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**Growing fast: education and training center for children  
with motor disabilities moves to larger facility**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – With a burgeoning popularity and enrollment, a program for children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and other motor disorders is moving into a larger facility for the coming school year.

The Conductive Learning Center, established by Aquinas College in 1998 and housed there until this year, is moving into the Lake Michigan Academy building, 2428 Burton Street SE. The new facility will enable the program to accept of the growing number of applicants to the specialized education-and-training program.

"We simply outgrew our space at Aquinas," said Executive Director Dave Dvorak. "We're extremely grateful the space at Lake Michigan Academy became available. Now, we'll be able to reach and help the increasing number of parents who are seeking our services to nurture their children's growth and development."

The Conductive Learning Center was established in response to parent demand for a comprehensive, proven approach to learning and development for children with motor disorders. It was developed and operates in cooperation with the International Peto Institute of Conductive Education in Budapest, Hungary.

Conductive Education is based on the theory that the central nervous system has the capacity to form new neural connections, despite neurological damage. By repeating tasks and integrating intentional movement with learning, the brain creates alternate paths to send messages to muscle groups to create the desired movements. Through this methodology, a child can gain movement and skills, and achieve greater levels of independence.

Conductive Education was developed in 1945 in Hungary and has since become well established in many parts of Europe and Canada. It just now is beginning to be recognized in the United States for its efficacy and its results. Statistics indicate that 70 to 80 percent of the children who participate in the program between the ages of 6 and 12 months are able to integrate into the community appropriate to their age between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

Parents -- along with educators, physicians, therapists, and other professionals across the state -- are learning about and referring children to the Conductive Learning Center in increasing numbers.

"Our goal is to help children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and other motor disorders become independent and be prepared for the traditional classroom," Dvorak said. "We target children up to age six, the years when we can have the greatest impact."

Specially Peto-trained teachers, who are called conductors, lead classes at the center. Programs are individualized within a group setting to ensure that methods and goals are appropriate to each child's development level, intellectual ability, and personal characteristics.

An Open House is planned for the new facility on Tuesday, October 15, 2002 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Conductive Learning Center, 2428 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546. Dr. Brian Hotchkiss, a local pediatric orthopaedic surgeon, will lead a brief program at 6:15.

For more information on the Conductive Learning Center or on Conductive Education, the following people are available locally for interviews:

- Dave Dvorak, Executive Director, 616.632.2429
- Chuck Saur, Transition Coordinator, Kent Intermediate School District, whose child is a student at the center, 365-2293.
- Brian Hotchkiss, MD, Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon & Board Member, 942-1313.
- Judy Winter, parent of child in the program and 2002 Michigan Council of Exceptional Children "Parent of the Year", 517.669.6915.

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