

CHILED A

CHRONICLES



Welcome To Chileda Chronicles

After being a part of Chileda's history for many years, it went quiet for a while, but we're excited to bring it back in 2025. Through this newsletter, we aim to "open our doors" and offer families a glimpse into the vibrant world of Chileda.

At Chileda, we provide a community of care and treatment where young people can grow and thrive. Our mission is clear: to improve the lives of those we serve, equipping them with the tools and confidence they need to succeed in their next chapter after leaving our care. This mission is only possible thanks to the incredible dedication of our staff. Their compassion, empathy, and tireless efforts are the foundation of everything we do. In this newsletter, we celebrate their outstanding contributions and share insights into the community life our students enjoy.

Another vital purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed about the ever-evolving world of autism. In this issue, I'll highlight a recent development that could have a significant impact on individuals with profound autism. Future editions will continue to provide updates on legislative, scientific, therapeutic, and other relevant advancements to support you as parents and caregivers. We hope you find this newsletter informative, meaningful, and enjoyable. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful and fulfilling 2025.

Sincerely,

Derek Cortez, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

NEW

Introducing the Chileda Blog

We're beyond thrilled to introduce the Chileda blog—a heartfelt hub for insightful articles, uplifting stories, and expert advice on supporting individuals with autism and cognitive and behavioral challenges.

Updated monthly, this blog provides valuable information, fosters deeper understanding, and shares practical strategies to support families, caregivers, professionals, and anyone passionate about enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs.

Our first article outlines how strategies like social stories, task analysis, modeling, and reinforcement can support individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities during seasonal transitions.

Our second article is about indoor winter activities for children with autism. It provides tips and ideas for creating a fun and supportive environment, helping families find enjoyable activities that promote emotional regulation and skill-building during the season.

[View Our Blog Posts Here](#)

Submitted by Regan Jarrett,
Director of Quality Assurance

Winter Activities to Promote Emotional Regulation

Winter is here and with winter comes more programming and activities indoors. It can be difficult to find activities that your child enjoys doing inside to promote emotional regulation. Check out our tips and tricks that you can try!

By engaging in these activities, you provide opportunities for skill-building, sensory regulation, and meaningful connections. Remember, every child is unique, so tailor these suggestions to fit your child's specific needs and preferences. Most importantly, have fun!

Arts & Crafts

Fosters self-expression and improves fine motor skills

- Finger painting
- Stickers
- Crafts around children's interest



Music & Movement

Promotes self-regulation, physical activity, and emotional expression.

- Dancing
- Use small instruments like maracas or drums



Building & Sorting

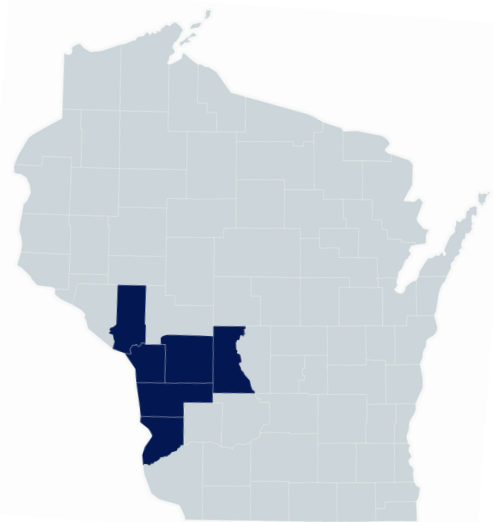
Improves focus and cognitive skills

- Sorting objects by color, shape or size can be calming and educational
- Legos and building blocks
- Puzzles



Explore Our Emerging Services

Chileda Shine Community Services provides ABA Therapy, Mental Health support, and Music Therapy programs. Our mission is to be a standout provider, offering parents and caregivers the tools and resources they need to effectively manage their child's behaviors and teach essential skills. We invest significant time in training our staff to deliver and recommend the most effective, evidence-based practices. Shine provides evidence-based skill services to aid in teaching functional communication, emotional regulation, social skills, and more. Our approach is creative and engaging, using tools like puppets to help clients open up during therapy, preferred songs to teach regulation skills, and visuals with high-interest items to guide making and following expectations and schedules easier. We are client-centered, using the interests of both clients and their families to guide sessions, treatment plans, and reinforcement strategies for the entire family.



