

2016
ANNUAL
REPORT



Years of caring service



ABOUT ACDS

Note About Artwork in Annual Report:
The students at ACDS love to create and express themselves through art. Through this Annual Report you will see what they have created and we are proud to share these artistic visions with you.



MISSION AND VISION

ACDS is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities and their families.

Building on more than 50 years of service, ACDS seeks to be widely recognized as a leader in the field of Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities by its commitment to quality, innovation and empowerment.

5 CORE VALUES

ACDS embodies five core values, as follows:

FOCUS:

To empower all individuals with Down syndrome and developmental disabilities to achieve their greatest potential; to treat our consumers and their families with respect, understanding and compassion; and to build collaboration, teamwork and trust throughout our organization.

EXCELLENCE:

To pursue excellence passionately; to be sure that quality is a concern in every activity; and to be flexible and willing to try new things.

INTEGRITY:

To act professionally and honestly at all times; to demonstrate truthfulness and reliability in everything we do; and to adhere without exception to this statement of values.

OUTREACH:

To be highly visible as a leadership organization in the field of Down syndrome and related developmental disabilities; to have local, regional and national reputes for the quality, sensitivity and innovation of our programs and activities; and to advocate effectively and continuously for full integration and inclusion in society of all individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

COMMUNITY:

To be an exemplary member of the larger community of individuals and organizations interested in, and concerned about, the field of Down syndrome and related developmental disabilities; to work cooperatively and collegially with other organizations in this field; and to contribute positively to the local communities in which we work.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It is hard to wrap our heads around the idea that ACDS is celebrating 50 years (a half century) of services. The two of us have many people to thank, most of all those who have preceded us.

So, thanks go out to all past Board members and Board presidents, and to past leaders of the agency (whatever title they used).

Our thanks go out to all staff, past and present. As of today we have 350 employees and about 60 more consultants. And literally thousands of others, employees and volunteers, came before them. And we recognize one of them, our superb preschool teacher, Pam Wise, who is in her 38th year of teaching at ACDS. Pam is emblematic of the best in all our employees.

We thank our families—we estimate that over 4000 families have been served by ACDS through our 50 years.

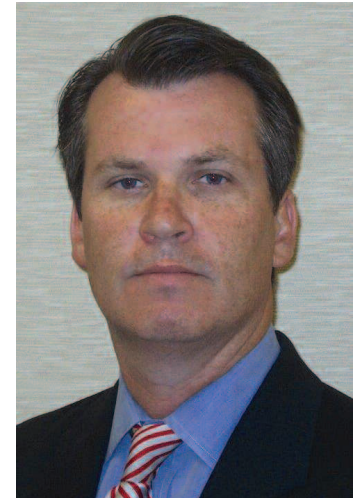
We thank, most especially, the children and adults who have come into our lives and enriched them. From the bottom of our hearts we know that you have made us better people and made the world a better, kinder, and more welcoming place.

And we thank everyone who has supported the work of ACDS. In the earliest years, when government was nowhere to be found, and in these later years when government is pulling back, it is their support which allows us to look toward the next half century with hope and the expectation of achieving even more.

We thank you all for allowing us to lead this wonderful organization.

Gene Kirley
Board President

Michael M. Smith
Executive Director



■ ACDS SCHOOLS, GROUP HOMES AND ADULT SERVICE FACILITIES

The founders of ACDS would be surprised at how we have grown. Not only will our budget approach \$20,000,000 this year, but we have a wide variety of properties, from Nassau to Westchester County. The photos on these pages are our schools, group homes, and other adult services facilities. We feel taken together they offer a good “picture” of where we are as an agency as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.



FERN PLACE



JERUSALEM AVE



MERRICK AVE



HORATIO AVE



KIMBERLY COURT



NORTH NEWBRIDGE ROAD



SCARSDALE ROAD



SOUTH BAYVIEW AVE



WASHINGTON AVE



SEARINGTON AVE



WEST LOINES AVE



COLONIAL COURT

Photos courtesy of Zeus Pyle

ACDS TIMELINE



Space is rented in Nassau & Suffolk for the first "center-based" programs. Our first teachers and teacher assistants are hired.

Preschool moves to Bellmore. School grows to 70 students. Budget grows to \$250,00 with 26 full and part-time staff.

1966

A group of parents, seeking services for their children, found The Association for Special Children.

1972

Space is rented in Nassau & Suffolk for the first "center-based" programs. Our first teachers and teacher assistants are hired.

