



# The Hagedorn Little Village School

## *Jack Joel Center for Special Children*



## July 2019 Newsletter

### *Graduation 2019*





# Graduation 2019



*Congratulations  
to all of our  
graduates!*



*You will be missed!*





# Graduation 2019 - HLVS Parents Kristen and Tom LaMaina

## Parents Kristen and Tom LaMania speaking at graduation....

Good morning....I have to admit, when **Jon** asked me to speak my initial, gut reaction was a firm NO! One of my biggest fears is public speaking....but....when I thought about it again, and thought about all of the challenges our little guy has faced, thought about all of the cards that have been stacked against him, and then thought about how he's taken each one head on with his **Brady** boy smile on his face....and then thought about the people and the place that made so many of his accomplishments possible, I realized this was exactly what I needed to do. I needed to face one of my fears, head on, with a smile on my face and in my heart, tell all of you how incredibly proud I am of Brady and thank the super special staff of Little Village for helping him on his way. So, as Jon told you, our given names are **Kristen and Tom LaMaina**. But, what we most fondly go by is Ryan, Emma, Brady & Molly's mom and dad.



Brady is #3 of our 4 children. As a chubby little guy, who had an older sister and brother, he was constantly scooped up and ran out the door for nursery school drop off or dance or soccer pickup. We never really focused on the fact that he wasn't necessarily doing things in the same timeframe as his siblings. We never compared our children. They're all so different, even today and as we all know well, different means beautiful. Brady was evaluated for Early intervention services and granted speech- for apraxia, PT and OT both for low muscle tone and global developmental delays. I'll be honest, this was a world we were very unfamiliar with. We both figured he'd get the services he'd need and continue on at the same school his siblings were at, which I had graduated from 8th grade as well. But, as the saying goes, we make plans and God laughs. Though...in looking back... I have to believe that he only laughed because he had an even better plan in place. After being discharged from his early intervention speech therapist in our home, we were given the opportunity for him to receive speech here, at Little Village. Several times a week, myself, Brady and usually his little sister, **Molly** came to meet with Brady's very first Little Village angel, **Sue Browne**. Her warm smile, her gentle way, and kind nature, made the struggle to get there worth it every single time.

In no time, we were all welcomed by **Mr. Bill** at the door, **Gloria** at the front desk, and **Fran** who's office molly and I would sit outside of while Brady was in with Sue. Those faces and their smiles made us feel at home there before we were truly part of the family. That following spring it was decided that Brady would benefit from attending a PreK program in a school like little village. With heavy hearts, since it was not what we had planned, we put our smiling from ear to ear little boy who could barely communicate verbally, onto a bus, all by himself, and sent him to school in another town. There were tears pouring down my face as the bus pulled away. He never looked nervous- even when I'm sure inside he had to be. Our biggest comfort was that he would be greeted by the same faces that had met us for speech the year before. After a short time in a half day program it was recommended that Brady attend a full day in a newly developed speech and hearing impaired class with another one of our Little Village angels....Katy Marascia. Well, to this day, I don't think I can ever fully put into words the impact Katy left on our hearts. She made me truly believe that everything would be ok. She made me understand things about Brady that no one had ever been able to clearly explain. And she constantly reinforced in our hearts that our decision to send him to Little Village was most definitely the right one. 3 years later when she was sitting in our church for Brady's communion, along with other amazing staff of Little Village, she was still showing her dedication to our little guy, and her love for him and for her job. We will be forever grateful for Katy walking into Brady's life when we needed her most.

That same year, Brady's, dream team as we call them, his speech therapist, **Maria**, his Occupational Therapist, **Lorena** and his physical therapist, **Sarah**, also began their 5 year journey with our little guy. These 3 are exceptional!!!! Maria crossed the finish line with Brady at the first sleepy hollow 5k we did after Brady had a bilateral knee surgery. I'll never forget the smile on both of their faces.



