

The LIBERTY ADVOCATE 16

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NYSID and Liberty Say "Thank You" with Good Deeds

n Thursday, September 17, Liberty along with Montgomery County Habitat for Humanity participated in New York State Industries for the Disabled, Inc. (NYSID) first ever NYSID WORKS! day. Both organizations were part of a statewide effort to bring awareness of employment for individuals with developmental and physical disabilities.

Each NYSID member agency or corporate partner chose a local non-profit in need of beautification or a renovation project. Through these joint, statewide community service projects, member agencies, corporate partners, and NYSID sent a unified, heartfelt message of gratitude to legislators, and business and community leaders across New York State for creating employment opportunities for citizens with disabilities.

NYSID WORKS! was established to complement NYSID's 40th anniversary theme, "40 Years of Looking Forward," while also segueing into National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

Liberty volunteers opted to focus their NYSID WORKS! effort at the first Habitat for Humanity home in Montgomery County benefiting Manny and Melissa Castro, two individuals in Liberty's program.

Throughout the day a group of 30–35 volunteers worked on hanging sheetrock, painting interior walls, and clearing and landscaping around the Castros' future home. Manny and Melissa were on hand to assist volunteers and witness the progress.

Since breaking ground in early 2014, a tremendous amount of work has been done on the home, thanks, in large part, to Liberty's Facility Management Department. Staff has helped by lending diverse expertise in building and grounds trades. Eleven Liberty staff members donated a total of more than 450 hours of benefit

time to construct the home's foundation, walls, and roof.

The NYSID WORKS! volunteer day helped move the home closer to fulfilling Manny and Melissa's dream of home ownership and brought attention to NYSID's role in providing employment opportunities throughout NYS. •





LIBERTY
43 Liberty Drive
Amsterdam, NY 12010

Above: Liberty staff member and Montgomery County Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Coordinator Tara Stanton instructs Liberty staff volunteers on the day's tasks.

Upper photo: Liberty CFO Chris Lail preps drywalls for painting.

Lower photo: NYSID President/CEO Ron Romano (L) and NYS Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara (R) stand with soon-to-be first-time homeowners Manny and Melissa Castro.

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VOLUME 25

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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President's Letter



Lisa Vander Wal, President Liberty Board of Directors

Dear Liberty family and friends,

As 2015 came to a close, it is appropriate to reflect upon a year of significant losses and great accomplishments. We marked the passing of three standing Liberty board members: Joel Kaplan, Jay Quatrini, and Robert Quick. All three contributed their time and unique talents to further Liberty's mission; their loss will be acutely felt. As treasurer, Joel's keen attention to detail was legendary, and we are grateful that his expertise has made a deep impact upon our financial health. In a similar vein, Past President Ken Adamowski started a tradition to begin board meetings with acknowledgement of past board members who helped to shape this agency. We stand in the very big shoes of others who

worked tirelessly to make Liberty a successful agency whose first priority is the people we support.

It was my pleasure to attend a recent Employee Recognition Dinner. As I listened to humorous and poignant stories of the employees being honored, I was humbled to see the ways in which these individuals have gone above and beyond to enhance quality of life for the people we support. We are truly thankful for their commitment and loyalty. At our recent retreat, board members were able to review the wonderfully creative initiative to improve the way ISPs tell the story of "What Matters to Me." Similarly, we are grateful for new employment opportunities enabled through the Liberty Fresh Market and other development ventures for our consumers. These are great accomplishments; we look forward to their expansion to benefit even more of the people we support. Finally, a word of gratitude to all of the Liberty family: consumers, family members, staff, committee and board members. We appreciate you!

Lisa S. Vandu Wal

A wonderful 2016 to you all.

An Afternoon with Aladdin

ore than 20 participants in Liberty's Family Support Services (FSS) recreation program recently enhanced their theatrical talents by presenting *Aladdin* at Amsterdam High in conjunction with **Missoula Children's Theatre.**

The traveling troupe focuses on developing life skills in children through education, entertainment, enrichment, and participation in the performing arts. In 2015, they worked with 65,000 children in more than 1,200 communities in all 50 states and 17 countries. This is the second year Liberty's FSS recreation program has worked with MCT. A full-length public performance, complete with props and costumes, concluded a week of preparation under the tutelage of two professional actors. It was made possible through an \$8,000 remainder fund grant offered through the trustees of the NYSARC, Inc. Trust.

