

“Just Have Fun” and “Gift of Gab” Scholarships...

This past summer Thumbuddy Special gave away over \$15,000 dollars in summer camp scholarships for kids to get out and play. In addition, we also sponsored 16 children with Special Needs with communication devices or adaptive equipment to allow the child to interact with their environment.



Joey loving his new iPad!

“Joey’s device has helped him be able to communicate his needs/ wants in a healthy and positive way. It has also been a great way for him to feel more independent. Thanks Thumbuddy Special! Your generosity has truly been a blessing to Joey and my family!”
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING!
Steph

Thumbuddy Special:

Thank you for the Intelli Switch and the Early songs and Play software! I am having so much fun learning and playing fun games using my switch with my computer. The Intelli switch adapts my computer to make that happen. My favorite is Itsy Bitsy Spider song and I am getting better at pressing my switch throughout the song! Thanks to Thumbuddy Special I am finding more ways to use my switch so I can learn to communicate.
Hugs with a Big Thank You
Keya



Keya using her Intelli Switch

Save the Dates

| | | |
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| MARCH 8 SATURDAY Carlucci Night | APRIL 2014 Candlelight Bowling | JULY 25 FRIDAY Golf Outing |
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Left: Natalie at the TS Santa Day in 1994, she is currently a Junior at Morton College.



Right: Brooke with her new iPad

We are gearing up for our Needy Family Giving Program, where TS sponsors over 100 families that are in need this Christmas Season. Please continue your generosity and help us make these simple wishes come true. We appreciate your continued support!

God Bless, Mary Ellen Connelly

Thank you for keeping us in a positive and progressive direction. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

Make checks payable to

Thumbuddy Special
P. O. Box 145
Downers Grove, IL.
60515



Check us out at thumbuddyspecial.org... we are also on Facebook.

Thumbuddy Special

20 Year ANNIVERSARY

NEWSLETTER ~ 2014

Celebrating 20 Years of Thumbuddy Special Time Sure Does Fly By



Ben cutting the ribbon to the new park at Holmes School in 1988.

This is quite a momentous milestone, The 20th Year Anniversary of Thumbuddy Special! I feel in every fiber of my soul, that we are doing very powerful work. I hear the gratitude in the voices of the parents and the smiles on our special buddies faces. They are overwhelmed with an outpouring of thanksgiving; that our help is what they were praying for...we are truly doing God’s Work. Letter after letter: “God Bless You”, “Thank You, This will make our life simpler”, “Oh the smile on my son’s face”. “She is now telling us what she wants’, all made possible by a little idea over 25 years ago. It took us a couple of years to become “legal” with the tax-exempt, but Chris Gillis, Chris Zielinski and I started out raising money for an adapted park at our school in Oak Park, that was in 1987. Our challenges kept coming; this student needs this bath seat and insurance is denying it. This student wants to go to summer camp, but the parents can’t afford it. We thought about it and finally said, “let’s just do it”, (before the Nike campaign, there was Thumbuddy Special!)

When we started this venture to create a non-profit, we truly had no idea that we would still be at it 25 years later. Our kids have grown up with Thumbuddy Special; Golf Outings, Carlucci Night, Bowling, Cash Raffle, Happy Hours, Santa Days, Polar Express, Mom’s Day Out and Christmas Gift Wrapping Day. Year around generosity! Giving brings out the best in people. I often say, “There is a powerful Spirit in the room when you are at a Thumbuddy Special Event.” I believe it is the Holy Spirit smiling! It is a group of ordinary people, doing extraordinary things. Being the President of TS is a lot of work, but I get to witness people at their best...giving with sincere gratitude and open hearts.

We are so blessed to be in a position to give with a generous spirit, knowing that it is the right thing to do.

With my heart filled with gratitude; thank you for being part of this beautiful ride!

God Bless you and your families this Christmas Season and throughout the New Year!

Mary Ellen



Hugo in 1994 at one of the TS Santa Days.



Caeli face painting Tommy at the TS Picnic in 2002



Hugo “studying” abroad in his wheelchair from TS this past spring in Cost Rica!

Kids on the GO...

Gilbert and Yalina both received a “like new” van this past year. Yalina joined us at our Bowling Night and at our Spring Happy Hour. Both events were great successes! Thank you to all who joined in on these fabulous nights out!



Mary Ellen, Wanika, Rich Rositti from South Suburban Dodge and “Big Mama.”



Yalina and her family at the Bowling Night.

Dear Thumbuddy Special,

Hil My name is Yalina. I wanted to write my own thank you letter to you. First, I want to thank you for giving my mom a fun day at the spa. She looked more beautiful than ever! I'm so glad you did that for her and the other mom's. I think kids like me our mom's are extra special cause their work is a lot harder and it seems they never rest. I want you to know I think you are God's secret Earth angels.

