

# OUTLOOK

Supporting People with Disabilities



## A HEART-TO-HEART WITH MARY HUTCHENS



### How did your career begin with Racker?

**MH:** I completed my Masters in Social Work degree in 1977 and applied for the Home-School Coordinator position that Racker had at TST BOCES. I interviewed with Jean Strout and later with Dr. Racker. I met with Dr. Racker at her office at the hospital.

She was so warm and engaging; asking me questions about my family and my life story. It was a unique interview that told me a lot about what the agency felt was important. I already felt a level of support and belonging that has continued to this day.

The position I was applying for was primarily to support the Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and Speech Therapists that we had at BOCES at the time. The role was to communicate between school and home; providing information about the child's progress and connecting families to other supports that they and their child might benefit from. I remember thinking at the end of my first month..."I can't believe I am being paid to do this!"

At the point I started, the schools were beginning to see the need for more counseling support for their students. I was happy to be able to provide play therapy to a number of young children at BOCES. This number grew steadily during the 10 years I was in this position until it became the majority of my duties. I believe it was the beginning of an emerging need to offer more social-emotional support to students.

In 1988 I helped develop the Day Treatment program at TST BOCES. This initiative was in response to their request to partner in a model that would offer more comprehensive mental health services to students and support to their families. We developed a similar program at the BOCES in Cortland in 1993. Since the late 1990's, we have been asked to develop supports in the public schools that could help identify issues at an earlier point in time. I have so appreciated having the opportunity to help create new services, puzzle through complex issues and work alongside dedicated and talented people.



Top picture: Mary Hutchens staff directory photo taken in 1977.  
Bottom picture: Mary, today, in her office at TST BOCES.

- Page 2 .... A Note from Dan
- Page 3 .... Mary Hutchens continued
- Page 4 .... Staff Spotlights
- Page 5 .... Dr. Jeffrey Lewis is named next Medical Director
- Page 6 .... Tompkins Community Celebration

*Continued on page 3...*

# A NOTE FROM DAN

As we approach the end of the year, it is a time to reflect on progress and gratitude. I could not write something better than what our Inspiration Award winner, Sheila Enstine, said at our Tompkins Celebration:



"I was amazed when Cecilia told me I would receive this award. But after thinking about it, I realized that this is a great opportunity for several things. First, it's an opportunity to let my coworkers know how much I appreciate them and enjoy working with them. You couldn't ask for a more dedicated, professional, and fun group of people to work with than the Finance Team. I want to especially thank my counterpart in billing, Debbie Allen, and my supervisor Colleen Smith. Colleen is a very resilient person, with a great sense of humor. She keeps the billing chugging along."

This is also an opportunity to thank my family for their support over the last 15 years. A long time ago, Ed decided that Thursday night would be "cook's night out" because by that time in the week I'm usually babbling about codes. And Steve has an amazing talent for looking interested when I talk about changes in billing rules or issues with electronic files.

And, this is an opportunity to tell a lot of people how proud I am to work for the Centers. The service that Racker delivers to our clients beautifies the culture they dwell in. This is hard to explain in words, so I'd like to use a picture.



## kintsukuroi

(n.) (v. phr.) "to repair with gold"; the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver lacquer and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken

What you see in the photo to the left is a type of pottery that is found in Japan, Korea, China, and throughout Asia. As the caption says, the name means "to repair with gold"; the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver lacquer and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken.

Rather than attempt to hide the fissures, the artist intentionally magnifies them, and uses expensive materials to make the repair. The repaired vessel is considered more beautiful than the original piece. The eastern philosophy behind this looks at the world differently than we tend to do in the West. The idea is to stop and examine that which seems out of place or broken or separated. Think of a perfectly manicured

Zen garden with just one black rock seemingly out of place. In examining the out of place thing, beauty and meaning emerge.

