

New Yummy Tummies Mealtime Group

ACDS is conducting a new mealtime playgroup after school for preschoolers ages 3 and 4 who are picky eaters and/or who may need encouragement to enjoy mealtime experiences. Facilitated by a licensed speech Pathologist who specializes in feeding, this innovative new group has been running on Thursday afternoons for six consecutive weeks in one-hour sessions. Groups, which consist of no more than five children, explore foods and textures through play, fine and gross motor skill activities and song. Goals focus on improving eating behaviors at mealtime, tolerance of different food textures and learning positive language as it relates to feeding.

For the first 45 minutes of class, the children are engaged by the speech therapist without parents present. The children participate in a warm up activity designed to “wake up” the child’s senses, help prepare the food they will eat, and learn to enjoy mealtime through a variety of activities.

Towards the end of the session, parents join the group where the speech therapist reviews the session and assigns simple homework activities so that parents may carry over the new learned ideas into everyday meal times with their children. A new session will be beginning the first week of October 2014. If you are interested in signing up or finding out more information about Yummy Tummies please contact Barbara Sweeney, SLP at 516.933.4700 x 141 or via email at bsweeney@acds.org.



Did you know that ACDS Family Services Department holds **monthly support groups** for new and preschool parents & family members, as well as for families of ACDS Alumni? The groups are held at the Fern Place building during the school year and are facilitated by a Licensed Social Worker. For more information please call 516.933.4700 x 178

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Gene Kirley Elected ACDS Board President

ACDS welcomes its newest Board President, Gene Kirley, who was elected into service on December 11, 2012. Gene has been a board member since June 2010. He takes the reigns from long-time president Tim Michel, a board member since 2008. Tim, who is father to an ACDS preschool graduate, will remain on the board. We thank him for his time and leadership.

“ACDS is a tremendous organization that I am honored to be a part of,” Kirley says. “It has given me an opportunity to give back to an organization that has done so much for my family and for others.” Gene and his wife, Tracy, were introduced to ACDS in 2010 after their daughter, Bryn, was born with Down syndrome. Since Bryn’s birth both Gene and his wife have worked tirelessly, devoting time and energy to supporting ACDS and its programs. Both are active on various event committees and Tracy is co-president of the ACDS Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO).

Since 1993, Gene has worked as First Vice President/Wealth Management of the Garden City office of Janney Montgomery Scott LLC, a full-service investment and investment-banking firm. Outside of the office, he enjoys coaching baseball and serves as the co-founder and commissioner of the Rockville Centre Little League’s Challenger League, a division for children with special needs. ACDS Executive Director, Michael Smith, stated “Having Gene serve as our Board President is an honor. His understanding and commitment to our cause has made him a strong advocate for ACDS.”

We are happy to welcome Gene as ACDS’ new Board President and thank him for his time and dedication to ACDS.

From the Desk of the Executive Director

The pace of change in the various lines of our business has been accelerating at a dizzying rate. As a result, my own job has changed significantly as I focus on the external forces driving the future of services to special needs populations.

I would have been unable to move forward with this external focus without the strong management team we have built to sustain our daily operations. I thank them for their commitment, passion and support.

So what is this new focus? It is in two major, overlapping areas. The first is increased collaboration with like-minded agencies with which we share a vision and a set of values. The second area is on policy changes occurring in Washington, D.C. and the changing contours of health care, particularly Managed Long Term Care, as well as on the relationship between Washington and Albany.

Regarding the collaboration, ACDS has joined two new groups, the Interagency Council (IAC) and AGNY. IAC is a Manhattan-based industry group with over 150 members most of whom serve populations similar to our own; IAC is probably the most effective agency in the state lobbying in Albany for our issues. AGNY is a group that was formed to collectively pursue options in the new managed care environment. AGNY at last count had 51 members and through partnerships with two other groups, represents agencies which serve over 30,000 individuals funded through OPWDD with about \$1.2 billion in revenues. This group is currently in negotiations with health insurers to create a downstate managed care entity to carry us forward in the changing environment.

