



*Matthew Garrison working at  
Menne Nursery & Garden Artistry*

Aspire  
of WNY

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

# Annual Message

## FROM ASPIRE'S LEADERSHIP



As we take important time to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of 2014, Aspire is pleased to share this annual report with you.

Our major focus in 2014 was our Center for Learning (CFL) renovation and expansion. We expended just over \$7.2M to renovate every square inch of our existing school on Union Road, and added nearly 20,000 square feet. The transformation to a cutting edge educational center is amazing. Our school age students returned in September, and our preschool students in February. We also have been conducting a \$1.8M capital campaign to support the CFL project. I am pleased to announce we achieved this goal and are closing up a last few asks to exceed \$2M. Thank you to all who contributed!

Aspire enhanced its leadership position in finding and preparing individuals with disabilities employment opportunities. In 2014, Aspire's ADAPT began to offer Community Prevocational Services. We have augmented this employment readiness training by adding assistive technology along with volunteering and internship opportunities between Niagara Falls and Jamestown. We also began to offer a new OPWDD program entitled Pathways to Employment. Our partners for pre-employment internships are growing daily.

Last year, Aspire began a collaboration with Summit Educational in the delivery of services that allows an individual with behavioral challenges to stay at home with their family. We also signed a collaborative agreement with Autism Services in the provision of pre-employment training to their students over the coming summer. Aspire continued its exciting process with Niagara Cerebral Palsy of evaluating sharing select administrative services.

As always, thank you for your support and interest. You can follow our accomplishments daily through Facebook and Twitter.



As my board chairman term concludes, I reflect back on a time of dynamic change, budgetary challenges and regulatory perplexities. The one constant that has allowed us to persevere, however, has been Aspire's passionate commitment to the people we serve. Aspire does amazing work for amazing people.

I take this opportunity to offer a final and sincere thank you to those who make Aspire one-of-a-kind. To the administrators and staff, the Board of Directors recognizes and appreciates every ounce of your hard work and dedication. To my fellow Board members, Aspire sets the standard in part because of the gift of your time and talents. Lastly, to our donors and those who support the agency, I have seen first hand how your financial assistance has made a meaningful difference in the thousands of lives touched by Aspire.

Personally, Aspire has made the most lasting impression through the relationships I formed and the respect for those I have met during my tenure. It is these special people that have made it truly an honor and a pleasure to serve on the Board of Directors.

**Thomas Sy**  
*President/CEO*

**Jacob Herstek**  
*Board Chairperson*

# A Family Finds Hope

## THROUGH ASPIRE COLLABORATION

Aspire of WNY is an agency that will take any necessary steps to help ensure the success of the individuals that they support. A key to that success is sometimes through open collaborations with other area agencies. One such successful collaboration with The Summit Group has had a profound impact on the quality of life for Cris Rodriguez. Aspire's Southern Tier Office began supporting Cris at the age of three by providing in home Community Habilitation. Although he began his schooling in the Dunkirk School District, in the fall of 2011 Cris was accepted into Summit Educational Services.

The Summit and Aspire collaboration in supporting Cris and his family was most prevalent in August 2013, when he began a five-month stay at the Kennedy Krieger Institute's Neurobehavioral Program in Baltimore, Maryland. While there, Cris received intensive behavioral services and medical treatment. Further, to ensure that Cris would be successful upon his transition back to his home, representatives from Aspire and Summit Center traveled with Cris' family to the Krieger Institute for training on the specifics of his behavioral treatment plan. Because of this willing partnership between the agencies and the family, Cris has been able to maintain the skills that he had been taught, helping him to be more independent and successful in home, school, and community settings.

"Being in a more rural community, it can be difficult at times to find the resources to meet specific needs," explains Cris' mother, Diane. "You can just imagine how grateful we are for the dedication shown by Aspire and Summit in creating a brighter future for Cris!"

With Aspire providing Community Habilitation supports while Summit provides a behavioral clinician, both agencies are working together to achieve consistency of staff implementations through trainings, maintaining oversight of the plan, and data collection. Today, Cris enjoys being integrated into his community by taking walks and interacting with his neighbors. He continues to improve his home skills and independence by taking care of his belongings, making holiday crafts and decorating cookies for all occasions.

