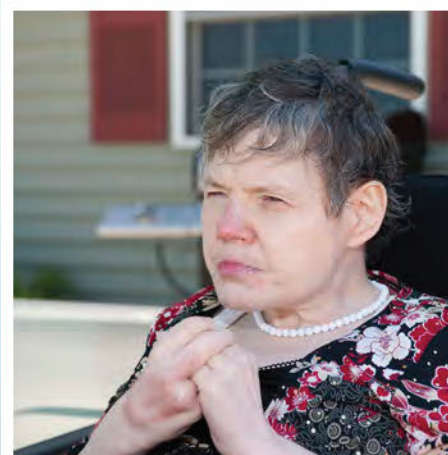


Celebrating 30 Years of Residential Services



In 1989 the then Special Children's Center (now Racker) opened their first residential house in Dryden, NY. This house, named Evergreen, became home to 12 children and young adults. Other houses soon followed, and Racker now owns and operates 26 houses throughout Tompkins, Cortland and Tioga Counties for people with a wide range of abilities and needs. We serve 144 people, responding to the varied needs of each person. Our staff are present 24 hours each and every day to assist the residents in all aspects of daily living. The goal of Residential Services is to provide people with developmental disabilities a place to call home where they can thrive. Participants receive nursing and nutritional services as well as services that help them identify and achieve their goals that reflect their dreams, wishes, and desires. Person-centered planning guides the Residential Program at Racker. Our well-maintained residences enhance the lives of participants by affording opportunities for lifelong community involvement in a nurturing environment.

In This Issue Residential Developments • From The Desk of Katie Boardman • Self-Direction

2019 Award Winners • Cerebral Palsy Associations of NYS Conference • Connections Workshop • and more...

FROM THE DESK OF *Katie Boardman*



I am honored and excited to have been named the new Director of Residential Services here at Racker. It is especially exciting to step into this role on the 30th Anniversary year of the program!

I have worked for Racker for the past 16 years, spending most of my time in residential. I began in 2003 as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at one of our residential homes – Hallstead House, doing just what the job title says – providing direct support to the people Racker has committed to serving. Supporting people with disabilities, helping them in the day – to – day activities of their life, and assisting them as they strive to reach the goals that are important to them is really the heart and soul of the residential program. Little did I know that when I stepped into that first role it would begin my journey to someday leading the program.

Over the next three years I was able to become a Senior DSP and then was promoted to be a Team Leader at the house. In 2006 I became a Team Director, and then transitioned into the role of Program Advisor, where my main focus was to mentor new Team Directors and help oversee the opening of the Campbell Ave home in 2009.

Then in 2009 I became a Regional Residential Director overseeing homes in Ithaca and Trumansburg. This was a wonderful opportunity to look at the program in the “big picture” drawing upon my experiences in residential from the ground up. I was in this position for over 7 years when I had the opportunity to join the Family Resource Program at Racker, becoming the regional director from 2016 – 2018. My most recent position was Assistant Director of Quality Standards, where I was able to delve into the critical area of compliance and regulations for the programs Racker provides.

My journey at Racker has been a very fulfilling one thus far, and as I look back on all I have been able to experience it seems all roads have led me to this wonderful opportunity as Director of Residential. I am excited to dive in! We have experienced some wonderful accomplishments, but have some big challenges as well. The program has experienced ongoing staffing challenges, and I am working with my team and senior management to address this issue. As I know from personal experience, working as a direct support professional in our homes is challenging work. But it is also exciting and rewarding.

As I get myself settled into this new role I am thrilled that Pat Montanez, the former Director of Residential, will be focusing on the development of residential properties for the program. Pat has been a mentor to me throughout my career development and I am grateful to continue my work alongside her in our new roles. Check out two of our new houses soon to open on page 3.

So I hope you can take a minute to browse through the Outlook – there are some great stories and updates including a timeline of the residential program over the last 30 years!! It’s an exciting time in residential and I am thrilled to be a part of it. 🌿

Best,

Katie Boardman

Katie Boardman
Director of Residential Services

Join Our Team!