In addition, remainder fund grants totaling \$1,466,000 were awarded to support NYSARC guardianship programs statewide. A total of 1,919,000 in remainder grants were awarded in 2015 to support recreation and guardianship statewide. NYSARC Trust Services administers supplemental needs trusts that enable people with disabilities to remain in their home and community while retaining Medicaid services and other government benefits. Information is available on how NYSARC Trust Services may benefit you: at www.nysarctrustservices.org, by calling 518.439.8323, toll-free phone 1.800.735.8924 or by email at info@nysarctrustservices.org.



Angelie Padilla as Dinazade and Jonathan Perez as the Genie prepare for their appearance.

Raffle Winners Announced

This year's Liberty Foundation Annual "Feather Your Nest" Raffle drawing was held at Liberty's Day Supports Café. Those in attendance for the drawing of the winning names were treated to a dinner and a night with friends and neighbors. An impressive \$14,000 in cash prizes were awarded!



Liberty individual David DiCaprio lent a helping hand, spinning the ticket cage.

The winners of the \$7,500 Grand Prize were Ned and Patricia Reo of Saratoga Springs (Our thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Reo for donating back \$500 of their prize money!) The Second Place \$1,000 winners were Liberty staff member Nan Conyne, and Liberty friends Hillary Graff, Gary Kosiba, and Jill Loucks. Also awarded were five \$500 Prizes to board members Ken Adamowski and Dave Fariello, and Liberty supporters Barbara Banovich, Jack Davey, and Mary Doris and Fred DiCaprio. Congratulations to this year's winners. Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported the raffle—and Liberty Foundation—by purchasing tickets. We are happy to report that all 300 tickets were sold! ◆

A Message from Liberty's CEO

Jennifer Saunders Chief Executive Officer

A Family Night to Remember...

This past fall, Liberty hosted a "Family Night" to share information with our stakeholders regarding NYSARC's statewide "It Matters to Me" campaign. It aims to draw public and political attention to the critical issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families through grass roots "story telling." It also focuses on important topics such as the closure of sheltered workshops and the need for wage increases for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Liberty participated in the effort by

producing a video in which three people we support shared, in their own words, the impact of the sheltered workshop on people we employ.

In addition to informing attendees about the campaign, we used this opportunity to update families about some of the new and exciting things occurring at Liberty. Three Individual Service Plan (ISP) videos that were developed as part of our 2015 strategic plan were viewed. Each video gave the audience a sense of the person, his or her interests, people in their lives who matter to them, and their hopes and dreams for the future. The response to the videos was very positive. We also shared our progress with the goal of increasing community employment through activities such as the Liberty Fresh Market and the recent transition of two of our store clerks to competitive employment with Price Chopper. We were very pleased by strong turnout and look forward to hosting more Family Night forums in 2016. I encourage you to attend our next event to hear what's happening at Liberty and share your feedback about what matters to you.

I would like to end by thanking a few individuals who have recently joined a support committee and the Liberty Foundation Board. We were very pleased to welcome local businessman Andy Heck to our Finance Committee, and the Liberty Foundation Board got a boost with the addition of area banking executives Kate Wolfe and Brett Harris. It is through volunteers such as these individuals that Liberty is able to achieve its mission; we sincerely thank them for their commitment of time and expertise. •

Joel Kaplan

Memorials

ur dear friend and longtime Board member Joel G. Kaplan died peacefully on Monday, August 3, 2015, at age 94. Joel served on Liberty's Board since 1980 and was president from 1984–1986. During most of his tenure with Liberty he served as Treasurer of the Liberty and Liberty Foundation Boards and Chair of the Finance Committee. Joel also served as Liberty's representative on NYSARC's



Joel G. Kaplan

Board of Governors since 1990. All who knew and worked with him at Liberty over the years were deeply saddened by Joel's passing. We feel fortunate to have known this very special man who made a pledge to help others and did so with grace and kindness.

