



LIBERTY ADVOCATE 2012

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Bountiful Harvest at the Liberty/FM Community Garden

The late summer months of August and September have proven very bountiful as the individuals Liberty supports begin to harvest the Liberty/FM Community Garden at Fulton-Montgomery Community College (FM). It has been an abundant crop of fruits and vegetables, including: peas, green beans, green and hot peppers, cherry and plum tomatoes, basil, spinach, radishes, and sweet corn.

The produce from the garden is being donated to local community groups, such as Catholic Charities of Fulton and Montgomery Counties and the Fulmont Community Action Agency.

Liberty and FM, along with volunteers from both organizations, have been caretakers of the garden since its creation last fall. They oversee nine individual 10'x10' raised planter boxes for crop rotations and will soon be planting trees for various fruits surrounding the garden. ♦



Garden photos: Cabbage and basil plants grew lush and plentiful. Harvested items are a colorful cornucopia for the eye and delicious to the palate. Valerie Tarantelli enjoys her work watering the garden. Debbie Hull and Tiffany Bottomly proudly collect tomatoes.

*At right:
L to R: Mike Gotell, Tiffany Bottomly, (in back) Rose Santana and Jenny Huertas of Fulmont Community Action Agency, and Ryan Whitehouse pose with an assortment of fresh-picked produce.*



Liberty gardeners show their pride as they bring much-needed donations of fresh fruits and vegetables to local charities. This healthy and nutritious produce will provide assistance to local families in need.

LIBERTY

43 Liberty Drive
Amsterdam, NY 12010
518.842.5080

Caring About Each Other. Committed to the Community.



affiliated with The Arc, a national organization on intellectual and/or developmental disabilities

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The Liberty Advocate is a publication of Liberty, the Montgomery County chapter of NYSARC, Inc. Its purpose is to provide relevant information and maintain on-going contact with parents, members, staff, and the community.

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A Message from the President

This year has flown by. It does not seem possible that we are nearing the end of September... and will soon be moving into the holidays! It has been an eventful year. First and foremost, the Board is very pleased with the smooth transition of leadership from our longtime CEO Frank Capone to our present CEO Mike Decker. Obviously, the succession plan for transition of the organization's leadership outlined by our Governance Committee was very effective. We truly appreciate the efforts of everyone involved in making sure that this process was seamless.

It is the time of year that our annual membership campaign draws to a close. Part of my role as President is to help recruit new members or urge existing members to rejoin the organization. When I approach potential members, I am often asked why Liberty needs members. Sometimes I am surprised that people don't realize the importance of membership to our organization. It is probably because my parents were involved in Liberty's membership campaigns before I was born and it was always a part of my life.

Though it has always been part of my family's life, others may be unaware of why Liberty needs members. Here are the main reasons:

- Membership in Liberty/NYSARC gives us a united voice and strength in numbers as we advocate for funding and legislation affecting the lives of people

with disabilities.

- Our Chapter must have at least 301 members in order to maintain two representatives on NYSARC's Board of Governors. Our Chapter's delegates, Joel Kaplan and Sally Romano, assure that issues of importance to Liberty and the people we support are keep at the forefront.

- Membership is a way to show your support of our Chapter and the high quality programs we offer to people with disabilities in our community. Though we encourage people from all walks of life to join, it is especially important that families of individuals become members.

Even though the campaign is over for this year and the names have been submitted to NYSARC for 2012, you can still become a member. For a mere \$5, you can join Liberty, the Montgomery County Chapter of NYSARC. It is easy. Just go to www.libertyarc.org and click on 'Make a Donation.' Membership is listed as an option. If online payment is not your thing, just send in your information and a check with names, addresses, and contact numbers. Or, better yet, stop in. We would love to sign you up as a member, and, if you have some time, give you a tour of our facilities. ♦



Val Zabo, President

A Letter from Mike Decker, CEO



Mike Decker, CEO

It does not seem possible that we are now ending the third quarter of 2012. I am happy to report that this first year as CEO has been a very productive, enjoyable, and active time. Although I have been a member of the management team for 23 years, in my new role I have come to appreciate, more than ever before, just how important it is to work with people who are truly committed to Liberty's mission. Our agency is fortunate to have a visionary Board and an incredibly dedicated and skilled workforce. It is a combination that has served this agency well for many years...and will do so for many years to come.

