

# News



A newsletter for the friends of FECA • Foundation for Educating Children with Autism • Winter 2013

## FECA on Fifth Gala Honors Clarfeld Financial Advisors

The elegant ballroom of the Pierre Hotel provided the perfect setting on March 20th for an opportunity to toast our most stalwart of allies and supporters, Clarfeld Financial Advisors (CFA). Rob Clarfeld, CEO of CFA, has held “the scepter, if not



Event co-chair and MC Phil Orlando welcomes supporters to the Pierre

the crown, to the kingdom of unwavering devotion and support. There has simply not been a single event that we have held in our nearly two decades of events, where the presence of Rob and his colleagues at Clarfeld has not been deeply felt,” stated FECA President Melanie Schaffran, as she presented them with the 2013 FECA Employer of the Year Award.

Careful training of two participants in the Devereux Adult program to the rules of the working world, matched by the instincts and experience of Clarfeld staff, has resulted in a stellar example of what is possible if opportunity is dedicated to the particular abilities of our young people. CFA has set a priceless example, opening its doors and its arms to a grand and ultimately successful experiment, through the inclusion of two members of the Devereux Adult program to their staff. Josh Fineman has worked at CFA

for over three years, scanning documents and doing Excel spreadsheets. “The skills I am learning at Clarfeld will help me all my life,” he stated. Matt Koch has worked at CFA for over four years and in addition to the value of his work, he loves the way staff greets him. Koch added that he “felt like I was in (the TV show) “Cheers” and just like Norm, everyone knew my name.”

Two dozen CFA employees joined Rob on stage as Joy Soodik, who is largely responsible for the success of the program, accepted the award on behalf of the firm. Joy gave a rousing call to action to potential employers to open their doors to the growing numbers of adults with autism who are able to contribute to the workplace and their communities, if only given the opportunity.

The annual spring cocktail party, chaired by Elise and Phil Orlando and Melanie and Andrew Schaffran, raised over \$185,000 for programs supporting children and adults with autism. A stellar silent auction, chaired by John and Gina DeCaprio, offered tickets to exciting entertainment and sporting events, fabulous memorabilia items and getaway packages.



Joy Soodik rallies the crowd!

## Opportunity Network for Employers and Employees (ONEE) Program Launch

When Clarfeld Financial Advisors’ Joy Soodik accepted the 2013 FECA Employer of the Year Award last March, there were rallying cries of joy. “It’s the best thing we’ve ever done” and “join the campaign” echoed off the elegant walls of the Pierre Hotel. The call to battle was music to the ears of parents of adults with autism, and particularly, members of the FECA board, who have



Neil Boyle is working with FECA to establish the ONEE Network

been searching for the most effective way to confront the tremendous need for volunteer and employment opportunities for children becoming adults.

When FECA first launched its effort to establish a school for children with autism, 1 in 10,000 children were diagnosed. That figure is now an astounding 1 in 85 for boys struggling with this pervasive, life-long diagnosis. Enormous strides have been made in early detection, intervention and services for children, but the enormity of the problem has become clearer as thousands age out of educational placements. Many graduate with a range of skills to apply in the workplace, but confront a world woefully ill-prepared to receive them and unable to provide them with the opportunity to become productive members of their community. Parents and caregivers struggle to find organizations that can

*continued on page 2*

## ONEE Program Launch

continued from page 1

accommodate these growing numbers. The agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to balance the needs of the day to day staffing with the challenge of finding new opportunities.

"It's an enormous undertaking, to place these young adults in the workplace," said FECA President Melanie Schaffran. We must first explore the community's resources to find a potential need, and then match that need with the particular interests and abilities of a consumer. Then the individuals must be trained and provided with support and a job coach who can provide transportation, for what

is usually at least three consumers, to a job or volunteer site. Once established, the rewards to both consumer and workplace have been undeniably rich for all involved, but it is a daunting task.

