

OUTLOOK



RACKER CENTERS

Supporting People with Disabilities

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Racker Rivals Big Red 2016 Recap

The total amount raised as of Monday, August 8th is \$120,079.60!

This is an increase of \$20,000 from last year's event and can be attributed in large part to the success of the fun competition among players in the online player pledges leading up to the game.

We estimate nearly 2,000 people attended the game on August 6th at Lynah Rink. The family open skate sponsored by Cargill Deicing more than tripled in attendance from last year with over 125 people participating before the game, including Laurianne Rougeau, a gold medal winner at the 2014 Sochi Olympics and Alyssa Gagliardi, member of the U.S. Women's National Team. Attendance at the newly introduced family BBQ and activities such as face painting and "Take a shot on Goal" that took place in the parking lot at Lynah before the game were busy and fun for those attending as well.

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9 year-old Mather Stover-Ling (center) with Paralympian Josh Pauls (right) and Cornell Men's Hockey Coach Mike Schafer (left).



BEING SPECIAL *by Topher Scott*

I have witnessed a lot of special in my life.

As a hockey player, I have been fortunate to skate with Hall of Famers and play on teams with future NHL Stars. As a coach and recruiter, I can remember sitting in freezing cold rinks watching Connor McDavid and Auston Matthews play when they were 15 years old. Talk about witnessing special...watching those two made the frostbite on my toes worth the price of admission (both McDavid and Matthews were #1 picks in the last two NHL drafts)!

But when I think of special – my first thoughts are not of Hall of Famers and rising stars. I don’t think about world class skill and talent. I think about my twin brothers, Max and Jake. THEY are MY heroes.

Today I want to write about my connection to the special needs community and why I devote a lot of my time to raising money and awareness to support this community. I want to tell you about how my twin brothers with special needs have made my life more fulfilling and made me a better man.

Max and Jake were born with a genetic disorder called ‘Fragile X Syndrome’. For men, it is a genetic condition that causes developmental problems like learning disabilities and cognitive impairment. Fragile X triggers neurological issues that can affect males cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Through the years, I have seen a lot with Max and Jake. I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly. I have met some INCREDIBLE people who have helped my brothers and my family more than they could ever know. I have also witnessed some gut-wrenching lows that made me question the goals of humanity. Anybody involved in the special needs community knows what I’m talking about, on both sides of the spectrum.

Here is an example of one of the gut-wrenching lows: It was one of the worst moments of my life, and it happened during a Christmas break home from Cornell. Max slowly walked into my bedroom, bawling his eyes out, and he asked me: “Topher, what’s wrong with me? Something is wrong with me...” Over the next few hours, he expressed that he’d been bullied so badly in school that he didn’t want to go back. He couldn’t understand or comprehend how kids could be so incredibly mean. Some of the things they said to him...it makes my stomach turn to this day. I felt helpless. I felt like there was nothing that I could do in that situation to help him feel any better. What could I possibly say that could ease that kind of pain? And to SUCH A GREAT KID. It wasn’t fair.

I wanted so badly to trade places with him. And I can imagine that there are plenty of other siblings to people with special needs that have felt the same way.

But...Just as we hurt when they hurt in the tough times, there is no greater feeling than watching them accomplish something and be truly proud of themselves.

Like when Max graduated from his Arrowsmith Program in Vancouver. Or when he received A’s and B’s on his report card in his first year of community college. With the cognitive challenges Max faces daily, these accomplishments were nothing more than amazing. Max is so determined to reach his goals...there is nothing that inspires me more.



Topher Scott (Center) with his brothers Jake (left) and Max (right).

And with Jake, I think of when he was named an Assistant Captain of his JV Hockey team in high school. Or when he graduated from his PACE Program in Chicago, and many of his classmates went out of their way to tell everyone what a great friend and mentor he had been. Jake cares so much about the well-being of others, and wants so badly to make other people happy. He inspires me every day.

If the world had more hearts like Max and Jake’s, we wouldn’t be shaking our heads at the news every day. We would be learning to live our lives with more love, acceptance, and understanding. And that’s a gift that all people with special needs possess. They make you feel more deeply. They make you love more fully. Through the highs and the lows, they allow you to flat out love and feel more than you ever thought was possible.

