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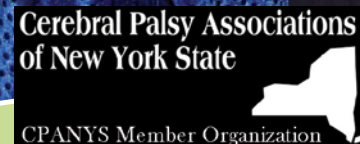
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A Note from Dan

Staff are always sharing stories with me that highlight the success of individuals and their families. In this report you will read a few of those stories. These successes were a direct result of our amazing staff and the things made possible in an accepting and supportive community. I also know there are thousands of other stories waiting to unfold. But, as Arthur Ashe said, “Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is more important than the outcome.”

Every day we have over 700 staff that assist individuals with disabilities and their families on their journey. All of these individual journeys reflect our 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.”

Society has come a long way in the 65 years since Franziska Racker Centers was founded. Some notable events:

- In 1984 Nancy Kayes developed a program called “Everybody Counts.” This program was lauded as groundbreaking because it introduced children with disabilities to typical needs children. Today, typical needs children and children with disabilities learn and play together. We carry this vision forward in our integrated preschools in Tompkins, Cortland, and Tioga Counties.
- In 1986 Ann Landers received a letter from a person saying her appetite was spoiled when she saw a husband feeding his wife and wiping her mouth as she had trouble swallowing. What was the community’s response to this? Some people said things like: “Would you believe there are many handicapped people who take great pleasure in flaunting their disability so they can make able-bodied people feel guilty.” Ann Landers replied to the person whose appetite was ruined, and told the person off in her column. Many people wrote in support of her response.
- Recently, at a restaurant in Texas, a family wanted to be moved because they didn’t want to be near a family that had a child with a disability. The waiter’s response to this was that “He couldn’t serve them.” The community responded by praising the waiter on the restaurant’s Facebook page. People went to the restaurant in droves and asked to have that waiter as their server.

These three stories highlight the dramatic shift in community. Racker Centers is proud to have played a small part in helping to carry forth this vision.



Dan

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM
Poised to Expand

by Jon Ulrich

Franziska Racker Centers’ residential program will be expanding to meet the community’s needs in the coming year, with four new houses opening in Tioga County.

Among the projects will be a four-bedroom house on Route 17C in Owego. The residence, to be called “River’s Edge,” will cater to adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum. The program’s other houses will open under the umbrella of the state’s Community Placement Program (CPP), which identifies residential opportunities for residents of Broome Developmental Center. “With the closing of the Developmental Center,” says Registered Nurse Guy Stillman, who will help oversee the houses’ day-to-day medical operations, “these residents will need a place to call home.”

Holiday Hill, an eight-bedroom home, and Gaskill Road, a four-bedroom house, are slated to open by the beginning of 2014. Holiday Hill will support individuals with high health care needs along with other individuals who need support to be successful in their daily lives. Staff will be specially trained to accommodate these needs and will have the support of the agency’s nursing and clinical team twenty-four hours a day.

“It’s an unbelievably exciting experience,” adds Stillman. Team Director Keri Walp echoes these sentiments. “I feel lucky to be part of such an endeavor,” she says. “One advantage of homes opening in the Owego area is that

Residents, Kenny and Lorraine (brother and sister), pictured at their home in Tioga County – McFadden House.



“River’s Edge” in Owego, NY

it allows many of the future residents to remain close to their families and friends who live in the Broome and Tioga County areas.”

Regional Director Ashley Keelty believes the initiative will afford the residential program greater visibility. “We will work with local agencies, allowing us to create more opportunities for residents to build friendships and participate in group activities in the community.”

Coventry Road is another six-bedroom house projected to open in the Owego area. This home will support individuals with high health care needs. The opening of these proposed residences will bring the total number of individuals served by the residential program in Tioga County to thirty-three, and the total number of houses throughout the county to six.

“This supports the agency’s mission of creating opportunities for familial and community involvement,” says Pat Montanez, Director of Residential Services at Franziska Racker Centers. “These homes will also facilitate job growth in the Southern Tier, and enable us to grow a team that will work together to support all six homes, each other, and the residents we serve.”