Residential Development



TOBEY ROAD - Our newest house to offer residential opportunities in Tioga County is our Tobey Road House. Located in Apalachin, NY, this house will be home to 6 adults with developmental disabilities. Some of the new residents have high medical needs, so along with staff, a nurse will help ensure the well-being of the people who live there. The house is currently under construction, and we hope to officially open by the end of the year. As we do with all our residential homes, special care is being taken to ensure accessibility inside and out. For people that have mobility issues, a nice open floor-plan works well to ensure ease in moving throughout the home. This house will have a large kitchen and living area, perfect for hosting gatherings with the residents' family and friends. Once open, neighbors will be invited to come see the house and meet their new neighbors and the staff who support them. 🌿



Margaret Gibson with preschool student

THE GIBSON HOUSE will open in Tompkins County by year's end as well. This house was purchased to give 5 people a more “aging-friendly” environment. The residents in this house are active and involved in the community. The house is located on West Hill in Ithaca, with great access to shopping and volunteer opportunities. Upon going to see the house for the first time it was a wonderful surprise for the team to realize that it was once owned long ago by a very special friend of Racker. In her memory we have decided to name the house after her – The Gibson House. 🌿

BEING A DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL is an opportunity to share in the excitement of helping someone have a fulfilling life. Racker provides the training you need to be confident in your ability to help support someone live a life filled with goals of their choosing. Interested in learning more about becoming a Direct Support Professional? Please visit www.racker.org/employment to browse our open positions.

When Did The Houses Open?

- Evergreen.....1989
- East Seneca.....1993
- Hook1994
- Levydale1995
- Salem.....1998
- Circle.....1998
- Halstead1998
- Eddy1998
- Highgate1999
- East King2000
- Miller.....2001
- Larchmont2001
- North Triphammer.....2001
- Penny Lane2001
- Clinton.....2005
- Hilton.....2006
- McFadden.....2006
- Campbell2009
- Etna.....2009
- Starry Night2011
- Warren2012
- Rivers Edge2013
- Dryden.....2013
- Coventry2014
- Holiday Hill2014
- Gaskill2014
- Gibson House.....2019

Throughout 2019 we honored many Racker staff and community members in recognition of their commitment to Racker's Mission and Vision. Hundreds of people attended each of our community celebrations held in Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins counties. Thank you to everyone who helped nominate, celebrate, and honor recipients this year!



CORTLAND COUNTY

RACKER PRESENTED AWARDS TO:

Cortland County

- THE INSPIRATION AWARD
Sonia Ferro - *Early Childhood Director*
Stephanie Wasley - *Family Support Coordinator*
- THE COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD
Cortland Prevention Resources COMPASS Program
- THE SPECIAL FRIEND AWARD
Tom Backus
- SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD
Mark Webster - *President, Guthrie Cortland Medical Center*

FRANZISKA RACKER AWARD
Sandy Ehrlich - *Care Coordination Director (Agency Wide)*

Tioga County

- THE INSPIRATION AWARD
Megan Kaminsky - *Family Resource Regional Director*
Reggye Wiggins - *Senior Shift Supervisor*
- THE COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD
Pat Gillule - *Candor Central School District*
- THE SPECIAL FRIEND AWARD
Jamie Holliday - *Tioga County Boys and Girls Club*



TIOGA COUNTY

Tompkins County

- THE INSPIRATION AWARD
Kelly Buck - *Senior Daycare Teacher*
Charity Miller - *Senior Relief Direct Support Professional*
- THE COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD
Dr. Bryan Duff, *Cornell University (Not Pictured)*
- THE SPECIAL FRIEND AWARD
Tamie Pushlar
- SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD
Sarah Rich, Ph.D
- MARY HUTCHENS AWARD
Bev Hartz - *Clinic Director (Not Pictured) (Agency Wide)*



TOMPKINS COUNTY

SELF-DIRECTION

MEET THE TEAM

- Carol Wallace
- Laura Riker
- Gayle Pado
- Melissa Kiser
- Angila Ferguson
- Jan Dyson (*not pictured*)



RACKER'S SELF DETERMINATION PROGRAM

Self-Directed Services, where people with disabilities have choices and control over the services provided to help them, have been a long time coming. In the 1960s and 1970s, Independent Living Centers and disability rights organizations moved forward the radical idea that ALL people, including people with disabilities, deserve to have choices and the right to make decisions about their lives, including the supports they receive and the lives they live.

