



Capper Update

FALL 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

Your support is changing lives, and I'm excited to share a few heartwarming stories from our community.

At Dialogue Coffee House, we celebrated

the one-year anniversary of opening two new locations at Fellowship Bible Church and in Silver Lake. These spaces provide valuable opportunities for individuals with disabilities to develop life skills and contribute meaningfully to our community.

We're also thrilled to share the progress of Izaiah, a young man with severe medical challenges who is now able to better communicate through skills learned in therapy. His family's journey of hope and transformation is a testament to the impact of Capper Foundation's work.

Lastly, we celebrate Carrie Greenwood, a former Capper student who now empowers others with disabilities across Kansas.

Her story reminds us of the importance of advocacy and embracing diversity.

Your generosity makes these stories possible. Thank you for being part of our mission.

With gratitude,

Zach Ahrens, President & CEO



Using an iPad and specialized apps, Izaiah is experiencing new levels of communication with the goal of being able to type words to express his wants and needs to his family and those around him.

IZAIAH & HIS FAMILY: HOPE & SUCCESS THROUGH THERAPY

Learning new ways to connect

Imagine a little boy with severe medical challenges that at times left him barely able to walk or lift his head let alone leave home, or sometimes even bed. Now, imagine this child also has Autism and could benefit from services at Capper Foundation. For some time, Bart and Annie brought their son Izaiah to Capper for speech therapy, but due to his numerous health challenges, the desired progress was slow in coming.

"Those years were a heart-wrenching part of our journey, but we always had the support of Capper staff and knew we were welcome to return for services when Izaiah was able," shared Annie. Fast forward to today when Izaiah is a 15-year-old teenager who is healthier, happier, and is unlocking his potential with occupational and speech therapy that his parents reinforce every day at home. Annie noted, "Working with Kailey and Connor is revolutionary for our family as we get to teach Izaiah, watch him learn, and be with him in a way we never could before."

Kailey Petrehn, Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), worked with the family to integrate speech into all daily activities and introduced Izaiah to specialized iPad apps to better communicate. "When I was concerned, her assuredness and professionalism drove confidence in me that he would gain the ability to use the apps, and he has. My current dream is to be able to teach him to type his own words into the app because to me, this will unlock Izaiah on a level that none of us have experienced before. We might finally know the depths of our son that we have never been privy to and more importantly, he will come face to face with the fact that there really is not anything he cannot do if he could communicate this way," expressed Annie.



“We are so thankful to Capper Foundation for putting so much into Izaiah and our family.”

—Annie, Izaiah's Mom

Connor Tanking, Occupational Therapist (OTR/L), helped them understand that Izaiah experiences dysregulation leading him to be very stimulated, unfocused, and always moving. With practical activities, Izaiah can now fulfill his sensory needs to regulate his body allowing him to sit still, focus, and enjoy doing schoolwork for periods of time. "Connor established a foundation for Izaiah to feel whole and comfortable in his skin," says Annie.

"As parents of two children who have needed therapeutic support, I can promise you that there are never enough places like Capper. Everything is expensive, time-consuming, life-encompassing, and very lonely. It is more than Capper's services that are needed, it is also the community. To have such loving people rally around you is an incredible phenomenon. We have given our kids all we have for twenty-one years. All our resources, our time, our futures—we have invested everything in our kids to help them get where they dream of being. Our daughter, despite being severely autistic at one time, is

now a senior at Washburn University because of our family's tireless work. We did not have a resource like Capper's when our daughter was young as we did not live in this area, and this is partly why we were so exhausted when we landed on Kailey and Conner's 'doorstep'. We are so thankful to Capper Foundation for putting so much into Izaiah and our family. Their staff's encouragement, faithfulness, knowledge, talent, and big hearts have truly penetrated our lives. We now feel like our son has a great purpose in this life." — Bart & Annie

JOIN US IN OCTOBER AS WE RECOGNIZE...

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



At Capper Foundation, we believe every person has the right to make informed decisions affecting his or her life including if they

choose to have a job. We strive to ensure that individuals of all abilities who want to work have the skills to be successful employees so they can be as independent as possible.