One key to Liberty's past and future success is an effective strategic planning process. At the end of each year, the Board approves organizational goals for the upcoming twelve months. The goals are organized under Liberty's Pillars of Excellence: Quality, Customer, Workforce, Finance, and Community. In 2012, our Quality and Customer goals focus on initiatives to enhance dignity and quality of life, while promoting employment opportunities for the people we support. The Finance goal centers on the need to maintain

Liberty's financial stability while our Workforce goals focus on keeping the lines of communication with our staff open and vital.

Our Community goal this year and beyond is to increase awareness of Liberty's mission and our important role in the community. We will be focusing on the caring relationships that exist within our organization as well as those that have been established with our many friends, neighbors, and partners. A media campaign was recently launched with the intent of bringing attention to Liberty's important role in the community. Our slogan is, **"Caring About Each Other. Committed to the Community."** We anticipate that the increased visibility will encourage area residents to get to know us better.

I invite you to learn more about Liberty. If it isn't possible for you to join us at one of our program sites, take a few minutes to tour our website (www.libertyarc.org) or take look at our most recent Facebook posts to see what is happening. We are confident that if you take the time to get to know us better, you will understand how much Liberty means to each person we support, their families, our Board, our employees and this community. ♦

Caring About Each Other. Committed to the Community.

The commitment Liberty individuals have made to the community has produced strong, meaningful, long-lasting bonds. These incredible bonds will impact lives forever. Whether it is delivering sustenance to homebound seniors, providing needed supplies to local children, or donating fresh vegetables to food pantries, Liberty sees the need in the community and aims to meet those needs through various groups and skills. ♦

Salsa Picante

Right: Salsa Picante Member Marisol Pietri prepares food for a recent fundraiser.

This powerhouse group of individuals have made it their mission to provide authentic Hispanic meals at community events to raise money for numerous organizations. To date, Salsa Picante has raised over \$7,000 for agencies such as United Way, Salvation Army, and YMCA. They have also purchased back-to-school supplies for local children. Members of Salsa Picante are proud of their cooking skills and passionate about helping others.



At right: Ryan Stockwell helps assemble snack bags for local school children at our 7 Main St. Day Hab site in Ft. Plain.

Fantastic Fact:
Year-to-date, Liberty individuals have contributed over 18,000 hours of volunteer service to our community!

Below:
L to R: Matt Summerfield and AJ Hazzard enjoy spending time with man's best friend as they volunteer at Ayers Animal Shelter in Sprakers.



This billboard is located just outside Amsterdam near Truax Road. You can see it when you are headed west on Rte. 5.

The billboard portion of the campaign can be seen in several locations throughout Montgomery County. The other three locations are: headed south over the bridge going towards 5S/Thruway out of Amsterdam; Rte. 5S headed east towards Canajoharie; and Rte. 30 headed north. Also, keep an eye out when traveling the roads of Amsterdam for "Bus Billboards" coming soon to the City of Amsterdam public transportation! ♦

Mrs. Warren looks forward to her delivery not just because she's getting a good meal but she's also enjoying time with a friendly face. She loves visiting and says the food is delicious!



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Our sincere thanks to the following individuals, families and businesses who contributed to Liberty Foundation, Inc., since January, 2012. We truly appreciate your support.

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Gifts Through Your Estate Plan

Gifts through your estate provide important benefits to you as well as to the individuals and families supported through Liberty Foundation, Inc. Gifts may be made by will or trust, through which you may direct either a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate. In addition, you may designate your gift to support a particular program or department of interest to you.

