



Exceptional Times

Fall / Winter 2005

Matthew's Story

We have learned something very important from Matthew Marsoobian: never underestimate what can happen when a determined child, a determined family, and a team of determined early interventionists come together. Matthew came to EPU when he was 6 months old. He had been diagnosed with a rare disorder which caused him to have extreme muscle weakness throughout his body. He was unable to move much, and it was difficult for him to communicate his emotions and needs because the muscles in his face did not permit him to express himself.

Matthew's mother, Pam, says that she knew something was different about Matthew when he was born. She describes the loneliness of trying to convince her pediatrician, family and friends that something wasn't right about Matthew. When he was 4 months old, she asked her pediatrician to run some specific tests. Tests that she felt, through her own research, might shed light on Matthew. Those tests led to genetic testing and to the diagnosis of a rare and specific metabolic disorder. Pam describes the uneasiness of those months as feeling like she had been "digesting cement."

Matthew and his family participated in many services offered by EPU's Infant Family Program: early developmental assessment and intervention, physical therapy, speech therapy, Play and Grow, and parent support. EPU staff members saw the potential in Matthew and were challenged to challenge him. Matthew has come a long way since

we first met him: he walks (and climbs), he knows his alphabet, can complete the spelling of simple words on his "Leapster," and he has learned many signs which he uses in 3-4 word sentences. Smiling is challenging for him, but laughing is not.



His exhilarating laugh contributes to the joy of everyone who knows him. Matthew recently graduated from EPU at the age of 3. He cried tears of sadness on his last day of Toddler Group (along with the staff), but he *walked* out of the Center! From Matthew we have learned that you can't make assumptions about what may be locked up inside a child when his body doesn't cooperate with what his mind wants to do.

Matthew is now attending a preschool program in Clovis Unified School District. He loves school and is being challenged by his teachers and the other children in his class. His story tells the story of early intervention. Some children have to work harder at being children than others, and some children need extra help from their families and specialists to assure that they progress developmentally to the best they can. While we cannot take away the underlying physiological conditions of our children, we can encourage them and their families to make adaptations which lay down the foundation for success throughout their lives.

OPEN HOUSE

Celebrating the opening of

The Assessment Center for Children

A community partnership for children and families

Thursday, October 20, 2005
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

at

Exceptional Parents Unlimited
4440 N. First Street

OKTOBERFEST

Sponsored by: North Fresno Rotary

Benefiting EPU and other selected charities

Sunday, October 23, 2005
1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Coombs Riverbend Ranch

Tickets available at EPU Adults \$40,
Children 12 and under \$5

Fun and food and OOMPAAH music
for children and adults!



Heart to Heart



2005 - 2006
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The story of Matthew Marsoobian is indeed heart warming, but it also provides insight into the challenges facing families who have developmental concerns about their children. As one mother poignantly said about the months that she spent searching for answers to her concerns about her daughter, "I felt that I was the only one who didn't believe in her." These stories illustrate the reasons behind the Assessment Center for Children which recently opened its doors at EPU. Parents, pediatricians and others now have one place to call with their concerns.

EPU is honored to have been selected as the lead agency for the new Assessment Center for Children in Fresno County. We are pleased to be welcoming new children and families to our center for assessment and referral for intervention at the earliest possible time.

We are also very excited to be the recipient of a new challenge grant from Fresno Regional Foundation through the Bennett Family Trust. A grant of \$100,000 will be available if we are able to raise an equivalent amount of money over the next 12 months. Our Board of Directors has concurred with the donor that these funds will go toward both repairing our roof and establishing an endowment which will support EPU into the future.

At the same time, we are sad that we have had to establish a waiting list for infants and young children to enter our Infant Family Program. We know from our work with babies who have been identified with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, neurological injuries, autism, seizure disorders and other delays that early intervention can make a huge difference in their capacity to grow and learn throughout their lives.

As we are opening the doors to some new children through the Assessment Center, we don't want to be closing our doors to other children through our Infant Family Program – a program we have provided since 1979. We continue to need the support of our community who has been so generous to EPU over the years. Our donors have enabled us to maintain the level of excellence that our children deserve.

I hope you will come to our Open House on October 20 and help us celebrate the community's new Assessment Center for Children. I also ask you to share your compassion in helping us to keep our doors open for the children who need us most.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

Marion M. Karian

Marion M. Karian, Executive Director



15 Years of Fiesta Fun

Our 15th annual Fiesta de los Niños on July 16 was attended by nearly 1,000 people and raised over \$76,000 to benefit EPU services for children and families. Fresno Firefighters cooked the tri-tip, and over 250 volunteers helped.

We're grateful for the many contributions of quality items for our live and silent auctions, and for the donations of food, beverages and other items from so many sources. Thanks to everyone who attended, and thanks especially to our major event sponsors.



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More Special Thanks

CalTrans Kids Day Benefits EPU



Employees from CalTrans District 6 presented a check to EPU for \$2,000 from their Kids Day event in July. The proceeds are permanently sponsoring two transportation rooms at EPU.

Fresno Rotary Sponsors Clubhouse

New furnishings and equipment for the EPU Clubhouse, made possible by a \$6,000 grant from Fresno Rotary, are delighting children ages 6 and older.

SC Johnson Sponsors Life Skills



Representatives from SC Johnson Co. presented a check to EPU in June for \$10,000 toward Life Skills classes for the Learning About Parenting program.