# *Graduation 2019 - HLVS Parents Kristen and Tom LaMaina*

When he first began working with her, he could barely get the words to “head, shoulders, knees and toes” and 5 years later I have to ask him to just give me 5 minutes of silence....please. Sarah took Brady on, and I remember us talking about how he loved playing basketball, and riding a bike- and we talked about wanting him to have the capability to descend a flight of stairs one foot over the other. She took Brady back at school- just two weeks after his crazy surgery, helped him to remain strong for when the casts came off and helped him recover and relearn all the things he was struggling with post op. I don't think I could've had the patience to push through like she did. And last but most certainly not least, Lorena.....one of our greatest Little Village memories will forever be Brady and Lorena at the fashion show this year! I know getting up there in front of all of those people wasn't easy for her, but she told me she'd do it for Brady. I guess he has us both as I stand before you today. I remember telling Lorena all I wanted was for him to be able to write his name....and, thanks to her hard work, he does that and so much more. These 3 remarkable women impress me every week with their dedication, their kindness towards Brady but most of all with their genuine love for him. Brady asked me several weeks ago if he could take them with him, I think even he realizes the gifts they've given him. And while I had to explain that we can't physically take them with us, they are forever in our hearts and will always be key players in Team Brady's bunch!



My own personal Little Village angel is **Anne Partridge**. Anne has spent time with me these past few years, talking me through the struggles I face. She's offered her advice, her ear, her hugs....she's listened to me complain when things have been hard, and she's shared in some of my greatest joys. She always just gets it...and gets me. Never judges, always understands- and always making me feel like even on my toughest day I'm still doing a great job. I'm going to miss her visits more than she will ever know.

Tom and I have always said, in our family, our greatest challenge has also been our biggest blessing. I once said that to our oldest son, **Ryan**. He immediately responded with, “You mean, Brady, right mom...” I told him, it's not Brady that's any more of a blessing in our lives than any of our other kids, it's who Brady is and in turn who our other 3 kids are too. Life as a special needs parent is challenging. And each one of us here today face different daily struggles but....in our house, because all things aren't “cookie cutter”...neither are our kids. They are kind, genuinely good, accepting individuals. They love to their core and we are so blessed that they are ours. Because of our “challenges” we've been lucky enough to be a part of the Little Village community. We've seen such amazing work take place- we've met such special people- our Brady boy has been at home and so have we.

So, Brady, I hope you know how incredibly proud we are of you. I hope you always remember that no matter where you go in life or what you're doing, we are always by your side. I know you'll take the tools you've learned here at little village and apply them to all the wonderful things you accomplish along life's way. We love you, buddy, up to the moon and back....Thank you for choosing us to be your mom and dad!

And, to the faculty and staff of Little Village...from Jon and **Patti**, the school nurses, the teachers, the aides, the therapists and Mr. Bill, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. While it wasn't the plan for us to land here, we are so thankful that we did. You have more than just a school, you have created a family. You've given gifts of hope, gifts of strength and gifts of love. This special place will forever hold a piece of our hearts. I'm not sure we know how to navigate this world without the guidance of Little Village, but I'm hopeful that because of what we've all gained here, in whatever time frame and capacity each and every one of us has stayed for, our little people and all of us here today, will continue to achieve greatness.

Congratulations to the Hagedorn Little Village School class of 2019! Today is YOUR day!



# Graduation 2019





# Graduation 2019 - HLVS Parent Jenn Apostle

## *Parent Jenn Apostle speaking at graduation....*

So, here we are, ready (or not) to move on from this amazing place that we've been lucky enough to call home for the past nine years. My daughter told me not to cry because crying in public makes people uncomfortable so I promise I will do my best to try. In a way I wish that I could be speaking to you (and to myself) on our first day coming through those doors instead of our last. If I could, I would tell you that despite your worst fears and anxieties, with a little time (or maybe A LOT of time), a great amount of trust and infinite patience, it's going to be okay.

Recently, a friend of mine began the daunting task of finding a school for her 3-year-old with special needs. When I asked her if there was a particular school she was interested in (completely assuming that Little Village would be at the top of her list) her answer was, "I don't want ANY school." I guess we can all remember what it was like to be in that place. It's a long and difficult process adjusting to the idea that your child will need more than most. It's painful to let go of the hopes and dreams that you had before you were worried by missed milestones or crushed by a doctor's diagnosis. What was even more challenging to accept (before you've even had time to wrap your head around all of this) is that you're going to need to let go and trust others to help your precious baby through their immense struggles.

