



In a picture that appeared on the front page of the Boston Globe on Saturday, October 12th, League School student Joseph Mulkerrins is shown hugging his mother, reveling in the joy he experienced in attending the show.

Thanks to SynapDx, Two League Families Enjoyed a Special Presentation of “The Lion King”

Once again, a close corporate friend of League School, SynapDx Corporation, exhibited exceptional generosity and provided the school with a very special opportunity. The company generously donated 2 sets of four tickets to the League School to the October 11th Lion King performance presented at the Boston Opera House. This performance was billed as the first ever autism-friendly performance of the Lion King in Boston.

The school sent a flyer home to its families letting them know that we would be having a free raffle for the tickets. If they were interested in taking their child, they just had to send us an email and we would put their family’s name in for the drawing. We drew the names on October 7th and, drum roll please, the Davis and Mulkerrins families won the tickets.

The “autism-friendly” performance of “The Lion King” was among a growing number of theater productions in Boston and around the country intended for families with children on the autism spectrum, with quieter music and less intense lighting, plus calming areas and relaxed rules about theater etiquette.

The idea for the Boston performance was hatched when Broadway in Boston learned that the Tony Award-winning musical had been performed for children with autism in New York, Pittsburgh, and Houston, to sold-out crowds. It was Broadway in Boston’s first effort, and with 2,600 people at the sold-out show, it played to the biggest audience of autistic children and their families the city has seen. Modeled after similar Broadway stagings, the matinee was designed to create “a sensory-friendly and judgment-free environment,” said Rich Jaffe, president of Broadway in Boston.

And what a memorable evening it turned out to be for both League School families in attendance. The Davis family contingent that attended the performance included Patrick, his mother, his brother, Brendan, and his grandmother. They called their seats “incredible,” and, as an unexpected bonus, were able to meet Boston Mayor, Marty Walsh. And Patrick’s mother proudly reported to us that Patrick showed some very good social skills by shaking the Mayor’s hand and even introducing himself (with some prompting) to the Mayor.



Not to be outdone, the Mulkerrins family (mother, son, daughter and niece) found themselves featured in a picture that appeared on the front page of the Boston Globe the very next day, with Joseph shown hugging his mother, Kathy, and Kathy, being quoted in the accompanying piece - “I wasn’t 100 percent sure he would enjoy the musical versus the TV screen,” she said, “but boy oh boy, from the minute it started, it was unbelievable. Now that the door’s been opened, I think we’ll be doing it again.”

It was a terrific evening, and we once again want to thank our friends at SynapDx for making it all possible.



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League School Is One of the Top Fundraisers at October's "Walk Now for Autism Speaks"

League School of Greater Boston participated again this year in the 2014 Greater Boston Walk Now for Autism Speaks on Sunday, October 19. After many years of walking at Suffolk Downs racetrack in East Boston, this year's venue was The Xfinity Center in Mansfield, MA. And it was a perfect day for the walk---bright & sunny, low 60's, and no rain!

Walk Now for Autism Speaks is the nation's largest grassroots autism walk program, and signature fundraising and awareness event. Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families.

Team League School consisted of 23 registered walkers which included staff, current and former students, families and friends and has raised more than \$7,400.00, again placing us in the top 15 fundraising teams! In addition, we exceeded our team recruitment and fundraising goals! Led by team captain, Pat Connolly, the League School team members included:

- Melissa Albert
- Sarah Conley
- Colleen Davis Barthel
- Geoff Ellis
- Patrick Fuller
- Denise Murphy
- Catherine Petringa
- Erin Shaughnessy
- Greg Barthel
- Colleen Crehan
- Carla Dyer
- Patricia Ellis
- Sally Hile
- Leo Murphy
- Maria Rello
- Peter Ciancerelli
- Laura Davis
- Connor Ellis
- Frank Fitzpatrick
- Josh Johnson
- Michelle Peirce
- Michelle Sexton

All of the walkers were treated to entertainment - an acoustic guitarist, Jon James, and a break dancing group, the NBW Allstars, on The Xfinity Center's main stage; an opening ceremony performance by Issa Pointer (formerly of the Pointer Sisters); and the Boston Higashi School Jazz Band performed as walkers completed the walk route. Snacks and water were provided to walkers by Frito Lay, and Uno Chicago Grill served a delicious lunch of salad, pizza, and hot dogs to walkers and volunteers. It was an enjoyable day for all!

Our fundraising continues until the end of this year---there's still time to make a donation to our team! To make a secure donation online, visit www.walknowforautismspeaks.org and search for team "League School." Thank you in advance for your support!

League School's Parent Advisory Council Sponsored a Workshop - *Financial Planning for Special Needs Families*

League School of Greater Boston's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) sponsored a workshop last month, *Financial Planning for Special Needs Families*, that was presented by Neil Blicher, CFP and Richard Harwood, CLU, CAP. Topics covered that night included:

- Timeline / roadmap of transition points and services
- Guardianship issues and considerations
- How to maximize -- and preserve eligibility -- for government benefits
- Vocational residential options

Thanks again to our Parent Advisory Council for hosting such an informative event.



