

*We envision a world where  
all people know they belong.*

# Racker 2024

ANNUAL REPORT



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Each year, putting together our annual report gives us a chance to pause and reflect — on the lives we’ve touched, the smiles we’ve shared, and the milestones that made us proud. This report tells our story, not just in numbers — dollars earned, services delivered, people supported — but in the real moments that show who we are. Many of these moments came together at our 2024 Community Celebration: Celebration of Your Heart, a reminder of the spirit that drives Racker every day.

This year, we set big goals and made new beginnings. We launched Meaningful Days, a program focused on helping the people we serve build richer, fuller lives. We brought back the Special Friends Luncheon, a tradition honoring Dr. Racker’s birthday and the friendships that have long supported our work. We celebrated alongside Cornell Hockey at Racker Rivals Big Red, strengthening the bonds that bring our community together.

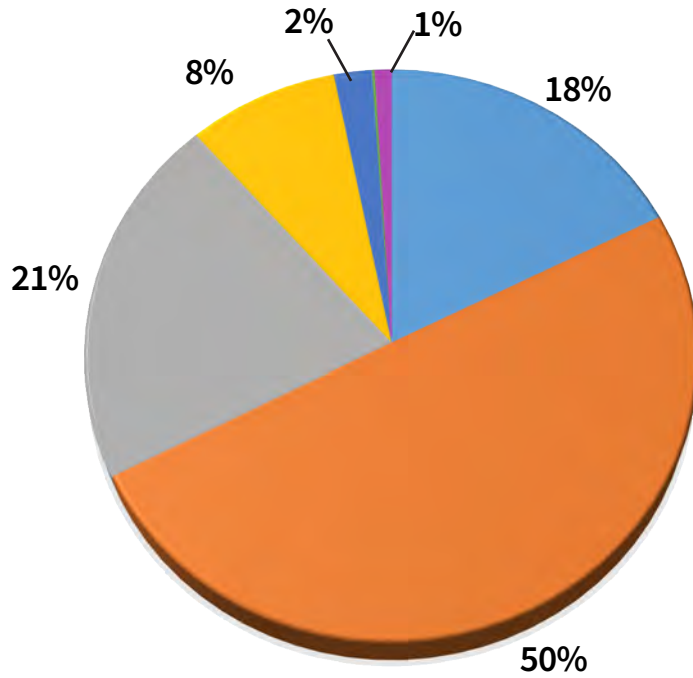
A longtime dream also became reality: the opening of the Neighborhood Depot. First imagined in 2018, it now stands as a symbol of partnership and community, shared with our friends from Tioga County Rural Ministry, Tioga County United Way, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tioga County. It’s more than just a building — it’s a reminder that together, we’re stronger.

The community’s support showed in other ways, too. Racker was honored with several Finger Lakes Favorite awards — gold for Favorite Nonprofit and Preschool, and silver for our Audiology Clinic. These recognitions are thanks to the dedication and heart of our 800 Racker staff members, who live out our mission every day.

Above all, we’re grateful — for you. Our friends who have stood by us through every high and low.

Thank you for celebrating with us, mourning losses with us, and standing up for a world where everyone knows they belong. Here’s to another year of building inclusion — one story, and one heart, at a time.

