



Rise Above!

Rise and Shine Walk 2008

On Saturday, February 23rd, almost 500 walkers arrived at Cole Park for our second annual walk. It was a fantastic morning seeing our students, staff members, friends and families lace their shoes and stretch their legs to Rise and Shine. With music, food and fun for the entire family, we celebrated our school, gained new supporters and raised awareness for The Rise School of Corpus Christi. Most importantly - we raised over \$20,000 through registration fees and sponsorships alone. WAY TO GO!

The community involvement continues to surpass our expectations and we are grateful for each and every one - schools, churches and special friends who continue to volunteer on our walk committees. We want to extend an extra big thank you to our sponsors: Porsche/Volkswagon of Corpus Christi, LVN Engineering, Corpus Christi General & Implant Dentistry, Wigington Rumley LLP, La Bahia Mexican Restaurant, Lundquist Automotive, Czech-Mex Bakery & Cafe, Lamar Advertising, Kennedy Dental Care, Belly & Baby and Hopscotch and Coastal Bend Down Syndrome Advocates.

Rise and Shine 2009 will be held Saturday, February 21st at Cole Park. Please contact Cammy Mikulencak cammy@stx.rr.com or Stacy Reynolds smreynolds7@sbcglobal.net if you would like to volunteer.



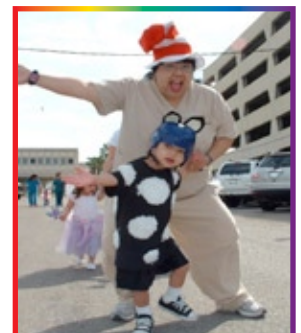
Celebrating 2008 Week of the Young Child



The Rise School celebrated the Week of the Young Child April 14-18th. The Week of the Young Child is a time to recognize that children's opportunities are our responsibility, and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that every child experiences that type of early environment - at home, at school, in the community -- that will promote their early learning. It is an annually celebrated event established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



We had a great time this week rejuvenating our spirit for the purpose of promoting learning in young children. We recognized our excellent and exceptional team by honoring them with small tokens of appreciation and lunch away from school. Pajama Day (*everyone dressed in their pajamas*) centered on the importance of sleep for young children and the lesson plans for the day supported that theme. We also celebrated with a parking lot parade. Children and staff dressed in their favorite storybook characters, marching to music as family, friends and Driscoll Hospital staff cheered them forward. We ended our week with an extended day outside and a family picnic. This week was indeed a time of reflection and appreciation of all that we do for young children.



Thanks to all that participated and made the week special for children and staff. Can you guess who our children's favorite characters are? Jack the Leopard, Dash the Pokey Puppy with Ms. Gutierrez as Dr. Seuss, Emma and Jackie our fairies and of course Olivia as Dora the Explorer and Ms. Woodin as Clifford the Big Red Dog.



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The Rise School
3434 Ft. Worth
Corpus Christi, TX 78411
361-814-9399

www.riseschool.org
riseschoolcc@yahoo.com

Dear Friends of the Rise School,

Some of the most amazing testimonies can be found within the doors of the Rise School of Corpus Christi. Children, families and staff are all learning and growing together. Throughout the year, Rise Staff have planned and facilitated learning experiences that have supported measurable positive outcomes for each child. Testimonies of perseverance, renewed strength, physical and intellectual growth are all apparent.

As part of the Rise School curriculum, each child is assessed in the Fall and then again in the Spring – allowing for specific goals and individualized treatment plans to be established for each child. During our first year of school we proved that a quality early childhood educational program like the Rise School can have a considerable impact on social/emotional, physical and intellectual progress. We saw an 18% increase in our students' skills when we compared assessment scores from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008.

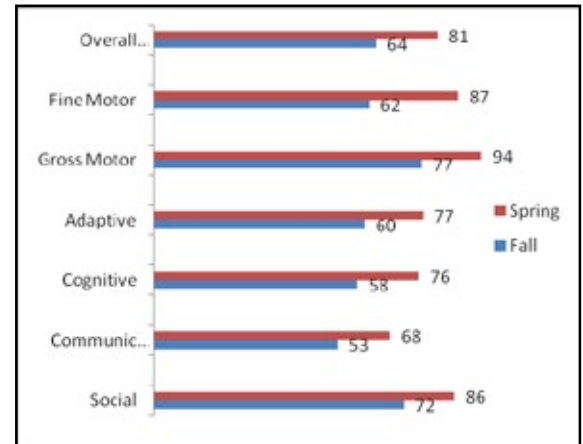
Assessment Results

There were significant gains made in fine motor (i.e., building block towers, eating with utensils, hand eye coordination, etc.) and cognitive development (i.e., problem solving, following simple commands, imitation of new concepts and words, etc.).

