

OUTLOOK



RACKER CENTERS

Supporting People with Disabilities

ON THE COVER

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Where All People Belong**

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**The fun begins on
the Racker Facebook
page on May 25th!**

**Make sure you visit
for your chance to
enter to win tickets,
prizes and a VIP
package leading up
to the game.**

SAVE THE DATE: July 11, 2015!

In 2014 Franziska Racker Centers, Cornell's Big Red Hockey, and the Tompkins Trust Company embarked on a unique partnership organizing the first ever Racker Rivals Big Red Hockey Game at Lynah Rink on the Cornell University campus. This unique community event included players from Cornell's men's and women's teams, Cornell hockey coaches Mike Schafer, Doug Derraugh, Ben Syer, Topher Scott and Cornell alumni Matt Hedge, Mike Kennedy, and Tyler Roeszler. In addition local players from the community including Greg Hartz, President of Tompkins Trust Company and hockey all-stars, Joe Nieuwendyk and Mike Richter signed on to play!

***This summer on July 11th we mark the date for the
2nd ever RACKER RIVALS BIG RED GAME with thanks
to our title sponsor, Tompkins Trust Company.***

Are you ready for Racker Rivals Big Red on July 11th?

We envision a world where all people know they belong.

If you would like one of our new bracelets please let me know at danb@rackercenters.org.



Why did belonging become our Vision? It came from the wisdom of over 500 people that participated in our strategic planning journey during 2014. Participants included people with disabilities, families, board and community members, business leaders, educators and staff. It was a very interactive process and I was grateful for the time and energy that many of you brought to our work.

The wisdom of our participants rivals Harvard PhD’s and researchers. The Grant Study done at Harvard followed the lives of 720 people over 75 years starting in their late teens to examine many things including the question: What makes a fulfilling life?

The study confirmed what our Participants already knew, “that a fulfilling life is not about grim determination to get or have more. Nor is it about low cholesterol levels or intellectual brilliance or career accomplishments. It’s about human connections: parents, siblings, spouses, children, friends, neighbors, and mentors. Without them, life quickly loses its flavor, whatever material successes we enjoy. Lasting satisfaction is rare outside of meaningful human relationships. Look back at your life and you will almost certainly find that the most significant moments were births, deaths, weddings and celebrations.” These memories are when we connected with others or they connected with us. The study’s author and our strategic planning Participants concluded that a fulfilling life “is more about *us* than *me*.”

People with disabilities have fewer connections, which means less belonging and consequently a life that might not be as fulfilling as they would desire and deserve. To change this paradigm and bring our Vision to life, many of you helped us create a Three to Five Year Outcome:

Individuals and families that we support will know they belong to more communities of their choosing.

Our work on the Three to Five Year Outcome in 2015 will include the following:

- How do we measure belonging? Begin the measurement process.
- We will educate our staff on what belonging is and isn’t. Simply said, we want people with disabilities to not just be “in” the community but be a part “of” the community.
- Research the state of the art on how to increase belonging for people with disabilities and then begin educating our staff.
- Equally important, we need to engage YOU in helping us make this happen.

People with disabilities may want to be “of” the community but without you that won’t be possible!

Thanks in advance for your help.

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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Nancy holds her B.A. in Psychology and Art History from Muhlenberg College and an M.A. from New York University in Art Administration. After eight years of studying nutrition and herbalism, and interning with nutritionists in the Washington, D.C. area, she also received her Master of Science in Human Nutrition from the University of Bridgeport.

Since 2000, Nancy has taken the lead on a variety of initiatives including leading support groups for parents of children with special needs and initiating an occupational therapy screening at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia’s preschool that will help identify children with developmental delays. Nancy also founded a sensory day camp for children with Sensory Integration Dysfunction and Autistic Spectrum Disorders and founded N2Nourish, LLC an organic, raw food manufacturing company. Nancy is married to Joel Malina, Vice President for University Relations at Cornell University. They reside in Cayuga Heights with their two teenage children.



Nancy Corwin Malina



Emily Papperman

Emily is a Peer Counselor at Finger Lakes Independence Center where she has also chaired the Women with Disabilities Health Group for the past four years, a committee of human service organizations and community members who are dedicated to ensuring that people with disabilities have access to resources and treatment options throughout the community.