Currently, 65 individuals living with disabilities are employed by Capper in Topeka and South Central Kansas. Eight individuals receive job training and support from Capper for their positions at other area businesses including USD 501 Topeka Public Schools, Panera Bread, Sunsations Tanning, Kansas Children's Discovery Center, and Ramada Topeka.

In Kansas, 28% of people with a disability who are not employed want to work. Through more job training, partnerships with businesses, and continued advocacy, these individuals will see their hopes and dreams realized. To raise awareness of this month, local businesses and organizations including Capper have collaborated to host the Shawnee County Disability Mentoring Day on October 23, 2024, from 9am – noon at Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. *More event information is available at www.sncodmd.com.*

CARRIE GREENWOOD — THEN AND NOW...

Champion of disability pride and advocacy

At one time, there was a shy little girl named Carrie who was told that she needed to better advocate for herself, however, she was too young to understand what that meant fully. Now, decades later, she uses her voice and life experiences to empower others living with disabilities across Kansas and the nation.

Born with Arthrogryposis, a rare, congenital condition (occurs in 1 in 3,000 live births), Carrie has contractures (or stiffness) and weakness affecting the bones, joints, and muscles in her arms, legs, and other parts of her body. Attending Capper Foundation's inclusive Kidlink Preschool & Childcare Program and then Kindergarten (USD 501 had academic classrooms at Capper from 1959 to 1996) while concurrently receiving occupational and physical therapy helped shape Carrie into the person she has become, "Looking back at my time as a student at Capper, it taught me to have disability pride, embrace my differences and gave me such a great foundation for life."

Right after graduating from Shawnee Heights High School in 2001, Carrie had the opportunity to participate in the first-ever Kansas



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—Carrie Greenwood

Youth Leadership Forum (KYLf), a motivational five-day event for a small group of high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. "KYLf changed my life as it showed me what advocacy is, why it's important, helped grow my confidence, and inspired me to be an advocate and a role model, especially for youth and women," shared Carrie. In 2004, she became an independent delegate serving as the first Ms. Wheelchair Kansas titleholder. Since then, she has continued to build up and lead Ms. Wheelchair Kansas and Little Miss Wheelchair Kansas programs in a volunteer capacity.



After earning an Associate of Applied Science degree in Design Technology from Washburn University, Carrie's passion for promoting diversity, empowerment, and education ultimately led her to work for the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA) since it opened as a non-profit in 2005. In her role as Program Coordinator, she now helps oversee the annual KYLF event and other programs among other duties. Carrie has spoken to over 500 groups about disability-related and empowerment topics.

Outside of work and volunteering, Carrie proudly owns her own home and vehicle both modified to meet her needs – giving her as much independence as possible. In the future, she plans to keep being a disability advocate and educator with hopes of getting married and having a family. "I believe in the saying 'Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.' We choose every day what kind of life we are going to live, and what attitude we are going to have...I choose to be positive, live my life to the fullest no matter what, and know that despite the challenges this is who I was meant to be."

With your support, Capper Foundation can continue to help individuals build their abilities so that they can live a fulfilled life pursuing their passions, hopes, and dreams like Carrie.

Cheers to One Year of More Coffee & Conversation

The phrase "time flies when you're having fun" certainly holds true for the team at Dialogue Coffee House. Last fall, we were blessed with the opportunity to open two new locations, Fellowship Bible Church and Silver Lake, to further our mission and enrich our communities.

These expansions allow more individuals living with disabilities to learn valuable life skills, earn well-deserved paychecks, find purpose in their work, and be a greater part of our community.

Our location at Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) has also become the home of "Abilities Day." This monthly event brings together many of our friends with disabilities, peers, and volunteers from

our community for a morning of coffee, treats, and fun activities.

Our location in Silver Lake is a store full of hometown pride. In partnership with Silver Lake Public Schools, we have students and peers working together to create an inclusive community.

As the demand for Dialogue's goods and services increases, we are welcoming more individuals with and without disabilities to join the team as volunteers.

We are anticipating the next steps that lie ahead so stay tuned. In the meantime, experience the conversation by visiting the four area Dialogue locations and following Capper Foundation and Dialogue Coffee House on social media.



dialogue
coffee house

DIALOGUE COFFEE HOUSE IS A COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OF CAPPER FOUNDATION.



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