We also noticed something that cannot be measured but you can see changes in. Our students have become more aware of their surroundings and it seems like all of a sudden the lights came on for all of them and now they see things with new eyes. They are eager to explore, examine and learn new ways of doing things. I simply marvel at what they have accomplished and it reminds me of a famous quote by Jack Nicklaus, "Achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one's levels of aspiration... and expectation."

- Sherry Peterson

Executive Director, Rise School of Corpus Christi



A Rise School Donor Wise Beyond His Years

Thirteen year old Eric Davis, child of Mr. Jordan and Mrs. Robin Davis, celebrated his Bar-Mitzvah January 25, 2007. The family is a member of the Congregation Beth Israel. In honor of his Bar-Mitzvah, Eric decided to give half of his monetary gifts to two charities, Child Protective Services-Rainbow Room and the Rise School of Corpus Christi. Eric and his parents visited the school and presented a check for \$1000 to Sherry Peterson, Director, and Sherry Rumley, Local Founder (pictured above). The money will be used for educational materials for the children. When asked why he chose the Rise School, Eric replied, "Because they deserve a really good life. They deserve to be treated equal."



This bright, sensitive young man truly understands the importance of quality of life. This was evident as he affectionately spoke of his 18 year old sister, Amy Davis, who has Down syndrome. Life has an interesting way of bringing events full circle to create positive outcomes. Mrs. Jordan's family, the Braslaus', were instrumental with founding and building the synagogue now owned by Driscoll Children's Hospital that was partially renovated to house the Rise School of Corpus Christi. Mrs. Jordan was delighted with the structural transformation. She acknowledged how appropriate it is that the very place her daughter Amy grew up worshipping in should become a school with emphasis on educating children with disabilities.

The Rise School of Corpus Christi is grateful to Eric and his family for their contribution, words of encouragement and continued support for the school.

A Rise Family Story

On September 3rd 2005, our baby girl was born. Olivia was finally here after many scary trials and tribulations during my pregnancy. As a labor and delivery nurse at the time, I honestly did not know if she was going to make it here safely and at full term considering all the horror stories I had witnessed. This truly is the miracle of life. She had ten toes and ten fingers, apgar 10 of 10. Yes she passed all the tests, she was labeled "typical." I was told to take her home and enjoy my baby girl, that is exactly what her older sister Abigail and all the family did. We spoiled her from day one and never looked back. As I nursed her and doted on her, I waited patiently with my sister, Sherry Rumley, for the arrival of her baby, soon to be called Jack. There was six weeks of bliss with our new baby and then the day finally came and Jack entered our world. I was so excited to think about how our two babies would grow and play together. How my sister, my best friend, and I would share this wonderful time of motherhood.

When Jack was born I wavered for a minute, he was born different. He did not fit in the story I had made up in my head. Down syndrome had entered our family. Again, as a nurse, I immediately thought clinical and started with the check lists, I started to compare Olivia to Jack and Jack to all the dusty text books I had at home. Things did not add up and my dreams were dashed. Why had we been robbed of happiness? How would I tell Olivia and Abigail that their cousin had this thing called Down syndrome? How would my family continue on with a typical child? I felt such guilt for having a "normal" child. How was this decided between the two sisters? As we know now, Jack is our happiness! He is what this family was missing. We thank God everyday for this gift we have been given, not just the gift of Jack but for the awakening we received when he entered our world. This thing called Down syndrome entered our family and we met it head on. We rallied as we always do when faced with issues, we educated ourselves, and we asked a lot of questions and figured out the best plan for our family.

