



# McCarthy Fund Helps Families ‘Speak Up’ for Themselves

March 15 2012 9:23 AM

**Raymond Johnes with Sarah Myers, OT, in the Speech Therapy Department at Alton Memorial Hospital.**

ALTON, IL -- Parents of children with speech problems have a voice at Alton Memorial Hospital, thanks to the generosity of Mary Alice McCarthy 60 years ago.

“When our son was 3 years old and in need of speech therapy I felt discouraged and lost,” wrote Karin Johnes, mother of twins Raymond and Caroline. “Then I discovered the Speech Therapy department in the Human Motion Institute at Alton Memorial Hospital. From the very first appointment, a huge weight was lifted off my heart. Now, after about a year of treatment, the improvement in my son is profound. Seeing his enthusiasm for his therapy brings a tear to my eye.”

“When it was first determined that Raymond needed speech therapy, our insurance rejected his treatment plan,” Karin continued. “Luckily, he was able to receive assistance through the Mary Alice McCarthy Fund. I do not have enough words to express my sincere gratitude.”

The fund was established in 1951 by McCarthy, a local school teacher who left a portion of her estate to assist children stricken with polio. While the polio epidemic is past, childhood health needs continue. This year the Mary Alice McCarthy Fund aided 32 area children with financial assistance for speech, occupational and physical therapy.

While therapists work with patients of all ages, the pre-school years are the most critical for language and motor skills development.

“As occupational therapists, we work in conjunction with speech therapy to give children a solid foundation on which to build their learning skills,” said Sarah Myers, OT. “There are building blocks of learning. If steps are missed, the next steps become more difficult. Letters and sounds must be mastered before reading can begin. Fine motor skills must be mastered prior to learning to write. We try to make practicing these skills fun so that children will embrace the joy of learning.”

Assistance through the Mary Alice McCarthy Fund has a significant impact on children during crucial stages of their development.

“Alton Memorial Hospital truly strives to provide our community with excellent care,” Karin Johnes said. “We made a donation to the Foundation to show our appreciation to the hospital for being such an outstanding presence in the River Bend community.”