

OUTLOOK

Supporting People with Disabilities



**Back for a 3rd
Year in 2016!**

ANNOUNCING RACKER RIVALS BIG RED

sponsored by
TOMPKINS
Trust Company

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Thank you to Tompkins Trust Company the event's Title Sponsor!
Playing hockey supporting people with disabilities...

Celebrities Joe Nieuwendyk, Dustin Brown, Brian Gionta and Ben Scrivens participated in past games, along with local celebs from our Community including Greg Hartz, CEO Tompkins Trust Company, and Cornell Men's Hockey Coach, Mike Schafer, all skating for the important work of supporting individuals with disabilities in our community.



Ben Scrivens, Joe Nieuwendyk, Ashley Bohn, Patrick Bohn and Dustin Brown

Racker Rivals Big Red is an exhibition hockey game featuring Cornell University's men's and women's coaches, celebrities, and local community players to raise funds for individuals with disabilities in our community. The 2015 event raised over \$100,000 for the services that Racker Centers provides for individuals throughout the community, and brought over 2,700 people together to enjoy a lively time on and off the ice.

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Joe Nieuwendyk, Greg Hartz and Brian Gionta

FROM THE DESK OF DAN BROWN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'd like to share with you some pieces of a letter that I sent to Acting Commissioner Kerry Delaney addressing the Transformation Panel Report. This report was issued in late 2015 by The Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) after gathering needed input on how to better structure supports for people with disabilities. The overarching goals are to offer a system that is more efficient and person-centered. After issuing the report, OPWDD asked for comments from stakeholders.



Dear Acting Commissioner Delaney,

Thank you for seeking public input on the transformation plan and providing an opportunity for public comment. As I write this, I will continually transition between my two "roles." First, I am a father of a daughter, age 26, that has been receiving supports and services from OPWDD since 2008. Recently, she moved out of her 10 person group home into her own one-bedroom apartment; I am VERY proud of her. Second, I am the Executive Director of Franziska Racker Centers, an organization that has 26 group homes and supports over 1,000 people with disabilities in the local community.

The first part of your report states, "Today the entire healthcare system in our country is being reconceived to meet the needs of the future. The OPWDD system is also evolving, for two simple reasons: more people require supports, and their needs are changing. As more enter the system others are requiring support for a longer time. Needs are changing as well, as integration in the community becomes a realistic goal for many and supports can be tailored to the individual."

There is no question that we need to be more efficient, and as we move down that path we should think about community inclusion, not community integration.

While I agree that system change is very important, the Report misses making recommendations that address the Panel's three key priorities:

- 1. Community: being accepted as part of our communities
- 2. Outcomes: the quality of the person's experience and the outcomes they want, which includes living and working in the community while directing their own services and supports
- 3. Flexible System Platforms: integrated, quality services must be supported by networks of high performing providers with the flexibility to meet people's needs

What if we move to a more flexible system of support and completely miss the mark on Community and Outcomes? My daughter doesn't care about system change, she is on a journey to lead a fulfilling life. How does the system find out from her, what her definition of a fulfilling life is?

How does the "system" let her make reasonable mistakes, as we all do in life, without penalizing the supporting organization? Let me give you a specific example, from my daughter's time in a group home. When my daughter, at 19, moved into the group home, not one operated by Racker Centers, she had had sex education like every teen. Not long after she was there, she was "caught" kissing a boy (what 19 year old girl hasn't kissed a boy). Because the group home provider was worried about my daughter having sex, they immediately eliminated her community alone time. The provider was trying to protect itself from allegations of neglect. How do we create system change that enables organizations to take reasonable risks?

If you want to lead a fulfilling life, risk is necessary. Believe me, my daughter and I know about risk. It was never as apparent as when I hugged and said goodbye to her recently, in what was to be her first night on her own. One way to help organizations and individuals take reasonable risks is through the use of Supported Decision-Making.

How does OPWDD help us move to a system that fully implements the new Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) rules? While I consider our organization to be progressive relative to person-centered planning and supports, I know that the skills and habits of my 800 staff will need to change to fully implement HCBS. What trainings and funding will be provided to make this happen? Answers to these questions need to be formalized to fit with your three simple strategies to make the process of change easier for all: Offering support for the family members and the direct support professionals who are the foundation of our systems of care.