Franziska Racker Centers’ residential program opened in 1980, with one house located in Dryden, NY. The program now serves more than 120 individuals in three counties (Cortland, Tompkins & Tioga). Once the new houses open in Tioga County, a total of twenty-seven houses will be in operation to support residents enrolled in the program.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Franklin Triplets

by Esty Schachter

On a recent Wednesday morning Bev came to the Franklin household, with roller skates, and was enthusiastically greeted by triplets Reese, Troy and Jillian. Bev Hartz is a Racker Centers physical therapist. Therapists, to these toddlers, mean fun. When the threesome look out their picture window to see a car pull up, they immediately know which therapist is coming to play. Through play, therapists help to teach or strengthen a wide range of skills.

Dixie, the children’s mom, reflected on the rough start their family faced, but credits Early Intervention and therapies through Racker Centers for a warm, supportive journey. All three children were born prematurely. Reese, the oldest, was born at 23 weeks, 6 days. Doctors were able to delay the delivery of Troy and Jillian, who were born at 26 weeks, 3 days. The family spent over one hundred days in neonatal intensive care units, in different hospitals at times due to each child’s special healthcare needs. All three children have received therapies since they were babies, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy that started out as feeding support but has moved into speech, play therapy and teaching. “The relationship the therapists have developed with the kids is so beautiful.” Dixie adds, “they helped the kids, and helped me too!”

THROUGH PLAY, THERAPISTS HELP TO TEACH OR STRENGTHEN A WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS.

Jay, the triplets’ father, spoke about the work the therapists do with his kids. “They’re not just in and out, they truly know the kids as individuals, and know them so well.” He shared that their careful observations and feedback have helped Jay and Dixie pick up on subtle changes as well as medical needs, such as when stoic Reese’s ear infection could only be detected by a slight change in her speech.

In May, Reese will turn three, followed by Troy and Jillian in June. As the family gets closer to ‘graduating’ from home-



Top photo: The triplets model their new custom aprons.
Bottom: The triplets pose with Patti Meyers, Racker Centers Special Education Itinerant Teacher.

THE TRIPLETS WILL NOT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL THERAPIES AFTER EARLY INTERVENTION FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE OR FEEDING, A TRUE TESTAMENT TO WHY EARLY INTERVENTION WORKS.

based Early Intervention programs, Dixie says “it’s hard to think about not having the therapists in our life!”

All three children are now running, jumping, climbing and talking, all typical activities for their age group. They will not require additional therapies after Early Intervention for speech, language or feeding, a true testament to why Early Intervention works. Sitting on the floor with three eager, vibrant toddlers showing off their favorite toys and sharing their favorite colors, Jay expressed his enormous gratitude for his family, for all they’ve been through and for where they are today. Every tiny fist bump and little high five for a hard-won milestone is cherished, and a beautiful thing to see. Dixie echoed Jay’s sentiments on the progress their children have made. “We’ve arrived at a place we could only hope for. It’s a miraculous process to see them improve and improve and improve, and it’s just amazing.”



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EARLY CHILDHOOD

Kaiden

by Heather Hughes

Walking into the Partnership Classroom at Racker Centers' Tompkins County preschool site, one would never know little Kaiden was enrolled in the program just two years earlier without having the ability to communicate or play in a group. Now, he "horses around" with his friends like any typical four-year-old. His Special Education Teacher, Renee Zonder, reminds herself of the importance to allow room for these typical playful and boyish behaviors, balancing that in a structured setting that supports children with highly involved needs on the autism spectrum.

THE PARTNERSHIP CLASSROOM APPLIES THE PRINCIPLES OF APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA), AN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE, IN AN INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL SETTING.

Kaiden has benefitted so much from both his preschool experience in the Racker Partnership Program and the Tompkins County Early Intervention Program that he is more than ready to enter Kindergarten next fall. Renee states, "I don't know how to convey how remarkable his progress is, and it truly expresses the importance that early detection and intervention play



Renee Zonder, Special Education Teacher, with Kaiden.

in a child's growth." Kaiden received an evaluation for Early Intervention services through the Tompkins County Health Department by Racker Centers when he was 17 months old. That is when Kaiden received a diagnosis of autism, and it was apparent that he already had some severe needs.

Annemarie Mattison (LCSW-R), Social Worker for the Partnership Program states, "Often when children have challenging behavioral and communication needs, families can feel very isolated and it's even worse if they feel they can't go out into the community easily. When I first met Kaiden's mom Stephanie, one of the first things we tried to help her with was getting her a stroller to accommodate her three small children. Before that, she couldn't go out safely because Kaiden would run off."

