

News



A newsletter for the friends of FECA • Foundation for Educating Children with Autism • Winter 2012

Celebrating A Successful Year

As the year 2012 comes to a close, it is important to reflect on our shared achievements of the past year and focus on meeting the challenges of the years to come.

Despite a difficult economic climate, FECA continues to succeed in raising support from our community to substantially impact children and adults with autism. The Devereux Millwood Learning Center continues into its 17th year educating 48



Brett Schaffran doing office work at Bethel-Croton Admissions Department

Devereux Adult Program has expanded to twelve young men who travel throughout the county providing an impressive array of services to many area businesses and non-profits.



Greg Mayerick and Avery Lepore doing office work at Bethel-Croton Admissions Department

students from Westchester and the surrounding areas. The vocational program, which FECA has long supported, grows in stature as an exemplar for preparing young adults for their full participation in family and community life. The

The sustained support of our community of friends, family, colleagues and community partners will enable FECA to continue our mission to further opportunities for children and adults with autism. During this season of

giving, we have enclosed a charitable donation envelope should you find it within your capacity to support FECA's endeavors once more this year. We thank you for your continued support and especially want to thank our long-time partner MBIA for their sustained generosity year after year.

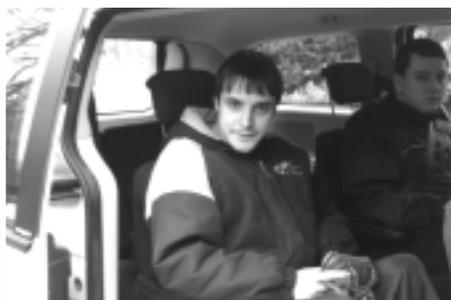
We hope you will enjoy the pictures and articles in this publication that tell a little of our story of the past year.



Matt Koch at Clarfeld Financial Advisors, Inc.



Andrew Finder and Brian Kirk deliver inventory in a "Back-pack program" for less fortunate children



Alexander Vizioli and Matt Pirraglia off to work in one of DMLC's vans

"Once Upon A Time" Event Provides Festive Escape from Hurricane Sandy Recovery

Making their way through downed power lines and despite lives turned upside down due to the tremendous destruction of Hurricane Sandy, a hale and hardy band of celebrants made their way to the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown on November 6th for the Annual FECA Fall Gala. For many, the festive atmosphere filled with food, libations, dancing and the roll of the dice at the ever-popular casino beckoned them to leave their dark and cold abodes to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our young people and give thanks to staff and the community for their contribution to their ongoing success.



Debra Decloux receives Community Partner Award from a grateful Brian Kirk

The theme of "Once Upon a Time" called on the creative energies of many to come attired in the guise of their favorite fairy tale character or hero of history or lore. Though our beloved MC Phil Orlando looked dashing in his suit and tie, FECA President Melanie Schaffran called on higher magical powers as an (aging) Tinkerbell, replete with

“Once Upon A Time” Event

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wings and wand as she offered a videotaped glimpse into the lives of the young people who contribute to their communities through their work at a wide variety of businesses and nonprofits.



John O'Keefe recipient of the 2012 FECA Lifetime Achievement Award being congratulated by the young men he helps

Debra Descloux accepted our annual Community Partner Award on behalf of the Interfaith Housing Network, which owns or manages affordable apartments and offers other critical life skills support to over 5,000 low wage-earning individuals in the Westchester area. Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA) provides a growing number of DMLC students, and nearly all of the Devereux adult participants, with meaningful responsibilities. As such, they provide a stellar example of what is possible to create if the world of the work were to embrace a broader view of the tasks at hand and the people that are more than capable of completing them.

Many of the young school and adult program participants came to the dais to shake hands and say thank you to John O'Keefe, Director of Devereux New York, as he was given the FECA 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award. John was honored for his leadership role in sustaining the Devereux Millwood Learning Center, but more importantly for meeting the challenge of creating and sustaining the Devereux Adult Day Habilitation program which was created nearly four years ago and now provides volunteer and employment training and opportunities to 12 and soon to be 15 young men who have graduated from their educational settings to the larger world of their communities. Facing programmatic extinction repeatedly since its creation, John played a pivotal role in negotiating with decision makers in Albany against oftentimes insurmountable odds to provide adequate funding for the program to continue and grow. Joining John's family

for this honor were Bob Kreider, President and CEO of the national Devereux Foundation and his wife, Barbara, and Sarah Ellen Lenahan, Vice President for Operations and Staff Development.

The dinner, co-chaired by Pete and Ann DiChiara and Melanie and Drew Schaffran, raised \$30,000 to help support programs throughout and beyond the county including the purchase of critical curriculum for a group home sponsored by Cardinal McCloskey Services and autism programs at the Center for Discovery in Harris, New York.

The silent auction, which included theater and sporting event tickets and memorabilia, a spectacular array of food, wine and gift-baskets and weekends in New York and put together despite Sandy's obstacles by co-chairs Liz Finder, Peggy Wedin and Melanie Schaffran, added both to the bottom line and to the festive ambiance. Monica Haugh, once again, worked her magic in putting together the evening's journal, which provided friends and family an opportunity to advertise their appreciation for the efforts of staff and honor the accomplishments of our "kids."



Creativity and fun honored with best costume awards

Throughout the evening another theme emerged as FECA grapples with its future role in helping to make possible the continued emergence and growth of programs to serve the ever-growing population of individuals with autism. As one surveyed the dance floor and casino tables, it became abundantly clear that those whose lives we hope to enhance were in fact being provided that opportunity for a night where practicing "social skills" can really just mean having fun surrounded by loved ones and those whose day-to-day efforts make it all possible.

