

OUTLOOK



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Partnership Program Alumnus Visits Preschool

By Mary Balfour

Corey is a twelve-year old Watkins Glen Middle School student with a ready smile and the build of a long-distance runner, a twinkle in his eye and a matching sense of humor. He is an honor roll student who just completed seventh grade, but is already delving into ninth grade math, scoring 102% on his last report card. He is a whiz at chess, creates music using computer mixing software, plays computer games, enjoys watching car racing and spending laid-back summer days with family. He lives with his mother, Bridget, and stepfather, Tom, along with brothers Alex (20) and Kyle (17), at the edge of the Finger Lakes National Forest. And by the way, Corey is an alumnus of the first Franziska Racker Centers' Partnership Program classroom.

The Partnership Program is a specialized classroom serving children on or suspected to be on the autism spectrum. It employs the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), an evidence-based practice, in an integrated preschool setting. An integrated classroom has a mix of children with special needs and typically developing children. At the age of fourteen months, Corey was referred for an evaluation by Dr. Karen Fried, a psychologist formerly at Racker Centers, and was diagnosed with autism.

Continued on page 4...



This year our top fundraising priority is Early Childhood Services. *The early years are among the most important in a child's development. Providing services for children when they are young is often the "Window of Opportunity" for helping them grow, learn and thrive. The story about Corey in this edition of our Outlook publication highlights how instrumental early intervention, preschool special education, related therapies and services are for a child and their entire family's quality of life and future success.*

FROM DAN'S DESK

Non-profits are finding that their best efforts can't stack up against today's complex and interdependent problems. There is a national trend for non-profits to put aside their self-interests and build collaborations that help foster a stronger infrastructure. Nationally, the trend is being called "Collective Impact." Since non-profit human service organizations are supported and "owned" by our communities, it is each organization's responsibility to work together as a group to meet the needs of the individuals and families in our community.

Thanks to the vision of Roger Sibley, Racker Centers has been ahead of the curve on the Collective Impact trend. We have a long list of organizations in our community where we weave together a "basket" of supports for individuals and families: BOCES, DSS, Head Start, United Ways, County Mental Health offices, daycares, schools, employment agencies, YMCA, YWCA and the list goes on. This year we are adding another type of "thread" to our basket.

The Alcohol and Drug Council of Tompkins County ("The Council") has been an important part of our community for 48 years. In late 2012, The Council ran into difficulties when it couldn't fill a long term vacancy in its blended Director of Finance and Standards position. Given the difficulties caused by the long term vacancy, and considering our community focus of, "All for one, one for all," our staff members Cecilia Campbell and Sue Budney stepped in and provided some interim support at no charge to The Council. After awhile the following questions arose:

- Could Racker Centers' staff fulfill The Council's need for a Director of Finance and Standards on a permanent basis?
- Does it fit in the Racker Centers' mission?
- Would this kind of support meet the needs of The Council?
- Is it good for the community?

Well, it turns out that the answers to these questions are a resounding YES! So in January 2013 we began an affiliation with The Council. This affiliation is a "win-win." For an annual fee, our staff perform the Director of Finance and Standards position's responsibilities. The great part of this affiliation is that it really benefits the community. The Council is paying us less than it would have cost them to fill the vacant position and, therefore, they have more money going into services for individuals in the community. AND, the administrative cost to Racker Centers will be less than what The Council is paying us, so Racker Centers also has more money available for services for individuals in the community. This affiliation is the new thread that we have added to the "basket" supporting our community.

This could not have happened without the vision of Roger Sibley, Emeritus Executive Director; Angela Sullivan, Executive Director of The Council; Cecilia Campbell, Director of Finance; Sue Budney, Director of Standards, and the Board of Directors for each organization.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Dan".

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SUN SHELTER BUILD

April showers bring May flowers, as the saying goes. At Onondaga-Cortland-Madison (OCM) BOCES this past May, flowers were beginning to bloom, along with a beautiful new sun shelter that will provide a place for reflection and healing for many BOCES students as they visit the McEvoy Children's Garden.

