



# SMILE CONNECTION

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2026

## BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A BRIGHT YEAR OF SMILES

### A Bright Smile for the Happiest Girl

**The diagnosis of a cleft before birth is a surprise. But the finding of a cleft after birth, and after unremarkable scans, is the shock of a lifetime.**

Zachary McCauley and Samantha Coates welcomed twin girls – Gabby and Isabell – in 2018. Gabby was raced to the NICU.

“I knew something wasn’t right,” Samantha says, reflecting on the c-section. “She didn’t cry.”

Gabby struggled to breathe and gain weight. She was transferred to Penn State Children’s Hospital.

There, Zachary and Samantha met Dr. Samson. “He came with his Team and reviewed her,” Samantha reflects.

“Dr. Samson told us, ‘When she’s in the operating room, she’s my daughter. I’m going to take care of her.’ That encouraged us so much,” Samantha says. “I’ll always remember that.”

The surgery revealed a mass stretching from Gabby’s nasal cavity to the base of her skull and a cleft palate, which explained her difficulty swallowing and breathing. Gabby received a tracheostomy and feeding tube.

Then after 62 days in the hospital, Gabby finally got to go home.

The Clinic has been in Zachary and Samantha’s lives ever since.

The mass was removed a few weeks before her discharge and in May 2019, Dr. Samson completed her cleft palate repair. In 2004 Gabby had palate lengthening surgery.

Gabby, now 7 years old, visits the Clinic at least every six months for multiple services. She receives cleft-related checks, that include speech therapy evaluations, and dental services. Eventually, Gabby will see orthodontics too.

“They’re wonderful,” Samantha shares. “And they’re not just good with my child, they’re good with our whole family.”



Samantha even drives 90 minutes so that Isabell – who is not a cleft patient of the Clinic – can see the dentist there.

Of Dr. Samson, Samantha and Zachary agree that from the day he entered their lives until now, they don’t have a negative thing to say about him. His care has given Gabby the brightest smile – a smile she shares easily with everyone.

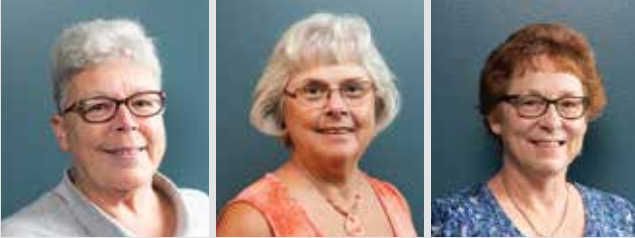
“She’s the happiest kid,” Samantha says. Gabby loves pretending to be a mom and doctor, and she loves sisters Isabell and 4-year-old Estelle.

“LCPC is full of individuals who have experienced what we have,” Zachary says. “We learn from parents with older kids. We’re assured there’s a plan of action and everything will be alright. We look forward to being part of the Clinic’s future.”

Samantha agrees, because she’s never forgotten that promise Dr. Samson made to her years ago, as she – an anxious new mother – prepared to watch her baby depart for surgery.

“He told us he’d take care of her – in there, she was his own child,” Samantha says. “If you want someone who’ll treat your kids like family, the Clinic is the place for you.”

# BUILDING LEGACIES AND BRIGHT SMILES



Brenda Hohman

Darla Miles

Jackie Faust

The Clinic would like to announce the retirement of three of our longest serving co-workers who helped us build a strong foundation for the future. After 99+ combined years of service to LCPC, **Brenda Hohman, Darla Miles, and Jackie Faust** started a well-deserved period of relaxation on December 31st. Darla worked for us for 36 years, Brenda for 34 years, and Jackie for 29 years.

Our entire staff is incredibly thankful for their hard work and dedication to the Clinic. They have each contributed immensely to our organization and shown decades of loyalty that is rare in this day and age.

Brenda, our Team Scheduler, has gotten to know our Team families and developed relationships with our young patients in a way that made them feel more comfortable when they visited us for long and sometimes stressful visits. She spent years keeping our Team schedule organized and efficient.

Darla served LCPC as our Financial Coordinator. Darla's keen attention to detail and strong financial skills have supported our fiscal health and kept our budget in a healthy place. The Clinic's books are in top shape thanks to her support.

Jackie, as our Facility Coordinator, kept our space in excellent shape, allowing us to function at our best. Our systems always ran smoothly because of her.

Please join us in gratitude for their career-long contributions to LCPC.

With gratitude,



Liz Prada, DMD, MPH  
Executive Director and  
Pediatric Dentist

# BRIGHT SMILES FOR A JOYFUL YEAR AHEAD

2026 is starting with joy. Each event, meeting, and act of kindness to support patient care is helping us begin an uncertain year with some security. Cuts to Medicaid will impact coverage for our patients, but we will not know what that fully means for several months. The good news is that we raised almost \$50,000 during the ExtraGive! And Christmas Tree Lane brought another \$2,600 to support patient care! We have also recently received several grant awards that are making futures brighter for our patients.



