

OUTLOOK Racker

QUARTERLY | FALL 2022

WWW.RACKER.ORG

8:30am-10:30am

OCTOBER

12

WEDNESDAY

CORTLAND

Celebration

Cortland Repertory Theatre

8:30am-10:30am

OCTOBER

13

THURSDAY

TIOGA

Celebration

Tioga Downs Ballroom

8:30am-10:30am

OCTOBER

14

FRIDAY

ITHACA

Celebration

Emerson Suites, Ithaca College

Join us for one of three
Celebrations!

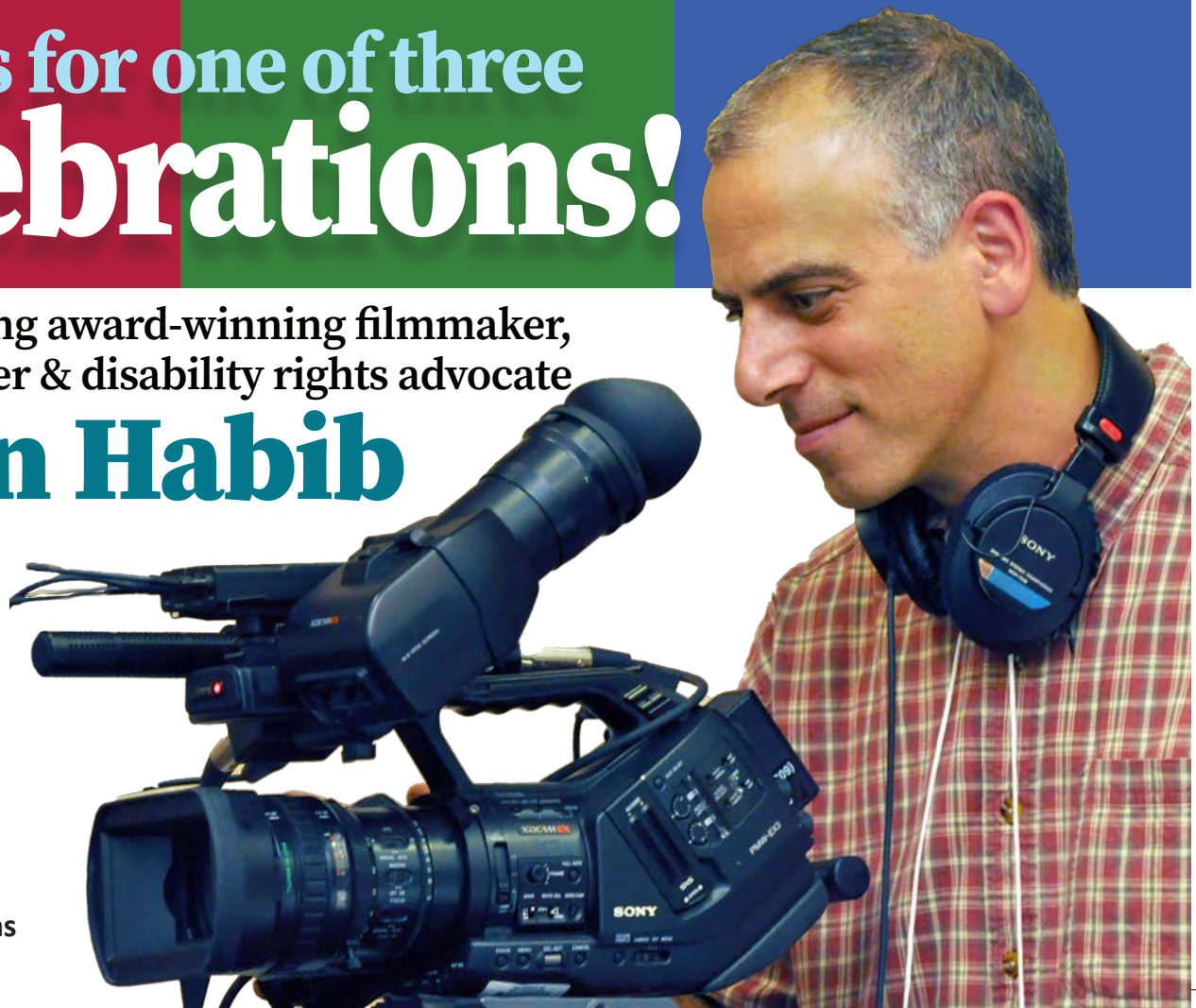
featuring award-winning filmmaker,
public speaker & disability rights advocate

Dan Habib

Scan to Register:



racker.org/celebrations





FROM THE DESK OF

CRIS DONOVAN

Executive Director, Racker

In 2003, Racker formally incorporated the Circle of Courage into our organization and all of our program areas. Developed by Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg & Steve Van Bockern as a model for positive youth development, the Circle of Courage has been adopted by many organizations not only for youth development, but as a universal way to see and understand one another.