Racker has always held the value of being centered on the people and families we serve – ensuring they are the captain of their ship, giving them the information they need to make choices, and then respecting decisions. To the greatest extent possible, the bulk of our services have been “self-directed” since our inception.

Self-Direction as a funded program model, began slowly. It wasn’t until the mid to late 1990s, when the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded a pilot to explore self-directed services for people with intellectual and physical disabilities, that the movement became something truly viable for more people.

Ten years ago, Racker made the decision to begin providing formalized Self-Directed services. It started very small, but in the last 6 years, it has become a standard option for many people with disabilities, and we are seeing enormous growth in this option. Self-Direction provides the platform for people and their families to be in the driver’s seat. They work with a team to plan the details of their lives, what they need help with, and what parts of their lives they want to grow and enhance. They choose the staff to help them, choose the rate of pay, choose how to prioritize supports, and make decisions on goals and the strategies to reach those goals. The Self-Direction Program also gives flexibility in how resources are used. There are options to enhance independent living, support to build leisure skills, and a team of personal friends and professional help to help make it all happen.

The research is clear. When people with disabilities have more control and choice in their lives, the higher their overall quality of life. When providers, like Racker, are exploring ways to improve the quality of our services, we need to look toward more opportunities to give control and decisions back to the people we are here for. They know their lives best. We can provide experience-based input, expertise in certain areas, scenarios of possible options, and then support the decisions that people make to move their lives forward in the way that will lead toward their own, personally-defined, fulfilling life.

CLARA'S STORY

People using Self-Direction often talk about the flexibility and freedom that the program provides. Recently, Kay Allen shared stories of her daughter Clara’s success as a busy young woman. Clara is currently using self-direction to fill her days doing the things she loves. Clara, with the help of her Community Support Professional paid through her Self-Direction budget, spend the week volunteering in the community, meeting friends and neighbors for lunch and art courses, and setting aside time for exercise. Kay described the program as giving Clara the opportunity to have a purpose in the community and to have her own life – outside of her mom’s oversight. The flexibility, and ability to experiment, are critical to the success of the program. Clara has been able to stretch her imagination and push beyond what typical programs may have thought were possible for her.

FAYE'S STORY

Faye Bareham’s experience for her son, Ryan, mirrors that of Kay and Clara. Prior to joining self-direction, there were barriers in the more traditional services that have been eliminated with the individualization inherent in Self-Direction. Self-Direction’s budget gives people more control. Faye described this in the use of the budget to purchase items specifically needed for her son including specially sized shoes and socks, as well as apps for her son’s communication device. Ryan is working on his communication, using an iPad and the communication app *Proloquo2Go*. With his Community Support Professional, Ryan has a wide variety of chances to build his skills. While in the community, Ryan and his support staff work on making choices and communication. He is making decisions about his life every day and is planning next year to put his communication skills to work in a new job.

SELF-DIRECTION IS HARD WORK

There is a lot to juggle between managing staff and the paperwork that comes along with the services, but for both of these families, they have been able to use Self-Direction in creative ways that support their overall goals for their children – a fulfilling, independent life.

Electronic Outlook

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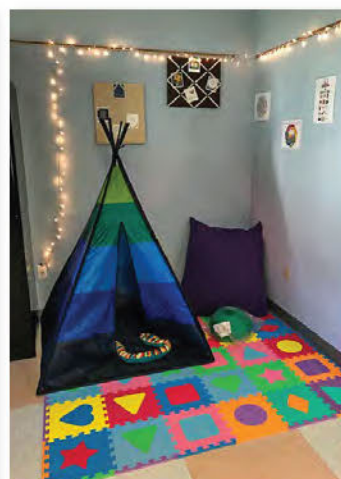
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CORTLAND LENDING LIBRARY

The Cortland Lending Library is part of the Parent Network and is located in the Family Resource Office in our Cortland site. The library is funded by New York State's Family Support Services and designed for individuals and their families to try out various sensory items or get some needed information. Various items are on display with new items rotated often. Some highlights include the bubble light, sound machines, different type of weighted blankets, vests, lap pads, two different types of tunnels, a crash pad (not on display) Yogibo bean bag, various fidget sensory items, visual timers, and much more!