“Once Upon A Time”



7 - November 6, 2012





FECA's Spring Gala Successes

FECA hosted its 17th Annual Spring In The Park Gala on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, at one of our favorite corners in New York City, The Bryant Park Grill.

The event provided the FECA community an opportunity to gather together to celebrate the successes of our loved ones,



Deutsche Bank honorees Marcelo Pizzimbono, Phil Orlando (FECA) and Sagar Sheth

and of the educators who work tirelessly on the behalf of our children and young adults every day. Likewise, it reminded all of us of the importance of community and financial support for our endeavors.



Raffle winners are chosen

Among the many sponsors and supporters to attend the cocktail party were this

year's honoree, Deutsche Bank Securities Inc. Phil Orlando introduced Marcelo Pizzimbono and Sagar Sheth, who have been great, humble and long-standing friends to FECA over the years and the crowd honored them with a warm round of applause and appreciation.



Our fabulous Silent Auction

The highly anticipated Silent Auction was coordinated by the very skilled dynamic duo of Elise Orlando and Gina DeCaprio and was made possible by a long list of generous donors. Auction items included Broadway tickets, travel packages, sporting tickets and sports memorabilia. Among the many raffle prize-winners, the grand prize one-week vacation to Cancun Mexico went to Marjory DiChiara.

The 300 event attendees enjoyed cocktails and a delicious dinner by the bite from the culinary team at Bryant Park Grill. The event raised nearly \$250,000 to help support a cause very dear to all of our hearts.

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped to coordinate such a memorable and successful event.

FECA Expands Collaborative Efforts to Cardinal McCloskey Service and Center for Discovery

Four families in Westchester County recently celebrated the opening of a new home for their young adults with autism made possible through the sponsorship of Cardinal McCloskey Services (CMS). CMS has recently expanded its commitment to adults with autism as they age out of the larger world. In keeping with our mission to support and enhance programs supporting adults with autism, FECA seized the opportunity to help CMS with the most effective therapeutic model, based on applied behavior analysis by providing the funding to purchase a comprehensive curriculum with a \$25,000 grant.



On behalf of FECA, Ann DiChiara presents Beth Finnerty and Diane Pryce of CMS with a check in support of their new programs for autistic individuals.

Earlier this summer, FECA had reached out to the Center for Discovery, an integrative, nature-based residential program located in Sullivan County, in upstate New York to offer our support for their enormous contribution to children and adults with autism with a \$25,000 donation.

Inspiration for FECA's Mission Comes in All Forms!

We are always delighted and inspired by the initiative of many of our supporters who look for ways to do their part to support their brothers and sisters and family members through FECA.

Rebekah Rosman will become a bat mitzvah this year and has included FECA as one of three organizations that she is supporting through an on-line auction of "stuff from her closet!"

The Holistic Learning Center recently purchased "Our Whole Lives" Lifespan Sexuality Education Curriculum to be used in programs for DMLC and the Adult Program.

FECA on Fifth!

Please mark your calendar for Wednesday night, March 20, 2013, which is the first day of Spring, when FECA gathers on Fifth Avenue at the spectacular Pierre Hotel in NYC for our 18th annual cocktail party to benefit autism, as we honor Clarfeld Financial Advisors.



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Save the Date

18th Annual

FECA on Fifth Gala

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

The Pierre Hotel in NYC

Honoring Clarfeld Financial Advisors

Devereux Millwood Adult Program Saved at the Eleventh Hour: DMLC Continues to Thrive

Since its (van) doors opened in 2009, the existence of the Devereux Millwood Adult Program has always been threatened by the state's enormous economic challenges, which historically first threatened services for those most vulnerable. Despite being recognized by state officials as an exemplar for vocational programs, Devereux faced the most extreme challenge over the past tumultuous months.

Through the auspices of Senator Greg Ball's office, Devereux New York Director John O'Keefe, and DMLC Director Cindy Alterson traveled last spring with FECA Board President Melanie Schaffran and original founder of the adult program, Theresa Pirraglia, to Albany to meet with the Commissioner for the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Courtney Burke, and her deputy, Jim Moran, to plead the case for appropriate funding for the program. Despite their assurances, which included a commitment to a substantial growth in the program, a meaningful resolution continued to haunt the program over many months. After additional months of negotiations, word came down during the summer that the program would continue and could grow from its nine young men currently enrolled to 15, a substantial growth but one that will surely require continued lobbying to meet the exponential growth in the population in need of services.

Recently, the program accepted its twelfth member and serves a growing number of businesses and non-profits in the Westchester area, including two area pizza restaurants, the Interfaith Council for Action, the Mt. Kisco Boys and Girls Club, the Pleasantville JCC, the Westchester Food Bank, two facilities of the Bethel Nursing Home and Mt. Kisco Honda, to name a few. Consumers travel by van to their various employment and volunteer sites and also share meals at local restaurants, work out at Planet Fitness, and are partaking of various programs offered through the SPARC program where they swim, play basketball, and learn to cook their lunches.

DMLC continues to serve 48 students from the metropolitan New York area with a continued growth in emphasis on the vocational program which, starting at age 14, focuses on developing individual skills through intensive training coupled with opportunities provided in the community through area businesses and nonprofit organizations.

DMLC Students and Staff Applaud the Graduation of Member of Original Entering Class

FECA original founding members Ann and Pete DiChiara, whose daughter Christine attended DMLC throughout her entire educational career, were thrilled to attend her graduation this past June with her siblings cheering her on. Christian Cordasco, a long time student of DMLC also graduated this past June.



Long time DMLC Students Make Their Way Into the Adult World

Davey Bigelow, Owen Murray, Jackson Schwab and Kelly Wedin, fellow long-time students at the school, also moved out into the larger world to residential communities nearby.

Congratulations to all for all their years of hard work and accomplishment!