

# PARC AVENUES

Exceptional Opportunities for People with Disabilities

## PARC PRESCHOOL GRADUATION; Annual Ceremony Enjoys Sunshine and Smiles

By Kristin Wegel & Maureen Franze

PARC Preschool celebrated its 39th graduation on Friday, June 19, 2009. There were 17 graduates and family members as well as community members, colleagues, and friends from the agency. After a steady rain on Thursday, June 18th, Friday morning turned out to be beautiful, with the sun peeking out of the clouds. To everyone's surprise and delight, the ceremony was able to be held outdoors.

The ceremony began at 10 a.m. with the children entering to the music of Elgar's "Pomp & Circumstance." The children entertained their families with songs celebrating this year's western theme, culminating in an entertaining dance to the song "Cotton Eye Joe."

Following the children's performance, graduates were called by name to receive their diplomas from each of their respective teachers. The students were presented with Certificates of Recognition from Senator Vincent Leibell, as well as diplomas personalized with their photographs. They marched out to Miley Cyrus' "The Climb". The event ended with everyone enjoying graduation cake and refreshments provided by the families of the graduates.



*PARC's Mission: As a community leader, PARC creates and provides lifelong opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve success.*

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Susan Limongello

PARC is proud to celebrate 55 years of excellent service. Starting in 1955 as a small school for children with mental retardation, PARC's preschool was the creation of parents in PUTNAM who needed to develop a place for their precious children to grow, learn and develop. Thanks to those original founders, PARC has flourished from a small school with no budget, housed in a church basement, to a \$25 million dollar, multi-service organization. PARC now serves 650 people with a developmental disability with a dedicated staff of 450. In the past 55 years, PARC has developed:

- 14 residential facilities, and 9 supportive apartments, that house 134 people
- a vocational department that supports 177 people
- a preschool that teaches 60 children each year
- Day Habilitation services that supports 142 people
- Medicaid Service Coordinators serve 296 people in residential settings as well as in the community
- An Article 16 Clinic that serves 195 people
- Educational Services supporting 40 young adults

We also provide services to people with Traumatic Brain Injury, families in need of respite, recreation to people who live in the community, an "after-program program" for community people, and guardianship. We at PARC are proud of the work we do, especially in the changes we make every day in peoples' lives and in the lives of their families. By offering expertise and excellent care, we allow the families to have comfort knowing that their loved one will be taken care of and protected. That is what the incredible staff of PARC does on a daily basis. They care for and protect people with disabilities and have been doing that for 55 years.

Being part of a community that cares is what working at PARC is about. The Putnam County community has opened its arms and heart to us and the people we serve, and has helped us branch out and grow to meet the needs of a very vulnerable population in the County.

With the responsible staff at PARC and the Putnam community, we plan on providing excellent care in this county for at least another 55 years.



## PARC AVENUES IS GOING PAPERLESS; new model will be emailed out to members and subscribers

In an effort to bring PARC Avenues to as many members as possible, and cut costs at the same time, PARC Avenues will now be emailed to members quarterly, offering a new, paperless model. To subscribe to the new E-PARC Avenues newsletter, please send your first and last name and email address to [rand\\_otten@putnamarc.org](mailto:rand_otten@putnamarc.org). Once we receive your e-news request, we will no longer send you the paper edition of the newsletter.

If you'd still like to receive your PARC Avenues by mail, no further action is needed. Your newsletter subscription will continue with your annual PARC membership.

We look forward to bringing you PARC Avenues in a new format and thank you for helping PARC to save printing, mailing and postage costs.

# Partners with PARC Fundraisers

## SECRET GARDEN TOUR ENJOYS BEST YEAR EVER!

With the winning combination of nine beautiful gardens, the stunning Massaro/Frank Lloyd Wright House on Lake Mahopac, one of the few sunny days all spring, and more than 400 guests, the 2009 Secret Garden Tour was a stellar success.

The one day, Putnam County-wide driving tour of the best, private gardens celebrated its third year on June 13, 2009 and helped to raise more than \$19,000 for Partners with PARC's mission to secure the financial future for people with developmental disabilities in Putnam County.