When Sherry told me about this school called Rise, I was curious how this would all pan out. It sounded too good to be true. Jack and Olivia could still be together? Yes, it was true and we love it! Jack and Olivia go to the Rise School everyday together. They play and learn side by side. It is so amazing to watch their friendship grow. Jack and Olivia both have many friends at the Rise School. Some with disabilities and some without, it does not seem to matter to them. They have been given the tool to communicate with each other either by talking or signing or both. I am amazed how all the children interact with one another. Everyone has found their place in the classroom. My Olivia has found her place as "La Jeffa", the boss. She has become such a leader, thirsty for new information and her teachers keep feeding her more and more. I am so proud that not only is she a leader for the other children to follow but she also learns from them every day. I can't imagine her at any other school.

When people ask me where Olivia goes to school I proudly say "The Rise School" and I usually get a strange look and asked if Olivia has a disability. I explain to them the Rise School is a regular preschool where 30% of the children have no disabilities and up to 70% have disabilities. Then they ask why, what does this school do for Olivia and aren't we worried this will hold her back? I smile and say what better place to learn compassion, caring, and understanding. Olivia has the best of both worlds here at the Rise School, not only does she get to enrich her soul but also to participate in a rigorous curriculum that stimulates her brain and lets her shine. We looked at other schools and compared what was in Corpus Christi and we discovered we can't beat the student/teacher ratio, the rigorous curriculum and all the therapy offered. I am so proud to say I am a parent of a Rise student and I too have a child that is rising and shining.



Rise School of Corpus Christi Receives Texas Rising Star Certification



A Texas Rising Star program is an early care and education program that voluntarily meets requirements that exceed the State's Minimum Licensing Standards for health and safety, group size, child/staff ratios, caregiver training and developmentally appropriate curricula and activities. Programs voluntarily participate in an assessment process that evaluates whether the state's criteria of quality are evident (met or not met). The Rise School of Corpus Christi met 169 of 171 criteria... WOW!

The Texas Workforce Commission awarded the Rise School of Corpus Christi the Texas Rising Certification, February 21, 2008. The certification honors the Rise School with the commission's highest distinction of a four-star rating. We are delighted to accept this award because it represents our commitment to excellence in the educating of all children, regardless of their medical conditions or abilities.

It is our commitment to continuously step towards ensuring a quality early education program that is formally recognized by the early childhood community and other entities but, most importantly contributes significantly to the early development of young children. Congratulations to Rise's hard working staff, families, and volunteers.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the nation's largest and most influential organization of early childhood educators and others dedicated to the education of young children. The Texas Rising Star certification is our stepping stone as we prepare within the next 2 years for NAEYC Accreditation. We will continue to RISE!





The Rise School
 3434 Ft. Worth
 Corpus Christi, TX 78411

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New Staff at Rise



Nanette Borden joins the Rise School team as the Early Childhood Music Specialist. She has a Bachelor's in Music at all levels of music education. She is certified to teach Musikgarten. Mrs. Borden has been awarded the Exemplary Award for teaching Musikgarten the past four years. She has worked in the field of music for over 20 years and has an

exceptional reputation. We are blessed to have her as a part of our team.



Melanie Saenz joins the Rise School as an Instructional Assistant. She is currently taking early childhood education courses working toward a Child Development Associates Credential and a Deaf Education Degree. Her previous experience and continued education will be

an asset to the Rise program. The Rise School is pleased to have a young upcoming professional committed to the field of educating young children, especially those with special needs.



The Rise School Wish List

Listed below are some of the items needed for the school but an extensive wish list can be found on the website www.riseschool.org.

- Laminating Machine
- Electric Hole Puncher
- Steam Carpet Cleaner
- Electric Pencil Sharpener
- Adult and Child Size Garden Tools and Materials
- Projector
- Portable Screen
- TV with a DVD/VCR Player
(Training Purposes)
- Camcorder
- Rise School Banner
- Small Computer Desk
- Kodak Digital Camera (2)
- Lawn Mower
- Weed Eater
- Glue Gun
- Power Sander

How to Play a Part in The Rise School

Every contribution makes a difference. The Rise School of Corpus Christi counts on generous friends for assistance.

- To donate an item, Chrissy Royo, (361) 854-0102
- To have someone speak to your organization about The Rise School, Sherry Rumley, (361) 537-6983

Thank you again for helping to reduce the challenges of disabilities for our young children while maximizing their abilities.

Thank you for caring.