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Dan Brown

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During the past several years OPWDD has created new important visions and goals. For example, as many people with disabilities as possible will work alongside individuals without disabilities. That is a great goal. The planning/ implementation to move to that goal from the current system was non-existent. OPWDD came out and said no more people will be funded in sheltered workshops and that the funding for sheltered workshops would be cut 20% per year for the next five years. OPWDD missed item three in your list of simple strategies to make the process of change easier for all: Involving individuals and families as much as possible.

In order for the new transformed system to be effective and to continue OPWDD's leadership in the support of individuals with disabilities, they MUST involve individuals with disabilities and families in the design process. Yes, involving more stakeholders may take longer, but the end result will be WELL worth it. In my opinion, to have transformation that is successful and addresses the key priorities of Community and Outcomes, OPWDD must fully utilize the simple strategies that you mention. Thank you for listening; this is a worthwhile journey.

Dan Brown

Father of a Daughter with Intellectual Disabilities
Executive Director at Franziska Racker Centers

RACKER ADVOCACY TEAM GOES TO ALBANY

The Racker Advocacy Team went to Albany on March 29th to participate in Inclusive Democracy in Action – a state-wide initiative that encouraged staff and families to come speak to their representatives during the budget hearings. The key topics discussed were the minimum wage issue, and the care our staff provides for the people we serve.



From Left to Right: Phyllis Joyce/Parent and Racker Emeritus Director, Nate Robertson/Racker Staff, Nina Dallaire/Racker staff, Dan Brown/Racker Executive Director, Assemblywoman Barbara Lipton, Ana Landau-Swiger/Racker Staff, Nkechi Ebube/Racker Staff, Sue Canfield/Parent and Racker Staff.

RACKER RIVALS BIG RED 2016... CONTINUED FROM COVER



Photo by Ashley Bohn

Topher Scott, 2016 RRBR Event Chair, and former Cornell Men’s Assistant Hockey Coach has been the driving force behind this event for the past three years. As an article written by Patrick Bohn in the Summer 2015 Racker Centers’ Outlook Newsletter stated, “The event has grown into something bigger: a chance to connect a community to a cause.” In that article Scott states, “My involvement with Racker Centers through Cornell Men’s Hockey has been one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had.” Scott visited the Racker Centers Special Education preschool as a player when attending Cornell, and brought the Men’s Hockey team back time and time again when working as the team’s coach.

“I see the look on our players faces, and interacting with these kids has really shaped our players,” says Scott. A lot of guys I talked to have said it’s helped them realize how critical it is that individuals with disabilities have the support and opportunities that many of us take for granted. I know they’ve learned more about this cause and other ways they can give back,” he concludes.

Topher has recently moved on from Cornell Men’s Hockey to pursue other interests, but the thrill of connecting his love of hockey to a bigger cause brings him back to the game as 2016 Event Chair.

We are excited to be building the roster now and will be announcing this year’s celebrities in the coming weeks.

This year with an earlier start time of 5:00p.m.

AUGUST 6, 2016 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 3:00 p.m. Rink opens to the community
- 3:00-4:30 p.m. Cargill Deicing Family Open Skate at Lynah Rink (Open to those attending the game)

Come with your own skates or rent skates at the rink and come and skate with the Cornell Hockey players!

- 5:00 p.m. Game starts
25 minute half
Intermission featuring a match played by the Ithaca Mites
25 minute half
Shoot-out

TICKET PRICING:

Adults and Children \$10 in advance/ \$15 at the door (ages 3 years and under are free)

To see an updated roster or purchase tickets visit: www.rackercenters.org/RackerRivalsBigRed

TIOGA COMMUNITY CELEBRATION RECAP

The Celebration on May 12th was attended by over 130 Tioga Community members and friends of Racker Centers. A panel of staff and program participants was the highlight of the presentation portion of the event answering questions about their experiences and sharing the impact that Racker Centers has made in their life and/or the life of their loved one. A success story video about three-year-old Quinn was also shared and can be viewed at www.rackercenters.org.



