



**FAMILY
ACHIEVEMENT
FOUNDATION**

We can do this together

Family Achievement Foundation

July 2025

Second Annual Parent Retreat Brought Connection, Respite & Love

Sarah Mason, Founder

Family Achievement Foundation hosted its second parent/caregiver retreat in April. Held in Hudson, Wisconsin at the home of Tom Hoel and Sarah Mason, founders of the organization, the retreat provided respite, relaxing and resources. With 16 people in attendance, the retreat was a small group of individuals who created strong connections over the weekend with time to relax, reflect, gain knowledge on tools and resources, and participate in relaxing and fun activities.



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The main objectives for the retreat were accomplished:

- Relaxation and connection with other parents and caregivers on a challenging journey.
- Treat participants to meals and experiences as guests with chef made meals, massages, and options for personal time and reflection.
- Meaningful and fun group activities such as pottery making, dinner in downtown Hudson, and fire burning ceremony to release things participants wanted to let go of.
- Valuable tools and resources provided through expert professionals in various fields specializing in families with disabilities.



The retreat was a meaningful weekend that achieved Family Achievement Foundation's mission of providing love, connections, and resources to families on a challenging journey.

Thank you to the amazing parents/ caregivers who participated, as well as the wonderful speakers and entertainment who helped to create a wonderful experience!

Thank You Speakers & Other Special Guests!



Rachel Everson Fink,
CCC-SLP
Wellness & Self Care +
Letting Go Ceremony



Chef Manny
Friday Night Welcome
Dinner



Beth Neu
Managing Family Dynamics



Dr. Lorraine & Woodbury
Family Chiropractic
Massages



Kari's Create & Paint
Group Pottery Making

Free Family Meetup with HOPE Grove serves over 20 families

Family Achievement Foundation partnered with HOPE Grove, LLC to offer a FREE Family Meetup on June 14th. Over 20 families were in attendance and participated in a scavenger hunt, nature-based outside play and a craft. Parents and caregivers were also able to connect with one another while their children played. HOPE Grove, LLC is a nature based therapeutic and free play group designed to promote your child's resilience, curiosity and growth based in Hudson, WI.



Join Family Achievement Foundation's online closed group for parents/caregivers on Facebook!



Join Family Achievement Foundation's Peer-to-Peer Support Program

Family Achievement Foundation is looking to build a new family and caregiver mentorship/support program. If you are interested in learning more please contact Sarah at smason@familyachievement.com.

Follow Family Achievement Foundation on social media to stay updated!





Journey Award Recipient

Josephine Martinez

Congratulations to our most recent Journey Award recipient, Josephine. Josephine was nominated by friend, Sheletta, who writes "Josephine is a force! When she arrived a year ago in Minnesota from Georgia with her husband and five autistic sons, she had a dream of making the Twin Cities better for parents who have children with special needs. After she found somewhere to live and settled in, she partnered with We Rock the Spectrum to open a facility in Woodbury where East Metro special needs children can play safely. I don't know how in the world Josephine does it. Take care of her kids and a community of kids by creating this indoor park, but she did it and we are all better for it."

Sheletta continues to state "I'm inspired by and grateful for Josephine. She's the mom of special needs children, she's created an atmosphere where you don't ever have to apologize or say "I'm sorry" because someone is looking funny at your kids because they aren't acting "normal." It's safe. S. She's given our family a fun place to go together. We didn't have that for a long time. And she's curating camps and summer programs for the kids, which those opportunities are even fewer and further between. I'm grateful for her remarkable leadership in the short time she's been in our town, she's made a huge impact!"

Congratulations Josephine!



The Journey Award

The Journey Award was created with the hope of touching a parent on a challenging journey. While they may not see what they are doing as special because they love their children, those around them see their caretaking, tireless advocacy, and unconditional love for their children. The individuals selected will receive a \$500 check, a custom-made heart stone, and an award certificate explaining why they were nominated.

Nominate a deserving caregiver for our Journey Award at www.journeyaward.org



Bridging the Gap Between Occupational Therapy & Mental Health

In today's wellness-focused world, terms like mental health and occupational therapy are used often—sometimes even interchangeably. But while they're interconnected in meaningful ways, they serve very different purposes. Earlier this spring, Family Achievement Center's occupational therapists, Tiana Burda OTR/L and Angie Ellingson, OTR/L and Child Mental Health Practitioner from Apricity Counseling and Wellness, and a Clinical Psychologist presented on how OT and mental health can work to treat the whole child and when a child may benefit from one or the other or both synchronously.

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel, and behave. Good mental health enables people to manage stress, maintain relationships, make decisions, and bounce back from adversity. When challenges arise—like anxiety, depression, trauma, or mood disorders—they can disrupt everyday life and overall well-being.

Mental health is a broad umbrella that encompasses everything from emotional regulation to psychiatric conditions, and is supported by various professionals including psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and counselors.

In pediatric mental health, specifically, there are many forms of mental health therapy including: talk therapy, play therapy, Parent/Child Interaction Therapy, family therapy and SPACE (supportive parent for anxious childhood emotions) therapy.

Where Does Occupational Therapy Fit In?

