

# A LEARNING LABORATORY

Imagine you have a child with a developmental disability who has never been out in public without you, has never left the house alone, and has never spoken to a stranger.

Now, standing in front of you, a tiny woman in glasses and a habit is telling you she will teach your child not only how to ride a bus alone, but how to obey street signs, count out bus fare, and even call your phone number if something goes wrong.

Why? Because he needs those skills to be able *to go to work*.

Your child is one of over 400 children and adults enrolled in the many innovative programs at the Cantalician Center for Learning, and they are all doing things no one ever thought possible.

How? With new legislation and funding to support services for people with developmental disabilities – and a lot of hard work – programming at Cantalician took off in the 1970s and 1980s. There wasn't a problem her students faced that Sister Raphael Marie couldn't write a grant for and try to fix.

Would early intervention with infants and toddlers improve a child's development? Yes, and there's a grant for that. Would under-served minority groups benefit from Cantalician's services? Yes. There's a grant for that, too. Would your son be able to work if he could ride the bus? Yes. *Cantalician Center can help you.*

As the programming expanded, so did the staff. Cantalician's mission brought together hundreds of dedicated professionals, teachers and therapists of every kind, nurses, social workers, artists, administrators, cooks, and maintenance workers. They also recruited students from local colleges, volunteer parents, foster grandparents, and even local businesses as part of the team.

Thanks to everyone's hard work, Cantalician Center became a state-of-the-art incubator of quality programming for people with developmental disabilities, continually winning grants to develop pilot programs for use across the country and winning service awards at the state and national level – a true Learning Laboratory.



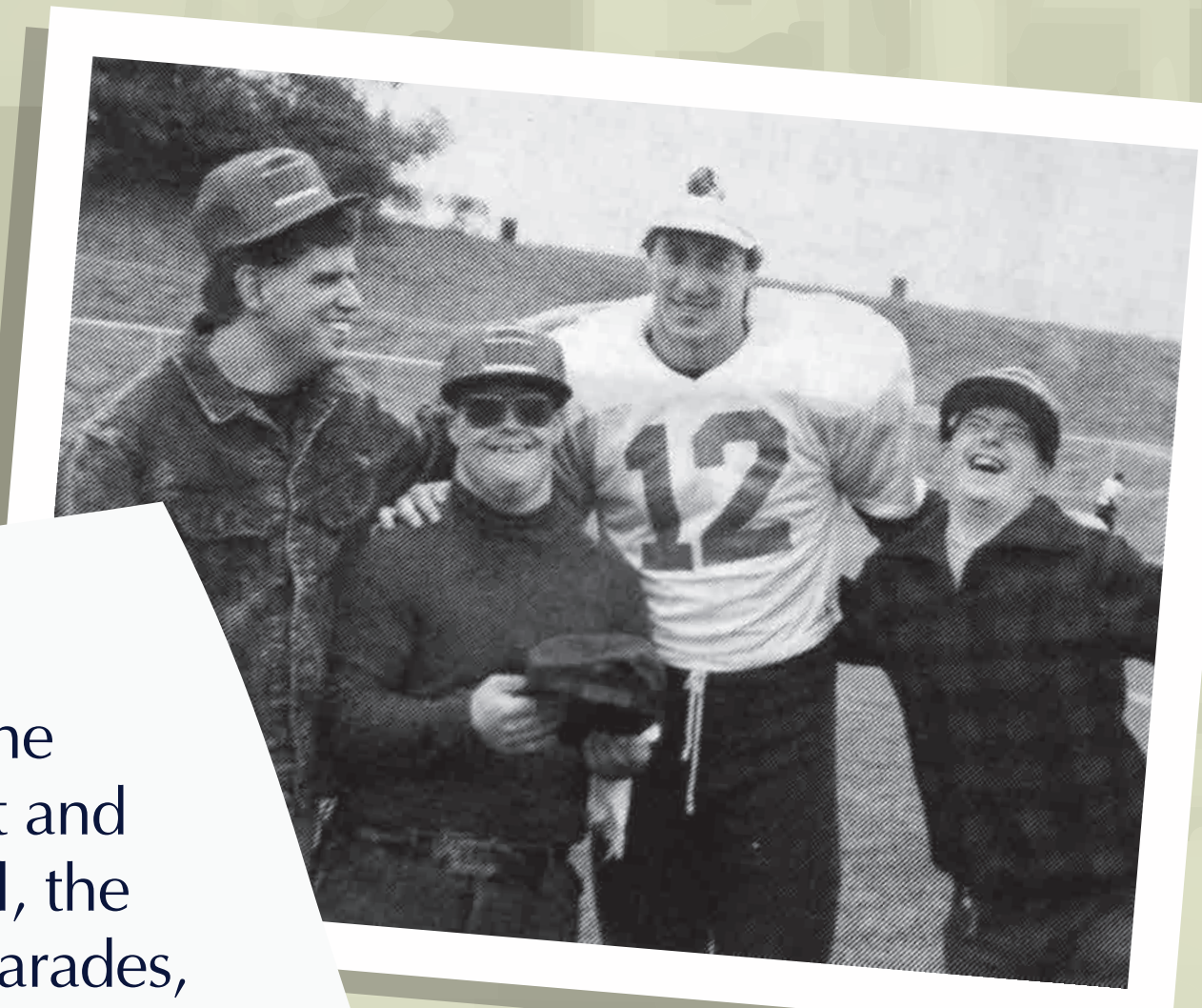
Ever mindful of the special needs of their children and families, Cantalician expanded its care to infants and toddlers with an extraordinary array of new services, such as a comprehensive Preschool program, a ground-breaking Family Infant program to teach parents to be the primary instructors of their children, and a Dads program, which met in the evenings so whole families could participate and learn together.



A changing world brought new challenges, and Cantalician services expanded to meet them. New programs welcomed individuals with autism, children with multiple disabilities, and infants of drug-addicted mothers. Physical education programs grew to include Creative Arts Therapy and the new Special Olympics. And the innovative Specialized Family program helped parents with developmental disabilities learn to raise their children who also had disabilities.

*“When I first told the parents about this, it was like hitting them with a thunderbolt.”*

— Sister Raphael Marie



As Cantalician's programming expanded, so did its relationship with the community. Local businesses and organizations provided crucial support and opportunities for Cantalician's students and families. The D'Youville pool, the Knights of Columbus bowling alley, Buffalo firefighters, American Legion parades, skating with SABAH, and Alhambra Cordova Caravan picnics were the highlights of the year, eclipsed only by visits from the Buffalo Bills – and Santa.

