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70 Years of Building a World Where All People Know They Belong

-2018

QUARTERLY | Fall 2018

# OUTLOOK Racker



Supporting People with Disabilities

www.racker.org

## *Racker Rivals Big Red Raises More Than \$124,000*



*Pictured left to right: Joe Nieuwendyk, Isiah Betances, Annie Joyce, Topher Scott and Alex Tuch took to the ice for the ceremonial puck drop. Both Isiah and Annie have received supports from Racker.*

*NHL legends, rising stars, Cornell Hockey alumni and a host of local celebrities laced up their skates in support of Racker July 14<sup>th</sup>, and while Team Racker skated away with the trophy, the event was a win for the entire community, with more than \$124,000 being raised in support of Racker's early childhood programs.*

NHL Hall of Famer and three-time Stanley Cup winner, Joe Nieuwendyk, returned to Lynah Rink for this year's event, which also included appearances by fellow Hall of Fame legend Mike Richter; 2018 U.S. Olympic Team Captain Brian Gionta; Joakim Ryan of the San Jose Sharks; former Los Angeles King Brad Chartrand; Cole Bardreau of the Lehigh Valley Phantoms; and league newcomers, Alex Tuch, who helped his Vegas Golden Knights earn a trip to the 2018 Stanley Cup finals, and Anthony Angello, who was recently signed by the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Presented by Tompkins Trust Company, Racker Rivals Big Red (RRBR) unites the local hockey community for a spirited exhibition hockey game, with proceeds from business sponsorships, a Pledge-A-Player Campaign, ticket and merchandise sales providing essential funding for Racker's preschool program.

This year's game, the fourth Racker Rivals Big Red event, drew more than 2,000 hockey fans, who watched as Team Racker took home the RRBR Cup for the first time.

*More photos on Page 7...*

## A NOTE FROM DAN

trans·for·ma·tion -  
a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness.

For seven decades, Racker has been a place for transformations—a place where individuals with disabilities find the support and services they need to become active, engaged members of their communities. As we celebrate 70 years of transformations this year, we are reminded of the courageous first families who championed our vision of a world where all people know they belong—families like the Yeiers.

Eudora and Leo Yeier were instrumental to Racker's early successes—leading the charge for families in our region who wanted to raise their children with disabilities at home, surrounded by family and friends. Recently, I had the immense pleasure of meeting Eudora's son, Lavon, and learning about the ways he participates in his community. I know Eudora would be thrilled to see that her vision and tireless efforts for individuals with disabilities has transformed, not only Lavon's life, but the lives of thousands of families in our region.

That parent-led transformation from 70 years ago continues today. We are on the cusp of another large transformation, from a system that supports an individual's developmental disability to a managed care system that will be responsible for the care of the whole person; combining the support of their developmental disability and their health and wellness needs.

The first step in this transformation to managed care is the change from Medicaid Service Coordination being provided by non-profits, like Racker, to Care Coordination Organizations, CCOs, beginning July 1, 2018. Racker is excited to announce that we have entered into a partnership with LIFEPlan CCO, one of seven designated CCOs throughout New York State.

LIFEPlan CCO is a partnership of 72 non-profit organizations with a long history of providing supports and services to people with developmental disabilities. LIFEPlan CCO will cover a 38 county territory in Central and Northern New York, including the Capital Region, Southern Tier and Hudson Valley. LIFEPlan CCO will take a regional approach, tailoring its supports to meet the specific needs of the people within each community.

LIFEPlan's core values are Person-Centered Services and Supports, Community Inclusion, and Independence. LIFEPlan's Mission is to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be citizens of our communities and to lead quality lives with as much choice and independence as possible. LIFEPlan is the only parent-led CCO. Nick Capoletti, CEO of LIFEPlan, has a son Mark, with a disability.

My daughter Hannah, has intellectual and developmental disabilities, and as a parent and the executive director of Racker, I am proud that Racker has partnered with LIFEPlan CCO in this transformation, and I am confident that our common, parent-led perspective, vision and mission will lead to a new system of supports with better outcomes for people with disabilities.