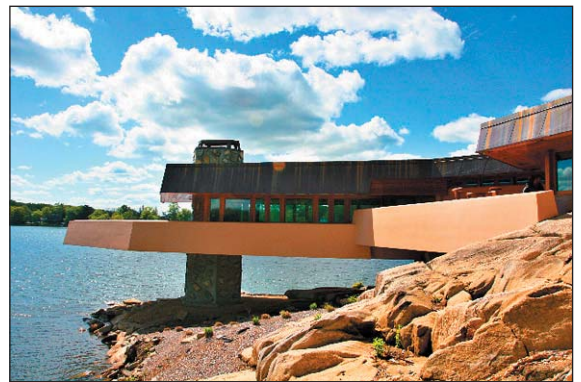
The tour, which ran from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., included properties in Garrison, Cold Spring, Kent, Mahopac and Brewster. We congratulate the Brown Family in Garrison for winning the coveted "Best Garden" award, as voted on by the event attendees and to the Santomero Family of Brewster for winning runner-up best garden.

The special event of this year's fundraiser was the private tour of the renowned and celebrated Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house on Petra Island in the middle of Lake Mahopac, NY. Our gracious hosts and homeowners, Joe & Barbara Massaro, helped the event to raise additional funds as they welcomed 90 VIP guests to their home for a private tour, history and questions and answers. We applaud the Massaros for their thoughtfulness and assistance with our fundraising efforts.

Thanks also go out to the many generous sponsors who helped make the Garden Tour memorable and successful, including JP McHale Pest Management, I LOVE NY/Putnam Visitors Bureau, ShopRite Stores, Entergy and Westchester Home Magazine.

And without the dedicated team of nearly 40 volunteers, this event would never get off the ground and run so smoothly. Many thanks to the staff of PARC who dedicated an entire day to the running of this massive event and to the Carmel High School Future Business Leaders of America who also volunteered for the day.

We are already planning our 2010 tour, with a selection of wonderful properties around the county. If you'd like your garden considered for the 2010 tour, please email [rand\\_otten@putnamarc.org](mailto:rand_otten@putnamarc.org)



### 2009 Event Sponsors:



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[www.shoprite.com](http://www.shoprite.com)

# Partners with PARC Fundraisers

## Quadricentennial Fireworks Cruise on the Hudson

**Saturday, September 12, 2009**

Cold Spring Boat Club, Cold Spring, NY. Take a lovely cruise up and down the Hudson River on the River Rose and celebrate the River's Quadricentennial! This wonderful evening includes full dinner buffet, open bar, music and dancing, silent and live auctions, and Peekskill Celebration Fireworks Display. Cruise from 8-11p.m. and let the water take you on a one-night vacation on the majestic Hudson River. \$100 per person. **Event Sponsors - I LOVE NY & ShopRite Stores**



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## Cold Spring by Candlelight Holiday Festival & House Tours

**Saturday, December 5, 2009**

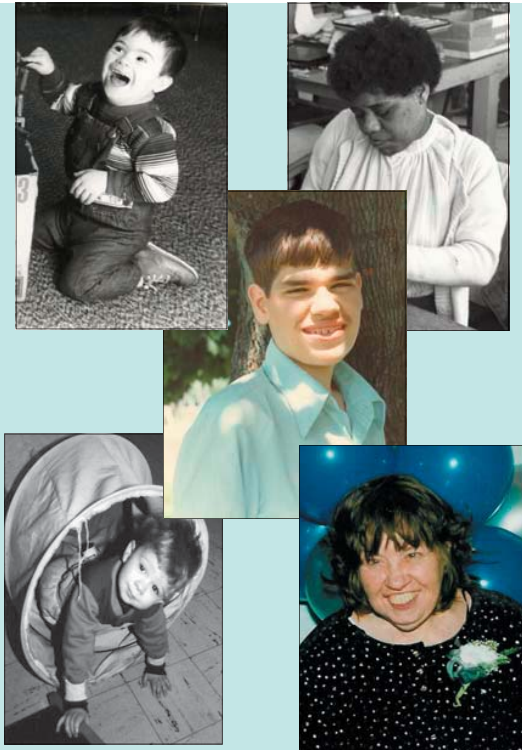
Historic and unique homes and sites will be open to the public during this 6th annual tour to benefit Partners with PARC. Expect homes and sites featured on the National Historic Register, holiday caroling, discounts at local stores and restaurants, holiday music, visits with Old St. Nick and much more! Kick off the holiday season in beautiful and historic Cold Spring. Tours from noon- 6 p.m. It's Currier & Ives meets It's a Wonderful Life. Advance tickets: \$25 adults, \$20 seniors; \$15 children under 12. Day of event tickets: \$30 adults, \$25 seniors, \$18 for children under 12.

