

OUTLOOK



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Erica Goes the Extra Mile

*If you've watched the hit show **The Biggest Loser** you know how hard the individuals work to lose weight each week. What is evident is that the trainers' motivation and the hard work of the individuals on the show is an inspiration to many.*

...Continued on page 3



*Franziska Racker
Centers' Community
Support Staff Nancy
Webster with Erica
after completing the
Ithaca Festival Mile*

I was thinking of inviting Bob Dylan to keynote our Fall Celebration on November 4, 8:00 am. He would sing "The Times They are a'Changin'" and talk about the brave, or frightened, new world. But I understand he is now selling panty hose, and might be too expensive anyhow. So we will figure out a Plan B.

I have recently attended some meetings in Albany which are giving me hope. The fact that change is here is well-known, and with change there is often a possibility of improvement. The State agency that oversees many of our services recently changed its name to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, OPWDD. I like to call it Opie, giving it a Mayberry flavor. We don't always like bureaucracies, but an afternoon fishing with Sheriff Andy sounds pretty good.



Roger Sibley, Executive Director

One of the themes that Opie has touted for a long time is "Putting People First." That is not entirely accurate. Capturing Medicaid funding has been the top priority for decades, followed closely by maintaining Opie's power and control. Even though there are a lot of community-based services, there is still a great deal of institutional thinking in the system. That shows itself in a number of ways.

Many of the service models that exist today came out of the institutions, those old state school warehouses. People with disabilities would live in large buildings with several thousand of their best friends. Modern group homes are much smaller, and are a part of communities and not isolated. The old institutional day rooms have become a variety of day programs, much more interesting and useful than the huge rooms with mats on the floor where people were brought. Special education kids also came out of the institutions, with the model now used with a much wider variety of kids.

The other institutional practice that survived all these years is great bureaucratic management of activities. The systems have not often been good at indentifying, let alone achieving, outcomes, but the regulatory and reporting requirements are meticulously time-consuming. In a broad generality, bureaucracies and organizations love programs. They are clearly defined forms, lots of rules, and easy to pay for. Like all package deals, it may not be right for all or any individual, but it covers a lot of the bases.

The new system that is now being developed has great promise to be different. It can be truly individualized, provide as much or as little support as makes sense to each person, and can make much better use of community activities instead of specialized disability programs. The whole point of the disability movement is inclusion. Our founders wanted their children to grow up as a part of their family and be welcomed as valued members of the community.

One of the great risks whenever systems change is attempted is that the vested interests will prevail and things will not change as they should. New York's human service systems are beyond broken, so this effort is worth a shot. Stay tuned.



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Erica...continued from cover

Erica, a 25 year-old woman with Down syndrome, is one of those inspired fans. She has reached goals she never thought possible by following a strict regimen of exercise, nutrition and, yes, weekly weigh-ins. Her Community

ERICA HAS LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT HEALTH AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT, WHILE HAVING FUN IN THE PROCESS.

Support Staff Nancy Webster has worked with Erica for over a year and is impressed by her commitment and motivation. "I really enjoy working with Erica," says Nancy. "She is always excited to participate in the exercise classes at the YMCA and with some encouragement, surprises herself with her strength each week. Erica has

learned a great deal about health and weight management, while having fun in the process," Nancy concludes.

Recently Erica participated in a triathlon at the local YMCA that included swimming, walking and climbing. "In the end she far exceeded what she thought she could do," says Nancy of the 5 laps in the pool, mile on the treadmill and another mile on the elliptical that Erica completed. "I was very proud of her but more importantly, she was proud of herself," Nancy states. Erica has always struggled with her weight and has some health complications from it such as sleep apnea. However, since starting her "Biggest Loser" regimen which includes water aerobics and strength training, Erica has lost 20 pounds.

Erica has no intention of stopping anytime soon and plans to participate in several upcoming community races including another triathlon later this year. Good luck Erica!



Erica running the mile at the Ithaca Festival Parade

NUTRITION TRAINING HELD



Billy Earl, who lives at Hook Place, shows off the healthy meal created during nutrition training

Dietician Kris Scofield, an employee of Racker Centers for nearly seventeen years, plays an important role in menu planning and training the staff in the residential program on nutrition and portion sizes. Recently she expanded this training to the residents of Campbell and Hook Place to give them the tools they need to make healthy choices for themselves. During this training, Kris used a soda bottle partially filled with sugar to communicate how much sugar is consumed when drinking these beverages. She also showed the residents portion sizes for cereal, meat, rice and drinks. More nutrition trainings are planned for other locations in the near future.