There is a reason why my sister chose to become a Special Education teacher. I love listening to her talk about the bravery, work ethic, and resiliency of her students. I love hearing about the positive influence she hopes to make in their lives.

One of the things I used to love doing as a coach was taking our players to a school for individuals with special needs, the Franziska Racker Centers. They always loved goofing around and playing with the kids, but the conversations after the visit were always very special for me. The players never mentioned anything about the positive effect they felt they had on the kids. But they always spoke about the positive effect that the kids had on them.

Those of us that have been touched by the special needs community know this sentiment so unbelievably well. But it is heartwarming to see other people begin to appreciate – judgement free – the gifts that lie within these individuals with special needs. We recognize what a blessing it is to have these brave and courageous people in our lives.

My hope is that one day we can all come to this understanding, and continue to make these incredible people belong. Because that is what they want. They want people to accept them for who they are. They want people to understand what they are going through. They want to love and be loved. And they want to belong to something they feel is greater than themselves.

Don’t we all?

SIVA TRAINING

SIVA (Supporting Individuals through Valued Attachments), a holistic, relationship-based model, was the topic of a 5-day training this summer attended by over 40 staff from Franziska Racker Centers and TST BOCES. While most participants work directly with school-aged youth with social emotional needs, the application of this model for both younger and older individuals was evident to our preschool and residential staff.

Don Castaldi, our enthusiastic, knowledgeable presenter and co-founder of the model, outlined the 4 Guiding Principles and then shared specific tools that can be utilized when people are learning new ways to regulate their emotions. The Guiding Principles that create the SIVA framework are: creating holistic safety, collaboration with the folks we are supporting, goal direction which includes clear communication on how to be successful, and healthy empowerment which inspires hope and resilience. This model thoughtfully considers the message of promoting self-care for our staff and recognizes the connection between the health of our staff and their availability to positively connect. Don’s presentation included rich examples of the direct work he has done and much dialogue with staff as we gained a better understanding of how this model could be used in our settings.

One participant summarized their experience with these words, “These were great tools to add to my toolbox and I also now have a toolbox to hold my tools.”

We are grateful for the support of the Park Foundation, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES and the Community Foundation of Tompkins County who supported this training opportunity.

Next steps include forming an advisory group of participants that will outline a plan for us to integrate these principles and tools and become a learning community as we develop our grasp on the power of the SIVA approach.

Special Thanks to the Park Foundation, and to the Community Foundation’s Tompkins Today and Tomorrow Fund for a grant to help underwrite the costs of our SIVA training. We are so grateful for this support!



SAVE THE DATE!

2016 UPCOMING COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

CORTLAND COUNTY CELEBRATION

Thursday, September 22nd from 8:30-10:30 a.m.
Cortland Repertory Theatre downtown

CORTLAND AWARD WINNERS

Community Partner Award

Carole Ann Davies, OCM BOCES Administrator

Staff Inspiration Award

Julie Caldarulo, Direct Support Professional

FRANZISKA RACKER AWARD

Cindy Jones, Teacher’s Assistant, Cortland Preschool

TOMPKINS COUNTY CELEBRATION

Tuesday, October 11th from 8:30-10:30a.m
Emerson Suites, Ithaca College

TOMPKINS AWARD WINNERS

Community Partner Award

Anmarie Peterson, Broome DDRO

Staff Inspiration Award

Dorothy Lovelace, Medicaid Service Coordinator

Staff Inspiration Award

Debbie Bray, Program Director TST
Counseling for School Success

Special Friend Award

Phyllis Tottey and Leroy Barrett, ICSD Bus Drivers

Special Friend Award

Angenetta Martinovich,
Uniquely You Integrative Massage Therapy

Continued from cover...

Most importantly, an event such as Racker Rivals Big Red gives Racker Centers the opportunity to create awareness throughout the communities we serve and the ability to share our Mission and Vision with so many. Through cooperative partnerships, involving a great crew of volunteers and creative outreach, we were able to truly see our Mission and Vision come to life at this year's game. Josh Pauls, two-time gold medal Paralympian, Mather Stover-Ling, 9-year-old sled hockey player on the Ice House Hawks team out of Binghamton, NHL Stanley Cup winners Joe Nieuwendyk, Dustin Brown, Kevyn Adams, and many more individuals of all abilities came together for a common good and shared goal: to support people with disabilities and their families to lead a fulfilling lives by providing opportunities to learn and be connected with others.

