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The Addams Family Musical



Each year, Lisa Byrne, Cato-Meridian's Drama Director, invites Community Networks' participants and staff to a preview of the high school play. Unlike other Musicals where songs are well known and have been around forever, the students at Cato-Meridian High School challenged themselves this year and gave Networks an awesome preview of "The Addams Family" on March 8th.

For those new to the story, this quirky, ghoulish family has been living for centuries, and had a popular TV show in the 1960's. Gomez and Morticia

are the loving parents of Wednesday and Pugsley, who live in a gloomy mansion with their extended family.

The Networks Department begins preparing for this excursion weeks in advance. Our cooking groups bake a variety of cookies to give to the cast and crew as a token of thanks for all their hard work. Once we arrive, Mrs. Byrne gives a short description of the play and the characters. It's not easy to miss her sense of pride in her students and everyone who contributed to the play's success. And Networks... Well, we provide

the much needed audience to perform for! Every performer wants to see people enjoy themselves and react with enthusiasm, and that's us! Our folks interact with the cast and crew and have so much fun taking their picture with them. We call it disability awareness and social integration, but to the students it's performing for an audience who truly enjoys their talents!

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For all...

- ◇ Does your pet love people? Our Networks program loves pets! Contact Lynnette Sherwood at lsherwood@accesscny.org if you'd like to bring your pet in to visit our participants.
- ◇ The Education Department is accepting volunteers to read to the children in Exploring Your World. Contact Rachel Harry at rharry@accesscny.org for more information. Participants and staff are welcome!



Don't forget! April is Autism Awareness Month!

Advocacy Day With a Focus on Staff Wages

On March 7, AccessCNY hosted an Advocacy Day. Program participants, employees and community members came together to send messages to legislators in Albany about issues important to those with disabilities and mental health diagnoses, as well staff who provide services. By the end of the day, over 700 letters had been sent to Albany officials!

Last year, AccessCNY's advocacy efforts and those across the state helped secure a 3.25% wage increase for DSPs. This year, the agency rallied behind a further 3.25% wage increase. These wage increases will impact staff on both the mental health and developmental disability teams. "The goal is to get lawmakers in Albany to make additional wage increases for Direct Support Professionals happen sooner. We know that direct care staff

aren't paid enough for the difficult and intimate work they do and we are trying to help officials in the legislature understand that too," explained Matt Seubert, a member of AccessCNY's Executive Team. Thanks to this wage funding increase from New York State, AccessCNY will be able to lift wages for DSPs, Residence Counselors and many others. Sue Schultz, Chief Operating Officer also adds, "The agency will also use our own funds to lift wages for other positions

across the agency. We are committed to being the preferred human service employer in Central New York and will continue to look for ways to reward staff for their hard work." Additionally, AccessCNY has worked to secure additional money for mental health housing programs. So far, the effort has been successful in securing millions in additional funding, but numbers aren't final yet - stay tuned for future updates!



Members of AccessCNY's Self-Advocate's group drop off hundreds of letters at the post office for Advocacy Day.

Employee Enrichment

Don't miss out on the May training opportunities! Call or e-mail Crystal Baker to sign up! *Prior to signing up for any of these trainings, please obtain approval from your supervisor.

◇ **Understanding Addiction**
Wednesday, 5/2/18, 9:00 am-12:30 pm
1603 Court Street, Room 108
(For staff supporting
Individuals with MH Diagnosis)

◇ **Diversity/Controversial Issues**
National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)
Wednesday, 5/16/18, 1:00 pm-3:30 pm
1603 Court Street, Training Room
(1/2 day review for MH Residential Only)
(This is a review for those who have previously
completed the one day Diversity training session.)

547 Years of Commitment!

by Brittany Halligan, Associate Executive Director, DD/ABI Residential & Day Services

We are in the middle of our merger with Spaulding Support Services, and I am excited by the opportunity to once again expand our DD/ABI Department and welcome Free Standing Respite to the services we offer our community. On July 1, 2018, Spaulding will join AccessCNY; and when I look at the leadership team as one, I am inspired by the talent, the compassion, and the commitment to our agency and to those we serve!

Our leadership team is comprised of 36 Managers, 11 Directors, 2 Associate Directors and myself, who together

share a combined 547 years of service to this agency alone! But more importantly, we share the common objective of providing reliable services that positively impact the lives of those we serve. Moving forward, our leadership team will be charged with training, motivating and retaining over 350 employees who provide direct services to over 800 participants.

The employees of AccessCNY are the direct link to our participants and we are committed to you! Your job is huge and one which demands great knowledge and dynamic skill sets. Our

goal is to provide you with the support and training necessary to be successful in your current role, to mentor others to be the best they can be, and to facilitate a career path for you at AccessCNY. Our efforts combined with yours will directly enhance the services we provide and allow us to continue building healthy, trusting relationships that have substance and longevity. Let's do this!

*Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.*

- Helen Keller

Thriving After Forty Years

*A millstone or a milestone,
Which one shall it be?
Shall I hang it 'round my neck
To drag along with me,
Or stand it by the roadside
To mark my victory?*

Peter J. Henniker-Heaton

Throughout our lives and careers, we all face many trials and experience many triumphs. This holds true for Kathy Dannible, a native Syracusan that has been employed with AccessCNY for 40 years.

Starting out after graduation, after working a few "small" jobs, Kathy found

herself unemployed. She applied to United Cerebral Palsy (a legacy organization of AccessCNY) with little experience beyond a bookkeeping class. Forty years later, Kathy is still going strong as the Participant Account Specialist. Kathy shared that a highlight of her job is when someone who has never had their own money is finally able to buy something they've always wanted.

One key to Kathy's longevity is her belief that one should, "Live for today, because you never know what tomorrow will bring." This belief may stem from Kathy's bout with breast

cancer seven years ago. She said that she was surprised by the people here at AccessCNY who stood by her throughout her ordeal, which included thirteen surgeries.

As for the future, Kathy says she doesn't know what's in store for her and her husband, but that they look forward to continuing to take life one day at a time. So in that spirit of endurance, let us all gather the strength to overcome our tribulations, and remember to embrace our opportunities for celebration!

Nurse's Corner

On April 5th we hosted our third Blood Drive, and it was another successful event! I just want to thank everyone who participated, we could not have done it without you. This drive resulted in 17 registered donors, 13 whole blood, and 1 power red for a total of 15 units donated. With those 15 units collected, we were able to give the gift of life to 45 people! As a result of all three drives, we have helped 180 people! I anticipate that we will host it again in October, 2018. We will confirm dates and keep you posted closer to the event. Thanks again for your continued support!

Clinic and Preschool VIPs (Very Important Professionals)

For Exploring Your World Preschool and Clinic Services, spring is an opportunity to recognize two important clinical disciplines that help make our programs so special. April is Occupational Therapy Month and May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. We are proud to recognize our clinicians in these two crucial therapy fields: Chelsea Leonard, Michelle Walsh, Jessica Brown, Meg Keech, Susan Banasiewicz, Tara Sheri, and Kaitlin Cope.

Occupational Therapy helps individuals across their life-span to participate in the things they need and want to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. A great example of this at EYW is the story of a child who had a difficult time when he started

preschool. As a result of his sensory system being overwhelmed, he had outbursts and trouble sitting still. He also had a hard time drawing/writing, holding onto markers and other tools, manipulating toys and materials etc. This often made him avoid classroom activities. The OT Team, along with the rest of the preschool crew, worked on his fine motor skills and his sensory needs, and he is now better able to stay calm and focused. He has developed age-appropriate fine motor skills, and will no longer need Occupational Therapy services when he goes to Kindergarten next fall.

Speech Therapy focuses on improving a person's speech and abilities to understand and express language, including nonverbal

language. In clinic, we have a group of three gentlemen who come to speech therapy to work on their social language skills. Two communicate verbally and one uses a communication device. The goal has been to help them expand their vocabulary and encourage lengthier responses. As their conversational exchanges have improved, they have reached a point where they can end each session independently playing a hand of "Go Fish" without any prompting from the therapist. We are very proud of our guys' group and the progress they have made.

So if you see any of these clinicians, please thank them for the important role they play in supporting our participants' goals and dreams!

Welcome to AccessCNY

We're excited to welcome the following new employees who joined our agency in March:

- Tyairah Allen, Direct Support Professional – Respite
- Katelin Arnold, Peer Specialist, Crisis Respite
- Kenderia Bachus, Direct Support Professional – Community Habilitation
- Joseph Baillargeon, Teacher Aide
- Sarah Bergh, Peer Specialist, Crisis Respite
- Alicia Clark, Service Coordinator
- David Cole, Teacher Aide Substitute
- Oakley Elizabeth, Teacher Aide Substitute
- Melissa Elsbree, Service Coordinator
- Kayla Flowers, Direct Support Professional – Certified
- Zikia Murry, Direct Support Professional – Certified
- Abdikadir Musa, Direct Support Professional – Respite
- Tonya Peake, Children's Support Specialist
- Eannette Pinet, Direct Support Professional – Certified
- Diana Pugh, Self Direction Support Staff
- Mary Sawyer, Direct Support Professional – Certified
- Lisa Siler, Property Manager
- Bill Tedesio – Self Direction Support Staff
- Samantha Valentin, Direct Support Professional – Certified

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at."

- Stephen Hawking