Throughout her career, Emily has advised many people on housing issues, benefits, self-esteem and adjusting to the “new normal” that is living with a disability. Integral to her work is connecting people with disabilities and their families with community resources to positively impact their quality of life. Emily organizes workshops and panel discussions centered on topics such as coping with changes in physical conditions, sleep disorders, vision loss, stress reduction, living with anxiety and more. She is passionate about giving people (especially young people) more opportunities to do the things that they love with the people they love, in a place where they feel welcome and valued for their own gifts and passions.

Jessica Casey, D.O. has practiced general pediatrics at Buttermilk Falls Pediatrics for over 12 years. A native of the Southern Tier and a Cornell University graduate with a degree in Nutrition, she loves practicing in this area. Upon graduating from Cornell, Dr. Casey went on to study at Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, MO. From there she moved to New Jersey to complete her Pediatric residency in Newark and a year of Pediatric ICU fellowship at Weill Cornell Medical College.

Jessica is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Family Reading Partnership and the Board of Trustees of the Hangar Theatre, where she also serves as chair of the special events committee. She sits on the Physician Council at Cayuga Medical Center which is a group made up of physicians and members of the senior leadership team. She has also participated in the development of our local Accountable Care Organization, the Cayuga Area Physicians Alliance, as well as Kids Care, the new after hours pediatrics urgent care unit at Cayuga Medical Center.



Dr. Jessica Casey



Dawn Eller, ND, CNS

Dawn received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biological Sciences from Rutgers University and a doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine from Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, Tempe, AZ. She has continued her education in homeopathy through the New England School of Homeopathy. In 2013 she received her board certification as a Nutrition Specialist from the American College of Nutrition. Dawn is the mother of two amazing children, Maxwell and Evan, who provide inspiration and motivation in her daily life.

Through her private practice Dawn guides people on their paths to wellness including serving children on the Autism Spectrum. Dawn is also an adjunct professor at the Finger Lakes School of Massage, and Tompkins-Cortland Community College.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In 2004, Racker Centers ventured on the path to create a program to address the community's growing need for local services for families with children on the autism spectrum. This venture entailed more than a year of preparation, study, research, and fundraising, culminating in the opening of the first integrated preschool classroom for children on the autism spectrum in New York State, the Racker Centers' Partnership Program. 2014 marked the ten year anniversary of this venture when the Partnership Program was launched at the agency's Tompkins County Preschool site on July 12, 2004. A year later, the agency opened a second classroom at their Cortland County preschool site. Ever since, the benefits to the community and the success of the children and families served has grown exponentially.

The Partnership Program is a specialized classroom serving children with autism and other related disorders. The focus is on kindergarten readiness and lifelong learning. The program employs the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), an evidence-based practice proven to be successful when working with children with autism, in a preschool setting integrating children with disabilities and children without disabilities, and a team of teachers and therapists to support them. A decade after the program was started, over 70 students have participated.

Many of the staff who helped to establish the program are still with Racker Centers today. Annemarie Mattison, LCSW-R was involved with the program's development. "We spent a great deal of time planning and training before we opened the classroom. Over the years, adjustments have been made to the program based on the needs of children and on evidence-based research." Some of the ABA teaching strategies have also been incorporated in Racker Centers' other integrated preschool classrooms. "There is still a need for these services beyond what we can meet in the two Partnership classrooms we operate," states Jody Scriber, Director of Education and Clinical Services for Racker Centers' Early Childhood programs.

On November 14, 2014 Racker Centers held an Anniversary Celebration and Reunion for graduates and families of the program.



Attendees enjoyed a performance by Bubblemania.

AUTISM AND ANDALUSITE written by Mary Hause

www.teacheach1.wordpress.com

About 6 years ago, a co-worker asked if I would be interested in teaching a class of preschoolers with Autism. I answered, "No." To be polite, I may have added, "I love what I'm doing now," and it was true. After teaching kids of all ages with special needs for nearly 20 years, I was currently teaching an integrated preschool class. At that point, however, I hadn't had much experience with young children diagnosed with Autism. I'll confess that when I start something, I want to do it well, so knowing that about myself solidified my answer. Soon after that question was posed to me, I met Lila.