Richard Schweitzer and his mother, Christine, participate in the panel presentation.



Quinn with his friend, Bayleigh, at the Celebration.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Jackie Jackson was the recipient of the Staff Inspiration Award, which honors a staff member who inspires and motivates others in their role at Racker Centers.

The Community Partner Award recognizes a group or business that works to improve the lives of people with disabilities in our community and was presented this year to the deserving Owego Elementary School for their ongoing support of Racker Centers over the years and the successful partnership of the integrated classroom located at the new elementary school.



Staff Inspiration Award – Jackie Jackson, Community Support Professional with her son, Parker



Community Partner Award - Owego Elementary School
Pictured above: (left to right) Dr. Bill Russell- Superintendent; Laurie McKeveny - Principal, Owego Elementary; Stefani Wieckhorst- UPK Teacher, Owego Elementary; Barbara Patten- Racker Centers, Tioga County Preschool Program Director; Meagan Sabatini- Racker Centers, Preschool Special Education Teacher; Tom Comerford- Director of Special Education and UPK, Owego Apalachin School District

2016 UPCOMING COMMUNITY CELEBRATION AWARD WINNERS

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
Annmarie 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

TASFIA TOURS TCAT by Ashley Bohn

At Racker Centers, we envision a world where all people know they belong. Stephanie Foote, Family Resource Assistant at Racker Centers, spends every Saturday with Tasfia, helping her to experience more belonging in her community. Tasfia is a 12-year-old young woman with autism, who has received services through Racker for the past seven years. Together, she and Stephanie work on achieving Tasfia’s personal goals, including using her manners, initiating and participating in reciprocal conversation, and making friends while participating in shared interests.

Another way that Tasfia is working to feel more a part of her community is through visiting local businesses and attractions. She and Stephanie have gone to various local hotspots, but if it were up to Tasfia, she’d spend each weekend doing her favorite activity: riding the TCAT, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, which is the public bus transportation throughout Tompkins County.

Tasfia’s interest in TCAT extends far beyond just taking the bus from one place to another. She’s extremely interested in all things TCAT-related, such as the different models and designs, and all the parts that make buses such a fascinating mode of transportation. She even has a pair of favorite buses—the #70 and the #30— both of which have routes in Cornell where her parents work.

This past January, Stephanie was looking for a way to plan a special day for Tasfia. While exploring the TCAT website, she discovered that the company frequently gives tours to interested community members. Stephanie contacted TCAT’s Communications and Marketing Manager, Patty Poist, and the two planned a tour of the downtown Ithaca garage for Tasfia. Needless to say, when Stephanie shared the plans with Tasfia, she was thrilled!

During the tour, Tasfia had the opportunity to sit in and adjust the driver’s seat, make the wheelchair ramp go up and down, and even had the opportunity to pretend to drive!

Tasfia, who is not often emotionally expressive, said that the experience “made me feel happy!” and that she “liked when the buses went up and down.” Always polite, at the end of the tour,



Tasfia

Tasfia made sure to thank the driver and Patty for taking the time to make her day so memorable. “I think it’s wonderful that Patty was so accepting and impressed by Tasfia’s extensive knowledge of TCAT,” said Stephanie. “Tasfia knows every make and model and could talk about the buses for hours! It’s

great that she had the opportunity to share one of her passions with those at TCAT themselves.”

Tasfia left the TCAT garage with more than just new memories. After the hour-long tour, the team presented her with TCAT paraphernalia, including a hat, yearbooks, pens and more! “Getting young people interested in and knowledgeable about public transit is very important so they feel comfortable using it throughout their lives,” said Patty. “More and more young people are giving up or delaying getting their drivers’ licenses and are using public transit. It is more affordable, better for the environment, and reduces traffic.”

“We thoroughly enjoyed showing Tasfia and Stephanie our facility and we were all uplifted by Tasfia’s enthusiasm and incredible knowledge—at such a young age—about our buses and how we operate,” said Patty. “Our TCAT Bus Operator, Manny Thumm, enjoyed showing her the driver’s seat and how all the gadgets work. Tasfia was an utter delight.”



