After a year-long renovation during which all preschool classrooms had to be relocated to temporary sites out in the community, Franziska Racker Centers happily welcomed back kids and staff to the new and improved Wilkins Road site, home to the Margaret Gibson Preschool and the Jean Dunlavey Learning Center. And “Making Room” hits the campaign goal! Life is good at Franziska Racker Centers! Raising money to renovate the preschool, the building is now asbestos free, has proper insulation and sound proofing, and sports an environmentally friendly HVAC heating and cooling system. The classrooms have all been renovated and new technology has been installed. “We are so grateful to our community for supporting us in this important project”, says Perri LoPinto, Director of Community Relations “How fortunate we are to live in such a generous and caring community”.

They’re Back!
The musical *Show Boat*, one of my favorites, features a beautiful song “Old Man River”. While many things are happening on and around the Mississippi, the river “just keeps rolling along.”

As you read this, the work modernizing our Wilkins Road is finished, and it is beautiful. The Making Room Campaign has successfully concluded, raising over $3,500,000 to support this effort. We pause to gratefully reflect on all the wonderful ways people in our community have helped us, and how meaningful it all is.

If you believe, as I do, that funding for many things including human services will have limited growth from now on, the Learning Center initiative is the right thing at the right time.

Our conference rooms have all the computerized presentation systems, and the ability to receive web casts and do video conferencing. We appear to be sliding into the twenty-first century.

Napoleon said that an army travels on its stomach. A human service organization travels on knowledge, beliefs, and skills. The Learning Center allows us to expand our ability to acquire, share, and use information and ideas for the benefit of our people, other organizations, and the community.

If you believe, as I do, that funding for many things including human services will have limited growth from now on, the Learning Center initiative is the right thing at the right time.

Franziska Racker Centers has had 64 years of new beginnings. Savor today, plan for tomorrow.

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**They’re Back Continued...**

The campaign also raised funds to add 9,000 square feet to the Wilkins Rd. campus. This space now has two new classrooms, and is home to Franziska Racker Centers’ new Learning Center. Two new conference rooms can accommodate up to 200 people and are equipped with the latest conferencing equipment. Staff, families and the community at large will gather to learn best practices for helping people with disabilities in our community. Video-conferencing is also available so staff at sites in other counties can participate in trainings without having to travel.

The new addition also allowed for a new main entrance for the campus that welcomes visitors and families. Stop by and have a look, see how we “made room” for you!

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!***

Please plan to attend the Official Ribbon Cutting and Awards Ceremony for the new Franziska Racker Centers’ Learning Center and Preschool on Oct. 12, 2012 at 11:00am. Details coming!
Leadership Series

A group of nearly 20 Franziska Racker Centers’ staff members from multiple areas of the agency gathered biweekly from March to June for the 2012 Leadership Series. The training program focused on building positive relationships to enhance leadership. Facilitated by Director of Quality Enhancement Sue Budney, Director of the Residential Pat Montanez, Director of Human Resources Bethany Brown and the Assistant Director of Quality Enhancement Jessica Jones, the series referenced the books The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Steven Covey and Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High by Kerry Patterson. “We were able to take ideas from the authors and make them applicable to what the group actually does day to day,” says Pat.

Together the facilitators worked to create a dynamic agenda of video clips, group activities, discussion topics, and shared experiences that inspired conversation and sparked connections. “We wanted people to feel prepared for leading or stepping into managerial roles,” explains Sue, “and to understand that how they perceive situations and how the world perceives them makes an impact on their ability to be influential leaders.” The facilitators requested feedback after each session and tailored the next gathering based off of what was most successful. They plan to do the same for the 2013 Leadership Series and Pat is optimistic that it will be well-received. “I think those in attendance will encourage others to attend the session in the Spring,” she says. “It was a really great experience for staff to get to know peers in other departments and learn more about the agency, as well as get valuable training that they can apply to know peers in other departments and learn more about what the group actually does day to day,” says Pat.

“The group activities helped me to focus on crucial points of the topic matter.”

“I'm very glad to get to meet people from other parts of the agency. I am always impressed by the integrity of the agency in living our values, so I find all the presentation credible and useful. The day flew by!”

Feedback from Prior Series:

FLIP IT® goes Electronic

It all started with some fun sketches created to entertain the kids at Franziska Racker Centers’ preschool where Brandon Beebe Graves has been a Classroom Aide since 2005. Now, those sketches appear in his children’s book, Beaner’s Backyard, which is now available as an e-book and an interactive application in addition to hardcopy form. Brandon worked with Authorhouse, a self-publishing company, to transform his book into digital options. The eBook is a completely electronic version of the traditional print book that can be downloaded to devices such as the Amazon Kindle or Apple iPhone, or be read on sites such as Scribd.com.

The interactive application allows readers to download the book from the Apple App Store™ to their iPhone®, iPod touch™ or iPad™. “Through the app kids can read the story and record themselves, request that the book be read to them, turn the pages into line art for coloring, and even make a page into a 12-piece puzzle!” explains Brandon, who both wrote and illustrated the book. Brandon is thrilled to see his publication available in so many formats. “I’m donating part of the proceeds to the centers,” he explains, “so the more ways there are to buy the book the better off we are!”

Find the book online at www.bookfinder4u.com or search the book’s title in iTunes.

Larry gives a thumbs-up as he enters the Grassroots Festival.