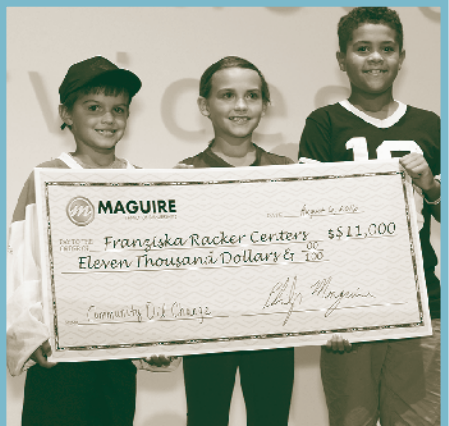


Mather drops the puck at RRBR hockey game.



Special thanks to Dustin and Nicole Brown for their generous donation to Racker Centers.

Franziska Racker Centers would like to thank everyone involved in this year's Racker Rivals Big Red Hockey game. Special thanks to our Sponsors!



Special thanks to Maguire for their donation of the proceeds from the Community Oil Change.

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Cayuga Landscape
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Photos courtesy of Diane Duthie, Ned Dykes, and Ashley Bohn

MEET RAY *By Patrick Bohn*

If you've gone to the Price Chopper in Owego sometime in the past year, chances are you've seen a smiling face bringing carts in from the parking lot. Or maybe he's helped you at the bottle return. If you're lucky, he's carried your groceries to your car.

That smiling face is Ray Davis, and he's seen at the Price Chopper three days a week. And if you've been fortunate enough to come across Ray during your shopping trip, you should know that to the people who have worked with him for years, like Racker Centers' Jan Dyson, Senior Family Support Coordinator, and Jennifer Nickels, Family Support Coordinator, the fact that he's succeeding there is no surprise.

"I remember when Ray lived downtown with his grandmother," said Jan, who has been working with Ray for nearly ten years. "He was always making sure she got to where she needed to go. And because she lived near the grocery store, he would frequently come across shopping carts people left on the sidewalks and bring them back. It's come full circle now that he does that for a job."

The move from simply being a good Samaritan to a valuable and trustworthy employee hasn't been easy. Before beginning to receive services at Racker Centers in 1999, Ray struggled to find his niche. But once he arrived, things began to change.

Ray agreed to share his story and participate in an interview process designed to identify what is most important to him in his life and for his future. The interview tool is called the Personal Outcomes Measures© (POMS), which looks at 21 specific areas in a person's life, and how each person defines their unique vision of a good life, as well as understanding what encompasses a person's preferences and priorities. The tool, one of many from the Council on Quality Leadership (CQL) is a way for us to shape supports and services in a way that pays special attention to what matters most to each person. It is a valid, reliable, tool that gives us a fresh look and new ways of hearing the ways we can provide support in helping each person to lead a fulfilling life.

"When we did Ray's Personal Outcome Measures © interview, he would repeat over and over 'I want to work,'" Jan said. "It was obvious he had the drive to be successful, we just needed to find the right place for him. The POMS interview was really what opened the door for him, because from that, we got a clear idea of what Ray's goals and dreams were."

In fact, Ray did have a goal in mind: Working at McDonalds. "He always said he wanted to work there so he could make the fries and eat them," Jan laughed.

Even after some logistical challenges got in the way of that dream, Ray refused to give up. He volunteered around his community, including at a local church, and was able to build a strong network of references. Then, he traveled to Binghamton and attended half-day job training sessions, where he mastered some of the intricacies of employment, such as interviewing, the importance of being on time, filling out a time sheet, and customer service. Over time, although Ray's follow-up with McDonald's unfortunately did not pan out, through working with his job coach, Ray was able to explore other options that interested him. His interest in returning stray carts with his grandmother turned in to an interest in working at the Price Chopper.



Jennifer Nickels, Family Support Coordinator with Ray and Jan Dyson, Senior Family Support Coordinator

With the help of a job coach, Ray was able to secure a job for one day a week at the Price Chopper. But it wasn't long before everyone there started seeing the tenacity and willingness to work that Jan observed years ago in his POMs interview. Before long, his one-day-a-week appearance at the cart return – Ray's favorite task– grew to two days a week. "We stress the 'dignity of risk,'" Jan said. "It's important that we give everyone who wants it the chance to take on challenges and see if they can succeed. Often, you'll find that they're able to handle more than they'd been given a chance to in the past."

