



A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO SHARING THE INSPIRATION AND SUCCESS STORIES THAT SURROUND US AT ASPIRE

SUMMER | 2015

NEW VISIONS

Excitement Surrounds Renovated Center for Learning

The beneficiary of the single, largest capital campaign in the 70-year history of Aspire of WNY, the renovated Center For Learning (CFL) is open to the delight of staff, students, and administrators. While the CFL project is nearly completed, as with any major construction project, unforeseen costs arose throughout, including weather delays and asbestos remediation. These challenges have driven the capital costs from the original \$1.8 million to \$2 million. Michael Holley, Aspire VP of Development is confident that the remaining capital can be raised through the extraordinary generosity of WNY philanthropists.

Despite the project challenges, the CFL opened for the fall school session to rave reviews from everyone involved. "I've been at the CFL for 28 years," stated Cathleen Voyer, Aspire VP of Educational Services. "And it is really exciting to have this newly renovated building that meets all of the physical and educational needs of our students. Both our staff and their students are in an environment that has the latest technologies and is designed from the ground up to support their success."

There are countless highlights to the renovated facility, starting with entrances that are 100% accessible for students of all abilities and a covered pick up and drop off area to protect mobility-restricted students from the elements. The building itself received upgraded electrical service and new heating and



New front entrance to the Center for Learning.

cooling systems allowing for better environmental controls for students with medical/respiratory issues.

There are 16 new classrooms that were designed specifically for children with disabilities. This upgrade is critically important in allowing teachers and staff to have the space for wheelchairs and adaptive equipment. The entire

CFL campus features enhanced wireless connectivity, meaning students have greater access to their adaptive technology devices, and each classroom contains a SMART board allowing teachers to tailor lessons to their students varying abilities and needs.



CFL Student Haley using walking sling on the new walking track.

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One-of-a-kind services for one-of-a-kind people.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Thomas Sy



As I previewed this issue of New Visions I was struck by the coincidental pattern of 25 years throughout a number of the stories. You will read in this issue about the successful conclusion of our expansion and renovation of our Center for Learning. Aspire has delivered a variety of children's services from the Union Road site for over 25 years. The challenges posed by the old elementary school have been well chronicled by Aspire. Those are all in the rearview mirror and we can't wait to invite you to a ribbon cutting and open house soon.

And who among the initial partners (Dopkins, Parkview Pharmacy and Irr Supply) would have envisioned that a fun golf event begun 25 years ago would still be alive and strong and, more importantly, raise over \$1.7M for Aspire and many of our programs. As we get ready to hold the 25th anniversary event allow me to thank Dopkins and Co. in particular for their support and direction.

By all means, take the time to read about the services delivered and evolution of the relationship formed between Aspire staff and Randy and his mother for nearly 25 years. We state all the time what a privilege it is for us to serve individuals and families. Randy's story and journey are an excellent example of that opportunity. Randy will be missed.



Jeff Paterson, Executive Director of Niagara Cerebral Palsy and Tom Sy, Aspire CEO at joint fundraiser the agencies held in February at Aquarium of Niagara Falls.

Lastly, as you know Aspire and our peer agencies are highly reliant on New York State for our funding, and that recent budget years have been a struggle to say the least. I am pleased to note that in relative terms the recently passed state budget was favorable. There are significant new dollars for new services to individuals and their families and new dollars specifically targeted at staff raises. As the difference between the increasing minimum wage and our starting wage shrinks, it is difficult for all agencies to attract quality direct support staff. Aspire is pleased to be able to recognize the great work done daily by our staff.

Sincerely,

Thomas Sy
President and CEO

Renovated Center for Learning

Continued from cover



Aiyah working in gait trainer on the new walking track.

The CFL now includes designated therapy rooms that were collaboratively designed by the therapy staff and the contractors to ensure that the space accommodates the wide array of student needs. To promote wellness and physical development, the CFL includes a walking track and a specialized fitness room containing body-weight support devices, treadmills, gait trainers and more. These enhancements allow for the expansion of the

Aspire Wellness Program, committed to helping students achieve their physical capabilities and enable them to participate more fully in school, home, and community activities.