When **Kerrick** was two, the idea of sending him to school was completely terrifying. I couldn't imagine that anyone would possibly love him or care for him as well as we did at home. Especially considering the revolving door we had at our house with a constant flow of EI staff; PT's, OT's, Speech Therapists, Special Ed Teachers, ABA therapists, Vision specialist - the acronyms alone took years to figure out. When we were trying to find a school, I reached out to another mom who had just gone through the process with her daughter. She assured me that sending Kerrick to school was absolutely necessary... she said that he needed school and we as parents needed school but I still wasn't so sure. Then we came to Little Village.

The positive energy that I felt as soon as I stepped foot in this building gave me hope that maybe progress and change would come. Maybe we wouldn't need to manage all of this on our own. Maybe it was going to be okay. Well, it was more than okay. It was happy. It was loving. It was kind. It wasn't at all where I wanted or expected to be but little by little it became our home.

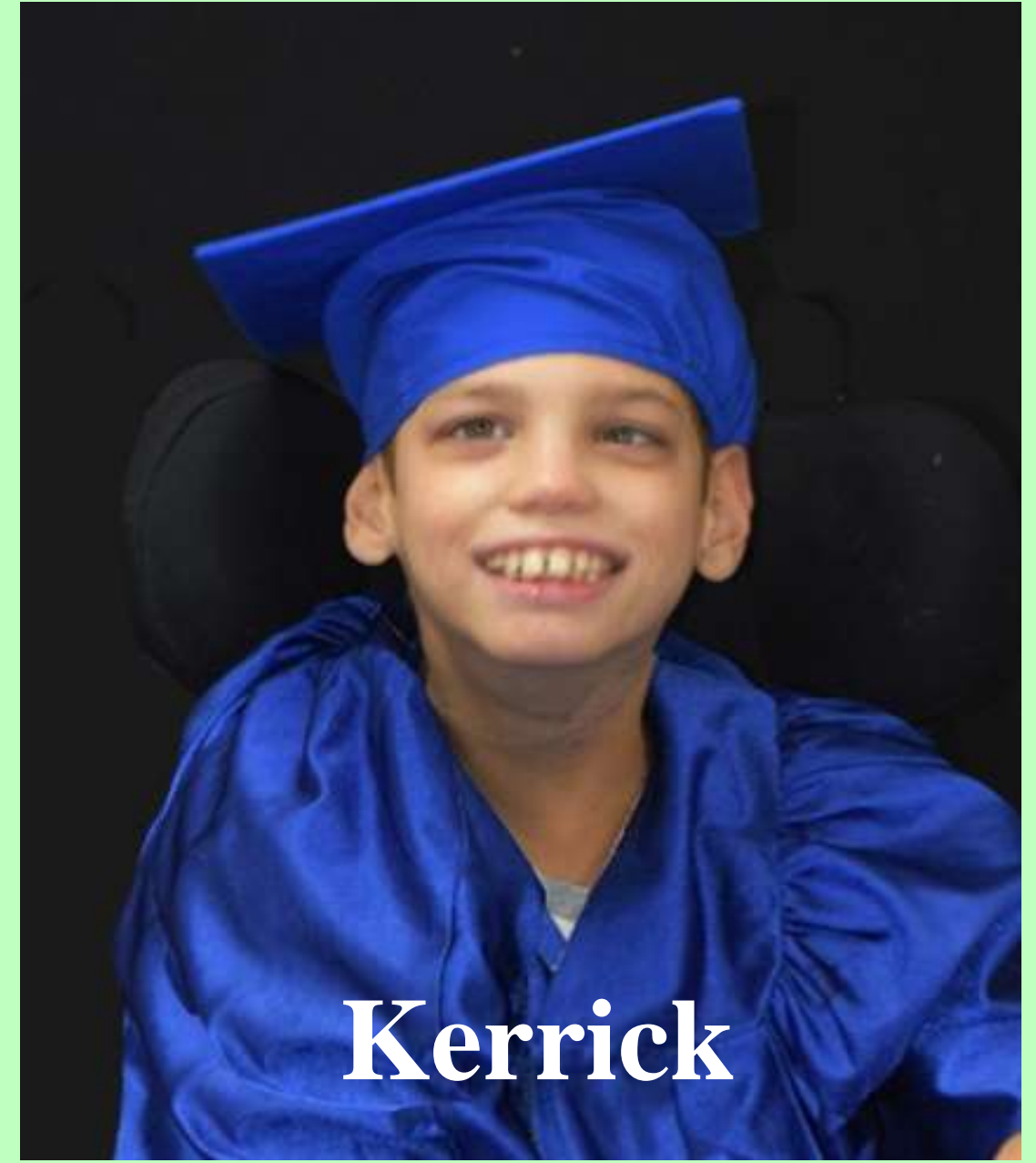
The administration welcomed us and did whatever possible to put us at ease. The incredible teachers worked tirelessly to create appropriate goals and inclusive lesson plans adapting everything to meet each child's needs and abilities. The therapists moved mountains (and bikes and swings and treadmills) to get our kids motivated and keep them smiling though difficult, repetitive tasks. Supervisors took the phone calls, set up the meetings, ironed out the kinks and just sat down to listen whenever there was a concern. Nurses made those uncomfortable calls home, managed meds and ran daily laps through the hallways to answer any call for help. Classroom aides....how can we ever thank you enough? They took turns competing for snuggles and hugs and bravely took on the challenges of feeding, positioning, diapering and shuffling our kids from busses, to classrooms, to therapies and more. They basically stepped into our shoes 6 hours a day 5 days a week...willingly. Parent's group was an absolute life line. The knowledge and strength that I gained from these remarkable women took me from a place of heartache and despair to a place of empowerment and determination. **Anne's** gentle guidance and not always so subtle suggestions to "find the joy" and "remember to take care of you first" will stay with me forever. The honesty and loving support that I found in group made all the difference.





