

# 2010 annual

**MAKING ROOM FOR MORE SUCCESS**

# report



# Notes from Roger

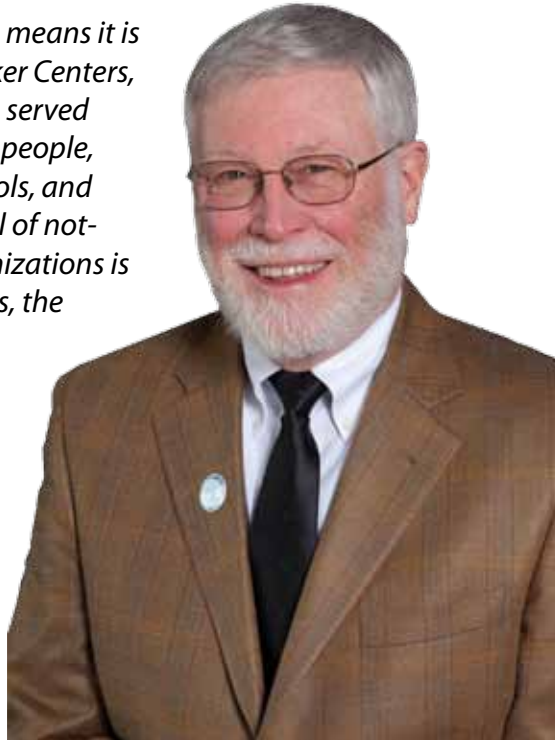
*2010 has two zeros in it, which means it is half-empty. For Franziska Racker Centers, 2010 was actually very full. We served 2,813 or some such number of people, plus families, schools, preschools, and other organizations. If the goal of not-for-profit human service organizations is to put ourselves out of business, the numbers suggest we are not doing too well.*

*In November we announced the public phase of our "Making Room" Campaign, which is very important for the future of the Centers and, I think, the community. The Learning Center is one strategy toward the goal mentioned above. Helping people with disabilities is a knowledge-based enterprise. The Learning Center will expand our ability to gather state-of-the-art information and ideas and share them throughout our communities. The objective*

**In November we announced the public phase of our Making Room Campaign, which is very important for the future of the Centers and, I think, the community.**

*is to help schools, preschools, and others to be more successful in including and supporting people with disabilities so that fewer people will need to come to us.*

*We will keep you posted on our progress.*



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# spotlight On Social Work

"The primary role of social workers is to promote social-emotional development," explains Annemarie Mattison, a social worker at Racker Centers for over 25 years. The definition of social-emotional development is a child's ability to form relationships and express feelings. Put simply, it is the foundation for all other areas of our development. Franziska Racker Centers' Social Workers play a pivotal role in providing the individuals they serve and their families with support, counseling, consistent communication and access to resources to promote healthy social and emotional growth.

At Racker Centers' Special Education Preschool, social workers are a part of each classroom team. In addition to meeting with families individually and working with teachers to help navigate difficult situations, they attend weekly meetings to address individual, family and classroom concerns. Families are encouraged and supported as they learn to become active participants in the ongoing support of their loved one. Social work provides a gateway for families to gain information regarding diagnosis, evaluations, behavior strategies, equipment, medical assistance, and educational opportunities.

Working in a team setting, social workers have the benefit of understanding a child or student's challenges and developing creative strategies to help him or her succeed. Sharing these observations and strategies with family members is ideal and the social workers appreciate that their involvement in the classroom and with families is supported by the agency. "A draw of coming to work at Racker was the multi-disciplinary approach," says Social Worker Linda Kline. "It lets us see a bigger picture of what is happening with a child but allows us to focus on the critical pieces needed for each situation." Those pieces are many and include: counseling, working with other service providers, assisting families with paperwork, educating parents, and building trust with parents and caregivers. "As a social worker, I spend time building a relationship with families I work with," says Linda. "That familiarity helps a lot if issues arise in the future."