Christina McCarrick
Speech and Language Pathologist

Meet Our League School Employees of the Month: For October - Christina McCarrick

Chrissy is an amazing Speech and Language Pathologist who supports the Transition team. She has remarkable knowledge, insight and experience to share with her team. She utilizes many creative ways to help students communicate, become more independent and to generalize learned skills. She consistently incorporates the use of assistive technology and visuals to facilitate communication for students. All staff members agree that Chrissy is upbeat, insightful, supportive, and professional. She always has great advice that is delivered with a smile.

For November - Maureen Pratt

Maureen is the Vocational Coordinator. She is always seeking to match students with appropriate vocational internships based on their interests and skillsets. Maureen seeks out new opportunities for students and has expanded the number of job sites for students to experience. She makes careful recommendations for student placements with input from the educational team. She manages a busy vocational schedule for the students, coaches and teams. League School is fortunate to have such a caring and knowledgeable Vocational Coordinator.



Maureen Pratt, Vocational Coordinator

What Teaching at League School Means to Me

Here is the second in a series of articles in which a League School staff member shares with us some reflections on what it means to teach at League School of Greater Boston. As we have stated before, our goal is to enable our readers to better understand the special opportunities that both students and teachers alike enjoy by being a part of the League School family. Here is one such reflection from Catherine Petringa, Assistive Technology Specialist:

I have been working at the League School for just over 3 years now. I often try to explain my job to people I meet, and I realize how little people know about what we do and our population of students. They understand there is a spectrum, and that it can be challenging to socialize with an individual with Autism. Typically they have a story about someone they have met, or a child of a friend who was diagnosed.

Once I am given the time to explain the remarkable skills that our students have - drawing, composing music, memorizing birthdays and facts - they become so interested in hearing more. I explain what we do with schedules, timers, music and art, how our staff can react so quickly and professionally in an unexpected situation. I tell them how close-knit the staff are, running to support each other, sharing tips and ideas about how to work with our unique students. I describe some of the challenges our students face, and how we work to overcome them.

Often times, I get a reaction of gratitude from these people. They say "Thank you so much for what you do!." But I do not think that is fitting. We work here because we enjoy it, because we love working with the students; we enjoy encouraging these students to achieve goals that many people assume they will never accomplish. The joy on a parent's face when they see their child succeed in something for the first time, or the smile on the student's face when they are proud of themselves. Most of our students have never been told they are great at something. They do not fit into the mainstream schools, appearing to always "fail."

At the League School, their talents are displayed and their accomplishments are compared only to their personal goals, not to other student's. At the League School, the students achieve great accomplishments and fit in perfectly, often for the first time ever in their lives.



Catherine Petringa,
Assistive Technology Specialist



Ohio Wesleyan students, Elizabeth Prior and Alexandra Thrasher, share a smile with League School Executive Director, Dr. Frank Gagliardi.

League School Hosts Two Interns from Ohio Wesleyan

Early last month, League School of Greater Boston hosted two interns from Ohio Wesleyan University for a few days of interaction and cooperative learning. Alexandra Thrasher and Elizabeth Prior worked with students and teachers alike throughout the day, getting a sense of the challenges our teachers face as well as the rewards they enjoy. Here is what each had to say about her experience here:

I wanted to take a moment to thank you so much for hosting me at the League School a few weeks ago. I had a great experience and learned so much about the school. As a psychology major, I am planning on attending a graduate program for school psychology. At the League School, I was able to interact, not only with the students, but also with staff. It was very helpful for me to meet and talk with current school psychologists to hear their stories and experiences. As a school psychologist I will be working with many different types of students with many different needs. It was interesting for me to experience work and teaching with the students in your school. I loved meeting and talking with current students as well. Again, I greatly appreciate your time and hospitality and hope to visit again someday.
Elizabeth Prior

Thank you for all for hard work in making my internship experience at the League School so rewarding. I have learned so much about autism, dedication, and teaching than I ever thought I would. I know all of the advice I received while at the League will be invaluable to me in my future career endeavors. Thank you again, and I wish you the best of luck in the future.
Alex Thrasher

Upcoming Events at League School:

Please check the school calendar on the school website, leagueschool.com, for the latest announcements about upcoming events at the school.

League School Celebrates Halloween with a Wonderful Party Enjoyed by Students and Staff Alike

This year's Halloween party at League School was shifted into the auditorium in order to accommodate the ongoing construction. But, it didn't prevent us from holding our usual activities and having a ton of fun. Judy set up a face painting and arts & crafts table that the Pathfinder students ably manned. Marie set up a cookie-decorating (and eating) table, full of a variety of cookies, toppings and frostings.

Upon entering the room, students and staff could hear Halloween-themed music, and, every so often, a spontaneous "flash mob" erupted whenever *Ghostbusters* played. Everyone would stop whatever they were doing, grab some ribbons and start to dance.

The staff also set up a photo booth, complete with props, which was a big hit with the students. The party ended with a parade of costumed staff and students, with prizes being awarded to those who were best dressed. As usual, it was a wonderful time - thanks to all students and staff members who made it such a memorable event.

