**Morgan's Place**

**KRISTEN MALFARA**, founder and Executive Director of The M.O.R.G.A.N. (Making Opportunities Reality Granting Assistance Nationwide) Project has seen her share of marvels since the birth of her son Morgan, who was diagnosed with a rare form of leukodystrophy, and the beginning of the organization over 10 years ago.

"I started The M.O.R.G.A.N. Project in 2001, just before Morgan’s 4th birthday. We had been told that we ‘might see his 3rd birthday, but would never see his 4th’ by the doctor that diagnosed him, so as his 4th birthday was nearing, I was frantically trying to get the organization up and running so I would have a lifeline after Morgan was gone. Little did I know that 10 years later I would still have both of my ‘babies.”

The organization provides support to parents/caregivers of special needs children and acts as a reference source for information, financial resources, used equipment exchanges, research and clinical studies, support groups, web links and more. Her latest endeavor, Morgan’s Place, the new home of the organization and their current quality-of-life support programs for children with disabilities expands services with a brand new, state-of-the-art, one-of-a-kind Sensorium and Accessible Technology zone. This “Snoezelen-type” multi-sensory environment is just one of a few hundred that exist across North America (a majority of them are in Canada) and only one of a handful in Florida.

The idea for the center originated from the fact that there are lots of “places” for typically developing children to play but there was never a “place” for a disabled child. “It has been my dream for years to create one. This unique center is now home to all of our quality-of-life support programs, as well as offering information on other community disability resources and services.”

Morgan’s Place is not a drop-off center; it has been designed to provide a safe environment for parents to bring their children with special health care needs and physical disabilities for hands-on therapeutic play, as well as creative and fun activities. “Our goal is to offer an alternative to outdoor inaccessible playgrounds, ‘McDonald’s’ or ‘Chuck E. Cheese’ type play areas, Mommy and Me toddler playgroups, libraries, and other similar places or support groups that unfortunately are not appropriate for the physically disabled child with special health care needs,” Kristen says. Her goal is to begin taking appointments and open this month.

The M.O.R.G.A.N. Project’s signature annual FUNDraising campaign begins March 1. The 8th Annual Turtle Splash takes place on May 5, 2012 during the Melbourne Beach Founder’s Day Celebration. The grand prize is a 7-day cruise for two on Holland America Cruises and nine other fabulous prize packages. Turtle “adoptions” are only $5, and can be adopted online at [www.turtlesplash.org](http://www.turtlesplash.org), Lexus of Melbourne or any Regions Bank location.
Sensorium: Based on "Snoezelen Multi-Sensory Environment" principles, the Morgan's Place created a one-of-a-kind non-threatening dedicated space designed to promote intellectual activity, heighten awareness, and encourage relaxation. Designed by the Christopher Douglas Hidden Angel Foundation, this room has been engineered to bring together state-of-the-art multi-sensory equipment to stimulate the sensory pathways of touch, taste, sight, sound, smell, and movement without the need for intellectual reasoning. A demand-free environment where you can select and experience sensory stimulation, it can produce a calming effect on individuals prone to frustration, or stimulate passive individuals who appear withdrawn. Ideal for those with profound disabilities who have limited access to multi-sensory stimulation on their own, or those who may have sensory processing challenges and need varying stimulation in order to process self-regulation, the desired results are to promote development, improve their capability to communicate, and positively affect their behavior. The Sensorium also benefits those without disabilities where multi-sensory stimulation and experiencing the environment can be a basis for relaxation. This enriched environment encourages learning and improves the participant's quality of life.

Technology Zone: Designed to enable children with physical and cognitive challenges to access special education software on touch-screen tablets and touch-smart computers with or without the use of adaptive controllers and devices, the Technology Zone is also equipped with a video game system and oversized HDTV/monitor for both educational and recreational video gaming. Sporting teams for children with special needs will be offered utilizing the Wii bowling, golf and tennis programs. In addition, the assistive technology computer lab and resource library provides parent caregivers with the tools they need to locate information and services that would benefit their children, as well as the support and services that would benefit their own needs.