Through your gift you can:

- Preserve current assets.
- Reduce or eliminate federal estate taxes.
- Make an enduring contribution to Liberty Foundation, Inc.
- Become a member of the Bright Futures Society Giving.

We will be pleased to discuss ways to make a gift through your estate to benefit Liberty Foundation, Inc.

Contact:

Barbara Wool
Director of Development
PO Box 515
Amsterdam, NY 12010
518.954.3202
barbw@libertyarc.org



"Liberty has played an important role in the life of our son Alex. When my wife Pauline and I were setting up our estate plan we decided to include a bequest to

Liberty as a means of expressing our gratitude for the support Alex has received over the years.

We both feel very committed to helping ensure that, in the years ahead, Liberty will be here for kids like our son. We encourage other parents to step up and show their support."

—Ken Adamowski



L to R: Pauline, Sarah, Ken, and Alex Adamowski take in the sights at the University of Charleston where Sarah is attending her first year of college. She is a member of the University's women's golf team.

18th Annual Golf Tournament

The Foundation's 18th Annual Golf Tournament was held on Thursday, June 7, at Rolling Hills Country Club. Golfers were there to support Liberty Foundation and the people with disabilities and families who benefit from programs funded by the organization.

Following play, the following on-course contest winners were recognized for their efforts:

Low net category: 1st Place, A.J. Augustine, Michele Furnare, Ken Moran and Ron Smith with a score of 54.2; 2nd Place, Scott Bruce, John Kelley, Julie Pierce and Michele Walsh-58.4; and 3rd Place Andy Heck, Bud Heck, Brendan Parker and Andy Rubilotta-59.0.

Low gross category: 1st Place, Rick Frasier, Jay Marsden, Keith Plummer and Mike Schebel with a score of -61; 2nd Place, Joe Daley, Mike Hutcherson, Carl Pucci and Mike Wallace-63; and 3rd Place, Gordon Coleman, Ed Jacksland, Richard Miller and Jerry Murray-64.

- Men's Long Drive on Hole #1, Jay Marsden • Closest to the Pin on Hole #2, Jerry Murray at 11'7"
- Women's Long Drive on Hole #4, Michelle Furnare • Closest to the Pin (Team Prize) on Hole #6, Greg Brown, Brian DiCaprio, Paul DiCaprio and Mike Frolo at 6'5"
- Closest to the Pin on Hole #14, Drew Fiumano at 12'4"
- Men's Straightest Drive on Hole #18, Bud Heck
- Women's Straightest Drive on Hole #18, Kara Tedesco



Larry Jordan, Kathy Jordan, and Pat Rosetti have a good time on the links. They were among 112 golfers who braved early rain showers to support Liberty Foundation.

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to Our Sponsors!*

Liberty Foundation was founded in 1993 to provide funding for family support services offered by Liberty as well as other worthy projects benefiting people with disabilities in Montgomery County. Over the last 18 years, the Foundation has allocated over \$5,000,000 to help underwrite the cost of programs such as in- and out-of-home respite, evening and weekend recreation, after school programs, a school recess program, and other programs designed to assist families of developmentally disabled children and adults.

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Celebrating Achievements:

Tiffany Macan and Maggie Rodriguez



➤ Tiffany's Story

As I walked through the door at a local pre-school recently, I was greeted with shouts of “Miss Tiffany” over children’s laughter. Tiffany Macan was working as a teacher’s assistant guiding the children through their morning routine, creating arts & crafts and reading to them. The love that the children and Tiffany had for each other was clearly evident, as was the fact that she was committed to providing a warm, patient, and nurturing environment. Even though her internship has ended, Tiffany is pursuing a full-time childcare position at another local day care provider. Tiffany is passionate about working with children and making a positive impact in their lives. She says, “they put a smile on my face.”