And, as always, I am deeply grateful to our incredible MSC's (now care managers), who have been working diligently to make this transition as smooth as possible for the nearly 1,000 people receiving service coordination from Racker. These dedicated employees have had the challenge of maintaining their service coordination work while learning a brand new set of systems and regulations governing care coordination. On behalf of all of those we support—THANK YOU!



“Every person deserves the opportunity to lead a full and meaningful life. Every family deserves the peace of mind that their loved one will be cared for now and when they can no longer take care of them. That is my commitment to my son and family, and that is our commitment to you and your family.”

– Nick Capoletti

## 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SPOTLIGHT: A FOUNDING FAMILY'S GREATEST LEGACY DAN BROWN VISITS WITH LAVON YEIER

As Racker looks back on seven decades of support for individuals with disabilities and their families, the story of Eudora Yeier's pioneering leadership and advocacy has been an inspiring reminder of the agency's humble beginnings. Recently, Executive Director Dan Brown had a chance to learn more about what inspired Eudora.

During Racker's Tioga Community Celebration on April 18<sup>th</sup>, Brown shared Yeier's incredible story, telling the more than 200 people in attendance about her travels from the family home in Candor to homes across the state to connect with families of children with cerebral palsy--families just like her own.

In the early 1940s, Yeier and her husband, Leo, welcomed a healthy baby boy, Leodore Lavon. “Vonnie” was a happy, healthy baby until at 16-months-old he developed encephalitis which led to a host of physical and mental challenges, including epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

By his sixth birthday, local doctors had determined that Vonnie needed care that couldn't be provided locally and urged the Yeiers to place him in a state-run facility. Reluctantly, the young parents agreed, but Vonnie's stay there would be short-lived.

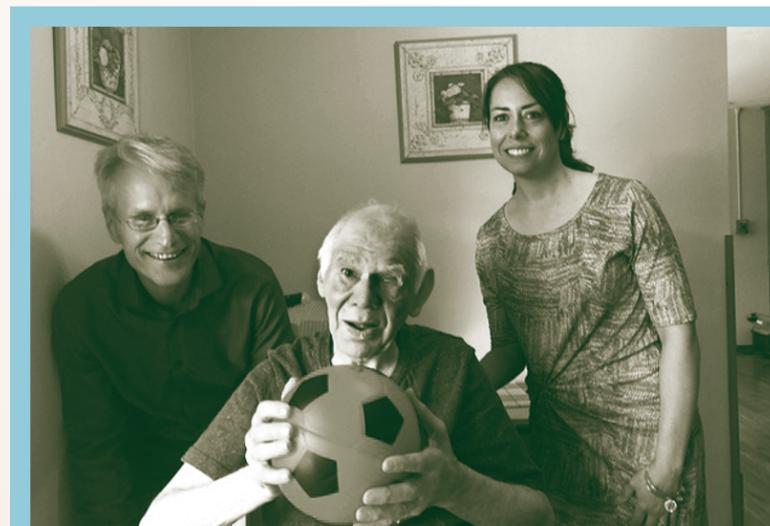
After weekly visits unveiled unsettling conditions, Leo and Eudora made the then-radical decision to bring Vonnie home, because they knew—70 years ago-- that Vonnie--and all children with disabilities—deserved to be a part of our community—not hidden away—not forgotten or mistreated—but active, valued members of the towns they lived in and families they loved.

In order to make their dream of inclusion possible for Vonnie and others, the Yeiers joined a group of parents from throughout the region. The group would ultimately found the Cerebral Palsy Association of the Ithaca Area, (now Racker)—the same agency that provided the Yeier's with the support and services they needed to keep Vonnie at home until he was 41-years-old.

Following Brown's presentation, he was approached by Service Coordinator April Vasquez, who shared that she not only knows Lavon, but works with him at a Broome Development Center residence, and to Brown's delight, she agreed to organize a meeting.

Just a few weeks later, Brown traveled to Lavon's home where they had a chance to talk about his love of art, animals, weekly field trips and helping around the house. It was an incredible meeting and one that offered a glimpse into what fueled the passion of one of Racker's most beloved founders.

