

The Building Block

An e-newsletter of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities

The Susan Linn Story

“I get encouragement here, I don’t get pity, and I appreciate that.”

There is resilience in her voice. She has a ‘where there is a will there is a way’ attitude. There is a confidence that every mother has about what is right for her family and her children. The voice. The attitude. The confidence, all belong to Susan Linn of Prague, Oklahoma, a semi-retired hairstylist, wife, mother of two, adoptive mother of three five years of age and younger.

Susan and Michael Linn have been married for 19 years. Susan had always wanted a big family. The Linn’s first child was a baby girl named Abby. She is now 21 and newly married. Their second child was a son. His name is Aftahan. He is 16. When Susan found out she couldn’t have any more children she didn’t let that deter her from having her big family. She and Michael discussed it and decided to adopt more children, but they didn’t want to go overseas to do it.

Susan had a plan. She wanted to adopt children locally. “When we decided to adopt we wanted to adopt those children that were least likely to be adopted,” explained Susan. “We wanted to give them a chance for a permanent family environment instead of being moved around in the foster care system. I knew that Michael and I could do it. I knew that we were a strong couple. Now I’ll admit that there are days (her voice trails off), but at the end of the day we’ve made it because of our strength as a couple.”

The Linn’s first adopted child is Luke. Susan’s meeting of Luke was serendipitous. Luke had a tough entry into this world. He was premature, weighing one and half pounds at birth. He spent the

first five months of his life in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Unfortunately, Luke was a drug baby. He tested positive for methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine and alcohol.

Luke proved to be a tough little boy and was sent home with foster parents who just happen to be friends of the Linn’s. Even more fateful was that Luke’s home health nurse was Susan’s sister Jeanne.

Susan met Luke when he was nine months old. She and her sister were providing a respite break for the foster

parents. “I know the first time I saw Luke he’d be coming home with me,” said Susan. About a month later, at 10 months and 10 pounds, Luke joined the Linn family. That was April 2003.

Jake joined the Linn family in February 2005. Jake was seven days old when Susan picked him up from a DHS approved shelter. “Basically, Jake went right from the delivery room to the shelter,” said Susan. “There weren’t any available foster parents in Oklahoma County to take him in at the time of his birth.”

“At the time we got the call from DHS about Jake they told us he seemed to be healthy,” explained Susan. “Since then he has been diagnosed with brain malformation. It affects his muscle tone and speech. We’re still testing and don’t have all the answers on Jake yet.”

Little Addey is the latest addition to the Linn clan. She was born in June 2006. DHS contacted Susan about Addey the day after she was born probably because she is a half sister to Jake. “Addey was very premature. She was two pounds at birth,” Susan said. “She had a twin that didn’t survive. Addey spent a month in the NICU.”

At birth Addey tested positive for alcohol and cocaine. “Right now Addey is on track developmentally,” Susan said, “but the pediatrician says if she has any issues they won’t materialize until she’s two or three years old. So, it’s a waiting game with Addey.”



Susan Linn from Prague, Oklahoma, sits with her adopted children in the waiting room at the J. D. McCarty Center. After moving back to Prague from Norman she continues to drive to Norman every week so that her children can receive outpatient therapy services at the McCarty Center. “It’s a small sacrifice for a great reward for my kids. I don’t believe that I could find what we get here anywhere else. I get encouragement here, I don’t get pity and I appreciate that,” Linn said. Linn’s children are (l-r) Jake, age three, Addey, almost two, and Luke, age five.

continued on page 2.

The Susan Linn Story

Continued from page 1

Once Michael and Susan made the decision to expand the family through adoption, they discussed the idea with Abby and Aftahan to see how they felt about it. "The kids supported the idea," Susan said. "Their only request was that the children be younger than they were. They didn't want to suddenly become the middle and youngest child of the family. They were content with their birth order and that was fine with us."

Susan reports that her daughter Abby and her husband Clint Lindsey are very attached to the newest arrivals in the Linn household and spend lots of time with them.

"It's funny because Aftahan has discovered that his younger brothers are chick magnets," laughed Susan. "He takes them to the basketball games with him and the girls all come by to see the boys. But it's not just the girls, it's Aftahan's teammates and friends who also look after the kids. I was surprised that teen-aged boys would care that much, but they really do look after them."