Working with children is not her only area of interest. For the last several years she has served on the state advocacy committee, where she works diligently to give a voice to people with developmental disabilities who might not otherwise be heard. This past June, Tiffany was re-elected to another three-year term! She understands that in order to make a difference you have to be involved. Tiffany takes her responsibilities very seriously and represents Liberty at statewide conferences and even attended a Medicaid rally in Washington D.C. last year.

Tiffany is literally “living” a dream she’s had for a long time; to live independently. She accomplished this through hard work and unwavering support from her team. Tiffany was able to not only achieve that dream, but is flourishing. ♦



➤ Maggie's Story

Pride is something Maggie Rodriguez knows a lot about! She is one of the original members of Salsa Picante, a group of individuals and staff at Liberty who love to cook and are committed to helping others. (Salsa Picante means ‘hot pepper’ in Spanish!) Maggie is not only passionate about cooking authentic Hispanic food, but making sure others have a chance to taste what it’s all about! Maggie’s specialty is cooking Empañadas and enjoys taking on that responsibility each time the group cooks.

Like Tiffany, Maggie set a goal to live independently and has accomplished this goal. She lives with a roommate with whom she has developed a protective and nurturing relationship.

At a recent Town Hall meeting, I had the honor of listening to Maggie speak about what matters most to her. Maggie reminisced about a time when she helped her roommate. She mentioned how sensitive her roommate is to emergency vehicle lights and how looking at them might cause seizures. Maggie recalled that one night her roommate was having chest pains so she called 911. If that wasn’t heroic enough, Maggie also informed the 911 operator about how the emergency lights could bother her roommate. While awaiting emergency crews, Maggie sat with her roommate and covered her eyes, saying, “just in case she needed the help.”

Maggie isn’t afraid of a little hard work either! She’s also a part of Liberty’s Community Connections group and keeps busy helping neighbors in need. ♦

These vibrant and caring young ladies are a perfect example of what can happen when you put your whole heart into accomplishing goals that matter to you.

Sharon Holbrook-Ryan, Liberty Public Relations Assistant

A Visitor from “Down-Under”



Recently, Liberty was honored to welcome Phil Hayes-Brown, CEO, of Wallara, a Council on Quality Leadership (CQL) accredited organization in Victoria, Australia, that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. He was in the states to visit other CQL accredited organizations. Liberty is among a handful of agencies that were suggested by CQL as worthy of a visit by Hayes-Brown because of innovative and quality programs offered to the people supported. ♦



L to R: Liberty CEO Mike Decker, Liberty CCO Candy Opalka, Maggie Rodriguez, and Wallara CEO Phil Hayes-Brown. Maggie told her story as an example of how she and others are accomplishing what matters to them!

Creative Expressions Art Show a Success!



Creative Expressions, the first art show sponsored by Liberty, showcased artwork created by individuals in its successful **Liberty Through the Arts** programs.

Fifteen other ARCs throughout the state contributed more than 50 pieces of artwork. The two-day show culminated on Saturday, May 19, with a free public viewing at the Century Club, Amsterdam. ♦



*Trio: Congratulations to **Amy Devendorf** for all her hard work as the art instructor for the **Liberty Through the Arts** program and for being the driving force behind the art show. Her passion and dedication was evident in the breathtaking art on display and was reflected in the number of participants. Left to right: **Amy Devendorf**, **Breauna Theaubbald** and **Mike Decker, CEO**.*

*Left: **Joey Then** flashes his winning smile as he receives the People's Choice Award. His painting, **Poppies**, was a crowd pleaser.*



Liberty's Annual Dinner and 2012 Community Commitment Award

Liberty celebrated its Annual Dinner, this past May, at River Stone Manor in Scotia. Approximately 130 people attended to recognize board members, community partners, and Liberty individuals for their numerous achievements.

The highlight of the evening came when Liberty's own **Community Connections** program was awarded the **2012 Community Commitment Award**, citing the group's dedication to volunteerism and enriching the community. The program has focused on service to seniors in the community for nearly four years.