Due to this increasing need, FECA is launching the **Opportunity Network for Employers and Employees (ONEE)**. ONEE will establish an active database of meaningful and productive opportunities that will provide potential matches with existing and evolving agencies and consumers. To that end, FECA has hired Neil Boyle, the former vocational coordinator at the Devereux Millwood Learn-

ing Center. Neil created the position at DMLC eight years ago, as children at the school began reaching the pivotal age of 14, where vocational educational plans were required.

For six years at DMLC, Neil established over a dozen initial placements, ranging from the Bethel Nursing Home and The Interfaith Council For Action, to The Muscular Dystrophy Association, The American Red Cross and Clarfeld Financial Advisors. He also expanded opportunities at The Food Bank for Westchester, The Country Deli, Euro Pizza and Mt. Kisco Honda. Neil trained educational staff and worksite administrators, guided consumers through various worksite demands to learn interests and develop skills and oversaw the growth of the program. Many of those initial placements still provide opportunities for participants in the Devereux Adult Program and are regarded as the gold standard for productivity and further learning.

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*"It is an honor and privilege to have the opportunity to collaborate with FECA again. I am excited about the new ONEE initiative.*

*Creating meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the workplace is extremely rewarding. To my knowledge, this is the first employment initiative in this area that will support individuals with autism, parents/guardians, employers and agencies in creating meaningful vocational experiences. Once again, FECA is creating something that exemplifies excellence." – Neil Boyle*

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# Save the Date

19th annual

Foundation for Educating Children with Autism's

## FECA on Fifth Gala

Thursday, April 24, 2014 • 6:30 – 9:30pm

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

Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction • Invitation to follow

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

**FECA on Fifth Gala – March 20th, 2013**





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## Prom and Graduation at DMLC

June 2013 was an exciting time at DMLC as staff and students were busy gearing up for prom and graduation day. Candyland was the theme for the prom held on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Lindsay Peterson and Kim Bailey, along with their staff from classes 5 & 6, did a wonderful job creating colorful decorations representing Candyland's characters and landmarks. A wonderful time was had by all who attended.



John DeCaprio, Mickey Carter & Andy McKeon

Graduation day, June 19<sup>th</sup>, was emotional, exciting and joyous for our graduates, John DeCaprio, Mickey Carter and Andy McKeon. DMLC Principal, Dr. Cindy Alterson, welcomed family and friends to the festive occasion. Class 7 staff did a wonderful job decorating the conference room and gym. They captured the personality of each

graduate through pictures of their years at DMLC. Teacher Jackie Adams read wonderful accounts of each graduate's special qualities. We wish our graduates the best of luck as they move into their adult life.



Alex Lee

Below are all the staff that contributed to making both these events at DMLC, heartfelt and memorable!

**Class 5 –**  
Lindsay Peterson,  
Steve Irizarry,  
Aliex Irizarry,  
Will Suarez,  
Yvonne Bansil,  
Lauren DeNoia



Vivek Mukherjee  
& Alexandra  
(Lulu) Cui dancing

**Class 6 –**  
Kim Bailey, John Ranone, Kalyon Hintze, Kayla Gately, Rebekah Salcedo, Max Schwartzman, Liz Mendonca, Sonja Yannantuono

**Class 7 –**  
Jackie Adams, Liz Oliveto, Shatera Weaver, Ron Bacon, Leigh Rowton

## Victoria's Love Children's Foundation Raises Funds for Children's Charities Including FECA

Victoria's Love Children's Foundation was established in April 2013 in response to a tragic boating accident that claimed the lives of three children during a Fourth of July celebration. Lisa Gaines started the foundation after losing her daughter, Victoria, that day. "Turning pain into promise" is the mission of the Foundation. Lisa made this pledge into a reality on October 8th with a successful gala held at the Oheka Castle in Huntington, Long Island. As a longtime supporter of FECA, Lisa donated \$4,000 from the evening's proceeds that will be used to fund our special projects at the Devereux Millwood Learning Center. We are truly grateful for her continued support.

DMLC classes celebrated Halloween with a pumpkin decorating contest as part of the annual spirit week festivities which included a Color War between classes.