Today, Kaiden and his family enjoy participating in community events. Annemarie continues, "I was so happy when I was at the Ithaca Festival last year and I saw her family there. A year before I don't think they would have been able to go. The fact that they were there as a family, watching the parade, was just so exciting to me."

Renee looks back on the two years that she's had Kaiden in her classroom. She states, "When he started, he wanted to communicate, but he basically was not able to because of his speech and the fact that he just didn't know how to interact socially." The Racker Centers' Special Education Program works on goals throughout the time a child is enrolled in the program. Renee continues, "I remember working on his play goals with him, and I remember writing 'Kaiden is participating in reciprocal

pretend play with peers.' It was amazing; he just kind of exploded in three months time." Now Kaiden has the language and the social interest to play with friends.

Sometimes the transition from Early Intervention services when children are receiving therapies in their family's home, to a preschool where services are received out of the home, is a hard one for families. Stephanie is very committed to being involved in Kaiden's education, and although she does not have her own transportation, she does not let this become an obstacle to stop her from being the best advocate she can be for her son. "She's been at all of his school meetings, even walking through torrential rainstorms to get there," Annemarie recounts. Annemarie and Renee have also been able to use the technology available at the preschool to video tape some of Kaiden's sessions in school and make them available to Stephanie so she can still witness Kaiden's daily successes.

Though Kaiden continues to struggle with articulation and being understood by peers, his understanding of social communication has blossomed. He is able to understand the social nuances of speech that are typically so difficult for children with autism to master. Looking forward, it will remain even more important for his mom, his team of teachers and therapists including Annemarie, Renee, Peg Stoyell, Racker Speech Therapist and Meg Gillard, Racker Occupational Therapist, and the school district to work together for

OFTEN WHEN CHILDREN HAVE CHALLENGING BEHAVIORAL AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS, FAMILIES CAN FEEL VERY ISOLATED AND IT'S EVEN WORSE IF THEY FEEL THEY CAN'T GO OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY EASILY.

his upcoming transition to Kindergarten. "Kaiden has made so much progress and appears so typical, it's wonderful! But because of this, his mom is very afraid that he won't get the supports he needs to continue to progress. She's very hopeful that he will continue to get help in the area of communication. When Kaiden has trouble with communicating, it makes life at home extremely difficult. Kaiden's speech therapist, Peg Stoyell, will play an integral part in the Committee for Special Education meeting that will help put the supports in place that Kaiden will need to be successful in school.

Kaiden's mom Stephanie states, "I want to be an active participant in my son's education." This philosophy and her part in the team of individuals that has supported Kaiden as he's grown will only continue to build upon his success throughout his life.

Kaiden participates in Circle Time during class.





Doug with horse, Royal Floozy, at Fagnoli Farms.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT *Doug* by Elvina Scott

Doug and Kirstie Hardenstine were looking for things to do. In January 2012, Kirstie Hardenstine, BOCES educator and Doug's Community Support Staff (CSS) through Racker Centers, had the idea to try Fagnoli Farms as a volunteer in the therapeutic riding program.

Kirstie and Doug have the relationship one hopes every CSS and individual could experience: connected and having a great time. Doug loves animals, and with Kirstie, his work with animals went from his beloved cat Mopsy, to a giant, grand horse at Fagnoli Farms, Royal Floozy.

Doug's role at Fagnoli Farms is the "side walker." Dale Corbin, volunteer and Doug's good friend, is the "lead line." The lead line leads the horse, and the side walker is there to both guide the horse, and be there for the needs of the rider. Doug and his young rider Evan bonded early on over a love of



throwing rocks in the creek. Doug had the idea to walk Evan to the creek and hand him rocks to throw into the water, on horseback.

Doug is tall and says, "The horse likes my stride, but everyone else is always telling me to slow down." I asked Doug's mom, Sarah, what she saw in Doug after he started up at Fagnoli, and she said, "Confidence." Sarah continued, "He has developed a sense of responsibility from his work there. Even if one morning he doesn't want to go, he goes, because he is thinking of all the other people who are expecting him and relying on him."