Special thanks to Lisa Augustine, Melissa Lasher, Dorothy Danaher, and Beth Francisco for all their help in making the night a success. ♦



Front row, L to R: Anthony Battisti, Susan Jones—Liberty Staff, Pat Oesher—Office for the Aging, John DiMezza—Liberty Staff, Kelly Casler—Office for the Aging, Gregg Tokarczyk, Maggie Rodriguez, Georgeann Bramer—Liberty Staff, Colleen Irish. Back, L to R: Robert Wilhem, John Spak, Josh Race, Kent Waldron—Liberty Staff, Bruce Murphy, Joe Lynch, and Liberty COO Candy Opalka.



Front, L to R: Donna (Sollecito) Canestraro; Public Relations Assistant Lisa Augustine; Director of PR and Development Barb Wool; and Rosalyn Sollecito. Back, L to R: Former Liberty CEO Frank Capone and Liberty CEO Mike Decker.

At the annual dinner, the Sollecito family was recognized for establishing the **Christopher Sollecito Memorial Scholarship**, following the death of their 2 1/2 year old son Christopher in 1968. Thanks to their vision, more than 40 students from Montgomery County received monetary support and nearly all gained crucial experience through a paid internship at Liberty. Over the years, the memorial fund was depleted and the number of eligible applicants decreased. A decision was made, and 2011 was the scholarship's final year.

Mrs. Rosalyn Sollecito and Donna (Sollecito) Canestraro accepted a plaque honoring Christopher and the scholarship founded in his name. Christopher's father Vincent, who passed away in 2005, served as an officer and director of the Board and was instrumental in the development of Liberty's programs in the '60s and '70s. The plaque is now mounted near the Liberty Tree in the Day Support facility at 47 Liberty Drive—not far from a plaque in memory of Vince. ♦



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In the Community

Pulling for Ronald McDonald House



Liberty program individual Samantha Togaila recently donated five large coffee cans of pull tabs to Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMDHC) of the Capital Region. Samantha led a campaign to collect pull tabs, the pieces of metal that open aluminum cans.

According to Ronald McDonald House Charities, pull tabs are easier to collect, clean, and store and are more valuable than the whole can because they are pure aluminum. All proceeds help the charity provide a home-away-from-home for families during medical treatment of seriously ill children. ♦

Samantha Togaila beams with pride as she hands RMDHC's Operations Manager Lori Emery a portion of the pull tabs she collected. Samantha

chose this charity to give to because it's close to her heart, as she had a brief stay there while being treated at Albany Medical Center when younger.

Taking Time for Play



Liberty CEO, Mike Decker (left) and Liberty Program Director Pete Lawrence (right) are presented a check for \$5,155 from Deanna Palczak (center) President of Children's Aid Association.

If you build it, they will come! The new Family Support Services (FSS) playground is ready to provide hours of fun to children who participate in the after school and recess programs. The program currently provides more than 6,000 hours of services to 36 children with developmental disabilities for approximately 45 days when school is not in session and during summer vacation. Situated between the Day Support and Liberty Enterprises buildings, this multi-faceted recreational area was made possible through a grant received from Children's Aid Association. ♦



Gold Diggers Strike Gold

Special Olympics



A volleyball team made up of athletes from both Liberty and Lexington (Fulton County ARC) bumped their way to a gold medal at the 2012 New York State Summer Special Olympics in Buffalo. The Gold Diggers defeated eight out of 13 teams to rise to the top spot. This victory comes on the heels of winning their division at the Regional Special Olympics at Shenendahowa High School in early spring. This year's team consisted of: Mark Bentz (Co-Captain), Steve McPhail (Co-Captain), David Lopez, Chris Liljeberg, Monserrate Matos, Kim Rickard, Shannane Blakenbaker of Liberty; and Ross Carangelo, Rose Mason, and Abby Tavalaro of Lexington. The team was led by Mike Houghton the Canajoharie High School volleyball coach. ♦