## Celebrating Smiles with Penn State Health and Fulton

**Financial Advisors** is **March 6** and we can't wait to share all the great art with you. Our first fundraiser of the year promises to be great fun with live music by the talented Corey Aiden, a former patient, an arts and crafts table for kids, goody bags of surprises for our first 100 guests, drinks to help everyone sip and stroll, and, of course, all the art on display! We have a new addition this year of baskets to bid on. These baskets are all fun ways to spend time with loved ones, and range from a family fun night of games to a weekend in Philly!

Visit our auction site to see everything and bid on your favorites until 7:30 pm on March 6.  
[givebutter.com/Smiles26](https://givebutter.com/Smiles26)



Follow the QR code to see all the great items!



Deanna Meyler, PhD  
Director of Development



# BUILDING A BETTER WAY

Research gaps are opportunities to LEARN AND GROW



Our Feeding Specialist, Lauren Madhoun, PhD, published “Examining Milk-Thickening Practices for Infants With Cleft Palate: A Scoping Review” in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology with colleagues in November.

One technique used to reduce aspiration and reflux concerns in infants is to thicken their milk. However, thickened milk can be challenging for infants with a cleft palate who typically use specialized bottles with one-way valves to get their milk. Exploring five different databases and placing practical limits on articles to review led to 2,282 publications for their scoping review. However, only one article specifically described the use of thickened milk for infants with cleft palate. An additional 11 tutorial and seminar articles discussed milk thickening as a strategy, but did not use it on infants. Ultimately, there is not currently strong evidence to encourage milk thickening for infants with a cleft palate, particularly when using with cleft-adapted feeding methods. There is great opportunity to learn more about this intervention before recommending or utilizing it among infants with a cleft palate.

Congratulations to Lauren and her colleagues for documenting a gap in research and creating an opportunity to learn more about a topic that is informative for our patients and their families.



## New Smiles New Places

**Congratulations to Vickie Coniglio** (above) on her promotion to Lead Front Desk Patient Coordinator! Vickie has many years of dental experience and excels in patient customer service skills. You will always see a big smile and hear a cheerful hello followed by “how can I help you?”



**Camryn Heister, MS, CCC,** is a Speech-Language Pathologist with the Clinic. We are excited to share she has started a new role as Adjunct Instructor in the Speech Pathology Master’s Program at Lebanon Valley

College, teaching Cleft & Craniofacial Disorders. Camryn says, “I’m grateful for the opportunity to work with future speech-language pathologists and to integrate real-world craniofacial team care into the classroom.”

## GRATEFUL FOR GENEROUS GRANTS

- We are thrilled to share that we have been awarded a two-year \$100,000 grant from the United Concordia Dental Charitable Fund which will support our Dental Home program through 2027.
- Jubilation is also being inspired by the Gamber Foundation who has awarded the Clinic \$10,000 to support patient care.
- The Richard S. and Ann B. Barshinger Foundation has kindly awarded the Clinic \$15,000 to support patient care.
- The Ferree Foundation has awarded the Clinic \$28,591 to complete repainting the Clinic that we started in 2024 and to replace the faucets in our bathrooms.



**BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A  
BRIGHT YEAR  
OF SMILES**

**Join Us for Events Sure to Make You Smile**



**Celebrating Smiles with Penn State Health and Fulton Financial Advisors**

**MARCH 6 from 4 to 8 pm** we will display original art by patients and their family members, staff, and others who care about our mission at the Sehner-Ellicott-von Hess House, 123 N Prince Street, Lancaster, during Lancaster First Friday. **Scan QR code to see the auction site.**



**Lititz Pretzel Fest**

On **MAY 2**, downtown Lititz will once again be the place to enjoy multiple savory and sweet pretzel treats. The Kiwanis Club of Lititz Area hosts this annual event and proceeds benefit local charities that support children, like the

Clinic! Join us to eat our way through Lititz and support patient care.



**Highmark Walk For A Healthy Community**

The Clinic is a participating organization with the Highmark Walk For A Healthy Community! Join us on **MAY 16** in Harrisburg for a 1 mile or 5K walk around H.A.C.C. It's free to walk and a donation of at least \$30 provides an event t-shirt. All funds raised through our page will support patient care. **Follow the QR code to sign up and donate!**



**Gainer-Race Memorial Softball Weekend**

Play ball, make a donation, or volunteer **MAY 29-31** and make a real difference in the lives of children across Lancaster County, including our patients! The **FREE Kids Game** and carnival is Friday (ages 4-12)! **Follow their Facebook page for more information.**



**Day of Gratitude**

Mark your calendar and RSVP for **JUNE 6** to share a picnic with us. We want to thank you for making our work possible with games for all ages, cotton candy, and more from 2 to 4 pm at Amos Herr Park, East Pavilion.