SAVE THE DATE FALL CELEBRATION

Franziska Racker Centers' Annual Fall Celebration will be held on Friday, November 4th at Celebrations Banquet Facility. The breakfast will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Community partners as well as staff within the agency will be recognized for working within the scope of the Circle of Courage and the core values of the Centers. The Circle of Courage is portrayed on the traditional Native American medicine wheel as representing the wholeness of life. The four core values are belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.

More information can be found at www.rackercenters.org

WE'RE IN HOT WATER NOW!

"A good problem to have," says Rick Darfler, Director of Facilities regarding the performance of the solar panels recently installed at Racker Centers' Evergreen House located in Dryden, NY. "The hot water panels are working so well that the temperature of the water is above what we had expected," Rick explains. The Earthkind Solar panels, storage tanks, pumps and controls were installed over a two week period in early June by TCAAction through a grant received by the Department of Energy under the Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers (SERC) grant. Racker Centers expects to save \$1000 a year on their energy bill due to the addition of the panels. "Every dollar we don't spend on utilities, we can spend on programming for our people directly," says Rick.

"We will duplicate this solar hot water installation project at our Eddy and Halstead houses and replace the boilers as well, thanks to additional funding from New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR)." The scope of the Groton work will include installing the solar hot water systems and replacing the existing boilers with new condensing boilers that run with 20% greater efficiency. Overall, the houses will experience a savings of 25% to 30% on their gas use compared to past years.

Special thanks goes to Stacey Murphy, TCA Director of Energy Services, Tedd Hurd, TCA Energy Projects Coordinator, and Gerhard Klier, EnergyKind Solar's Project Engineer.

Top: Stacey Murphy of Tompkins Community Action speaks to members of the New York State Weatherization Directors Association about the solar hot water panels at Racker Centers' Dryden house. Right: Solar panels ready to be installed.



STARRY NIGHT EARNS SILVER



In early July, Virgil Farlow, a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) evaluator visited the Starry Night respite house in Cortland, NY to complete final testing on the building. The testing was done as a part of the National Home Builder's Association "National Green Building Standard" (NGBS). NGBS looks at energy, water and resource efficiency, indoor environmental quality, lot design, preparation and development, and the operation and maintenance done by the building owner. To comply with the NGBS, a builder or remodeler

must incorporate a minimum number of features in the following areas: lot and site development; energy, water and resource efficiency; indoor environmental quality; and home owner education. To attain a higher level of certification by the NAHB Research Center, a home must accrue a certain level of points in each category. We are pleased to announce that Starry Night is aptly named and received a Silver rating on the NGBS scale. "I'm pleased we got a Silver rating," says Rick Darfler, Facilities Manager, "it shows the thought and planning that was put into the design and siting of the house."

RACKER CENTERS' ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE KITCHEN THEATRE COMPANY

"At the core, the theater is about telling stories and shining a light on the unique journey each individual takes in life. *NEAT* by Charlayne Woodard is masterful storytelling richly drawn from the playwright's own life. *NEAT* will be brought to the stage this fall at the Kitchen Theatre Company. The play focuses on the teenage years of a young African American girl whose family moves from the south to the north in the turbulent 1960's. Part of the family is Aunt Neat, who was inadvertently poisoned as a baby resulting in brain damage and a life-long disability. Initially, young Charlayne adores her Aunt Neat who seems like another child, but their relationship is tested as Charlayne becomes an adolescent. The story of the bond between these two is set against the struggle of typical teenage angst made tougher by outside prejudice and misunderstanding." -*NY Times*

Sara Lampert Hoover, the director of the piece, states "When Rachel offered me *NEAT* by Charlayne Woodard to direct next season, I immediately said "yes." I was first introduced to Woodard's plays when I directed *Pretty Fire* at the Kitchen in 1999. Her work presents a director's dream of theatrical possibilities. I am excited to re-connect with her intimate, soulful and joyous storytelling."