**Event Sponsors: I LOVE NY, Hudson Valley Magazine & ShopRite Stores**



**RESERVE YOUR TICKETS EARLY!**  
**Log onto [www.PartnerswithPARC.org](http://www.PartnerswithPARC.org) today for more information and to purchase tickets.**





# Save the Date - 55th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, October 18, 2009

An Elegant Afternoon Celebration at Mahopac Golf Club

Noon to 3 p.m.

### Honorees Include:

- \*New York State Senator Vincent Leibell
- \*Longtime PARC Board Member Helga Beyer
- \*Partners with PARC Board Member Charles Daniels
- \*Businesswoman and PARC Supporter Mary Courtney
- \*Longtime PARC Facilities Director Spencer Terwilliger

\$65 per person

For reservations or information, please call 845-278-7272, ext. 287 or log onto [www.PutnamARC.org](http://www.PutnamARC.org)

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## Nancy Miringoff's 30th Anniversary - a PARC Celebration for One and All

*By Louis Lindenbaum, Deputy Executive Director*

On Friday, July 17, 2009, over 150 people celebrated our Associate Executive Director, Nancy Miringoff's 30th Anniversary "Happening" at the Ludington Residence. How appropriate, since Ludington was PARC's first residence to open when Nancy started working in transitioning people from the institutions to living a full life in the community.

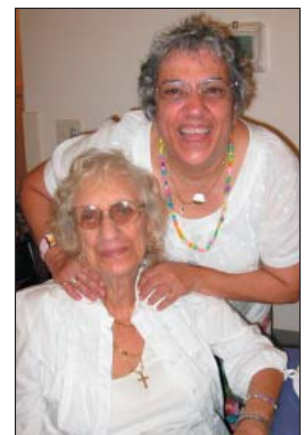
It was described as a "Happening" because it was exactly that for everyone who attended, one of the biggest events of the year. There were staff, participants/residents, administrators, supervisors, family and friends. There were folk singers (Nancy's favorite music), wonderful food provided by staff and the residences, decorations made by the children at the Preschool and the participants in Day Habilitation, photography by Ken Ogana and Delia Stanley, a barbecue with chefs Tom McGuire and Chris Ojuro and the hospitality provided by Nawroz Rawji and the Ludington Team along with the Ludington residents. Thanks to all who helped make this "happening" possible. Special thanks to Megan Crowther, Diane McGuire, Elizabeth Mazzucco and Hennie Fry. The look on Nancy's face throughout the event said it all – happiness and joy.

In honoring Nancy, all the speakers, including Jay Migliaccio, Linda Wilson, Doreen Taylor, Marvin Novinsky, Jane Curtin and the Pre-school staff, Louise Rheem, Louis Lindenbaum and Susan Limongello, made it very clear to everyone what an integral part Nancy has been in the growth and success of PARC over the years. She started out as the Assistant Director of the first clinic in New York State serving people with disabilities. She then moved on to the Preschool as the Director and then became the Assistant Executive Director, overseeing our day programs and services. Currently, Nancy is the Associate Executive Director overseeing Residential Services and Nursing. She has always been there for PARC and answered the call when there was a need to address or a role to fill. Over the years, Nancy embraced these roles in the agency with a sense of determination, a sense of dedication and a sense of commitment to do her best, which for her, was to do the best for the individuals served and their families.

All the speakers acknowledged the impact that Nancy has had on their lives, and all the lives at PARC, as a teacher, a mentor, a colleague and a leader. As a token of appreciation, Nancy was given artwork made by the children at the Preschool, a bouquet of flowers, photo albums of her with past and current participants/residents and staff, and a piece of office furniture. Susan Limongello, Executive Director, gave Nancy an appreciation plaque for her 30 years of dedication and commitment to PARC. Susan spoke about what Nancy has meant to the agency and to each and every one of us here at PARC.

