Parents Corner  
By Nicholas Black

Four years ago, my wife Nancy and I felt an increasing despair descending over us about how to help our son, Jeremy. He had been in our public school system since Kindergarten, and while the administration and teachers worked hard and valiantly with and for him, his progress in learning how to communicate with his assistive eye-gaze computer was painfully slow. A chance conversation with a nurse from our church a year before alerted me to HMS. That set into motion a series of consultations with HMS staff, working together to assist Jeremy’s teachers in learning how to work with him to use his device.

But his progress was too slow. We knew Jeremy needed more than occasional teacher consultations; he needed hands-on teaching and training. We didn’t have the knowledge and skills to help him effectively learn to communicate with the only device that could help him connect with others; and we felt time rapidly slipping away. Jeremy was 17.

We decided to send Jeremy to HMS’ ESY program. We entered the world of HMS desperately hopeful. What took place in a short time that summer astonished us. Jeremy learned more in six weeks at HMS about how to use his assistive device than...
Meet our Class of 2014

Jeremiah (Jeremy) Black, 21  
Glenside, PA  
Years at HMS: 4 • Day Student

**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:** Becoming fluent with his eye-gaze communication device since first coming to HMS during ESY in 2010. Since then, Jeremy opened up and began socializing independently with classmates and staff. He is able to tell about himself and his feelings and engage in reciprocal communication.

**Favorite extracurricular activities:** Reading and listening to stories, and watching movies and technology-related videos on robotics and bionics.

**Leadership:** Jeremy served as the class treasurer this school year and received the Jim Roebuck Leadership Award from State Representative James Roebuck.

**Plans after HMS:** Jeremy will be attending classes at local area schools, participating in a home-based art and recreation program, in addition to other meaningful activities arranged by his family. Jeremy would also like to remain in contact with many of his HMS friends so he can continue to socialize with his peers.

**What makes Jeremy special:** Kevin Rafferty, Jeremy’s classroom teacher of two and a half years, wishes he could have more time to work with Jeremy before he leaves HMS. “Jeremy has a great desire and tenacity to do better and better. He really wants to work hard.”

Katelyn Blaszczyk, 21  
Huntingdon Valley, PA  
Years at HMS: 4 • Day Student

**Most significant accomplishment at HMS:** Being able to get out of her wheelchair and walk with assistance. By using her voice, she also was able to let others know when she is happy and when she has discomfort. Rich Magnuson, Recreation Therapist, says about Katelyn “she has developed a strong ability to express her preferences and dislikes. When she has a strong opinion on something, she will let you know!”

**Favorite extracurricular activities:** Katelyn loves to go swimming. The water is very therapeutic—comforting and relaxing her body. Katelyn also likes being active by walking, dancing, and swinging. She especially enjoyed riding on the horse simulator during therapeutic horseback riding.

**What else:** Katelyn loves spending time with her mom, dad, sister Courtney, brother Gary, brother-in-law Kevin, and Aunt Regina. She especially enjoys watching Dancing with the Stars and The Voice with her mom!

**Plans after HMS:** Katelyn will be going back to her hometown, filling her days with a variety of activities which include swimming at the YMCA, music, dance, and visits to the library.

**What makes Katelyn special:** Katelyn has a special smile that she shares with her family, friends, and HMS staff that lets them know she is enjoying herself.
he had learned at his school the prior two years. Seeing daylight ahead instead of darkening clouds, we asked the school to send Jeremy to HMS. While they had to reassess him to make that decision, frankly, Jeremy wowed them upon his return in September. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.

In June 2011 Jeremy entered HMS full-time. In three years, Jeremy has received much more than communication training, which was our primary goal. He entered a world that has brought him out of isolation. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.

In June 2011 Jeremy entered HMS full-time. In three years, Jeremy has received much more than communication training, which was our primary goal. He entered a world that has brought him out of isolation. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.

In June 2011 Jeremy entered HMS full-time. In three years, Jeremy has received much more than communication training, which was our primary goal. He entered a world that has brought him out of isolation. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.

In June 2011 Jeremy entered HMS full-time. In three years, Jeremy has received much more than communication training, which was our primary goal. He entered a world that has brought him out of isolation. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.

In June 2011 Jeremy entered HMS full-time. In three years, Jeremy has received much more than communication training, which was our primary goal. He entered a world that has brought him out of isolation. He was doing things he had never been able to do before.
Magnuson, who introduced us to therapeutic horseback riding, the Walnut Street Theatre’s residency program, and dance movement therapy; and Mary Anne Bayne, who brought her extensive nursing knowledge to help us understand and respond to our students’ complex medical needs. We are committed to continuing their legacy at HMS.

Maintaining this level of innovation and expertise among our staff is a key element in our strategic plan, aimed at strengthening our position as a thought leader and role model for those working with students with complex disabilities. We pride ourselves on knowing the newest technologies and incorporating current research and trends when they work for our students, and sharing this well beyond our building. Recently, we have helped establish a newly-emerging coalition of schools serving students with similar highly-specialized needs who have committed to advocate together for this relatively small subset of all students.

As we say goodbye to our graduates, Jeremy Black, Katelyn Blaszczyk, and Mark DiCocco, and to Rich and Mary Anne, we look forward to the next three to five years under the guidance of our new strategic plan—years during which we’ll continue to honor what was bequeathed to us by those who are leaving and to seek new ways to innovate, learn and teach.

Best wishes for a relaxing and joyous summer.