1975

The agency is approved for New York State funding, programs are consolidated in eastern Nassau County. Salaried position of Executive Director is created.

1978

Preschool moves to Bellmore. School grows to 70 students. Budget grows to \$250,00 with 26 full and part-time staff.

1984

Governor Mario Cuomo establishes October as Down Syndrome Awareness Month in New York State in a ceremony attended by Executive Director Freda Stimell. Teacher-Toddler Daycare opens in September.

School expands with new classes added. Enrollment reaches 90 students.

1985



5 Plus after school recreation program expands to Saturdays. Program coordinator is hired.

1988



5 Plus after school recreation program is started with a legislative grant.

1986



100% of ACDS graduates transition to public school placements for the first time. First full-time controller is hired.

1992



■ ACDS TIMELINE

Inclusionary day care program for children in the community opens.

1995



Agency name is changed to Association for Children with Down Syndrome, Inc., also legally known as ACDS. School moves to current facility in Plainview.

1999

1996

First children without Down syndrome are accepted into the program.



2000

First IRA group home opens in Wantagh. All six residents are former ACDS preschool students. Homes in Seaford and Freeport open shortly thereafter.

A center based Early Intervention class begins for children on the Autistic spectrum. Merrick IRA opens.

2002



Horatio Avenue IRA opens in Merrick. Adult Medicaid Service Coordination program begins. Student enrollment surpasses 200.

2005



Home-based preschool ABA (applied behavior analysis) services are added. Our 6th IRA, Hellenos House, opens in Wantagh.

2007

2004

Michael Smith is hired as Executive Director. Chief Financial Officer position is created.

2006

ACDS celebrates its 40th anniversary. Staff reaches 175 and budget is \$8 million. Fourth integrated class is added.



■ ACDS TIMELINE



Educational programs continue to expand – ACDS is authorized to serve an additional child in each of our classes.

2009



ACDS celebrates its 45th anniversary. Now providing service to nearly 1000 individuals. Additional ABA classes open in September.

2011



2008

5 Plus programs continue to expand as a week-long overnight summer camp commences in Garrison, New York.



2010

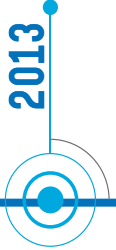
7th IRA is opened on West Loines Avenue in Merrick. Day habilitation services are added and housed at a new facility on Newbridge Rd. School is reconfigured to add a self-contained clinical services wing.



2012

Agency changes legal name to ACDS to reflect continuum of service to children and adults. 12 dancers from ACDS 5 Plus program perform on the stage at Lincoln Center.

An eighth group home is opened in Albertson, NY to serve four individuals with autism. Total client population surpasses 1,000 individuals.



Innovative, half day Early Intervention class, using ABA techniques, opens in September. Day Hab Program Without Walls grows to 61 participants.



5 Plus and Dayhab programs move to a new leased site in Plainview, having outgrown current location. AAC Evaluation Center opens.



ACDS celebrates 50 years of service to the Long Island community, continuing the tradition started in 1966, by a small group of parents with a vision of acceptance and inclusion for their children.

■ RIBBON CUTTING WESTCHESTER SCHOOL OPENING

On Tuesday, October 25, we had the Ribbon Cutting for our new Preschool in Scarsdale in Westchester County.

We were honored to have New York State Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer there to do the honors. The assemblywoman is both the representative of the district in which the new school is located and the Chairperson of the Subcommittee for Children with Special Needs. Shelley and her staff, and in fact the whole community, have been supportive of this project right from the start.

The school, a 4410 Preschool like our flagship school in Plainview, actually opened on September 6 with two classes. By the day of the ribbon cutting we had four classes up and running with 38 students. The State Education Department has authorized us to go to six classes and plans are now with the local building department to expand to 16 classes serving over 160 children. We believe we could reach those numbers in the next 18 months.

Thanks to all who attended and supported this new initiative, our most ambitious one in this our 50th Anniversary Year.



Westchester School Grand Opening with (l-r) ACDS Board President Gene Kirley, New York State Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer, Executive Director Michael M. Smith and Board Secretary Tom Ryan.



ACDS FAMILY FUN DAY 2016



■ ACDS IS A PLACE SURROUNDED BY LOVE! THE STORY OF DESI

As Executive Director, only the most critical and insoluble issues make it to your desk. As a result, you get to know the students families, and consumer's best who face intractable problems.

