



The Cromwell Center News, September 2009

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“After you came to our school last year we started treating a boy with physical disabilities differently.

We stopped teasing him and started helping him when he fell.”

A 4th grade student

We change attitudes

We begin our sixth year of offering the Student Disabilities Awareness Program in Maine schools with renewed commitment to our work in classrooms. Our work is changing attitudes on how all 3rd through 6th grade students think about disabilities.

One in five students have a diagnosed physical, developmental, learning, or behavioral disability. Students with disabilities are a minority population often invisible in efforts to address diversity. Isolation, stigma, and bigotry are every day occurrences for many students with disabilities.

We have heard from thousands of students who have let us know that the gap in understanding disabilities is wider than we imagined.

A 4th grade student stated in a session: *“After you came to our school last year we started treating a boy with physical disabilities differently. We stopped teasing him and started helping him when he fell.”* At another session, a 5th grade student shared with his class for the first time: *“I have ADD which is a disability that makes people think I’m crazy but I’m not, I just need to move around a lot.”*

We listen as students disclose all kinds of disabilities that they or a close family member have. More importantly, students listen to each other. In one remarkable session, a 6th grade student spoke about having a developmental disability. He described how people tease him and how very hard it is for him to be in school. Another student in this classroom stated that this boy was indeed the bravest of them all for being willing to talk about his disability.

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Cromwell Center’s programs expanding

The Cromwell Center’s programs have attracted the attention of two major national organizations: the Center for Talented Youth (CTY), at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, which conducts summer programs for gifted students throughout the country and in several foreign countries; and Boston-based City Year, which places nearly 2,000 college-age youth volunteers as full-time mentors, tutors and role models in inner-city schools in 19 U.S. locations and in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Two Center instructors flew to Baltimore in July to conduct a three-day pilot program in CTY classes. The programs were well received, and CTY and the Center are now engaged in discussions to jointly seek funding to integrate the Center’s work into CTY programs.

see PROGRAMS page 3

Letter from executive director Jamie Kaplan

“The Center has incubated here an innovative and unique Cromwell Method for disabilities awareness education that has attracted attention in other areas of the country and even the world.”

Jamie Kaplan

It’s hard to believe the Cromwell Center is in the midst of our 7th year, one that has generated more excitement in several different quarters than ever before. Part of the excitement is in the office as my colleagues seemed thrilled with my extended periods of absence for my social entrepreneur fellowship in a new initiative at Harvard University. There’s also excitement at home as my wife revels in the quiet and solitude she experiences during my time in Cambridge.

The greatest excitement, however, is generated by possibilities now on the Center’s doorstep as a result of my fellowship learning, networking, exchange of ideas, and consultation with some of the nation’s prominent experts in the non-profit arena. Elsewhere in this newsletter is an article on the potential for long-term strategic partnerships that seem well within grasp with national organizations like City Year and the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University. These partnerships can raise the profile of and further legitimize the Center’s work beyond Maine.

In other words, the Center has incubated here an innovative and unique Cromwell Method for disabilities awareness education that has attracted attention in other areas of the country and even the world. And the highest form of flattery is a desire of others to replicate your work based on merit and successes. We are learning that the Center’s capacity for flattery has no bounds.

None of these successes would be possible without the interest and support of our many friends and supporters – old and new, large and small. Were it not for your remarkable generosity, the Center’s programs would be nice ideas confined to a computer; our programs have no life without you. Not only are we grateful to you, but 25,000 Maine schoolchildren in Grades 3 through 6 and their teachers, every library in Maine and Massachusetts, and diverse communities in both states are grateful to you as well. They tell us loud and clear, and we now tell you.

We are hopeful that next year will bring even greater excitement. With most sincere thanks to you for your ongoing interest, support, and belief in the Center’s mission and work. You are critical to our goal to make the world a better place for all people, with and without disabilities. Most sincerely -- Jamie.

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Send your donation to:
**The Cromwell Center
for Disabilities Awareness
57 Exchange St., Suite 203
Portland, ME 04101**

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COMING SOON: ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

Please plan to give generously again this year – children depend on your support of school programs!

“I have ADD which is a disability that makes people think I’m crazy but I’m not, I just need to move around a lot.”

A 5th grade student

We change attitudes

ATTITUDES from page one

For the 2007-09 years, 98% of returned educator surveys affirm that the Program makes students more sensitive and accepting of students with disabilities. Fully 100% of 570 respondents want the Program to return to classrooms in their school.

A 3rd grade teacher tearfully told us that the Program changed the learning and social environment in her classroom. She had not observed students with disabilities being teased in her classroom. She did observe students with disabilities left out of group learning and social experiences. Through-out that school year she saw a new level of appreciation for differences, new friendships were formed, and a higher level of cooperation realized. Attitudes were changed.

We look forward to the real life experiences and insights students will share with us this year. At the end of the last school year, a mother of a 3rd grader wrote: *“Thank you, thank you, thank you for making the acceptance of all people a priority for our children, and our schools! What an important lesson for us all.”* A new year begins.

**100% of
570 school
administrators
and teachers
surveyed would
like the
Cromwell
Center to
return to
their school.**

**Survey results
2007-09**

Programs expanding

PROGRAMS from page one

Cromwell director Jamie Kaplan is also in discussion with City Year executives to formulate a model to integrate the Center’s disabilities awareness work into City Year’s training for volunteer corps members, initially at the Boston site and potentially in other U.S. locations.

Both CTY and City Year have been drawn to the Center by the unique Cromwell Method approach to disabilities awareness education that instills positive attitudes, understanding and acceptance of people with all kinds of disabilities – learning, behavioral and emotional, developmental, and physical. In addition, both organizations recognize the civic leadership value of empathy fostered by the Center’s programs.

The Center is involved in efforts to develop other strategic partnerships to spread the proven impact of its programs to other United States locations.

Center’s annual gala exceeds fundraising, attendance goals

Hundreds of old friends and new supporters of the Cromwell Center filled the Sable Oaks Marriott’s banquet room in June to roast Center board chair, Les Otten. Guests hailed from New York, California, Boston and western Maine to honor Les as Cromwell’s “Person of the Year.”

Among the half dozen roasters offering tributes and personal stories were Larry Lucchino of the Boston Red Sox, Warren Cook of Saddleback, Maine, Bill Ryan of TD Bank and Dr. Chip Crothers, co-founder with Otten of Maine Handicapped Skiing.

Attendance swelled over the previous years’ dinner and auction events, and new donors and sponsors stepped forward to increase by 70% over last year the amount raised for Cromwell Center’s student disabilities awareness programs.



Les Otten was roasted by Red Sox CEO, Larry Lucchino

The Numbers: Gala 2009

325 attendees

\$118,000 raised

21 new sponsors

49 new donors

20 new auction donors

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