

OUTLOOK

QUARTERLY | Winter 2015



Celebrating Jody Scriber by Patrick Bohn

In her four decades working at Franziska Racker Centers, Jody Scriber has impacted hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals through her unwavering dedication to improve the lives of children with disabilities, and the lives of their families. And although she'll be heading off into a well-deserved retirement, her influence on Racker Centers, and the individuals they serve will be felt long after she's left the halls for the final time.

If you wanted to try and understand Jody Scriber's full impact on Racker, a good place to start would be by talking with some of the many people she's worked with since she arrived in 1976. Even then, however, it might be a challenge. "How can I even put into words what she's meant?" said Tim Miller, who arrived at Racker Centers at nearly the same time as Jody. "In so many ways, Jody is the fiber of the agency itself, part of what makes it successful and continually able to grow."

Miller, who has Spastic Diplegia Cerebral Palsy which affects him from the waist down, still remembers how Scriber began working with him when he was just a few years old. "Even though it was so long ago, I can recall her daily determination to push me, and make me stronger," he said. "At the time, I didn't really understand how my body could work, and she helped me understand it—and myself—better than anyone.

"But it went beyond just me," Miller continued. "Jody embodies the phrase, 'It takes a village.' There were times when my mother wasn't sure what to do with me, and Jody not only helped her through that, her determination to push me rubbed off on my mom. When I was 16, I had a difficult surgery, and afterwards, I spent probably 6 to 8 months in a wheelchair before my mom handed me some crutches and told me to get moving. I know she got that from Jody."

Miller now lives in Santa Clara, California with his husband Tim, and enjoys an active lifestyle, rock-climbing several times a week and wakeboarding once a week. And even though he hasn't worked directly with Scriber for a quarter-century, he said that she still influences him today. "I can honestly say I wouldn't be the man I am today without Jody."

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Executive Director Dan Brown

FROM DAN’S DESK

After 67 years of supporting people with disabilities and their families, Racker’s staffing patterns are reaching a milestone. The last few years have seen the beginning of what will continue to be a steady stream of people retiring from Racker. The most notable of course was the retirement of Roger Sibley after 33 years as our Executive Director in 2012. This year we held a dinner for staff that had worked 25 years or more for Racker; 40 people have reached that milestone! That group has 1,169 years of work experience at Racker, imagine -- more than 11 centuries!

Some might say: Out with the old and in with the new. It is of course, important to bring new people into an organization with different ideas and perspectives’. (Since Racker has been growing, and we are currently over 800 staff, getting new ideas and perspectives’ is always happening). So is this “maturing” as an organization significant, for sure! Losing the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the staff that are retiring could result in a huge brain drain for the organization and ultimately impact the people with disabilities that we support.

As an organization we have been taking steps to pass on the knowledge and expertise of the staff that will be retiring along to other staff, and we have been doing succession planning.

It is with great sadness that I tell you that Jody Scriber, our Director of Clinical and Educational Services, will be retiring this February after 40 years at Racker Centers; she is our longest serving staff person. Yes, you read that correctly, 40 years. She started her career at Racker in 1976. What were you doing in 1976? If I remember correctly, in January 1976 I was a junior in high school.

Jody began her career at Racker as a Physical Therapist. Every decade or so after she wanted more challenges, so she became our Physical Therapy Chairperson, then Director of Clinical Services, and finally Director of Clinical and Educational Services.

The best way to describe the impact of Jody’s career is to “hear” the voices of the families and staff that have worked with Jody.

“In my work as a clinical social worker, I often encounter challenging situations where families are in need of intensive support. Sometimes “the system” cannot respond soon enough and there is a crisis that needs to be resolved. Through my work with Jody, it became apparent that every child matters to Jody, and every family matters too. She found ways to support them. If there wasn’t a way, she created one.”