Nancy then spoke eloquently about her career here at PARC and how fortunate she feels to be part of such a wonderful organization. It was apparent to all of us how connected Nancy is to PARC and all of us to her. Her career at PARC over the past 30 years has made such a difference and has touched so many lives. We are so grateful and feel so fortunate to have Nancy here at PARC and we look forward to our future in many ways because she remains an integral part of it. Thank you, Nancy, for all you do and for all that you are.

(Pictured below, left-right: Lee and Nancy Miringoff; Lou Lindenbaum speaks about Nancy's contributions to PARC; Jay & Donna Migliaccio attended the festivities).



## EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AWARDS CEREMONY 2009

Students were present and accounted for on June 15, 2009 at the Educational Services Awards Ceremony, along with parents and PARC & school district staff. Sheila Mealy and Helaina Ricciardi from Tilly Foster Farm also attended as the management team that supervises student workers on the farm.

The event praised and honored the Work Readiness Program's student workers for their hard work throughout the school year. Each student was presented with an award by WRP staff with comments and remarks on their progress.

The WRP students learn job skills by working at community job sites and in PARC Center workshops with job coaching, job development, and vocational skills classes. Some of the businesses that WRP students work in are: Bob's Auto Parts, Marshall's, PARC Shipping & Receiving, KMart, CVS, Edible Arrangements, Just-a-Buck, PARC Administrative Offices, DeCicco's Grocery and Rite Aid.

Emily Perl Kingsley was the key note speaker for the event. She shared some of her experiences as an advocate, parent, and Sesame Street writer with the group. Les Luca, Putnam Valley Special Education teacher received the "Lifetime Achievement" award for all his dedication to students. Dawn Gorlitsky, Carmel School Psychologist, was the event's "Education Honoree" for positive work in the Middle & High Schools.

The WRP team includes: Teddi Barry, Claudia Lima, Zach Disador, Jill Giampino, Nadine Ziegler, Tim MacAllister, and John Meier.



Emily Perl Kingsley



Kelly celebrates with her mother



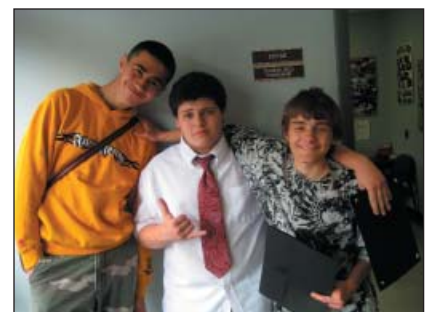
Les Luca, top right, with his PV schools colleagues



Claudia Lima with Evan



Mark with Bill Morgan & Bernie Gamble



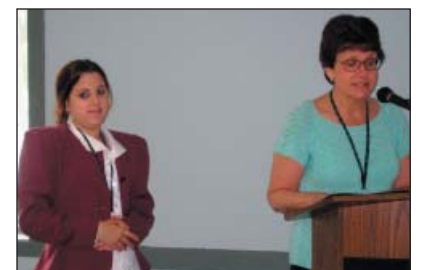
Steven, Shaun & Adam



Artie with Zach Disador



Joe with John Meier



Alison with Nadine Ziegler



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# CABLETHON 2009

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2009**  
***10 a.m.—noon live on Comcast Channel 8***

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Email—for pledge confirmation \_\_\_\_\_

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- \$250 Connect Club
- \$100 Friends Club
- Other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Dear PARC Preschool, Kristin, Nicole, Mina, Damian, Donna and Clair,

What a wonderful year this has been! I wanted to take just a moment to say a very heartfelt thank you, to all of you, for your work with our son.

I am sure, like most school years, you begin with a welcomed excitement to meet all the new little ones. Unaware of what the school year will bring but ever so hopeful progress will be made. This year was a very special year for us and I hope as well for all of you.

We always believed that William was a very capable child and you all helped bring that out in him. Each and everyday we see changes, mark his progress, and smile at the very unique little man before us.