For any questions or to learn more please contact Amanda Hudson by phone at 607-753-9376 ext. 119 or by email at AmandaH@racker.org



The Partnership Program Celebrates 15 Years

2019 marked 15 years of The Partnership Program and we celebrated with a presentation from Karen Fried (original program director), Annemarie Mattison (social worker), and Dan Brown (Racker executive director). A video directed by one of the original graduating students was also played.



Staff and team involved with the Partnership Program over the 15 years.



Former staff, families, and community members attended the anniversary party. Original students from the first year were in attendance, some of whom can now drive and work full time jobs or go to college! Thank you to everyone who attended and helped celebrate this successful program.

Dr. Karen Fried, center, with Roger Sibley (Emeritus Executive Director) and Jody Scriber (former Early Childhood & Clinic Director).

RACKER STAFF HONORED AT CEREBRAL PALSY ASSOCIATIONS OF NYS ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Top Row From Left: Dan Brown - Executive Director; Patricia Walsh - Family Resource Assistant & Award Winner; Jennifer Frank - Home Service Director; Austin MacRae - Senior Family Support Coordinator & Award Winner; Gayle Pado - Director of Family Resources; Jackie Jackson - Family Resource Assistant/SEMP Specialist

Bottom Row From Left: Cris Donovan - Associate Executive Director; Lisa Coniglio - Community Support Professional & Award Winner; Rebecca Kithcart - Community Support Professional.

Not Pictured: Savannah Medler - Senior Direct Support Professional & Award Winner

MAKING IT HAPPEN

CONNECTIONS WORKSHOP



During four days in August, 13 people participated in the "Connections" improv workshop held at Racker's Wilkins Road location in Ithaca. The workshop was suggested by a Racker parent who witnessed her daughter's transformation in an "Introduction to Improv" class led by the workshop's creator and facilitator, Erica Marx. "Everyone craves connection and a sense of belonging. Improv instantly creates a context where we must rely on each other for support," says Marx. "Improv teaches the social skills that connect us to each other." The workshop was made possible through the generous support of The Richard M. Leavitt M.D. Memorial Fund, The Frances V. Wilson Memorial Fund, The Bohn Family Fund, and the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities.

Participants were saying:

"I was surprised by the cohesiveness of the teams - it was obvious that friendships were forming. All of the participants seemed to genuinely enjoy the activities and each other's company"

"Olivia loved the program! Wants to do it again, smiled all week"

"I liked the acting. It was fun."

Confidence Coach Erica Marx leads an improv group



Ice Cream Social & Physics Bus

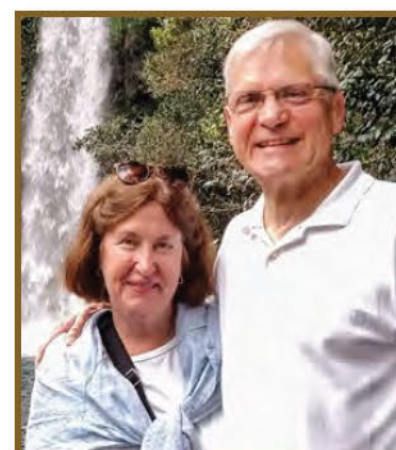
Racker held an Ice Cream Social at Stewart Park on Saturday September 21st! The weather was warm and the ice cream was cold. Over 100 people attended, including current and former Racker staff, as well as many of the families and people Racker supported over the years. The Ithaca Physics Bus was also there treating attendees to the wonderful world of science, creativity, and imagination!

Thank you to everyone that came to help us celebrate! 🌟



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Making a planned gift for Racker was important to us because...