At the time I first met Lila, she did not yet have a diagnosis. I went to meet her in the daycare classroom of toddlers down the hall because I had been told that she might be moving

continued from previous page...

up to our class. I remember that they were having cake, probably for a birthday celebration that day. The other kids were sitting at the table and eating but Lila was playing and seemed oblivious to the cake happiness going on at the table. I went over to her and got down to her eye level and asked, "Lila, do you want cake?" She moved away from me to continue her play. I don't know what compelled me, but I picked her up and brought her over to the table. The screaming and thrashing that she did in the seconds it took to get her to the table made me question my actions. But as soon as she got sight of the cake, she perked up and sat down to eat. It occurred to me that maybe she just didn't understand my question. Soon after that day, she moved into our classroom and I fell in love.

Lila was lovely and high-spirited. She used her facial expressions and affection to communicate since she didn't have many words to express herself. We used pictures to help her learn words and understand what was expected of her; she learned quickly. Not long after getting a diagnosis of Autism, a spot opened in our Partnership Program, an intensive classroom primarily for children with Autism. If offered a place in that class, she would receive a significant amount of individualized instruction. I remember hugging Lila's mom, both of us with tears in our eyes, when the decision was made for Lila to change classrooms. We both knew it was a great opportunity. Over the course of the next year, I'd see and hear Lila in the hallway and be amazed at the progress she had made. Over the years, there have been many other unique and special kids with Autism who have come through the door of our classroom. We've learned so much from every child. Recently, I heard a television commentator remark that "Autism is a terrible thing." It struck me how strongly I disagreed with that statement. I recognize, having worked with so many brave and caring families, that having a child with Autism is incredibly challenging. But witnessing these children move from their private world into the bigger world around them is a thrill like no other. It's like watching a baby bird hatch. The kids themselves I liken to rare, exotic gems, perhaps andalusite.

*"...andalusite looks quite unlike any other gemstone, with patterns of colour dancing around the facets."**

*"Andalusite is a strikingly beautiful gem, but it is largely unknown to the general public..."***

I can't think of any better analogy to explain what working with these kids is like. Some have no words but know all

of their letters. Some can't answer a question but learn songs in a snap. Others could tell you the shortest route to anyplace in town. The list of unique qualities goes on and on.

Four years after first meeting Lila I saw her again. Now 7 years old, she's taller, more talkative, and lovely. When I looked at her I still saw stunning 'patterns of color dancing around the facets.' For some people, loving a child with Autism may be an acquired taste; after you learn to appreciate them, you find your life is unmistakably richer. You come to see that Autism is not a terrible thing, no more than andalusite is a terrible gem.

**Gemstone.org*

***Gemselect.com*

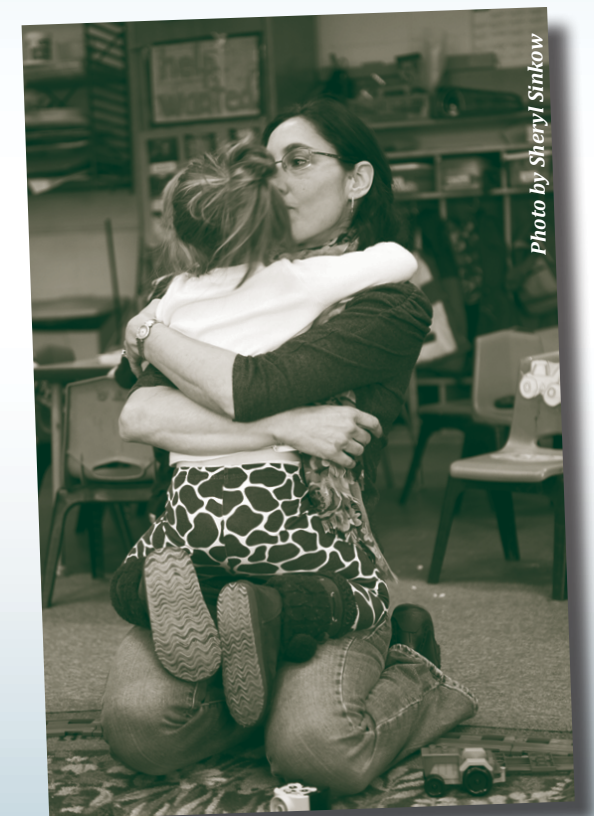


Photo by Sheryl Sinkov

Mary Hause with Lila during Lila's preschool days at Racker.