The garden, now in its 14th growing season, was a group initiative started by Susan Thomas, Day Treatment Program Director, and many other staff at the Turning Point Program located at the OCM BOCES Cortland campus. Susan states, "We did a lot of work initially to have the children participate in the design of the garden. The idea was to promote working with nature, health and wellness, acts of generosity and belonging to their school. The whole initiative tied in so well with Racker Centers' culture and the Circle of Courage."

Then, two years ago, the passing of Susan's father following a long battle with skin cancer, initiated a new project to take shape. There has always been the desire to have a sun shelter in the garden. Many of the students enrolled in Turning Point are on medications that don't react well with sun exposure. A collection was started to fund the building of a structure in the garden. After a lot of leg work by Susan, and with the hard work of a number of dedicated volunteers, the sun shelter was erected on a rainy day in June.

Tim Bearup, local builder and owner of Bearup Construction, Byran Bartholomew, a graduate from the BOCES Building Trades program as well as owner of a local excavating company, the Tully Rotary Club, and students from the BOCES Building Trades and Career Explorations programs all came together for this volunteer build. Despite the rain, volunteers enjoyed contributing to the project and look forward to finding more ways to help in the future. John Buss, one of the newer Rotarians at the build said, "In addition to Tully Rotary, I volunteer with the East Syracuse-Minoa High School football team. Working with the head coach, Kevin Depart, and trying to create a culture of giving back, we came up with a community service project where we will bus the team here in the fall to do some additional work on the garden." Tim Bearup, helping to lead the building project on the day of the build states, "My wife, Rachel, is very active with Tully Rotary. When they decided to help with this project, I was very happy to help with the build. It's a good community project."

The vision for the shelter is that it will be a therapeutic structure to foster healing and promote learning for BOCES students, staff and anyone visiting this very special garden.

The Turning Point Day Treatment Program at OCM BOCES is a part of Racker Centers' Counseling for School Success programs. These programs are licensed by the New York State Office of Mental Health and are a collaboration among Racker Centers and OCM and TST BOCES. Racker Centers' mental health professionals partner with BOCES educators to support young people referred by their school districts who have a significant history of emotional and behavioral needs.



Pictured (left to right): Peter Cameron, Tim Bearup, Sue Thomas, Peter Cardamone, Hal Brown, John Buss, Kim Cameron

SAVE THE DATE

**Cortland Parent Network Fall Conference
Annual Fall Celebration**

**November 12
November 13**

**5:30-7:30p.m. - Cortland Ramada Inn
8:00-10:00a.m. - Celebrations Banquet Facility, Ithaca**



WITH PRESENTATIONS BY NATIONALLY KNOWN AUTHOR, RACHEL SIMON

Rachel Simon is the author of six books. Two of her most notable are her recent best selling fiction novel, *The Story of Beautiful Girl*, and the memoir, *Riding the Bus with My Sister*. The latter, is a story focusing on the relationship between Rachel and her sister Beth, who has an intellectual disability. The book has been the impetus behind Rachel's ongoing public speaking and advocacy efforts for people living with disabilities.

For more information visit www.rackercenters.org/events

Partnership Program Alumnus *(continued from cover)*

Corey's mother, Bridget Lorow, a vivacious, energetic woman speaks of the early days. "Having two other children, I just knew something wasn't right when Corey was about seven months old." She began to pursue answers, while figuring out exactly what questions to ask. Her quest led her to Franziska Racker Centers. At first Bridget grieved. "I went through that whole cycle of grief, at first I was sad, and then I was angry- although that didn't last long. I decided I would do what I could do."