The Washington involvement is because most of our services and almost all of our adult programs are fueled through Medicaid. New York State consumes more federal revenues on the OPW population than the next three largest states combined. This fact alone caught the attention of a newly cost conscious Washington. As a result, Washington cut New York State's Medicaid reimbursement by over one billion dollars, effective April 1, 2013. ACDS's share of that reduction is over \$300,000 or about \$6,000 per group home resident. This is real money! Consequently agencies such as ACDS must be involved through industry group lobbyists, and our elected officials, on what is happening in both our nation's and our state capitals.

If I cannot bring back to governance, staff and parents (as I did recently in a constructive meeting with residential families) the latest policy and legislative changes impacting our students and consumers so that we can stay ahead of the curve, I am putting everything we built at risk. I have too much invested in your children and siblings to ever let that happen.



Day Hab's Innovative New Fitness Program

ACDS' Opportunities Day Hab participants are moving and grooving in their new Expressions Workshop. The Expressions Workshop, led by Adam Stevens, combines exercise, speech, drama, healthy eating and role playing. This program was developed in an effort to provide fitness and general wellness for all of our participants. The current mission of the Expressions Workshop is: "To allow each unique individual a safe, positive and productive atmosphere to express himself or herself by way of creative outlets, various forms of movement and different dramatic genres."



Incorporating Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" program into our Day Hab encourages the participants to work towards healthier lifestyles. Staff is thrilled to see the participants moving and really enjoying it.

This program has been so successful that it is leading to a "Moving and Grooving Program" this summer for teens and young adults in ACDS' 5PLUS Program. Watch for updates about this new program on ACDS' website and in the mail!

Annual Gala A Success After Storm Delay

ACDS' Annual Gala took center stage at the Garden City Hotel on Saturday January 26th, having been postponed after Superstorm Sandy in October. The gala, with a Broadway theme, was our most successful to date. Gala honorees included the Italian Welfare League and its board president, Linda Carozzi as well as six previous Board Presidents who were recognized and honored for their contributions to the agency. Past Board presidents honored were Roy Danis, Joe Foster, David Graney, Craig Lomma, Stuart Schoenfeld and David Weingarten.



Michael Smith, Bea Tusiani and Vinnie Santo.

After dinner, over 300 guests partied on the dance floor to the sounds of the Hank Lane Orchestra. The brightest stars of the evening were more than 50 residents or clients of ACDS's seven supervised residences and its new Day Habilitation program, all of whom attended courtesy of generous table sponsors.

The 2013 Gala will be held on Sat., November 9th. Save the date!

Honorees and former board presidents David Graney, David Weingarten, Roy Danis, Joe Foster, Stuart Schoenfeld, Craig Lomma and ACDS Executive Director, Michael Smith



SPECIAL THANKS TO...

...**Reinwald's Bakery** in Huntington, New York who held a fundraiser last October for ACDS in honor of Down Syndrome Awareness Month. Rich Reinwald, owner of the bakery, recently visited ACDS and presented ACDS with the proceeds from their special cupcake fundraiser.

...**the Richard J. O'Brien Foundation** for once again choosing ACDS as one of the beneficiaries of their annual Golf Outing and Dinner which was held this past September at Southward Ho Country Club in Bay Shore. The foundation's board visited ACDS in March and presented Michael Smith with a check for \$30,000.

...**Maryann Aidikoff**, and a group of her friends, who organized and ran a MahJong and Dinner fundraiser on March 21st that raised over \$11,000 to help support the programs and services at ACDS. Mrs. Aidikoff is mom to one of our group home residents.

...**all of our ACDS Supporters**...did you know that our 2012 Annual Appeal was our most successful ever? We thank everyone who participated. Without your help, we cannot continue our important work. Special thanks to two anonymous donors who each provided matching contributions of \$10,000.