Thus it was when I met Desiderio and his mother, Mary Kim Farkas.

Mary had found ACDS during her pregnancy. As her story, which follows, relates, she felt she had found a home when she walked into our school. Of course, we wanted to serve Desi, who we knew would be born with Down syndrome, but that is hardly the end of the story.

Desi was born with significant cardiac issues, his health was fragile, he wasn't thriving and he was tiny. Mary brought him to us and wanted to put him in Daycare when he was six weeks old. Staff brought the matter to my attention at this point, concerned about taking on this child whose mere survival was seriously in question.

I met Mary and Desi, and held this newborn child. I went to staff. For several days I discussed with them whether they could take this on, whether the risk to the child and ACDS was too great. These days (and the ones which followed) lead to sleepless nights.

Ultimately, I had a discussion with myself. I said "if we can't do this, can't take this on, can't help this mother and child, why are we here?"

So I said yes, we can and will serve Desi. But it didn't end there. Never have I personally been so involved with a child we serve. I went several days a week into our infant room to check on him and hold him. His color wasn't great, but he seemed to be getting stronger and was adding weight, maybe a half ounce at a time, but he was adding weight. Together with Mary we needed to make him strong enough to be able to be ready for his complicated cardiac surgery.

Within a few months, the call was made by Desi's doctors to go ahead with his surgery. I felt we had done all we could, our staff had done amazing work and we all loved this child. We all prayed for the success of the surgery.

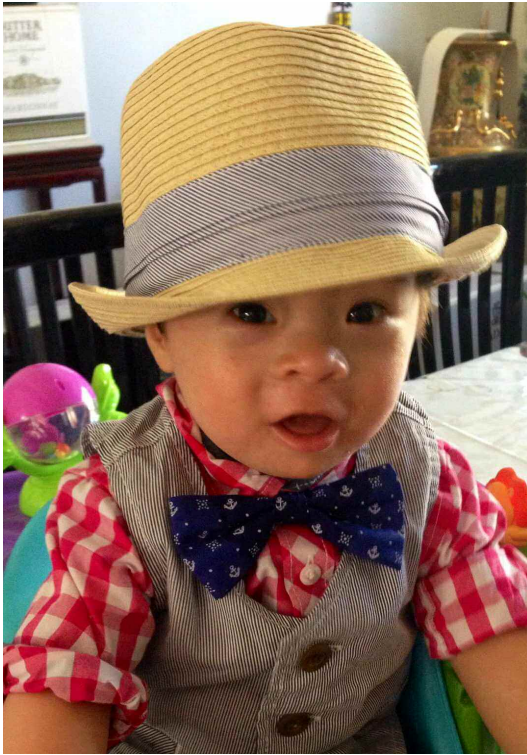
Several months later Mary came to an evening meeting of parents of children with Down syndrome. She was proudly carrying a robust Desi, whose color had totally changed to that of a healthy child with a properly functioning heart. She thanked our amazing staff for all they had done. It was one of my proudest moments in my long career doing this work.

Our 50 years make us able to take on these challenges. ACDS was founded to serve Desi and Mary Kim Farkas.

Her personal story follows.

Michael M. Smith
October 2016





My name is Mary Kim Farkas and I'm writing this on behalf of my son, Desiderio Kwan Farkas, who is 3 years old.

The first time I heard of ACDS was when I went for my second opinion, after my Amniocentesis, confirming a Down Syndrome diagnosis. The very next day was a Saturday, and I drove to ACDS to "investigate". The school was closed, but I walked the grounds and peeked into the rooms. I was impressed and intrigued. On Monday morning I called and set up an appointment. I was about five months pregnant. Four years later, I am more in love with this ACDS family than ever before. Desiderio has been enrolled at ACDS since he was 8 weeks old. Desi truly has a home away from home. I can freely drop him off at early care and pick him up at after care, knowing he is in the best place possible.

This school represents inclusion, pride, and teamwork. Every day, we are greeted with acceptance, love, and the biggest hearts. From the custodial staff to the CEO, everyone has the same agenda to create and foster an environment of creating, learning, and teaching on all levels.

I thank God every day for everyone who is part of Desi's team because I know he wouldn't be as far along as he is, if he wasn't at this school. Desiderio's developmental advancement is a direct result of his team's daily consistent drive and dedication to do everything in their power to ensure we will be ready for our transition when Desi graduates in 2 years. As a single mom, I will forever be grateful for my ACDS village.

