

News



A newsletter for the friends of FECA • Foundation for Educating Children with Autism • Fall 2010

FECA Celebrates the Future and Honors the Past

Over a decade and a half ago, a weary but stubborn group banded together on a hope and a dream that became the reality of FECA. Two years later, a partnership with Devereux New York turned the dream of a school into a reality when

they emerge into the larger world. Our spring cocktail party event honored a 15-year partnership with Devereux, which ultimately made that future possible.

Our fall event, held November 7 at the Rye Town Hilton, celebrated the decade of the 70s with the multipurpose theme of "Staying Alive". A Saturday Night Fever themed disco provided the backdrop for renewing the collective commitment of the participants to keeping the mission of FECA not only "alive" but also thriving.

Continuing the long tradition of fun and conviviality, participants came adorned in the fabulous fashions of the time. Members of the Village People mingled with bell bottoms

and sequins, joyfully dancing from dance floor to the fabulous array of silent auction items, which were anchored by our first ever "on line" auction. The web-based auction, which began a month



FECA Honorees, Neil Boyle (center) and Melanie and Drew Schaffran

DMLC opened its doors in 1996. Fifty students now receive an exemplary education through the enormous skill and dedication of a legion of teachers and staff over the years. Last summer, five young men boarded vans one morning and headed out into their future as our partnership with Devereux again opened doors with the establishment of our adult program; this summer four more young citizens, including two recent graduates of DMLC, Andrew Finder and Brett Schaffran, added to their ranks.

The theme for the 2009-2010 event calendar framed both the future and honored our past. At our annual fall dinner we honored a beloved staff member and an esteemed employer who have each made a tremendous contribution to the future of our students as



FECA's Friends of the Bethel Nursing & Rehabilitation Center

before the event, included an adventure package to Alaska, dream vacations to Anguilla and St. Croix, fabulous get-aways to California, New York City and the Adirondacks and a tour of the new

DMLC Celebrated Three June Graduates

With nary a dry eye in the gym, three young men gleefully celebrated their graduation from DMLC this past June. Andrew Finder, Pratik Ravichandran and Brett Schaffran had long shared their teachers, their classroom and the vans that drove them to their various worksites. They seemed delighted to share this last ceremony signaling their completion of one journey and their first steps into the larger world of work and community.



(L to R) Pratik Ravichandran, Brett Schaffran and Andrew Finder, FECA's 2010 Graduates

Brett Schaffran, who entered DMLC at age six in the first class of students, is the son of FECA founders and first and current board presidents, Andrew and Melanie Schaffran. In an emotional dedication, his mother thanked the staff and teachers who had contributed to Brett's growth and success. Pratik's father, Ravi, spoke movingly of his son's decade-long tenure at DMLC finally finding a home where he distinguished himself as the first student to garner his own office at his work site, Bethel Nursing Home. Andrew's father, Ed, told the audience of his son's dual struggle with not only autism but also with leukemia, the latter of which he conquered after many years of treatment. Andrew has also made great strides in the world of work.

Brett and Andrew joined the ranks of

And The Emmy Goes To...

As you watched the glitz and glam at the Emmy awards this year, you may have noticed something extraordinary: Emily Gerson Saines accepting an Emmy for her role as Executive Producer of HBO's "Temple Grandin". The film tells a real-life story of the best-selling author and groundbreaking agricultural scientist who struggled early in



Emily Gerson Saines and Temple Grandin proudly embrace with Emmy in hand.

life to learn how to cope with autism before it was more widely known. "Temple Grandin" certainly made an impact with the Academy, taking home five Emmys for the evening.

Emily Gerson Saines, together with her husband Andy, is the proud parent of DMLC student, Dashiell.