# *Graduation 2019 - HLVS Parent Jenn Apostle*

This incredible network of teachers, professionals, family and friends helped Kerrick to grow and learn so much over the years. To the outside world, his gains may seem small but inside these walls they were huge victories. The progress I was hoping for did come but not at all in the way I expected. For Kerrick, success cannot be measured in milestones achieved, words spoken or steps taken...and that's okay. The changes can be seen in everyone around him. The changes came in our parents, in Kerrick's siblings, in our extended family and the countless therapist and caregivers who came into our lives. The change was acceptance and a new idea of what was "enough" in life. The change was tolerance, patience and gratitude. We will never be able to fully measure how Kerrick has changed us for the better on how greatly Little Village impacted that change but we are whole heartedly grateful for this school. Thank you for all that you have done to make our lives better, for treating Kerrick with kindness, love and respect and for holding our hands every step of the way. The ripple effect that started with each one of these children will continue to grow long after graduation day.



As we leave Little Village to begin the next part of this journey, I want to remind you of two simple things. First, that everything is going to be okay. I don't mean every day or every week, or even every year. We all know by now that the tough stuff will come and there will be many moments when things are definitely not okay (and if you find yourself having a whole lot of those days just call Anne Partridge and she'll welcome you back to group with open arms). Secondly, the most important part of being okay is remembering that you are not alone. Just being here is proof of that. Take a look around you. These are your people, this is you're community. Whether you wanted to be one of us or not, you're in it now. They say "It takes a village" no truer or more appropriate words were ever spoken and I am eternally grateful that this one was ours.

Thank you and congratulations to the Little Village graduates of 2019!

## **July Workshop**

### *For Parents and Professionals working with Individuals with Autism*

#### New York State Training in the Need of Students with Autism

The Hagedorn Little Village School is approved by the New York State Education Department to provide mandated training in the needs of children with autism to new special education teachers seeking certification and new administrators and supervisors of special education programs. The three hour training program has been developed **in accordance with the NYS Education Department's Autism Syllabus. This course is open to all who are interested.** The training has been designed to educate professionals who assist in the treatment and educational process of those diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

The cost is \$75.00. All participants will receive a State Education Certificate of Completion

**Monday July 29, 2019**

*Free of charge to parents of HLVS students and for staff*

As space is limited, please have your registration in 5 days prior to the workshop date.