When I first saw a picture of this type of art, my first thought was "Wow, this is a perfect metaphor for what Racker is about!" This is the work that you do, staff, clients, family and friends, together. Rather than repair pots, you are attempting to restore lives that for various reasons may have been separated from community. You have learned that there is more reward in accommodating difference than in attempting to hide it or disguise it. Your dedication is the lacquer. Your time and talent, your treasure, is the gold powder. These mixed together and applied to people's lives bring them back into community, creating a culture of caring that is more beautiful for having been broken. I am proud to be a part of this work. Thank you all for making this corner of the world a more beautiful place."

-Sheila Enstine

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Mary Hutchens, continued from cover...

## What is your fondest memory of working at Racker?

**MH:** Anytime groups of staff get together to think about new ways we can be helpful to kids. I love our energetic, hopeful conversations about the whole child. We think about their interests and identifying strengths that are not easily apparent. Racker staff have a wonderful way of thinking creatively about what can make a difference. We imagine things that are not traditional and then about how to make it happen. Our staff so often go the extra mile. These opportunities are especially rich in the partnership programs we do with the schools. Schools are where our kids "do their work." If they can find success in school, their chances for success in life increases. Having educators at the table, sharing their expertise and collaborating day-to-day makes us so much stronger.

## What do you feel is one of your biggest accomplishments while working here?

**MH:** It's always been important to me that our staff feel both supported and challenged in the work they do every day. It's critical that we offer learning opportunities to gain new skills and strategies, that we foster strong teams and provide a safe place to explore the emotional reactions this work can raise. We have created a strong supervisory team that keeps these priorities in the forefront.

## How would you summarize the changes you've seen occur at Racker Centers from the beginning of your career until now?

**MH:** I believe we are more aware of the social-emotional needs of the people we serve. We are better able to articulate the fundamental need for relationship that we all have and how key that is to supporting growth. I believe our Mission's emphasis on Belonging has better focused our diverse programs and clarified some of the skills that are universally needed among our staff.

## Many things have changed over the years, what are some things that have remained the same?

**MH:** While our agency has grown tremendously, we have maintained a sense of family and culture. We have also remained an agency that is aware of the community we are in and the needs that are being presented. Like the people we serve, we are of the community and try to do our part to make it better.

## What are your plans for the future?

**MH:** I trust plans will emerge. I have a lot of interests that I would like to dedicate more time to. My husband and I enjoy traveling and spending time in exotic places. Spending time with our two granddaughters will be an important part of the plan too.



Mary has been a well-respected and quiet force at the Centers for many years. Her breadth of knowledge, sincerity & open-mindedness, depth of compassion and phenomenal patience have provided us all with necessary perspective, wisdom, and contribution that will be sustained for years to come.

~Sue Budney, Director of Quality Enhancement & Standards



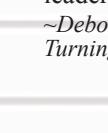
It's hard for me to capture my work, friendship and regard for Mary with words as words are so limiting...Mary has always allowed me to be me. Under her guidance (spoken and unspoken) I have become a kinder, gentler, more user-friendly version of myself. Mary has rubbed off on me in many ways; I am less reactive, more patient, better at being present with others, a better listener and have learned critical skills of leadership.

~Deborah Bray, LCSW-R Program Director, Turning Point, Counseling for School Success



Mary has certainly earned her retirement, and I'm happy for her and her family that she'll be more available for them, but it's sure going to be hard to say goodbye!

~Lisa Pate, Day Treatment Counselor



I wish Mary all the best in her retirement and want her to know that I sincerely could not have done my job for the past 10 years without her support. She deserves all of the best that life has to offer her in the next chapter of her life!

~Mary J. Meeker, Principal and Dignity Act Coordinator, Turning Point, Springboard and Lighthouse programs TST BOCES



Mary showed a great deal of confidence in what she did, in where the program needed to go, and in, as needed, the development of different approaches to the many problems persons with disabilities face. She is to be commended for a career well done. ~Gene Erickson, Associate Director

# 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

This year four staff members were inducted into the *25 year or more club* at an annual dinner recognizing staff for their longevity with the agency. Reaching their 25 year anniversary with the agency during this year were:

- **Nancy Bruce, Physical Therapist at the Cortland Preschool**
- **Sally Lawrence, Special Education Teacher in the preschool classroom at Spencer-Van Etten School**
- **Annemarie Mattison, MSW, LCSW-R - Social Worker at the Tompkins Preschool**
- **Rose Wolf, Systems coordinator in the residential program**

Congratulations!