Larry, who receives supports and services through Franziska Racker Centers, is an ardent fan of Country music. Thanks to the generosity of the Grassroots Festival of Music and Dance, over the last three years he’s had the opportunity to see some of the genre’s most legendary acts—Merle Haggard, Court Yard Hounds, and George Jones—for free. “They’ve always been so accommodating,” says Diana Gallagher, Larry’s Service Coordinator. “There are never any hoops we have to jump through. They say, ‘No problem—we’ll have the tickets ready!’” This is in keeping with the organization’s altruistic goals. “We take the idea of community involvement seriously,” says Megan Romer, the festival’s Marketing Director. “Our mission allows us to support area non-profits, and donating tickets is a way for us to give folks who might not otherwise have access to music a chance to spend the weekend with our performers.” For Larry the experience of attending the festival has left an indelible mark. When asked how he feels about the opportunity to see renowned artists in such an intimate setting, he grins and says, “I love it.” The Grassroots Festival of Music and Dance, whose mission is to support arts, education, and the fight against AIDS, is held annually every July at the Trumansburg Fairgrounds in Trumansburg, New York. —By Jon Ulrich, Opportunity Development Facilitator

The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour

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FLIP IT® Behavior Support Program Wins National Award

FLIP IT®: Transforming Challenging Behaviors joins an elite list of outstanding “must-have” products for parents as a Silver 2012 National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA) Parenting Resource winner. NAPPA’s independent expert judges and parent testers evaluated hundreds of submissions for their innovation, safety, quality and the degree to which they make parenting easier. With over 20 years of experience in the industry, NAPPA has been continuously celebrated as the “go-to” source for parents and professionals seeking the best products for their children and families. “The National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA) is one of the oldest and most respected awards programs in the country,” says Rachel Sperry who developed FLIP IT at Franziska Racker Centers in 2005 with an Innovative Grant received from New York State Office of Children and Family Services. FLIP IT is four simple steps to transform challenging behavior in young children. Teachers and parents can help children learn about their feelings and gain self-control by using the mnemonic: F – Feelings, L – Limits, I – Inquiries, P – Prompts. This strategy is nothing new, but transforms best practice into something that is easy to remember, applicable in a variety of challenging situations and portable. FLIP IT has applications for parents as well as teachers, caregivers, administrators, mental health professionals, social workers and any other individual who interacts with a child who struggles with behavioral challenges. FLIP IT is in good company! In previous years, awards have been given to products such as Audible for Kids and the Workman Publishing “What to Expect” parenting series. “I am still in a bit of shock, but so excited!” Rachel exclaims. “We should all be proud.”

For a complete list of all 2012 NAPPA Parenting Resources winners and more information about the competition, visit www.NAPPAwards.com. For more information about FLIP IT: Transforming Challenging Behaviors visit www.rackercennters.org and www.MoreFLIPIT.org.
Elks Foundation Gift Supports Preschool Renovation

Ithaca Elks Lodge #636 submitted a Gratitude Grant to the Elks National Foundation asking for support of Franziska Racker Centers’ “Making Room” Capital Campaign. A grant of $2,000 was received, and will support needed renovations for the Racker Centers’ special education preschool building. The grant will also help in building a new Learning Center where best practices for helping people with special needs can be shared with the community. Franziska Racker Centers has a long partnership with the Elks and greatly appreciate the ongoing support the Elks have shown Racker Centers over the years. “We couldn’t ask for better friends,” say Executive Director Roger Sibley. “Together we are able to assist many people in our community, helping them have happier more productive lives. We are grateful for this gift to our “Making Room” Campaign.”

Community Playground Build Held in May

May 18th and 19th brought together volunteers and staff at Racker Centers’ preschool site where they constructed a new play structure for the school. Thank you to everyone that gave of their time to help our playground become a reality.

Special thanks to Gimmee Coffee, Parkitechts and all our volunteers!

Photos:
1- Executive Director Roger Sibley gears up for the playground build!
2- Volunteers signed the banner to register for the day. 3- Progress is being made on the tower slide. 4 - Steve from Parkitechts gets volunteers started.
5 - Lots of holes needed to be dug! 6 - Reliable refreshment team keeps everyone energized!
7 - Volunteers take a break to enjoy donated refreshments.
8 - Putting the swingset together takes teamwork.
9 - The flag goes up!
10 - Progress is made quickly!

Grant From the Ithaca Garden Club Supports Outdoor Learning Space

The Ithaca Garden Club generously approved a grant of $3,475 for Franziska Racker Centers’ “Making Room” Campaign. This grant specifically supports the cleaning and replanting of the Atrium Garden located in the preschool building on Wilkins Road in Ithaca. The Atrium Garden is located in the middle of the building, and is a focal point for all entering the preschool. A much-loved space by staff and children alike, it was in dire need of some loving attention. Working with Michael Fitzpatrick from The Village Greenhouse, the garden now has new plantings to enjoy. Along with the new plants, each class will have their own planting box. Teachers are excited for the opportunity to have the children germinate seeds in the classrooms and then transplant the young plants into their planting boxes in the Atrium. This generous grant supported all the replanting as well as gardening tools for the children and supplies needed for the planting boxes. We are so grateful for this support from the Ithaca Garden Club.

CONGRATULATIONS!
Alisa O’Bine, Partnership Program Teacher, has recently become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). This national certification requires specific coursework in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) along with 1500 hours of supervision by another BCBA and passing of the final examination. Great Job Alisa!
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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