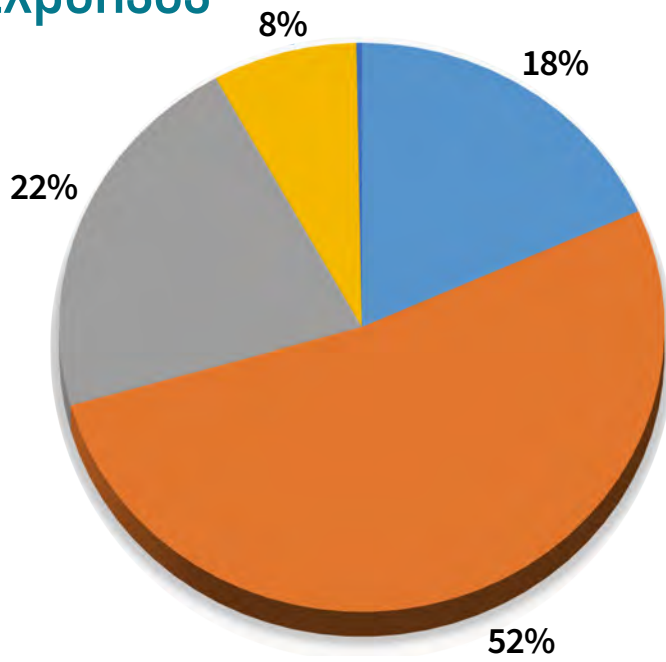
## Revenue



<span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span>	Residential Services \$24,595,204 - 50%
<span style="color: #a6a6a6;">■</span>	Community Support Services \$10,377,403 - 21%
<span style="color: #5dade2;">■</span>	Children's & Clinical Services \$8,668,552 - 18%
<span style="color: #f1c40f;">■</span>	Counseling for School Success \$4,100,467 - 8%
<span style="color: #3498db;">■</span>	Fundraising \$1,030,342 - 2%
<span style="color: #9b59b6;">■</span>	Investment Return \$453,863 - 1%
<span style="color: #27ae60;">■</span>	Other/Miscellaneous \$74,854 - 0%

Total Revenue \$49,300,685

## Expenses



<span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span>	Residential Services \$25,478,491 - 52%
<span style="color: #a6a6a6;">■</span>	Community Support Services \$10,434,997 - 22%
<span style="color: #5dade2;">■</span>	Children's & Clinical Services \$8,930,462 - 18%
<span style="color: #f1c40f;">■</span>	Counseling for School Success \$3,765,860 - 8%
<span style="color: #3498db;">■</span>	Fundraising \$143,740 - 0%

Total Expenses: \$48,753,550

Net Revenue: \$547,138

Administrative Costs: 10.3%



# Children's Mental Health Services

SPOA: 593 contacts    Children's Care Management: 50  
 Day Treatment: 100    Lighthouse Program: 25  
 School Counseling: 32    Possibilities: 83

Racker's Children's Mental Health programs provide a range of services for children in need of social emotional support. Across our continuum of programming, we touch children and families in crisis, who have experienced trauma, need additional support for school success in their home schools, and through more intensive mental health treatment in short-term or longer-term BOCES classrooms with Racker's embedded clinical services. In our school-based programs, we collaborate with families, school personnel and other providers to remove obstacles for children and youth to thrive in their school environments, with the least restrictive intervention possible. Our Children's Health Home Care Management program and SPOA Coordinator work in the community to help strengthen the families and systems that support children and youth.



*This story from the heart was shared at our Annual Celebration:*



Two years ago, a small group of high school students from Racker's Turning Point Program walked across the softball field behind campus. Above them, a patch of forest stretched toward Sapsucker Woods. Leading the way was a visiting biologist, holding a small, gray bird in her hand — a Tufted Titmouse — which pecked at her thumb with all the feisty determination the species is known for.

The students were participants in Counseling for School Success, a program that partners with BOCES and is designed for young people navigating the long-term effects of trauma. Their daily therapeutic work is rarely confined to traditional counseling spaces. Here, the learning and healing happens in hallways, during walks across fields, over shared jokes at lunch, and sometimes — as it did that day — in the unexpected company of wild birds.

The visiting biologists had been invited to campus to demonstrate a research technique using mist nets — fine mesh nets strung across bird flyways that safely capture wild birds for study and release. For the students, the chance to hold and examine birds up close offered both novelty and wonder, but for the staff, the real hope was to engage these students in an educational activity with their peers in a comfortable environment.

The bird feeders had been the students' own project, including one student, known affectionately as “Garfield.” That spring, she had begun EMDR therapy — Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing — a research-backed treatment for trauma that helps the brain reprocess distressing memories using bilateral stimulation, such as eye movements, taps, or sounds.

The approach is designed to help clients release painful experiences and reshape the way those memories are stored.

Once too anxious and ashamed to show her face, Garfield had arrived in the program silent and hidden beneath a mask and hood. One day, during a group bird-feeding walk, she quietly pulled down her mask for the first time. Her friend smiled and tried to act casual, before tossing birdseed over her therapist in celebration. The moment ended with laughter, birdseed flying, and a celebration that lingered in the therapist's memory.