A dedicated space was also designed to support the Occupational Therapy activities at the CFL. The space includes permanent workstations that are set up to allow students to work on fine motor skills, hand strengthening, and visual motor skills training.

The room includes a sensory area and ceiling tracks to allow for the safe positioning of students on therapeutic equipment. A special splinting room was created to allow the therapist to create a variety of casts, and splints for their students to promote the maintenance and improvement of range of motion.

Another exciting addition to the newly renovated CFL is the multi-function cafetorium, a cafeteria that also serves as an auditorium. This adaptive space will provide a spacious area for preschool, day care, and school age students to socialize and interact with peers during meal times. CFL students will be able to facilitate friendships and work on developing socialization skills. In addition, the raised stage provides a larger space for planned school activities and student performances.

Aspire President and CEO, Thomas Sy, recently spoke about the impact that the CFL project has on the present and future of Aspire of WNY.

"This project results in an opportunity to elevate our enrollment capacity, giving both school districts and parents more options for placement of their children in need of specialized education services. Now, that we are near completion, we have truly stabilized the long-term future of the CFL by gaining control over our own dedicated space and removing any ongoing lease uncertainties. The CFL is an educational jewel that will provide life-long benefits to the students we serve."

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Michael Holley, vice president of development



2015 marks another exciting year for Aspire's fundraising efforts. As you've already read, the largest capital campaign in Aspire's history is coming to a close. To the nearly 100 corporations, foundations and individuals who embraced this effort and made it such a success, we can't thank you enough!

In January, we kicked off our 2015 special events season with another successful **Ski the Valley** fundraiser at Holiday Valley, presented by Independent Health. Once again, thank you to the many friends and families who joined us for an extraordinary day on the slopes. It's always great to see people we support enjoying the event as well through the Loundesbury Adaptive Ski Program. They're one of the best adaptive ski programs in the country and we're lucky that they call Holiday Valley home. Although it's getting hot out, I urge you to please mark your calendars for January 10, 2016 as we strap on the skis and boards for another exciting day!

As of this writing, Aspire's Development Office and a tremendous team of committed volunteers are completing our final preparations for the 25th Annual **Going for the Green** golf tournament. Not only is this our oldest fundraising event, it's also our largest. Many thanks to our friends at Dopkins & Company, LLP for coming up with the idea for this tournament 25 years ago, choosing Aspire as the beneficiary, and donating a huge amount of

time, talent and treasure to making it such a great success every year.

Thanks to the participation of so many over the years -- including Dopkins, Parkview Health Services and Irr Supply, who were there the first year and will join us again on June 1st -- this tournament has raised more than \$1.7 million for Aspire's programs and services.

Please help us finish our year strong by marking these additional special event dates on your calendars and consider joining us, along with your family and friends.

Art at the Athenaeum, presented by KeyBank -- Friday, June 26th from 5pm to 9pm at the Athenaeum Hotel in the Chautauqua Institution.

Art & Wine Celebration, presented by KeyBank -- Friday, September 11th from 5pm to 9pm at Aspire's Administrative and Day Habilitation offices, 2356 North Forest Road, Getzville.

For more information regarding our events, please visit our website at www.aspirewny.org or call Amanda Utz at (716) 505-5514.

And finally, if you haven't already done so, please "like" and follow Aspire on Facebook and Twitter. This is our easiest way to keep you updated and inspired by Aspire's efforts in the community.

Thank you!

Below: Exterior of Aspire's newly completed Center for Learning. Right and inset: Preschool students and staff in their new space.



Going for the Green Turns 25



Eager foursomes line up for the Shotgun start at the 2014 Going for the Green tournament.

Monday, June 1st, a full flight of 144 golfers will kick off the 25th Annual Going for the Green Golf Tournament at Brookfield Country Club in Clarence, NY. This special golf outing is Aspire's longest running and largest fundraising event, having raised in excess of \$1.7 million since its inception.

