhane to have to leave the nursery daily and travel to an office for his speech therapy," Abi explains. "He was very unhappy with the therapy and would just sit at the table and refuse to cooperate with the speech therapist."

Zhane wasn't showing any improvement, and Abi didn't know where to turn. Zhane's welfare was her top priority, but she still had to meet the demands of her hectic work schedule. That's when Abi's sister, Rachel Ikudabo, a Fort Wayne resident, stepped forward with a plan: Zhane could live with her in a more stable environment while undergoing therapy. Abi made the very difficult decision to let Zhane live with his aunt, and he was enrolled in childcare at the Robert Kimbrough Early Learning Center.

Continued on page 4

Turning disabilities into possibilities



Our growing sports programs need your help

"It was unlike anything I'd ever done before," she said. "It surprised me. You wouldn't think it would, but it increases your heart rate. It gives me a sense of freedom."

I look at the above quotation quite often (it's taped to my computer), and I swear my heart actually starts to beat more quickly each time I read those words. Maybe it's because I knew the person who said those words, our client Laurie Williams, who died recently from a stroke at age 40. Maybe, it's because Laurie was describing feelings she'd never had a chance to experience until she was 40. And maybe my heart's quickening is due to a burst of pride in Turnstone because the joy Laurie described so well came as a result of her participation on Turnstone's power soccer team (a team that, by the way, finished third in nationals in this, its first year).

Power soccer is just one of the adaptive sports we now offer through our therapeutic recreation services. Until we built our gymnasium in 1995, we didn't have any sort of therapeutic recreation at Turnstone. But since then, we've developed a quite successful and longstanding wheelchair basketball program. And we've offered tae kwon

do, wheelchair tennis, and, as of this year, power soccer, and an aquatic lap club. Interest just keeps growing and expanding into areas we never dreamed.

Has our therapeutic recreation program developed as part of a well-designed plan? Well, yes and no. If you consider our mission is to help people with disabilities gain independence and live with dignity—and the best way we've found to do that is to be responsive to our community—then the answer is "yes." Most of the programs have started because people in our community approached us with a desire for a specific sport.

If being a part of a well-designed plan assumes we've set aside the money for the staff, equipment, and transportation costs that each sport requires before we leapt in, then the answer would have to be "no." Each sport costs a lot of money because teams have to travel across the country to compete against other adaptive sports teams, and, believe me, the equipment is expensive. So far, we've run the program using minimal staff hours and enlisting the support of over 35 volunteers. The parents and families of the therapeutic recreation participants are also of huge importance to the success of the

program. They are advocates, fundraisers, and "friendraisers."

In the coming months, Turnstone will be exploring how to take the program to the next level. After more than 10 years, the program has gained enough momentum that folks are coming to us and wanting to do and see more activities—activities like wheelchair rugby and wheelchair fencing.

Before we move forward, Turnstone will explore how to introduce these activities, while also sustaining the existing adaptive activities and sports teams. That means finding the experts in the field, looking for sponsors, and setting aside additional dollars in our budget to ensure the therapeutic recreation program can continue as long as people want to participate.

We'd love to have you come out and cheer for any of our teams at the next home game. You'll be amazed at the level of competition, skill, and drive exhibited by the players.

You'll see people with disabilities turn their disabilities into possibilities.

And, if afterward you want to get more involved, we'd love to have you!

Welcome new staff

Krista Nicolet,
Pediatric Occupational Therapist
Julia Harter,
Pediatric Physical Therapist
Emily Mead,
Receptionist
Chad Reichert,
Adult Day Services Program Assist.

Welcome new board officers and directors

(Elected June 11)

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Jenee Johnson, *Account Executive, Providence Communications*
Richard Espinoza, *Advertising Director, Fronteras/Fort Wayne Newspapers*
Kathy Porter, *Executive Assistant, Pizza Hut of Fort Wayne*

News to note and upcoming events

We're car crazy

Street Rod rocks

Thousands of people visited the Allen County Fairgrounds for the 33rd Annual Muddy River Run on August 11-12. As it has done for the past 23 years, the Fort Wayne Street Rod Association donated the proceeds from the Muddy River Run to Turnstone. Turnstone is appreciative of the Street Rodders for making this event possible. Turnstone's thanks also go to the Shoaff Park Lions and Waynedale Lions for continuing to volunteer their time at the annual Pancake Sausage Breakfast, which is held in conjunction with the Muddy River Run. Proceeds from the breakfast have been designated to Turnstone's residential ramp building program.