What Bridget, Corey and the whole family did was quite remarkable. Before the age of two, Corey began receiving services from Racker staff; Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), Peg Stoyell and Occupational Therapist, Meg Gillard. Bridget scoured the internet for information on effective treatments. She found books, teaching materials and Bumblebee videos, which provide video language models specifically for children with autism. Corey received home-based services through Racker Centers. When the Partnership Program was forming, Dr. Fried called Bridget and asked if her family would like to participate, and so Corey then attended Racker Centers' preschool. Social worker Annemarie Mattison, LCSW-R, who worked with the family remembers that, "Bridget was a very involved, 'go-getter' mom. Corey protested PECs; mom persevered." **(To learn more about PECs, a Picture Exchange Communication system, watch our video at: www.rackercenters.org/pecs)**

With the help of Peg Stoyell, Bridget taught herself how to use PECS, which helps children to communicate by exchanging pictures of items he or she wants for the actual item. Bridget also independently studied Applied Behavioral Analysis, after learning of its efficacy, then hired Ithaca College students and trained them to provide up to 40 hours of intervention each week. "Those early days were hectic. Corey stopped napping as soon as we started all this therapy - there was no time. The whole family got involved. The older boys were troopers. Corey was nonverbal until almost four, so we all learned sign language. We all used PECS. It was tough. Corey had a favorite blanket and I used to put it up high, where he could see it but had to request it, which encouraged him to verbalize his requests."

With the help of Peg Stoyell, Bridget taught herself how to use PECS, a Picture Exchange Communication System, which helps children to communicate by exchanging pictures of items he or she wants for the actual item.

Listening to his mom tell these stories, Corey laughed. He remembers how much he loved the Bumblebee videos.



Corey (middle) with his mother, Bridget, and Annemarie Mattison, LCSW-R

His brothers, in that mischievous way siblings have, would change the language on the videos while Corey was watching. The outcome was that Corey's first word was "chien," or dog, in French.

Bridget reminisces about the night Corey learned how to drink from a straw. All five family members sat around the table with tumblers in hand, making a game out of sipping through straws, but the focus of the evening was to teach Corey to drink through a straw. About three hours later, at ten that night, Corey took his first sip and his family cheered.

Corey continues to grow in independence. He participates in a typical school day, currently without any additional support. Corey emails his teachers if he has an assignment he doesn't understand and they answer immediately. Corey's mom stays in close contact with the school, adding that the school is so good at communicating, she knows if something notable has happened during the day before Corey gets off the bus. Corey has permission to leave class any time

CORNELL MEN'S HOCKEY TEDDY BEAR TOSS

The Big Red Men's varsity hockey team continues to support local human service organizations through its annual Teddy Bear Toss. The team has supported Racker Centers annually since 2005, first through the Saves for the Centers (2005-06) and since then through the Teddy Bear Toss. Once each year, Big Red Hockey fans purchase CU teddy bears and toss them onto the ice at Lynah Rink at the end of the game to show support for the team's community interests. Proceeds from the teddy bear sales support Franziska Racker Centers and the Cancer Resource Center. Players from the team collect the bears from the ice and donate them to Ithaca Cops, Kids & Toys to be given away to kids in need. Assistant Coach and former hockey standout, Topher Scott '08, states, "the Teddy Bear Toss isn't a required activity for the team—it's something that the guys want to do to give back to the community. They appreciate the support of their fans in participating in the Teddy Bear Toss." Over the years, the team has raised more than \$40,000 for Racker Centers.



Cornell Men's Hockey team members forward Andy Iles '14 (right) and on left, goalie Rodger Craig '14 visit kids in the classroom.

Topher began the Steve Garner Teddy Bear Toss in 2006 as a means of supporting the community and commemorating long-time hockey supporter, Steve Garner, late president of the Tompkins Trust Company who passed away unexpectedly earlier that year. In doing so, he carried on the tradition of his teammate, David McKee, all-star goalie and organizer of Saves for the Centers. Over the years, team members Ben Scrivens '10 who has since turned pro playing for the Los Angeles Kings, Dan Dileo '09 (goalie), Keir Ross '12 (defenseman), Rodger Craig '14 (forward), and Andy Iles '14 (goalie), have been involved in organizing the Teddy Bear Toss.

he feels he is about to lose his temper, an area he continues to work on. He says he still thrives on routine and gets upset with unexpected changes or if he misplaces his work.

