

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

## Aspire's 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.

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## Save the Date

**DDAWNY Family  
Committee Meeting**  
7 Community Drive  
Cheektowaga, NY  
Third Tuesday of the Month  
7:00 pm

For more event information,  
please contact Amanda Utz  
at 716-505-5514 or via email at  
[Amanda.Utz@aspirewny.org](mailto:Amanda.Utz@aspirewny.org)

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Aspire of WNY's Success Through Transition™

## Center for Learning Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



DaShawn Bonner talking about how much he enjoys the new school.

Before taking part in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil the newly renovated Center for Learning (CFL), student DaShawn Bonner used his communication device to convey what the completed facility means to him and his fellow students.

"The new sensory room is great, and I enjoy being able to eat lunch with my friends in the new cafeteria," he explained. "Everything about it, provides us with a wonderful place to learn."

"And I love having a stage for my performances!" He added with a smile.

Joining DaShawn in cutting the ribbon was Aspire of WNY's President and CEO, Tom Sy, Aspire's VP of Educational Services, Cathleen Voyer, and members of the Aspire Capital Campaign Committee.



The CFL's new therapy track.

On September 29th, from 4 pm to 7 pm, the largest capital project in Aspire's nearly 70-year history was unveiled to the public. Parents, friends, supporters, and assembled dignitaries toured the renovated and expanded CFL. Once inside, visitors witnessed the new therapy rooms, the important technology that is

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## A Letter from Aspire's CEO:



Welcome back to “school” and to Aspire’s Transition Times for fall 2015. Aspire is pleased to continue to make this fun and informative resource available to our partners and stakeholders.

Top on our list for the start of the 2015/16 school year has to

be the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of our renovated and expanded Center for Learning on Union Rd in Cheektowaga. A great many donors, school districts, foundations, contractors and Aspire Board members were on hand on September 29th for tours and a brief program. Representatives from our Capital Campaign Cabinet, School Administration and a student representative all commented on the

impact the new school is having on their educational experience. If you and your district contact missed the event feel free to call us to schedule a time to tour this wonderfully modern educational facility.

We finished the summer with another fabulous Work Skills experience and enjoyed as always hearing from our students what vocational skills and experiences they gained.

Thank you for the ongoing support and partnership in educating students with special needs.

Thomas Sy  
CEO, Aspire of WNY

## Aspire and Autism Services Celebrate Summer WOW



WOW graduation celebration group photo.

On August 13th, a special celebration ceremony was held at Autism Services, Inc. in Williamsville. The reason for the gathering was to celebrate the successful collaboration between Aspire and Autism Services for the Summer World of Work (WOW) program. As with graduation ceremonies that occur in school districts throughout Western New York, parents, grandparents, siblings, and students gathered here to bask in the successful completion of the summer WOW session. The students proudly accepted their Certificates of Completion from Aspire’s President and CEO, Tom Sy and Autism Services Executive Director, Veronica Federiconi.

For the first time, Aspire and Autism Services combined to offer students supported by both agencies an opportunity to participate in WOW activities. The

World of Work program places students into real-world opportunities with local business partners. Here the students, with the help of a job coach, learn skills that will help them find meaningful employment in the future. This summer, Shea’s Performing Arts Center and Brompton Heights welcomed the WOW students and provided them internship opportunities.

“The WOW program was a great experience,” stated Patti Webster-Fleming, Shea’s Performing Arts. “Especially for students with Autism because it helps them grow stronger and learn new vocational and social skills that will help them in the working world.”

Going forward, both agencies are reviewing the student successes and are discussing the potential opportunity to continue offering the collaborative WOW session in the future. For now, congratulations to the students who spent their summer working so hard for themselves and our business partners.





# SUMMER WORK SKILLS 2015



*The students and job coaches of the 2015 Summer Work Skills Program.*

Each summer, students from various school districts come to Aspire to participate in the Work Skills Program. Local businesses including, Andersons, the Millennium Hotel, T.G.I.Fridays, Chili's, and Catalyst Fitness, welcome summer interns for hands on work-related training. The interns learn a variety of skills that will assist them in securing meaningful employment in the future. Students foster communication, team-work, self-advocacy, and independency skills while learning how to complete a variety of job-specific tasks including food preparation, cleaning, and the sorting and folding of laundry. In addition to learning work-related skills, students further develop money, time, careers, mathematics, reading, writing, and cooking skills. Culminating the summer session, Work Skills' student interns (and staff) throw a themed party where interns are presented with certificates of job skill training. The students also present written speeches about their job sites and enjoy a delicious spread of food and vibrant music. This year's theme was "Super Heroes!"

## Summer Work Skills Student Spotlight:

### KATHERINE WARSOCKI

Katherine Warsocki is a third year veteran of the Work Skills Program. This summer, she worked at Andersons on Union Road in Cheektowaga. Katie demonstrates strong leadership skills and motivates and assists her peers with task completion. While working, she independently completes all food preparation and cleaning related tasks. Katie effectively communicates with her job coaches, peers, and Andersons' staff to complete all assigned tasks. Katie is very deserving of this recognition, as she demonstrates all the skills, abilities, and qualities we wish to equip our students with for the workforce in the future. Way to go Katie!

— **Brianna Pride & Melanie Stephen**  
(Job Coaches)



*Katie working hard at Andersons during the summer work skills session.*

## TECHNOLOGY TODAY:

# Connecting Communities

Technology Today uses the Internet for many of its daily activities. The program sites in Buffalo and Tonawanda have been successfully using cloud-based technology for the past 18 months through the use of Google Applications. Participants are able to communicate with family and friends via personal Gmail accounts, they can create and share documents using Google Drive, and manage activities by using Google Calendar. Also, many have met people from around the world using Google Hangouts with their peers.

This fall, Technology Today will be offering live, web-based technology instruction from both the Buffalo and Tonawanda sites. Students participating in Aspire's World of Work program, a group from People Inc.'s CAPP program, and members of the local community will participate in these instructional opportunities to learn more about current technology. The classes are offered on Fridays beginning in October 2015 at no cost to the participants.

If you are interested in joining the Friday sessions or want more information about the technology services offered by Aspire of WNY, contact Rebecca Smith via email at [Rebecca.Smith@aspirewny.org](mailto:Rebecca.Smith@aspirewny.org).



## Comments, Suggestions or Ideas?

*If you have any comments, suggestions or a subject you would like to see in an upcoming newsletter, please contact Paula Kerber at 716.836.7235, or email [paula.kerber@aspirewny.org](mailto:paula.kerber@aspirewny.org).*

## Want an electronic copy of Transition Times?

*Send your email to: [paula.kerber@aspirewny.org](mailto:paula.kerber@aspirewny.org) and we'll send you an electronic version of Transition Times. Thanks for your interest!*

## CFL Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

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*Mr. and Mrs. Ballow and son Stephen in the main entrance named after them.*

now available in every classroom, the sparkling new combination Cafeteria / Auditorium, called the Cafetorium, and so much more. In addition to the renovations, the project included an additional 20,000 square feet of space and a new heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system. This environmental upgrade ensures that all of our students can learn and thrive in a consistently comfortable environment.

Every visitor that navigated the expanded hallways left knowing that Aspire of WNY is the proud owner of the crown-jewel of educational facilities for pre-school and school age students with disabilities. The Center for Learning will continue thriving for many years to come in providing state-of-the-art therapies and educational services for their students.