- Annemarie Mattison, MSW, LCSW-R

“I have known Jody for 22 years, ever since our daughter, Annie, who was born with Down Syndrome became affiliated with the Racker Centers. I can remember Jody as an ever present personality at the time. I knew she was instrumental in teaching and mentoring and guiding the employees for whom she was responsible, as well as being an advocate for the families and children who were served by Racker Centers. It wasn’t until a few years later, when I became a member of the Board of Directors for the Centers, that I fully understood the role that Jody has played. Jody is a teacher, a mentor, a voice for families, an advocate, a friend. She has been able to evolve and change within a very complex and sometimes difficult set of rules and regulations. It is with great pride that I can say that Racker Center has been so fortunate to have Jody spend her career with us.”

– Phyllis Joyce, Family of loved one served

This quote from Ezra and Daphne Cornell summarizes Jody’s impact on our community, succinctly in just two sentences:

Jody taught our son to walk, balance, jump and run. To have given such gifts to one child is wonderful, NOW imagine that multiplied over 40 years!

Signature of Dan Brown

Here’s to a career that made a huge impact on thousands of people, SALUTE!

Quotes from families:

- Jody is not put off by a challenge.
• You can always depend on Jody.
• She went above and beyond...we are indebted to her for her advocacy and support.
• She is a voice for families and an advocate for people with disabilities.

Quotes from colleagues:

- Jody is unwavering in her efforts to support children and their families to achieve their goals.
• Jody’s leadership style: She always placed the needs of children as the priority and supported staff so that they, too, could prioritize the needs of those we served.
• Jody’s wisdom, focus, integrity, and thoughtfulness are important but she is defined by her passion and commitment.
• My early career at Racker was one of the most formative periods of my life and it wouldn’t have been possible without Jody’s support and guidance.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS



Cortland Celebration Picture Left to Right: Staff Inspiration Award winner, Nancy Bruce, Physical Therapist; Cortland Community Partner Award winner, Puzzle Solvers, accepted by Jackie Newton and Nicki Wynn; Inspiration Award winner, Joanna Welch, RN; and Special Friend Award winner, David McNeil



Tompkins Celebration Picture Left to Right: Staff Inspiration Award winners, Katie Deutsch, HR Administrative Assistant; Pauline Conroy, Medication Coordinator, RN; Special Friend Award winner, Gene Yarussi; and Tompkins Community Partner Award winner, Mary Meeker, TST BOCES

Our Community Celebrations were a big success this year as many new and longtime friends of Racker Centers attended one or more of the three celebrations that were held in Cortland, Tompkins, and Tioga counties. This year’s theme focused on our new vision, “we envision a world where all people know they belong.” Our Executive Director, Dan Brown, gave a presentation on “Belonging” and award winners from each county were presented with their accolades. We reported on our Tioga Celebration in our Summer Outlook. See our award recipients from the Cortland and Tompkins Celebrations to the left and below.



Franziska Racker Award: Sue Budney, Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards

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.

Celebrating Jody Scriber

by Patrick Bohn
...continued from cover

When asked what her greatest impact on him has been, Miller says there isn't one specific incident that stands out to him. Rather, it's "the constant presence she's had in my life, and the way she's helped me see that nothing is impossible, and I'm eternally grateful for that."

Emily Papperman also has Spastic Cerebral Palsy. She received early intervention services from Racker and Scriber was her first Physical Therapist. Even though Papperman only worked with Scriber when she was a child, she still recalls how the experience changed her. "When you're young and disabled, you don't always understand why you need to do the exercises your PTs want you to, and I was no exception," she said. "Jody worked with me to develop my strength and stamina, and there were definitely times where her pushing me helped me to accomplish my goals."



Jody with Emily Papperman

I immediately noticed about Jody is how well she is able to do that and how well-liked it makes her. The kids all think she is cool, because they see her as a big person who is ready to help them and sees the best in them."

Over the years, Jody rose through the ranks at Racker, taking on more and more responsibility and having more and more influence on the people who used Racker Centers' services. "You don't promote people for the heck of it," Sibley said. "You do so because you recognize the gifts they have and think about what they can bring to the organization. Jody is an amazing person, but in all honesty, people didn't send their children to us because we were nice. They did it because they wanted their children to achieve great things. And that's where Jody truly shined, because she was all about results. And because she's about results, she helps individuals develop the tools they need to succeed, both in physical therapy and in life."

