

The Building Block

An e-newsletter of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities

A Promise Fulfilled

Turning stumbling blocks into building blocks is more than just a slogan to 24-year old Cody Owen. It's a promise fulfilled.

Cody's stumbling block is cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is an umbrella term encompassing a group of non-progressive, non-contagious motor conditions that cause physical disability in human development. Cerebral palsy is caused by damage to the motor control centers of the developing brain and can occur during pregnancy (about 75 percent), during child-birth (about 5 percent) or after birth (about 15 percent) up to about age three.

As a child Cody got around using a combination of walkers, canes and occasionally a wheelchair. The wheelchair was for long excursions like going to a University of Oklahoma football game or making the rounds at Disney world. As a result of some surgeries, Cody only uses a walker to get around and according to Cody; it's just to help with his balance.

His building blocks are a supportive family, a desire to succeed and therapy and training from the J. D. McCarty Center.



Cody Owen at work.

Cody is from Shawnee, Oklahoma. His mother, Dawn, is a high school business and marketing teacher. His dad, Jim, is in sales. "They always encouraged me to be independent," Cody reflected. "They never looked at me, or treated me, like I had a disability." They were, and continue to be, a building block for Cody.

Life offered challenges to Cody especially during middle school. The middle school building was three stories. "The school had an elevator," said Cody, "but it was broken at least three times a year. If I had classes on the upper two floors, the teachers would send my work down to me. I'd have to do my work in the library or the special education classroom. I didn't like doing my work in the special ed classroom. I much preferred being in my classes with my classmates."

Things in Cody's life were pretty uneventful during his high school years. He went to school, did his homework, did chores around the house, played video games and hung out with a few friends. Cody graduated from Shawnee High School in May 2004.

Like most high school grads Cody started looking for work, but could not find a job in Shawnee. For six months after graduation, with no job prospects, Cody sat around home doing laundry for his family and playing video games.

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Promise Fulfilled

"After sitting around for six months," explained Cody, "my mom sat me down and explained to me that I had options. She told me that I could live at home with them for the rest of their lives and when they were gone I could move into a nursing home, or I could choose to be as independent as I could be. I chose independence." A building block achieved.

Dawn Owen had heard about the independent living training at the J. D. McCarty Center. Since Cody had been a patient here since he was 10-years old, Dawn called Richard Mann, director of social services and Cody's case manager at the hospital, to find out about the process before she sat Cody down for that life altering mother-son discussion.

Older teens who are interested in living on their own are thoroughly evaluated by the McCarty Center's occupational therapy team to determine what their current skills for independent living are and what they want them to be.

"We teach older teens how to survive on their own. In independent living we teach our patients to cook, clean, to do laundry, manage money, get services from the community and everything else they need to survive on their own," said Maria Greenfield, director of occupational therapy. "When we evaluated Cody his independent living skills were already pretty good. With Cody's moderate diagnosis we were certain he'd achieve his goals and be able to successfully live on his own," she added.

Before Cody came to Norman in February 2005 for what would be his last inpatient admission, he had another challenge to face...learning to drive. After all, if he was going to be independent, he needed to be able to get around. Learning to drive proved "exciting" for Cody. His greatest challenge was learning to accelerate and brake the car using a hand control that resembles a joystick. Steering the car was easier. Cody uses a knob that attaches to the steering wheel much like truckers use on their big rigs to help steer. Another building block achieved.

Cody entered the McCarty Center's independent living training in February 2005. He completed training in March and moved into his own apartment in



Cody works on meal preparation in the McCarty Center's independent living apartment while going through independent living training in 2005.

June. With the feeling of independence growing in Cody he continued to move forward. His next step was to obtain some additional education that would better prepare him for the job market and a way to support himself. In August 2005, Cody enrolled in the Moore/Norman Technology Center. He graduated in May 2007, with a certification in business technology and software applications. Another building block achieved.

It was while Cody was enrolled in Moore/Norman Technology that he made a decision that would lead him to his next building block. Cody returned to the McCarty Center in the summer of 2006 as a volunteer. He was looking for something to do between the spring and fall semesters. Having been a patient, he thought he knew his way around well enough to be of some help. He volunteered in the health information department managed by Patti Koeltzow.

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Next Step

“The thing that impressed me about Cody from the very beginning was his attention to detail,” Koeltzow said. “He’s very meticulous and in working with medical records that’s an important trait to have.”

After a year of volunteer service, Koeltzow offered Cody a part-time job that he readily accepted. “I would miss him if I suddenly didn’t have him,” Koeltzow explained. “He’s very excited about his work. He’s always on time. He’s very dependable. He’s an asset to my department.” Another building block achieved.

Cody says the thing he likes best about his job is the people he works with. He likes it because he knows most of the staff; after all he pretty much grew up at the McCarty Center. “If it wasn’t for the physical therapy I got here and the independent living training I don’t think I’d be where I am today,” Cody said reflectively. “I’d probably be a couch potato. Without a facility like this to help people like me there is no telling where we would be.”

“He was always happy,” said Greenfield. “Cody was always willing to work on stuff. It was his attitude, his willingness to succeed, that helped achieve his high level of independence and functionality. We took his stumbling blocks and helped him turn them into building blocks.”

For Cody Owen, a promise fulfilled.



12th Annual Kappa Klassic Scores Big

In 1998, the Beta Theta chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority at the University of Oklahoma selected the McCarty Center as their local philanthropy project. Twelve years later, that partnership between the women of Kappa Kappa Gamma and the McCarty Center continues to grow.