Eudora Yeier never stopped traveling, talking, or advocating, and when she passed away in 2004 at age 90, she left a powerful legacy—a legacy that has helped Lavon and thousands of others know what it means to live in a world where all people know they belong.



Dan Brown with Lavon Yeier, and April Vasquez

## RACKER KICKS-OFF PLANNED GIVING DRIVE IN CELEBRATION OF 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

In honor of its 70th Anniversary, Racker has launched a planned giving campaign designed to support and sustain the agency for years to come.

Perri LoPinto, Racker's director of donor and government relations, said planned gifts have proven essential to Racker's ability to address the needs of the 3,500 individuals and their families that Racker currently supports, while being able to plan and prepare for those who will need the agency in the future.

"Charitable bequests and other estate gifts left to Racker over the years have been transformative," LoPinto said. "Our funding streams can be narrow and specific, so when an individual makes provisions for a gift to Racker in their will or estate, they are helping the agency address critical needs that our regular funding streams can't cover."

Among the areas supported by planned giving are staff development, time-saving technologies, and new program development—all necessary to the realization of Racker's vision of a world where all people know they belong.

To learn more about the ways planned gifts support Racker, contact LoPinto at [perri@rackercenters.org](mailto:perri@rackercenters.org) or (607) 272-5891 extension 234.

celebrating  
**70**  
years

## BOHN FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN SECURES COMMUNITY-ACCESSIBLE WHEELCHAIR SCALE

"Giving is not just about making a donation. It's about making a difference." With their recent gift to the community, Patrick and Ashley Bohn have done both.

While training for an upcoming 5K-run, rock and roll, Ashley was able to measure her progress by tracking her weight at home, while Patrick, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, could not. This realization, and the knowledge that not even the family's primary care physician could provide access to a wheelchair scale, was disheartening enough, but Ashley soon discovered that individuals with disabilities throughout the local area were facing the same challenges.

"I contacted local hospitals, healthcare facilities, nursing homes, city healthcare buildings and offices and everything in between, but to my surprise either they didn't have a wheelchair scale, had never heard of a wheelchair scale, or had one, but due to liability reasons, refused to let us use it since we were not residents or patients in their care," Ashley recalled.



*Patrick Bohn, who received essential early support services from Racker, and his wife, Ashley, a former marketing specialist in Racker's Community Relations Department, recently completed a fundraiser to purchase a community-accessible wheelchair scale.*

With growing frustration, she reached out to Patrick's physician and made an impassioned plea for the purchase of a scale. After only a few days, the Bohn's learned that their lobbying had paid off, and the office would be purchasing its first wheelchair scale. While grateful for the office's responsiveness, the Bohn's quickly realized that Patrick would now have the ability to check his weight, but dozens of local families would remain without access. That's when they decided to take action.

Ashley quickly put together an online fundraising campaign, with a goal of raising enough money to purchase a community-accessible, medical-grade wheelchair scale to be housed at the Finger Lakes Independence Center. Within just a few weeks, the Bohn's had raised enough money to purchase the scale, and they generously gifted the surplus--\$400—to Racker, in honor of Cathe Oberlander, residential healthcare director and long-time employee of Racker.

"Not only did Cathe help me to identify the best scale to purchase and guide me throughout different options while explaining things to me, she is also living the mission of Dr. Racker every day," Ashley said, noting that Cathe made Racker's scale available to Patrick, who received early supports from the agency more than three decades ago, so that he could check his weight.

"Thank you for all that Racker continues to do to support people with disabilities and their families in our community," Ashley said. "My husband is a living Racker history book, and I am so happy to see that even 35 years later, Racker is still making sure he belongs."

## AGENCY WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Racker has welcomed Broome County-native Bob Brazill as its director of Community Relations and Development.

Brazill brings more than 15 years of management experience to his new role, most recently as director of development for ACHIEVE, a chapter of ARC NY, INC., which provides supports for individuals with disabilities in Broome, Chenango and Tioga counties.

He is the vice president of the Board of Directors for the United Way of Broome County and serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Club of Binghamton.

During his tenure at ACHIEVE, Brazill coordinated three successful meetings with state legislators in Albany to lobby for the #bFair2DirectCare movement in support of a living wage for direct care professionals.

