



Serving children and adults with
Down syndrome, autism and other
developmental disabilities

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ACDS DANCERS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN NEW YORK CITY

Sometimes dreams do come true. Twelve young ladies from ACDS got the chance of a lifetime to perform in front of a sold-out audience at the world famous Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts on March 28.

A group of teens and adults composed primarily of former participants of ACDS' 5Plus recreational dance program, performed lyrical and contemporary dance numbers during a showcase of ballet students from two leading Japanese ballet schools – the Katayama Mitsuko Ballet School and the Marry Ballet Studio.

“The audience was blown away by our dancers' performance. Standing ovations brought the house down,” said Linda Sperber, Director of Program Development at ACDS.

“Our dancers exceeded everyone's expectations. They had a burning desire to be successful and spent many hours rehearsing, as well as practicing at home,” said Erica Lepurage, Recreational Program Coordinator. “One mother shared the story of how when her daughter was a baby, the professionals said she probably would never walk or talk, and now, she is dancing at Lincoln Center – imagine that family's pride.”

Said Linda Sperber: “The dancers had an opportunity to be included with other talented dancers from around the world. They were able to show the world what happens when you focus on someone's ability rather than their disability.”

The dancers brought the house down with their performance and took their bows to a huge standing ovation. It was an evening no one involved will ever forget.



CARDOZA FAMILY PLAYGROUND

The preschool students at ACDS have a brand new playground at the Plainview facility thanks to the generosity of Raymond and Linda Cardoza and family.

The playground includes a swing set, independent pieces for climbing and a paved track encircling the playground where children can ride bikes and practice their motor skills. The previous playground was designed for children over 5 years-old. “What was there wasn't suitable for those under 5 years old who are developmentally challenged. Some of the equipment was too high for them,” said Cardoza, who met with ACDS staff to determine what was most needed.

On April 27, 2012, the preschool held its grand opening/ribbon cutting ceremony of the renovated playground, which was made possible with a generous donation of nearly \$40,000 donated by the Cardoza family-owned commercial plumbing business, as well as additional money he raised among his friends. The Cardozas were greeted by hundreds of smiling children, eager and waiting to try out the new playground.

“I wanted to give more than money; something for the children to enjoy and admire. The playground is just that – a legacy,” said Cardoza.

The Cardoza family has already made an indelible mark on the organization. For the past 15 years, they have worked tirelessly to serve on the Dinner Dance committee where they, along with their friends, family, and business associates have rallied behind the organization, whether it be purchasing journal ads or searching for sponsorships and donations. Raymond Cardoza is a past board member and is currently a member of the Advisory Board at ACDS.

The playground has gone to good use since the grand opening. On any nice day children can be found out there, running and playing on the equipment. Therapists and students are also using the track to practice gross motor skills, such as riding tricycles and jumping.

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MICHAEL M. SMITH

From the Desk of the Executive Director

As part of a strategic review of the agency, The Board of Directors has voted unanimously to change the legal name of the agency to "ACDS, Inc."

You may have thought that was already the name, because it is how most of us refer to the organization, but now it has formally been established and legally registered with the New York Secretary of State as required by law.

Reviewing our corporate history this appears to be perhaps the seventh time our name has changed in 46 years. Each time the change was to reflect new developments in the field, unacceptable references to the individuals we serve, changing social standards, or an evolving population in our programs and services. It is this last one that leads to the most recent change.

At the same time we felt the need to both recognize our heritage and better define our services. Meaning, we are no longer an "Association" and have not been for 13 years; we no longer serve just children and have not for almost 25 years; and we do not serve solely individuals with Down syndrome. So our former name, the Association for Children with Down Syndrome, was no longer appropriate.

To clarify who we are and what we do The Board also adopted a tagline to appear alongside our new name and redesigned logo:

"Serving children and adults with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities."

Thus, putting together logo, name and tagline, this is how we will identify ourselves going forward:



Serving children and adults with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities

RICHARD J. OBRIEN FOUNDATION

Richard O'Brien was always there for ACDS, whether it was serving as a banker working to get us the funding necessary to finance our group homes or supporting the organization's golf fundraisers. Said Michael M. Smith (Executive Director) "Rich always went the extra mile in helping ACDS, particularly in times when we needed his support the most. We miss his friendship, counsel and support. He was truly one-of-a-kind."

