Hears
Commitment to hearing

#IGotTheShot
Why Racker Vaccinates

MESSAGE FROM
RACKER BOARD PRESIDENT

COMMUNITY
COMING TOGETHER

ADVOCACY
TWENTY TWENTY-ONE
DEAR RACKER COMMUNITY: Hello! My name is Emily Papperman, and I have the privilege of being the new Racker Board President. For those that don’t know me, I am a lifelong resident of Interlaken, NY and I have been working in the disability services field for the last 13 years. I have also been involved with Racker for my entire life, receiving EI (Early Intervention) services and attending the preschool as a child and receiving physical and occupational therapies up until I graduated high school in 2003. I really believe that without the groundwork Racker gave me early on, I wouldn’t be as healthy and successful now.

Recently, I was asked to share why I both volunteered for the board, and accepted the nomination for Board Chair. The answer to that is simple: I felt that joining the Board allowed me to both give back to an agency that gave me such great support and care growing up, and provided me with an opportunity to help ensure that Racker can continue to help people with disabilities know they belong for years to come.

When I was asked to serve as the current Board President, my first reaction was “Are you serious?” because I generally prefer to smooth the way behind the scenes. I realized that it’s also important to continue to make sure that the needs and voices of people with disabilities continue to be heard and championed by our legislators. I also want to work to ensure that those who receive services through any Racker program are continually involved in having conversations and making decisions that directly affect how they receive care and live their daily lives. Accepting the Board President position also gives me a chance to continue to serve alongside the Racker staff to help make that happen.

Racker is important to me because it is led by the incredibly dedicated Board and staff who genuinely care about the people they serve and their families. They are a dedicated, passionate, caring group of people who work tirelessly to fulfill Racker’s mission to “envision a world where people know they belong.” Racker is important because they fight for their people and they love their community. At Racker everyone is part of a bigger family, and I think that that sense of family and togetherness is more important now than it’s ever been in this crazy time. I think Racker is important to the community for the same reason. It continues to promote togetherness, inclusion, and hope for the future, even amid (or perhaps in spite of) divisiveness, chaos and uncertainty.

In short: Racker cares. About its mission and purpose. About its people. About the community at large. I do too, and I am honored to work and serve alongside them. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to serving and helping in any way I can. Be well!

EMILY PAPPERMAN
President
Racker Board of Directors

Vaccines are not 100% effective, so the more people who get them, the less chance that the virus will be able to spread. A vaccine is not only used to protect you as an individual, it is there to protect anyone to whom you are exposed. The virus can be present without causing any symptoms and can inadvertently be passed on to someone who, in turn, may develop life threatening and/or life-altering complications. Widespread vaccination protects those who are not able to get vaccinated.

Dr. Dibble, a psychiatrist with our Counseling for School Success program, recently received both doses of her COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Dibble explained how she came to the decision to get her vaccine, and why she felt receiving the vaccine was important: “Prior to accepting my vaccination, I reviewed the science. I watched the public forums that were part of the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process. I consulted with my primary care physician to ensure that I did not have any health concerns that would make taking the vaccine risky. Every eligible health care provider I know has opted to receive a vaccine.”

Getting the vaccine is one of the moving parts to help put an end to this virus! I want to keep my families safe and continue to support them!

EMILY PAPPERMAN
President
Racker Board of Directors
Ithaca Hears

COMMITMENT TO HEARING

In 1993, the Special Children Center’s Audiology Clinic opened its doors. The organization’s long-time medical director, and later namesake, Dr. Franziska Racker had long advocated for the agency to provide these services. She knew that for many years, children had been denied access to hearing services by institutions because it was thought they had developmental delays when in fact they suffered from undiagnosed hearing difficulties instead. Since then, the Audiology Clinic has been an integral part of the agency’s array of services and an enduring legacy of Dr. Racker.