Brazill is a 2000 graduate of the State University of New York at Oneonta. He and his wife, Andrea, are the parents of three children, Elizabeth, Ben and Vincent.



*Bob Brazill*

## HOME SERVICES DIRECTOR WINS AWARD



Racker Home Services Director Jen Frank was the 2018 recipient of the Lou Withiam Award from NYS ELKS Major Projects Corporation. Established in honor of Lou Withiam's friendship, fundraising and advocacy as three-term Chairman of the ELKS Major Projects Committee, the award is given annually to a home service director who exhibits exceptional dedication and commitment to supporting people with disabilities and their families. Congratulations, Jen, on this well-deserved honor!

*Jennifer Frank and Jamie Peace, NYS Elks Major Projects*

## RACKER RECEIVES NEARLY \$1 MILLION DOLLAR GRANT

Under the leadership of IT Services Director Dianna Betts, Racker has been awarded a nearly \$1 million grant from Microsoft.



Microsoft Philanthropies announced the \$974,690 grant June 21, marking the second time Racker has benefitted from the software giant's commitment to helping not-for-profit organizations throughout the world transform communities by providing technology tools, training and resources. The grant will provide Racker staff members with access to a variety of software necessary to the efficient operation and delivery of services to the 3,500 individuals we currently support, while ensuring that the agency is able to meet the priorities and goals of its comprehensive technology plan.

Congratulations and thank you, Dianna, for your efforts to keep Racker on the cutting-edge of evolving technology.

## AGENCY STAFF RECOGNIZED WITH TRIP TO NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Longtime Racker staff members Cindy Bacheller and Samantha Parker were selected by their co-workers, in recognition of their commitment and dedication to the individuals they support, with a trip to the 2018 American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) Conference in New Orleans this spring.

“Cindy and Samantha were invited to attend the conference because they truly represent the best in community and direct support,” Executive Director Dan Brown said. “Both of these outstanding women embody an unwavering commitment to Racker’s vision of a world where all people know they belong, and they showcase that commitment through tireless, compassionate support of the individuals with whom they work.”

Brown, Bacheller and Parker heard from direct support professionals (DSP) from agencies throughout the country during the April 15<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> conference. The annual event is designed to “cultivate unique partnerships for creative solutions, to weave community networks and resources to enhance the quality services and supports we provide for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), to make an indelible impact in our collective national advocacy and to motivate, nurture, and inspire” professionals in the direct care field.

Bacheller said she was “overjoyed and humbled” to be selected to attend the conference and noted that she learned a variety of ways to recognize and energize staff members. “One of the most important parts of this job is to feel valued and supported. Believe it or not, money is not the most important part of what we do—sure, we need to make a living, but feeling valued goes a long way.”

The importance of appreciation was a central theme throughout the conference and one that Parker embraced during her time in the Big Easy. “I learned how much everyone really appreciates DSPs. Everywhere we went, people would stop us and say ‘Wow you’re a DSP? You’re an amazing person.’ That felt really nice,” Parker said. Parker and Bacheller were also eager to share their appreciation for Brown and the people who made their trip to ANCOR 2018 possible. “I’m so grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference in New Orleans,” Bacheller said. “I will remember it for the rest of my life.”