Michael Holley, Aspire's Vice-President of Development, recently spoke about an important contributor to the annual tournament.

"We're extraordinarily appreciative to Dopkins & Company, LLP," he said. "They were not only instrumental in creating the event, but continue to devote a significant amount of time, talent, and treasure to the planning and success of the tournament every year."

Fresh off the completion of an extensive course renovation, Brookfield Country Club remains one of the premier golf courses in Western New York. In addition to the impeccable surroundings,

tourney participants enjoy a wide array of extras, including a "mobile pro shop" sponsored by ADPRO Sports. Participating golfers are given a generous certificate towards the purchase of any item or combination of items in the mobile store. Choices range from golf clubs, shirts, shoes, socks, and many other golf-related items.

Another exciting aspect of the tournament is the high-end basket raffle that is available, plus a variety of exciting auction items. In the evening, attendees enjoy a bountiful feast and revel in the awards presentation for the top three foursomes, as well as the skill competition winners for longest drive and closest to the pin.

Anyone who is interested in participating or sponsoring the 25th Annual Going for the Green Golf Tournament can contact Michael Holley at (716) 505-5512 or by email at michael.holley@aspirewny.org.



Golfers arrive early to shop the many items in the ADPRO Sports Mobile Pro Shop.



ASPIRE OF WNY'S 12TH ANNUAL

ART & WINE CELEBRATION

An Evening of Extraordinary Artists

Friday, September 11, 2015 • 5-9PM
2356 North Forest Rd, Getzville, NY 14068
\$35 per person.

To register, email Amanda.Utz@aspirewny.org
or call 505-5514.

Aspire
OF WNY

Presented by KeyBank



Making Friends on the Farm

Lorenzo Wells and JoeyLynn Rhodes had a mutual friend who volunteered at Spruce Meadow Farm. As participants in Aspire's Supported Volunteering and Lifestyle Enrichment program (SVLE), they wondered if they too might get a chance to work with the horses. In September 2014, their wish was granted as owners Al and Karla Deacon accepted them as volunteers.

Spruce Meadow also serves as a rescue farm, meaning that many of the horses residing there have come from difficult situations. These horses need proper care and nurturing to bring them back to full health, both mentally and physically. Lorenzo and JoeyLynn have fit right into the mix, spending up to three hours a day, two times per week caring for the horses and the grounds. Joey's mom, Linda, is thrilled and recently spoke about her daughter's opportunity.



Lorenzo Wells and JoeyLynn Rhodes doing their daily chore at the farm! They work together and do an excellent job!

"I've always wanted Joey to be able to spend time and volunteer with animals," she said. "It is wonderful how SVLE allows her to experience different types of things."

Joey and Lorenzo spend time feeding and grooming the horses and giving them treats. They also clean out the stalls and sweep around the barn. Lorenzo has a gentle hand with all of the horses, but he has really taken a shine to working with Dallas while Joey has grown attached to another horse, Ember.

Owner, Al Deacon, talked about what it means to have the SVLE volunteers working at the farm.



Lorenzo Wells and JoeyLynn Rhodes brushing their favorite horse Dallas at Spruce Meadow Rescue Horse Farm.

"They all do a wonderful job and are welcome here anytime," he said. "I often give Joey a list of specific duties that really help me out and saves me a bunch of time."

Spruce Meadow is another shining example for SVLE of how Aspire volunteer participants can fit into any environment, and, through their hard work and positive attitudes, make a difference. It is clear that the equine residents at the rescue farm are benefiting from the care and attention they are receiving as much as the volunteers are by providing it.



@AspireWNY is on Twitter
#FollowUsToday

If you are like millions of other people, you are checking your twitter feed several times a day to catch up on what is happening in the world and with your friends. Aspire of WNY has finally joined the Twittersverse and wants you to follow us. Our Twitter feed contains exciting news about upcoming Aspire events, helpful information about healthcare, and links to stories about those we serve, community happenings, and more. Won't you take a moment and find us on Twitter @AspireWNY and give us a follow?

