

News



A newsletter for the friends of FECA • Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism • Winter 2014

FECA'S NEW MISSION - NEW NAME CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF ACHIEVEMENT

Many of you reading this newsletter have stood side by side with FECA as we sought to advocate for, and ultimately help change, the futures of our growing community of individuals with autism. You share with us our celebration of twenty years of struggle and effort and ultimately our successes. Let's take a moment to reflect and appreciate as we face our next challenges which have led us to emerge with an expanded mission and a new name, the Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism...still FECA... but with a reinvigorated purpose!

- ◆ In 1996, eight families established the Foundation for Educating Children with Autism to found a school.
- ◆ In 1996, FECA held its first two day conference with Dr. Ivar Lovaas, principal architect of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Over 1,400 parents and educators attended from 35 states and 5 countries spearheading the movement to accept ABA as the gold standard for educating children with autism and providing critical seed money for the school.
- ◆ In 1996, FECA partnered with the Devereux Foundation to open the Devereux Millwood Learning Center (DMLC) welcoming 12 children to a one to one, state of art ABA school. That number has grown to 48 students attending DMLC today.
- ◆ FECA has raised over a half a million dollars annually to pay for staff and other projects. To date, over \$9 million has been raised for essential programs.
- ◆ A playground was built, a new kitchen installed, a computer lab established, and six vans were purchased to further community integration programs over the first 15 years.
- ◆ For ten years, beginning in 1994, FECA sponsored a nationally recognized annual educational and scientific conference providing thousands of parents and educators with critical knowledge and scientific research to help their children and enhance educational programs.
- ◆ In 1998, FECA created the Jonathan Levin scholarship to encourage individuals to advance their education in the field; 55 received scholarships during the course of the program. In 2014, FECA reinstated the scholarship to promote the further education of individuals working with the adult population.
- ◆ Beginning in 2005, FECA met the developmental needs of DMLC students through the establishment and support of a new vocational director position. Dozens of new community integration sites were created for students to learn new skills and provide experience to prepare them for their adult lives.
- ◆ In 2007, FECA again partnered with the Devereux Foundation to establish the Devereux Adult Program; to date 18 young men now travel throughout the county to work and volunteer sites.
- ◆ In 2013, FECA established the Opportunity Network for Employers and Employees (ONEE) to create new volunteer and potential employment job opportunities within the profit and nonprofit community.
- ◆ In 2014, FECA honored the Ireland Family Foundation for their leadership in establishing Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina (EVNC), which creates micro businesses for paid employment opportunities for adults with autism. FECA is now an emerging partner with EVNC, which will translate into business creation specifically geared to the interests and skills of adults in Westchester County.



This year FECA redefined its mission and incorporated a new name to reflect our expanded purpose to embrace the needs of individuals with autism beyond childhood through their lives as adults.

Our new name - *The Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism* retains our acronym - *FECA* - with a reinvigorated purpose:

TO INSURE THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS LEAD MEANINGFUL AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES. WE DO THIS BY ADVOCATING FOR, PROVIDING AND SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL, VOCATIONAL, ADULT AND OTHER SERVICES BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS.

**Thank You To All of Our Steadfast Supporters!
Happy Holidays!!**

FECA Looks "Back..." in Celebration of Twenty Years of Achievements and Sets Its Sights..."To the Future"

Several hundred celebrants filled the ballroom of the Westchester Marriot on November 15th to celebrate and reflect on twenty years of challenges and accomplishments and hear what lies ahead for the newly named Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism (still FECA!) and the children and adults we strive to serve.

Phil Orlando, emcee extraordinaire, thanked the chairs of the event, Pete and Ann DiChiara and Drew and Melanie Schaffran, as well as the journal chairs, Barbara Kimmel and Terry Pirraglia. The journal which drew its creativity from the "Back to the Future" theme included newspaper articles from the early days when a school was just a dream of weary parents.

FECA President Melanie Schaffran reminded friends, family and colleagues of the essential part they have and continue to play as ambassadors to a world that has the capacity, but lacks the understanding, of what is possible for individuals with autism. She thanked supporters for making possible a school which has seen 124 students pass through its doors since it opened in 1996 and an adult day program which provides 18 young men with productive volunteer work, as primary achievements among so many other enhancements to the lives and well being of children and adults with autism.

