Dear Friends,

In this issue, we’re very proud to share our stories of success. Every time that a child or an adult achieves a goal, it is usually the result of a team effort. That individual has likely worked very hard, and they have had dedicated staff and a loving family offering support and encouragement. And the other member of that team is you. Our donors may not be here for the day-to-day activities and education, but there is no doubt that their generosity makes it possible to provide the highest quality programs and services that are making these dreams come true.

Each donation – no matter how large or small – is vitally important. In factoring all that goes into providing services, from utilities, food, staffing, etc., our total operating budget amounts to $250,000 per day. When you consider that our organization provides services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can get an idea of the scope of our operation – and our needs.

With the inclusion of Barber Honors, we recognize in a special way those individuals and businesses that have made a gift in the 2016-17 fiscal year. We offer our deepest appreciation for their investment in our mission, and their belief that we will indeed make dreams come true for our children, adults and families.

Sincerely,

John J. Barber
President & Chief Executive Officer

ON THE COVER
Speech therapist Stephanie Jordan is helping Bella Andrzejewski use her eyes to communicate.

OUR MISSION STATMENT
We “Make dreams come true.” We provide children and adults with autism, intellectual disabilities and behavioral health challenges and their families the education, support and resources needed to be self-reliant, independent and valued members of their community. In addition, we provide the professionals who serve them with world-class education and training.
It's an adventure that father and son keep coming back to. Their collection of medals – five each – serves as just one reminder of all the Beasts they've taken on – not that they could ever forget. Rick said Logan often reminds his dad about the upcoming Beast.

“He looks forward to it every year and he’s always asking and anticipating and wanting to know if we’re doing it,” Rick said.

The Beast is just one part of a very active schedule. Rick and Logan golf every weekend. Rick and his wife, Mary, also coach basketball and soccer for the Special Olympics, which Logan participates in, too. It’s a father-son duo that’s always running around, and not just on the sands of Presque Isle.

Logan is also involved with the Barber National Institute in other ways. He has received job training and assistance from Family Support Services.

“It’s nice an organization does things like this,” Rick said, “otherwise, where would we go?”

The Burrows family is also happy to give back to an organization that gives to them. The Beast on the Bay fits into their active lifestyle while also benefiting a cause near to their hearts.

“This was just a great fit for our family. It means a lot that we both can do it.”

Shown above: Rick and Logan Burrows show off the medals they earned at Barber Beast on the Bay.

Ten miles. 30 obstacles. One goal. That’s the mantra when takin on Barber Beast on the Bay. More than 700 participants have already registered for this year’s event set for Saturday, Sept 8 at Presque Isle State Park, the finish line at Waldameer.

While participants tackle the challenges during the Beast, they will also be helping children and adults with autism, intellectual disabilities and behavioral health challenges at the Barber National Institute who take on their own obstacles every day.

With past favorite obstacles like ‘Over Under,’ ‘Angle Wrangle,’ ‘No Monkeying Around,’ and ‘Wave Goodbye’ all set to return alongside several new obstacles, there’s sure to be something for all participants, new or experienced.

Barber Beast on the Bay also offers a course for those ages 16+ with physical or intellectual disabilities. The 10-mile course and our adapted course come together for the final two obstacles and all participants cross the finish line together!

To learn more about this year’s Beast on the Bay, please visit www.barberbeast.org.

Shown above: Rick and Logan Burrows show off the medals they earned at Barber Beast on the Bay.
Walking through the Zurn Science Center at Gannon University with a bulging backpack slung over his shoulder, Casey Ireson looks like most any other college student. And in many ways he is. Now in his third year majoring in environmental engineering, he worries about upcoming mid-terms and papers and makes plans for the weekend. But at one time, Casey never thought college was possible. And getting to college was often an elusive goal that took years of hard work, not to mention help from a team of dedicated supporters.

When Casey was five years old he was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, a form of high-functioning autism marked by a lack of social and coping skills. Children with Asperger’s are often very intelligent, but display behavior challenges due to an inability to comprehend social cues and norms that other kids instinctively understand.

For Casey, those differences were evident from an early age. “I would watch him in his preschool classroom, and I could see that he was different from the other students,” said Casey’s father, Kevin Ireson. Casey was evaluated, but demonstrated such high intelligence that teachers thought he just wasn’t being challenged enough.

“They said that things would get better when he got to kindergarten, but they didn’t,” said Casey’s mother, Becky. “They just got worse.”