Franziska Racker Centers is partnering with the Kitchen Theatre Company to help broaden the audience for this special performance. Racker Centers encourages all to gain a deeper understanding of disabilities, celebrating diversity and interdependence in our community.

You can see *NEAT* at the Kitchen Theatre from October 19 - November 6, 2011, Wednesdays - Sundays. For tickets call Ticket Center Ithaca 607-273-4497 or buy online at www.kitchentheatre.org. Racker Centers' staff, supporters and those served are invited to use the discount code NEAT5 (online or via phone) for \$5 off a regularly priced ticket.

"BITE OF ITHACA"



*Matt Scarpino, Racker Work Study Student
Jessica Marchesani and Candace Riggs*



Guests enjoy music and food during event

Ithaca College Recreational Therapy student, Jessica Marchesani, conducted her work-study at Franziska Racker Centers helping out in both the Community Relations Department as well as in the toddler daycare room at the Tompkins County Preschool. Her time at Racker Centers was spent on a variety of projects, including helping to create a database for items in the Autism Lending Library. The library makes items such as books, videos, safety supplies and equipment, as well as recreational supplies, available to families with loved ones on the Autism spectrum. This allows families to borrow from the library and try things out before they make an investment. Therefore, Jessica and her group including Jen O'Leary, Mike Preite, Matt Scarpino, Candace Riggs, and Brett Polsky chose Racker Centers' Autism Lending Library as the recipient of funds raised at a "tasting" event they planned for a class project called "A Bite of Ithaca." Restaurants throughout the Ithaca community donated food samplings for the event which allowed people to get a taste of what Ithaca has to offer. Held at the Elks Club, the event was well attended with live music, great food and special raffle prizes donated by local businesses.

A big thank you to the group for planning such a successful event and to all of the businesses who supported the event, including: Moe's, Purity, Buffalo Wild Wings, Wings over Ithaca, D.P. Dough, CT Bento, Rogan's, New Delhi Diamond's, Moosewood, Maine Source, Ithaca Coffee Company, McDonald's, City Style Salon, Home Grown, Wal-Mart, Café Pacific, Waffle Frolic, Burger King, Joe's Restaurant, Cost Cutters, Erik Caron, Maria Shishmanian, Ithaca College Baseball team and the Elk's Lodge.

The Racker Centers' Autism Lending Library currently serves people in Tompkins and Tioga counties.

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE!



Don't forget to bookmark Racker Centers' blog at www.rackercenters.blogspot.com.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FranziskaRackerCenters.



WHEN I'M EIGHTY-FOUR



Photo of Fay, present day, at East Seneca residence

Spending time with family is something we often take for granted. Mention a holiday or wedding and our synapses begin to fire, retrieving memories of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins gathered around a table or living room.

For Fay, a member of Franziska Racker Centers' residential program, reconnecting with his past has become a growing and vital pursuit. And earlier this year, while celebrating his eighty-fourth birthday, Fay was given the greatest gift of all. It wasn't something that could be wrapped or adorned with a bow. It wasn't something that fit comfortably in a box. It was the gift of family.

On a cool evening in April, Fay met his nephew, Michael, for the first time. "I was a little nervous," Michael admits. "I had only seen pictures of Fay from when he was a child."

Apprehension turned to elation once Fay acknowledged his presence, and Michael took to entertaining staff with stories of the people whose images populated his uncle's photo album. Not only was the meeting a reunion among family, it was an opportunity for staff to learn a bit of history about their most senior resident.

As one of nine children coming of age in Depression-era Upstate New York, Fay encountered hardship early in life. "From what my father told me," says Michael, "the family moved around a lot and didn't have much to live on."

NOT ONLY WAS THE MEETING A REUNION AMONG FAMILY, IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STAFF TO LEARN A BIT OF HISTORY ABOUT THEIR MOST SENIOR RESIDENT.

Although little is known about Fay's adolescence and young adulthood, he has been reaching out to progeny and next of kin, including his brother, Richard, since coming to the Centers in 2005. Michael's introduction to Fay was serendipitous. "We connected through my son-in-law, who is an employee of the Centers," he explains.