"There are days when I don't have enough hands, enough time or enough laundry soap"

Susan Linn

The Linn's recently moved back to Prague after living in Norman for two and half years. Prague is Susan's home. Michael is from nearby Meeker. Michael is a manager with Locke Supply in Norman. "We made the decision to move back to Prague for family support," said Susan. "With our special needs children I needed to be closer to family for the times I need help. There are days when I don't have enough time, enough hands or enough laundry soap," she quipped.

As a parent of children with developmental disabilities Susan quickly became adept at searching for resources for her children. One such resource is the McCarty Center. The McCarty Center is Oklahoma's center of excellence in the care and treatment of children with developmental disabilities from birth to age 21.

"I found out about the McCarty Center from Debbie Secret, a speech therapist with Sooner Start," Susan explained. "I was worried about where to find services for Luke after he turned three because that's where Sooner Start services end. Debbie recommended the McCarty Center to me," As it turned out, Secret joined the McCarty Center staff a few months after this encounter with Susan.

Susan's first impression of the McCarty Center was not what she expected. "I expected an old, run down, DHS facility where they we're doing their best to keep it up," she said. "But instead I found this new, state-of-the-art facility, with bright colors and friendly people. Everyone greeted or acknowledged us when we came in. We love the friendly treatment. There is no doubt that the employees from top to bottom have a heart for these kids."

"I don't believe that I could find what we get here anywhere else."

Susan Linn



Jake Linn (right) travels to the J. D. McCarty Center each week from Prague, Oklahoma, for outpatient therapy. Three-year-old Jake receives physical, occupational and speech therapy. Jake's mom, Susan Linn, says the drive is a small sacrifice for the great rewards her kids get from being at the McCarty Center. Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant Mikki Patten gives Jake a high five for his successful completion of an eye/hand coordination exercise.

Susan had expected Luke to be at the McCarty Center for two years of speech-language therapy. Luke's speech was bad and declining. She didn't think Luke would ever be able to speak or speak well. Within months of beginning his therapy treatments at the hospital, Luke was speaking smoothly. According to Susan, Luke's teachers believe his speech is his strongest asset right now. Being able to speak has brought out his musical abilities," said Susan. "That boy loves to sing."

The Linn's adoptive children have brought them joy. Susan says they bring them joy everyday in some way. It's usually something small. An example of that joy comes from Jake. "We'd always been told that Jake would be non-verbal," Susan said, "but his first words were mama. Michael and I just looked at each other and laughed and cried at the same time."

Even though the Linn household has relocated to Prague, Susan continues to bring her kids to the McCarty Center for weekly outpatient therapy appointments. The kids receive physical, occupational and speech therapy. "It's a small sacrifice for the great reward for my kids," said Susan. "I don't believe that I could find what we get here anywhere else. I get encouragement here," she said, "I don't get pity and I appreciate that."

The Building Block

The Building Block is published by the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities in Norman, Oklahoma, and is authorized by Curtis A. Peters, director and ceo. This publication is distributed via e-mail. If you would like your name removed from our mailing list, please send an e-mail to ggaston@jdmc.org. Write The Building Block on the subject line. Write Please Remove in the message box.

Director: Curtis A. Peters

Editor: Greg Gaston

Cerebral Palsy Commission:

John Knight
William R. Logan
Rob McCalla
Karen Rieger
Joe Sher

J. D. McCarty Center

for children with developmental disabilities

2002 East Robinson Street • Norman, Oklahoma 73071
405.307.2800 • 800.777.1272 • www.jdmc.org

Eagle Scouts Build Lakeside Shelter

Eric Oliver and Michael Downs, Eagle Scout candidates from Scout Troop 217, sponsored by St. Marks Catholic Church in Norman, completed their Eagle project by planning, designing, organizing and implementing a building project here at the hospital.

The project was a lakeside shelter with picnic table. Oliver's part of the project was the shelter. Downs was responsible for the picnic table. The project will provide McCarty Center patients, and staff, a shaded place by the lake to sit, play games or read.

The idea for the project came as a result of Oliver contacting Sue O'Hare, director of physical therapy at the McCarty Center, about a possible project. O'Hare's son Jack and Oliver's older brother Todd had been in Scouts together so there was a connection to the hospital. After reviewing several project ideas Oliver and O'Hare agreed on the lakeside shelter. Ultimately, the hospital hopes to have several of these lakeside shelters placed around the 18-acre lake on the hospital's property.

