





"Last year Colleen was writing letters, this year words, next year sentences . . . and soon entire stories. Thank you, Belle Center."









Belle Center of Chicago

2006 Annual Report

"Without the Belle Center and their help, it's entirely possible that our son would not be the spirited, focused, joyful 4 year-old he is today. If ever people make a difference, the people at the Belle Center do, day after day – not just with the work they perform, but with the mighty amounts of love and dedication behind it. I know Christopher picks up on that, and as grateful parents, so do we."



Photography: Selima Ani Design: Mary Chase Editor: Beth Valukas

Dear Friends,



This has been a monumental year for the Belle Center. We have expanded our services in all program areas and are serving a record number of children and families. We also established our first formal partnership with a Chicago Public School and provided mentoring and training to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities at this site. Support from the Big Shoulders Fund through Queen of Angels School funded a similar partnership at this private school site. With several new foundation partners, we have significantly increased our reach and expanded our capacity. Highlights from the year include:

- *The delivery of direct and supportive services to a record 160 children.*
- *The provision of mentoring, training and consultative services to nearly 400 parents, teachers and community providers.*
- *A record 2,416 visits to 50 classrooms at 26 school and community sites throughout the city.*
- *Over 500 hours of professional development, mentoring and training to teachers and support staff at partner school sites.*



We are thrilled to share that, with support from individuals, corporations, foundations and small businesses, we have been able to provide these services to all children, families and schools requesting support, regardless of financial status. The growth of our Scholarship Program is another meaningful highlight of the year.

We continue to provide these services to children with a wide range of abilities and areas of challenge. Our clients include children with diagnoses of Down syndrome, autistic spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, sensory integration dysfunction, speech-language disorders, learning disabilities or global developmental delays, among others. Whatever the initial reason for contacting the Belle Center, all of our families share a desire to maximize options for their children and to help them reach their greatest potential.

Our goal is, and always has been, to help children with disabilities access the educational and social opportunities available to all members of society. Although we are a small organization by most measures, we believe that the work that we have done over the past year has helped to open doors to schools and community programs throughout the city.

We are extremely proud of these recent accomplishments and invite you to take a look at highlights from the year in the pages that follow.

Sincerely,

Board Chair

Executive Director

program highlights



"The Belle Center has helped us to realize our dreams for our daughter. Their love, commitment and passion for inclusion has led to her continued success. Every day we see her growing, becoming more independent and, just, happy! I don't know where we would be without Belle's support!"

community outreach program

The Community Outreach Program continues to be the heart of our current work. Our staff of Educators and Speech-Language, Occupational and Physical Therapists travels to the places that make up a child's typical day – including schools, day care centers, day camps and homes – to provide services to children with disabilities in their natural environments. This year, with new support from the Foundation for Developmentally Disabled Children, we expanded the role of our Program Director to provide these services to more children and families than ever before. Working side-by-side with classroom teachers and community providers, Belle staff sought to support the inclusive placements of children with disabilities in general education classrooms and community programs throughout the city. **With a record 2,416 visits to 50 classrooms throughout the city, we observed children demonstrating increased self-confidence and social skills through participation in activities alongside their peers.** We also observed notable improvements in the areas of cognitive, speech, fine and gross motor development. Perhaps most compelling, we saw new friendships form and genuine displays of compassion and acceptance.

family support

The Belle Center continues to provide extensive family support services, including information, consultation, advocacy, research and referrals to parents, siblings and extended family members of the children we serve. Throughout the 2005-06 year, our staff worked with families to determine options for school placement, participate in school-based meetings, facilitate sibling support groups and help navigate an increasingly complex special education system, among other services. Participation in Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings on behalf of the children and parents served was a critical aspect of this work. In these meetings, Belle staff sought to maximize choices for families by advocating for access to the educational and supportive services to which they are entitled. We also helped families to advocate for school placements in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE). LRE is based on a growing body of research that demonstrates that when students with disabilities are educated and included in general school and community programs, they demonstrate increased motivation, higher self-esteem, improved communication and socialization skills, and greater academic achievement than those children placed in more restrictive, or segregated, environments. **Belle staff participated in a record 60 school-based meetings on behalf of our client families in the 2005-06 school year.**







inclusion education initiative

The goal of the Belle Center's Inclusion Education Initiative is to present community providers with information, tools and strategies to successfully include children with disabilities in their programs. Through workshops, in-services, consultation and training, we seek to open doors to community activities for all children. Whether the audience is a parent group, staff of camp counselors or meeting of classroom teachers, we strive to empower individuals to respond to the needs of all children within their communities. With the new support of the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation in 2005-06, the Belle Center established a pilot partnership with a public charter school to provide weekly mentoring, consultation and training services to teachers and support staff at the Chicago International Charter School - Bucktown. Through a combination of weekly classroom visits and regular professional development opportunities, the Belle Center's team sought to increase the competence and confidence of general educators, special educators and support staff to include and support children with disabilities in classrooms alongside their typically developing peers. **Through this partnership and a similar model at Queen of Angels School, we provided over 500 hours of professional development, mentoring and training to support inclusive placements.** We are thrilled to share that by the end of the year, the Polk Bros. Foundation had awarded the Belle Center a grant to develop a similar partnership at Coonley Elementary, an additional Chicago Public School site.