Counties Chiledda Shine Currently Serves:
La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon,
Trempealeau, Juneau, and Crawford.

Adult Family Home Services

Submitted by: Audreana Royer, Adult Family Home Program Director

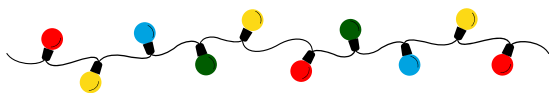
Chileda's Adult Family Home (AFH) serves as a supportive and structured living environment for adults with severe and profound autism. The home is designed to support the unique needs of the clients we serve. Our goal is to help each individual achieve their greatest potential through tailored support and meaningful daily activities.

At Chiledda's Adult Family Home, we focus on fostering the development of life skills, social-behavioral abilities, and self-advocacy in the home and community. Each day, our team works to enhance clients' quality of life through engaging activities such as arts and crafts, recreational outings, and opportunities to participate in community.



Submitted by: Jason Colvin,
Recreation Manager

Holiday Spirit Week Brings Cheer to Chileda



The annual Chileda Holiday Celebration took place on Friday, December 20, 2024, at the Chileda Learning Center, Lacrosse Campus. This festive gathering brought together students, their families, and staff for an afternoon of joy and connection. Highlights of the event included lively sing-alongs led by our talented students and an entertaining skit performed by the Recreation Department.



During the holiday break, the Recreation Department also organized a series of fun-filled holiday experiences, featuring both on- and off-campus activities for our students.

Students enjoyed the first snowfall with snow play and sledding. Off-campus outings included visits to the YMCA pool, Jump Start Trampoline Park, the Children's Museum, the Omni Center for ice skating, Rotary Lights, and more.

Christmas morning was particularly special, as each house was visited by Santa, who delivered presents provided by families, toys donated by students from La Crescent Middle School, and generous gifts from Rosie's Café.

We are incredibly grateful for the support of our staff and community partners, who make accommodations to ensure our students have meaningful experiences during community outings. Special thanks also go to the many community members whose generosity helps make the holidays magical for the students at Chileda!

Submitted by: Derek Cortez, CEO

Autism in Focus

The Autism CARES Act: A Landmark for Autism Research and Support

Since 2000, the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has skyrocketed, from 6.7 cases per 1,000 children to approximately 1 in 36 as of 2024. This ongoing increase emphasizes the critical need for enhanced research, support, and services for individuals affected by autism. Yet, research has often overlooked those with more severe forms of ASD, leaving a significant gap in care. In response, the Autism CARES Act, reauthorized in 2024, provides a vital framework to address these challenges.

What is the CARES Act?

First passed in 2006 as the Combating Autism Act and later renamed to include the word “CARES” (Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support), the Autism CARES Act is a pivotal federal law. It aims to address critical issues related to autism that range from diagnosis to long-term support for individuals across the spectrum. The Act provides resources for research, public awareness, and services, and helps ensure coordinated efforts across various government agencies.

The Autism CARES Act aims to:

- Enhance early diagnosis and intervention programs.
- Expand access to comprehensive services, including therapy, education, and employment support.
- Advance research into autism’s causes, prevention, and treatment options.
- Develop policies to help individuals with autism integrate into society through employment and community involvement.

Key Components of the Autism CARES Act

1. **Funding for Autism Research and Services:** The Act allocates federal funds to research the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of autism, as well as to support services for individuals and families affected by ASD.
2. **Support Across the Lifespan:** The Autism CARES Act recognizes that individuals with autism require different kinds of support at each life stage. The Act works to provide this continuous support.
3. **Interagency Collaboration:** Coordination among federal agencies dealing with autism-related issues is enhanced ensuring that research priorities and service delivery are aligned through the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC).
4. **Focus on Underserved Communities:** Recent updates to the Act highlight a renewed focus on expanding services and outreach to underserved and underrepresented communities, ensuring more equitable access to resources.

A Vital Commitment to the Autism Community

The Autism CARES Act remains the only federal law dedicated solely to the autism community. Judith Ursitti, President of the Profound Autism Alliance, stresses the Act’s importance, stating that its renewed focus ensures continued support and research across the full spectrum of autism. For organizations like Chiledda, this commitment is essential for providing the tools and resources needed to help individuals with autism thrive.