Oliver and Downs have now completed all their requirements for Eagle Scout, the Boy Scout's highest award. Oliver and Downs, along with seven other members of Troop 217's Fox Patrol, were awarded their Eagle Scout badge during a court of honor to be conducted on Sunday, May 25, at the McFarland Methodist Church in Norman.



Eagle Scout candidates Eric Oliver (left) and Michael Downs planned, designed, organized and built this lakeside shelter and picnic table on the campus of the J. D. McCarty Center for their Eagle Scout project. Setting up a board game at the picnic table is McCarty Center patient Kali Spencer and her direct care specialist, Savannah Judd. Oliver and Downs are members of the Fox Patrol of Scout Troop 217. The scouts were awarded their Eagle Scout badge during a court of honor scheduled for May 25, at McFarland Methodist Church.



Jacob Rice (left), promotions manager for Maggie Moo's Ice Cream in Norman, hands Uwe von Schamann, J. D. McCarty Center director of development, a sample spoon of ice cream shortly after handing him a check for \$250. The money, which will go into the Camp ClapHans summer camp scholarship endowment fund, represents a percent of sales from Maggie Moo's grand opening held Saturday, March 8. Camp ClapHans is a project of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities in Norman.

Maggie Moo's Provides Sweet Treat for Camp ClapHans

Maggie Moo's Ice Cream recently presented a check for \$250 to the McCarty Center. The donation was the result of Maggie Moo's pledge to donate ten percent of sales from their official grand opening held Saturday, March 8. Maggie Moo's is located at 1200 12th Avenue SE in Norman.

"When my family and I opened this business, we did it with the intention of using it as a way to give back to the community," said Maggie Moo's owner Judy Rollins. "We wanted to hire college and high school students who really needed to have a job and we wanted to help support places like the McCarty Center."

The idea to support the McCarty Center came from Maggie Moo's promotions manager Jacob Rice. Rice, a former deep snapper for the University of Oklahoma Sooners and the NFL Europe Hamburg (Germany) Sea Devils, had worked with special needs kids for two years while attending Norman High School. "I worked with some autistic kids in high school. I found them to be very interesting and fun to work with," said Rice.

When Rice first entered OU he was going to major in special education, but later had to change his major. "Class scheduling and student teaching schedules were not going to work with my athletic schedule, so I changed my major," Rice said, "but I always thought it was a calling."

According to Uwe von Schamann, director of development for the McCarty Center, the Maggie Moo's donation will go into the Camp ClapHans scholarship endowment fund.

Camp ClapHans is a summer camp project of the McCarty Center. The camp, which is scheduled to break ground for construction this year, will be built in the southwest corner of the hospital's 80-acre campus on the shore of an 18-acre lake.



Gutter Dancers Give Boost to Camp ClapHans Scholarship Endowment Fund

The Gutter Dance V, a two game charity bowling event benefiting the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities in Norman, raised \$9,500 during this recent event at the Sooner Bowling Center. The proceeds from this event will go into the Camp ClapHans summer camp scholarship endowment fund. Camp ClapHans is a project of the McCarty Center.

"The scholarship endowment fund is being built to help kids come to camp for a week who might not otherwise be able to afford it," explained Uwe von Schamann, the McCarty Center's director of development.

Eighty-four bowlers making up 21 teams showed up to demonstrate their keggling skills for this event's fifth year. "This event continues to grow in popularity," von Schamann said. "The great thing about it is that you don't even have to be a bowler to have a good time."

The Gutter Dance offered something for every bowling level. For the non-bowlers or occasional bowler there was an opportunity to buy a ringer. Mandy Haws, manager of the Sooner Bowling Center, arranged to have two very good bowlers with high averages standing by to bowl frames for bowlers who were willing to buy a ringer for a small fee. Bowlers could use a ringer twice during the evening's event to help increase their pin count.

On the other end of the bowling spectrum, the top ten high bowlers got a chance to participate in the 7-10 split roll off. The bowler making this split would win a 2008 Chevrolet Cobalt from Marc Heitz Chevrolet in Norman.