DMLC Celebrated Three June Graduates

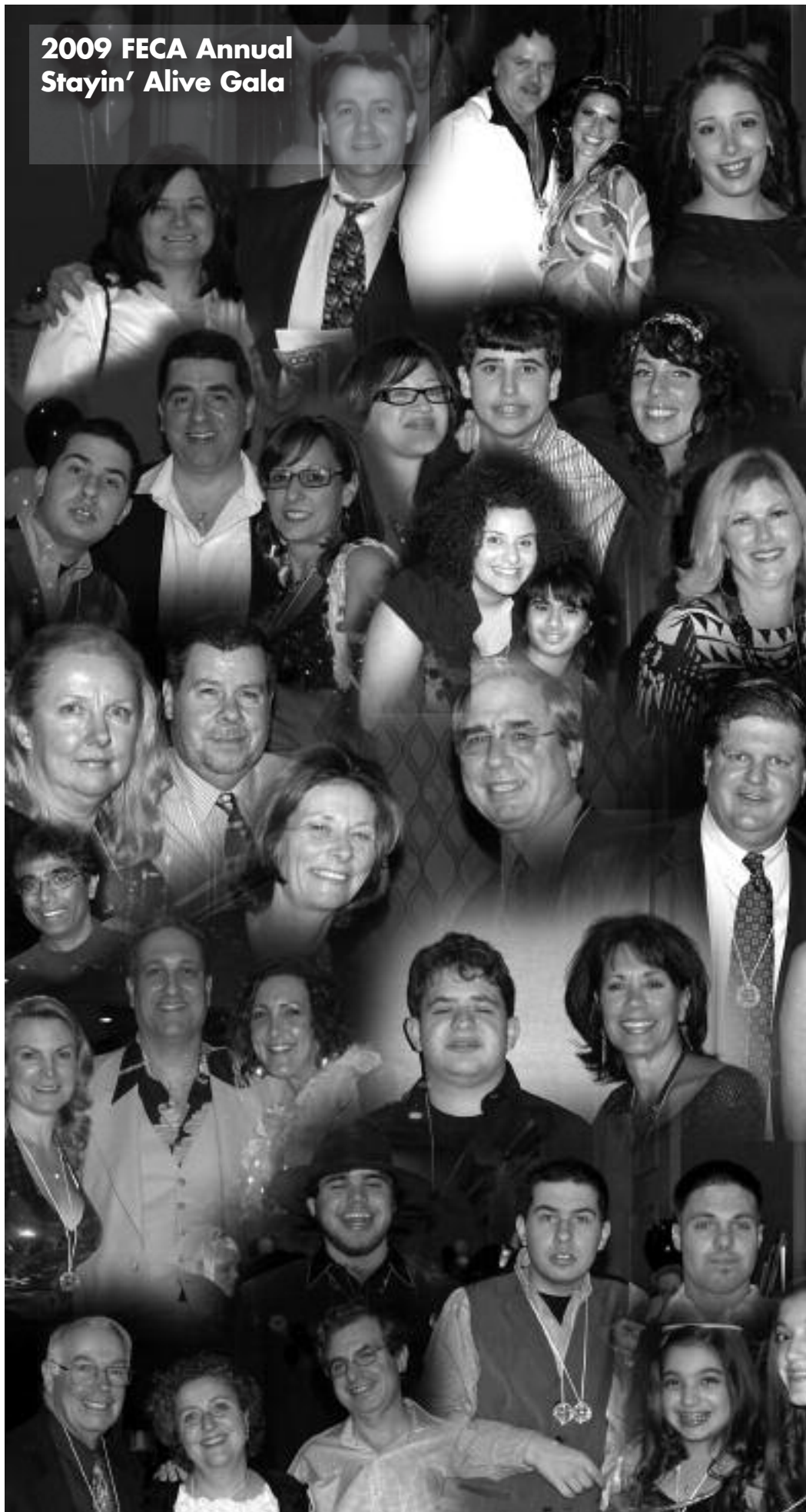
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the Devereux adult program in July and Pratik will continue his growth and success in a program across the river closer to his home. Congratulations graduates!!!



Pratik Ravichandran and DMLC Vocational Director Neil Boyle celebrate!

2009 FECA Annual Stayin' Alive Gala



**2010 FECA Spring
in the Park Gala**



2009-2010 Events: FECA Celebrates the Future and the Past

continued from page 1

Yankee Stadium guided by a former Yankee.

The festive occasion gave FECA an opportunity to celebrate and honor those who have given so much of their talent, time and energy to furthering the future of our students.

Bethel CEO Bruce Bradigan and beloved Volunteer Coordinator Jean Kulesa received the tribute on behalf of the Bethel Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, which has long been a cornerstone of DMLC's thriving vocational program. Neil Boyle accepted our heartfelt appreciation for his enormously productive efforts to ensure brighter futures for the students under his charge through his wise and creative guidance as DMLC's Vocational Director. It was fitting that the CVS Caremark Charitable trust chose this evening to present FECA with a \$15,000 grant for our vocational training program.



DMLC Student Pratik Ravichandran accepts donation from CVS representatives Jason Tretton and Anthony Riccardio.

auction, chaired by Liz Finder, Peggy Wedin and Melanie Schaffran, was a great success. The dinner journal, chaired by Monica Haugh and Lalitha Ravichandran, was particularly creative and rich with meaningful tributes to honorees, DMLC staff and students alike.

Our spring cocktail event held May 25th at the Bryant Park Grill provided a perfect opportunity to pay tribute to a 15-year partnership between FECA and Devereux New York which resulted in the establishment of the Devereux Millwood Learning Center and, most recently, the creation of an adult program that continues to make possible greater opportunities to young adults with autism.