The Circle of Courage gave us all the opportunity to have shared language and a common understanding of four universal needs: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. You may notice a nod to these concepts in our Mission and Vision statements. The Circle of Courage not only frames our thinking for all of the people we support but also serves to help us consider our team, their growth, and the organizational culture we strive for.

As I thought about this issue of the Outlook, the quadrants of the Circle of Courage were front and center in my mind – and not only because we had a team of staff go to South Dakota to learn from the creators! You'll see the generosity of players, donors, and sponsors in the wrap-up of our largest fundraiser, Racker Rivals Big Red. You'll read about the fishing mastery of Ken, who lives at one of our residential program's houses and the generosity of Tracy who is sharing her love of fishing with him. You'll see belonging (and seriously cute kids) in our preschool graduation photos. And we can't wait to share stories of inclusion and independence with Dan Habib at our Fall Celebration.

As a final thought, during the month of September, we celebrate CSP/DSP Recognition Week. This week was developed to honor and celebrate the work of those who provide direct support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Each and every day, CSPs and DSPs provide opportunities for the people we serve to fully experience all four quadrants of the Circle of Courage. What an amazing job to have!

All my best,

Cris



RECLAIMING YOUTH AT RISK CONFERENCE 2022

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE



Photo: Rebecca Mosher, Katherine Marte, Katie Anderson-Reynolds, Mara Haws, and Emily Olander

Thanks to a Workforce Grant from the NYS Office of Mental Health, a team of social workers from the Counseling for School Success Program recently had the opportunity to attend a three-day conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The conference pulled together pioneer researchers, writers, and trainers in the Circle of Courage approach to working with youth. The conference also created a platform for a diverse group of presenters to share their experiences with and practical applications of the Circle of Courage principles.

The Circle of Courage is based on Native American and First Nation People's approach to child rearing. Used internationally and implemented locally by several providers serving youth, the model emphasizes a culture of respect and offers four quadrants in which to support child development: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. This approach is also supported by current research in trauma informed care, resilience, and neuroscience, also explored throughout the conference.

Racker's connection with the Circle of Courage began in the late 1990s, when Racker and TST BOCES leadership connected with Martin Brokenleg of the Reclaiming Youth Movement. Since then, Racker and BOCES staff have worked collaboratively to implement the principles in our school based mental health settings, with the assumption that both children and adults must develop skills in those four

areas in order to live a fulfilling life. Beginning with the essential need for Belonging in our setting, we guide students through Mastery of their schoolwork and social-emotional goals; Generosity and respect for others; and Independence in making their own choices.

The team was able to learn best practices, explore new strategies, and network, while deepening their core understanding of the Circle of Courage principles and how to apply them to support youth in our children's mental health programs.

Mara: "The Circle of Courage embodies the values that guide social work and other helping efforts. Belonging is one element taught in the Circle of Courage that aligns splendidly with Racker's purpose. The conference allowed us to be impacted by the teaching of experts that champion helping children internalize their innate belonging. A phenomenal reminder for me was the focus on the ubiquitous human need for healthy connections, to feel safe, and the necessity of adaptation. All we do in our positions as helpers support others in these needs. The Circle of Courage offers a framework to remember these needs and I look forward to using it more thoroughly at TST BOCES.

Katie: "My biggest takeaway was the reminder that, 'a person depends other persons to be a person'. This is so simple and yet so vitally true when we are thinking of ourselves as a model for the skills we hope to teach our youth."

RACKER RIVALS BIG RED RECAP!



Our 8th annual Racker Rivals Big Red has come to a close, and we are so grateful to the community for their support once again! Thank you to the sponsors, hockey players, volunteers, and donors that participate each year. We raised \$150,000 this year, which pushes us past the \$1,000,000 mark – all money that goes directly to critical early childhood education services.

This game wouldn't happen without the support of Coach Mike Schafer, Greg Hartz, and Topher Scott. Thank you for your tireless efforts and commitment to this incredible event!

All of us at Racker, the families we serve and our board of directors want to say thank you to our generous businesses and families that sponsor Racker Rivals Big Red! By supporting the game and our organization, they stand with us and embrace a world where all people know they belong. This hockey game is a testament to the generosity of our Racker Community, and benefits the children and families of our early childhood services.

Please join us as we say thank you to all of our sponsors! We encourage all of our friends to support these businesses as they embrace the mission of Racker.

Thank you also to Spencer Margaret, our Top Fundraiser two years running! She set her sights on an impressive \$3,500 goal, but at the end of the game she had doubled her goal with an incredible \$7,410 for early childhood services at Racker. Thank you so much, Spencer Margaret!



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CSP & DSP RECOGNITION!



