

# PROFILES

Each Issue Features An Outstanding Student from Gateway School, Alpha School or Harbor School  
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**Matt Cloughley** is an 18-year-old young man with an incredible talent for music. In fact, he can play six different instruments: violin, saxophone, clarinet, guitar, piano and harmonica! Matt has been attending the Alpha School in Lakewood, NJ for the last 11 years, and has already been accepted to the Berkshire Hills Music Academy in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Berkshire Hills is a college for special needs young adults with musical ability and has been highlighted on a feature of 60 Minutes. Matt went up there for a camp, and they liked him so much, they accepted him into a three-year residential program, once he graduates from Alpha School.



*Matt Cloughley*

Matt has also been active with the Variety Club in Philadelphia, which is a special needs group that works in the tri-state area. Last year they had auditions with Eddie Bauer Entertainment and Matt was invited to play the saxophone at the Prince Music Theater. Matt has also played at the Autism Gala and the Galleria Mall, where he was able to showcase his musical talent.

*Continued on next page*

**For more information or to make arrangements for a tour please call:**

**Alpha School**

Forest Avenue & 11th Street  
Lakewood, NJ 08701  
Phone: 732-370-1150  
Fax: 732-901-0736  
www.AlphaSchool.com

**Harbor School**

240 Broad Street  
Eatontown, NJ 07724  
Phone: 732-544-9394  
Fax: 732-544-0245  
www.HarborSchool.com

**Gateway School**

60 High Street  
Carteret, NJ 07008  
Phone: 732-541-4400  
Fax: 732-541-2557  
www.TheGatewaySchool.com

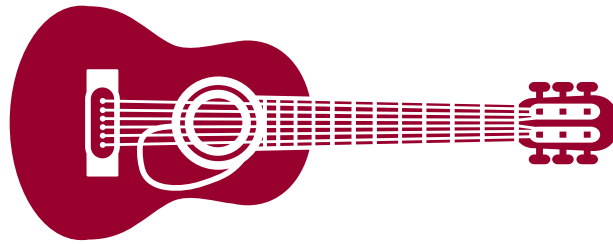
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Ruth H. Reinhard  
Loretta A. Kennedy  
V. Jean Stack  
Administrative Directors  
1415 Wyckoff Road, Suite 304  
Farmingdale, NJ 07727  
732-938-9585

Diagnosed at the age of 22 months with Autism, Matt was unable to speak until the age of six. His very first words at that time were, "Happy Birthday Matt", which brought his family to tears. Matt's mom, Dottie, relates that typically most children with Autism are diagnosed later than Matt was and have developed language that they then lose. "Matt never had language, and that was key in his early diagnosis." He didn't receive receptive language until the age of three and was unable to speak until six. Before Matt was able to speak, he used sign language to communicate. Dottie also says that, "Autism affects each child differently. Matt was always musically inclined. He could look at a series of instruments in a photo and pick out which instrument was being played in the background." He goes to Garden State Music Center for most of his lessons and practices all of the time. "I don't have to tell him it's time to practice, he just

loves doing it on his own", relates Dottie. "He can pick up most any instrument and just kind of figure it out". "Matt is very mellow and always happy", Dottie says. "And he loves being big brother to his 14-month old foster sister." His other interests include the Special Olympics where he competes in bowling and swimming every year. Matt loves practicing with his bowling team every Friday night, and also loves going to the mall and movies with his friends from Alpha School. "The Special Olympics hold dances six or so times a year, which Matt loves to attend, so he has a very active social life!" mom says.

Looking toward Matt's future, the Cloughleys are very excited about his next step. Berkshire Hills Music Academy in Massachusetts basically teaches their students how to earn a living within music, so the Cloughley's are very grateful for Matt's abilities. "We are very lucky", says Dottie.



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