Inside this issue

Letter from our Director, Page 2

Racker Rivals 2016 continued... Page 4

Tioga Community Celebration, Page 5

Tasfia Tours TCAT, Page 6

New Medical Director joins Racker, Page 7

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.

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.

continued on page 4...
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 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 span of 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.

...continued from previous page...

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 mentioned. Thank you for listening; this is a worthwhile journey.

Dan Brown

Father of a Daughter with Intellectual Disabilities
Executive Director at Franziska Racker Centers
This year with an earlier start time of 5:00 p.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](http://www.rackercenters.org/RackerRivalsBigRed)

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.
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 TCAT for Tasfia. While exploring the TCAT website, she discovered that the company frequently gives tours to interested community members.

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 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 became 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.

Emergency 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.
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.

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!