

## A New Interactive Sensory Experience

Merakey Allegheny Valley School (M/AVS) recently received funding from generous donors to purchase four new pieces of sensory equipment known as Tovertafels in Western PA. The Tovertafel is a projector that emits light and sound, using infrared sensors to detect hand movements and transforms any surface into an interactive experience.

The new equipment is a game console designed for use in healthcare settings and was developed for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). This equipment has enhanced our sensory program allowing for positive, interactive, and independent participation for the people we support as well as staff, family members, and visitors.

The Tovertafel also allows people to enjoy time together while having fun and increasing physical movements and hand-eye coordination. M/AVS is excited to be able to provide this unique sensory tool at the Pittsburgh Campus, Patricia Hillman Miller Campus (PHMC), Slippery Rock Program Center (SRPC) and Edward J. Zapp Center (Zapp).

M/AVS is working to secure funding that will help with the purchase of additional units throughout the state. Similar interactive sensory equipment is being used in Eastern PA, and will be added to the Hummelstown Campus soon. M/AVS strives to bring the latest technology programs to those we support to engage their interests while promoting cognitive, physical and social developments.



Staff Bobby Dwyer works with Darrell and Mark to use adapted equipment to reach all areas of the game.

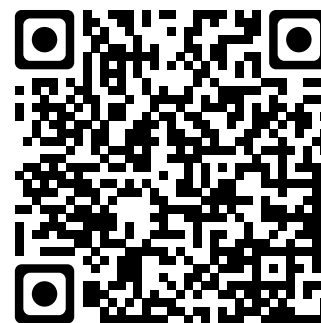


Program Aide Brie Loccisano and Barbie from SRPC are playing an interactive cooking game.

## Donate to Merakey AVS

Donors are welcome to designate their contribution for use at a particular location or for a specific project. For example, gifts can be used towards the new sensory rooms in Eastern or Central PA, the outdoor garden at the Edward J. Zapp Center, activity accounts at any home or campus, or any location/project that you request. To restrict your gift, please indicate the area on the donation envelope, or use the comments box on the online donation form.


**Scan the QR Code to make a donation to Merakey Allegheny Valley School.**



### CONNECT WITH US!


 [avs.merakey.org](https://avs.merakey.org)

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 412-299-7777

 [MerakeyOrg](https://www.youtube.com/MerakeyOrg)

 [Merakey](https://www.linkedin.com/Merakey)

 [MerakeyOrg](https://www.instagram.com/MerakeyOrg)

 [MerakeyIDD](https://www.facebook.com/MerakeyIDD)

## Out and About in the Community



Genny and Baylee attended the Zapp Center Spring Fling dance, which marked the first evening event held since the pandemic, offering a much-needed opportunity for everyone to reconnect.



House Manager Linda Finecy and John from Harmony had an exciting vacation with his housemates to Gatlinburg, TN, where they had a packed week of adventures, shopping, and dining.



David visits the petting zoo during the Pittsburgh Campus Carnival, which had a variety of activities including food trucks, carnival games, dunk tank, live band, and more!



Johanna from SRPC got to hold and pet a baby chick after she learned about animals that hatch from eggs.



Jon and staff Mike Casto from Pittsburgh Campus spent the day at Keystone Safari where they fed and pet a giraffe.



Janna from Oakhaven and her sister Diane spent a thrilling day at Kennywood Amusement Park with family and friends.



The 2024 Miracle League season was a hit! Shawn is up to bat with volunteer Michael Reiland and staff Roman Jones.



Kenton, Barbie, Bobby, Sean, and James from SRPC visited Bicycle Heaven in Pittsburgh, a museum that showcases vintage bicycles.



Recreational Instructor Jill Serold and Joe from Pittsburgh Campus showed their dance moves during a Valentine's event.





Antonio and Program Director Rachel Livingston dressed-up for the Hummelstown Campus Fall Festival where they played Halloween themed games and activities.



Michael and many others from Philadelphia Campus continue to benefit from monthly Horticultural Therapy sessions where they explore hands-on gardening.



Congratulations to all of the athletes who participate in Special Olympics. Eric, Chris, and Theresa received their medals at the Allegheny County Invitational Games.



Terri from Philadelphia Campus participates in Animal Assisted Therapy where she connects with new furry friends.



London created a sloth craft while taking an art class at a local ceramics studio in Butler, PA.



Keith from Wildwood visited the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh.



Lucas from Windy Ghoul explores the tropical environments at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh.



Lauren from the Philadelphia Campus splashed into fun at the Big Kahuna Water Park in West Berlin, NJ.



Elizabeth enjoys Aquatic Therapy at the PHMC pool with Adapted Aquatics Instructor Peyton Wheeler.

## Event Updates

### Congratulations, John Police!

The Friends of Merakey AVS Golf Open took place on September 16 at Chartiers Country Club. We honored Merakey Director of Facilities Management John Police as the 2024 AVS CHAMPion, who for 35 years helped build and maintain residential and recreational spaces for individuals with IDD.

Thank you to co-chairs Rick Mongiovi and Dan Taylor and the many sponsors, golfers, underwriters and donors who helped to raise \$140,000 for the Capital Development Fund. Nearly 200 guests came out to support the event and to honor John.



John Police (center) was presented the AVS CHAMPion Award by Merakey's CEO Joe Martz and Regis G. Champ, after whom the award was named.

### Racing to Support Merakey AVS

What began as a single-day race in Schenley Park in 1983, has grown into a full-fledged Motorsport Festival. The 10-day race week is packed with events including two race weekends, parties and automotive showcases. M/AVS individuals, staff members, families and friends volunteered and attended many of the events. Merakey AVS is proud and grateful for the continuous support from the PVGP since its founding. Race to [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org) for more info.



Merakey staff and families volunteered during race weekend in Schenley Park. Pictured left to right are Jill Finney, Marcia Brown, Renda Cypher, Mike Johnson, Jerry, Gianna, and Gemma Valenti.



PVGP Ambassador Kenny rode in a convertible during the Opening Ceremonies Parade.

### Congratulations, Theresa Cox!

Administrator Theresa Cox is celebrating 51 years of service with Merakey Allegheny Valley School. Theresa continues to put her heart and soul into working with the individuals and staff in the Slippery Rock area.

*"Theresa is a true leader who encourages others to elevate to her level of care. Her love and support of the individuals and the staff at Merakey AVS is unmatched."* – Roni Erath, Senior Regional Executive Director

**Congratulations Theresa on this milestone anniversary!**



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR WITH OUR 2025 EVENTS!

**June 2, 2025**

Merakey Foundation  
Golf Classic  
[ Lafayette Hill, PA ]

**June 10, 2025**

Merakey AVS Night at  
the Pirates Game  
[ Pittsburgh, PA ]

**June 19 – 20, 2025**

Pittsburgh Vintage Grand  
Prix Race Weekend  
[ Pittsburgh, PA ]

**September 15, 2025**

Merakey AVS Golf Open  
Chartiers Country Club  
[ Pittsburgh, PA ]