Pictured Above: Erin Arras, BCBA Behavior Intervention Specialist; Renee Zonder, BCBA LBA Special Education Teacher; Maureen Mozeleski, BCBA Behavior Intervention Specialist & Team Leader; Kendra Perry, RBT Teaching Assistant Partnership Program

Attendees of the 25 Year Anniversary Dinner had fun with the photo booth!



Ivan and Sandy Schoenfeldt



Jody Scriber, Meg Gillard and Sheryl Edwards

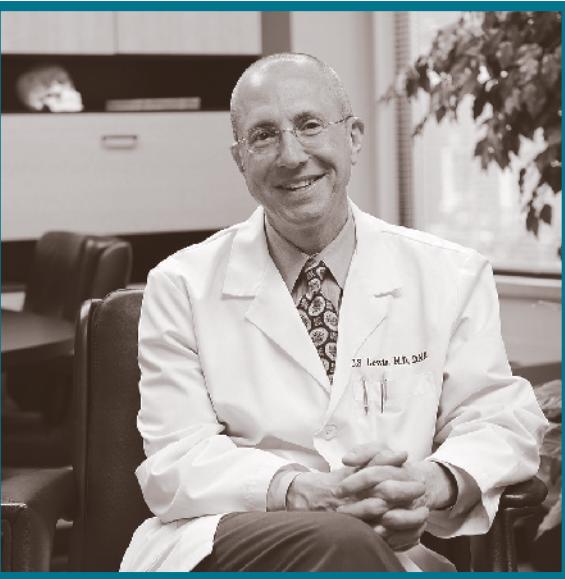


Marie Hedge, Susan Ruswick and Bev Hartz



Sally Manning and Mary Hutchens

## WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT DR. JEFFREY S. LEWIS, M.D., D.M.D. HAS ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR RACKER CENTERS!



"When I was asked to consider taking the position as the new Medical Director for Racker Centers, it took me about 30 seconds to realize that this could be a good fit, both for me, and for the organization," says Dr. Lewis. "Through my work as the Director of the Cleft Palate and Facial Deformities Team and Clinic during the past 21 years, I was able to meet and work with so many of the wonderful Racker staff clinicians and develop a deep working knowledge about how Racker clinical care is provided. Having served on Racker's Board of Directors for 6 years gave me a close look at how the organization is managed. These two experiences made me feel confident that I could serve this organization that I care so much about, as their new Medical Director."

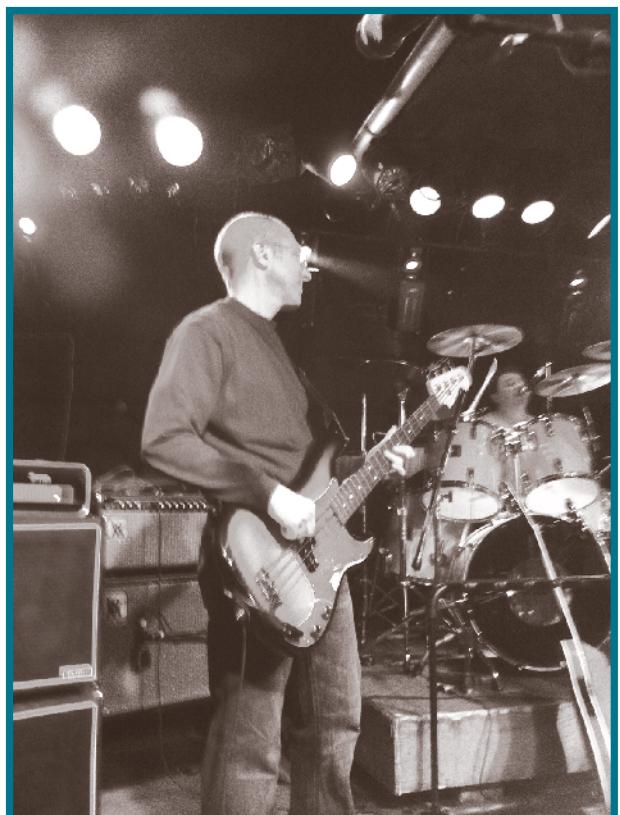
Dr. Lewis received his Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania, and his Doctor of Medicine from