In June 2012 Bridget felt confident that Corey was independent enough that she decided to return to her job after an eleven-year hiatus. Corey and his mom stopped by Franziska Racker Centers' Tompkins County preschool shortly after that, at Corey's request. Bridget said it seemed an appropriate way to reflect on the journey. Corey, with his outstanding report card in hand, chatted with Annemarie Mattison during the visit. She felt Corey and his family had an important message to share. Corey's words express it beautifully. "Just because you're different (don't give up). Push on, and turn it into something wonderful." Corey, with the aid of his determined family and community, are doing just that.

The Partnership Program at a glance...

- A classroom model with intensive instruction specialized for preschoolers with autism spectrum disorders or other related disorders.
- Instruction methods are based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which have been found effective for many children with autism.
- The mission is to help preschoolers with autism and other related disorders learn new skills and behaviors, develop interests, form relationships and actively participate in community life.
- Goals include helping families of these children reach their goals for success and happiness.
- The Partnership Program is currently offered at two sites, one in Ithaca and one in Cortland.

For more information about the Partnership Program in Ithaca - please contact Annemarie Mattison at 272-5891 ext. 362 in Cortland – contact Heidi Lieb-Graney at 607-753-9375 ext. 158

For more detailed information visit
www.rackercenters.org/partnership

HEROES AND SHEROES

The end of the 2012-13 school year at TST BOCES was highlighted by the 2nd annual Heroes and Sheroes Awards Ceremony. Colleagues from the staff at TST BOCES and Racker Centers' Counseling for School Success program joined together to honor 20 individuals from school districts and organizations throughout the community. Honorees included individuals that have gone over and above the call of duty to support the nearly 60 youth that were served in both the Lighthouse and Possibilities programs throughout the year.

Lighthouse is a voluntary program which provides a short-term school alternative for kids experiencing emotional trauma or crisis in their lives. It is a 30-day program for students in 6th-12th grades. Students enrolled in the program work in a small classroom setting with a certified BOCES teacher, a special education monitor and a Racker Centers' clinical social worker to complete work assigned by the student's home school district. The goal is to help stabilize the student and lay the groundwork for future academic success so the student can safely transition back to his or her home school.

“Colleen (Ledley) is a leader in solution focused work.”

- Tamie Pushlar, Lighthouse Coordinator

Possibilities is an 8-10 week intensive collaborative outreach program which serves students in crisis who choose to remain in their own schools or on home instruction. The program supports schools, families and students in participating school districts in grades K-12. Racker Centers' social workers work with students, their caregivers, their school and community agencies to come up with creative solutions that will allow all parties to more successfully meet the student's needs. The Heroes & Sheroes Awards Ceremony opened with remarks by Mary Meeker, Principal at TST BOCES' Smith School and Mary Hutchens, Director of Counseling for School Success at Franziska Racker Centers. Program staff then shared some brief words about each honoree. The theme repeatedly reemerging throughout the event: the importance of working together. Holly Cestero, BOCES teacher stated, “It's really a team effort both ways,” when honoring Lorraine Moose, Career & Tech

“This award goes to our entire faculty at Cascadilla School. It's truly a joint effort. Fortunately we've been able to help kids and that's a great thing.”

- Patricia Kendall, Headmistress at Cascadilla School and recipient of a "Sheroes" award

Education Consultant Teacher at TST BOCES. Jaydn McCune, Possibilities & Lighthouse Program Director, referenced the Lighthouse classroom symbolism in her closing remarks at the end of the evening stating, “We are teaching youth, families, and each other how to be the light.”