FECA President Melanie Schaffran paid tribute to the Devereux staff who have, over the past decade and a half, provided dozens of children, many of whom are now young adults, with a future of greater possibilities as a result of their dedication and hard

work. Devereux President and CEO Robert Kreider accepted the award.

The event, chaired by Donna and Rob Clarfeld, Gina and John DeCaprio, Elise and Phil Orlando, and Kimberly and James Schwab, raised over \$170,000.

The silent auction, always a fantastic creation, was ably co-chaired again by Elise Orlando and Gina DeCaprio.



Devereux President Bob Kreider (center) accepts award from FECA President Melanie Schaffran and Board Member Phil Orlando.

Melanie Schaffran and her husband, Drew, both original FECA co-founders, were stunned and delighted when presented with a surprise Lifetime Achievement Award offered by Ann DiChiara on behalf of the board. Melanie is the current president and Drew was FECA's first.

The event, chaired by FECA Treasurer Ann DiChiara and Secretary Heidi Lee raised \$120,000. The silent and on-line

In Memoriam: Autism Pioneer, Esteemed FECA Advisor O. Ivar Lovaas

Our world has lost an esteemed leader and colleague who, over his long and distinguished career of over 50 years, contributed enormously to the lives and well being of countless children with autism and their families. Many of us came to know of Dr. Lovaas in a state of crisis as we grappled with the enormous challenges of our young children. Dr. Lovaas' pioneering treatment was based on the principles of applied behavior analysis which became a standard best practice and, ultimately, changed the lives of legions of children. Reached effectively and early in their lives, children were able to change the course of the debilitating effects of this neurological disorder.



Dr. Lovaas is particularly beloved in the FECA community. His participation as the centerpiece of our first conference 16 years ago not only helped the 1,500 participants attending but its success enabled our ability to fund a school, which became a reality one year later. Dr. Lovaas continued on as a valued member of the FECA Board of Advisors. We considered him the rock star of our world. FECA sends heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr. Lovaas.

Wedding Bells And A FECA Donation

Christina Miele, a teacher at the Holistic Learning Center, and her fiancé, Michael Guarniero,

decided that in lieu of traditional wedding favors for their October wedding, they will make a \$500 donation to FECA. Thank you Christina and Michael and congratulations on your wedding!



Devereux Adult Day Program Marks First Anniversary

The Devereux Millwood Adult Day Habilitation, Without Walls/ Supported Employment program marked its first year of operation this past July. Terry Pirraglia, FECA Board Member, developed this unique service model in conjunction with the Devereux Foundation. It is the only without walls supported employment/day habilitation program that solely services the needs of adults with autism in Westchester County.

Under the leadership of Dr. Cindy Alterson, Program Director, and Angie Tocci, Program Coordinator, the original five participants are now employed and are an integral part of their local community.

These five new taxpayers are employed part-time in jobs as varied as the program participants themselves, encom-

passing such diverse duties as clerical work at a financial services company, food preparation and restocking at two local pizzerias, and janitorial duties at a non-profit organization. These fortunate Westchester employers are reaping the benefits of employing these five hard working and highly motivated young men.

The rest of each participant's busy week is spent volunteering at Bethel Nursing Home in Ossining and Northern Westchester Hospital Center in Mount Kisco. In addition, they each work on maintaining their functional academics, community integration and recreation goals.

In July 2010, four new young men joined the day habilitation without walls part of this new and innovative program.

Autism Speaks Inclusion Funding Yields New Opportunities

Through the leadership of founding board member Kevin Murray, Autism Speaks provided \$60,000 in funding support to promote community and school-based inclusion experiences for students at DMLC. Dr. Joanmarie Sackles is consulting with various community-based programs such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the 4H and martial arts studios which will be tailored to the individual student's needs and interests. The funding also provides for Eric Chessen of Autism Fitness to consult with DMLC, writing individual plans for students and conducting staff and parent training. Students have already been using a new elliptical machine, also a gift of the funding.

FECA's Grant Partners Fill the Gap to bring Vital Funding through our Doors

Now more than ever, FECA wishes to salute our Grant Program participants who have invested in our unique curriculum. Their support allows our students to follow new paths and truly make a difference for the many businesses and non-profits that partner with FECA in the award-winning Vocational Training Education Program and the Adult Habilitation Day Program.



The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc. has joined with us for several years, supporting our Vocational Training Education Program. Their current grant in the amount of \$20,000 provides the Flutie Foundation with the distinction of being one of the premiere investors in our Adult Habilitation Day Program. Pictured: Doug Flutie, Jr. and his son, Dougie.