In the Counseling for School Success (CSS) programs, provided in collaboration with TST BOCES and OCM BOCES, the social workers (referred to as counselors) also work within a team environment. "Each counselor is given two classrooms with four out of the eight

students assigned to them," explains Mary Hutchens, Director of Counseling for School Success. "This ensures that for the most part, there is a counselor available if one is absent or unavailable, and it also provides two individuals to run the weekly classroom sessions, which is a big part of their role." Another aspect of social work in a school-age setting is advocating for students as they transition between schools, navigate their community resources, or experience a crisis. "It's a matter of reminding students of how to cope with things," says Lisa Pate, a counselor for eight years. "I tell students to ask themselves, 'What did I learn and how do I use that to deal with this?'"

For Anne and her son Jarett, Lisa was their lifeline during his time at the CSS Turning Point Program. "She gave Jarett the skills



*Jarett with his mother Anne*

to help himself," says Anne, "and she knew when to push him a little. Now his positive attitude bubbles out of him!" Jarett agrees that having Lisa on his side was a big help saying, "she made me feel secure and that gave me confidence." Lisa even attended a meeting at Cortland County Mental Health to help transition Jarett to their services once he graduated in 2008. Now 21 years old, Jarett is taking that confidence and using it to build his future. He volunteers weekly at Access to Independence, has advocated for disability rights in Albany, and even spoke at a class at SUNY Cortland. "I'm not so focused on my own problems anymore," says Jarett with a smile. "I can enjoy making other people happy." As a social worker, Lisa couldn't ask for a better outcome.



## Why SOCIAL WORK?

*"I have a sister with Cerebral Palsy who is 10 years older than me. Seeing what my parents went through to advocate for her and fight for what she needed inspired me to become a social worker. I want to make getting those resources easier for the families I work with."*

*- Social Worker Tessa Zimmerman*

*Tessa with preschooler Robert. Tessa has worked with Robert through Play Therapy for two years and next year he will move onto kindergarden at Spencer-Van Etten.*





# Brianna

"I was so afraid to send her to school," says Brianna's mom Heather. "What if something went wrong with her feeding tube? What if she gets hurt?" Heather has valid reason to be concerned about her youngest daughter. Diagnosed at 10 months of age with SLOS (Smith-Lenli-Opitz Syndrome), Brianna's body lacks the ability to make or metabolize cholesterol. As a result, Brianna's growth and cognitive development have been significantly delayed. Brianna began seeing Alison Bryan, a speech therapist at Racker Centers, at 18 months of age weighing only 9 pounds. "I remember vividly that first meeting," recalls Alison. "Brianna was so tiny and would fall asleep mid-session or before I could even start!" Heather laughs and agrees, "There were so many times when I called Alison when she was on her way to our house and said, 'Turn around, she's asleep.'" Just exerting the energy to hold up her head exhausted Brianna. She was extremely sensitive to anything near her face, crying out if touched. Loud noises made her scream and hide. She did not walk or stand or interact with others. Rather, she would sit with her weight balanced on her outer wrists and watch others as they played with toys, pushing items away if they were introduced.

Over the next few years, Brianna made great strides beginning to trust and form bonds with others. She began using sign language and developed an increased awareness to cause and effect when playing with toys and completing activities. "In the last few years I have seen Brianna begin to identify pictures by pointing them out," says Alison. "She also will imitate sounds

and motions." Brianna's physical therapist at Racker Centers, Nancy Bruce, reports that Brianna's range of motion and reflexes have improved greatly. "Initially she did not move much and did not do well when I would try to touch her," says Nancy. "Eventually she progressed to sitting, then scooting, and weight bearing, pulling herself to standing and finally cruising (using pieces of furniture to move around)."

**"She's such a different child than she was a few years ago; it is amazing how far she has come."**

In September of 2010, Brianna began attending Racker Centers' Cortland Special Education Preschool Program. Since then she has truly blossomed. "Initially I couldn't be out of eyesight of her when at school," says Heather, "but now I am able to drop her at class and leave and she is fine." Indeed Brianna is thriving in her current classroom environment. "She is part of a busy classroom with other children and a wealth of stimuli and doing great," says Nancy. Brianna, now five years old, is now walking with the support of a one-hand assist. The swing she used to dislike during physical therapy sessions is now one of her favorites. She can specify the toys she wants, shakes her head and is using more and more sounds to communicate. Her strength and speed





have improved and her one-on-one aide, Rita Dains, says that her old tactic of bringing in musical toys from home is no longer necessary. "Now I just touch her hand to reassure her," says Rita. Brianna has developed friendships with her classmates who now ask "Where's Brianna?" if she is absent. Heather is anxious about her daughter's transition to public school next year saying, "If I had it my way, she would stay at Racker until she is an adult!" However, she is also very excited that Brianna has made such strides and knows she will continue to have success, "She's such a different child than she was a few years ago; it is amazing how far she has come."

