

15 minutes

By Mike Ellis
Photography by
Cheryl Brown

Josephine Boggs



JOSEPHINE BOGGS

is the new executive director at the Center for Independence through Conductive Education in Countryside, but she is a familiar face within the organization.

Boggs is an occupational therapist by trade who started at the center as a new graduate in 2002, before becoming clinical director about a decade later. She was installed as executive director last November, when center founder Patti Herbst stepped down from a role she had held for nearly 30 years. Herbst is now semi-retired, and is mentoring Boggs in her new role.

“It’s an honor to be able to carry the torch, and to be entrusted with the beautiful community that she and her husband built,” Boggs said.

Eager to introduce the concept of conductive education to the community, Herbst and her husband Chuck founded the Center for Independence in 1998 in a church basement in Western Springs. At the time, they worked with six children, including their son Justin.

The center serves children and adults with cerebral palsy and physical disabilities. It provides conductive education and intensive therapy through a staff of occupational, physical and speech therapists, as well as motor rehabilitation specialists known as conductive education teachers.

“We encourage the children to learn by doing, learn by saying and learn by watching,” Boggs said. “It’s all about positive peer interaction and a peer-driven motor-learning environment.”

Kids visit the center twice per week for about 2.5 hours each day, increasing to six hours per day over four days in the summer. Altogether, the center currently serves 233 individuals with cerebral palsy in therapy programs, and provides employment services for 236 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Children really gain skills to walk more independently, to take care of their self-care needs, addressing sitting balance, dressing skills and being able to access their environment,” Boggs said. “It’s important to us that children start to develop that self-reliance, and become more active participants in their daily lives.”

Boggs said no child is turned away due to an inability to pay, and 62 percent of families serviced have Medicaid for their primary insurance.

“Our goal is to ensure that every child has access to affordable, specialized, high-quality therapy,” she said.

According to Boggs, since its inception, the Center for Independence has provided above \$18 million in charitable care.

On Oct. 9, the center will host its annual fundraiser consisting of an afternoon golf outing at Seven Bridges Golf Club in Woodridge and a dinner dance down the street at Bobak’s Signature events. Boggs’s goal is to raise \$250,000 to \$300,000.

“We really rely on the community, on our generous donors and especially our families,” she said. ... “It’s a wonderful opportunity to give back to a hard-working set of families.” ■

For more information about the Center for Independence through Conductive Education or to register for the fundraiser, visit cfimove.org.