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NEW MEDICAL DIRECTOR JOINS RACKER AS DR. MEYER RETIRES AFTER 18 YEARS



Dr. Meyer interacts with a preschooler during his time as Medical Director

This marks only the third time in 46 years that our Board of Directors has appointed a new Medical Director. Our namesake, Dr. Franziska Racker, was our Medical Director from 1971 to 1998. Dr. C. Phillip Meyer has been our Medical Director since then. We have amazing longevity in that position! Earlier this year after 18 years of service to the community, Dr. Meyer submitted his retirement letter. The Board of Directors named Dr. Meyer as the first Emeritus Medical Director. Dr. Meyer’s retirement is well-deserved and we wish him the best and thank him for his years of dedication to Racker Centers.

As Dr. Meyer retires we are pleased to welcome Dr. Kathryn Rooth as Racker Centers new Medical Director. Dr. Rooth is a D.O., a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Rooth received her medical education in Florida and did a combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. Her desire to work with



Medical Director Dr. Kathryn Rooth, D.O.

individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities began when she was studying for her bachelor’s degree in Syracuse and got a job helping to integrate children at the Boys and Girls Club. Her passion for the work grew once she took the position as a hospitalist at Cayuga Medical Center (CMC) and began working with more and more patients from local group homes. After seeing the barriers that individuals with disabilities often experience in their care, she become more interested in working towards improving their quality of care. Dr. Rooth then joined the CMC ethics committee and learned of the opportunity with Racker Centers.

In addition to Dr. Rooth’s role at Racker Centers, she is Board Certified in Pediatrics and Internal Medicine. Dr. Rooth will maintain her employment at Cayuga Medical Center as an Internal Medicine Hospitalist and at Northeast Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine as an Urgent Care Pediatrician. She brings a passion and commitment to the position of Medical Director here at Racker Centers and we are happy to have her join our team.



Emeriti Directors' Named

In addition to the exciting news about Racker Centers’ new Medical Director, we are pleased to name two long-term volunteers and special friends to our highly regarded list of Emeriti Directors. Phyllis Joyce and Steve Lipinski both have a lengthy history as volunteers with Racker Centers. Phyllis joined the board in 2000 and Steve in 2002 and both have been valuable voices, leaders and advocates for individuals with disabilities and their families.

SUMMER 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.

Cornell University



Franziska Racker Centers shared Joe Riker's post.

A beautifully written thank you to Red Key Athlete Honor Society from Joe Riker regarding the baseball event this past weekend! #WeBelong

Thanks Joel



Joe Riker ► Red Key Athlete Honor Society
April 18 at 8:20pm · 🌐

I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of the student athletes who volunteered their time and energy at the baseball game for the Franziska Racker Centers. As a parent of a child with special needs, it isn't often that I am afforded the luxury of letting my guard down in public. My eyes are always on Marco...will he wander? Will someone who doesn't understand autism have a negative interaction with him? But on Saturday, we found an inviting and safe place.

The student athletes went above and beyond. They were very attentive at all times—always ready to jump to assistance well before being asked. All I had to do was to look up and someone was asking if they could help. They took my boys into their wings the moment we arrived at Friends Hall. Please pass on my most sincere heartfelt gratitude for all that they did.

In a time when you often hear a lot of negativity about young adults (particularly college athletes), your group gave our family a wonderful gift. Thank you so very much.



Will Keilbach poses with members of Cornell's Red Key Society.

On April 16th the Red Key Society at Cornell University invited Racker Centers' families to a day at the ballpark! The men's baseball team worked closely with the Red Key Society to plan a day full of fun for those served by Racker Centers, their families, and friends. There were complimentary refreshments and incredible goodie bags that contained Cornell bandanas, cups, and baseballs! The real treat came after the game ended when everyone was invited to come down on the field and meet the players and have their baseballs signed. A huge thank you to the Cornell Red Key Society!

EDITOR Heather Hughes, Director of Community Relations & Development
DESIGN Dawn Bricen LaMorte, Graphic Designer
CONTRIBUTORS Ashley Bohn, Dan Brown, Heather Hughes



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