parent training

Over the past year, the Belle Center integrated It Takes Two to Talk, The Hanen Program for Parents, as a regular component of its programs. The program is designed for parents of young children who have communication difficulties and is based on years of research that addresses the need for early intervention and the importance of parents' involvement. **Over the course of this 13-week program, parents participate in activities and group discussions to learn to create and take advantage of everyday opportunities to help their child communicate and use language.** Children whose parents are in an It Takes Two to Talk program have a variety of strengths and areas of need. The stages of communication range from children who communicate nonverbally to those that are beginning to put two to three words together. In an It Takes Two to Talk program, the reason for the communication delay doesn't matter. The focus is solely on how and why the child is currently communicating and what the next steps are in the development of communication skills. We are thrilled that this program has served as the point of entry for many new families.

"The Belle Center's parent training program provided me with effective techniques for helping my child communicate better. It taught me things about myself that I needed to change and has made me much more aware of each and every interaction with my child. It works!"

social groups

The Belle Center continues to offer and grow its School-Year and Summer Social Groups, designed to help children develop and expand upon specific skills that will promote social development. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the transfer of these newly acquired skills to the larger community settings in which children participate. Activities are planned and created to encourage, model and facilitate positive social skills while also incorporating educational, gross and fine motor activities. Social Groups address such skills as language and communication, cooperative play skills, pre-writing and early writing skills, early literacy skills and creative writing. Participating children learn to develop positive peer communication skills, take part in cooperative play and build upon sharing and learning skills. Social groups provide opportunities for children to feel successful and competent in using skills in areas where they have had challenges. **With the ongoing support of the Andrew Family Foundation, the Belle Center facilitated a record 12 groups throughout the year.**



Statement of Financial Position
August 31, 2006

CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	$ 98,775
Accounts Receivable	$ 372
Prepaid Expenses	$ 5,050
Total Current Assets	$104,197
Capital Assets (net of accumulated depreciation)	$ 5,732
Total Assets	**$109,929**
LIABILITIES	
Unearned Revenue	$ 11,250
Accounts Payable	$ 1,329
Payroll Taxes Payable	$ 4,223
Real Estate Taxes Payable	$ 2,670
Deposits	$ 122
Total Liabilities	**$ 19,594**
NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	$ 90,355
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$109,929**

Statement of Activities

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:	**Unrestricted**	**Temporarily Restricted**	**Total**
Tuition and Fees	$135,985	$ -	$135,985
Contributions and Donations	18,618	-	18,618
Interest Earnings	466	-	466
Special Events (less direct expense of $17,835)	54,495	-	54,495
Grants	191,000	41,250	232,250
Assets Released from Restriction	41,250	(41,250)	-
Total Revenue and Support	**$441,814**	**-**	**$441,814**
EXPENSES:			
Program	375,363	-	375,363
Supporting Services	64,819	-	64,819
Total Expenses	**440,182**	**-**	**440,182**
Change in Net Assets	1,632	-	1,632
NET ASSETS:			
Beginning of the Year	88,703	-	88,703
End of the Year	**$ 90,335**	**$ -**	**$90,335**

mission statement

The Belle Center promotes the rights and expectations of all children to be fully included in the community. The Center provides a progressive, family-centered inclusive approach to education and community life that supports children with disabilities and their families.

core values

Family Centered Approach: Families are the primary decision-makers regarding their child's learning experiences and development.

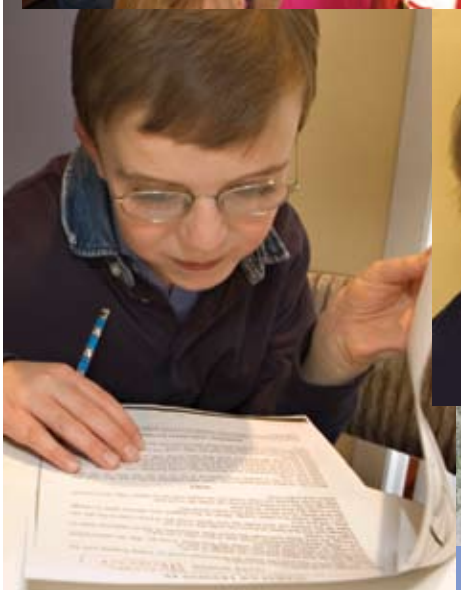
Advocacy: Advocacy is powerful. It can cause positive changes in the lives of the children whose families practice it, as well as within larger circles of children and families in the community.

Inclusion: Interactive learning experiences for children with and without disabilities are beneficial for ALL participants.

Collaboration: All members of a team – those persons designated by the family to provide support – are valuable when working together in the best interest of the child and family. A combination of unique strengths and roles forms the foundation.

Natural Environment: Families and children get support within, and relevant to, the places and activities that make up their lives.