The challenges that lie ahead and FECA's evolving mission in response were beautifully captured in a 15 minute video produced by Dana Garrett and Dave Butz.

The video featured interviews with parents, providers and volunteer site staff and followed the young men and women as they worked throughout the community.

The evening's festivities included a silent and newly inaugurated "Chinese" auction, dinner, dancing and a lively casino. Funds raised at the event will support FECA's three priorities: furthering volunteer opportunities in the community, creating micro businesses specifically designed to employ individuals with autism and the scholarship program which promotes the further education of individuals working with adults with autism.



FECA Honors the 'Extraordinary' Work of The Ireland Family Foundation

Once again, the ballroom of the Pierre Hotel provided an elegant setting for the 19th annual "FECA on Fifth" spring gala on April 24th.

Chaired by Elise and Phil Orlando and Melanie and Drew Schaffran, the event brought supporters together to not only celebrate the achievements of our young people, but also to announce the transformation of FECA to its broader mission, one that demanded a new name - *The Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism!*

In announcing the new name, FECA President Melanie Schaffran stated that while our acronym would remain the same, our efforts going forward would be largely directed towards the creation and support of programs and services that "empower" adults with autism

through their ability to obtain expanded opportunities in their communities.

FECA's honoree this year directly recognized the importance that work plays in the role of every individual, including those on the ASD spectrum. Responding to the enormous challenges that developmentally disabled individuals face in a typical workplace, Gregg and Lori Ireland, through the support of the Ireland Family Foundation, turned the concept of work opportunity on its head. Through trial and error, they endeavored to establish micro businesses designed to utilize and enhance each individual's unique interests and skills. Thus, Extraordinary Ventures of North Carolina (EVNC) was born.

EVNC (www.extraordinaryventures.org) formed in 2007, has established to date, 6 micro businesses which are created and

run by young, energetic social entrepreneurs. Though the businesses are competitive and market driven, their profits are reinvested to create further opportunities for the increasing population capable of gainful employment.

In presenting the award, it was announced that FECA is actively seeking the mentorship of EVNC to create similar opportunities for adults in our area.

FECA emcee, the honorable Phil Orlando, presided over the evening's festivities which included a spectacular silent auction chaired by Gina DeCaprio and Elise Orlando and the scrumptious meal "by the bite" offered at this landmark hotel.

The event, FECA's primary fundraising event of the year, raised over \$300,000 through sponsorships and donations which will go directly to serving our mission.





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Devereux New York's Fearless Leader John O'Keefe Retires

When John O'Keefe assumed the mantle of Executive Director of Devereux New York, the Red Hook program ran 5 group homes and a day habilitation program. Fourteen years later, the pro-



John O'Keefe

gram boasts 32 discrete programs serving approximately 377 individuals. John has been a stalwart supporter of DMLC and instrumental in the establishment of the Devereux Adult Program. In recognition of his unwavering devotion, John received the FECA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012 for his tireless efforts on behalf of individuals with autism. John retires this year and we send our heartiest congratulations and deepest appreciation for a job very well done!

John Lopez, who has served as Assistant Director will become Executive Director at the end of this year. Best wishes John!

Evercore ISI Celebrates with a Gift to FECA

Celebrating their recent successful merger and acquisition -- and in the spirit of tremendous generosity -- Evercore ISI, an independent investment advisory firm, donated 5% of their net commissions from their first week of operations as a combined company, to several charities. FECA was one of 11 to receive this unexpected and deeply appreciated \$15,000 charitable windfall.



Petrice Haughton, long time Devereux staff member, will continue her graduate education supported by a FECA scholarship.

Save the Date

20th annual

FECA on Fifth Gala

Thursday, March 19, 2015 • 6:30 – 9:30pm

The Pierre, 2 East 61st Street at Fifth Avenue, NY, NY

Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction

For further information, please call Michael at Hospitality Resource Group, Inc. (914) 761-7111