Doug was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PPD-NOS) at the age of four, and bi-polar at the age of nine. Sarah shared that before Doug started at Fagnoli Farms there were significant behavioral issues, that Doug was depressed, had a lot of aggression, and little interest in school. Insightful about her son, Sarah said, "When you feel good about one thing, when you are proud of one aspect of your life, then your behavior in the rest of your life is really different."

WHAT I SAW WITH DOUG AND FAGNOLI FARMS, THE PEOPLE THERE, THE GROUNDS, THE ANIMALS, WAS THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE: GENEROSITY, BELONGING, MASTERY, AND INDEPENDENCE

What I saw with Doug and Fagnoli Farms, the people there, the grounds, the animals, was the Circle of Courage: generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence. From the traditional Native American medicine wheel, the Circle of Courage is a context for measuring, or defining, success.

Doug and the community at Fagnoli give generously their time and energy, creating a meaningful opportunity for others to ride. Walking beside the horse, rider in the saddle, his lead line Dale in front, Doug is literally within a circle of support; he anticipates the needs of his young riders and fosters their confidence on the horse.

He has mastered grooming and saddling the horse, even the parts he does not like, like cleaning out the hooves; he has mastered his own emotions in his ability to be present for the horse and rider. In his work at Fagnoli, Doug has the independence to make decisions and try out his ideas.

Doug put himself out there in volunteering at Fagnoli Farms, to work with animals he didn't know, in a place he didn't know, with a whole new group of people. Sarah continued, "He did well, he experienced accomplishment and success in his work there, and that changed everything."

MENTAL HEALTH *Dylan* by Mary Hause

June 14th marked two remarkable events in the life of Dylan: his High School graduation, and his 19th birthday. After nine and one-half years, this outstanding young man was a proud graduate from the Turning Point day treatment program, a program in which Franziska Racker Centers partners with Onondaga-Cortland-Madison (OCM) BOCES to provide mental health services for students with a significant history of emotional and behavioral needs. Dylan's uphill journey began midway through third grade. Diagnosed with Bipolar Illness, Dylan became so frustrated at school that along with trying to throw a chair through a window, he was saying he wanted to die.

Dylan's mom remembers, "I was so afraid that he would not be able to get out of the dark place he had fallen into. I felt as though I was losing my son." She wanted a place where Dylan would feel safe and supported. Almost a decade later, it's amazing to see how such a sad, angry boy came to be described by so many as a stellar young man. It was a team effort. The change started with Dylan, who clearly embraces hard work. Also important to Dylan's success is the support of some very important people, first and foremost, his mother, Terri. She has been described by others as "a rock for Dylan, heroic and truly a demonstration of a mother's love of her son." Some others who've had a pivotal role in Dylan's life include Semra Kecelioglu and Carol Dannenfelser, Racker Centers' Therapists, Rusty Scira and Missy Adams, two of his favorite BOCES teachers, as well as the elders from his congregation at Faith Baptist Church.

DIAGNOSED WITH BIPOLAR ILLNESS, DYLAN BECAME SO FRUSTRATED AT SCHOOL THAT ALONG WITH TRYING TO THROW A CHAIR THROUGH A WINDOW HE WAS SAYING HE WANTED TO DIE.

The structure of the Turning Point program really helped Dylan, in large part because of the full team approach. For Dylan, this meant that he, his teachers, therapist, his mom, and Racker Centers' program psychiatrist met on a regular basis. Sally Manning, who was Franziska Racker Centers' Program Director for the Day Treatment Program, describes Dylan, saying, "I have incredible admiration for Dylan and am inspired by the persistence and dedication he has demonstrated on his path toward



Dylan with his favorite BOCES teacher.

well-being. It's clear he's working to do his part to make the world a better place."

Dylan's generosity and politeness are qualities that he is known for throughout the school. His character has earned him recognition from a variety of places. He recently earned an Eagle Scout badge, was nominated as the Cortland County student of the year, and inducted into the Honors Society. Dylan states, "My proudest moment was being asked to be an Eagle Scout mentor for a younger Boy Scout."

What does the future hold for this brave and committed young man? Dylan hopes to further develop his culinary skills at Tompkins Cortland Community College. Missy Adams, an instructor at BOCES who had Dylan in cooking classes, calls him a model student and wishes she had 10 more of him! Those who have had the privilege of meeting Dylan share that sentiment. Congratulations, Happy Birthday, and Good Luck Dylan!