Mary Hause with Lila at the Partnership Anniversary Celebration and Reunion held in November.

A BI-PARTISAN EFFORT FROM OUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D), and Senator Thomas O'Mara (R), meet with Executive Director Dan Brown, along with Rayna Kalas, family advocate from Franziska Racker Centers and Sylvia Allinger from the Tompkins County Health Department to discuss needed legislation that will ensure young children in our community have access to evaluations. We are so grateful that they were able to take time out of their busy schedules to help us with this important issue affecting young children.



Pictured from left to right, Dan Brown, Senator Thomas O'Mara, Rayna Kalas, Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, Director of Clinic and Education Services Jody Scriber, and Head of Children with Special Care Needs Tompkins County Health Department Sylvia Allinger.

THANK YOU BARNES & NOBLE

Franziska Racker Centers would like to thank Barnes & Nobles of Ithaca for choosing us as the recipient of their annual Holiday Book Drive. Thank you to the many staff at Barnes & Noble for coordinating such a wonderful community based program. We also want to thank the many individuals in the community who shopped at Barnes & Noble throughout the season and purchased books to donate to Racker Centers. This year alone, Racker Centers received 1900 books that were donated for people of all ages. These books were distributed to families we serve throughout our various programs as well as used in our special education preschools and mental health and community based programs throughout Cortland, Tompkins and Tioga Counties. Barnes and Noble, we can't thank you enough!



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Jessie Kanowitz, Special Education Teacher at the Cortland Preschool, 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 a national Board examination. Congratulations Jessie!

SCHAENEMAN FOUNDATION \$2000 GIFT FOR DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATIONS



Pictured from left to right, Racker Centers' Executive Director Dan Brown, Jody Scriber, Director of Clinic and Education Services, Derek Burrows from the Schaeneman Foundation and his daughter Evangeline.

Thank you to the Lewis G. Schaeneman Foundation for their gift of \$2,000 to help underwrite the costs of diagnostic evaluations for children who are on the autism spectrum. Without access to these evaluations children would not be able to receive much-needed services. We are grateful for this support.

The Lewis G. Schaeneman, Jr. Foundation is dedicated to the betterment of society and improvement of the quality of life at the local and regional levels through the support of social, educational, medical, and environmental causes. The Foundation's intent is to participate in those endeavors where our presence will produce a substantial and lasting impact and empower people from all walks of life to do extraordinary things.

ITHACA SERTOMA CLUB MAKES GIFT TO RACKER CENTERS TO SUPPORT DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATIONS

The Ithaca SERTOMA Club has supported many important causes within our community over the years, from an annual nursing scholarship to Dessie Jacobs Softball and various other community projects. Supporting the SERVICE TO MANKIND Foundation's primary mission of helping the hearing and speech impaired, the local SERTOMA chapter has been a good friend to Racker Centers over the years also.

This year the Ithaca SERTOMA Club has stepped forward with a substantial gift of \$10,000 directed to one of Racker Center's top annual fundraising priorities: Diagnostic Evaluations. Evaluations are needed in order for any child to receive needed services. However, Diagnostic Evaluations are a costly and time-intensive next step for children with severe issues who are suspected to be on the autism spectrum. Because of the time involved to evaluate, score tests, complete paperwork and produce reports, these evaluations cost Racker Centers over \$1,300, while the agency is reimbursed less than \$300 per evaluation.

The Ithaca SERTOMA club's gift will generously cover 10 evaluations for children with the most severe needs, providing them access to critical services.



Ron Davenport (left) and Allan Gurewicz (right) from SERTOMA present the check to Executive Director Dan Brown.

CAYUGA LANDSCAPE TREE PLANTING



Special Thanks to Cayuga Landscape for the gift of beautiful trees for our Wilkins Rd. site. Besides being lovely to look at, they will provide shade for the classrooms in the summer months.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS VISIT www.rackercenters.org



United Way Member Organization

SPRING 2015

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.

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DAVE CLARK FOUNDATION DISABILITY DREAM & DO - D3



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