The Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism & Developmental Disorders

The Future We Hoped to See
Dear Friends,

We now have a state-of-the-art facility in Maine that provides comprehensive care and services to individuals with autism and developmental disorders throughout the lifespan. Importantly, we have the leadership and talented, committed staff to fulfill their vision for continued growth and expansion. To all who supported the efforts to make this happen: thank you! Please share this triumph with us.

When the Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders opened in a new building this August, it represented a milestone achievement. This stunning, thoughtfully designed building is now the destination for all who require our services, including children under five, who require early intervention, and adults of all ages. Today, we appreciate the fact that, with the right care and ongoing support services, our loved ones can live much fuller lives than we once thought was possible.

The evolution to create a comprehensive center—among only 11 in the U.S.—began three years ago with the goal of raising $7.35 million. The need was there: more than 40,000 Maine families live with autism. Those who were aware that Matthew Siegel, MD, a nationally respected specialist in developmental disorders, had established a clinical and research center at Maine Behavioral Healthcare understood the opportunity. We would build on that impressive enterprise. The generous response, notably during the Covid-19 pandemic, was overwhelming.

Families with someone who has been diagnosed with autism know what it feels like to stare into the abyss—to wonder what life will be like for their loved one. Those families are no longer alone, because there are now close to 100 specialized, experienced staff in one location—at the Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence—who will guide and support their loved one, as well as the family.

Such a center requires leadership, and we have it in Dr. Siegel, whose vision has attracted top clinical and research staff from outside Maine. The initiative to launch a fundraising campaign, break ground for a new building and open the doors in 2021 required the support of MaineHealth, Maine Behavioral Healthcare, foundations, corporations and our community. We are grateful to the enthusiastic individuals from throughout the state who saw the value in having a comprehensive center in Maine. They are all aware that, without programs and services, hard-working employees must be at home to care for their loved one.

We cannot say enough about our talented, dedicated campaign cabinet—a group of individuals who cared deeply and worked hard in order to achieve fundraising success. We asked that they keep the mission at the front of their minds and told others about the role they were playing on behalf of those who feel isolated and are so busy caring for a family member that they can barely advocate for themselves.

Love, passion and hope are not strategies; the goal of raising funds for the center required leadership. So many generous people rose to the challenge.

To all who supported our campaign to establish comprehensive care for autism and developmental disorders care in Maine, saying “thank you” seems inadequate. We are humbled by your generosity—and by the duty and loyalty you have shown to your friends and neighbors.

Sincerely,

Wendi O’Donovan and Nancy Pond
Campaign Co-Chairs
The Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders

The capital campaign we launched three years ago...

...was always about the need and the vision. The need was for a full range of services, across the lifespan, for those with autism and developmental disorders. In Maine, more than 40,000 families require those services. The vision was to take our already impressive Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders to the next level of comprehensive support and innovation.

The campaign soon became about something else: the tremendous dedication of people who live in this community. It is clear that they want the best care to be available in Maine, so they proceeded to embrace our fundraising initiative to raise $7.35 million during the first global pandemic in 100 years. They supported the campaign financially, played leadership roles and found a number of ways to help.

Some showed enormous bravery by sharing, for the first time, what had been private: their experience caring for a family member with autism or a significant developmental disorder.

Thanks to countless people, we surpassed our fundraising goal, completed construction of our new, 28,000-square-foot building and have welcomed many new, specialized staff who now care for an increasing number of children and adults at the center.

The future we hoped to see is more than a stunning new building with space for the expanded programs and services now being provided. It is about the future that families hope to see for their loved ones—where they can reach their greatest potential.

Care Throughout the Lifespan and Specialized Services

Today there is broad recognition that we can't just study and care for children with autism and developmental disorders. These children become adults, and their needs don't disappear. Our Adult Outpatient Clinic is the starting point.

“We are focused on the need to help patients and families with the problems they face—specifically, emotional and behavioral challenges,” Dr. Siegel notes. “Our center is considered to be a leader in this area because of our commitment to multidisciplinary treatment and studying the biological mechanisms or features that relate to these behaviors.

“We understand that employment is an important goal for many of the adult patients we now see. We don’t need to replicate existing job training programs, but to recognize and treat emotional or behavioral conditions, such as anxiety, that can prevent them from functioning in a job or vocational program.”

There is also extensive evidence showing the importance of early intervention in children under age five, he adds. “That is reflected in our early intervention programs. If we don’t perform intensive work with children when they’re very young, they will not arrive at kindergarten or the first grade with the communication and learning skills they need.”

