

Latham Centers creates opportunities for independence, self-worth, and happiness for children and adults with complex special needs.

Latham Centers' Siblings Group: "I'm Not the Only One!"

Latham Centers' Outreach team has created new opportunities for individuals with PWS and their families since March, 2020. More than two years later, it has been incredible to see the growth of the Siblings Group.

The Siblings Group includes people of all ages who have siblings diagnosed with PWS. Some attendees have siblings in their 50s in our Adult Program, while others have siblings who are teens in our Children's Program. The group, facilitated on Zoom, encourages different perspectives and highlights one another's experiences. This allows for opportunities to learn from one another as well as to relay similar stories.

Group member Jenn, whose sister has been a participant in both our Children's and Adult Programs, shared her thoughts about the supportive group.

What was your first thought when you heard about the Latham sibling zoom?

When I first heard about Latham Sibling Zoom I was so excited. One of my first thoughts were, "Finally! Something for us!" So many seminars, education and resources are geared toward the individual or their parents (understandably), rarely are the siblings included.

What has been the best piece about participating in the Latham zoom meetings?

Hearing other siblings' stories or experiences that are similar to the ones I have gone through have been best part of the Latham zoom meetings. Other siblings can relate to those exact feelings about a story that maybe someone outside of the PWS world would never understand or may cringe at. I feel a weight is lifted off my shoulder when I am able to share the stories of my sister and another sibling is able to say, "Yup! My sibling did the same thing, listen to this!" While other family and friends have always supported those funny and not



Jenn with her sister Diane

so funny stories, the PWS siblings understand these stories.

Has there been a topic that was the most helpful so far?

Hearing older siblings talk about how their PWS sibling has changed as they have gotten older has been one of the most interesting topics for me.

What would you say to other siblings that are new or who haven't been able to connect as often?

I know for me my sister is one of my most sensitive topics. I can understand how the thought of it could be intimidating; that you are going to surround yourself with people that you have never met before to talk about one of the most sensitive topics in your life. Am I going to cry? Am I going to talk? Am I going to laugh? All of those emotions went through my head as well. I instantly felt comfortable when I joined. No one is there to judge you, we are here to listen and relate. For the first time in 26 years of having a sister with PWS, I felt "They get it," after one meeting.

Campus Happenings: Achieving Goals with Determination and Patience

Students come to the Latham Children's Program from all over the country, with different goals in mind. Some youngsters want to excel in the classroom, while others want to excel vocationally. Oftentimes, students have set a goal for themselves relating to fitness/weight loss. When a student attains his or her goals, word spreads amongst the staff quickly and you can hear applause from across the campus. Here is Scott's inspiring story.

Since joining us at Latham Centers, not only has Scott lost weight and gained strength, but he has made new friends, come out of his shell, and truly blossomed into a generous young man.

In April, Residential Activities Coordinator Danny Anderson said, "As most of you know, Scott had set a goal back in December that he wanted to be moved to the mounted group of horse care and be able to ride a horse. There was a strict weight limit that Scott had to reach and maintain for one week before he could ride. As of Monday, April 4th, Scott reached his goal and rode! [This] goes to show you, with determination and some patience, anything can be accomplished!"

The uplifting emails that ensued were copious, and the hoots and hollers across campus audible. Scott, we are incredibly proud of your recent success, and know how hard that you have worked. Congratulations, and we look forward to hearing more about your horse riding adventures.





Fun and Friendship at Adult Services' Monthly "First Fridays" events

Latham's Adult Services team has begun a "First Friday" event series. "We are very excited about this," said Kristen Furtado (Residential Manager). "Our first event, Luck o' the Irish Bingo in March, was such a happy, happy night." Kristen leads the First Fridays committee, and the group has been doing incredible work planning and decorating for the monthly gatherings. Pictured here: In April, they held Spring Fling; in May, they did yoga; and in June, they got together for an art event. (Coming up: a pool party!)









LathamCenters.org

PWS Conferences 2022

Latham Centers staffers returned from the May PWANY Conference in Binghamton with new knowledge and insights about Prader-Willi syndrome. Katrina Kozak, Director of National Outreach, asked colleagues to share their favorite parts of the conference and things they learned. Below are four responses, with more coming to the Latham blog soon (LathamCenters.org/blog).

Rob Shedlosky, Residential Supervisor: The best aspect of the conference was all the knowledge I gained from all the experts about PWS. It was eye-opening to learn from Dr. Angulo about how the body and brain are affected by PWS.