For the third year in a row, the MBIA Foundation has selected FECA as a grant partner. This year a \$10,000 award will support the various aspects of vocational training, including an environmental education component and the now second-year adult program. Pictured are members of MBIA's Charitable Contributions Committee, from left to right: Ed Janson, Jenn Cronin, Erin Holliday, Jean McGovern, Joe Pirraglia, Rick Hess, and Dan Hickey.



For the second year, the Ronald McDonald House Charities, New York Tri State Area has selected FECA as a funding recipient. We are grateful for the efforts of Peter Samaha, RMHC board member, for recognizing the unique contributions of our programs and services. The RMHC \$5,500 grant will enable our students to continue studying environmental education, while providing water testing and clean up to County Parks, trails and waterways. Shown in the photo, clockwise from left, next to the kitchen recycling center are Adam Rivera, Kelly Wedin, Pete Samaha and Miguelangel Cruz.

For the second year in a row, the CVS Caremark Charitable Trust has selected FECA as one of a small group of charities in the U.S. to benefit from their support. This year, a \$15,000 grant will help us to enhance vocational opportunities for teenagers and adults. Pictured (L to R) at our Fall 2009 Gala are Anthony Riccardo, District Sales Manager, CVS and his wife, Assemblyman Greg Ball and Lauren Pistone and Jason Tretton, District Sales Manager, CVS Pharmacy and his wife Kari Coyle.



We are grateful to the efforts of Assemblyman Greg Ball who consistently supports FECA and DMLC in many ways. A \$20,000 legislative member item will help us with transportation and supplies for vocational training, education, and transitional programs. Assemblyman Ball (center of photo, above) took time to visit with fellow grant partners at our Fall 2009 Annual Gala.

To learn more about FECA's Grant-Seeking Partnership Program, or suggest a company or foundation partner, please contact Lisa Keogh, FECA Grant Coordinator, Hospitality Resource Group, Inc., at 914-761-7111 or via email at lisa@hrginc.net.

We would also like to thank the following partners for their support:

White Plains Mayor Adam Bradley:

Prior to retiring from the state legislature, he successfully obtained member item funding for support of a vehicle and supplies for the vocational curriculum.

The Hudson Valley Office for People with Developmental Disabilities:

For several years they have funded our Summer Camp Respite and Enrichment Program.

Jim Witt and the H.O.P.E. for Youth Foundation:

For providing seed money for our educational workshop series.

Second Annual Spring Performance

On May 14, DMLC held its Second Annual Arts and Talent Show. The students were able to show off their skills to over 40 parents and family members who attended the event. The Art Gallery presented the works of Jackson, Owen, Adam, Farjana, Sheela, Christopher, Lulu, and Varun. Christian ran the bake sale expertly.

Jalyn, Connor, Nick D., Miguel, Tyrese, Andrew and Josh presented an interpretation of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider".

Rendy, Jaylen, Andrea, and Deego showed us a medley of songs and actions, including "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and "The Chicken Dance".

John D. sang a medley of 60s and 70s hits with the guest accompaniment of Marc the Music Man.

Students from classrooms 1, 7, and 8 encouraged us all to take care of our planet, to reduce, reuse, and recycle, and they sang a rendition of "We are the World".

The piano maestro of the day was Vivek, who performed "YMCA" and other songs that had the audience singing along.

DMLC students and staff worked very hard to prepare this event and we thank all who were able to attend. Once again, we have another hard act to follow for next year's performance.

PACE University Students Raise Awareness of Autism

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, the National Panhellenic Council of Pace University held a carnival for the students of the Devereux Millwood Learning Center. On April 9th, all of the staff and students went to the Pace – Pleasantville Campus Gym and were treated to a variety of events. The students participated in activities such as potato sack races, bingo, T-shirt dyeing, painting, ring toss, and other games. The students were able to win prizes of balls, toys, and even goldfish! The Pace students were very interactive in helping facilitate the fun events. The DMLC students were given

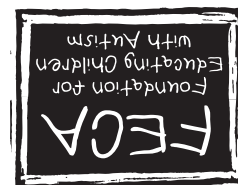


FECA students enjoy finger painting at Pace.

the opportunity to see and learn about birds and other animals. We sincerely thank the National Panhellenic Council of Pace University for initiating this awareness event and for giving our students a day of fun!

Join the
Foundation for Educating
Children with Autism
for an evening
**Around
the World**
Saturday, November 6, 2010
6:30 PM – 11:30 PM
Cocktail Reception, Dinner, Dancing,
Casino, and Silent Auction
Westchester Marriott
670 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, NY
For more information please contact Hospitality
Resource Group, Inc. at (914) 761-7111

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