

For Immediate Release
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The Brick House Hosts Benefit, “Stepping’ Out with CJ”

The Brick House, 245 N. Division Ave., will host a benefit event, *Stepping’ Out with CJ*, Friday, March 14 starting at 9 p.m. CJ Blackwell, age 2 ½, was born with spina bifida, a birth defect that leaves the spinal cord exposed and often damaged. In CJ’s case, nerve impulses cannot reach his lower body and legs. So, CJ is a paraplegic.

CJ’s mother, Sandy Blackwell, was told to expect that CJ would most likely always require a wheelchair and never gain bowel or bladder control. A good-natured little scrapper since birth, CJ is already doing more than was expected—physically and mentally—thanks to the Conductive Learning Center.

“Since he began attending the Conductive Learning Center this fall, CJ has learned all his colors. He sings rhymes and songs,” Blackwell says. “He is in the process of being potty trained. He also has better sitting balance, is learning how to place his feet as he walks with his walker and he has increased hip strength so he can move his legs in braces. CJ is already showing abilities that we were told he would never have.”

Because the Conductive Learning Center uses an alternative form of therapy not covered by state funding or insurance, the \$500 a month tuition remains the parents’ responsibility. When Blackwell asked family friend and Brick House owner, Angie Groenwald, if she would host a benefit for CJ, Groenwald responded with an immediate “Yes.”

CJ will be a student at the Conductive Learning Center for another two to three years--till he is ready to start kindergarten with abled children his own age. Sandy, CJ and brother, Gage, age 12, live in Kentwood. Gage recently helped his school, Kelloggsville Middle School, run a pop-can drive to help his little brother.

Developed in Hungary in 1945 by Dr. Andras Peto, Conductive Education is an intensive, multidisciplinary approach to education, training and development for youth with spina bifida, cerebral palsy and other motor challenges. Aquinas College established the Conductive Learning Center in Grand Rapids in 1998.

The *Steppin’ Out with CJ* benefit will include a 50-50 raffle, donation receptacles and other options for donating to CJ’s continuing therapy. Contributions are tax deductible; a receipt will be provided.

If you can’t go *Steppin’ Out with CJ*, you can make a contribution to the CJ Blackwell Scholarship/Conductive Learning Center, 2428 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546. For more information on the Conductive Learning Center, call 616-575-0575 or visit www.aquinas.edu/conded.