Brianna and her family have also benefitted from Racker



Centers' Family Support reimbursement for respite services. Additionally, the Service Coordination Program has enabled Brianna's family to renovate their bathroom and add a ramp to their home and purchase handrails and a trampoline. The family is also reimbursed through service coordination for medical and personal supplies not covered by insurance (including Brianna's cholesterol medication). Brianna's family was also able to attend a conference on Smith-Lenli-Opitz Syndrome through the support of Racker Centers' Parent Network program.



**PICTURED:**  
(left) Brianna with Physical Therapist Nancy Bruce and her mom Heather.

(above left) Brianna in classroom with One-on-One Aide Rita Dains



# "Making Room"

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that have already stepped  
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# Phillipos

Jennifer Aneshansley, Home Service Director at Racker Centers, was the first person to begin working with Phillipos and his family. Jennifer referred the family for a developmental evaluation and began the process of gaining eligibility for services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The evaluation provided Michael and Elisabeth with a deeper understanding of autism, giving them insight into how to best meet the needs of their son.

**Phillipos had begun to act out in school, struggled with communication and was exhibiting discomfort when in large crowds.**

Jennifer suggested that Phillipos begin attending a summer program at the Ithaca Youth Bureau. He also began receiving services through Racker Centers' Supporting Success program. By working with Behavioral Specialists Jessica Jones and Sheila Foote, Phillipos began to build skills of independence, safety and hygiene practices. "I recall such distinct strengths in his reading and his preference for routine from very early on," says Jessica. "Those things were essential in helping us to understand how to best work with Phillipos." By implementing Social Stories™, devised by Carol Gray of The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding, Jessica and Sheila were able to walk Phillipos step-by-step through a task and detail the acts in pictures. Phillipos was able to successfully accomplish the rituals of hygiene and become more autonomous. Sheila Foote states, "Phillipos is such a quick learner, he is a great reader, he reads the story twice and then he has the task down."

Michael and Elisabeth are just amazed with Phillipos' success, "We can't believe we went through a whole year living in Ithaca without knowing about Racker Centers," says Elisabeth. Michael agrees saying, "We saw his behavior improving and this gave us a more positive outlook." Phillipos continues to receive services and spends more time out in the community. Genevieve Labe, his Community Support Staff states, "the many things that we do together in the community have made him more confident and vocal with me and others." The support from Racker

Bright-eyed nine year-old Phillipos races into the house having just arrived home from the after-school Recreation Support Services program he attends at the Ithaca Youth Bureau. Today his mood is bright but this wasn't always the case for Phillipos. After relocating to Ithaca in 2007 with the rest of his family including his father Michael, mother Elisabeth, and two older brothers Aven and Yafet, Phillipos began to struggle. Phillipos' family physician referred him to Franziska Racker Centers due to concerns with Phillipos development and tendency to put small objects in his mouth. Previously diagnosed at age 4 with autism, Phillipos' recent increased hyperactivity and impulsivity was also concerning his family. Phillipos had begun to act out in school, struggled with communication and was exhibiting discomfort when in large crowds. His parents feared for his well-being when in the community since he did not possess the skills to keep himself safe.





**PICTURED: Phillipos' Family - brother Aven, mother Elisabeth, Phillipos, brother Yafet, and father Michael**

services is helping with Phillipos' development and also giving Michael and Elisabeth much desired one-on-one time with their other sons. "Now everyone in the family is getting their needs met," says Jennifer.