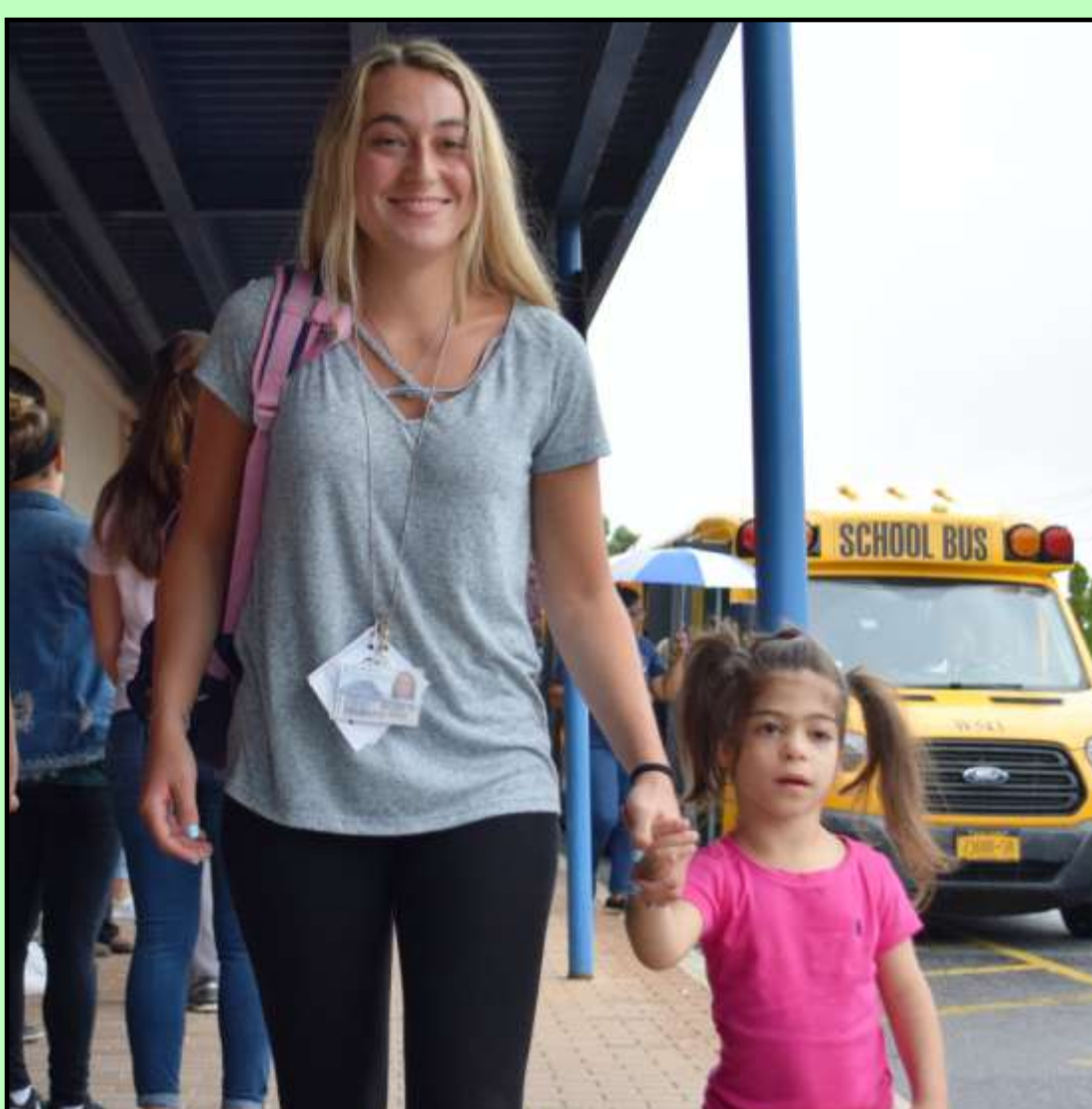
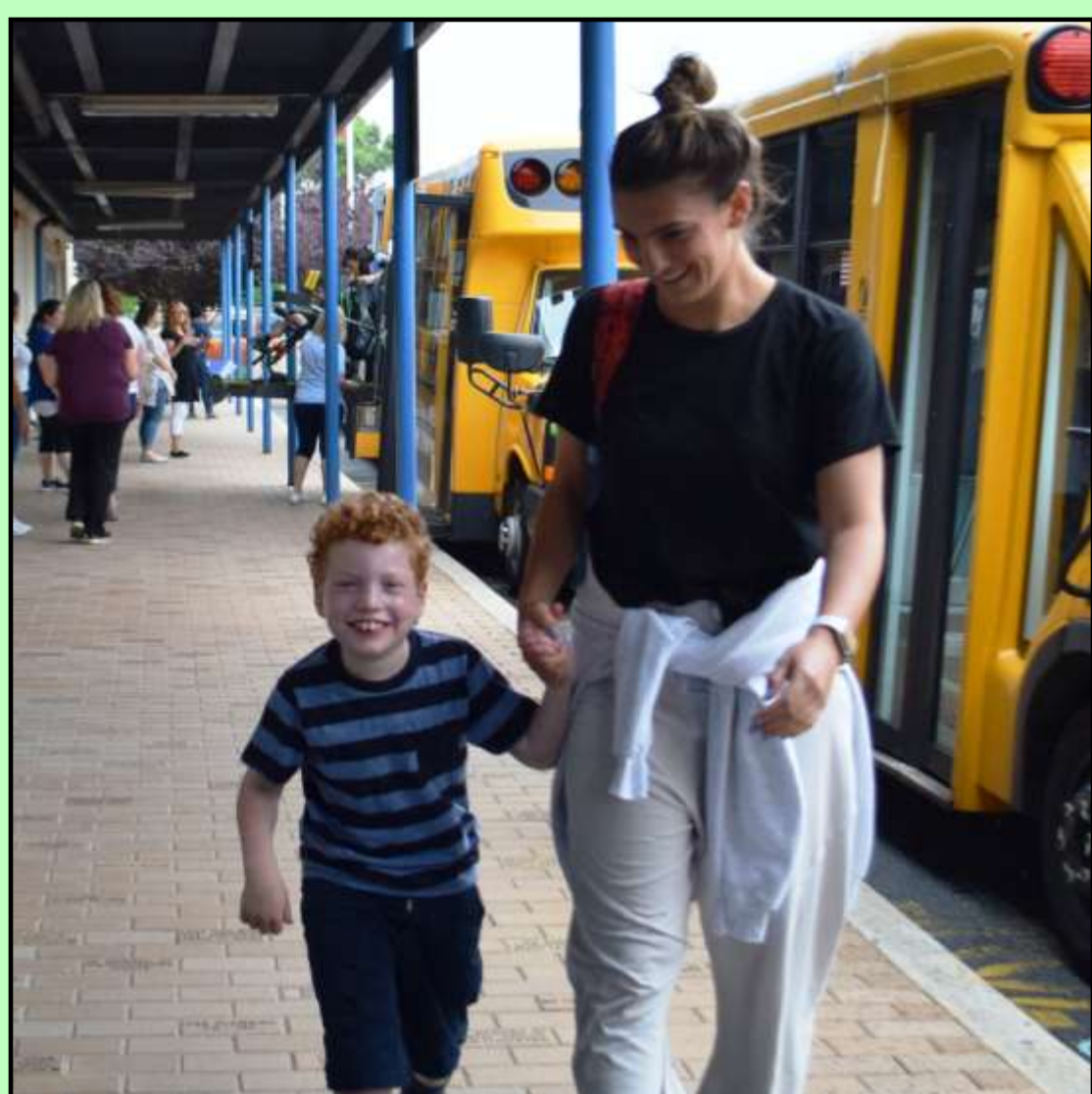