Joe and Marney Thomas: "For me it started in 1973," says Marney. "I had just finished my doctorate and was hired by the then Special Children's Center, to be their child psychologist. I worked there for 10 years, and it was an incredible experience. I learned so much from the other staff, and from the wonderful families that shared their stories with me and welcomed me into their lives. Racker continues to provide critical support and services for people with disabilities and their families, and Joe and I want to ensure that the good work that is being done can continue for future families that will need help." Joe agrees. "Having Racker in our community makes it a better place for all of us," he says. "The vision of a world where all people know they belong, speaks deeply to me. I want to make sure that this vision can continue. Serving on the board of directors confirms for me that the agency is well-run, financially sound, and mission driven. Marney and I both feel confident that our planned gift will be well-used."

For more information on planned giving contact: Perri LoPinto at 607.272.5891 x. 234 or perri@racker.org

WINTER 2019

OUTLOOK

Racker
3226 Wilkins Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

WWW.RACKER.ORG

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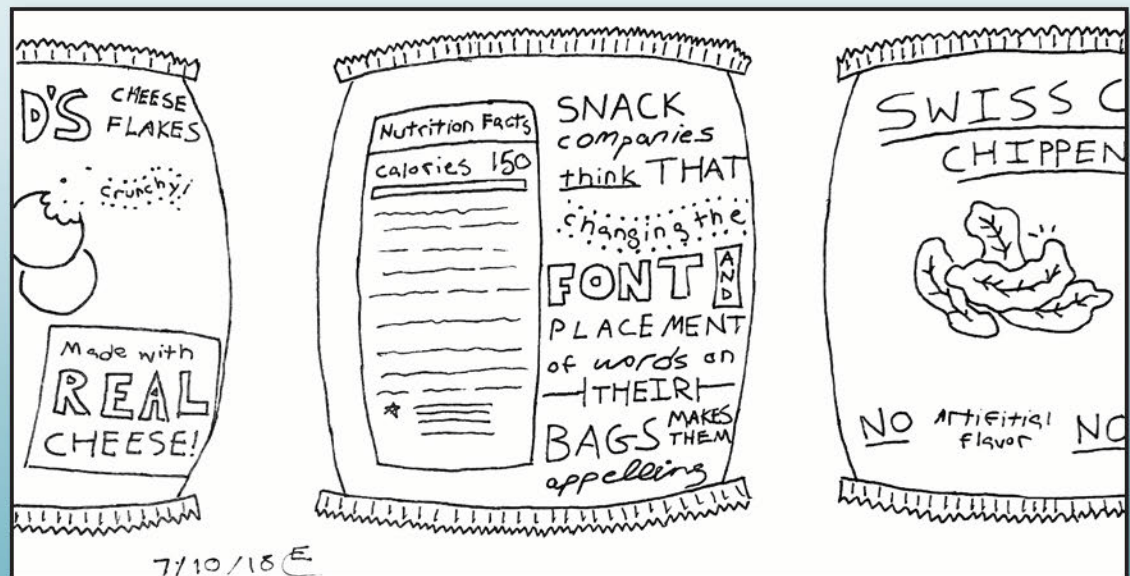
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Ethan Carlson is a student at Ithaca High School. As an individual on the autism spectrum, Ethan sees the world a bit differently than most people. This is especially seen in his cartoons.

Ethan's drawings are purposefully minimalist in order to make readers focus less on the imagery, and more on the humor that is ingrained in it. Many of his cartoons focus on the absurdity of everyday life, while others examine the irony of surreal situations.

For the past year and a half, Ethan has been publishing comics in his high school's magazine: *IHS Tattler*.

Thank you Ethan for sharing your excellent cartoons with us!

EDITOR Bob Brazill, Director of Community Relations and Development
DESIGN Joshua Skellett, Creative Content Strategist
CONTRIBUTORS Katie Boardman, Ethan Carlson, Cris Donovan,
Jennifer Frank, Amanda Hudson, Perri LoPinto, Joshua Skellett
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and Friends of Racker



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