Gift Listings September 1, 2005 - August 31, 2006

Gifts of $50,000 - $100,000
The Lakshmi Foundation
The Weasel Fund

Gifts of $25,000 - $49,999
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation

Gifts of $10,000 - $24,999
The Foundation for Developmentally Disabled Children
The Polk Bros. Foundation

Gifts of $5,000 - $9,999
Killerspin
RSM McGladrey, Inc.
Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon, LLP

Gifts of $2,500 - $4,999
Andrew Family Foundation
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Goldman Sachs & Co.
Mesirow Financial
Mills Family Charitable Foundation in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Wm Greengoss and in memory of Jeffrey Miller
SBC Illinois
Anton R. Valukas and Maria Finitzo-Valukas

Gifts of $1,000 - $2,499
Kemery Bloom
Nancy and John Buchanan
L.B. Carr
Tom and Amy Fahey
Tyrone C. Fahner
Christa and Greg Gallopoulos
Brian F. Hynes
Orlando Jones & Associates, LLC
Dr. and Mrs. Frank Kotsonis
Madeline and Steven Lesnik
Elick and Charlotte Lindon Fund
Gail and Andrew Marks in honor of Suzanne Carr
McMaster-Carr Supply Company
Diane and Glen Meakem
Moelis Family Foundation
Jim and Sheree Valukas

Gifts of $500 - $999
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Jane and Bill Altman
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Anna and Michael Boone
Access Living
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Mr. and Mrs. Joseph B. Carini, Jr.
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Jerald and Shannon Nelson
Aletha Noonan
Queen of Angels
The Honorable Patrick Quinn
Daniel and Elizabeth Reidy
Dennis and Priscilla Sienko
Shirley Thomas and Stephen Martin
Mr. and Mrs. Anton J. Valukas

Gifts of $100 - $249
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Tonia and Brian Arrington
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Peter Barash and Beth Valukas
Sheila A. Barrett
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Electronic Knowledge Interchange in memory of Scott Sherman
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Jeanlin and John Bower
Kelly Brennan and Joseph Kennedy
Diane Buchanan and Rick Andrew in honor of Rachel Buchanan
John and Sue Buchanan
Carol Cavazos in memory of Scott Sherman
Matt, Diana, Macy and Carson Chapman
E.L. and Kathy Crenshaw in memory of Scott Sherman
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Sarah Duncan and Tom McDougal
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Edward Grunebaum
Angelina Grzeslo
Gregory and Ines Grzeslo
Karen Haasen
Alyssa Heck
Stephen and Theresa Heck
Howard and Evelyn Hoffmann
Teresa and Tom Howe
Chester Kamin
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Kathy Kennedy-Kartheiser
Mary Kensik and John Winters
Richard and Joan Kohn
Robert Mardirossian and Mary Alice Lavin
Steven Levine
Veronica Lopez
Edward Malone
Ben and Dulce Marsan
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Kenton Moore
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Joan and Jack Wing

Gifts under $100
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Lisa Brooks
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Candace and Stephen Carr
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Cardinal Bernardin Early Childhood Center
Colleen and Patrick Coleman
Thomas Czarnecki
Susan and Thomas Da Mario
Damien Lee Johnson and Anne G. DeBock
Donald R. and Trudy Duvall
Emma Duvall

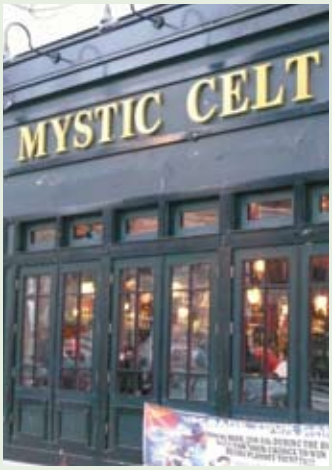
Belle-a Notte: A Beautiful Night with the Belle Center of Chicago

2005 marked the second year of Belle-a Notte and established the event as a major fundraiser for the organization. With over 200 guests and nearly $70,000 raised, the event provided an opportunity to recognize individuals who have helped to create connections between children with disabilities and their families, and the educational, social and learning environments available to all members of society. This year's Bridge Builder Honorees, Kathy and Jack Lavin, were recognized for the critical role that they have played in the ongoing growth and development of the organization, as well as for their broader advocacy efforts on behalf of other children and families in Chicago. We owe a very special thanks to Co-Chairs Jane Altman and Ines Grzeslo for their exceptional leadership on our behalf!



Belle Center Bar Night

The Belle Center hosted its first (soon to be annual) bar night, thanks to the leadership of Board Member Tricia O'Shea. Nearly 100 people came out for a summer evening of food, drinks and fun. We owe a very big thank you to Mystic Celt, which generously contributed towards the cost of food and beverages. Thanks to everyone who came out to support us!



David Feller
Margaret A. Feller
G. William Fishering
Gabriela V. Fitz
Maricruz Flores
Kenneth Brucks & Christine Frisoni
Cathy and Thomas Gallmeyer
Teresa Garate
Darchelle Garner
Danna McKay Glauser
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Tricia Sabathne and James Hocker
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Trica Sabathne
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Beth Valukas & Peter Barash
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All Children Can Learn and Play Together

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