



The cause we fight  
for is very **ordinary**



**October 2014**

*Dear supporters of the Champion Centre,*

*With spring finally here, we can look back over the last six months and take stock of our situation at the Champion Centre. In almost every respect it has been a positive few months.*

*The first bit of good news is that we are still here on the Burwood Hospital site! There are building works all around us, as the hospital is redeveloped, but the Canterbury District Health Board has been wonderful in helping us continue to support children while the contractors take down buildings, rewire and replumb, and create new access points for heavy equipment. The CDHB has also entered into constructive discussions with us around the rent they will charge us, and have given us a rent free year while we work on it together. We are very grateful to continue to be part of the provision for CDHB patients and their families.*

*Another bit of good news is that some very generous people have, between them, secured the future of both the Computer Supported Learning and the Learning Through Music programmes for the next couple of years. This is a huge relief, as these programmes do not attract government funding, so we are always needing to seek private funds to continue them. This newsletter contains a story from the*

*Music Programme about young Ayla and the role that music has played in helping her develop. I hope you enjoy it.*

*Less good is the fact that there has been no increase in our funding from either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Social Development and only a tiny increase from the Ministry of Health. The impact of that is that the shortfall in the government funded parts of the programme is almost \$580,000 this year. Of particular concern is that our core therapy staff members are still seriously underpaid compared with their equivalents in the public sector and have not had a pay increase for three years.*

*Love of the Champion Centre carries staff through the hard times but, as Director, I worry constantly about the lack of remuneration for our highly skilled staff. And our staff members are the Champion Centre programme. It is their skill and expertise working each day with families and children that makes the difference to the children. Accordingly, we select the very best staff members and support them to engage with families in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for each child. Without the staff there would be no Champion Centre.*

*Can you help us close the gaps?*

*Susan H. Foster-Cohen.*

Susan Foster-Cohen, PhD  
Centre Director



## The Champion Centre “Learning Through Music” Programme

The Learning Through Music Programme at the Champion Centre supports children’s development through activating and building on their natural musicality. It supports walking, talking, thinking and feeling, and often it can help a child discover the excitement of music for its own sake. This newsletter contains two stories. In one, a young girl’s natural responses to music become a way of finding her own voice and building her physical strength. In the other, the mother of a young boy who was born very prematurely reports on the importance of the music programme to her son, now in primary school.

### Listen to me!

Ayla has just turned four years old and is a very determined young lady with quite definite opinions which she shares easily with those around her in a clear voice. She has little time for those who see her powered wheelchair and assume she cannot do much for herself because, indeed, she has a fine intelligence and much to tell the world.



Two years ago, however, the frequent bouts of chest infections that landed her in hospital almost every other week meant that she barely spoke above a whisper. She couldn’t breathe well enough to speak up or to clear her lungs of the microbes that made her health so poor. She was so weak that she could barely move without getting exhausted.

As part of Ayla’s team at the Champion Centre Linda, the music specialist, noticed that Ayla had a very fine-tuned sense of beat.

Whenever there was music being played, Ayla’s feet would start moving in time and Linda realised that if she could harness that response, she could perhaps get Ayla’s hands, arms and body to move better.

Ayla was too weak at first to hold a shaker or a beater for a drum, so Linda used a computer tablet to help her make a noise with just a light tap of the fingers, and her family did the same at home, giving her a chance to have her own ‘disco’ by selecting her favourite songs.

To strengthen Ayla’s legs and feet, Linda tied bells onto her ankles so they tinkled when Ayla tapped her feet in time; and she encouraged her to beat a drum with her feet instead of with her hands. To build strength in her arms and hands, she offered rakau sticks that could be gently tapped together, and soon Ayla was able to beat a drum with a beater. She used ribbon sticks while she tapped her feet, swung her knees, and jived her shoulders to complex Latin rhythms. And at home she used a keyboard to develop her fine motor skills.

Linda and her family also encouraged Ayla to sing by giving her a chance to complete the notes at the end of each of the lines of a well-known song or nursery rhyme. At first she couldn’t get enough air into her lungs to make a sound, but little by little, over several months, she began to be able to draw larger and larger breaths. At home, her family gave Ayla small pipes and a harmonica that helped her make music as she developed her ability to control her breathing. As that control grew, Ayla was able to increase the number of words she could say before pausing for breath and soon the world began to know exactly what this switched on little girl has to say for herself.

Over time, Ayla has grown stronger and more verbal. Now when she is hospitalised, they know they can rely on Ayla to tell them what she wants and how she feels. Ayla's parents are grateful for all the help they have received from the Champion Centre, and credit the Music Programme with helping to show them the impressive thinking and talking skills their daughter possesses and for giving them ideas for things to do at home.

#### Rohan: young musician in the making



Rohan's mother Amy (the talented photographer of the photos of her son in this section) recently sent this story to be used on our Facebook page. Amy has kindly allowed us to reproduce it here.

