

# The Building Block

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

## McCarty Center Leadership Changes For The First Time In 20 Years

In a contest of longevity, Curt Peters, director and CEO for the McCarty Center, comes in second - though it is a close second - to Harper Orth who served as director and CEO for 25 years.

On Wednesday, June 30, at 4 p.m., Peters closed up his desk, left his office and walked out to his car in the parking lot for the last time. After 20 years as director and CEO of Oklahoma's center of excellence in the care and treatment of children with developmental disabilities, Peters retired.

Peters is originally from Lawton, Oklahoma. He received his bachelor's degree in history from Oklahoma State University in 1966, and a master's degree in hospital administration from Baylor University in 1977.

Upon graduating from OSU, Peters entered the U. S. Army as a Second Lieutenant in the artillery and ended his career as a Colonel in the Army's medical service corps. Wounds received in Vietnam precluded Peters from staying in the Army in a combat arms role. He was either going to have to leave the Army or choose

a non-combat arms role. "I chose the medical service corps," said Peters. "I knew it would lead to more education and a continued career path after the Army."

Peters' postings in the Army medical service took him to



*Curt Peters, served as the director and CEO of the McCarty Center from June 1990 to June 2010.*

some of the best-known health care facilities in the U. S. Army. His postings included the Army Hospital at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, the Pacific Surgeons Office in Hawaii, Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, the Fort Carson Army Hospital, the Army Surgeon General's Office, Walter

Reed Medical Center, the 85th Medical Battalion Commander at Fort Mead, Maryland, Office of the Inspector General 7th Medical Command in Germany and Reynolds Army Hospital at Fort Sill in Lawton.

It was while Peters was stationed at Reynolds Army Hospital and contemplating another assignment or retirement from the Army that opportunity knocked. It knocked in the person of John Kilgus, a civilian employee at Reynolds Army Hospital and a member of the Cerebral Palsy Commission, the governing board of the McCarty Center.

Kilgus talked to Peters about the director's position that was going to open up with the retirement of Mike Beale and asked Peters if he would be interested in interviewing for the position. He accepted the invitation to interview. As a result, Peters retired from his 24-year Army career on May 31, 1990, and started to work as the new director and CEO of the McCarty Center on June, 1, 1990.

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## Leadership Changes

During the last 20 years, Peters has been responsible for expanding and increasing the services provided to the population of patients the McCarty Center serves. Under his leadership, outpatient services were added to the hospital's service menu. Contracting with schools to provide therapy services to students with disabilities that are mandated by federal law was another addition. In 1996, the pioneering use of teletherapy, the providing of therapy services to remote, rural areas of Oklahoma using broadband Internet, was added to the service mix. The McCarty Center now keeps two teletherapy studios busy during the school year providing physical, occupational, speech and language therapy to children around the state. And finally, several inpatient and out-

patient clinics were added.

"My two biggest challenges as director," said Peters, "were getting approval and funding for our new hospital facility that was completed in October of 2004, and dealing with the Legislature on budget issues every year.



*Vicki Kuestersteffen took the reins of the McCarty Center on July 1, 2010. In doing so, she became the first female director and CEO in the 64-year history of the hospital.*

While we earn 86 percent of our annual operating budget from our fees for service, the state appropriation we receive is critically important to the service we provide to our patients."

Since the McCarty Center became a state agency in 1948, five men have held the position of director and CEO of the hospital. On July 1, 2010, Vicki Kuestersteffen became the first female director of the McCarty Center.

Kuestersteffen holds a bachelor's degree in microbiology from the University of Wyoming (1983) and a master's degree

in nutritional science from the University of Oklahoma (1990).

"My master's thesis was on Zinc bioavailability during recovery from malnutrition," explained Kuestersteffen. "I chose that subject to study because I was going to do mission work overseas. But I took a job with the McCarty Center and soon discovered that I could do my mission work here."

Kuestersteffen has been with the McCarty Center for 18 years. Her roles at the hospital have included food service director, quality assurance/performance improvement manager and principal assistant to the director. She has been the deputy director of the hospital since 2002.

Just like Peters, Kuestersteffen sees patient care as her primary job. "We do a really good job of creating a good environment for our patients," she said. "I want to make sure that I also create and maintain a good family environment for our staff and the community."