The top ten bowlers rolling for the Chevy Cobalt were: Michael Wellner (390), Kent Vig (384), Tim Howard (380), Steve Szabina (380), Gary Young (340), Mike Carothers (340), Caryl Hennen (338), Bart Wharton (332), Dean Bischoff (314) and Joe Sher (314)

No one picked up the split to win the car this year.

"One of the unique features of the Gutter Dance is that we not only recognize the top three winning teams, but we also recognize the last place team for their efforts," said von Schamann.

This year's first place team, the Older & Slower, was composed of Bart Wharton, Tim Howard, Kent Vig and Payton Reddeck with a team average of 351 pins.

Major Bowlers was the second place team composed of Jon Harrison, Mike Carothers, Roland Dernell and Michael Wellner.



John "super chicken" Johnson was one of 84 bowlers to participate in the Gutter Dance V charity bowling event benefiting the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities in Norman. Johnson's team, the Heroes in Training, won the most creative bowling attire contest. Proceeds from this year's Gutter Dance went to the Camp ClapHans scholarship endowment fund. Camp ClapHans is a summer camp project of the McCarty Center.

Third place went to Strike Force One. The team included Scott Winter, Billy Eades, Kenneth Stuart and Dewey Hill.

Last place in this year's Gutter Dance went to the Quintana Jumpsuits made up of Butch Enterline, Jorge Mendros, Dorinda Chapman and Dana Darrow.

Prizes were also awarded to the bowling team with the most creative bowling attire. This year's winners were members of the Heroes in Training bowling team, one of several teams from the McCarty Center. Team members were Tina Martinez, John Johnson, Sandra Myers-Johnson and Ray Bradley.

"An event like this isn't successful without the help of sponsors who are interested in the cause," von Schamann said. "Our sponsors are no exception. Our presenting sponsor was Oscar J. Bolt Construction. Event sponsors included Marc Heitz Chevrolet, the RibCrib BBQ and Grill, First American Bank, Randall Venk, DDS, and Blake Virgin attorney at law."

"The great thing about it is that you don't even have to be a bowler to have a good time."

Uwe von Schamann

Tax Deductible Donations

We are a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit hospital. Donation checks may be made out to the J. D. McCarty Center or the J. D. McCarty Center Foundation. The IRS has designated these donations tax deductible.

For questions about supporting the McCarty Center, contact Uwe von Schamann, director of development, at 405.307.2804 or uschamann@jdmc.org.

13th Annual Norman Conquest Bike Tour Benefits Camp ClapHans Scholarship Fund

Conquer the hills. Conquer the heat. That's the mantra for the Norman Bicycle League's 13th annual Norman Conquest bicycle tour scheduled for Saturday, July 19. The ride will begin and end at the McCarty Center at 2002 East Robinson Street in Norman.

"The BLN is proud to be supporting the Camp ClapHans summer camp scholarship endowment fund through this event," said David Ferguson, president of the Norman Bicycle League.



Uwe von Schamann shows his Giant bicycle to a McCarty Center patient prior to his 2005 CrissCross Oklahoma ride. von Schamann covered 1,634 miles during that fundraising ride for Camp ClapHans.

Camp ClapHans is a summer camp project of the McCarty Center. It will be the first camp in Oklahoma to be specifically designed and built for children with disabilities. The scholarship endowment fund will help children attend camp who might not otherwise be able to afford it. The camp will be built in the southwest corner of the McCarty Center's 80-acre campus.

"Ground breaking for the first phase of Camp ClapHans will take place sometime this year," said Uwe von Schamann, the McCarty Center's director of development. "The scholarship endowment fund is an important piece of the Camp ClapHans project and we really appreciate the Norman Bicycle League's support of this project."

"The Norman Conquest offers something for all levels of riders," said Rick Gutierrez, the BLN's director of the Norman Conquest. "We offer a 10-mile family tour, a 26-mile route with some hills, a 46-mile route that's hilly and then

there is the 66-mile route that is very hilly."

The ride begins at 7:30 a.m. and leaves from the McCarty Center. Parking is available at the McCarty Center and at the Norman Veterans Center next door to the McCarty Center. More than 600 cyclist are expected to participate.