Rich's legacy of giving continues, even after his untimely death in September of 2010. ACDS dedicated its May 2011 annual golf outing to Rich's memory. In September 2011 the Richard J. O'Brien Foundation held its first annual golf outing and ACDS was one of the beneficiaries. On February 16, 2012 the Foundation presented a \$30,000 check to ACDS to help the organization continue its mission of serving those with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

The foundation's support continued this year at the 2nd annual outing in September.

For more information on the Richard J. O'Brien Foundation and their annual golf outing, please visit: [www. http://rjofoundation.org](http://rjofoundation.org).

21st CENTURY TECHNOLOGY IN OUR CLASSROOMS

The preschool at ACDS has been taking advantage of the "hottest" trend in technology to help improve developmental levels of children with disabilities. The infamous iPad has been a hot topic since its debut in Spring 2010. The iPad isn't just about fun and games; it's a voice for those who are unable to or are just learning to speak, and a powerful teaching tool.

For the last year, many preschool students at ACDS have been able to communicate, some for the first time, thanks to this tablet technology.

"With our population, it's exciting to use 21st century technology to help us with our goal of preparing children to transition into the public school setting at the age of 5," explains Cecilia Barry, principal of ACDS.

The road began when Jessica Litwack, a speech/language pathologist, first heard about how iPads were being used to give a voice to those unable to speak. When she got an iPad and started using it, she saw the potential. A student diagnosed with apraxia, an oral-motor speech disorder, was using an iPad at home as a communication device. His therapist coordinated utilization of the tool for home and school with great success. Thus, an idea was born.

With donations from the PTO and anonymous donors, ACDS was able to purchase 24 iPads for use in the classrooms and by therapists.

There is nothing more frustrating than being unable to effectively communicate one's wants, needs or thoughts. With this device even the youngest students, at 2 years old, have been able to communicate. The touch-and-swipe screen gives them the ability to express themselves and serves as a tool that enables these children to participate in classroom activities with their peers. "The iPad has been remarkable in particular for use in children with autism spectrum disorders and Down syndrome," said Barry.

The use of machines to communicate is nothing new. The iPad, however, is much more versatile and much less expensive than the thousands of dollars an augmentative communication device can cost. It's also cool, fun, and socially acceptable which matters to children, who have shown that they are motivated to learn in this manner.

Many children with Down syndrome and autism are visual learners, so the iPad appeals to their learning style, helping them stay on task and focused for longer periods of time" -said Barry. "These kids are not reading, they're using pictures to communicate." For example, they can touch a picture of a sandwich or chicken nuggets on the screen to indicate their preference and a recorded voice states their choice in response to their touch.

Another effective teaching tool of the iPad is the camera. It enables the tablet to become more dynamic and specifically geared to each child's individual needs. A teacher recently used the iPad as a means of assessing ability to identify classmates for students unable to speak. The teacher took a picture of each child in class and the student was asked to identify his friends when they were named. By touching the pictures on the screen he was able to pick them out one by one - displaying a skill no one previously knew he had.

There are numerous apps designed for children with special needs. Not only do they teach readiness skills in a fun way, but many also have the ability to automatically record data on student's progress, calculating and tracking each child's individual development.

The iPad isn't just a trendy new gadget; for the children at ACDS, this technology is changing lives.



ACDS AT UNITED NATIONS

World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) is observed annually on March 21st. (3-21 was chosen because it represents the trisomy of the 21st chromosome apparent in Down syndrome). This year, WDSD was officially observed by the United Nations. This auspicious occasion was marked by a conference at the UN entitled "Building Our Future".

Representatives from Canada, Nigeria, Brazil, Poland, Sweden, Pakistan, Nepal, Yemen and other countries around the globe gathered and participated in panels on topics such as promoting inclusion in schools in Indonesia; fighting for the right to vote in Peru; Care, Treatment and Research – what's new on the Down syndrome front, among others.

Among the speakers were two of ACDS's very own; Michael Brennan, a group home resident and Tom Forester, Director of Residential Services.

"I tried my hardest, I spoke from my heart," said Michael, "I always wanted to live in my own house. I've been able to the last two years and I love it," said Brennan who shared his story and talked about the importance of living independently at the conference.

Tom Forester made a presentation on supporting safe independence. "ACDS was the only provider agency invited. It was an honor to be able to share with the world how we deal with residential services. The event gave a contrast of where we are compared with the rest of the world, and how we serve those with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. What we take for granted in the U.S., is not always commonplace," said Forester.