A reception was held in honor of Peters on Tuesday, June 29. During the reception, the Cerebral Palsy Commission honored Peters for his service, his leadership and his vision by creating and establishing the Curt Peters scholarship endowment to send a deserving child to Camp ClapHans annually. Camp ClapHans is a summer camp project of the McCarty Center that Peters has been working on for several years. The camp is scheduled to open in the summer of 2012.

## The Building Block

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# SibShop Helps Children Better Understand Their Special Needs Sibling

Having to put up with a brother or sister can be one of the most frustrating and annoying aspects of childhood. It can also lead to one of the most rewarding and influential relationships of our lives.

Does that change if your brother or sister has a disability?

Brothers and sisters will have the longest lasting relationship with a sibling who has a disability, one that can easily exceed 65 years. During their lives, they will experience most of the unique concerns and joys their parents do. But few siblings of children with special needs ever have a chance to talk about their issues with others who "get it"... until now.

SibShop Norman is part of a statewide program designed to provide peer support and education within a recreational context for boys and girls ages 6 to 13 who have siblings with a special need. These workshops are a lively, pedal-to-the-metal celebration of the many contributions made by brothers and sisters. The SibShop also acknowledges that being the brother or sister of a person with special needs is for some, a good thing, for others a not-so-good thing and for many, somewhere in between.

SibShop Norman will be held on Saturdays at the McCarty Center. SibShop will be divided into two age groups. Kids 6 to

9 years old will meet from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Their workshop dates are October 16; January 15; 2011, February 19; and April 16.

Kids 10 to 13 will meet from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on November 20; January 15, 2011; March 26; and May 21.

The cost to participate is \$6 per child or \$20 per child for all four workshops. For multiple siblings, the cost is \$15 for each additional sibling if all workshops are paid for in advance.

Lunch will be provided.

Research shows that the concerns of brothers and sisters of children with special health needs parallel that of their parents. These concerns include: a lifelong and ever-changing need for information about the disability or illness; feelings of isolation when they are excluded from information available to other family members, ignored by service providers or denied access to peers who share their often ambivalent feelings about their siblings; feelings of guilt about having caused the illness or disability, or being spared having the conditions; feelings of resentment when the child with special needs becomes the focus of the family's attention or is permitted to engage in behavior not allowed by other family members; a perceived pressure to achieve in academics, sports or behavior; increased care-giving demands, especially

for older sisters; and concerns about their future and their sibling's future.

The statewide SibShop program is a collaborative initiative funded by the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council. Lori Wathen is the state SibShop coordinator. Other partners in this program include: the Oklahoma Family Network, the Oklahoma Family Leadership Council at the Center for Learning and Leadership and the Child Study Center at the University of Oklahoma's Health Sciences Center's Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Section.

The SibShop program will provide support and technical assistance to families, organizations or agencies that are interested in establishing SibShops in their communities.

There are currently SibShop programs in Oklahoma City, Norman, Tulsa, Muskogee and Enid.

For more information about the Norman SibShop, contact Kerri Brooks at 405.249.1925 or [normansibshops@gmail.com](mailto:normansibshops@gmail.com).

For more information about the statewide program, contact Lori Wathen at 405.271.5700, ext. 45180, or [lori-wathen@ouhsc.edu](mailto:lori-wathen@ouhsc.edu).

# Norman Conquest Attracts 613 Riders and Raises \$5,000 for Camp ClapHans

With the heat index reaching about 105, 613 bicycle riders from 7 to 70 got an early start on the Bicycle League of Norman's 15th annual Norman Conquest bicycle tour on Saturday, July 17. Leaving the McCarty Center at 7:30 a.m., bicycle riders of all skill levels left in unison to take on one of four available routes ranging from 10 miles to 66 miles in length.

"Our all-time record for this event is 638," said Corri Ide, spokeswoman for the Bicycle League of Norman. "And the amount of money we raised is a record. We are very pleased with this year's results."

"This ride traditionally draws a lot of riders from around the state," explained Ide, "but the last couple of years attendance has been down some. We attribute that to the economy and people deciding not to travel as far for big events."

This year's event not only drew riders from around the state, but also from places like Billings, Montana; Boulder, Colorado; Houston, Texas; Tombstone, Arizona; and Jamacia Plains, Massachusetts.



**And they're off!** A total of 613 riders take off in unison as they start the 15th annual Norman Conquest.



Cerebral Palsy Commissioner Karen Rieger (left) and McCarty Center Speech-Language Pathologist Cara Taylor volunteered to work the registration table during the 15th annual Norman Conquest.



