Message from the CEO, Greg Sorrentino

We enter the month of March with the hope that the COVID spread has peaked and we are seeing less of an impact as we look to the Spring season which is fast approaching. The Center for Disability Services continues to adjust programs and services to accommodate staffing impacted by COVID quarantines, while maintaining service levels that can accommodate those we support and their families in a safe and effective manner.

We continue to see more individuals coming back to our programs, and hope that we can continue to make the adjustments necessary both programmatically and with staffing, that will allow everyone who wants to be in program, to have that opportunity made available to them.

Much like the transition from winter to spring, the anticipation is high that we can once again be able to not be under the grips of the pandemic as tightly as we have previously, and we can again start to have more public events and interaction, and begin to work our way to what will be the future of programs and services, post pandemic. Clearly we are not there yet, but let’s be optimistic that we are getting closer, and by the time spring arrives, so will more program opportunities.

We also share with you an optimistic view of Governor Hochul’s 2022-2023 New York State Budget which still needs to be negotiated with the legislature. It has been over 10 years since a Governor has proposed any meaningful funding for the services provided under OPWDD, Department of Health, and the State Education Department, for the individuals we support. Governor Hochul’s budget has dollars in the form of a cost of living increase available to our dedicated workers in our OPWDD programs, has a one-time increase in our school programs to start to address parity issues with the public school funding and some one time funding to support our dedicated workers at St. Margaret’s and in our clinic. In addition, the Governor has proposed dollars for infrastructure funding to help fund building upgrades and software investment to better serve your family members. Please talk with your local legislative representatives and make sure they understand the importance of these investments on the future of services and supports.

Thank you to our staff for their continued dedication and loyalty during this pandemic. They have made the difference in getting all of us through this unprecedented time.
Happy 2022!

This month we can have lots of things to celebrate. The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is rapidly diminishing after a record spike in January. Luckily, the majority of our residents and staff have been vaccinated, so although we experienced many positive cases, we had very little serious illness. Influenza quietly had its own spike during last month and is now receding as well. We have continued to look for new and better ways to serve the medical needs of our community by providing easy and comfortable access to care. This month we were able to purchase a brand new adjustable table for Primary Care that has a built-in weighing function. It is able to lower to just 18 inches off the ground, providing safety and security for our most vulnerable patients. Health related observances in February included National Cancer Prevention Month and America Heart Month. These were a good reminder to work on our health goals including improving fitness, working toward a healthy body weight, screening for high cholesterol and high blood pressure, reducing or eliminating cigarette use and completing screenings for early cancer detection. The groundhog said 6 more weeks of winter but as upstaters we already knew that!

A New Holiday Tradition

It was such an exciting day when matching winter pajamas arrived for the individuals who live at St. Margaret’s. It was so much fun to have everyone looking festive for the holidays.

We look forward to continuing this each holiday season. Thank you to the Kindness Is Foundation for their generous donation and for inspiring a new tradition!
It was hard not to get in the holiday mood when you walked into one of our programs! This spirit was contagious throughout our Day Hab and After School Programs.

Door decorating contests, making holiday ornaments, decorating gingerbread houses, showing off people’s artistic talents by donating decorated items for the Festival of Trees, singing Christmas carols and delivering donations to the Langan School’s Giving Tree were just some of the many holiday activities that took place. These were all fun activities that kept the spirit alive!!
Our Albany CloverPatch Preschool students are practicing their ball skills for Special Olympics! The students look forward to their monthly practices in the motor activities that will lead up to our main event this Spring! We have some very talented bowlers in our group! The students are also learning many other skills as they practice...such as counting, waiting turns, concepts less/more/next to and social skills as they cheer each other on. Thank you to Debbie Beach and the entire CloverPatch Preschool staff for making this such a fun event for the students.

Cloverpatch Preschool at Prospect Center had a great time creating gingerbread houses for the holidays!
This past September the Center celebrated Direct Support Professionals week differently then we have in previous years. In light of the pandemic, our committee came up with the idea of administrative staff supporting the programs in a “hands on” way. We had volunteers from executive management, support departments, and clinical services get the jobs done!!

Our dedicated program staff received a goody bag filled with treats and a message from Greg Sorrentino and a family member of the people we support expressing their gratitude to the staff for all they do each and everyday. Heartfelt messages from the families mentioned the dedication, self sacrifice, diligence, devotion and caring of the people who work every day to help their loved ones live their best lives. As Greg said in his message “I want to express our sincere gratitude for each of you, for your dedication and commitment to the Mission and to the families, as well as your unwavering compassion to those you support each day.”
Long Term Staff at Lori Drive

In this day and age we hear a lot about people changing jobs on a regular basis but fortunately that is not at all the case at the Lori Drive home! The staff pictured here represent over 105 years of service!!

Starting from the top left hand corner, Margarita, Khalid, Yesenia, Sharon, William (Murph), Victor & Mohammed have all been at the Center 10 years or more, with the majority of this staff spending their entire tenure at the Lori Drive home.