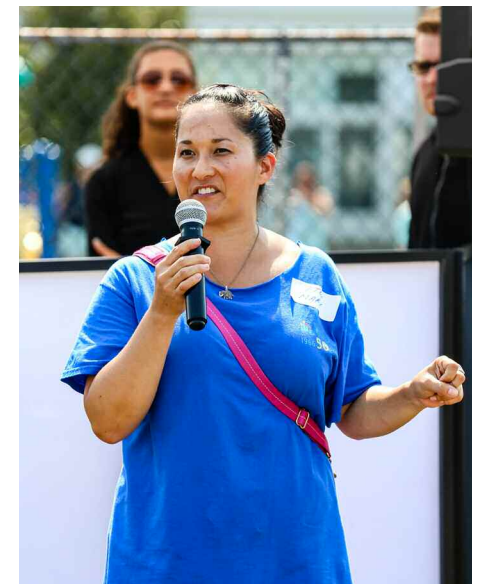
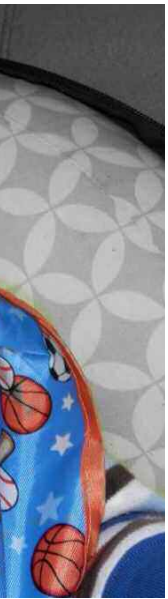
Before my son was born, I was told he would have a limited life with limited abilities. I was paralyzed with fear and especially fearful for the boundaries others would set for him. Today, I can stand taller and shout to the world that I have found the one place that matched my wish for Desiderio Kwan Farkas. My vision is your vision.

ACDS is a place surrounded by loved ones who will inspire and encourage him. Because of all of you, my son is full of life and has unlimited possibilities. Desiderio is the light in my soul, the joy in my heart, and the inspiration behind my fight. Desi and I are so honored and proud to be a part of this family as ACDS celebrates their 50th Anniversary.

My wish for ACDS in the next 50 years is to reach, teach, and touch 100's of thousands of other minds, hearts, and families. To continue to be the role model for other schools, organizations, and companies. You are the leader from Early Intervention to Adulthood. You provide a community for our children as they grow and become young adults to grown adults who will make the mark in this world.

Together, we will continue to celebrate lives and not fear the possible limits of blessed souls.

Much love and appreciation always,
Mary Kim Farkas.. aka Desi's Mom.