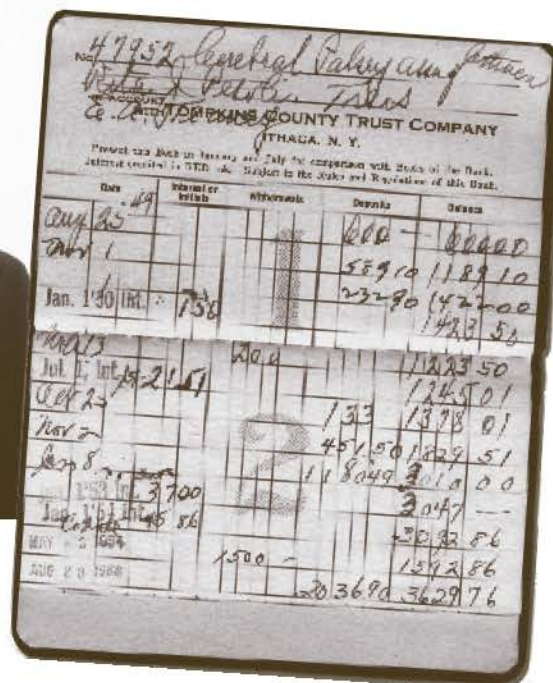
Fay as a boy

The warmth and generosity exhibited by staff at Fay's home is something he won't soon forget. Says Michael, "He's receiving good care and support through the Centers."

-Jon Ulrich, Opportunity Development Facilitator



**THANK YOU TOMPKINS TRUST COMPANY
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF RACKER
CENTERS AND CONGRATULATIONS ON 175
YEARS!**



Above: Bob Bantle, Executive Vice-President of Tompkins Services and Racker Centers Board Member, holding the Tompkins Trust Company passbook documenting the first deposit made by the Cerebral Palsy Association of Ithaca. Right: Interior of passbook showing the \$600 deposit made on August 25, 1949.

FOND FAREWELL TO CAYUGA'S HELPING HAND

Cayuga's Helping Hand began its work in this community when AES, one of the world's largest power companies, bought Miliken Station from NYSEG in 1999. For over ten years, the staff at AES Cayuga supported those in need by raising funds through community events, including hosting fashion shows, operating coffee carts during outages, giving through payroll deduction, holding raffles and having chicken BBQ's.

Darlene O'Neil headed the efforts of Cayuga's Helping Hand. "AES Cayuga is an organization that valued social responsibility and in 2000 they asked me to put a program into place that would allow the company and its employees to give back to the community. I explained to my boss that I didn't have much experience in this type of volunteer work. That is when he asked me what I loved. I jokingly told him clothes, and that is how our first fundraiser, a fashion show, was born," states Darlene.

Cayuga's Helping Hand received a lot of

support from the community because the money raised clearly went directly to people for what they really needed. "We had a committee that would meet to discuss and search out those that we could help. Our employees lived in all different communities, so we would help those in our communities and would do things such as pay a mortgage for an accident victim. We would also purchase gift cards for families after losing their home to a house fire. We helped many cancer patients with transportation (gas cards), purchased wigs and even helped pay bills. Once we purchased four car tires for a gentleman who used to volunteer to take people to their chemotherapy treatments," Darlene explains. Darlene



grew nostalgic as she spoke about one little boy that the organization helped. He lived with his family outside of Groton, NY and couldn't maneuver through his house except by dragging himself across the floor. She learned about this boy through Franziska Racker Centers. AES and Cayuga's Helping Hand purchased him the equipment that would allow him to move freely through his home. Darlene remembers the joy in this boy's face when he came to the AES power plant to receive this gift. She quietly speaks, "I will never forget the look in that little boy's eyes." After that, Franziska Racker Centers and Hospice were two organizations that became near and dear to Darlene's heart.

March 2011 marks the end of a decade of support as Cayuga's Helping Hand dissolves and its employees move on from AES. Their legacy will remain as will all the good their \$66,000 of fundraising did over the years. Racker Centers would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the organization and all of those involved over the years.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN NEW CONSTRUCTION