Robin Pape, Possibilities Social Worker honors Eric Guercio, Guidance Counselor at Dryden MS

HONOREES INCLUDED:

- Lorraine Moose, Career & Tech Special Education Consultant Teacher at TST BOCES
- Samantha Fishman, Special Education Teacher at Boynton MS
- Leann Young, School Counselor at Dewitt MS
- Kathy Troy, Guidance Administrative Assistant at Dewitt MS
- Colleen Ledley, South Hill Elementary Principal ICSD
- Beth Taplitz, School Psychologist at LACS
- Bart Auble, Special Education Teacher at LACS
- Stephen Jones, School Counselor at Ithaca HS
- Patricia Kendall, Headmistress at Cascadilla School
- Shenita Ruiz, School Counselor at Beverly J. Martin School
- Larry Cutler, Administrative Assistant at Beverly J. Martin School
- Eric Guercio, Guidance Counselor at Dryden MS
- Cathy Flanders, Dean of Students at South Seneca MS / HS
- Christopher Carver, Social Studies Teacher at Ithaca HS
- Jeremiah Salomon, Social Studies Teacher at Ithaca HS
- Joseph Lyman LCSW, Therapist at Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic
- Stephanie Valletta, Special Education Teacher at Ithaca HS
- Sheila McEnery, Director of Special Education at ICSD
- Stacey Hern, Administrative Assistant at Lansing HS
- Tokinma Killins, Associate Principal at Ithaca HS
- Jill Tripp, School Psychologist at Fall Creek Elementary
- Marie Mauboussin, School Social Worker Belle Sherman Elementary

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: THE MAGUIRE FAMILY



Phil and Nicole Maguire with their children Clara and Miles

Franziska Racker Centers was thrilled to be the May recipient of the Maguire Family of Dealerships' new philanthropic initiative, "The Community Oil Change," started by Phil Maguire, as a way to give back to the community. Started this past spring, the program was developed as a way to support local organizations. States Phil, "Throughout the years we have always tried to be responsive and supportive to local charities, but after some discussion with managers across our dealerships, we decided we wanted to do something more focused with a greater impact. And thus the \$10 community oil change was born."

For the month of May, Franziska Racker Centers was the recipient of 100% of the proceeds from every \$10 community oil change done at any of the six Maguire dealerships. "It was a win-win" says Phil, "It brought us some new customers as well as deepened the relationship with our existing customers. People really loved that they could get an oil change for just \$10 and that we were giving the money to charity."

For the month of May, Franziska Racker Centers was the recipient of 100% of the

Phil shares that he has a special relationship with Franziska Racker Centers. "They have helped our family" states Phil. "My wife Nicole and I understand how important Racker Centers is for our community on a personal level. We were thrilled to be able to help."

And help they did! Proceeds from the community oil change promotion brought in over \$15,000 for Racker Centers! Phil says that the promotion has gone very well and that they intend to choose certain months each year and repeat the promotion. Other community organizations that have benefitted from the program include, The Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes, The Central New York Chapter for Make-A-Wish, and Hospicare and Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County.

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United Way Member Organization



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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NIelsen GLOBAL IMPACT DAY



On June 13, Nielsen associates around the world helped to make an uncommon impact in the communities where they work and live by participating in Nielsen Global Impact Day, the company's global day of volunteering. Eleven associates from the Ithaca, NY office spent the day painting picnic tables, scrubbing cubbies and planting flower beds at Racker Centers' Cortland preschool site.

POWDERPUFF TOURNAMENT

The Ithaca College Physical Therapy (PT) club hosts a Powderpuff Tournament annually to raise money for a local non-profit organization that is PT related. This past spring, Franziska Racker Centers was chosen by the club to be the recipient of funds raised at this year's flag football event. The winning team is pictured here holding the Racker Centers' banner. This year's event resulted in a \$500 donation made to Racker Centers on behalf of the Club. Thank you girls!