Colleen Foley-Ingersoll, MEd, BCBA, a state leader in early intervention, joined the center as Senior Director to focus on this work. “We know that a young child who cannot use a communication system, such as language or symbols, will use behavior instead—that is, acting out,” she explains. “They need to learn how to learn, we use specialized techniques and training to help them. There is a window of time to accomplish this, and it’s a very important window.”

In addition to programs for adults and children that are shaped by the most current research-based evidence, the center has added staff and services that bring its offerings to the next level. The role of the new family navigator is essentially to take a family’s hand and guide them through each step in care. The resource library provides a range of materials on autism and developmental disorders aimed at educating and supporting families. Opportunities to practice sitting in a barber chair, a dental chair or a blood draw chair—critical life skills—are now being provided onsite, making life easier for patients and family members while also supporting research.

“Our patients face huge barriers in receiving basic health care, from having their teeth cleaned to having their blood drawn,” says Dr. Siegel. “This puts them at great risk for developing health problems. We decided to break down that wall between mental health and physical health by embedding those services in our center and providing the support they need.” The center has collaborated with the University of New England College of Dental Medicine to bring third-year dental students to provide basic oral care onsite under faculty supervision.

A Center Shaped by Innovation

The Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders is widely respected for its commitment to patients and families. Established research includes the PREDICT study, which uses biosensor technology designed to predict problem behaviors before they arise, and the Autism Inpatient Collection, a six-site inpatient research network aimed at identifying genetic subgroups within the autism spectrum. Two new investigators have already joined the center, and much more research is planned.

Highly specialized staff have flocked to the center. “At every level, people have responded to our vision and want to work here,” says Dr. Siegel. “They share our sense of mission and engagement.”

The reputations of Dr. Siegel and the center continue to grow. In 2020, he published national practice guidelines on psychiatric care for children with intellectual disability. This summer, Dr. Siegel was one of 22 specialists named by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to serve on the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, which guides national autism research policy.

A Community Advisory Council comprised of 16 enthusiastic individuals from throughout Maine has formed and meets quarterly. They include parents, grandparents, providers, state officials and regional and national experts. “The council will help us to assess the many needs and determine where we can have the most impact,” says Dr. Siegel.
The Future We See Now
As we settle into our Center For Excellence and welcome an increased number of individuals, we understand that excellence is not a destination. “It is a daily process of doing your best, pushing forward to challenge what you’re doing and determining how to do it better,” says Dr. Siegel.

Discussions are already underway to develop the following next phases of support:

• **Enhanced family support:** We will determine what mix of training, support groups and lectures are most valuable to the families and community we serve.

• **Intensive care:** We plan to expand the care being provided at the outpatient clinic, most likely with the addition of an intensive outpatient program.

• **On-site feeding clinic:** The high incidence of feeding disorders among those with autism can result in medical problems. We hope to identify funding and a specialized practitioner to focus on this area.

• **Expansion of research and recruiting additional investigators:** Our research team is now together in the new building, and we’re creating the intellectual energy needed to drive further innovation. The new center has multiple observation rooms with cameras and audio to allow us to perform more research.

“For those with a developmental disorder, this center is the best our state has to offer, with everything in one place,” says Ms. Foley-Ingersoll. “One of the main values here is innovation. We all feel like the sky’s the limit. It’s very exciting.”

“What we’ve achieved together is amazing,” Dr. Siegel adds, “but it is just a starting point—a launching pad to accomplish much more.”

The successful capital campaign infused all who were involved with optimism. “The campaign and its leadership led to so many friendships and new connections—personal and professional,” says Dr. Siegel. “It’s an extraordinary group of individuals who have come together as a caring community.”

Thank You

We are pleased to recognize these gifts made in support of the Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders as of October 1, 2021. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this listing and we regret any errors or omissions. Should you identify inaccuracies or omissions, please contact Cornell L. Stinson, Director of Development at 207-661-6100 or CStinson@MaineBehavioralHealthcare.org. If you do not wish to receive fundraising communications from Maine Behavioral Healthcare, please email Development@MaineBehavioralHealthcare.org.

The benefactor donors listed here share one thing in common: a belief that the Glickman Lauder Center of Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders is an important investment. Thank you for helping Maine Behavioral Healthcare expand its capacity to care for this population across the lifespan while continuing to provide care that is second to none.
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