Another evaluation labeled Casey as “emotionally disturbed,” and Becky was being called to school several times a week to get her son. After he had a particularly bad emotional meltdown, Becky felt at the end of her rope and knew she had to do something.

A PHONE CALL THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Becky knew about the Barber National Institute and, not knowing where else to turn, she dialed the phone number. “It was almost 5 p.m. and I didn’t know if anyone would answer. But Maureen (Barber-Carey) picked up. That call changed our life,” said Becky. They talked for more than an hour, and, for the first time, Becky heard the term Asperger’s. “I wanted her to know that these children can have bright futures, but they really need the right supports,” said Dr. Barber-Carey.

Becky continued to research the condition, becoming more convinced that the description fit her son. Armed with information from Dr. Barber-Carey, she pursued further testing for Casey. “When we finally got the diagnosis, it was a relief,” said Becky. “At least we knew what we were dealing with.”

With suggestions from Dr. Barber-Carey, the Iresons pursued the services that Casey needed. A behavioral team from the Barber National Institute began working with Casey in school and at home, and his family began to see changes.

During the summers, Casey attended Connections Camp at the Barber Institute, where he worked more intensively on social skills. Many of the children that he met there are still Casey’s friends today.

The camp also gave Casey the support he needed to overcome many of the fears that led to disruptive behaviors. “Casey was afraid of everything, but because he didn’t share a lot about
his emotions we didn’t see that,” said Becky. Casey was terrified of boats, but learned how to overcome his fears so that he could ride the water taxi across the bay with the other campers. At camp the next summer, he went on a small sailboat with an adaptive sailing instructor.

Casey also had many sensory issues, particularly a high sensitivity to noise. “When he was young, we were literally trapped in our home,” said Casey’s father. “We couldn’t go to a ball game because there might be loud clapping, or go to a parade because there might be sirens. And if we did go somewhere, he would have a melt down and we would have to leave.”

Casey’s behavioral team developed a plan to take him to a bowling alley every Saturday morning. Each week, they stayed a little longer and over time, he became less sensitive to noise and actually started to enjoy bowling.

“He started tolerating noise in other places, too. The change in him and in our lives was amazing,” said Kevin.

Casey continued receiving behavioral services through ninth grade, and his mother wants people—especially those setting state budgets for these supports—to know that funding is vital. “Success is possible for these children, but only if they get the help they need,” said Becky.

**CASEY’S MOUNTAIN**

While the Iresons always believed that college would be in Casey’s future, he didn’t even consider it until he first saw the HBO movie about Temple Grandin. “Here was someone with even more challenges than I have, and she went on to accomplish so much,” said Casey. For months, Casey would watch the movie every morning, and it had a profound effect on his expectations for himself. “I knew that I wanted to work in a field that I loved and do something where I could make a difference,” said Casey.

Around this time, Casey found his favorite quote from Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Mount Everest, that helped guide his journey: ‘It’s not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.’

“Autism is not who I am; it is something that I have. I will never be cured from autism; it is lifelong. But I decided that, if I worked really hard, I could reach my own summit,” said Casey.

His first semester at college, Casey was anxious about the new challenges and found that he had to change his study habits, giving himself more time to prepare for tests and papers. “But I really liked all of the learning that is possible, and loved the newfound freedom that comes with being an adult.”

**WINNING OVER**

In 2010, Casey began giving talks about autism to area elementary and high school students. He went to Clarion University in 2013 expecting to speak to a small group of students, only to find that 150 students and teachers had gathered to hear his presentation. “I don’t know how, but I just got up and did it,” said Casey.

After hearing his presentation to the Iroquois School District, a little girl stood up and said that she never told anyone that she had a brother with autism. Hearing Casey, she felt the courage to share her story.

“Maybe because of everything he’s been through, Casey is sensitive to other people’s pain,” said Becky. “If he sees someone in trouble, he is the first person to help.”

Casey can recall the bullying he experienced and some of the teachers who resisted having a student with autism in their classes. But he focuses more on the acceptance he has found. “Some people have deep set prejudices but most have an amazing ability to change,” said Becky. “Casey has changed people’s hearts and minds. He wins them over one person at a time.”