John Woods

n Sunday, November 8, 2015, our esteemed friend, supporter, and former Board member John P. Woods passed away at his farm in Canajoharie. We are sincerely grateful for John's unwavering generosity as a donor and his skilled guidance as a Liberty Foundation Board member from 1997–2011 while serving as an Investment Committee member during that same period. A deeply private man, John never



JOHN WOODS

sought nor expected recognition for his long and significant support of Liberty's programs. We are truly grateful for his many years of service and unselfish interest in fostering our mission.

The Liberty family expresses our sincere appreciation for both Joel and John. Their extraordinary support and commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities in our community will never be forgotten.

Liberty Foundation Notes

Liberty Appoints Foundation Board Member

Kate Wolfe was recently appointed to a seat on Liberty Foundation's Board of Directors. Kate is president and chief executive officer of Patriot Federal Bank. She is a founding officer of the Bank and served as chief operating officer prior to becoming president and chief executive officer in December, 2012.



"Kate's appointment solidifies her commitment to Liberty through Patriot Federal's continued support of the agency with their numerous volunteer efforts," said Liberty CEO Jennifer Saunders. "I truly believe with Kate's dedication to our organization and commitment to her community she'll play an invaluable role on the Liberty Foundation board. We're very pleased to

have her serve alongside us."

"I am honored and pleased to have been asked to serve as a Liberty Foundation board member. I have watched Liberty in our communities for many years and have always been impressed by their services and what they give back to our community," said Kate. "To have a small part in helping to ensure that those services continue is truly a privilege. I look forward to the challenges and rewards of being a part of this vital organization."

Kate is involved in numerous local civic and charitable organizations. She participates in the Fulton-Montgomery County CEO Roundtable and serves as a board member for Mountain Valley Hospice. She is a lifetime resident of Montgomery County and lives with her husband in Fort Plain.

Welcome, Kate! •

Liberty Foundation Donations



We thank the following individuals and business for their support of Liberty's mission by making a donation to Liberty Foundation, Inc. The donations listed were received from July 15, 2015, through December 31, 2015. If we have omitted your name from this list, we apologize for our error. Please let us know so we can include you in the next issue. 518.954.3203.

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Lester's Donation

Lester Hogabone, pictured at right, an individual who participates in Liberty's programs, recently made a very generous donation to the Canajoharie Youth Center of an Xbox gaming system, controls, and the Rock Band game...complete with a guitar and drum set!

Lester donated the system because he never used it and thought the children could enjoy playing with it.

This was the first time he has donated a gift of this size and said, "It made me feel good to give something to the kids. It felt nice."

Lester also noted that several of the kids thanked him and said they were very happy to have this game to play with at the center. •



Ms. Barbara Ganey

Mr. & Mrs. James Gargiulo





The following individuals have shown their support for people with disabilities by making a planned gift to Liberty Foundation, Inc. in 2015.

Mr. Robert & Mr. Eugene Gretkierwicz Mr. and Mrs. Keith Holland





Liberty's health care center, New Dimensions in Health Care, is now on Facebook! The page has useful health and dental information

as well as the latest news on what's happening at NDHC. Please visit and like!

CEN Luncheon Recognitions

n informal luncheon is hosted each year by Career & Employment Network (CEN), Liberty's vocational and employment support A program, to acknowledge community businesses which support Liberty's employment goals and the individuals who work with them.



Dorothy Clark, Bethany Cramer, Robin Crosier, Briana Halvey, Breaunna Theolbald, Tom Coman, Erin Abele, Karreene O'Neil, Joann (last name?), and Greg (last name?) on October 20, 2015.

Employer of the Year: Price Chopper

See page 8 for info on Price Chopper's new partnership with Liberty Fresh Market.

ACCES-VR Special Recognition: Alpin Haus

Alpin Haus has been a leader and partner in employing people with disabilities. Job opportunities have ranged from within the Alpin Haus gym to the Alpin Haus RV store and most recently to its Boat and Marine Store.

Outstanding Employee of the Year: Manuel Castro

Manny received recognition for his continuous dedication to the Hagaman YMCA for 24 years!

Special Employee Recognitions: Congratulations, everyone, on a great job!