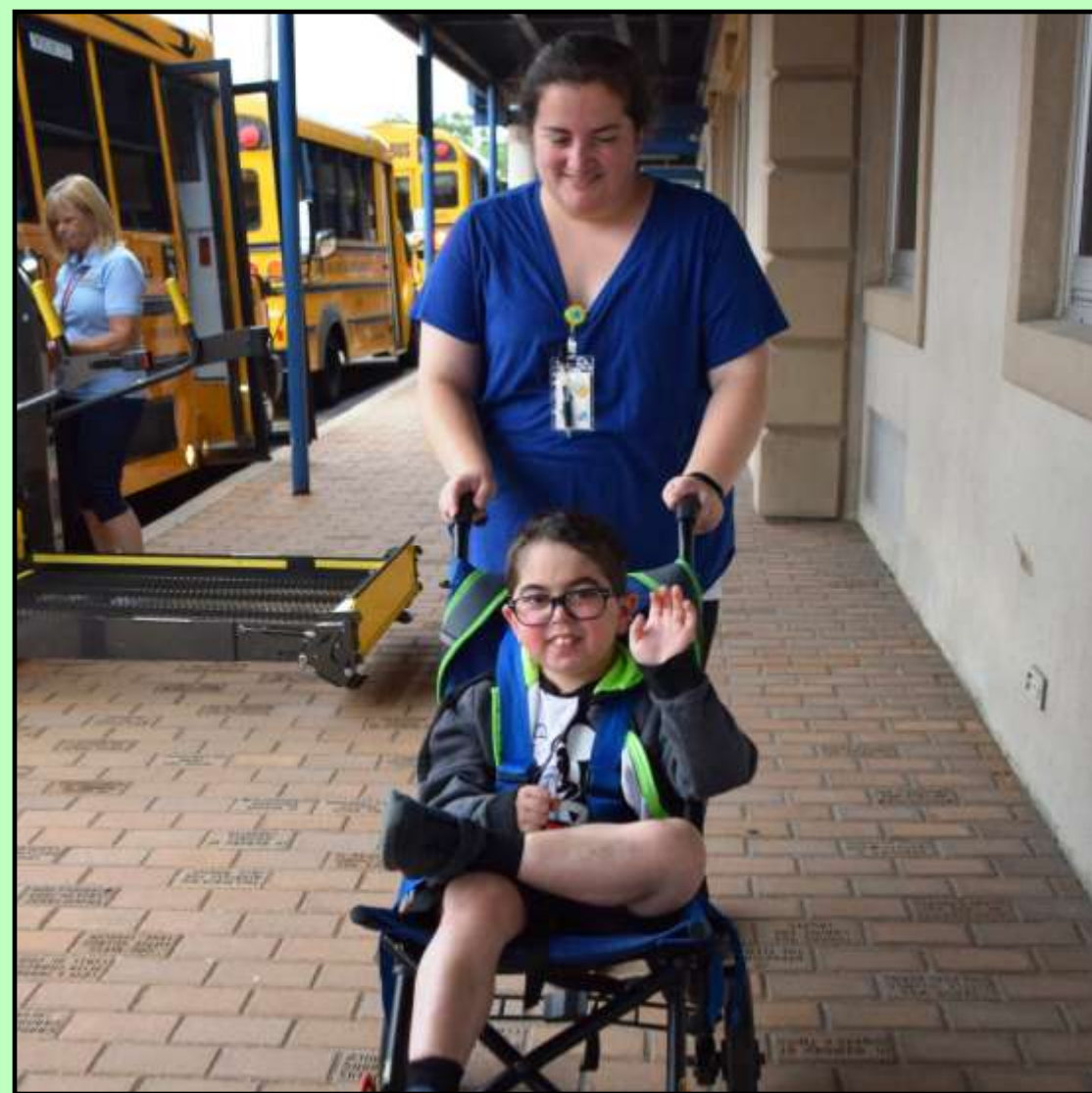
Please check our website [LittleVillage.org](http://LittleVillage.org) for more information, including registration information. Follow the link for Professional Development.