Becky often thinks back to the day she made that first phone call, and the doors it opened for Casey and her family. “Casey had the drive to push through, but I know that we would never be where we are today without the Barber Institute. From our very first TSS when Casey was in kindergarten to everyone we have dealt with—they have all been wonderful. It has made all the difference.”
Bella’s face lights up as she plays a matching game on the computer screen, successfully selecting pairs of identical animals from rows of photos. With each match comes a refrain of celebratory music from the computer and words of praise from her teacher.

Bella, who is not verbal and has limited use of her hands and arms, can’t play games or work on class assignments with paper or even a traditional computer. Bella is doing all of this with just the movement of her eyes.

Bella’s teacher and speech therapist are helping her learn to use a new portable device that tracks her eye gaze to make choices, interact with people and build a variety of skills. The device, a little larger than an iPad tablet, is mounted at eye level on Bella’s wheelchair. It comes with a wide variety of educational material, games and common social interactions, but can easily be customized for the individual user.

“We add in images and activities that coincide with what we are teaching in the classroom,” explained teacher Allyson Lowry. “The device enables Bella to make choices and more fully participate in what we are learning.”

A sensor on the screen can detect where Bella is looking. When she focuses on a particular item on the screen, a swirling red dot will appear. To select that image, Bella is learning to maintain her gaze on the dot for five seconds. Correct answers are also reinforced with music and other sounds from the computer.

In the past, Bella, age 12, had other communication devices that used switches and flash cards, but they were primarily limited to yes and no responses. This device opens a world of new possibilities.

“Bella loves interacting with people and this makes that possible,” said speech therapist Stephanie Jordan. “The amount of progress that she has made in the short time that she has had the device shows how much potential there is for her to expand how she uses it.”

School faculty are helping Bella use the device throughout the school day, and are adding in graphics so that it will be helpful at home, too. She has photos of all of her classmates, and greets each personally when she arrives at school every morning.

The device was selected especially for Bella after completing trials with three devices over the course of the last school year. Representatives from Tobi Dynavox, the company that developed the eye gaze technology, worked with school faculty to find the perfect fit.

“This device will grow with Bella,” said Stephanie. “We can add many functions, including a keyboard that she can use as she learns to spell more words. This is such new technology that we are, in a sense, learning right along with Bella. It’s really exciting to see all that is possible.”

Speech therapist Stephanie Jordan shows Bella where to direct her gaze to select a response on her new communication device.

“WHAT’S THE BALLOON’S LEAST FAVORITE TYPE OF MUSIC?”

“POP MUSIC!”

“WHAT’S HER FAVORITE?”

EVERY DAY, BELLA USES THE EYE GAZE TO TELL A JOKE.

TEACHING THE EYES TO SPEAK
When the Kiwanis Aktion Club has any kind of activity, you can count on Amy Murphy to be there. Whether it’s a service project such as highway litter pick up or a fundraiser for a local charity, Amy’s all in. Because of her more than 20 year commitment to the Aktion Club and the Kiwanis Club ideals, she was recently named Member of the Year for the state of Pennsylvania.

After Erie Aktion Club members voted Amy as their Member of the Year for the state of Pennsylvania. Amy is one of the group’s most successful fundraisers, setting records for donations raised for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Walk, the Bowl-a-Thon for Charities for Children and candy bar sales to benefit the Club.

For the past ten years, Amy has participated in Lifesharing through Family Living, residing in a provider home with another consumer. “Amy is always positive and friendly,” said Wendy Sadlier, her Lifesharing Provider. “When anyone asks Amy how she is, she has a long list of words like ‘super, fantastic, and stupendous.’ She loves to do just about everything.”

For the past three years, Amy has worked at a local Wendy’s Restaurant and volunteers on her own and through Club Erie with various local organizations. She also participates in Adult Basic Education class every week, and loves bowling and hockey.

But the Aktion Club is one thing that is always on her agenda. “She rarely misses a meeting and is someone we can count on for every service project,” said Heidi. “She is really deserving of this award.”

Clarence Swahn, right, treasurer of the Kiwanis Club of Erie, and Heidi McKenrick, left, associate director of Intellectual Disabilities Services and Aktion Club advisor, present the Pennsylvania Member of the Year Award to Amy Murphy.

The Barber National Institute recently integrated ten group homes located in Philadelphia into its residential programs. The Barber National Institute was one of just four providers in Pennsylvania asked by the Office of Development Programs to take over the homes from another provider.

“We were approached because we are a trusted provider with a proven track record for quality services,” said John Barber, president and chief executive officer of the Barber National Institute. “We have an organization-wide commitment to instilling a ‘Barber culture’ that is focused on meeting the needs of each individual and his or her family. This shared vision has created processes and structures that ensure consistently high standards across all of our services.”