Matt O'Sullivan, Assistant Principal: Attending this Binghamton Conference was a great first experience for a conference. I was able to join in on multiple sessions to learn about a new aspect of PWS and connect with families to learn about their home lives and their experiences. In the sessions, we learned about sleep issues, virtual communities, fostering independence, and many other informative topics. On top of these sessions, we had a chance to connect with family members that have an individual with PWS in their lives. Getting off campus and connecting with other families not connected with Latham was a great experience and opened us up to a broader PWS community. Leaving this conference left me looking forward to future conferences with the ability to make new connections and to learn more.



Taylor Burns, Assistant Director of Weekend **Programming and Staffing:** During the PWANY conference, Cindy Szapacs' applied behavioral analysis presentation gave us a different way of looking at our students' behavior. Cindy went over the ABC model, which entailed how to measure, observe, and react to all kinds of behaviors, positive and negative. I was beyond excited to bring this newfound knowledge back to Latham Centers and share it with my colleagues and staff. Understanding behavior is a crucial component of helping individuals with PWS and trauma overcome obstacles that they would not be able to understand by themselves and gives the individual a sense of safety and support. I cannot thank PWANY, Cindy, and all the presenters enough for the plethora of knowledge shared with us!

Dr. Colleen Sari, Psychiatrist: I attended the medical presentations, which broadened my knowledge base of Endocrine problems (Dr. Angulo) and Orthopedic problems (Dr. van Bosse) for individuals with PWS. It's not just about Growth Hormone and Back Surgeries! The update on the current clinical trials of possible new treatments (Dr. Meija-Corletto) was instructive and positive. Meeting these medical experts was valuable towards increasing my practice capabilities.

Pictured below left: Team Latham participates in PWANY Conference.

Coming Up

Latham Centers is excited to participate in the International Prader-Willi Syndrome Organisation (IPWSO) conference in Ireland beginning July 6th. Multiple staff are presenting, including Patrice Carroll, LICSW, Director of PWS Services, and Brittni Kliment, M. Ed, Director of Program Marketing and Admissions.

https://ipwso.org/news-events/conference-2022/

While it may be too late to plan for and attend IPWSO, mark your calendars for the Foundation for Prader-Willi Research (FPWR) conference in Chicago on September 29-October 1, 2022. Latham will be there in Chicago and we'd love to meet you there!

https://www.fpwr.org/annual-conference-2022

Brewster Chamber presents Latham with "Best In Show" Award

Latham Centers' 2022 Brewster in Bloom Parade float has been awarded Best In Show! Children's Program representatives happily accepted the award certificate from Brewster Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kyle Hinkle.

Pictured in the celebratory moment on our playground (left to right) are Kyle; Melissa Soares (Director of Residential Services); Emile; Peyton; and Taylor Burns (Assistant Director of Weekend Programming and Staffing). Thanks so much to Emile and Peyton for welcoming Kyle to campus and sharing in the excitement of this recognition!

Congratulations to the many students and staff who participated in the Brewster in Bloom Town Parade (BrewsterBlooms.com). We LOVED the theme, "Honoring Hometown Heroes," and we're grateful to the community of volunteers and sponsors who made the day so enjoyable! Our staff and students felt the love and support for Latham Centers as we were greeted along Main Street by endless cheers, applause, and shout-outs!





Staff Share Hope and Resilience with EOHHS Secretary

Our Adult Services Program was asked to give Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders a tour of one of Latham Centers' group residences in June. We were happy to introduce the Secretary to some of our residents and give her the opportunity to meet some of our outstanding staff.

Following the tour, we met briefly with the Secretary and attempted to impress her with the many challenges residential care is facing. We also spoke with her about some of the innovative initiatives underway at Latham utilizing remote supports. The Secretary was clearly impressed by the work being done at Latham and we were thrilled to give some of our exceptional staff an opportunity to tell their stories of hope and resilience.

The disability community throughout the Commonwealth continues to collaborate with our leaders to best serve the individuals in our care, as well as the dedicated staff of direct support professionals who serve them.



Pictured (left to right): Massachusetts EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders; Latham President & CEO Anne McManus; Residential Manager Stephen Lavallee; Residential Manager Patricia Morgan; Director of Adult Services Gina Sheehan; Assistant Director of Adult Services Ben Mundy; Supported Community Living Manager Greg Powers; and VP of Organizational Development Craig Anderson. (Therapy dog Rocco joined them, too!)

Newsletter Writers & Photographers: Admissions & Outreach Team; Children's and Adult Services contributions; Katrina Kozak (Director of National Outreach) and Dawn Dinnan (Director of Communications).