For further information, please contact

**Eileen Townsend Williams at 516-520-6026 or by e-mail, [Eileen.Williams@littlevillage.org](mailto:Eileen.Williams@littlevillage.org)**



# Welcome Back to Summer School!



*Don't forget to follow us on  
Instagram, Facebook & on the web  
at [www.littlevillage.org](http://www.littlevillage.org)*

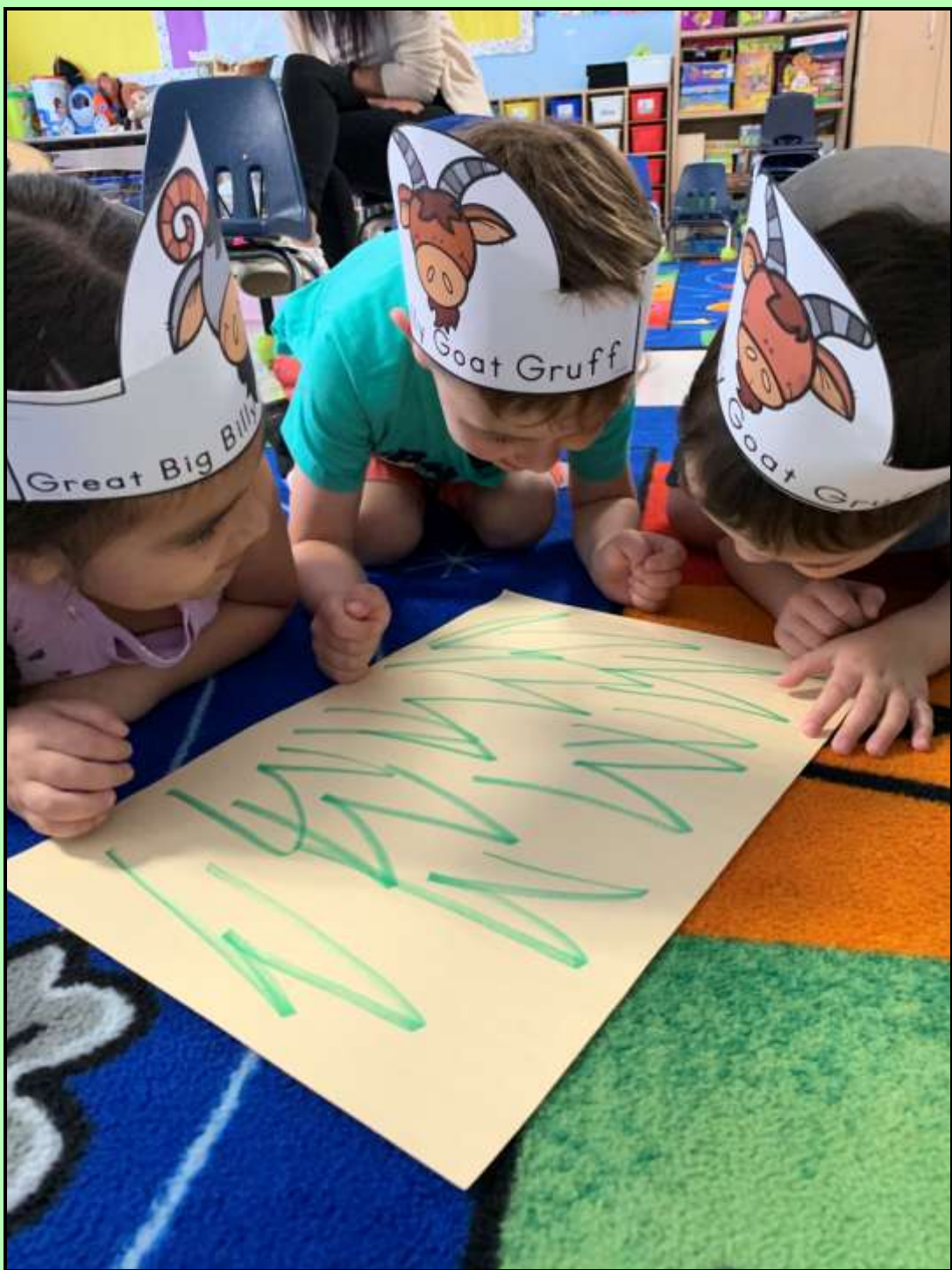




# A Great Start to Summer in Room 82

Teacher **Katy Marascia** and the students in Room 82 have had a great start to the summer session. The children have enjoyed the first Fairy Tale of the summer, *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. They identified the characters, the problem and the solution of the Fairy Tale and then they took turns acting it out.

They had a great time and are really looking forward to dressing up and acting out additional stories this summer!





Room 61 is off to a fun start while learning about fairy tales!

They started the summer by studying "The Three Little Pigs." They read the story, colored their own copies, sequenced the events, and acted it out!

Teacher **Kristina Lanza** and the students in Room 61 can not wait for the rest of the summer!





The children in Room 20 loved learning all about ladybugs and taking turns coloring and sorting facts!



**Save the  
Date!**

**2019 Sleepy Hollow 5K Charity Run/Walk**

**Sunday, October 27, 2019 9:30 am**

**Brady Park - Lake Shore Drive Massapequa Park, NY**



For information, contact Jennifer Kirincic at 520-6043 or by email at [Jennifer.kirincic@littlevillage.org](mailto:Jennifer.kirincic@littlevillage.org)