Later, during the birding event, another student — known for his resistance to therapy — surprised me. He raised his hand and asked, “What's it like being ...someone who wants to help a bunch of traumatized kids?”

That question said more than any counseling session ever had. In one sentence, he acknowledged his own trauma, his skepticism about being cared for, and the rarity of people who choose this work.

At Turning Point, these are the moments we treasure most: unplanned, unscripted, and full of meaning. Sometimes, healing begins not with a therapy session, but with a bird in your hand and a little space to wonder.

In Racker's Counseling for School Success program, healing rarely follows a script. It arrives in fleeting, serendipitous moments — when students are given the space to wonder, to connect, and to release, much like the birds they watch take flight.



## Early Childhood & Clinical Services

Preschool Classroom Students: 156

Childcare Enrollment: 101

Evaluations (Early Intervention, CPSE, School Age): 640

Early Intervention Children: 84

Preschool Itinerant Therapy Children: 37

School Aged Students: 226

Audiology: 2391 visits

Racker's Early Childhood and Clinical Services provide a wide range of educational and clinical services to children and families in our region. Racker's evaluation team is often the first point of contact between Racker and families. The team touches lives, opening the door to needed services and supports, while ensuring the families understand the strengths and gifts of their children. Through therapeutic interventions in the early months in homes and community childcare centers, therapies for children in their local schools, and services embedded in Racker's classrooms, Occupational Therapists, Speech Language Pathologists, Physical Therapists, and School Psychologists are making a difference every day.

In addition to the robust therapy services, Racker operates eleven inclusive preschool classrooms across Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties and three Infant/Toddler classrooms in Tompkins County. We have partnerships with Tompkins Community Action, Ithaca City School District, Cortland School District, and Abide in the Vine to make these classrooms a special place for children to learn and thrive together.

Lastly, our audiology clinic is a regional clinic that serves all age groups, offering comprehensive evaluation testing, hearing aids, as well as cleaning and repairs. Racker's clinic is open to the public and delivers professional, high-quality care.



## Here is a story of heart from our Early Childhood Program:

Jaxon came to Racker when he was just six months old. Like so many of the children at Racker, Jaxon's journey is one of growth. Jaxon was born with extraordinary mobility challenges. He couldn't crawl to explore his environment, hold objects to play, or use a cup or utensils to feed himself. Through a partnership between Racker and his family, Jaxon's story is becoming one of resilience and progress.

Jaxon's path hasn't been an easy one. He's faced barriers such as his own physical challenges, provider shortages, and the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 meant that Jaxon's beneficial hands-on therapies became virtual or infrequent. Progress slowed, and the uncertainty around his care was a heavy weight on his family's shoulders.

But Jaxon had a team of dedicated early intervention therapists who advocated for him and worked tirelessly to find solutions. They brought the therapy to Jaxon through home visits. In his own familiar environment, Jaxon began to make remarkable strides. The development of new skills became more natural and were easier for his family to continue after therapy visits. Jaxon's confidence in himself increased! He started to realize that he could do things, try things, and explore the world around him.

One of Jaxon's greatest obstacles was fear—the fear of the unknown, of trying new things, even of trying new foods. But his team didn't just focus on the physical skills; they spent countless hours building trust and creating a relationship with him and his family that supported Jaxon in pushing through his uncertainty, to take those first advances into the unfamiliar place where growth occurs.

A breakthrough came while enrolled in Racker's Early Childhood Preschool. Jaxon's PT petitioned for a lightweight, motorized wheelchair that would increase the independence and mobility he was so desperately missing. It wasn't just a mobility device—it was a gift of choice. Jaxon could move when and where he wanted. He could explore his environment on his own terms without relying on others.

The first time Jaxon sat in his powered wheelchair was memorable. After the briefest moment of hesitation, Jaxon seemed to realize he was now in



control of his movement. He knew just what to do and navigated the chair's joystick like it was meant to be. And then, in true Jaxon style, he *ran away*. Not because of distress or fear, but because for the first time in his life, he had the ability to choose when to leave a room. His wheelchair didn't just give him mobility—it gave him autonomy, the power to choose his path. The child who couldn't walk, jump, or run was now free to move on his own terms. His team saw something incredible in that moment—Jaxon felt freedom.