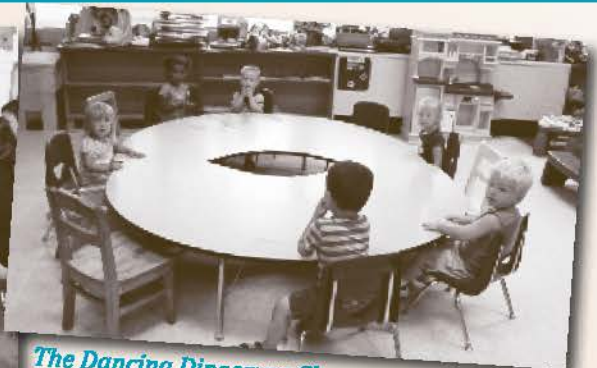
The construction at Ithaca's Wilkins Road site is well under way and plans have been made to ensure the additions are energy efficient, including:

- After a thorough evaluation and comparison of heating and cooling systems, a very unique heating and AC system called Variable Refrigerant Volume, more common in Japan and Europe than the United States, will be installed in the building. Though the first costs of the system are higher, the efficiency of operating the system will more than make up that cost in the long run. Racker Centers will also be able to use some funding from New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to offset the initial costs.
- Ventilation of the building after construction will be through a heat recovery ventilator. The stale air is vented and replaced with incoming fresh air, while the heat from the outgoing air is picked up by the incoming air to save utility cost.
- There will be air sealing on the building to reduce infiltration and all of the windows on the east and west sides throughout the school will be replaced. All new windows will be up to current standards of energy efficiency for insulation.

OUR STAFF AND CLASSROOMS HAVE RELOCATED FROM WILKINS ROAD TO "MAKE ROOM" FOR THE CONSTRUCTION. HERE ARE SOME PHOTOS OF THEIR NEW LOCATIONS!



The Partnership Program's Happy Hippos at Immaculate Conception School



The Dancing Dinosaurs Classroom, currently at Trumansburg Elementary, is scheduled to move to the new Namaste Elementary school in Jacksonville in the Fall



Beetles Classroom teacher Mary Hause works with a student in their new classroom at Immaculate Conception



Newfield Elementary cafeteria gives children in the relocated Fishbowl Classroom a chance to learn how to use the lunch line



Speech Therapist Sheryl Edwards holds a session in the therapy room at Immaculate Conception



Playground at Groton elementary school where the Butterflies Classroom is now located



Rick Darfler, Facilities Manager, helps prepare the Signworks building for the Community Support Services staff and preschool and clinical staff

**AND PROGRESS AT WILKINS ROAD
IS HAPPENING EVERYDAY!**



In the midst of deconstruction



Asbestos abatement complete in classrooms



Work on the new employee parking lot



Site of the new partnership classroom

THANK YOU BUSINESS PARTNERS*

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YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

When you become a Friend of Racker Centers, you help us provide people with disabilities the services, supports and opportunities they need to do things that are important to all of us: learn, have new experiences, enjoy friends and family, and be contributing members of our communities.

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 having special needs.

FRANCES G. BERKO LECTURESHIP FUND Created with a leadership gift from the J.M. McDonald Foundation in memory of Dr. Berko, the Centers' 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.

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.

TOMPKINS TRUST COMPANY BRIDGE FUND Supports otherwise unfunded clinical services for children throughout the year.

To donate or for more information call Perri LoPinto at 607.272.5891 Ext. 234 or email perri@rackercenters.org. You can also make a donation online at www.rackercenters.org.

Bella

On May 22, 2006 we welcomed an 8 pound 4 ounce bundle of joy into our lives. A few moments after our daughter's birth we learned that she was experiencing medical difficulties. After hours of uncertainty we learned that our daughter, Isabella Hope, may have a chromosomal abnormality, commonly referred to as Down syndrome (DS). By undergoing genetic testing, we now know that Bella has Mosaic Down syndrome.

At the age of two months, Bella was evaluated and determined eligible by Franziska Racker Centers for Early Intervention (EI) Services made available through Tompkins County Health Department. When Bella was three, we were in a panic wondering how we could ever find a preschool that would meet the many needs of our daughter. Thankfully, the summer before aging out of EI, Bella attended a toddler group at Racker Centers with Carol Booth, Early Intervention and Special Education Itinerant Teacher. We knew that if the preschool services at Racker Centers were half as good as the summer program, then this is where Bella would start her career as a student.