In its early years, the Clinic primarily served children in the Racker preschool or had been referred by Early Intervention programs in the area. Dr. Monica Brace Van Houten joined the Racker Audiology team in 2000. She brought with her an enthusiasm for expanding the Audiology Clinic to see not just people with disabilities within our programs and neighboring agencies, but to open the doors to the community at large. Jody Scriber, retired Director of Clinical and Educational Services, stated that “Monica [brought] new ideas on how to increase our client base and be more efficient in our services. She also worked to develop relationships with hearing aid suppliers and to develop opportunities for the public to learn what is new and available to satisfy the needs of our community. Monica works with a wide range of people who are interested in improving their quality of life with better hearing. The Clinic has steadily grown with the advances that were implemented by Monica.”

Today, Monica’s office is busier than ever. Dr. Van Houten has seen the expansion of the Clinic from the single room on Elmira Road to the larger, but shared space in the West End of Ithaca. This space was the home of the Clinic until 2015, when it moved to a new office building. Monica felt that moving to this location on State Street was vital to the growth of the Clinic, to “make a better experience for our patients.” Monica and Kim Steiner, Patient Administrator and Audiology Clinic Coordinator, both of whom celebrated their 20-year anniversary with Racker Audiology in 2020, oversaw the logistics of the move to their new space.

With the addition of Kris Lewis, Audiology Clinic Supervisor, and Crystal Garrett, Administrative Assistant, the office runs as a well-oiled machine. And with the continued growth of the Clinic, they are not just a critical part of our constellation of clinical services, but they are also one of the only area providers of hearing aids that accepts Medicaid.

Most recently, Monica and her team have had to adapt to the changes that came on the heels of the COVID-19 Pandemic. When pandemic closures began in mid-March 2020, the audiology team quickly worked to ensure their patients were supported. One key change was the use of telehealth to troubleshoot issues with hearing aids or help people adjust their newly dispensed devices. Kris Lewis, office supervisor, explains that telehealth was completely new to the practice and certainly had a learning curve, but that patients always came first and this was one way they could ensure everyone’s needs were being met. Monica explained that “hearing has been even more important to many people during Covid, it’s their connection to family and friends.”

As the office began to reopen for in-person visits, the team worked on safeguards for both patients and staff. Kim Steiner explained that historically, the office had an open-door policy to troubleshoot hearing aid issues in real time. With Covid precautions at the forefront of everyone’s mind this last year, Kim now does a great deal of the triage and troubleshooting for hearing aids over the phone. They’ve found that many of the issues patients have can be addressed at home, with the support of office staff. Between phone consultations, spreading out visits to prevent overlapping patients, and thorough health screenings before patients and staff can enter the building, the staff have managed to keep a safe space for returning patients.

The Audiology Clinic has weathered 2020 by being adaptable and putting patients first, and the future looks bright. When asked where they saw the clinic in five years, Monica and Kim were not short of ideas. There are goals to transition to a fully electronic medical record keeping system, but at the end of the day, Monica felt that “if we’re still doing in five years what we’re doing now, that’s a success.”

“Testimonial”

Dr. Van Houten was so nice and helpful, and very comforting.

I was going back and forth between different audiology offices for a while. The first time meeting Dr. Van Houten in person, I got fitted for my hearing aids. She helped me through the process of learning how to wear them, and helped me understand how to work with my insurance company.

I am a full-time student and also work full time. I’ve had my hearing aids for about a month, and I can’t wait to go back to work with them! When I take my hearing aids off, it’s like a completely different world. I didn’t know birds chirped or that cats purred, or that an oven makes crackling noises as it’s heating up.

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, Racker Audiology got me in as soon as they could. It’s quick and easy when all of the other places I went to before finding Dr. Van Houten were not.

I would recommend Racker Audiology to anyone looking for support, because they helped me get what I needed which makes my life more fulfilling.

There are so many people that are embarrassed about needing hearing aids. I’m not embarrassed at all, as long as I can hear. I can’t imagine my life without my hearing aids.”