Jaxon's resilience didn't end there. He continued to demonstrate what he was capable of. One day, Jaxon used a straw for the first time. A small milestone for some, but for Jaxon, it was huge. A simple action, like drinking from a cup without adult support, was a triumph—one that he had worked hard to achieve.

Jaxon's story is just one of many; a single drop in the vast ocean of stories that makes up the heart of Racker. Every day, in classrooms, therapy rooms and homes, children like Jaxon are discovering new possibilities and capabilities.



# Community Support Services

**Family Support Services: 363**

**Traditional Community Habilitation: 190**

**Self-Direction/Fiscal Intermediary: 207**

Our Community Support Services department offers a variety of services designed to meet people with disabilities and their families in many different circumstances. Family Support Services offer a range of services: in-home behavior support, financial reimbursement services, light-touch case management and service access assistance, self-advocacy, and a variety of support offered by the Sensory Lending Library. Traditional Community Habilitation services provide Racker staff to help with person-driven skill building to promote independence in homes and community locations. Self-Directed Services are designed to empower people with disabilities to create and manage their supports and tailor them to their unique strengths and goals.



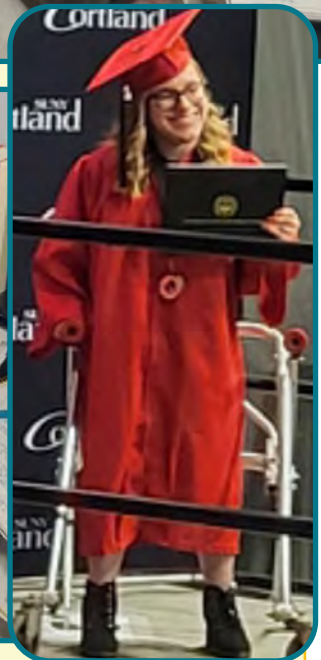
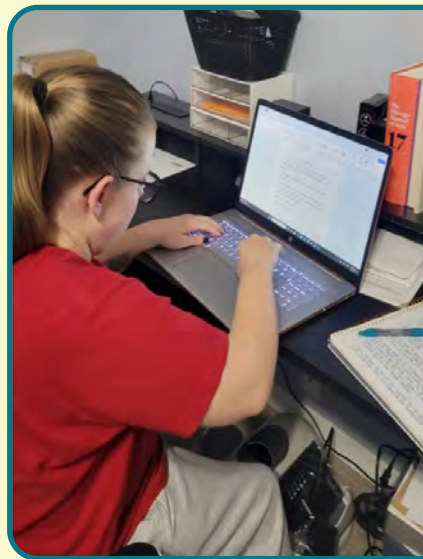
### *Here is a story of heart from our Self-Direction Program:*

Michaela started in Racker's Self Direction Program in 2017. As a teenager Michaela dreamed of going to college, becoming an author and editor, and to one day own her own business. Michaela graduated from Southside High School in Elmira and went on to Corning Community College for a two-year program where she graduated with her associate's degree.

During her time at Corning, Michaela knew she wanted to take her education further and get everything out of college all that it had to offer, including living full-time in a dorm. Michaela's family was unsure, as Michaela needs around-the-clock support; however, Michaela was full of determination and refused to be limited. She wanted to be independent and live out her dream and the Self-Direction Program helped her do just that.

She was accepted into SUNY Cortland where she lived in a 2-bedroom dorm room so that her self-hired staff could move into the dorms with her and provide her with the environmental support she needed to fully experience college life. Her Self Direction budget was utilized to cover her staffing and to offset her housing and food costs so she could experience the full college experience. Michaela's self hired staff attended all of Michaela's classes with her and provided support as needed. Michaela thrived at college and graduated with her bachelor's degree. Michaela was then accepted into the master's Program at SUNY Cortland. At that same time, Michaela decided she was ready to start her career as a writer.

Since graduating from college, Michaela's dream of becoming a writer has come true. She authored



a children's book about friendship called *New Friends, New Feelings*, which is due to be published in 2025.

Michaela was recently invited to be a guest speaker at a Meet the Author event at The Arc Allegany-Steuben, where she read her story to the people who attended. Michaela is currently working on her next book and has been studying to start her own editing business.