**"We can't believe we went through a whole year living in Ithaca without knowing about Racker Centers," says Elisabeth.**

Today Michael and Elisabeth take advantage of the trainings, social events, and items from the Autism Lending Library offered to families through Racker Centers. They attribute Phillipos' growth and success to Racker Centers, the Ithaca City School District and the Ithaca Youth Bureau. They are joyful in the fact that Phillipos can now sit with the family through meals at their home and Aven and Yafet enjoy that their brother can now play with them, "even if he does tell on us," they say with a laugh. Phillipos has big plans ahead, saying he would like to attend Cornell and become a doctor when he grows up. His family is very proud of Phillipos and thrilled that their son recognizes that his future is bright with potential.



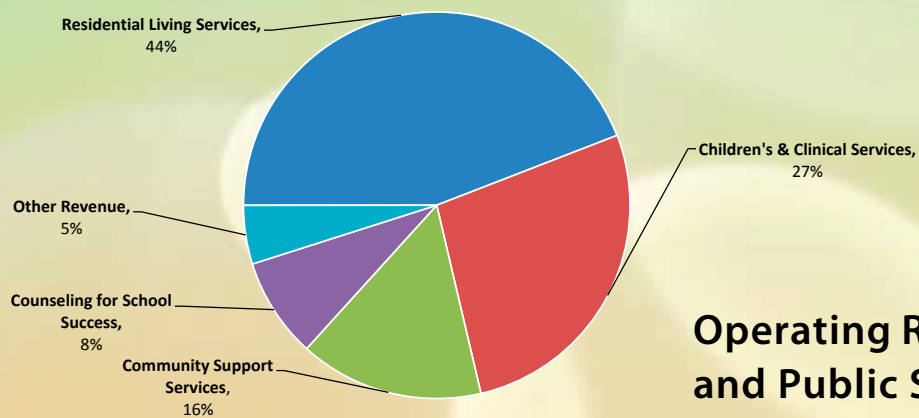


*Dan Brown, Associate Executive Director,  
has been with the agency for eleven years.*

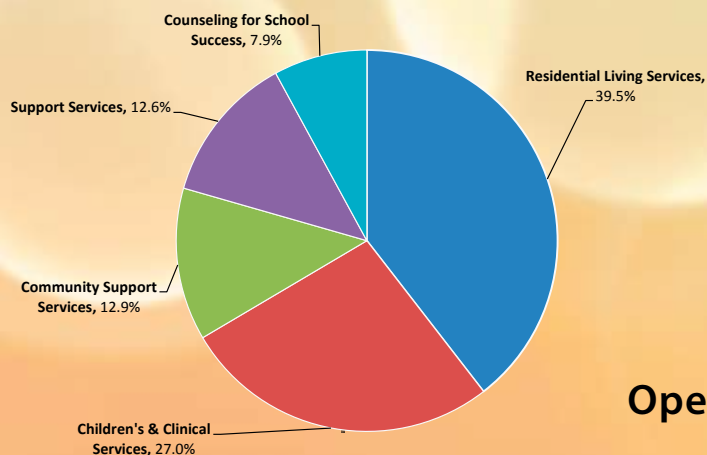


## 2010 Financial REPORT

Franziska Racker Centers had a great year programmatically serving more than 2800 people in 2010 with an annual budget of approximately \$26 million. Operating revenues combined with public support exceeded operating expenses resulting in a surplus. We rely upon your strong support, which enables us to provide opportunities for our participants that might not otherwise be possible.



### Operating Revenues and Public Support



### Operating Expenses



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# Jimmy

"This is a story that needs to be told," declares Andrea Schindler, a Systems Coordinator in the Residential Program at Racker Centers, referring to forty-nine year old Jimmy. "He has had amazing personal growth since moving to Evergreen, I love to share how he has grown," she says.

When Jimmy moved in less than a year ago he was despondent and unmotivated. He had few skills that would enable him to be more independent or improve his ability to communicate. The only tool Jimmy had mastered prior to living at Evergreen was a button that would request a glass of water. "So everything he tried to tell people was through pushing that button," says Andrea. Additionally, Jimmy was very passive, not making eye-contact or moving his own body. "We literally had to move his arms and legs into the position needed," says Kayleigh Deweese, a residential counselor at Evergreen since June of 2010, "Getting him into the van was a struggle."