**NEW
UPDATE**

Chileda Learning Center – Menasha Campus

Here's a must read note of gratitude from parents of a client that was sent to the Appleton Post-Crescent Newspaper in October.

"Tess has recently been accepted at the Chileda Learning Center in Menasha. She has been there for three weeks now and is thriving. Because of her sometimes severe behavioral issues (associated with her having CHARGE syndrome), she has never found a school where she "fit in", and I have been home schooling her for the past two years. I am friends with another parent whose child attends Chileda. She and I, and I am quite sure many more Chileda parents, are SO thankful to Chileda staff for helping our neurodiverse children thrive. "



Drawing by Tess featured
on our most recent
apparel order.

Ferguson's Orchards Outing

This past fall, staff and students from the Chileda Learning Center, La Crosse campus enjoyed an afternoon at Ferguson's Orchards in Galesville, WI.



Submitted by: Terri Gowey, MS, BCBA, LBA
Chief Operating Officer

Congrats to Our New BCBA's!

BCBAs (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) play a vital role at Chiledda, applying behavior analysis to create individualized learning plans that help students with autism and other developmental disabilities thrive. They conduct assessments, implement effective interventions, and track progress to reduce challenging behaviors by building essential life skills that promote greater independence.

The journey to becoming a BCBA is no small feat. It requires extensive academic training, hands-on fieldwork, and passing a rigorous certification exam. We're incredibly proud of our newest BCBAs hard work and dedication to achieving this milestone and making a difference in the lives of our students. Rhiannon Clyde, Behavior Services Manager (Menasha Campus), Evan Saltzman, Shine Behavior Analyst; Jessica Schuler, Director of Staff Development and Valerie Wilmink, STEP Behavior Analyst, (pictured below, left to right), are Chiledda's newest BCBA's!



Congressman Derrick Van Orden Visits Chiledda

In August, we welcomed Third Congressional District Representative Derrick Van Orden to our La Crosse and Shine Campuses. It was a great opportunity to showcase the impactful work we do and discuss how we're making a difference in our community.



Welcome Cheddar

Our La Crosse campus also received a special visit from Cheddar, the City of La Crosse Police Department's therapy dog.

Employee Spotlight



**Kay Lisick,
MSW, LCSW,
CSAC, ICS**
Mental Health
Therapist

Background and Experience

My educational background includes studies in both social work and psychology, culminating in multiple degrees from Viterbo University and the University of Minnesota. With over 17 years of professional experience in therapy, clinical substance abuse counseling, licensed clinical social work, licensed independent clinical supervision, psychopharmacology, and education in La Crosse and the surrounding areas, I've brought a variety of experience with me to Chileda.

What do you like so far about working at Chileda?

The best part about working at Chileda is that I have the freedom to be creative and adapt my therapeutic approach to meet the needs of the kids and families we serve. I am passionate about helping others, advocacy, mental healthcare, and social justice, and as part of the team at Chileda, I get to do all of those things. I also get the opportunity to just be my goofy, playful, quirky, self at work — which makes this truly one of the best places to work.

A Closer Look at Your Role

My role at Chileda encompasses psychotherapy, psycho-family education, and clinical supervision. I work at Shine, in the community, and also at the La Crosse campus.

Interesting Tidbits

My husband and I have 4 amazing daughters, and 2 different pointer-breed dogs (whom might as well be counted as 2 more children!) that make life chaotic, crazy and fantastic. When I'm not at work, you'll often find me out on the river, or at our boathouse, with my kids, my large but close-knit extended family, my friends, and my dogs. I also love to travel - both near and far. I believe strongly that every day is an opportunity for an adventure, and we should go on as many adventures as possible!

We'd Love to Hear From You!

Your thoughts and suggestions are important to us! Please take a moment to share your feedback on this edition of the newsletter. What did you find helpful? Is there something you'd like to see in future issues?

<https://forms.office.com/r/7vv36H44uZ>

Or feel free to reach out directly at ryverg@chileda.org.

Thank you for helping us make this newsletter better for you and your family!

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