Scriber's dedication to her position and the staff she oversaw as the head of the physical therapy department was another strong suit, said Sibley. "Jody worked with challenging people, who all had tough jobs to do, and she never gave up on them," he said. "It was patience with a purpose, and that purpose was making those around her better off. It was never about programs with her, it was about people."

"When you have people like Jody, who are good at what they do, it affects you immensely," he continued. "I was inspired to know that she was in the world and working to make it a better place."

Although it's been four decades since she started, Scriber can still recall her first impressions of Racker Centers. "There were only about 40 of us," she said. "I remember that we could all sit around one table, discussing the children. And even though we were small, I look back on it now and think about how great it was that we could work and plan together."



Jody (right) spends time in the classroom.

Papperman, who currently works as an Advocacy Specialist at the Finger Lakes Independence Center, is also a member of the Board of Directors here at Racker. And it's through this new role that she's been able to further appreciate Scriber's influence. "In everything she does, it's evident how much she cares for the children who are served by Racker Centers," Papperman says. "She's passionate about helping them, and compassionate regarding the challenges they face. That's something that I deeply respect and embodies the very mission of Racker Centers. In many ways, telling Jody thank you doesn't seem like enough when I think about all she's meant."

Passion for her job is something that nearly everyone who interacts with Scriber can recognize. Roger Sibley served as Executive Director of Racker Centers from 1979 to 2012. He recalled immediately realizing that Scriber was someone whose unique talent and gifts would make her an asset to the organization and the community it serves. "It didn't take me long to see all the ways Jody was making people's lives better," Sibley says. "It's not just her work ethic; it's her passion for knowledge and her tireless advocacy on behalf of the people she works for."

While Scriber's passion and intensity have served her and others well, Sibley said that her ability to connect with individuals has had an even greater impact. "When you work with people for a living, you need to be able to listen to them so you can fully understand their needs and how to reach them," he said. "One of the things



Jody with Margaret "Gibby" Gibson* and former Executive Director Roger Sibley.

She always cherished her time working with young, school aged individuals, and as the agency grew, so did Scriber's responsibility, which was something she relished. "I loved being able to help determine the direction Racker Centers was going to go, and developing new things in response to the community's needs, whether that was getting outreach started in other counties, getting more entrenched with the schools, or increasing services for children with autism, it all allowed me to learn new things and become more deeply ingrained with the community."

Scriber was also grateful to be able to pass her knowledge on to future generations of physical therapists. "Mentoring staff and providing opportunities to learn and be successful have meant a lot to me. I have always wanted us to be on the cutting edge."



Jody presents award to a member of her staff.

When asked what Racker Centers means to her, Scriber is direct: "It's more than a job to me, it's a big part of my life," she says. "To have other people bring you into their lives and be able to influence them positively because we all believe in our mission here is amazing. I've looked forward to coming into work every day for 40 years now, and I'm going to miss it. I'm lucky and honored to have been a part of something this unique for this long."



Pictured left to right: Jody dressed up for Halloween; Jody receives the Pride of Workmanship Award from the Ithaca Rotary Club; PT's gather at Old Port Harbor (from l to r) Jody, Kathy Tracy, Kathy Schlough, Meg Gillard, Karen Legnini, Dr. Racker, and Carol Maltese; Jody accepts the Racker Centers' Special Friend Award.

Thoughts from the Author:

Personally, I consider myself lucky and honored as well. I've had a long relationship with Racker Centers, but my relationship with Jody has continued well beyond its halls. Not only was Jody my longtime physical therapist, she's been one of my closest friends for nearly my entire life. Of course, when I was younger, I wasn't fully appreciative of her—as those of us who are young tend not to be with the people who truly know what's best for us.

But as I look back on my life now, at 32 years old, it's incredibly hard to think of a time when Jody wasn't there for me or my family. She worked with me to develop the skills I needed to be successful in school. She was there when I had my two surgeries, both as a support structure, and as the person who would call me out when I was complaining too much about the pain and making my healing process more difficult than it needed to be.