The journey ahead is not without challenges as Cris will continue to need intensive behavioral intervention supports, in addition to other services, as he matures. But, the Rodriguez family has real hope for continued success in the future knowing that they have the support of two caring agencies who will be there with them every step of the way.



*Katrynia Bailey, Community Support Associate helps Cris decorate cookies.*

# Building Bright Futures:

## CENTER FOR LEARNING CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The largest capital campaign in Aspire of WNY's nearly 70-year history has celebrated extraordinary success to-date. The \$9.4 million effort to renovate and expand the Center for Learning (CFL) is nearly complete and has resulted in an educational facility that stands among the best in all of Western New York.

The project, which features larger, more accessible classrooms, a new heating and cooling system, and expanded therapeutic and healthcare capabilities, relied on an initial fundraising goal of \$1.8 million and has exceeded that goal. However, unexpected challenges resulting from the weather, asbestos remediation and additional technology needs have stretched the campaign goal to \$2 million. Total donations currently stand at \$1.87 million.

"We would like to thank the many donors who helped us exceed our initial goal of \$1.8 million through their incredible generosity," stated Michael Holley, Vice President of Development for Aspire of WNY, "in particular, The John R. Oishei Foundation for their significant contribution, which served as a challenge to other area foundations and corporations - many of whom joined the effort as well."



*Exterior of Aspire's newly completed Center for Learning.*



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

Mr. Holley went on to state that the campaign's success to-date wouldn't have been possible without the selfless donation of time and talent from our Campaign Cabinet, led by Aspire Board member, Eileen Nosek, and including Charles Alles from Lawley Benefits Group, John Earshen from The Mattison Group LLC, Thomas Emmerling from Dopkins & Company, LLP, Jacob Herstek of HSBC Bank, Deborah Pawlowski from Kei Advisors LLC, Tom Sy, Aspire's CEO, Jack Walsh from Walsh Duffield Companies, Inc., and Earl Wells from e3communications, Inc.

As for CFL operations, Aspire's Vice President of Educational Services, Cathleen Voyer, is filled with pride and excitement for the future. She is quick to point out how the building is 100% accessible for the students, and that the newly expanded therapy rooms are specifically designed to promote maximum benefit for the students they serve.

"I've been at the CFL for 28 years," she said recently. "And it is really exciting and gratifying 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 cutting-edge technologies and is designed to support their success."

Aspire looks forward to holding a celebration to commemorate the opening of the renovated CFL at some point in the near future.

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*iXpress artist Gloria Slomba enjoying 2014 Art and Wine fundraiser.*

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# Self-Advocacy:

## A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND FRIENDSHIP

Josh Pietro began his Self-Advocacy journey in 2010. Prior to then, he had been living in a structured IRA setting but always had his sights set on obtaining more freedom in an apartment of his own. Since transitioning into his new home, Josh has been working with Dori Giles, Aspire's Facilitator of Life Choices, and others. Together they have developed a Self-Directed Services (SDS) plan to accomplish the goals that Josh has set for himself.

The key to a successful self-directed services plan is having a committed team to work with individuals, such as Josh, to ensure that personal choices and needs are being met. Aspire's SDS and Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSC) have encouraged Josh to explore his interests and have supported him as he works to manage his services going forward.



*Josh and Kristy are enjoying some fresh air and planning for the future.*

The experience has ignited a passion in Josh for helping others and taking on leadership roles. It began when Josh started presenting his story at Aspire's monthly orientation meetings for other "would-be" self-advocates. In 2013, with the help of Robert Kozlowski, Self-Directed Services Manager at Aspire, Josh established DREAMS Advocacy (Dreams, Recreation, Education, Advocacy, More Support) and remains the President of that group that helps self-advocates as they navigate the process. Also in 2013, Josh was the recipient of The Resource Center's (TRC) "Advocate of the Year" Award in Chautauqua County.