In September of 2009, Bella began attending preschool at Racker Centers. Bella was only able to move by crawling on her hands and knees. She was unable to communicate and the physical demands of being a preschooler took their toll. Bella would become fatigued and fall asleep during the school day. She would pinch, bite, and slap in an attempt to communicate and express frustration. Fortunately, Bella met many patient, cute and adorable new faces. One face in particular, her one-on-one aide, Kylee, is one Bella holds very near and dear in her heart. Kylee works closely with Bella's therapists and puts forth an insurmountable amount of effort to help Bella reach her goals. The monumental progress that Bella made in her second year of preschool to reach her educational and treatment objectives was astonishing.



Kylee and Bella



Stacey, Bella, Scott and Caleb

Fast forward two years, Bella is now 5 and has tossed aside all adaptive equipment and is walking independently. This accomplishment has given a whole new meaning to the term "baby proofing." Now that she is upright, Bella can clear a countertop in no time flat. We now have to enlist the help of Bella's younger brother, Caleb, to make sure our house is always "Bella proof." We have all been learning sign language to better meet Bella's needs. Caleb, who is 3 ½ years old, has retained much more than we have and is able to assist Bella with signing "more," "please" and "thank-you" at the dinner table.

Bella is now learning to go up and down a flight of stairs, and is starting to run down the hallway alongside of her peers. Her endurance and strength have improved to where she is now able to participate fully in all preschool activities with her special education teacher, Mary Hause, who has been such a pillar of support for our family and advocate for Bella. All of Bella's accomplishments would not have been possible without the perseverance of the therapists, aides and teachers. We will forever be indebted to Franziska Racker Centers for the milestones Bella has achieved.

-by Bella's mom, Stacey

THANK YOU CARGILL!



Franziska Racker Centers is pleased to announce that Cargill has stepped forward to become a Cornerstone Donor for their "Making Room" Capital Campaign.

This generous \$100,000 gift brings the agency that serves individuals with disabilities and their families throughout Cortland, Tompkins and Tioga counties closer to their Campaign goal. This gift will help fund renovations to Racker Centers' Tompkins County special education preschool facility on Wilkins Road and develop a Learning Center.

Roger Sibley states, "We are so excited that Cargill has chosen to support this project and the work of our agency. It's wonderful that this International Company supports the local communities where their employees live and work. This gift will place Cargill with other top donors in the new front entryway to our agency. We are thrilled to have their support."

WE ARE SO EXCITED THAT CARGILL HAS CHOSEN TO SUPPORT THIS PROJECT AND THE WORK OF OUR AGENCY.

Cargill is an international producer and marketer of food, agricultural, financial and industrial products and services. Founded in 1865, the privately held company employs 131,000 people in 66 countries. Cargill helps customers succeed through collaboration and innovation, and is committed to applying its global knowledge and experience to help meet economic, environmental and social challenges wherever it does business. Cargill operates a deicing plant locally in Lansing, New York.



Russ Givens, Cargill's Ithaca Plant Manager shakes hands with Racker Centers' Executive Director Roger Sibley

THE HELEN THOMAS HOWLAND FOUNDATION as administered by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County MAKES GIFT TO "MAKING ROOM" CAMPAIGN



Community Foundation
of Tompkins County

Franziska Racker Centers is proud to acknowledge a gift of \$5,000 from The Helen Thomas Howland Foundation given in support of the Centers' "Making Room" Capital Campaign. Administered through the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, this foundation awarded 13 different grants to a wide variety of local organizations that serve the community in the areas of aging services, youth services, animal welfare and the environment. Franziska Racker Centers' "Making Room" Campaign is raising funds to renovate their aging preschool facility, and to build a Learning Center where best practices for helping people with disabilities can be shared with the community at large. We are thrilled to receive this wonderful support.

FALL 2011

OUTLOOK

www.rackercenters.org



RACKER CENTERS

Creating Opportunities for People with Special Needs

Franziska Racker Centers
3226 Wilkins Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

Non-Profit Organization
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Ithaca, NY 14850

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

EDITOR Heather Hughes, Director of Public Relations

DESIGN Dawn Bricen LaMorte, **SUNRISE STUDIOS DESIGN** www.SunriseStudiosDesign.com

CONTRIBUTORS Stacey Caskey, Heather Hughes, Dawn Bricen LaMorte, Jon Ulrich



George, a member of the Fishbowl Classroom that is now located at Newfield Elementary, gives the camera a smile. George will begin Kindergarten at Newfield in the Fall.