David Gugliemelli—Dependability Corey Mahale—Growth & Commitment **Angel Pietri**—Overcoming Adversity **Matthew Raponi**—Customer Service **Dorothy Clark**—Customer Service Pamela Russell—Successful Transitions Magali Rodriguez—Integrity

Bethany Cramer—Pathway Award **Breauna Theobald**—*Pathway Award* **Penny Edgar**—Attention to Detail **Anna Baran**—Taking Initiative **Carmelo Serra**—*Thorough & Efficient* Michael Higgins—Growth & Improvement Melissa Thompson—Achieving Independence Shashona Perry—Most Improved Worker

Randi "Crew" Reddick—Mentor **Yvette Jevitt**—*Developing Skills* Markie Hugo—Most Improved Attitude **Peter DuFault**—*Most Improved Attendance* **Melvin Rodriguez**—*Most Productive Worker* **Steve LaFountain**—*Most Dependable Worker*

Pink Out! Day Raises Funds for Breast Cancer Patients

The halls of Liberty were decked out in pink on October 23 for our **2nd annual Pink Out! Day** held to raise awareness of breast cancer and to provide funds for a local cancer treatment center. Approximately \$1,000 was raised through sales of T-shirts (300 were purchased by staff), baked goods, and pink hair strands. Proceeds benefited local women affected by breast cancer at Amsterdam Oncology-Hematology Center.





Above: Liberty individuals offer a variety of goodies for the cause. Left: Liberty staff don T-shirts in awareness of Breast Cancer Month.

Sharing Information with DSPs

n innovation at the annual Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Conference of NYS Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) showcased DSPs and encouraged them to share creative strategies. Several of Liberty's inspiring and motivating programs were presented during the hour-long event. Conference participants heard about Liberty's art program from Amy **Devendorf**, coordinator of Liberty Through The Arts, the Liberty/ FM Community Garden from garden coordinator Lisa Thatcher, and the Academics program from Sue Jones who oversees this endeavor.

Liberty's Director of Vocational Services Erin Able explained Liberty's THRIVE and TEACCH programs and **Sharon Holbrook-Ryan**, PR & Digital Marketing Coordinator, represented Liberty Fresh Market. •



Creative Expressions 2015

The Liberty Through the Arts program held its annual Creative Expressions Art Show in early December. The event showcased works of art from both individuals in the program as well as staff. There was also a Holiday Shoppe, with items for sale created by Liberty artists.

1st Place—Catching Snowflakes (a collaborative piece):
Adobi Woods, Frank Rivera, Matt Novak, Dorothy
Cool, Nicole Lyons, Ken Shumaker, Lisa Bubniak, and
Angel Rivera

2nd place—*Poinsettia* (Market Street): Todd Holland, Katie Gusisti, Karen Parillo, Jenny Cuyler, and Edith Camacho-Willsey

3rd place— *Winter Blue Moon*: Pam Sherman **Honorable Mention**— *Heart*: Crew Reddick

Juror Award—Catching Snowflakes (see above)
People's Choice Award—Cityscape: Mark Klug
Employee Results

1st Place—The Farm (photograph):Tara Stanton 2nd Place—King (painting): Elizabeth Cardella 3rd Place—The God (pencil sketch): Lisa Thatcher Honorable Mention—Needlework: Annie Santana Juror Award—Needlework: Annie Santana People's Choice—King: Elizabeth Cardella



Pam Sherman very happily shows off her award-winning piece Winter Blue Moon.

Liberty Artists Recognized for their Artworks

Liberty artists participated in Otsego Voice! 11 Art Show, an annual event, held July 30 to August 14 at the Martin-Mullen Art Gallery at SUNY Oneonta. Approximately 70 individuals from NYSARC Chapters throughout New York State submitted artwork to the juried show. The Voice! Art Show is sponsored by The Arc Otsego. Congratulations to Liberty Through the Arts Program for receiving an impressive four awards.

Winning artwork created by Liberty artists, followed by brief impressions from the judges:

Mark Klug—People's Choice and Imagination Award

Mark's piece, *Cityscape*, also won People's Choice at the NYSACRA Art Show in April.

Comments: "Sculptural piece. Using interesting material to create a city world feel."