"Making Room" Final Report

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Sibley Learning Initiative Fund

In December of 2012 our Executive Director of 33 years, Roger Sibley, retired. In his honor, we established the Sibley Learning Initiative Fund to support innovative program and curriculum development. We want to extend our thanks to the generous donors that made gifts in his honor, and to this fund. For more information, or to make a gift to this fund, call Perri LoPinto at 607.272.5891 x 234.

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Photo courtesy of HOLT Architects P.C.

TRAINING

Learning Initiative

by Linda Kline

With over 700 employees, Franziska Racker Centers has an invaluable pool of resources. The building blocks of the Learning Initiative began with this as the foundation, and continued with the construction of the agency’s new Jean Dunlavey Learning Center. The Learning Center will serve as the hub to expand trainings for staff, for individuals, families and organizations throughout the community.

Senior Staff at Franziska Racker Centers have developed trainings within their particular area of expertise, and then offered that information to expand the knowledge and understanding of others, to be able to implement additional strategies in supporting the individuals and families we serve. Recently, Speech Language Pathologist Sheryl Edwards, and Physical Therapist Kellie Hummel, both from Racker Centers, offered a presentation to over seventy-five staff to enhance recognition and understanding of physical delays and feeding challenges that may occur as a result of gastro esophageal reflux, and discussed how to support babies, children, and their families with these challenges.

Tammy Goddard, Cortland Preschool Director, has undergone extensive training through the Devereux Foundation and is one of the national trainers for presenting information (DECA – Devereux Early Childhood Initiative) on children’s social emotional health and well-being. Tammy, along with Jessica Jones, Assistant Director of Quality Enhancement, has also been an integral force in offering Flip-It trainings, outlining and demonstrating a four-step process to address challenging behaviors that begins by identifying and validating a child’s



THE LEARNING INITIATIVE PROMOTES GROWTH OF RACKER CENTERS’ EMPLOYEES, AND ALSO STRIVES TO OFFER INFORMATION TO FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

feelings. Tammy has presented information to our preschool staff in Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties as well as to partner agencies within those communities and beyond. When asked how she feels about her role as a trainer, Tammy states, “I am learning new things from the participants. Presenting and training locally as well as nationally has allowed me to meet so many individuals that are dedicated to helping children reach their potential. It’s rewarding to see providers work as a team, learn from each other and put those best practices in place.”

The Learning Initiative promotes growth of Racker Centers’ employees,

and also strives to offer information to families and the community at large. Another recent workshop was held for parents whose children are in our special education program and will be transitioning to kindergarten. Local Committee for Preschool Special Education (CPSE) Chairs from Ithaca, Trumansburg, and Lansing joined parents of previous Racker Centers students to offer helpful pieces of information about the transition process. The workshop, preceded by dinner and for which childcare was provided, was attended by more than ten families. One family member who attended the workshop states, “The kindergarten transition meeting was so helpful in easing my fears about the whole process. Most helpful for me were the panelists from the various school districts and the explanations of all the terminology! Racker Centers’ staff explained everything in a clear and caring way – I feel ready to take on the process.”

Other trainings that have or will be offered include topics on: Grief and Loss, Reading and Early Literacy, Challenging Behaviors, Sensory difficulties, Autism, Nutrition,

Communication and Conflict Resolution, CPR and First Aid. It is the goal of the Learning Initiative that Franziska Racker Centers provides educational opportunities, supports, and resources to families, staff and the community at large. Watch for upcoming workshops on our website.

Jessica Jones, pictured here with Dan Brown, Dr. Elizabeth Perkins, and Rhoda Meador, Director of the IC Gerontology Institute, pose for a photo prior to a presentation provided by Dr. Perkins in the Dunlavey Learning Center – the presentation was the result of a partnership formed by Jones and the IC Gerontology Institute to discuss planning and promoting optimal aging for people with intellectual disabilities.