As a Mom I had only hoped that you all would love him. At times I had the pleasure of coming in and watching for a few minutes. I know that you really do love him and all the kids before you. You can see it in your eyes when you look at them. You can hear it in your laughter at a funny moment. You feel it in the look of concern when someone doesn't want lunch for the day. You can sense the pleasure in moments of reciprocated love with a hug or kiss. I watched as all of you went above and beyond for these children, for my child.

William spoke of Nicole from day one, and slowly

everyone else. He told us how Damian liked his shirts, and Clair played with him. When he lost his balloon he wanted Mina to know. He shared how Donna helped him and all the books Kristin would read. He left no one out, speaking of Ms Laura, Ms Carmen, Ms Iris, and my Ms Michelle!

It certainly takes a calling to do your jobs. The challenges that lay before you can be mounting at times. I could not have been more proud of PARC pre-school, this class, all of you, our therapists, and this school year. Every time I receive a compliment about my son, know that it's your compliment as well.

The road ahead of William will have more hurdles to climb but it carries many possibilities. Many more possibilities each and every day. Possibilities made possible by your work.

I am hoping that this letter conveys a sense of warmth, gratitude and accomplishment for the work that you do, the families you touch, the children you help, the siblings you meet, the human spirit you ignite, the language you give, the steps you teach, and the child you raise in your classroom.

We want to wish you all a very happy healthy summer and all the best in your work each time your classroom door opens. I hope that you will check on William next year in his new room and carry a piece of him with you always.

All our Love - Gina, Brian, Elizabeth, William and Paige Fagan



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## Lisa Blenkle Named PARC's Chief Financial Officer

Congratulations to Lisa Blenkle on her recent appointment as PARC's Chief Financial Officer. Blenkle, who first came to PARC as a board member, has served the agency in numerous capacities over the past eight years. Most recently, Lisa was PARC's chief administrative officer and chief compliance officer and formerly the agency's director of human resources.

Blenkle holds a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing and management from Siena College.

"Lisa's leadership and skills in finance will assist in bringing the organization to a more secure position," said PARC Executive Director Susan Limongello.



Blenkle

## PARC PRESCHOOL TRIP TO BEAR MOUNTAIN

*By Debbie Rossi, Teaching Assistant (as told by the children of the preschool summer program)*

We had a wonderful time at the Bear Mountain Zoo. We went with our parents, brothers and sisters. Some of our grandparents also went. The teachers and “helpers” from our classrooms and some of our therapists were there too!

We saw lots of animals at the zoo. We saw a sea otter and ducks swimming. We saw a bear sleeping and an eagle and an owl. The zoo takes care of sick animals until they are feeling better. In the Reptile House we saw snakes, lizards and frogs.

After our walk through the zoo, we all had lunch at the picnic tables. It was fun. We all brought our picnic lunches and had chips, pretzels and cookies. When we finished lunch we went to the playground. Our favorite place! We went down the slides and climbed on the jungle gym. We had fun playing with all of our friends. When we finished playing we said goodbye to all our friends from PARC Preschool and went to our cars to go home.

We sure hope we can all go back there again!



## Two New Staff Members Join PARC Team

Congratulations to Linda J. Gomes and David Daniello on their recent appointments to PARC.

Linda, who joined PARC in May 2009, is the agency’s general counsel and chief compliance officer. She comes to us with a rich background in the field of Developmental Disabilities. She not only worked as a Residence Manager at Westchester ARC but was promoted to various positions in her 20 plus years with them. Linda is trained in OMRDD investigations and has a vast knowledge of the policies and regulations as it relates to our state agencies. She has worked for Ledy-Gurren, Bass & Siff for over 5 years and has been PARC’s legal representative from that firm for those years. Linda’s responsibilities will be to provide General Counsel to PARC while supervising Human Resources and Corporate Compliance/ Quality Assurance. Linda holds a J.D. and Health Law Certificate from Pace University School of Law.

David, who also joined PARC in May 2009, is the agency’s controller. David comes to PARC from Hudson Valley Cardiovascular of Poughkeepsie where he was the chief financial officer. David holds an M.B.A. from Nyack College and a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Quinnipiac College.