Samantha and Cindy enjoying the Ancor Conference

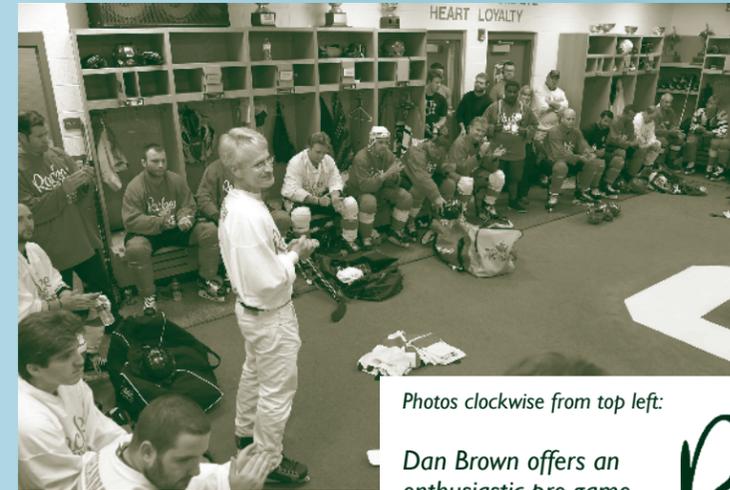
## RACKER STAFF TO RETIRE

With sincere appreciation for a combined 49 years of service, Racker will bid a fond farewell to long-time employees Sue Canfield (pictured below on the left) and Sheila Enstine (pictured on the right) this year.



Canfield, a teaching assistant in Racker’s Cortland Preschool dedicated 33 years to Racker before her June retirement, while Enstine, the agency’s finance coordinator has been with Racker for 16 years. Enstine will retire at the end of the year.

Both women have exemplified professionalism, enthusiasm and a commitment to Racker’s mission and vision during their lengthy careers. We wish them much happiness and success in their future endeavors.



Photos clockwise from top left:

Dan Brown offers an enthusiastic pre-game pep talk to players from both teams before the game.



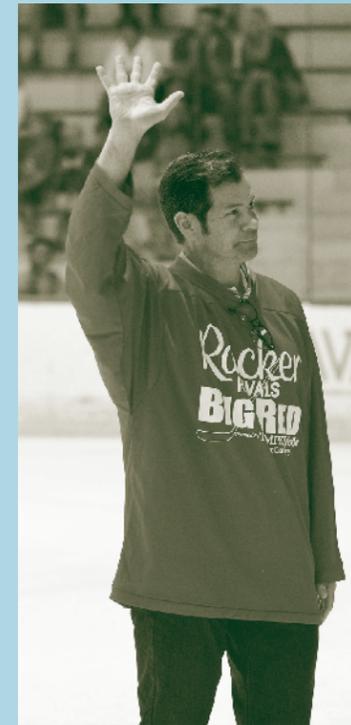
John, Diane and Mike Schafer pose for a photo during the post-game reception. Mike’s love of hockey and support of Racker have helped to make Racker Rivals Big Red a much-anticipated annual event for local hockey fans.

Racker Rivals Big Red Co-Chair Topher Scott brought his biggest fan, daughter Paige, onto the ice as the line-ups were announced. Topher is instrumental in making Racker Rivals Big Red a success, and is an incredible advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Team Racker Goalie Amanda Mazzotta earned MVP honors for her stellar performance, including shoot-out attempt stops against Brian Gionta and Joe Nieuwendyk to propel the white team to its first RRBR victory.

Dan Brown congratulates Roger Dennis, CEO of Taughanock Aviation, for leading the Pledge-A-Player Campaign by raising \$4,300 in support of Racker!

NHL Hall of Famer Mike Richter greets the Lynah Rink faithful before the puck drop.



All photos courtesy of Ned Dykes

FALL 2018

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## SAVE THE DATE! NOVEMBER 1, 2018

*Parent Network Presents: Disability Advocate Dave Hingsburger*

Location:  
Greek Peak Mountain Resort Acropolis Room  
2000 State Rt. 392  
Cortland, NY 13045

Session Information:  
9:00am-12:00pm  
Parents, Caregivers and Supports Session  
1:00pm-4:00pm  
Self-Advocates Only



### DISABILITIES AND INDEPENDENCE: NOT JUST A DREAM Creating Connections That Foster Independence

Dave Hingsburger is the director of clinical and educational services for Vita Community Living Services and a primary consultant for the Sexuality Clinic at York Simcoe Behavior Management Services. Dave also works in private practice as a consultant for schools, parents and agencies in a variety of areas regarding service provision to people with intellectual disabilities. Dave has published over 30 books and has made several television appearances discussing disability-related topics. Dave lectures extensively and was inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame for his impressive career advocating for people with disabilities. Registration required.

Registration will be available at [www.racker.org](http://www.racker.org) beginning Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>. For more information contact: Amanda Hudson at [AmandaH@rackercenters.org](mailto:AmandaH@rackercenters.org) or 607-753-9375 ext 119