IN MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

Linda Sperber



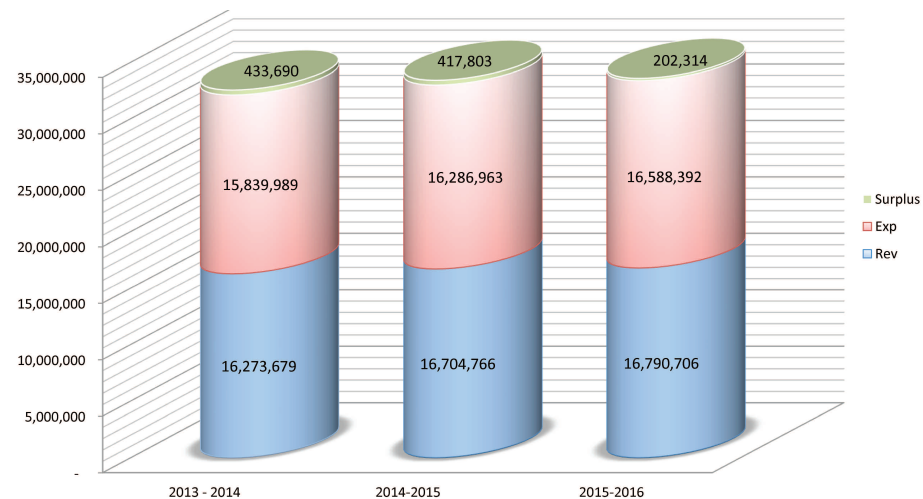
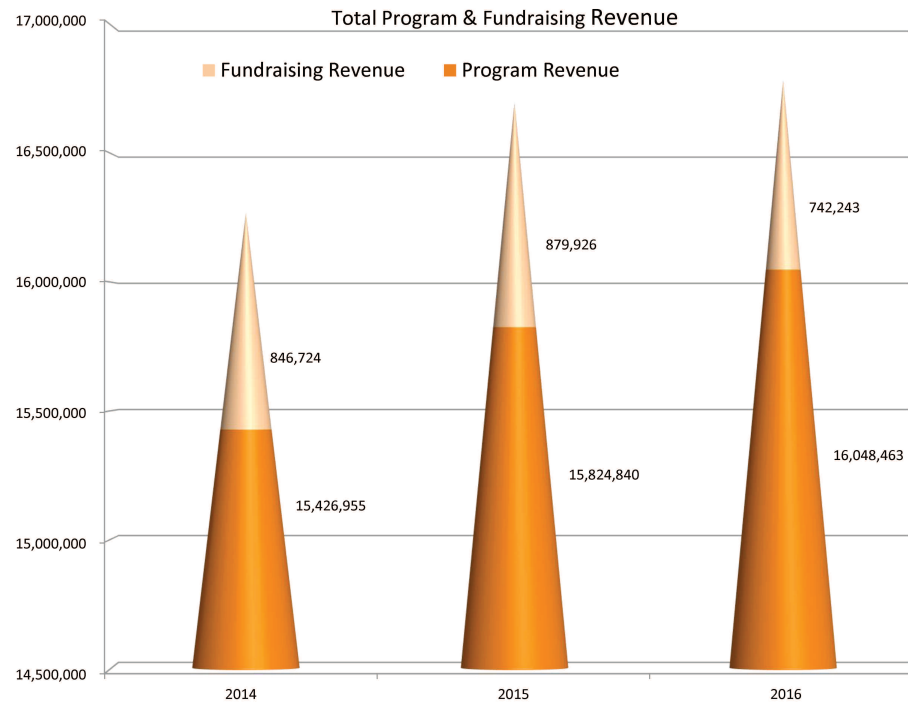
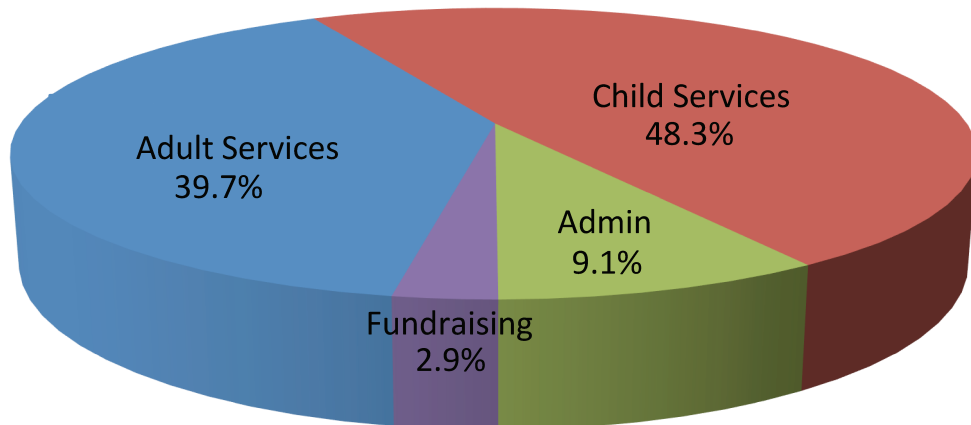
Linda was a valued colleague who created and administered all of our adult service programs. She was the “mother” of 5Plus, residential, MSC, and Day Habilitation. And she created programs which kept ACDS alive when the school was struggling. Linda, we all thank you.

And she did so because of her love for the babies she had in her classrooms beginning in 1985. After they graduated from our preschool, our children with Down syndrome (because that was our sole population 30 years ago), had nowhere to go. So Linda created programs for them and continued to do so right through the spring of 2016. ACDS serves over 1000 individuals a year, and about three quarters of them attend or are served by programs Linda imagined and opened. It is no exaggeration to say we are a thriving and successful agency celebrating our 50th Anniversary this year largely due to the work and dedication of this extraordinary woman.

FINANCIAL POSITION

As ACDS has grown, almost tripling in size since 2004, we have gotten fiscally stronger. With good governance and oversight from our 15 member Board of Directors, and with a strong management team and Finance Department, we continue to generate strong results. These results have enabled us to expand our services by opening our new school in Westchester. Of course, with government retrenchment, fundraising is needed to make up what government doesn't provide. In the pages which follow we highlight those who have so generously supported our work over the last five years.

**Fiscal Year 2015-2016
Expenses by Program**



DONOR REPORT

(DONATIONS SINCE JANUARY 1, 2011)



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\$10,000 +

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

ACDS 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

A publication of the
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