He brings to the agency several years experience as a controller in the health care service industry, and also has experience in a managerial financial capacity in the mental retardation/developmental disabilities field.



Gomes



Daniello

# 2009 Partners with PARC Golf Outing

With a dedicated group of 65 golfers and the best weather day of the entire summer (78 degrees, sunny and no humidity), Partners with PARC hosted its 12th Annual Golf Outing on Monday, July 13, 2009. Held at Centennial Golf Club in Carmel, NY, the event raised over \$23,000 to support Partners with PARC's mission to secure the financial future of people with disabilities. Making this day memorable and special were all of the event sponsors, who come back each year to help offset the rising costs of hosting an event of this nature. Partners with PARC thanks presenting sponsor **Malleolo Associates**; **Eagle Sponsors Rose & Kiernan Insurance and 21st Century Business Systems**; **Beverage Sponsors D. Bertoline & Sons & Pepsi Bottling Group**, **Hole in One Sponsors Park Ford Lincoln Mercury of Mahopac and Bill Volz Westchester Jeep of Cortlandt Manor**, **Cocktail Party Sponsor Putnam Federal Credit Union**, **Driving Range Sponsor Rosen & Company**, **Putting Green Sponsor Jackson Lewis**, and all of our hole sponsors for the day.

Congratulations to all our players who scored big on and off the course. The foursome from Rose & Kiernan had the best score of the day with an impressive score of 59 (that's 13 under par!), followed by the Pine Grove Team with a 60 and the Dervishi, Levine & Morgan Law Firm with a 63. Kudos to Janine Getler and Jim Brennan for hitting closest to the pin, while Cathryn Fadde and Lance LaRue had the longest drives. Prizes this year were supplied by D. Bertoline & Sons, Putnam National Golf Club and Centennial Golf Club.

And off the course, the competition and bidding was fast and furious, as PARC's post-golf silent auction raised over \$8,000 with items from: *Millbrook Winery, NY Renaissance Faire,*

*Arturo's of Mahopac, SunSwept Resorts, Thunder Ridge Ski Area, ABC Television, Hudson House River Inn, Hudson's Ribs & Fish, NY Liberty, Levon Helm, NY Jets, NY Giants, Red Bulls Soccer, LaGrande Confections, Aversano's, Town Tinker Tube Rental, WHUD Radio, The Mexican Shack, Edible Arrangements of Carmel, Four Brothers of Mahopac, Touch of Class Dry Cleaners, Brotherhood Winery, Brewster Ice Arena, Premier Cancun Vacations, Community Pharmacy and many more.* Thanks to Cassandra Catucci, Partners with PARC's summer intern, for creating a great silent auction.

Partners with PARC would also like to thank the staff of Centennial Golf Club and Grille Room who make our outing special, with all the pre-event work and the wonderful attention they give our golfers and guests. And many thanks to Dakota Catucci for capturing this year's outing pictures and portraits. Our golfers loved the group pictures and the action shots on the course.

We'll host the 13th Annual Golf Outing in July 2010. So look for a Save the Date reminder in February and we'll see you on the course!



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## PARC's Autism Resource Center to host autism support groups; groups for parents, peers, siblings and people living with autism set to start in September

With a legacy of 55 years providing exceptional services and extensive programs which offer new and exciting initiatives to participants and family members, PARC is pleased to announce the next phase of its Autism Resource Center – support groups for people living with autism and their family members and caregivers.

The support groups mark the successful completion of phase three of the Hudson Valley Autism Resource Center. Phase one, the center's website, [www.AutismResourceCenter.info](http://www.AutismResourceCenter.info), a one-stop clearinghouse of information related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), including autism, pervasive developmental disabilities (PDD), and Asperger's Syndrome, launched to the public in March 2008. Phase two, the center's extensive library collection, was officially opened in January 2009 at Mahopac Public Library. The collection is available throughout the Hudson Valley through inter-library loan.

In order to offer the best possible support groups, staff members of the Autism Resource Center hope to hear from parents and family members of people with autism, to assess what kinds of groups are needed. The hope is to start a peer to peer adolescent support group for people with autism, a group for parents of preschoolers with autism, another group for parents of school age children with autism, and a sibling group. All support groups will be held at the Mahopac Public Library, Mahopac, NY.