Just for kicks

Power soccer teams excel

Two Turnstone power soccer teams traveled to Indianapolis for the National Power Soccer Tournament June 7-9. Despite playing together for less than a year, the teams showed great skill and ability.

Team 1 made it is the semifinals and earned third place, while Team 2 made it to the quarterfinals.

Growing gains

ECA gives A-OK

Open since October 2005, Robert Kimbrough Early Learning Center's childcare continues to grow. This May, the center received Level 3 Paths to QUALITY certification from the Early Childhood Alliance in recognition of the center's commitment to enhancing the level of childcare and education provided.

A fitting tribute

In memory

In dedication and memory of Chloe Cook, Turnstone has added an Uppertone, a piece of exercise equipment designed for quadriplegics, to the Health and Wellness Center. If you haven't visited the center lately, please contact Joe Worman or Amber Goldman at (260) 483-2100 to find out how else the center has grown.

The 'will' to make a difference

Turnstone is participating in the 2007 Leave a Legacy® Write a Will event. On October 17 and 18, attorneys Stacy Somers and Charles Backs of Beers, Mallers, Backs and Salin, LLP, will volunteer their time to advise members of the Turnstone staff and clients and their families about wills and charitable bequests. Appointments are available at 8:30, 9, 9:30, 10, and 10:30 a.m. If you choose to make a charitable bequest, the lawyer will prepare a simple will for you, completely free of charge. For more details or to reserve your appointment, contact Jen Neher, director of development and marketing, at (260) 483-2100. For more information on Leave A Legacy events, visit www.pgcni.org.

Wish list

Clear-plastic tubs • bingo set • sentence strips • masking tape • gallon jugs of washable tempera paint • washable markers • construction paper • hole punches • staplers for kids • divided foam plates • 8-ounce foam cups • paper towels • baby wipes • napkins • plastic spoons and forks • gloves for food service • bleach • laundry detergent

Mark Your Calendar

Concours d' Elegance

On Sunday, **September 2**, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Dean V. Kruse Foundation will host the 3rd Annual Concours d' Elegance. "Celebrating 1957's Best Autos," this year's concours will be held at the World War II Victory Museum show grounds. A portion of proceeds from the event will benefit Turnstone. To learn more, contact Bethany Clapper, director of events, at (260) 483-2100.

27th Annual Golf Outing

The outing is set for Wednesday, **September 5**, at Autumn Ridge Golf Club. Check-in and registration will begin at 11:30 a.m., with a shotgun start at 1 p.m. A complimentary lunch will be provided by Classic Café. Following 18 holes, players will be treated to dinner. Sponsors, teams, and volunteers are needed. For more information, contact Bethany Clapper at bethany@turnstone.org, or call (260) 483-2100.

Friday Nites Live

The 1963 Corvette Sting Ray being raffled by Turnstone in October will be on hand when Turnstone and Jefferson Pointe host the final Friday Nites Live event of the season on **September 28**. Check out this sweet split-window 'Vette coupé in person—and buy your raffle tickets. The musical guest will be Bees Knees. Friday Nites Live begin at 6:30 p.m. in the center courtyard.

Continued from cover

That was a little over a year ago, and, well, what a difference a year at Turnstone can make. Through speech therapy, the dedication of staff members, and interaction with other children, Zhane, now 4 years old, has made dramatic progress.

“When Zhane first came here, he couldn’t say a single word,” says Adrienne Lyon, director of children’s services at Turnstone. “He made noises that had intonations and patterns similar to speech, but they weren’t actual words. After speech therapists Kate Cox and Abby Wooldridge worked with him, he’s made significant improvement.