In September, Racker celebrates Direct Support Professional (DSP) and Community Support Professional (CSP) Recognition Week. These dedicated staff members work compassionately with the people and families in our programs. Support professionals go above and beyond every day, and we are so thankful for their exceptional work! Racker supervisors were happy to share

their thoughts on the valuable work of our support professionals, and share some stories of success. "The passion that CSPs and DSPs project is infectious; personally, it reminds me why I rise to my role each day. These staff know and care about the people they support, and put creative spins on what these folks aspire to. This dedication is absorbed and channeled into my own work."

DSPs and CSPs command a great degree of respect. Their efforts help people grow to greater independence and enhance their community connection. Many of these incredible staff have pushed forward through difficult times like the pandemic. We are grateful to celebrate this noble work; helping folks pursue different forms of service and live the mission and vision of Racker. 🌱

David and his CSP Shelly, have been busy creating a garden at the McFadden House. They both picked the spot and dug out a spot for the garden. David takes great pride in the project and really enjoys cultivating the plants. The evening house staff support David by helping him water the garden

and harvesting the plants. He enjoys discussing how to best grow the plants and the proper time to harvest.

David is gaining mastery in the success of the garden. Congratulations to David on his beautiful garden! Keep up the great work! 🌱

SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT



OUR CELEBRATION KEYNOTE SPEAKER **DAN HABIB:**

Filmmaker, public speaker, and disability rights advocate Dan Habib will be the featured presenter at Racker's Community Celebrations on October 12th, 13th and 14th. Mr. Habib's work tackles important topics surrounding the inclusion and independence of people who live with varying disabilities. Dan's works include the films: *Intelligent Lives*, *Who Cares About Kelsey*, *Mr. Connolly Has ALS*, *Including Samuel* and *My Disability Roadmap*- a film he co-directed with his son Samuel Habib.

Dan Habib's films focus on the wide range of disabilities in our society including emotional and behavioral disabilities in school-age children, inclusion for children with developmental disabilities in classrooms, and the challenges of adults working toward goals around independence and acceptance. Mr. Habib's work has earned him many accolades including Emmy Award nominations and an appointment by President Barack Obama to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Racker is pleased to welcome Dan Habib to all three of our Community Celebrations in Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins County to share stories and insights into the impact that inclusion and belonging can have not only on people with disabilities but for all of us. These events will also honor our Racker staff with awards for outstanding performance and thank our partners in the community. If you are interested in registering, please follow the QR code to the Racker website and you can choose which celebration you would like to attend. 🌿



KEN'S FISHING STORY

Tracy is a Senior DSP with 27 years of direct support experience. She has been working with Ken for several years. One of the things that Tracy enjoys about being a DSP is her ability to share her interests and hobbies with those she supports. One day, Tracy was sharing with Ken that she had gone fishing with her family and that she regularly enjoys this on her days off. Ken told Tracy about going fishing in the past and expressed an interest in resuming this past hobby. Tracy recognized this as an activity that they could do together to work towards Ken's goals of maintaining his health while exploring outdoor activities. Tracy and Ken decided on things they could do together as part of his day services which included going to sports stores and trying to find the best spots to fish in local lakes and ponds. As spring turned to summer, Tracy and Ken developed a routine of fishing together and Ken settled on a favorite local pond. To date, he has caught

Tracy works with several houses in the Tioga County area and regularly looks for ways to help the people she supports develop belonging in the communities they live in while working toward the goals they have set for themselves. Her personal interest and expertise in fishing is a great example of how DSPs bring their unique talents and backgrounds to the work that they do. 🌿





PRESCHOOL GRADUATION

Congratulations to our graduating classes of 2022! Racker classrooms in Cortland, Tioga and Tompkins counties celebrated these milestones with a ceremony and some fun! Families joined Racker staff in congratulating the students on a great year. This year, 54 students of all abilities graduated from Racker and learned in an environment where all people know they belong.

Our classroom staff members are so proud of our students and wish them the best as they move into their elementary schools. 🌿



Dr. C. Phillip Meyer was a local pediatrician and part of the Racker family for almost 50 years, serving as our Medical Director for 17 years from 1999 - 2016. Dr. Meyer was a wealth of knowledge and we could always count on him to share interesting stories and information learned from his readings, children, and travels. Each year, Dr. Meyer would remind us of the importance of vaccinations, ending each of his monthly board reports throughout the fall and winter months with reminders about getting our flu shots. He was fiercely dedicated to the eradication of polio and spent many years volunteering for that effort. Dr. Meyer passed away in May of this year. We are grateful for his dedication to children and families near and far and the mark he made on Racker throughout his decades of kindness, care, and service. 🌿

IN MEMORIAM: DR. C. PHILLIP MEYER



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OUTLOOK

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OUR MISSION:

We support people with disabilities and their families
to lead fulfilling lives by providing opportunities to
learn and be connected with others.

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