The gift of the van was awesome! It was better then winning the lottery! Thanks to you I no longer have to say "Oh mom! How I wish we had our own van." and silently wish we could go here or there. My wish has finally come true. We can go to Great America, water parks, ride by the lake front, and to the zoo! My favorite is Lincoln Park Zoo. I love all the trees and shade and everything is so close by. We won't ever have to take a train or a bus to go to the Science Museum. Plus I get to go to the library - ANYTIME!! YAY!!

Having this van is the best gift our family can have. The shopping carts can have a long rest. My family tells everyone it's my van even though I can't drive yet. They even let me name it. I call her "Big Mama" I'm so happy and thankful for this gift. No longer will I feel like Rapunzel in her tower looking out. Now I will be able to get out and see things for myself. I'm so excited! We will take good care of her and she will always have a good home with us. Every time I look at her and ride in her..I will always silently say "Thank You" to you. May God bless you forever. I Love you all forever!

Love & Kisses,
Yalina

Gilberto rode his van and joined us at the TS Golf Outing. It was hot, but the day was magnificent! There were lots of laughs on the links and cold drinks at the 19th Hole. Thanks to all the hole sponsors and golfers who braved the heat!



Gilberto is ready to get out and about



Red and Mary out on the links. Red is our oldest TS fan, at age 92 he braved the heat!

Bikes and More Bikes...

A bicycle built for a child with Special Needs can cost any where from \$800 to \$4,000 dollars. This year we purchased 9 bikes for our sweet friends; Megan, Paul, Sammy, Leslie, Suraj, Natalia, Mahogany, Christopher and Mario!



Dear Thumbuddy Special,

I want to say a big, big thank you for the amazing gift for my sister Megan. Megan has several issues with her spine, hips and feet so walking is never a comfortable endeavor. Last year I discovered she liked riding on a friend's bike with training wheels but finding a bike that was safe and appropriately sized for her was a struggle. Then like a miracle came Mary Ellen who said, “Don’t worry, we will find the perfect bike for Meg”. And she did, on Megan’s birthday as a matter of fact! We are so blessed and thankful to Mary Ellen and Thumbuddy Special! Megan LOVES it!

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!
Kelly and Megan

Mary Ellen,

We could not have imagined how much joy Paul would receive from his new bike! Thank you so much for making this happen for him. We knew having ataxia and difficulty with balance and gross motor skills this bike would provide him with the therapy he needs to keep strong. But the therapy he is getting by having complete independence is not measurable! He literally is laughing out loud while he rides it up and down the block, and all the neighborhood children are cheering! Thank you Mary Ellen! Thank you Thumbuddy Special! This really is such a gift! What joy you have brought for him. Proud and thankful parents J
Karen and Steve



In Memory of: . . .

Joseph Zielinski
Mary Rita Costin
Nellie Madden
Dan Schoeler
Jim Madden
Tom Fielding
Jack Fielding
Jack LeClair
Lorraine Studin
Dick Perrault
Connie Thompson
Florence Zielinski
Brian McGarry
Tom Joyce
David Jandris
June Carlson
Jan Fleming
Lauren Scheffler
Robert and Dorothy Roginski
Jeanie Rierdon
Larry Zinder
Ken Clacher
Loretta Pacaro
Bart Murphy

Helen Madejczyk
Jerry Dvorak

Our Sweet Angels: Jimmy Davis, Yamile Salvador and Enrique Flores, all running around in heaven and bossing everyone around!

In Honor of:

Retirement of Michele Hoshimoto, Cheryl Pal and Donna Sabatka.

Our schools are a little less happy without your giving spirits running around!

Chub Thompson’s “58th” Birthday

John & Mary Ellen Moore 40TH Wedding Anniversary

Thank you to all of our . . .

ALL STARS ★ ★ ★

- ★ Judy Carlson, for your years of donating silently and graciously to TS, Happy Retirement!
- ★ Penny Krahmer
- ★ Carlucci Restaurant in Downers Grove
- ★ Chub Thompson
- ★ Dr Robert Hall and Kristine Hall
- ★ Al and Gail Madden
- ★ Cathy and Tom Joyce
- ★ Dave and Cathy Cahill
- ★ Scheck and Siress
- ★ Helen McDonald
- ★ Carolyn Murphy
- ★ Dawnelle and Scott Pearson
- ★ Molly and James North
- ★ Chuck and Debbie Novak
- ★ Suzanne Zinder
- ★ St Vincent DePaul and the Knights of Columbus at Christ the King in Lombard
- ★ Knights of Columbus at Notre Dame Parish in Clarendon Hills

- ★ A special shout out to our friends at BCD Meetings and Incentives and Swanson Martin and Bell LLP, who combined, donated over \$10,000 dollars to Thumbuddy Special through the generosity of their employees. We are so happy you are part of our Thumbuddy Special family!