Michaela is a determined young woman who has truly paved her way through this world, showing us all what is possible with determination, heart, and a fantastic sense of humor.



## Residential & Day Services

- Residents: 136
- Residential Houses: 25
- Meaningful Days: 28
- Flex Hab: 26
- Free-Standing Respite: 60

Racker's Residential Program provides around the clock support in 25 homes. The program offers a range of daily support including medication administration and health care, leisure skill development, and assistance building skills in all of the day-to-day activities at home.

When Day Program options were limited following COVID, the Residential Program built services to ensure that everyone enrolled in the Residential program had opportunities for community engagement and full days. The Meaningful Days program and Flex Hab give people living in the Residential Program fun opportunities for skill building at home and in the community through a variety of recreational activities and volunteer service.

Racker's Free-Standing Respite, Starry Night, provides families with essential temporary respite services in a safe and comfortable home.

Through our unwavering commitment to personalized care and community engagement, Racker's Residential Program makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve, enriching their experiences and empowering them to thrive while actively supporting and strengthening our community.



## *Here is a story of heart from our Meaningful Days Program:*

In Meaningful Days, we support people in their pursuit of their goals and interests. The program encourages community exploration and inclusion as well as fostering relationships between the person and their community. In doing so, people in our program are leading more enriching, joyful, and meaningful lives. None of this would be possible without staff who view “limitations” as just a problem that we haven’t found a solution to yet.

First and foremost, as in all of the programs offered at Racker, Meaningful Days meets people where they are. Through learning more about each other, trust and confidence form and a foundation laid. From there, we explore the pillars of the community, used to build safe introductions to each person’s home community.

Places such as libraries, coffee shops, community centers, fire stations, and churches are wonderful places for individuals to pursue goals and interests specific to them. This also opens the opportunity for relationships to be forged and fostered between people served and the places that are important to them in their community. We walk into coffee shops frequently now and the baristas are excited to see everyone and often ask what we have all been up to. These connections to others are organic and vital to feeling included. From these community “staples,” we branch out to explore new and exciting places and create more meaningful life experiences.

For one person, getting out into the community proved difficult. This difficulty was accompanied by behavioral and communication challenges and resulted in not really knowing what the individual wanted and not engaging with the community or others.

With the help of an exemplary staff, things started to change for this person. She started by just spending time with the individual, being a calming presence. Through time and compassionate understanding, the staff began to pick up some of the signs they used to communicate. As trust and confidence grew between the two they started venturing out into their community more and more. Together, they have had many adventures. and continue to share their experiences and joy with others almost daily.



One favorite story is of a picture received one day from this staff. The person she supports initially found it difficult to leave the house, let alone connect with others. The picture I received was of this individual having just grasped the hand of another from another house in a moment of solidarity, friendship, comfort, ease, and happiness. This type of organic and meaningful connection between two individuals would not have been possible without this staff member.



The compassion, patience, and encouragement of the staff here pay off in these very real, incredibly valuable, experiences. And we do them every day.

It was Les Brown who said, “Life has no limitations, except the ones we make.” At Meaningful Days, we seek to take advantage of the time we have together to enrich the lives of the people we support. These things include small, but significant, things such as volunteering at a local SPCA or attending a group musical instrument class that ends in an epic jam session. They also include the big things too like supporting someone during an educational opportunity out of state or to see Niagara Falls for the first time. All of these things matter - and all of these things are possible in the Meaningful Days Program.

## Our Donors

There's a word that comes up often at Racker: heart. It isn't just something we say — it's something we see and feel every day in the work of our staff, the experiences of the individuals and families we serve, and the unwavering kindness of those who stand behind us.

At Racker, heart can take many forms. Sometimes it's courage in the face of challenges. Sometimes it's empathy — the willingness to listen, to understand, and to stand alongside someone whose experiences may be very different from our own. And sometimes, heart shows up as the steady, quiet commitment to doing the right thing, day after day, even when no one is watching.

This work is fueled by heart, and nowhere is that more evident than in the generosity of our donors. Their support is the foundation of so much of what we are able to do. Whether the gift is large or small, it creates ripples — opening doors, expanding possibilities, and lighting the way toward a future where everyone belongs.