A special shout out to Khalid and Mohammad who have spent most of their long careers on the overnight shift.

Thank you to all of the staff at Lori Drive for your care and compassion to the individuals you support and for your dedication to the Center!

“The Mighty Pucks” of Altamont!

Sarah and David from our Altamont homes are participating in the Special Olympics as members of the “Mighty Pucks” broom hockey team. The team is looking forward to welcoming Allison who has recently moved into one of our Altamont residences.

The team practices for an hour and a half on Wednesday evenings under the guidance of Coach Courtney Sims. It has been a group effort amongst the Direct Support Professionals, Residential Support Staff and management staff to provide the transportation. Congratulations to David and Sarah who placed 1st and 2nd in their division at a recent skills tournament.

Soon they will all be heading to Syracuse to participate in States. Best of luck to the team and we can't wait to hear all about your travels and the games!!
Scott, who lives at Ontario St., enjoys giving back to the community, especially during difficult times. This year he enlisted the support of his staff, Ashanta and Justin, to help him come up with a plan. They decided to provide homemade cookies in handcrafted packages to the homeless.

Scott, his housemates and staff wasted no time in executing their plan. They got in touch with the Albany City Mission who were thrilled with their generosity.

Together everyone at Ontario St. used their collective talents to plan, bake, decorate and deliver wonderful cookie bags and boxes to the mission. Those who received the gifts were very appreciative.

Everyone at Ontario St. found the reward of giving to others was far greater than anything that was waiting for them under the tree!

Rooting for the Home Team!!

On Monday November 22nd Peter, Freddy Matt P., Sean and Doug from our Velina, Nolan and River Road homes were excited about the opportunity to attend a Siena basketball game.

They had a new experience watching the game from a box generously donated by NFP (formerly Rose & Kiernan, Inc.) They had a great time and are looking forward to attending another Siena basketball game!

Double Celebration at Campito House

On January 14th, Bill, along with his mother, sister and housemates, celebrated his 60th birthday.

The week before his birthday Bill and his sister had shared with the staff that it was 28 years ago on Bill’s 32nd birthday that he had moved into Campito House on it’s opening day!

Balloons and decorations were put up to commemorate both Bill’s birthday and move to his new home! Congratulations Bill!
Local talent and inspirational stories were highlighted during the #518gives Fundraiser on Sunday, February 6.

Child Representative Kassidy Salisbury Arnold is 8 years old and attends the Center’s Langan School in Albany. Adult Representative Matt Graham lives in one of the Center’s homes, works at St. Margaret’s Center and is a Power Lifter who will be participating in the National Special Olympics. “A Heroes Tribute” was one of the stories featuring Montoya Burt-Certified Nursing Assistant-St. Margaret’s Center, Stacie Cousineau-Special Education Teacher-Education Services, Don Shorts-Senior Day Program Counselor-Adult Services and Lameeka Tarver-Resident Counselor-Residential Services. These staff were recipients of the 2021 Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State Staff Recognition Awards and represent all of the Center staff who work tirelessly every day.

Wrapping up the broadcast was the Center’s own Fran Suggs, Administrator of Residential Services, who along with Kevin Rooney of Delmar and Travis Rockenstire of Feura Bush with their beautiful rendition of “God Bless America”.

Links to view #518gives Fundraiser Stories:

https://vimeo.com/672855653 “Mail Fulfillment Tour”
https://vimeo.com/672608418 Matt Part A
https://vimeo.com/672609649 Matt Part B
https://vimeo.com/672607846 Matt News Story
https://vimeo.com/673177272 Kassidy Part A
https://vimeo.com/673179584 Kassidy Part B
https://vimeo.com/673662132 Kassidy News Story
https://vimeo.com/672003692 Roberto Part A
https://vimeo.com/672005673 Roberto Part B
https://vimeo.com/672002633 Roberto News Story
https://vimeo.com/672030916 Hanani’s Story
https://vimeo.com/672090750 Hi Tech Story
https://vimeo.com/673964028 Tom Cassidy Tribute

Special Events Calendar

World Down Syndrome Day March 21st
An Aficionado Experience
Presented by Northwestern Mutual June 16th
Schuyler Meadows Club Loudonville, New York
29th Annual Siro’s Cup July 13th
Siro’s Restaurant Saratoga Springs, New York
31st Annual Million Dollar Beach Volleyball Tournament
Presented by the Times Union
August 6th & 7th
Million Dollar Beach Lake George, New York
Lake George Aficionado August 2022
Lake George Club Diamond Point, New York
7th Annual Concert for a Cause June 2022
TBD
Capital Region Buddy Walk October 15th
Schenectady Central Park Schenectady, New York
31st Annual North Country Festival of Trees
Presented by Berkshire Bank Nov. 25th -27th
The Queensbury Hotel Glens Falls, New York