Autism spectrum disorders are developmental disabilities that cause significant impairments in social interaction and communication. The ability of individuals with ASDs to think and learn ranges from gifted to severely challenged. Rates for those affected by autism are changing rapidly. Autism now affects 1 in 150 children, and 1 in 100 male children.

"PARC has always been at the forefront of advocacy and services for people with all developmental disabilities," said Susan Limongello, PARC's Executive Director. "With the numbers of children being diagnosed with autism and thousands of people living with autism in New York state alone, we knew it was time to have a centralized place for information, assistance and hope for families and people with Autism."

The center received start-up funding from Provident Bank, The Thomas & Agnes Carvel Foundation, Senator Vincent Leibell/NYS Senate, The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation, and the Gannett Foundation. The support groups will begin in 2009.

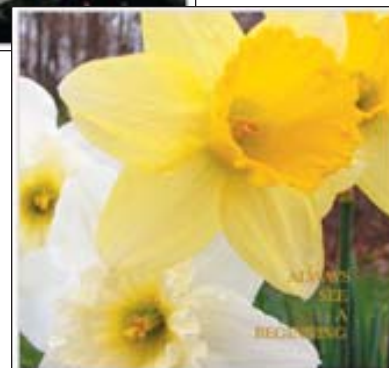
For more information about the Autism Resource Center and the center's support groups, please call 845-278-7272, ext. 287.

### GIVE THE GIFT OF ART

Order your holiday gifts from WildFlower Inspired, from October through December 2009, and part of the proceeds will come back to PARC. Visit [www.WildFlowerInspired.com](http://www.WildFlowerInspired.com) for the great works of art & inspiration by Valerie Anastasio.

Just type in *PARC* or *PARC Newsletter* when you order through the website or mention PARC when ordering by phone.

Nature is the canvas and the inspiration of WILD FLOWER INSPIRED! These beautiful hand-crafted prints, perfectly harmonized with invigorating words, invite nature into our living and working space instilling good feelings about ourselves and others, and having a positive impact on the way we interact with family members, friends, co-workers, patients, clients, and others we meet in our daily encounters.



## PARC HOSTS SUCCESSFUL BRAIN INJURY TRAINING DAY

*By Josephine Todaro, Brain Injury Coordinator*

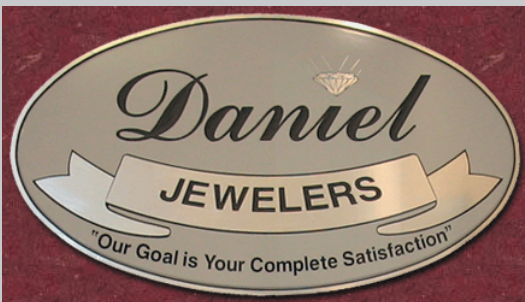
On April 27, 2009, Josephine Todaro, Putnam ARC's Brain Injury Coordinator, hosted a professional training day for persons working in the field of brain injury. Generous contributions from Basch and Keegan, Attorneys at Law; Jones, Wilcenski and Pleat, Attorneys at Law; The Sandra Finkelstein Foundation; Neuropsychological Rehabilitation Services; and, Cortland Community ReEntry Program provided the financial support to assure a successful day. The event was held at Mahopac Public Library and 90 registrants attended free of charge. PARC was well represented in the audience: service coordination, nursing, pre-school, vocational and executive administration were in attendance for a day of professional training and development.

The day commenced with introductions by Josephine and a morning presentation by Judith Avner, Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of NYS and Dr. Maria Cavallo, President of the Brain Injury Association of NYS. An overview of brain injury and services in NYS was presented to a receptive audience.

A wonderful lunch was provided courtesy of the day's sponsors and the afternoon sessions continued to be informative and well received. Dr. Sheryl Statman and Dr. Leonard Travaglione each addressed smaller sessions of professionals, addressing more specific areas of brain injury, including neuroanatomy and the value of a holistic treatment plan. Edward Wilcenski, Attorney at Law, presented the final workshop, which was focused on issues around special needs trusts and benefit entitlements.