2012 Financial Report

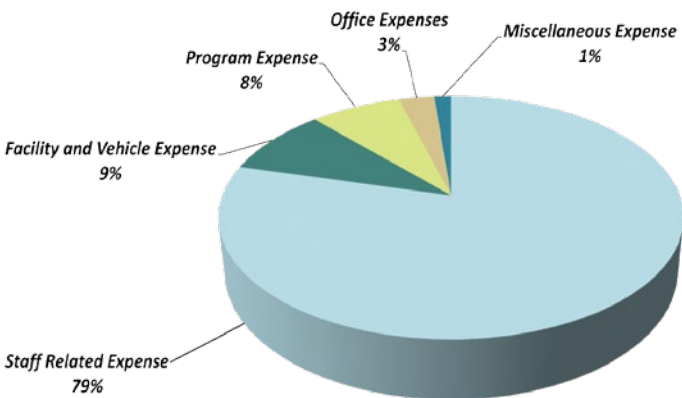
Franziska Racker Centers had a great year programmatically, serving almost 3,000 people in 2012 with an annual budget of approximately \$27 million. Operating revenues, combined with public support for our Capital Campaign, exceeded operating expenses and resulted in a surplus. We rely upon the support of our community, which enables us to provide opportunities for our participants that might not otherwise be possible.

Operating Expenses

Staff Related Expenses	\$20,864,888
Facility and Vehicle Expense	2,391,077
Program Expense	1,986,519
Office Expenses	785,250
Miscellaneous Expense	361,428

Total Expenses **\$26,389,162**

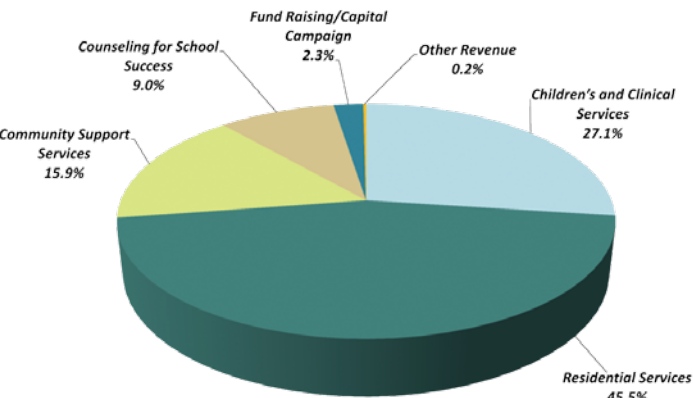
Change in Net Assets **\$1,220,196**



Operating Revenues and Public Support

Children’s and Clinical Services	\$7,470,943
Residential Services	12,587,478
Community Support Services	4,376,833
Counseling for School Success	2,479,751
Fund Raising/Capital Campaign	627,702
Other Revenue	66,651
-Investment Gains.....	154,113
-Prior Period Adjustments.....	(97,109)
-Miscellaneous Revenue.....	9,647

Total Public Support and Revenue **\$27,609,358**



GIVING to Racker Centers

We feel fortunate to have so many friends who support us with their time, talents, and resources. Our FRIENDS of the Centers list includes those who made gifts, pledges, or Gifts-in-kind* to any of the following areas in 2012. We owe a special thank you to those on our Racker Fellows and Business Partners lists for their donations of \$1,000 or more. Gifts to Racker Centers help us fill funding gaps and address areas of greatest concern. With your help, we can continue providing innovative services for people with disabilities in our community, helping them have happy, productive lives. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our many friends.

Unrestricted Annual Support | Allows us to respond to areas of immediate need.

Bohn Family Fund | Created by Donna and Tom Bohn, provides resources and supports for families with children with special needs.

Frances G. Berko Lectureship Fund | Created with a leadership gift from the J.M. McDonald Foundation in memory of Dr. Berko, Executive Director from 1964 to 1974. It supports community education and professional development for those working in the disability field.

Frances V. Wilson Memorial Fund | Created by Margaret Gibson, provides financial support for needed items not covered by traditional funding sources.

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.

“Making Room” Capital Campaign | Supporting the creation of the Jean Dunlavey Learning Center and the renovation and expansion of the Margaret I. Gibson Preschool on Wilkins Road.

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.

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

Sibley Learning Initiative Fund | Created in honor of Roger Sibley’s 33 years of dedicated service to Franziska Racker Centers as Executive Director. This fund supports innovative program and curriculum development.

Tompkins Trust Company Bridge Fund | Supports otherwise unfunded clinical services for children throughout the year.

*Gifts-in-kind include items or services that directly enhance our ongoing programs. If you have an item or service that you would like to donate, please contact Perri LoPinto at Perri@rackercenters.org or (607)272-5891 ext. 234.

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