According to Maggie Murdock, the Kappa’s philanthropy chair, this year’s tournament raised \$19,000. That brings the twelve year total to \$159,481.

Fundraising began with a silent auction during a dad’s day bar-b-que held at the Kappa house before the OU-Texas A & M game. “This was the first time we’ve had a silent auction in connection with the Kappa Klassic,” explained Murdock. “We raised \$1500. We believe the silent auction will continue to grow.”

On Sunday, November 5, two hundred twenty golfers braved a damp, cold, wind chilled day to play in the 12th annual Kappa Klassic golf Tournament at the Westwood Golf Course in Norman. Golfers were divided between morning and afternoon rounds.

“We are grateful for the support the Kappa’s have shown us over the years,” said Uwe von Schamann, director of development for the McCarty Center. “They have not only been generous with their financial support, but also with their time and talents as volunteers at the hospital. This year’s Kappa Klassic proceeds will go to our Camp ClapHans scholarship endowment fund,” he added.

Camp ClapHans is a summer camp project of the McCarty Center. The scholarship endowment fund will assist parents in paying camp tuition for their children. The camp is in the construction bid phase and is anticipated to be open in the summer of 2011.



Caddy Shack head cover



Members of OU's Hourly Employee Council donated 20 bicycles and tricycles of various sizes to the McCarty Center as a part of their annual Christmas project. The group raised \$1,000 to purchase the bikes and trikes along with helmets, knee and elbow pads.

OU's Hourly Employee Council Put Some Wheels Into Christmas

The Hourly Employee Council at the University of Oklahoma put some wheels into Christmas when they donated 20 bicycles and tricycles to the McCarty Center the weekend before Christmas.

The Hourly Employee Council conducts an annual Christmas project benefiting different organizations in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. This year the group wanted to do a project closer to home.

"I've known Uwe (von Schamann) for a long time," said Linda Smith, president of the OU Hourly Employee Council. "I called him to see if they had a wish list that we might be able to help the McCarty Center with. It just happened that they did."

The twenty-two member council raised \$1,000, then purchased bicycles and tricycles in a variety of sizes as well as training wheels, helmets, knee and elbow pads. "We felt like we did very well this year considering the economy," Smith said.

"We really appreciate this donation of bikes and trikes," said Mike Powers, recreational activities coordinator for the McCarty Center. "I've been wanting some bikes and trikes for the kids for a long time, but until recently we haven't had a place to store them out of the weather. This is really a great donation for the kids."



OMCA Hearts Are Wide Open

The economy may be down, but the Oklahoma Municipal Contractors Association's hearts and wallets are wide open for the children served by the McCarty Center.

During its annual Christmas party for the inpatients, the president of OMCA, Doug Walker with Rudy Construction, and OMCA executive director, Rick Moore, presented a check to the McCarty Center's director and CEO, Curt Peters, for \$35,000.

The money will be used to fund activities for the inpatients next year.

OMCA raises money for the McCarty Center through its annual golf tournament held each September at the Twin Hills Golf and Country Club in Oklahoma City.

"I'm always amazed by our members and our tournament sponsors," said Moore. "With the economy the way it is, we exceeded our expectations this year by about \$10,000. It demonstrates the level of commitment our organization has to the kids at the McCarty Center."



Sooner Football Players Surprise Avid Young Fan With A Visit

"I was shocked. It was a total surprise," explained Jared Goss, a 16-year old patient from Vinita, Oklahoma.

The surprise he's speaking of was an unexpected visit from the University of Oklahoma Sooners Landry Jones, Gerald McCoy and Matt Mooreland.

Arrangements for the visit were made by Callyn Honse and Katie Slagle, members of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority at OU and wish granter volunteers with the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Oklahoma.

"We get a list of children each week that we can select to work with," explained Honse. "When we saw that Jared was at the McCarty Center Katie and I selected him because of our past work with the McCarty Center through our sorority."

Since 1980, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has enriched the lives of children from age 2 1/2 to 18 with life-threatening medical conditions through its wish-granting work.

There are four steps to the Make-A-Wish process. The first step is the referral. The referral can be made by a physician, a parent or the potential wish child themselves.

The second step is determining the child's medical eligibility with the help of the treating physician.

The third step is finding out what the child's true wish is. That's where volunteer wish granters like Honse and Slagle come into the picture.

The fourth and final step is the wish itself.

It was during the third step that Honse and Slagle discovered what an avid football fan Goss is. "He knew players names. He knew statistics," said Honse. "His true wish is to be the coach of the Minnesota Vikings for a day. We're working on trying to make that happen," she added.

Another piece of information that came out of Honse and Slagle's interview is that Goss is a huge Sooners football fan.

"I've known Landry Jones since we were freshmen," explained Honse. "I thought it would be neat if Jared could meet Landry, so I called Landry and asked him for a favor. He said yes. The added bonus was that he brought Matt and Gerald with him. We really blew Jared away when he saw them standing in front of him."

After the shock wore off of Goss, the conversation turned to what else...football. While McCoy hasn't been drafted into the NFL yet, Goss believes that he will be a Hall of Fame player. The three Sooners signed a football for Goss as a remembrance of their meeting. In return, Goss gave Jones a play to use in the Sun Bowl.



Jared Goss proudly shows off his autographed football from three Sooner football stars. The surprise visit was arranged through Make-A-Wish volunteers Katie Slagle (l) and Callyn Honse. OU Sooners are (l-r) Landry Jones, OU quarterback, Matt Mooreland, OU kick off specialist, and Gerald McCoy, OU defensive tackle.