*"Rohan was born at 28 weeks on the 14th January, 2004. Rohan went through the Champion Centre from 6 months of age until graduating when he left for primary school in the January of 2009. While he was there he was privileged to have Julie and Ali as his music therapists.*

*Rohan is now 10 years old, a year 6 at Waimataitai School, Timaru. He plays both the drums and trombone in the Waimataitai Brass Band, has learnt the guitar and is a senior member of the school's Kapa Haka group. He [recently] sat his first Trinity College of London Rock & Pop Grade 1 Drums exam and passed with distinction with a score of 94/100.*

*I would like to thank these two amazing ladies for seeing Rohan's gift with music and encouraging us as a family to help him grow and learn through music. Forever grateful to you all at the Champion Centre. Many Thanks, Amy and Rohan"*



#### **Upcoming events....**

Russley Golf Club Fundraising Breakfast - A fundraiser to help The Champion Centre continue to support the children and families who attend the centre

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 8.30 am Tickets \$22

Tickets available phone:

Anne 358 6515 (email [andrea.macgregor@xtra.co.nz](mailto:andrea.macgregor@xtra.co.nz))

Janet 358 6112 (email: [Desjanet.oloughlin@clear.net.nz](mailto:Desjanet.oloughlin@clear.net.nz))

Eve 383 6867 (email [eve.nissen@championcentre.org.nz](mailto:eve.nissen@championcentre.org.nz))

RSVP Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October

You too can be a Champion for our Champions!

*The Christchurch Early Intervention Trust (governance body of the Champion Centre ) will hold its AGM in conjunction with the Champion Foundation Trust AGM at 6:30 p.m. Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at the Champion Centre.*

## **Supporters near and far...**

Our sincere thanks to ::

SJ Charitable Trust

Lesley Nesbit

Burrows Bros

Dublin Street Trust.

Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust (UK)

Christchurch Earthquake Recovery Trust

Air Rescue Services

Pub Charity

Southern Trust

Farina Thomson Trust

Christchurch City Council

COGS

Harcourts Foundation

Mainland Foundation

Other donations include:

Smile Dial and Dynamic Controls- iPads for children's home use.

Our Champion Supporters, and regular givers through payroll giving and Flow Hot Yoga Mandeville Street.

We are thankful for your continued faith in the work that we do.

We have had some fantastic support from many different parts of the city recently. A few months ago, Takeshi Aikawa, whose company **Edukiwi** supports students from Japan to come to New Zealand to study, came to see how he could help us while giving his students activities that would bring them in contact with the local community. At Japan Day, back in February, the students circulated with buckets collecting for us; and now they are back for more, running five sausage sizzles to support us.

### ***Domo arigatou!***



Other local help is coming from the **Rangiora High School** students, who are supporting the Champion Centre through a fundraiser involving a School House challenge for Boys Netball teams. They aim to encourage those watching the game to make a donation to The Champion Centre. In preparation for the event, Kerryn O'Sullivan from Rangiora High School, called into The Champion Centre recently to see the Transition to School programme. Here she is with Mathilde de Joux who will soon be moving on to primary school in North Canterbury.



The folks at **Harcourts Grenadier** on Moorhouse Avenue recently made a grant of \$4,000 to the Centre from The Harcourts Foundation to support the early intervention research at the Champion Centre led by Dr. Susan Foster-Cohen. This research is exploring the knowledge that our parents bring to the partnership with therapy teams and how it can help children be supported by all those who work with them. Thank you so much! This grant will not only help our children but others whose therapists can profit from the research.



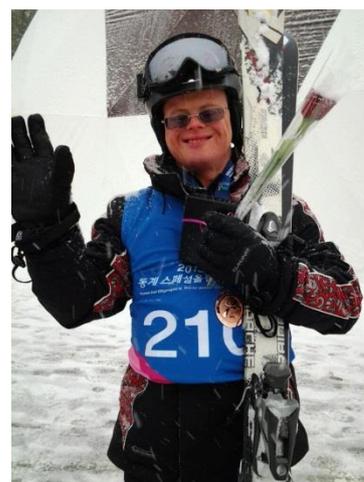
**Flow Hot Yoga** in Mandeville Street is currently supporting the Champion Centre through donations made at its Saturday morning community class. This is a wonderful example of the values and caring of the local community.

***Serious help from afar.....** The Christchurch Earthquake Appeal UK, which two years ago gave us \$100,000 to help us support our families, has again come to our aid, providing \$65,000 to support children and families through the long recovery process post-earthquakes. We are so grateful to these generous people who have found a way to help us through these hard times.*

### **Where are they now?**

Here is one of our graduates, Nick Latz, who was awarded the Bronze medal for Giant Slalom at the Special Olympics World Winter Games.

Nick's family recalls that when they first came to the Champion Centre, Hilary Stock (our computer supported learning specialist) told them to get Nick up to the mountains (as he was terrified of heights). Nick has been skiing (mostly at Mt Hutt) for many years and has obviously overcome his fear of heights. Well done Nick!!



*Tuia te rangi e tū iho nei. Tuia te papa e takoto nei.*

*'As the sky joins the earth, so people depend on one another.'*