ODP asked the Barber National Institute to formulate a plan for integrating 30 adults who were residing in the ten residential group homes. More than 125 direct support and supervisory staff were hired to serve residents in the homes.

Staff has been working with individuals and families to develop plans for meeting the goals they want to achieve. “We were very happy to receive a very warm welcome and look forward to working with these families to build the happiest, most independent and fulfilling lives for each of the residents,” said Barber.

The recent addition brings to 37 the total number of group homes that the Barber Institute operates in Philadelphia, Bucks and Montgomery counties.
Congratulations to Jenifer Wolfram, second from right, who was awarded the 2017 Front Line Manager of the Year for the Western PA Region at the PAR (Pennsylvania Advocacy & Resources of Autism and Intellectual Disability) fall conference. Jen has managed Club Erie for 12 years, organizing community activities for more than 110 individuals and 40 staff every week. Congratulating Jen are, from left, Carrie Kontis, vice president for Intellectual Disabilities Services (IDS); Maggie Dimitriadis, director, IDS; and President & Chief Executive Officer John Barber.

Frank Fecko, center, supervisor of the Fine Arts Program at the Barber National Institute, was presented with the Imagine Award for inspiring adults with disabilities to develop their artistic skills. Presenting the award was Amanda Sissem, left, executive director of Erie Arts and Culture, and Jim Dible, right, board member. Congratulating Frank were Mark Delio and Carrie Kontis, Intellectual Disabilities Services at the Barber National Institute.

After being part of the Barber Institute family for 17 years, Ronnie Giannini passed away following a long illness. His family shared the following reflection in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

“Ronnie became a part of the Barber Institute Day and Group Home Programs upon the closing of Western Center. The family resisted the change in the beginning, but was soon won over by all of the wonderful employees, administrators, nurses, caregivers, day program and group home staff.

No matter the situation, adversity, or challenge they were faced with, they came through for our family. There is a circle of Barber Center staff that have become Ronnie’s family, caring for him day and night, through his good times and bad, through his health concerns, sickness and challenges, and have championed through them every time.

For without these individuals … he would have never lived such a happy and fulfilled life. Ronnie loved them with every single piece of his heart.”
One of the region’s largest and most eclectic art exhibits will soon be here when “Celebrating the Possibilities,” the Jay & Mona Kang Art Show & Sale opens at the Barber National Institute. This is the eleventh year for the event that offers a wide array of expression by adult amateur and professional artists, as well as an always charming display by youth artists.

The 2018 Show is sponsored by Jay and Mona Kang, two Erie physicians who are dedicated patrons of all forms of the arts in the community.

Visitors are encouraged to see this year’s exhibit on:

**FRIDAY, APRIL 13** – The show opens at 10 a.m., with an evening Wine & Cheese Reception from 5 – 8 p.m.

Please join us at 11 a.m. for the unveiling of a new public art sculpture on our main campus created in collaboration with students and faculty at George Jr. Republic. “Timeless Possibilities” captures the Barber National Institute philosophy that, in a world where all persons differ, everyone should have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 14** – noon – 3 p.m.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 15** – noon – 3 p.m. with family-friendly activities including arts & crafts and an art scavenger hunt for children; youth artist award presentation at 1 p.m.

**MONDAY, APRIL 16** – 1 – 6 p.m.

The Show will feature a wide range of paintings, sculptures, photography and other media submitted by more than 500 area youth and adult artists, including the work of students and adults at the Barber National Institute. A panel of judges from the community will select cash award winners, but all visitors will also have their say by voting for the People’s Choice Awards presented to one youth and one adult artist following the show.

Many pieces of artwork are for sale, and the Barber Foundation receives a commission from each purchase. Admission is free of charge.

Support the Art Show! Become a Patron with a $100 donation or a Friend with a gift of $50. Checks payable to the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Foundation and mailed to: Art Show, Barber National Institute 100 Barber Place, Erie, PA 16507

Or, donate online at BarberInstitute.org/artshow.
Kimberly Fisher developed top-notch janitorial skills while on the crew cleaning Barber National Institute offices in Philadelphia. When she was ready for community employment, Job Coach Gale Williams had the perfect fit in mind.

With help from Gale, Kimberly applied for a job as a cafeteria attendant the Courtyard Marriott. Since getting hired in early December, Kimberly has made her mark.