St. Patrick's Celebration

More than 600 guests gathered at the Parish Center in Rockville Centre at ACDS' annual St. Patrick's Celebration on Saturday March 2nd.

This year's event honored event founder, ACDS parent and former board member, Liz Lawlor Campbell as well as ACDS Educational Coordinator, Jane Shimkin, both residents of Rockville Centre.

Guests enjoyed an evening of entertainment with pipers from the New York Metro Pipe Band, Irish dancers from Petri School of Irish Dancing, Irish music by Martin Flynn as well as delicious catering by Kasey's Kitchen and Cocktails. The event also included dozens of raffles and silent auctions, with a super raffle that included a 5 day trip to Ireland, courtesy of Sceptre Tours in Rockville Centre.

Upcoming Preschool Graduation!

ACDS preschool graduation ceremonies will be celebrated on Tuesday, June 18th and Wednesday, June 19th, 2013. The children have been practicing and, as in the past, the ceremony will evoke bittersweet emotions from parents, families and staff. This year, ACDS will be graduating 78 students from our prekindergarten, special education and integrated co-teaching classes, **the largest class ever!** We are so proud of our children who are so ready to use their wings and soar as they transition into elementary school!

ACDS Dance Troupe Performs at Lincoln Center for Second Time



Photo by Nate Williams

A night of inclusion and acceptance — the very essence of what ACDS is all about — was recently celebrated at the world famous Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts when the ACDS dance troupe performed on the same stage with traditional Japanese dancers, a Japanese choir and the remarkable Abyssinian Baptist Choir from Harlem.

It was an event that marveled the sold out crowd and brought together people of different backgrounds with half of the night's proceeds donated to ACDS. The program, entitled "Enjoy Japan", was dedicated to world peace and US-Japanese friendship. The ACDS dance troupe, which consists of 10 young women with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities, captivated the crowd. The evening marked the second consecutive year ACDS' dance troupe was invited to take center stage at Lincoln Center. They owned the moment with pride, performing two different routines, complete with costume changes.

The dancers shared the spotlight with renowned Japanese choral director, Ando Yuki, who led two choirs, traditional Japanese dancers, and the world-renowned Abyssinian Baptist Choir, who had the audience on their feet during their spectacular performance. All of the performers gathered onstage for an emotional finale that was a testament to the theme of the evening; showing acceptance and inclusion regardless of culture, ability or race. The evening ended with a rousing standing ovation for those on stage.

The dance troupe dedicated this year's performance to choreographer and dance teacher, Beth King, who sadly passed away shortly after the girl's 2012 performance. Beth, along with her longtime friend Susan Cavallo, arranged the girls' choreography and led their weekly practices for their initial Lincoln Center performance. This year's performance was choreographed by Beth's daughter Kaley Young and Cavallo.

We Need You!



ACDS is looking for dedicated and reliable volunteers who are enthusiastic about our organization and are willing to support us with their time and talent by joining one of our Special Event committees. Committee involvement includes helping to plan and execute each event, along with soliciting attendees, raffles, auction prizes and sponsorships. ACDS holds three events during the year and we are in need of individuals to help serve on the committees for either golf, St. Pat's or our annual gala.

These events and the funds that they generate are vitally important to allow ACDS to continue to raise awareness and acceptance, as well as to continue to fulfill our mission.

If you are interested please email Event Coordinator Laurie Schaefer at lschaefer@acds.org or call 516.933.4700 x 124.



Group home residents volunteered at the second World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) conference at United Nation Headquarters on March 21st 2013.

Pictured (left) is Michael Patton with a conference attendee and (right) Loretta Clark at the UN directing attendees to the WDSD Conference areas.



If you would like to make a donation to ACDS, please visit our website and click on the 'donate now' tab, or use the attached envelope. We thank you for your ongoing support of ACDS.

If there is an error on your mailing label for this newsletter, please inform us of the corrected address.

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 4 Fern Place
 Plainville, New York 11803-4725
 (516) 933-4700
www.acds.org



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