Crew Reddick—Juror's Award: Oh Happy Day Comments: "Appealing piece. Relatable to all ages. Joyous and happy. Use of varied, but simple materials. Makes one smile." Collaborative Award—Frank Rivera, Angel Rivera, Dorothy Cool, Lisa Bubniak, Matt Novak, Nicole Lyons, Adobi Woods, and Kenny Shumaker for their combined effort, Catching a Snowflake.

Comments: "The personality of each individual comes through yet, it is surprisingly cohesive. Great design sense."

Right: Mark Klug, Adobi Woods, and Breaunna Theobald with Liberty Through the Arts coordinator Amy Devendorf.



"It Matters to Me"

On October 20, Liberty held a **Family Night** to both bring families together to listen to possible concerns and questions as well as to raise awareness on critical issues that affect their loved ones and people with disabilities throughout the state.

NYSARC, Liberty's parent agency, developed a lobbying platform titled "It Matters to Me" to address these issues. The statewide advocacy effort has been taken up by Liberty and its sister chapters to bring attention to the issues most pertinent to families and individuals in their respective communities.

Issue Areas:

Residential Housing and other opportunities for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) living at home with aging caregivers.

Families Cannot Be Caregivers Forever

- Development of new residential opportunities
- Difficulties helping people on waiting lists and filling vacancies

Employment

- Sheltered workshops/work centers
- Employment First Choice Act/Transformational Agenda
- Lack of community employment opportunities as alternative work options

Wages

- The need for any minimum wage increase to apply to the professionals who support people with I/DD
- The need for provider rate increases to support higher wages for

direct support professionals (DSPs)

• The ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining DSPs and other key staff due to low pay scales

Transition Services

- The challenges facing young adults transitioning from school to work settings
- The challenges facing young adults in need of adult programs and services, including meaningful opportunities for post-secondary education.

Sharing Holiday Cheer with Friends

The festive atmosphere was contagious at Liberty's Annual Holiday Party held at the **Amsterdam Elks Lodge #101**. The Elks have sponsored this muchanticipated annual event for individuals for more than 30 years. As usual, there was an abundance of good cheer and warm wishes as approximately 250 individuals and staff enjoyed a day of merriment. In addition to some enthusiastic dancing, a plethora of

good food and much fun were in evidence.

To top it off, the man in red paid a visit. •



Sidney Vanderbilt takes time out to visit with the jolly ol' man.

A Busy Holiday Season at Liberty Fresh Market



This past fall, Liberty and Price Chopper/Market 32 announced collaborative employment focused on enhancing and continuing job training provided at Liberty Fresh Market. They have worked together to develop employment expectations, best practices, and identify a plan for an employment mentorship program. It includes various aspects of retail skills, gaining an understanding of the importance of following company policy and pro-

understanding of the importance of following company policy and procedures, learning how to work as part of a team, and effective communication techniques for the workplace.

The program is already seeing success with the employment of two of Liberty Fresh Market's store clerks. Bethany Cramer and Breauna Theobald are now store associates at the Amsterdam Price Chopper. They both worked at Liberty Fresh Market for a year while receiving employment support through Liberty's Pathway to Employment service.

Thanks to all who shopped at the market for Thanksgiving and Christmas supplies. •

Visit with Santa

Holiday spirit was alive and bustling at Liberty Fresh Market's annual "Visit with Santa" event on December 19. Kris Kringle

(a.k.a. Jeff Stark) was on hand to delight children and parents as he listened to them recite their wish list for Christmas and pose for photos. Again this year, Santa was assisted by Elf Extraordinaire Bob Purtell, who kibitzed with kids and parents as they waited for photos with former Liberty employee Marie Gavry (recently retired).



Krista Barrett and her son Angelo with Santa

Pie Promo

A n impressive 240 pies were sold during the market's **Pie Extravaganza** promo. Customers reserved delicious Thanksgiving pies from Mourningkill Bakery, Burnt Hills, while shopping, by calling or by ordering online.

Food Drive

The market's very generous customers gave the gift of food to area people in need this holiday season. More than 20 pounds of non-perishable food items were donated to "Danielle's House" in Amsterdam, a program of Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless (IPH).

A Market with a Mission