607.882.9047

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Monica Van Houten, Audiologist, and Kim Steiner, Audiology Program Coordinator, both celebrated their 20-year anniversary with Racker Audiology in 2020. Congratulations, Kim and Monica!”
The Lipinski Tradition of Kindness and Hope

The holiday season is full of traditions. For Steve and Kathy Lipinski, one of their traditions is helping their neighbors and bringing joy to local families. Each year, the Lipinskis create baskets of food, candy and other essentials to be distributed to people in need. They work with Racker staff who help identify families in need, and arrange the basket based on the size of the family.

“We’ve been doing it for some time, so we’ve really got it down to a science. We do this to honor our very special niece, Spencer Margaret,” said Steve, who puts together an elaborate spreadsheet that outlines various goods and the number of people per family. This year was a little different, as there were more families in need due to the pandemic. The Lipinskis adapted their process and put together even more baskets for our community.

In a year when kindness and hope are in high demand, Steve and Kathy Lipinski continue to show us what is important. Following a basket delivery, one Racker staff reflected: “I spoke with the family this morning and she asked that I pass along their sincere gratitude for the overflowing holiday basket provided before Christmas. She was very emotional and shared how helpful it was for her whole family to have such a generous gift over the holidays. She mentioned how much worry it alleviated. The family was so very appreciative of the generosity.”

Many thanks to Steve and Kathy. We are so grateful for your time and generosity.

Racker Staff Donates Gift Card

Every fall, Racker staff support the Tompkins County United Way charitable giving campaign. With each donation, staff are entered into a random drawing to win various prizes. Sally Manning, Racker’s Family Navigator Partnership Coordinator, was the winning recipient of a gift card as a result of her contribution to the United Way giving campaign. In true Sally fashion, she donated the card right back to be available for use by the Racker Community. Sally had this to say about the donation,

“My donation of the gift card is the perfect definition of serendipity, synchronicity, the planets aligning perfectly, the gods and goddesses of the world working together and every other goodness that exists in the world coming together!”

Sally and her team had previously set out to share holiday cheer of some sort to Racker’s Residential Program. While Sally and her team ended up hand delivering Chinese food for a holiday lunch to a few homes, Sally says, “A few days before Christmas, I learned I had won the United Way gift card. Voila! It was my pleasure to make my United Way donation useful twice. I couldn’t imagine a better way to pay it forward!”

Thank you Sally for your donation and for spreading holiday cheer and hope to the Racker community!

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Cookies for Caregivers delivers cookies to Cortland Racker Homes

Since their inception, Cookies for Caregivers has gained interest on a global scale for the better part of 2020. With so much to be unsure about, one group was sure of one thing: caregivers never stopped working hard and they could use some extra compassion in a world full of fatigue. Their official Facebook group states, “Cookies for Caregivers was born as a reflection of the COVID-19 experience in 2020. Many folks continued to go to work and serve their community as others were told to stay home, or were able to work from home. We decided to show our gratitude to those working to serve us by serving them freshly baked cookies as a modest sign of our appreciation and respect.”

Cookies for Caregivers delivers cookies to Cortland Racker Homes

Cookies for Caregivers delivers cookies to Cortland Racker Homes

Erin McBane
Tobey
Apalachin NY , 13732
Residential Development in our community.

Greetings from Tobey Road

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
Tobey Road - We’re proud to announce that our newest
home welcomes 6 adults with developmental disabilities.
Like many other programs at Racker, opening Tobey Road faced a few setbacks throughout 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, our talented residential development and facilities teams were able to reorient
new and existing staff into the Tobey Road home to best support the transition for the new people moving in.

To stay up to date on our advocacy push, please visit www.racker.org/advocacy
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.

In 2020, Ethan started teaching Comic Book Design, a class offered as part of Racker’s weekly Virtual Activities. For more information, please check out our Virtual Activities Calendar posted every week on www.racker.org/events!

Thank you Ethan for sharing your excellent cartoons with us!