As is often the case, when individuals chart their future, the journey comes with unforeseen blessings. For Josh, it was forming a new friendship with Kristy Pezon. She too was looking to take on a greater role in planning her future through self-direction. Her first step was to find an apartment where she could experience greater freedoms and opportunities. As

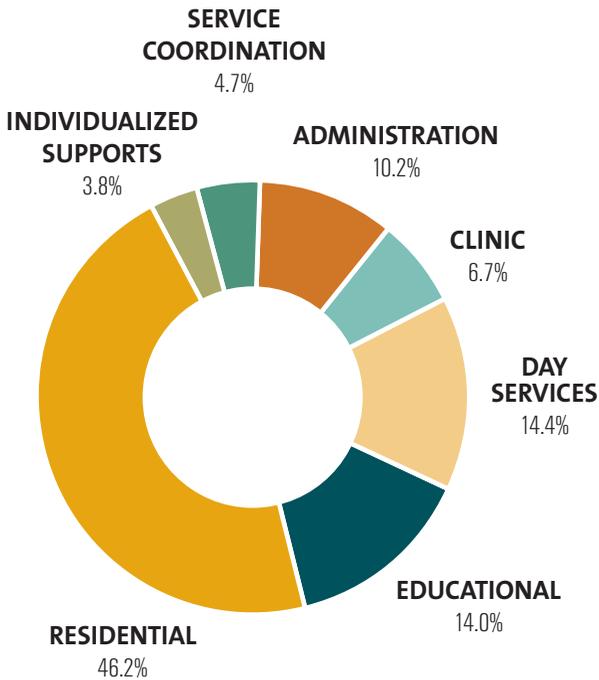
fate would have it, Kristy's journey led her to an apartment in the same complex as Josh. It was there that this amazing friendship was born.

"Josh and Kristy have become great friends, like a brother and sister relationship," said Robert Kozlowski. "They have helped each other in so many ways and they really enjoy working on projects together."

As Kristy is working through the process of developing her SDS plan, Josh has been there for her as a mentor. In addition to Josh, Kristy has worked with Aspire's Chandra Davis, Kim Buffone, and others to incorporate her dreams and community goals into her SDS plan. Kristy, in turn, has joined Josh as part of the DREAMS Advocacy group and is now the Vice-President. Together, they are utilizing their strong advocacy skills to guide and help others. Currently, they are making plans to attend the Western Regional Disabilities Conference this summer, and received an invitation to present their story at the 27th Annual Developmental Disability Awareness (DD) Day held on May 28th in Niagara Falls.

# 2014 Financials<sup>1</sup>

## ASPIRE OF WNY & AFFILIATED ENTITIES – RESULTS OF OPERATIONS PER AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



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REVENUE	2014
Program Service Revenue <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	\$65,707,526
Government Grants . . . . .	\$1,769,963
Fundraising . . . . .	\$1,082,343
Other . . . . .	\$128,213
<b>TOTAL REVENUE . . . . .</b>	<b>\$68,683,045</b>

<sup>1</sup> The above information was developed by management based on information in the audited financial statements.

<sup>2</sup> 98.4% Federal and New York State Governmental Funding

EXPENSES	2014
Administration	10.2%
Clinic	6.7%
Day Services	14.4%
Educational	14.0%
Residential	46.2%
Service Coordination	4.7%
Individualized Supports	3.8%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>100%</b>

## In Memoriam

### THE LIGHT

*Matt Milholland*

Rolling solo's always blue  
But some hues of blue can still be bright  
Eagle soaring, sun and moon, the sky above is you  
Smiling face, a smiling soul, away at last in flight

So hard for us to say goodbye  
You used to roll but now you fly

### INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY ASPIRE WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2014

James Armeli	Michael Knox
Kenneth Brown	Mary B. McLoughlin
Thomas Caliadidlo	Erika Mallory
Robert Lee Ellis	Kathryn Mazurkiewicz
William Fraizer	Paul M. Ritter
Alice Ann Hollenbach	Norma Jean Rogers
Constance Kelley	Gerald Verdi
Kaitlyn V. Klemick	



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**"Birds of the Sunrise" by iXpress artist Mike Montileone**