As I got older, my need for physical therapy waxed and waned depending on how I was currently feeling. But at no point was Jody any less of a constant presence in my life. Like the time in high school when my parents were out of town and she took me to a museum to take pictures for a Latin project I had procrastinated a bit too long on. Or the time just a few years ago, when getting to my car after teaching a class at Ithaca College late at night, I realized, in the middle of an ice storm, that my car trunk had broken and I could not put my wheelchair in it. With my parents out of touch, there was no question who I would call, and even less of a question as to if she'd pick me up and make sure I got home safe.

I'm no longer the stubborn child I was when I met Jody. I'm a fully independent adult, in large part because of what I learned from Racker Centers and Jody. But even now, her impact on my life is constant. When

I expressed a desire to stand throughout the entirety of my first dance with my wife at our recent wedding, Jody sprang into action, helped secure me a physical therapist, and before I knew it, I was almost immediately working towards that goal. I was married on August 8, 2015, and, like I promised my wife Ashley, I was able to stand throughout our entire first dance. It was arguably the most important three and a half minutes of my life, and not only was Jody a large part in making sure that they were as special as they could be, she was there at the ceremony, because like so many others before me, I wouldn't be who I am today without her.

In many ways, Tim Miller, Emily Papperman, Roger Sibley, and I all agree. When you look at the balance sheet and you see all the ways Jody Scriber has positively impacted so many lives, a mere "Thank you" seems like an inconsequential reply for someone who many of us don't just consider a friend and a colleague, but family as well. But it's important to remember that we don't just give thanks through our words. We give it through our actions and how we carry ourselves in our daily lives. And it's there where we truly say it every single day, in countless ways she may not even be aware of.

Thank you.



Patrick and his bride Ashley during their first dance together.



TRANSITIONS by Executive Director Dan Brown

As I mentioned in my letter earlier in this Outlook, Jody will be retiring in February 2016, but that is only one of several changes that will be happening at the beginning of 2016. We have several key staff making changes in the new year:

- Perri LoPinto, our Director of Community Relations and Development, has requested a transition to part-time, giving her more time with her husband and the pottery wheel.
- Cindy Lilly, long-time Executive Assistant, has also requested a transition to part-time giving her more time with her husband and grandchildren.
- Cris Donovan, our current Director of Community Support Services, will assume responsibility for Clinical and Educational Services. Cris’ new title will be Director of Early Childhood and Community Services.
- Bev Hartz, the current Chair of the Physical Therapy department, will work with Cris and assume responsibilities of Clinical Director.
- Heather Hughes, our current Director of PR, will be taking over the role of Director of Community Relations and Development.

Early Childhood and Clinical Services

I am very excited to announce Cris and Bev’s transition to manage our Clinical and Educational Services. Cris has demonstrated great leadership and growth at Racker Centers. Cris started at Racker in 1998 as a Team Director, was promoted to Assistant Director of Residential then Home Services Director, and in 2006 she took on her current position as the Director of Community Support Services. In 2007 Cris received her Master’s in Public Administration. During Cris’ tenure as the Director of Community Services, the program budget has increased by 270% and the program went from having a deficit to generating a surplus. Her experience managing itinerant/community based services, her experience in managing site-based programs (from her time in our Residential program), and her consistent push to have Racker be on the forefront of how we support people with disabilities and their families, make her the ideal person to lead our Clinical and Educational Services. Cris will also continue to manage our Community Support Services in her new role.



Cris Donovan



Bev Hartz

Bev’s leadership as the Chair of our Physical Therapy department has been outstanding. She has demonstrated a strong commitment to continuing education and superior clinical knowledge by recently obtaining her Doctorate in PT. Her leadership skills, partner connections combined with her compassion for people with disabilities and their families, will make her an outstanding Clinical Director. Cris and Bev will bring 47 years of Racker experience and skills to the effort of moving Clinical and Educational Services into the future. I am very confident that the two of them will make a great team and keep Jody’s programs functioning at a very high level.