SAVE THE DATE

DDAWNY Family Committee Meeting June 16 • 7pm

The Developmental Disability Alliance of WNY (DDAWNY) is holding a Family Committee meeting at 7 Community Drive in Cheektowaga on June 16 at 7pm. Please plan on attending to learn how to more effectively advocate for your child. For more information contact DDAWNYfamilycommittee@gmail.com.

Ski The Valley Event Kicks Off Aspire's Annual Fundraisers



Guests enjoy an epic day on the slopes in support of Aspire.

Aspire of WNY welcomed supporters, friends, and families to their 2nd Annual Ski The Valley Event at Holiday Valley in Ellicottville. Presented by Independent Health, this annual ski outing serves as the first of Aspire's main fundraising events held throughout the year. Attendees enjoyed perfect weather for skiing, snowboarding and tubing at Western New York's premier venue, Holiday Valley. Aspire was also thrilled to welcome several skiers with disabilities who participated in adaptive skiing. Holiday Valley is host to the Lounsbury Adaptive Ski Program, known as one of the nation's top programs accommodating skiers with a broad range of disabilities.

"We are extremely grateful to our presenting sponsor, Independent Health," said Michael Holley, Vice President of Development for Aspire, "along with our other sponsors, Accessium Group, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Main Mobility, LCS, Inc., and Medtronic, who helped us make this event so fun and successful."

Adults and children of all ages were on hand enjoying the slopes and partaking of the available food and beverages. One adaptive skier, in particular, Michael Hackford, could barely contain his excitement. He had tremendous fun learning to ski.

Mike's mother watched him navigate the slopes with a smile. "I had no idea that there was a program allowing Mike to ski. I used to ski all the time, and now I am so happy that we will have an opportunity to ski together in the future."

In all, everyone had a great time. Even the non-skiers who enjoyed the blazing fire, the banquet, and plenty of hot chocolate while watching the festivities. If you were unable to attend Ski The Valley this year, mark your calendars for January 10, 2016 and be sure to take part in the fun and excitement next year.



Michael Hackford prepares to ski.

An Incredible Journey

Randy had received Community Habilitation, Respite and MSC services from Aspire for 22 years of his life. In the beginning, his mother admits she had been very protective of him and was unsure of trusting service supports in her home. She was very particular of who worked with him and the standard of care she expected. Through the years, she co-managed his supports and worked with Aspire managers to find the best matches for Randy. You see, Randy was considered medically fragile. He had spent most of his life inside of his home, mostly in bed and occasionally in his wheelchair if he was having a good day.

Aspire has had wonderful staff working with Randy over the years. Over time, a trusting relationship developed between Aspire, Randy, and his mother. About five years ago, Wendy Ranney, Community Support Associate, began working with Randy. Their relationship blossomed. Her skilled care of Randy enabled his mother to trust and relax whenever Wendy was with him. With the trust Wendy earned, she was able to start talking to Randy and his mother about ideas of expanding Randy's



horizons outside of his home and family. At first, they ventured out across the street to a local park. This is where Randy began to thrive. He loved watching the kids play. He would smile and his

eyes would light up. Not only did Randy enjoy it, but the kids at the park came to know him by name. They would seek him out to show him things and tell him stories. Randy became a "regular" at the park!

His community adventures did not stop there. Wendy took him to the River Walk, the mall and Rejoicing Spirits at a local church. With her caring nature and the relationships built with him and his mother, Wendy was able to tap into Randy's sense of adventure and open up a world of community life beyond his home.

Sadly, Randy passed away on April 13, 2015. Wendy is a great example of making a difference in someone's life and supporting Randy with leaving his lasting imprint on his community.

Aspire Presents at International Technology Conference

Aspire team honored to lead a session at the 32nd Annual Closing The Gap, Inc. Annual Conference in Minneapolis, MN.