A year later, the progress Jimmy has made since moving into Racker Centers' Residential Program has been extraordinary. His ability to hold a utensil has greatly improved and he feels secure in the routines at his new home. Jimmy is also learning American Sign Language to signal when he wants a drink, food or to answer "yes" or "no" to questions. He is connecting now with the staff and gets along great with his house mates. "Jimmy came to Evergreen with a history of self-injurious behavior and difficulty with his peers," says Andrea. "We haven't seen any of that here."

Jimmy is emerging as a new, happy and engaged man who now thrives on the attention and excitement he gets each day. He spends his time at his day program and at his new home. He no longer requires as much help with movement. The staff works daily with Jimmy to improve his manual dexterity. He is



*Jimmy carves a pumpkin with staff person Danielle Letson*

learning to turn on and off light switches and pour his own drink. His comforting habit of tapping his shoe is still present but "now he'll leave his shoe on the floor while engaging in other activities," says Kayleigh.

Last summer the staff at Evergreen organized a family reunion picnic for residents and their family members. The event was a huge success with family members attending from all around. Jimmy's mom made the trip from her home in Waverly, NY and his sister Ruthie and brother John were in attendance. Kayleigh says that she saw a big change in Jimmy at the reunion. "He came alive at that party," says Kayleigh, "he was smiling from ear to ear."

The smiles continue and the joy in Jimmy's bright eyes and broad grin may be the greatest achievement of all. "He is so engaged as opposed to a few months ago," says Andrea. "He notices if I don't comment on his need for a shave each morning!" Andrea is astonished and thrilled by Jimmy's growth, "It's like watching someone break out of a shell!"

*The Evergreen house is located in Dryden, NY and one of nineteen residential houses owned and operated by Franziska Racker Centers. The goal of Residential Services is to provide people with developmental disabilities a place to call home where they can thrive. Residences provide 24 hour care and support with a direct care service support staff on premises at all times.*





# Giving to the Centers

When you contribute to Franziska Racker Centers you become a **Friend of the Centers**. If your contribution is \$1000 or more, you become a **Racker Fellows** or **Business Partner**. Your generosity helps us to fill funding gaps, allows for program enhancement, and supports new and innovative services for people with disabilities in our community. We are thankful for the ongoing support of all our Friends, and fondly remember those that have left us, some in the past year.

Some of our friends gave **Gifts in Kind**. These donations are items or services that directly enhance ongoing programs. Monetary gifts may have been given to **Unrestricted Annual Support**, allowing us to address areas of greatest need within the agency, or they may have been designated to one or more of the seven funds described below.

**Bohn Family Fund** created by Donna and Tom Bohn, provides resources and supports for families with children having special needs.

**Frances G. Berko Lectureship Fund** created in memory of Dr. Berko, the Centers' executive director from 1964 to 1974, supports community education and professional development for those working in the disability field.

**Richard M. Leavitt, M.D. Memorial Fund** created by Judy Leavitt and her sons, provides support for special experiences for children and young adults with disabilities.

**Tompkins Trust Company Bridge Fund** supports otherwise unfunded clinical services for children throughout the year.

**Frances V. Wilson Memorial Fund** created by Margaret Gibson in memory of her dear friend, provides financial support for needed items not covered by traditional funding sources.

**Scriber/Cash Family Fund** created by Jody and Kent Scriber and David and Lori Cash, supports community-based experiences for preschool and elementary age children with special needs.

**Franziska W. Racker Memorial Fund** created in memory of our former medical director and the agency's namesake, supports early childhood services, an area that was dear to Dr. Racker's heart.

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### MISSION

We are dedicated to helping people with special needs and their families have good lives, with opportunities to learn, to be responsible, to feel cared for, to share, to be connected to others. We are committed to creating a culture of inclusion in our community, celebrating the richness that diversity and interdependence bring.

### VISION

We are inspired by the vision of our founding families, that all people with disabilities will be valued members of a welcoming and supportive community.

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*Dawn Bricen LaMorte | Sunrise Studios Design*

*Remaining photos courtesy of Friends of the Centers*



*"In the two years Morgan has attended Racker Centers, he has found his voice, his strength, and his 'wings'."*

*~The Family of Morgan*