Occupational therapy (OT) helps people do the things they want and need to do through therapeutic use of daily activities. Pediatric OT focuses on sensory processing related to emotion regulation thus also playing a role in mental health treatment. OT doesn't diagnose mental health disorders, but it provides practical strategies to manage them and live well with them.

BRIDGING THE GAP CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



BRIDGING THE GAP CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Key Differences at a Glance

Mental Health	Occupational Therapy
Focuses on overall emotional and psychological well-being	Focuses on function—helping individuals engage in meaningful daily activities
Can be supported by therapy, medication, lifestyle changes	Uses personalized activities and environmental modifications to support daily routines
Often includes diagnosis and treatment of mental illness (anxiety, OCD, trauma)	Does not diagnose, but works with diagnosed conditions to improve quality of life
Parent training and coaching (PCIT, SPACE) Parents can benefit from behavior management to help child with behaviors that are not due to sensory concerns.	Identifies a child’s unique sensory needs and provides strategies that can improve daily routines & identifies strategies for emotion regulation for a sensory perspective based on child’s abilities which may include co-regulation, interoceptive awareness, self-regulation
Providers: psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers	Providers: licensed occupational therapists

The Power of Collaboration

While they serve different roles, OT and mental health care providers often collaborate. A mental health therapist might help someone process trauma, while the OT helps them manage sensory triggers in real-life situations. Together, they create a holistic circle of care that addresses both inner healing and everyday living. OT and mental health can collaborate on emotional regulation and transitions to support the underlying factors that impact function.

Occupational therapy steps in to bridge the gap between things we may struggle with and daily life. OT doesn’t replace mental health treatment—it complements it. Some children benefit from OT in conjunction with mental health to promote holistic wellness.

Find out more by watching our free Resource Series on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@FamilyAchievementFoundation>

All About Me Profile

Introducing your child to new teachers and caregivers can be challenging for both the parents and the child. Every child has unique interests, strengths, and needs. Parents/caregivers often need a simple and effective way to communicate that information to their child's teacher at the start of the school year or a new PCA/babysitter anytime throughout the year. Family Achievement Foundation's All About Me profile can help make this easier for everyone involved!

An "All About Me" profile is a great way to introduce your child to their teacher(s), therapists, other caregivers and/or any other professionals that will be working with them. It can be used when your child enters a new grade, moves to a new school, or is preparing for a big transition. The document is a great summary of your child's needs, safety considerations and medical information.

This profile will allow you to drive the narrative for your child. It will include all the important things you think your child's team should know and is a great way to open the lines of communication between you and your child's team. This is a great tool for teachers and care providers to reference all year long! You can fill this out as the parent/caregiver or you and/or your child can fill out together.



Create an *All About Me* page for your child by visiting our website!



familyachievementfoundation.org/resources/about-me-tool/





About Me
Hi, I'm Abby
I am 7 years old

I HAVE
Down Syndrome
Asthma
Epilepsy

Medications:
• List medication and dosage here
• List medication and dosage here
• Epi Pen

Allergies
• Eggs

Speaking ☒ **Non-speaking** ☐
• I use Verbal communication, Sign Language and my AAC Device

Mom: Andrea
mom@youremail.com
085-598-7734

Dad: Thomas
dad@youremail.com
085-598-7734

Other Caregivers: Grandma- Tami
PCAs- Emily, Sophie

ABOUT ME:
I have a two younger brothers named Joey & Evan. I have a dog named Beau & a cat named Bear. I live in Duluth, MN. I love to go on walks with my mom. My favorite things to do are Miracle League Baseball and Darby's Dancers. I love to watch Bluey and Disney Movies. Frozen and Moana are my favorite.

I HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH:
• Sitting still at a table
• Trying new foods
• Jumping and doing stairs
• Loud places
• Waiting & being patient

THINGS THAT HELP ME:
• Visual Schedules
• Calm Voices
• Quiet Spaces when I need a break
• Big hugs from familiar people
• Being patient with me

I AM REALLY GOOD AT:
• In a book and doing simple puzzles.

Make your own "All About Me Profile" by visiting
<https://familyachievementfoundation.org/resources/about-me-tool/>



Join Family Achievement Center's Move to Your Own Groove All Abilities Run, Walk & Roll

Proceeds will
benefit Family
Achievement
Foundation

Sunday, September 7th
Colby Lake Park
Woodbury



Register:

<https://MTYOG2025.eventbrite.com>



PLEASE NOTE:

This event will be Family Achievement Foundation's major fundraiser during 2025 & no gala will be held.

SPONSOR MOVE TO YOUR OWN GROOVE

by emailing kgavin@familyachievement.com



Upcoming Events

Family Park Meetup: Colby Lake Park

Join us at the park after Move to Your Own Groove

Sunday, September 7th
10:00 AM

Free Resource Series: Navigating Your Child's IEP

Individualized Education Plan

Tuesday, August 5th
6:30-7:30 PM

Family Achievement Center- Woodbury or Virtual
on Zoom

Email info@familyachieve.org to register

**VISIT [FAMILYACHIEVEMENTFOUNDATION.ORG/EVENTS](https://familyachievementfoundation.org/events) TO
SEE ALL UPCOMING EVENTS**