Aspire of WNY, a leader in utilizing assistive technology to enhance the lives of children and adults with disabilities, recently received the honor of hosting a session at the 32nd Annual *Closing The Gap, Inc. International Conference*, held October 15th to 17th in Minneapolis, MN. Closing The Gap, Inc. provides assistive technology resources and training opportunities through bi-monthly magazines, webinars, and the yearly *Assistive Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation* conference. By definition, Assistive technology (AT) refers to assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for individuals with disabilities. This promotes independence through enhancements or changes to the methods a person uses to interact with the technology which helps them perform needed tasks. The conference brings together teachers, therapists, clinicians, and parents from around the world to focus on exploring the many ways that assistive technology can be successfully implemented in education, rehabilitation, and vocational settings. This year, three members of Aspire of WNY were asked to present a session to attendees of the conference. Led by Martha Farewell, SLP, Therapy Operations Manager at Aspire's Adult Health Care Center, the group conducted a detailed session titled: *Learning and Growing through Accessible Social Network Experiences*.

"There are many opportunities for assistive technology training and skill development through social networking projects and experiences," explained Ms. Farewell, upon returning from the conference.

The team also included Brendan Stapley, Aspire's Technology Evaluator and Special Projects Trainer and Sharon Zimpfer, Registered Occupational Therapist at Aspire's Center For Learning. Their seminar highlighted several successful Aspire projects where social media platforms, such as Facebook®, Google+™, and FaceTime® were used to facilitate inclusion, educational and vocational pursuits, and communication training.



Left to Right Martha Farewell, Brendan Stapely, and Sharon Zimpfer at the conclusion of their presentation.

"We wanted to give audience members concrete examples for providing Assistive Technology training in a motivating, empowering, and engaging manner," continued Ms. Farewell. "We demonstrated that those who face even the most complex communication challenges can enter the world of social media and grow a great deal in the process."

In recognition of their leadership in AT utilization, all three members of the Aspire presentation team were approached to lend their expertise to various national efforts in AT education training and software.

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Aspire of WNY
www.aspirewny.org
716-505-5500

Thomas A. Sy, President/CEO

Mission

Aspire's mission is to support children and adults with developmental and similar disabilities, helping them to live their lives to the fullest by providing individualized assistance based on personal choices.

Vision

Aspire is the region's leader in supporting individuals with disabilities. We envision full participation of those we support in all aspects of community living. Toward that end, Aspire empowers individuals to maximize their potential, including those we support, those who work for us and those who work with us.

New Visions is published by Aspire as part of its public information and education activities. For comments or corrections, please contact Communications & Development at 716-505-5512 or michael.holley@aspirewny.org



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Aspire Presents A Special Concert

Attendees of a special concert held on Thursday, May 7th at the UB Center for the Arts were treated to a heartwarming musical presentation by renowned composer Tim Janis and a performance by Buffalo Chamber Players. The performance was titled *Songs From The Heart*, and it truly lived up to its billing. Mr. Janis performed original compositions in front of a gorgeous video montage of nature scenes of his home state of Maine, as well as uplifting scenes of Aspire's Center For Learning students.

Aspire President and CEO, Thomas Sy, welcomed the audience to this one-of-a-kind event, and thanked Mr. Janis for sharing his time and talents to help support the Aspire Health Clinic and the *iXpress Arts Program*. Jenny Knapp, an *iXpress* artist, used her Dynavox communication device to share with the audience how much she loves art and how the Aspire Art Facilitators help her create the pictures she has in her mind. In addition, during Mr. Janis' performance, *iXpress* artists Eric Kurek and Jenna Pantano expressed the emotion of the music through an interpretive dance.

Buffalo Chamber Players (BCP) treated the audience to a performance of original music collaboratively created by members of the *iXpress* program. The performance of *Odyssey* was a reprisal of a BCP performance from 2014 at the Burchfield Penney Art Center.



Eric and Jenna perform interpretive dance with composer Tim Janis and Buffalo Chamber Players.

Another highlight was a sneak peak at an upcoming Hallmark Channel movie, "The Button Girl" starring Dick Van Dyke, Jane Seymour, and Rita Wilson and featuring a score composed by Tim Janis. In addition to the movie score, Janis has released 15 solo compositions and sold more than one million albums. The movie is slated for release in December of 2015.