Such was the case with Ray. After successfully working two days a week he was given the added responsibility of the bottle return and bringing out customers' groceries. Now, Ray not only works three days a week, he often comes in earlier than he's scheduled in order to help out at the store when they are short-handed.

In fact, Ray's such a valued employee that he's been asked to apply for a job directly through the store—yet another display of how independent he's capable of being. And even though he's a tireless worker, Ray's good-natured disposition and smile have made him many friends at the store, from his favorite co-worker and fellow cart-wrangler, Peter, to the customers he regularly helps.

"There's a lady who comes to the store a lot, and I always bring her groceries to her car," Ray said. "When I'm done, she always lets me know that I've done a good job."

Make no mistake, however. Even though Ray will always give you service with a smile, if you're lucky enough to be at the Price Chopper on a day he's working, don't think you can take him away from his work too long. Jan knows this from experience. "I like to stop by on the days Ray is working," she said. "And he'll always wave to me and say hello. But if I keep talking to him, it won't be long before he's telling me, 'I have to get back to work.' Not that I'm too surprised. After all, he'd been telling us that for years. I'm just glad we have the resources and people who could help him make that goal a reality."

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MAKING IT HAPPEN

Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County

We are pleased to announce that the Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County approved a grant in the amount of \$5,500 for two special needs changing tables for our residential program. The tables will be installed at two of Racker Centers' residential houses, one at East Seneca in Trumansburg, and at Eddy house in Groton, NY. Many of the individuals residing at these two houses have significant disabilities and require full care and support. This grant allows us to provide these residents with a changing table, one in each of the house's main bathrooms, providing them with the most basic need, one of privacy in their daily hygiene routine.



Floyd Hooker Foundation

The Floyd Hooker Foundation awarded Racker Centers a grant of \$2988.00 which will be used to support the Tioga County preschool enrichment program. An enrichment program for our Tioga County preschool classrooms will offer the opportunity to introduce art, music, theatre, nature, and literature to children with disabilities, including autism and other challenging behaviors, who may otherwise not have the opportunity to experience these cultural learning experiences. Taking children with difficult behaviors or limited mobility out for new experiences is often scary and difficult for families to navigate on their own. This program will allow for well-planned activities, staff support and a safe environment for children to participate in new experiences.

The Community Foundation of Tompkins County

The Community Foundation of Tompkins County awarded Racker Centers \$2366.00 through the Helen T. Howland Foundation to support Tompkins County preschool enrichment. An Enrichment Program at Racker Centers' Tompkins County preschool is an opportunity to bring together all of the children who attend programs at our Wilkins Road location: four Integrated Special Education Classrooms, one classroom for toddlers, and two Head Start Classrooms. In total, there are nearly 100 children from 18 months – 5 years old in our building. These monthly events will provide an opportunity for the children to experience new and different activities and experiences. Many of the children in our programs do not have the opportunity to access these events in the community. Whether due to the rural nature of many families, lack of transportation, or simply fears around children's challenging behaviors, the activities and events offered through this program will provide an introduction to art, music, theater, nature, literature, and fitness in an accessible and safe manner that's especially tailored for preschoolers.



FALL 2016

OUTLOOK
www.rackercenters.org

Franziska Racker Centers
3226 Wilkins Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

MISSION STATEMENT | We support people with disabilities and their families to lead fulfilling lives by providing opportunities to learn and be connected with others.

VISION STATEMENT | We envision a world where all people know they belong.

CAYUGA MEDICAL CENTER HOLDS COMMUNITY WELLNESS FAIR AT RACKER



Cayuga Medical Center (CMC) held a Community Wellness Health Fair at Franziska Racker Centers' Wilkins Road location on Thursday, August 11th. Booths were setup by local organizations to educate attendees on local resources and provide tools for making healthy decisions. CMC and Racker Centers would like to thank everyone that helped to make this event a success.

Children from Racker Centers' Special Education Preschool enjoy balloon animals and face painting while attending the fair.

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