EPU Teen and Young Adult Groups Raise \$800 for New Sign

The EPU Teen and Young Adult Groups held a car wash in April to raise money toward replacing the EPU building sign that has suffered repeated graffiti from taggers over the past two years. The young people decided they wanted to do something about this. The combined groups and their family members had a great time, and the car wash raised over \$800.

Bobbie Coulbourne, one of the group coordinators, says challenges like these are important for our youth. She says, "Giving back to the community is the best thing we can give our youth."



See's Candies for the Holiday

The EPU Youth Group and Young Adults Group will be selling See's Candies for the holidays. There are yummy choices ranging from \$4 for Mini Holiday Fancies to \$27.50 for a two-pound box of assorted chocolates. A one-pound gift certificate is available for \$13.60. Proceeds from holiday sales of See's Candies help support group activities all year long.



Please call Janet
at 229-2000
to place your orders.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited is excited to offer the 2006 Entertainment Book at the new low price of only \$25.00. Please help support EPU by purchasing one today! Books are available for pick up now. Please print form below and mail or bring to: EPU • 4440 North First Street • Fresno, CA 93726.

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Thank you for supporting EPU!

Della Garrett Receives Tobacco Education Award

EPU Nurse Della Garrett has received a certificate of appreciation from the California Health Collaborative on behalf of the Strengthening Tobacco Prevention (STOP) program for her work in providing tobacco education to EPU families and the community.

In addition to providing a free 8-week Smoking Cessation classes, Della also works with families in their homes sharing the secondary effects of smoking as well as techniques for quitting.

To learn about the next class, call 229-2000, Ext. 116



“Understanding ADD/ADHD” a Popular Class with Parents

EPU is pleased to have the continuing support of Kaiser Permanente for a class for parents on “Understanding ADD/ADHD.” The class covers Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, how to access medical and psychological services, definitions of disability categories for educational assistance, and general behavioral management techniques for parents.

To register or learn about other classes, please call Anita at 559•229-2000.

The next class is scheduled for Wednesday, November 9, from 6-9 p.m., in Clovis.



Grocery Rebates Benefit EPU

EPU participates in three grocery rebate programs that benefit EPU:

- Albertsons
- Foods Co
- Save Mart-FoodMaxx

If you shop at any of these stores, please consider helping EPU by signing up for the community benefit program. A percentage of your purchases will be returned to help support EPU services for children and families.

To enroll, call 229-2000.

Worth Doing Buddy Walk October 15

The Fresno Area Down Syndrome Society is sponsoring the Buddy Walk at Roeding Park in Fresno on Saturday, October 15, 2005. For details, contact FADSS at 228-0411.

Winter Wonderland for Youth



The third annual Winter Formal for EPU teens and young adults and their friends will be held on Friday evening, December 16, at Love and Garlic banquet facility. This is a special opportunity for these young people

to dress in tuxes and evening gown and have their portraits taken. There'll be music, dancing and refreshments – and memories to last a lifetime.



Please call 229-2000 for tickets, to offer contributions or to volunteer your help.



Assessment Center Open House - October 20

We are happy to invite the community to our Open House on Thursday, October 20, from 4-6 p.m. The address is 4420 N. First Street, Suite 110, Fresno. Our offices at 4440 N. First Street will also be open for touring and refreshments.

Since opening in the spring, the Assessment Center for Children at EPU has been seeing Fresno County children 0-5 whose parents or caregivers have multiple concerns about their child's learning, development, and/or behavior. The Assessment Center is one place where children and families can come and receive an assessment that includes the participation of professionals from several different agencies. For questions about assessment services or the assessment process, please call 559•225-1102. Representatives from our partner agencies who have staff located at the center will also be on hand to answer questions:

- Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC)
- Fresno Unified School District
- Fresno County Dept. of Children & Family Services
- Fresno Co. Department of Community Health
- Fresno County Employment & Temporary Assistance

We look forward to seeing you on October 20.



EPU Holiday Open House

Children and their families will celebrate holidays around the world and enjoy special treats at EPU in December. There will be arts and crafts, games, and pictures with Santa Claus. Dates and times are:



Selma	Tuesday, December 13	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Firebaugh	Friday, December 16	1-3 p.m.
Fresno	Wednesday, December 21	9:30-11:30 & 1:30-3:30

EPU supporters and guests from the community are welcome to join the festivities.



Pumpkin Patch a Treat for Children

October 24 - 28 will be Pumpkin Patch week at EPU. Children are invited to wear their Halloween costumes when they come to Play & Grow. They'll have fun climbing on bales of hay and exploring different sizes of pumpkins before trick-or-treating throughout our offices.



EPU Wish List

Just some of our wishes to help our children grow and learn:



- Pumpkin Patch Week – pumpkins, bales of hay, and treats for the children.
- Teddy Bear Picnic week in November – books and snacks for the children.
- Holiday Open House in December – decorated cookies, funds for film and other treats.

Your contributions work many wonders.

EPU is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible

For your convenience, on-line secure donation also available through www.exceptionalparents.org

Yes! I would like to contribute to brighter futures for EPU children and families with a gift of: \$ _____

Please include me in "100 Friends of EPU" with my donation of \$250.

This gift is made : In memory of _____ In honor of _____

Please send an acknowledgment to : _____

Enclosed is my check, or please charge my credit card: MasterCard Visa expiration date ___ - ___ - ___

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Mission Statement

To strengthen and empower children and families facing extraordinary medical, developmental, and parenting challenges.

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