the University of Nebraska. Originally from the Ithaca area, Dr. Lewis practiced in Northern California before returning home to Ithaca to establish Cayuga Facial Surgery in 1994. A few years later, he started the Cleft Palate and Facial Deformities Clinic to address the needs of local families with loved ones born with cleft palates and/or lips. In 2006, Dr. Lewis received Racker's Brick Miscal/Community Partner Award for his work through the clinic.

Dr. Lewis was on the staff at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester for over 20 years, where he also served as a faculty member at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. He is currently on the medical staff of Cayuga Medical Center at Ithaca.

"Personally, this position will give me new opportunities to give back to the community that has given me so much, in so many ways, for so many years," shares Dr. Lewis. "I look forward to doing my best to make this wonderful organization even better."

Dr. Lewis and his wife Kris have two children. When he is not seeing patients, in the operating room, or assisting the staff and the people Racker serves, he can be found playing bass in the band "Spy Donkey."



## TOMPKINS COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

The Community Celebrations each year allow us the opportunity to honor those staff and community partners that help to carry out the important Mission and Vision of Racker Centers. At the recent Tompkins Celebration, held at Emerson Suites on October 12<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed over 200 close friends as well as new faces to celebrate the following deserving award recipients:



Pictured left: NYS Senator Thomas O'Mara was honored with the SPECIAL FRIEND AWARD while INSPIRATION AWARDS were received by Jennifer Frank, Home Services Director and Sheila Enstine, Finance Coordinator. The DR. FRANZISKA RACKER AWARD was presented to Jaydn McCune, LCSW - Program Director for Lighthouse, Little Lighthouse, Expanding Possibilities and Possibilities

Pictured below: Members of the Tompkins County Sheriff's Department - Project Lifesaver received THE TOMPKINS COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD

Congratulations to all honorees!

Make sure not to miss the video on BELONGING rolled out at the celebrations this year: see it at [www.Rackercenters.org](http://www.Rackercenters.org)

This year again, another highlight of the celebrations were the Panel Presentations on 'Belonging' facilitated by Cris Donovan, Associate Executive Director of Racker Centers. Panelists discussed how their supports including friends, families, and professionals help to create opportunities for belonging in their lives.

A special thank you to our Tompkins Celebration panel members:

HAILEIGH THOMAS is a young woman who has a self-direction plan and is pursuing her many interests through the flexibility that this type of plan provides.

DR. BILL THOMAS, Haleigh's father, is also an author, entrepreneur, musician, teacher, farmer and physician whose wide-ranging work explores the terrain of human aging. Best known for his healthcare system innovations, he is the founder of a global non-profit (The Eden Alternative) which works to improve the care provided to older people. Find out more at [www.drbillthomas.org](http://www.drbillthomas.org).

KAREN LEGNINI has been with Racker for almost 30 years, the majority spent as a Physical Therapist at TST BOCES. Karen has been a go-to person for her knowledge about adaptive equipment, and has been a wonderful resource for student interns enrolled in physical therapy programs. Karen has been employed as a Community Support Professional helping Haleigh to achieve the goals in her self-direction plan and support her belonging for almost two years.

DEVEN FOWLER is a young man who enrolled in the Turning Point program in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Now in 10<sup>th</sup> grade he is successfully navigating his high school years, has recently enrolled in a half-day career and technology program at BOCES and is on the honor roll. Deven participated in the panel by talking about how the Counseling for School Success program has helped him learn how to be successful in school, with the help of the belonging embedded in the program.