Massage therapist Rocky Chen was one of two massage therapists who were available to rub the kinks out of the riders as they finished their rides. Here Susan Sheldon takes advantage of the free service provided to the Norman Conquest participants.

## Tax Deductible Donations

We are a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit hospital. Donation checks may be made out to the J. D. McCarty Center. The IRS has designated these donations tax deductible.

For questions about supporting the McCarty Center, contact Greg Gaston, director of marketing, at 405.307.2807 or [ggaston@jdmc.org](mailto:ggaston@jdmc.org).

# Zumba Dancers Move, Groove and Give to the McCarty Center

Dancing feet helped generate a generous donation to the McCarty Center.

Close to \$3,000 was raised for the hospital through a Zumbathon held on September 10. The event featured certified instructors who led participants in Zumba fitness, which blends Latin and international rhythms and basic dance steps into a workout.

More than 200 people participated in the fundraiser at Crossroads Mall in Oklahoma City. The event also featured a silent auction.



*Doris Blair, McCarty Center direct care specialist, participates in regular Zumba classes as a part of her exercise program. She came up with the idea of having a Zumbathon and chaired the committee that made it happen.*



*Joan Livesay, a certified Zumba instructor, takes the crowd through some fancy steps during the Zumbathon event. She also helped organize and publicize the event.*

The proceeds will support the programs and services at the McCarty Center.

Attendees included Zumba enthusiasts, families, college students and McCarty Center staff.

Some children from the center also took part and showed a zeal for Zumba. The kids danced in the center of the room during one song as the crowd circled them and cheered and clapped.

“I think the highlight tonight was to see the kids dance,” said participant Nick Callaway at the event. Callaway is the lead pastor of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries at the University of Oklahoma and brought about 20 students and staff members to the event.

Other participants said the Zumbathon offered fun, fitness and feel-good moments, such as seeing the excitement from the kids from the center.

“The kids bless our lives everyday and you just gave back to them,” said Vicki Kuesterstefen, director and CEO of the center, as she addressed the crowd at the end of the evening.



*Zumba fitness is easy, fun and for all ages. This mother daughter pair were just two of several families enjoying the evening together.*

# Sooner AMBUCS Provides Bucks to Boost Musical Instruments for McCarty Center

Children at the McCarty Center can rock out and keep rhythm on musical instruments that were recently donated by Sooner AMBUCS.

The group purchased about \$300 worth of instruments in August for the hospital's music room.

Sooner AMBUCS is the Norman chapter of AMBUCS, which is a national nonprofit service organization dedicated to creating mobility and independence for people with disabilities.

Darrell Green, recreational activities specialist at the McCarty Center, said the instruments are greatly appreciated and provide therapeutic value. Children can have fun, relieve a little stress and develop an appreciation for music while playing with instruments.

The donation came at a time when the center was low on instruments for the music room, Green said.

Turns out, instruments were also on the mind of AdriAnne Trammell, president of Sooner AMBUCS.

Trammell said she remembered touring the center a few years ago and noticed a need for more instruments in the music room. She also had attended Christmas parties at the center in the past and recalled how much fun the kids had playing with instruments at the events.

Trammell then met with Green to determine specific needs and they later went shopping at Copelin's Office Center in Norman.

"Copelin's gave AMBUCS a generous discount and helped locate all sorts of great rhythm instruments with an emphasis on some of those proven useful for children with disabilities," Trammell said.

The donation of instruments is not the only involvement Sooner AMBUCS has had with the McCarty Center.

The chapter has participated in center fundraisers and has donated computers and AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to the McCarty Center. The AmTryke tricycles are designed to accommodate different ages, sizes and physical needs of children.

She also hopes the donated instruments will bring enjoyment to the kids and education.

"I hope that it helps with their therapy but, in addition, I hope it gives them an entree into music and into their abilities concerning music."



*Darrell Green, recreational activities specialist, works with Victoria Buretta (left) and Melissa Arnold as they try out the new rhythm band instruments provided by Sooner AMBUCS.*

"I just saw the level of enjoyment. That stuck with me," she said.

Trammel sent a letter in July to Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO of the McCarty Center, to say that Sooner AMBUCS would be willing to purchase instruments for the music room.