A small raffle wrapped up the training day, with gifts provided by a number of attendees. Professionals from OMRDD, NYS DOH, VESID, West Point, Putnam Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, various not-for-profit agencies and the private sector rounded out a specialized audience.

At the end of the day, a brief survey was completed by attendees and the results indicated a high satisfaction with the conference. This day was successful due to the efforts of many PARC employees, including Service Coordination, maintenance, Megan Crowther, and Josephine Todaro. Teresa Todaro's volunteer services were also essential in the success of this event.



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## Professional Standards Task Force Making Great Strides

*By Louis Lindenbaum, Ed.D. Deputy Executive Director and Pat Burdi, Director of Training and Administrative Support*

In October 2007, a task force was created to develop guiding principles for Professional Standards, a compilation of PARCs culture, ethics and professional expectations. The team initially gathered to focus on the professionalization of the work that our Direct Support Professionals provide.

According to the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) support people in their communities and are called upon to make independent judgments on a daily basis that involve both practical and ethical reasoning.

A primary purpose of the DSP is to assist people who need support to lead self-directed lives and to participate fully in our communities. The emphasis is on empowerment and participation.

DSPs are often asked to serve as gatekeepers between people needing support in almost every aspect of their lives, including access to community, personal finances, physical well-being, relationships, employment, and everyday choices. DSPs face ethical decisions on a daily basis and consistently feel the tension between the ideals of the profession and its practice. A strong ethical foundation is critical to help DSPs navigate through the maze of influences that bombard them.

Professional Standards is intended to guide DSPs in resolving ethical dilemmas they face every day and to encourage DSPs to achieve the highest ideals of the profession.

The Task Force was comprised of two representatives from Residential and DayHab services, included Zak Brown, Assistant Manager of Nelsonville, Rita McManus, Assistant Manager of Ludingtonville, Miguel Reyes and Lorraine Wrobbel-Yi, Community Specialists from Day Habilitation, respectively.

In a presentation on Professional Standards, Rita McManus outlined the responsibilities and commitment of the task force team in this way:

“The Code of Ethics Task Force is committed to professionalize and elevate the status of Direct Support Professionals by offering enhanced training and support within the Agency, as well as partial tuition reimbursement for college courses. In addition, PARC continues to advocate through NYSARC to pass legislation at both state and federal levels in order to increase wages for all Direct Support Professionals.

The role of the Task Force was to identify what areas of training and support needed to be developed in order to enhance professional standards. Our next step was to develop a PARC specific Code of Ethics along with a Direct Support Professional Manual targeted at new employees. In subsequent meetings, our committee members shared many experiences that often resulted in negative perceptions about the outcome and frustrations that there was nowhere to go for answers. These situations included a broad range of issues that questioned the professionalism of other colleagues, as well as incidents that some felt could have been resolved in a better way. Therefore, the committee decided that all staff throughout the Agency would benefit with training and/or discussion in Professional Standards and Code of Ethics.

The committee members reviewed and discussed PARC’s Guiding Principles and Expectations. We also looked at the Code of Ethics originated by The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP Code of Ethics) that The National Association of the Direct Support Professionals had for their own members. We used all these resources in adopting new standards and guidelines for PARC’s Code of Ethics.

Professional Standards outline the following principles: Guiding Principles – integrity, independence, respect, honesty, empathy, equality; Expectations - Commitment, professionalism, generosity of spirit, self awareness, leadership, celebration of diversity; Professional Standards and Guidelines – Agency Mission, Person Centered Supports/Self Determination, Promoting physical and emotional well-being, integrity and responsibility, confidentiality, justice, fairness and equality, respect, relationships, and advocacy.

Some members felt that the information presented would be used for Residential and DayHab services along with role-playing to emphasize the different scenarios our employees come across on a day-to-day basis. Other members felt they would use the Code of Ethics as a teaching tool at staff meetings and as a guideline to help clarify standards and expectations as situations arise.

“The committee feels that the Code of Ethics as presented will bring a new awareness through the Agency on how people perceive each other and we hope that it is a day-to-day reminder on how we interact not only with the people we support, but with each other as professional colleagues,” said McManus.

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