“Since her very first day, Kim has embodied her role with pride,” said Laura Williams, director of Human Resources. “She takes ownership for ensuring our employee cafeteria is sparkling clean and fully stocked at all times. We have seen a dramatic increase in the cleanliness and organization of the cafeteria.”

Recently, Kim has taken on new responsibilities that include cleaning of banquet rooms and providing room service.

Kim’s favorite part of working at the Courtyard Marriott is meeting all of the new people she comes in contact with. And, it seems the feeling is mutual. “Kim’s outgoing personality and smiling face makes every team member feel welcome,” said Ms. Williams.

Kim is one of three adults that have been hired at the Courtyard Marriott with assistance from the Supported Employment Program. The service helps adults assess their skills and interests, and then look for and apply for jobs in the community. After adults are hired, job coaches remain with them on the job until they learn all of the responsibilities in their new position.

“It is really a ‘win-win’ for the adult and the employer,” said Carrie Kontis, vice president for Intellectual Disabilities Services. “Adults find meaningful work in the community, and employers get very loyal, well trained employees who are a great asset to their workforce.”
For the first time, adults participated in the Times Old Newsies Fund Drive, collecting donations outside of the Blasco Memorial Library in Erie. The drive raises funds for food baskets to needy families at Christmas.

VOLUNTEERS “GIVE BACK”

For students and adults at the Barber National Institute, Giving Tuesday was another day of “giving back” to our community. The day is marked nationally on the last Tuesday of November to celebrate and encourage all forms of giving.

Every month, adults in the Club Erie day program complete more than 200 hours of volunteer service to a variety of organizations. Activities include bowling with residents at the Brevillier Village nursing home, packing and transporting food baskets for families served by the food pantry at Saint Patrick Church and the Second Harvest Food Bank, and cleaning the Humane Society and the nature play space at Presque Isle State Park.

Adults in Philadelphia also volunteer with Cradles to Crayons, helping to package items needed by children who are homeless or living in low-income families.

The experiences benefit all involved, according to Carrie Kontis, vice president for Intellectual Disabilities Services at the Barber National Institute. “Volunteerism helps participants in our services understand the needs of others and find places in their local communities where they are welcomed. They may be receiving some help themselves, but volunteer opportunities provide a way to give something back,” said Kontis.

“Many adults are also building skills that we hope will help them eventually find community employment,” Kontis added.

Students also assemble information packets for the National Association of Mental Illness and shop and deliver groceries for clients of Meals on Wheels.
Barber Spirit is a quarterly publication for friends of the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Center, Inc.
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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
Bright Beginning Early Intervention (birth-age 3)
The Elizabeth Lee Black School (Approved Private School)
Autism Center
Happy Hearts Day Care & Inclusive Preschool
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Program
Adult Education & Literacy
Pre Employment Transition Services for Youth

THERAPIES
Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic
Traditional & Specialized Family Based Mental Health Services
Advanced Children’s Therapies (ACT) Program
Speech Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services
Psychiatric & Psychological Services
Nutritional Services
Trauma and Grief Counseling
Health Services Department
Social Skills Training

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY
Respite Care
Lifeshares through Family Living
Supported Living in homes and apartments
Residential Group Homes
Community Habilitation

DAYTIME COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES
Club Erie
Community Endeavors
Community Participation Program
Prevocational Services
Transitional Work Services
Supported Employment
Adult Training Facilities
Older Adult Daily Living Centers

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES
Blended Case Management for Children & Adults
Family Support Services
Family and Sibling Support Groups
Agency with Choice, Habilitation Services

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
Connections Summer Camp for children with high functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome
ESD Dances and Summer Camp
(Expanding Social Opportunities)
Learn to Ride Bike Camp
Camp Shamrock Summer Program
Time for Me

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
Before/After School & Summer Child Care Programs
Consultative services to schools & professionals
Swimming Lessons & Water Exercise Classes
Kids on the Block Puppet Troupe
Gift Shop

For more information, call the Barber National Institute at 814-453-7661 or visit www.BarberInstitute.org.

Dress your best with the latest in Barber-wear and Beast on the Bay attire. Shop the Gift Shop at Barber Place week days from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., or online anytime at BarberInstitute.org/giftshop.

THE BEAST IS BACK SEPTEMBER 8...
SAVE YOUR DATE TO BEAT THE BEAST