“First, Zhane began repeating what he heard,” Adrienne says. “Then, he began responding appropriately to greetings. Now, he speaks the names of classmates and teachers and often says things spontaneously, such as ‘I want to color.’”

and makes an effort to respond to all requests, such as, ‘Put your clothes in the basket.’

“Zhane has always had trouble transitioning from one activity to another, but with the patience and care from the Turnstone staff he’s getting much better,” Abi says. “He’ll occasionally still try an old trick or two, but that’s him just being ‘smart,’ as opposed to being unable to understand that he needs to stop playing and sit at the dinner table or go to bed, for example.”

Knowing that Zhane is getting the best of therapy and care makes it easier for Abi to cope with the distance between them. “It’s very hard living away from your son, especially when he’s so young, but seeing the improvements in his speech, interaction, and general happiness makes it much easier to accept,” Abi says. “He’s made a lot of friends at Turnstone to whom he refers by name and has settled into a routine with which he seems very comfortable.”

Now, Zhane also benefits from speech therapy at Buschor Hear Preschool Center, part of Fort Wayne Community Schools. “Zhane always looks forward to going to school,” Rachel says. “It’s been fun having him live with me. Of course, young children are always a handful, but Zhane’s shown great improvement; he’s changed a lot. Turnstone has people who really know how to take care of children with disabilities.”

In both the preschool and childcare at the Kimbrough Early Learning Center, children of all abilities are learning and growing physically, emotionally, and socially. Caring, compassion, and teamwork are the keys.

“As proud as I am of Zhane and the progress he’s made, I’m just as proud of our staff members,” Adrienne says. “Members of our staff have been diligent, patient, and thoughtful as they worked with Zhane. I really applaud their efforts. There were some tough days with him in the beginning. But just as it is with everything we do here at Turnstone, we were able to help him through a total team effort.” n



Zhane with speech therapist Abby Wooldridge.

Of course, no one is more amazed and elated by Zhane’s progress than Abi, who comes to Fort Wayne to spend time with him as often as her work will allow. And, Zhane can now tell his mom about his day over the phone when she’s in London.

“It was hard to imagine that Zhane would make such leaps and bounds in his therapy,” Abi says. “The early—and more intense—intervention he’s received at Turnstone has set him fantastically well for his future transition into mainstream education.

“Zhane is able to articulate his emotions and needs much better now,” Abi continues. “Instead of simply pointing to objects he wants, or ignoring requests he can’t respond to or understand, he’ll now ask, for example, ‘Mom, can I get a doughnut?’ He follows instructions

‘No Excuses’ for this preschool grad

Although looking through a box of old photos brought him some smiles, Kyle Maynard really didn’t need visual aids to help him recall his preschool days at Turnstone when he visited the center in June.

“I remember the therapy here,” says Kyle, who was back in Fort Wayne to serve as the keynote speaker at

the 2007 Board of Directors Gala. “I know the motor skills I’ve developed came from what I learned at Turnstone.”

No Excuses: The True Story of a Congenital Amputee Who Became a Champion in Wrestling and in Life, the title of Kyle’s best-selling book, is an apt description of a young man who’s become an inspiration to people with and without disabilities around the world. Kyle, now 21, was born with congenital amputation and has just three major joints, a neck and two shoulders. He has no elbows or knees.

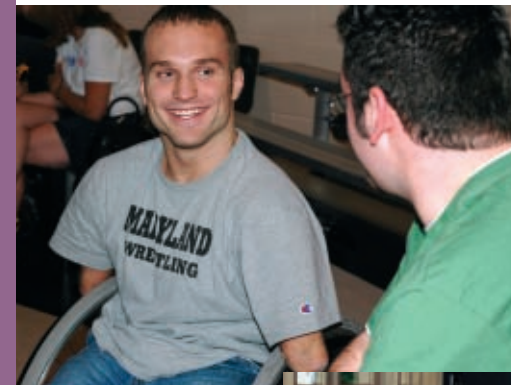
But despite those physical differences, Kyle competed in a wide variety of sports without the aid of prosthetics and became one of the top high

school wrestlers in Georgia. He now wrestles for the University of Georgia. “When you start thinking of yourself as different, you start making excuses,” Kyle says.