WDSD was first established by Down Syndrome International and celebrated since 2006, and is observed in over 60 countries around the world. The aim of the day is to raise awareness and increase the understanding about Down syndrome, to promote the inherent rights and dignity of persons with Down syndrome to enjoy full and dignified lives and to recognize the worth and valuable contributions of people with Down syndrome.



ACDS HONORED AT RVC ST. PATRICK'S PARADE

ACDS was one of three charities featured on March 24, at the 16th annual Rockville Centre St. Patrick's Parade. In addition to participating in parade festivities, the agency received a \$14,000 donation, presented at a ceremony at Kasey's Kitchen & Cocktails in April.

A total of more than 150 children, adults, their families and staff members from ACDS marched in the parade, smiling and waving to the crowds that lined the streets of Rockville Centre.

Each year "the parade that cares and shares", sponsors a national, local and Irish charity with proceeds from the parade going to each highlighted charity. The RVC parade is one of the best attended and supported outside of New York City. In the past fifteen years \$676,000 has been distributed to 45 charities. The selection process was rigorous as charities had to apply and be approved by the Parade Committee.

The Ronald McDonald House of Long Island and Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities were also honored and will share fundraising proceeds with ACDS.

It was a great distinction to be recognized by a parade with such history and we thank the Rockville Centre Parade Committee and the community for the honor.

2012 DINNER DANCE HONOREES

On Saturday November 3rd, ACDS will be holding its Annual Gala at the Garden City Hotel. This year the organization will be honoring the past six board presidents of ACDS. We are very proud that ACDS is a lifetime resource for families, and these six gentlemen personify that, as all continue to be involved with ACDS long after their service as Board President ended. Joe Foster and David Weingarten have sons who live in our group homes. Roy Danis and Dave Graney have children we serve through Medicaid Service Coordination, and Stuart Schoenfeld's daughter danced at Lincoln Center. Finally, Craig Lomma, who, lives in Connecticut, has been active in strategic planning and has regularly participated in many of our fundraising events. So, come out on November 3 and thank these six gentlemen whose service extends back to 1985!! They are a big part of the reason ACDS is thriving today. We are also proudly honoring the Italian Welfare League and its president, Linda Carozzi for their ongoing support of ACDS.

SAVE THE DATES!

- > ACDS Annual Dinner Dance
 - Saturday November 3rd 2012
 - Garden City Hotel 7PM
- > Patrick Xavier Owens Memorial Fundraiser
 - January 2013
 - East Rockaway, NY
- > St. Patrick's Celebration
 - Saturday March 2nd 2013
 - St. Agnes Parish Center, Rockville Centre NY
- > ACDS Annual Golf Outing
 - Thursday May 9th 2013
 - Hempstead Country Club
- > For more information on these events please visit our website www.acds.org

FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

ACDS can be found at www.facebook.com/ACDSNY and @ACDSNY Join us today!



On Wednesday, December 28th ACDS Executive Director, Michael M. Smith (center), rang the opening bell at the NYSE in celebration of ACDS's 45 years of service to the community. Michael was joined on this exciting day by current and former ACDS Board Members and their families.

NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY!

ACDS is proud to announce the development of a new online community at <http://acdscommunity.ning.com/>.

This online community was created as a support forum for those impacted by autism, Down syndrome or other disabilities.

Please sign up and take part in the discussions today!!



PICTURED:
Linda Sperber,
Assemblyman Felix
Ortiz, Michael Smith,
Manny Katsoulis

HELLENOS HOUSE ANNIVERSARY

On Saturday September 8th, ACDS Hellenos House celebrated its 4 year anniversary. Present at the festivities along with Hellenos residents and ACDS staff were Assemblyman Félix Ortiz of Brooklyn, District 51 and Chairman of the Mental Health Committee in the Assembly, Donna Limiti, Acting Director of DDSO in NYC, Samantha Darche, Acting Chief of Staff for Assemblywoman Aravella Simotos in Astoria Queens and Father Dennis of St. Michael the Archangel Greek Orthodox Church in Port Washington. Hellenos House was developed through a partnership with Archangel Michael Greek Orthodox Church and their Challenge Liturgy Program. ACDS hopes to partner with these supporters to create a similar home in Astoria in the future.



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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 enclosing a check or filling out your credit card number. We thank you for your ongoing support of ACDS.

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