You can see that heart in the donors who, year after year, step forward to provide holiday meals for Racker families. Thoughtfully filling baskets with food and essentials, these donors make sure families can share special meals together during the holidays and school breaks — a gesture that offers not just nourishment, but comfort and dignity. Often, when Racker staff deliver these baskets, they are met with quiet tears, warm embraces, and heartfelt gratitude.



You can see it in the donor who made it possible for one of our residential homes to install a wheelchair-accessible swing. More than just a piece of equipment, this swing created a space where every resident — no matter their mobility — could join in, laugh, and share moments of connection. It's a small but powerful example of what it means to make inclusion a reality, not just a promise.

And you can see heart in the donor who saw potential in an overlooked room, a space long forgotten, and reimagined it as a bright, welcoming area for preschool students to play, move, and explore. Thanks to their generosity, what was once an empty space became a place for growth and joy — proof that kindness can transform even the simplest places.

These are only a few of the ways heart shows up at Racker, and always, it begins with people — donors, partners, staff, and friends — who choose to believe in possibility.



Their generosity is woven into every success story, every new opportunity, and every smile you see. Because of them, the heart of Racker keeps growing.

Thank you to everyone on the list of this annual report, the staff that made these opportunities a reality, and the heartbeat of our community that drives Racker every day.

## RACKER VISIONARIES - INDIVIDUALS

*Gifts of \$2,500 & above from individuals & families*

Anonymous  
John & Elaine Alexander  
Curt & Ann Ashman  
Daphne & Ezra Cornell  
Carol L. Corwin  
Joan D. Craig  
Joan Davis  
Jerome & Kaye Kleisath  
Kevin Kleisath  
Stephen & Kathryn Lipinski  
Nancy Corwin Malina & Joel Malina  
Dr. Gary Koretzky & Dr. Kim J. Overby  
Sarah Rich  
Gillian Ryan  
L. Joseph & Marney Thomas  
Erik & Deborah Whitney  
Eugene & Jeanne Yarussi

## RACKER VISIONARIES - ORGANIZATIONS

*Gifts of \$2,500 & above from corporations, foundations & businesses*

Anonymous  
Cayuga Health System  
Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State  
Community Foundation of Tompkins County, Inc.  
Consiliarium Group, LLC  
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca  
Excellus BlueCross BlueShield  
Foundation Source  
George V. & Jean A. Smith Charitable Trust  
Harris Beach PLLC  
MVP Health Care  
Sciarabba Walker & Co., LLP  
The Guthrie Clinic  
Tompkins Community Bank  
Triad Foundation Inc.  
United Way of Tompkins County  
Visions Federal Credit Union

## RACKER FELLOWS- INDIVIDUAL

*Gifts of \$1,000 to \$2,499 from individuals & families*

Anonymous  
Paul & Diane Banfield  
Melinda Bantle  
Bethany Brown & Bradley Smith  
David & Julie Brumsted  
David Campbell & Thomas Connors  
Susan Cole  
John & Ann Racker Costello  
Harold Crozier  
Max & Nancy Della Pia  
Chuck & Cris Donovan  
Peggy Dunlop  
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Pat & Paul Stefek  
Deborah Streeter & Thomas Owens  
Maurice & Steffi White

## RACKER FELLOWS - ORGANIZATIONS

*Gifts of \$1,000 to \$2,499 from corporations, foundations & businesses*

Air Temp Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.  
Carey's Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.  
Community Foundation for South Central New York  
Cornell Pochily Investment Advisors  
Coughlin & Gerhart, LLP  
Engineered Building Systems  
Enterprise Mobility Foundation  
Gemm Shop  
Linz Real Estate  
Nationwide Insurance  
Sentry Alarms, LLC

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 Fareed & Lamia Abdulky  
 Mansour Abdulky  
 John Abel  
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 Aloja Airewele  
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 Rick & Marlaine Darfler  
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 Elwood Hulbert  
 Kellie & Chris Hummel  
 Catherine Husa-Husseini & Sami Hussein

## FRIENDS OF RACKER - INDIVIDUALS

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Jake & Janet Jacoby  
Jean Jagendorf  
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