AUBREY MUNSON served as Deven's counselor in the Turning Point program for a number of years. Over time Deven developed a trusting relationship with Aubrey. Through this relationship he was able to use counseling to tackle many difficult things in his life. Aubrey has witnessed Deven evolve from a young man who struggled with relationships and finding success in school to a young man who is self-reflective, brave, curious, capable, trusting, intelligent and works hard to be the best version of himself in this world.

DOUGLAS LUCE is a Special Education Teacher in the Turning Point partner program between TST BOCES and Racker Centers. He has been Deven's homeroom teacher for two years and has also witnessed Deven's successful growth.

Special thanks to Mutual of America for supporting our Community Celebration!

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## MAKING IT HAPPEN

Thank you to the Fred L. Emerson Foundation for their support of a training held this fall on self-awareness and relationship attachment styles led by Don Castaldi, co-founder of the SIVA (Supporting Individuals through Valued Attachments) training. This training was offered to Tompkins, Seneca, Tioga (TST) BOCES and Racker Centers staff who work directly with school-aged youth with social-emotional needs. TST BOCES and Racker Centers have partnered to support students with social/emotional and behavioral challenges for the last 29 years, first establishing the Counseling for School Success mental health day treatment program in 1988.

In 2016, Don Castaldi provided the Supporting Individuals through Valued Attachments (SIVA) training to over 40 staff from Racker Centers and TST BOCES. In addition to the staff from the day treatment program attending, staff from Racker Centers' residential program and preschool special education program attended because of the relevance of this model across disciplines.

A one-day training and opportunity for support on three advisory days this past fall from Don Castaldi helped to strengthen the efficacy of the SIVA training model.

The mental health programs at TST BOCES serve the school districts throughout the Tompkins, Seneca, Tioga county region. At any given time there are more than 150 students enrolled in Racker Centers' Counseling for School Success programs.



Amy Gaulke poses with Maureen Mozeleski at the Explora! Program.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH SCIENCE CENTER

Sensory Hours are events in which the Sciencenter, located in Ithaca, NY, makes adjustments throughout the museum, such as sound reduction, designated quiet spaces with sensory tools, added visual signage, and makes sensory aids available such as noise-cancelling headphones and sunglasses to visitors. All is to help create a more accepting and inviting environment for children with sensory integration challenges including children on the autism spectrum. When the program was initially started, Maureen Mozeleski, Behavior Specialist at Racker worked to help train Sciencenter staff on ways to help make some exhibits less overstimulating. She helped the Sciencenter create their calming room, and she attends the events regularly, providing sensory tools from the Autism Lending Library at Racker for visitors to use.

This past fall, Amy Gaulke, Public and Media Relations Manager at the Sciencenter in Ithaca, and Maureen attended a training at Explora, a science center located in Albuquerque, NM. This was the outcome of a grant through the Institute for Museums and Library Science (IMLS) in which Explora had applied to fund a project called *Experiential Science for Families Affected by Autism*. The Sciencenter, along with two other museums nationally, were written in as partners on this project and will implement year-two of the project in their museums. The training workshop in Albuquerque involved learning what Explora developed through the project in year-one, and how those resources could be implemented at the Sciencenter.

The Sciencenter was also given the opportunity to invite a community partner to attend the training workshop and as such, asked Racker Centers to join since they have provided support, resources, and guidance through the Sciencenter's development of Sensory Hours.

Maureen states, "The Sciencenter is way ahead of the curve in this arena. They were the only museum attending the pilot training that brought along a community partner such as Racker. I look forward to seeing where this wonderful partnership takes us."

As a direct outcome from being a partner on this IMLS grant, the Sciencenter will expand autism services using the prototype sensory kits and other resources developed by Explora in year one of the project. Additionally, the Sciencenter will work with Racker to develop and implement new tools such as training modules and resources for families. The Sciencenter will use feedback and information shared at a Listening Session held at Racker in November to help guide their efforts forward.

WINTER 2017

# OUTLOOK

[www.rackercenters.org](http://www.rackercenters.org)

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