Perri LoPinto



Heather Hughes

Community Relations & Development

Perri has done an outstanding job of leading our Community Relations department for over 15 years. During the last ten years, Perri’s group has raised over \$5 million to support people with disabilities and their families. Perri is a well-known personality in the development field within the region and a resource to many in the community. In her new role, Perri will now focus specifically on major gifts, government relations and family advocacy work.

I am very pleased to announce that Heather Hughes will be taking over the role of Director of Community Relations and Development. Heather has an extensive background in the field of marketing and communications and has worked as the Director of Public Relations at Racker Centers for the past five years. Heather is excited to learn more about best practices in the field of fundraising, will establish more opportunities for online giving, focus on annual fund initiatives and oversee all of the development and communications initiatives of the agency. This will lead to more resources for us to help people with disabilities.



Cindy Lilly

Cindy’s Change to Part-Time

Cindy has been at Racker for over 30 years where she has most recently been the Executive Assistant for Jody, me and the Racker Centers Board of Directors. I am SO thankful that Cindy is still willing to work part-time. Her “institutional” knowledge and wisdom could not be replaced. Over the next few months we will figure out a plan to transition part of her workload, but it will be awesome to have her continue as a resource and advisor.

MAKING IT HAPPEN



Drew, Drew’s father David, Drew’s brother David, cousins Clint and Coby

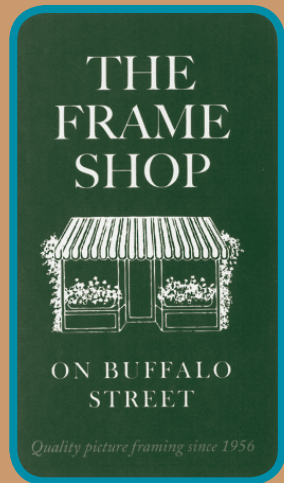
Push America Club of Cornell (soon rebranding to The Ability Experience)

The Push America Club of Cornell is part of the Pi Kappa Phi, Psi Chapter at Cornell. The group has supported a number of families that Racker Centers works with through their ramp projects. The most recent project is pictured on the left. The Knickerbockers are a family in Tioga County who were in high need of a ramp because Drew, David Kickerbocker’s 16 year old son who suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury at the age of 6 recently came to live with him in his home that was not adapted to his needs. The Push America Club built this ramp this past October, making Drew’s home accessible for him. The family is thrilled! Thank you Push America!



Push America Club of Cornell students hard at work.

Thank You for Supporting our Community Celebrations!



THE FRAME SHOP has supported Racker Centers in honoring the Franziska Racker Award recipient each year by donating their services to beautifully mount and frame the Racker Award. This year’s award was presented to Sue Budney, Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards.

Thank you to The Frame Shop for your annual support and beautiful work!



Pictured (left to right): Brian Thomas, Dan Brown, Ed Wallace, and Adam Deutsch

Racker Centers would also like to thank **MUTUAL OF AMERICA** for their event sponsorship of \$2000 for our Tompkins Celebration. Their support helped to underwrite the cost of individuals and families so more could attend the event.

Thank you to the Park Foundation!

The Park Foundation has stepped forward with a generous gift of \$10,000 to help cover the cost of a specialized training for our staff supporting children with complex mental health needs. SIVA – Supporting Individuals through Valued Attachments – is a strength-based program developed by Dr. Donald Castaldi and Michael Taylor which focuses on a relationship-based model that uses collaboration and self-management to help strengthen relationships for kids with challenging behaviors. We are thrilled to receive this support!

For a complete list of our Business Partners visit www.rackercenters.org



Please congratulate Jody, Perri, Cindy, Cris, Bev and Heather on the changes in their future.

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25 YEARS OF SERVICE

This year four staff members were honored for their longevity at Racker Centers after reaching their 25 years of service with the agency.

Pictured from left to right:

Sue Budney, Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards; Jim Schafrik, Custodian; Renie Petrovic, Director of Family Resources; and Peg Stoyell, Speech Language Pathologist-Congratulations to each of you on your combined 100 years of knowledge and history with Racker Centers!

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