Pre-registration for the Norman Conquest can be done on-line at www.normanconquest.bicycleleague.com or by contacting Rick Gutierrez at 405.314.3165 for a registration brochure. Registration packets can be picked up at the conference center at the McCarty Center on Friday, July 18 from 7 - 9 p.m. or the morning of the ride beginning at 6:00 a.m.

The cost for a single rider to register is \$25 prior to July 11. Registration includes a great t-shirt and lunch. After July 11, registration is \$30 per rider. Registration at this time does not guarantee a great t-shirt, but it does include a great lunch. The family tour registration is \$10, which includes lunch, but no t-shirt.

The cost for tandem riders to register is \$35 prior to July 11. Registration includes two Norman Conquest t-shirts and two lunches. After July 11, the registration fee is \$40, which includes two lunches, but does not guarantee t-shirts. For family tour tandem riders the registration cost is \$15, which includes lunch, but no t-shirt.



King of the Mountain

"New for this year's event will be an optional King of the Mountain event on the 66-mile route for the more competitive riders," explained Gutierrez. "There will be four hill sprints along the course. The top three riders of each sprint section

will be awarded points. The rider with the most points at the end of the fourth sprint will be named King of the Mountain. The winners will receive prizes, plus the Norman Conquest will make donations of \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third to Camp ClapHans in the names of the three winners."

There will be rest stops strategically located along the tour routes and mechanical and SAG support will be provided. SAG is a cycling term that means support and gear. At the end of the tour there will be live music by Super Freak, an Oklahoma City area 70's band 80's music group, a drawing for a free bicycle and other prizes. The conference center's executive chef Galen Oliver will prepare lunch at the McCarty Center.

For more information about the 13th annual Norman Conquest including route maps and registration forms visit www.normanconquest.bicycleleague.com.



The 13th annual Norman Conquest will benefit the Camp ClapHans scholarship endowment fund.

Camp ClapHans is a new summer camp specifically designed and built for children with disabilities.

Ground breaking for the construction of Camp ClapHans will take place in the fall of this year.

Uwe's Corner



with
Uwe von Schamann
Director of Development

If you're a racer or just a recreational rider we have the route for you. (See the story on page 5 for details.) So if you haven't been riding it's time to get on your bike and train for one of our four routes. I know everybody can participate in our family ride. Maybe some of you might want to try out our hilly routes.

This event will also give you an opportunity to tour our state-of-the-art hospital and conference center if you haven't had the opportunity to see it yet. It's not like any hospital you've ever seen.

The Norman Conquest also provides an opportunity to volunteer. We can use people to help direct parking, put together the registration packets and to man the registration tables. Call me at 307.2804 if you are interested in this volunteer opportunity.

This has been an exciting year for the McCarty Center. What was just an idea 10 years ago is finally coming to fruition. We are going to break ground on Camp ClapHans this fall. It is especially gratifying and I'm extremely proud to honor my former teammate and friend Sammy Jack Claphan, for whom we named the camp.

We still have work to do. We still have to raise about \$1million for phase two of Camp ClapHans. Please contact me if you would like to help us in some way with phase two, or if you would like to conduct a fundraiser on our behalf.

Again, I want to thank all of our donors for your support.

I want to thank Greg Gaston our director of marketing for another outstanding newsletter.

I'm very excited about our upcoming bicycle event with the Norman Bicycle League's 13th annual Norman Conquest. The reason I love this event is that everyone, regardless of riding level, can get involved. There is a route for everyone.

The proceeds from this event will go to support the Camp ClapHans summer camp scholarship endowment fund that will help to send kids to summer camp with a variety of scholarship levels.



This is an architectural rendering of Camp ClapHans by gh2 Gralla Architects, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Camp ClapHans will be built on a lake shore in the southwest corner of the McCarty Center's 80-acre campus.

Donation Card

Thank you for your support of the programs, services and capital building needs of the J. D. McCarty Center. Please fill out this card, cut it out and mail it along with your check to Uwe von Schamann, Director of Development, J. D McCarty Center, 2002 East Robinson Street, Norman, Oklahoma 73070.

Make your check payable to: J. D. McCarty Center Foundation

Please apply my donation to:
(Check your choice)

Donor's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Day Time Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

- Summer Camp Scholarship Fund
- Summer Camp Building Fund
- Lake Restoration Project
- Hippotherapy/Therapeutic Riding Facility