Kyle’s inspirational story of hard work, perseverance, and positivity has been the subject of numerous magazine articles and television segments, and he’s also become a sought-after speaker and national talk-show guest. Oprah Winfrey and Larry King, among others, have welcomed Kyle onto their shows. In 2004, Kyle received an ESPY award for Best Athlete with a Disability from ESPN.

In 2006, Kyle spoke professionally at 44 events here and abroad, including in the United Kingdom and Japan, but he waived his speaker’s fee for Turnstone, where he was a student until he was 6 years old. “I really believe in the things they do here at Turnstone,” Kyle says. “Turnstone has had a positive impact on me and my entire family.”

Kyle’s mom, Anita, is his No. 1 fan—and a huge fan of Turnstone, as well. “This is the best place ever—we’ll forever be indebted to Turnstone,” she says.



**Top: Kyle Maynard
At right: Percy Talati with Vince and Ellen Heiny.**



Seventh Annual Gala another big success

More than 200 friends and families near and dear to the organization, along with matching foundation grants, raised more than \$420,000 during Turnstone’s Seventh Annual Board of Directors Gala at the Fort Wayne Country Club on June 21. These funds will help support therapeutic services for children and adults with physical disabilities.

As he has done in previous years, Dean Kruse was the guest auctioneer. Dean not only donated his time and

talents, he donated the use of his Arizona home during the live auction. Other guest speakers included Melissa Long of Indiana’s NewsCenter; Rabbi Jonathan Katz; and Kyle Maynard (see above).

This year’s live auction featured tickets to the Masters, a girl’s weekend in South Haven, and an adorable schnoodle affectionately named “Maynard” after the guest speaker. There were many silent-auction items up for bid as well. This year’s raffle winner will be

both punctual and stylish wearing the Rolex watch donated by Bradley Gough Diamonds.

Our thanks goes to all who attended the gala, our wonderful, always-dedicated committee members, and the many volunteers who made the event a success. Our thanks also goes to our sponsors and matching foundation donors for their generosity. Please look for a complete listing of sponsors in the next issue of *Topics*.

Thank you to all who have given honorarium and memorial gifts to Turnstone from March 8 through July 10, 2007.

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Thanks and 'hats off' to:

- **Fort Wayne Derby Girls** for hosting a mock bout at Turnstone this June and for their generous gift of \$1,300.
- **The Madge Rothschild Foundation, Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation, O'Rourke-Schof Foundation, and Clinton E. Newman Foundation** for their matching gifts made at the seventh annual Board of Directors Gala this June.
- **Ian and Miriam Rolland Foundation** for its gift of \$15,000 in support of Turnstone's Adult Day Services program.
- **Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, English Bonter Mitchell and O'Rourke-Schof Foundation** for their support of Turnstone's general operations.
- **Fort Wayne Flash** for allowing Turnstone's power soccer team to present a demonstration of its skills during halftime.
- **Theta Theta Chapter of the Psi Iota Xi Sorority** for the donation of \$2,000 to purchase augmentative communication equipment and to support the Kimbrough Early Learning Center tuition-assistance fund.
- **Lane Middle School students, faculty, and parents** for their gift of \$150 to support Turnstone's children's program.
- The **fourth-grade class at St. Charles Catholic School** for its gift of \$3,406, generated through the class' annual Read-A-Thon. This gift will help support Turnstone's therapeutic recreation program.
- The **Carson and Rosemary Noecker Family Foundation** for helping to support a pediatric physical therapist's position.

Volunteer opportunities

Turnstone has many volunteer opportunities available to persons of all ages and abilities. Contact Karen Tyner at (260) 483-2100. Call Bethany Clapper to lend your talents and assist with fundraising events.

Childcare openings

For children of all abilities, ages 3 to 6, the Kimbrough Early Learning Center is open from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Care is available on either a part-time or full-time basis. Call Adrienne Lyon at (260) 483-2100.

