

# News



A newsletter for the friends of FECA • Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism • Winter 2019

## FECA Spring Gala – The Yale Club – April 3, 2019

The *Foundation for Empowering Citizens with Autism (FECA)* held its 24th Annual Spring Gala on Wednesday evening, April 3rd, welcoming more than 250 guests to the Yale Club for the third time. Continuing a recent trend, several generous guests even flew into New York City from all over the U.S. to attend our event, which raised more than \$300,000 to help FECA continue its mission of ensuring that individuals with autism-spectrum disorders lead meaningful and productive lives.

The benefit was chaired by long-time board members Elise & Phil Orlando and Melanie & Drew Schaffran, bringing together supporters to celebrate both the achievements of our young people and FECA's broader new mission to create employment opportunities for adults with autism.

Gina DeCaprio once again chaired an incredible Silent Auction, full of exciting and unique items, such as theater tickets, golf outings, autographed sports memorabilia, tickets to sporting events, fine wines and liquors, restaurant gift certificates, jewelry and designer handbags. The Silent Auction contributed significantly to the financial success of our annual event, as the majority of items are donated and secured by members of the Benefit Committee and the Board of Directors. A few select Silent Auction items were hotly pursued late into the evening, as guests were in a feeding frenzy to go home with their coveted prize.

As a complete surprise, the FECA Board also presented Elise and Phil Orlando with a plaque recognizing their tireless dedication and commitment to FECA over the last 25 years.



Phil Orlando presents Bud Wentz with the honoree award.



Bud Wentz presents Wentz Family Foundation plaque to FECA.

The highlight of the evening was FECA's presentation to its 2019 honoree, the Wentz Family Foundation, which has provided tremendous support to FECA and EVNY over the past several years.

Bud Wentz, the President of Wentz Financial, also serves as the chairman of his family's foundation. Several members of the Wentz Family Foundation showed their dedication to our cause by visiting the school FECA founded in 1996 (now called Devereux Cares) and the Extraordinary Ventures New York (EVNY) office in Mount Kisco. EVNY was established in 2015 with an initial grant from FECA to establish employment opportunities for young adults with autism.

Additionally, they requested 500 personalized bracelets with their Wentz Family Foundation logo, which they gave to anyone in their philanthropic circle who made a donation to FECA. In addition to supporting EVNY's business, their extraordinary bracelet order also provided countless hours of productive and profitable work for our employees.



Wentz Family and FECA members accepting very generous donation.

It was a hugely successful evening for FECA, thanks in part to our many guests and an amazing honoree. The Wentz Family Foundation has set the bar high for future honorees, and for that we are very thankful.



Elise & Phil Orlando with the FECA Board after receiving a plaque recognizing their dedication and commitment to FECA over the last 25 years.



# FECA's Investment in EVNY Continues to Expand Opportunities for the Adult Community

A substantial grant three years ago made a significant expansion of an enterprise possible, which all began simply, but with high hopes, as an experiment in the basement of a FECA board member. That commitment to the mission of employing adults on the autism spectrum through the funding of Extraordinary Ventures New York (EVNY) continues to pay off as businesses grow, and with that, the number of employees given meaningful opportunities also grows.

Three robust businesses, EV Gift, EV Office Solutions and EV Laundry, are thriving under the leadership of Executive Director, Andrew Tedder and EV's Business Manager, Ann DiChiara. EVNY has also continued to be the recipient of the wise counsel and generosity of an expanded board of advisors, many of whom have been long time supporters of FECA. Rob Clarfeld, Founder and Director of Clarfeld Financial Advisors, was FECA's first substantial, and for the past 26 years, most generous and loyal supporter. Neil Boyle held the position of Vocational Director at DMLC which was created and funded by FECA for several years before moving to BOCES and Westchester area school districts. Another long time FECA supporter,

Susan Varsames, who founded and directs the Holistic Learning Center, which offers advanced behavioral therapy training and many other services. Janet Riley just retired after a 25-year long career as director, North East Westchester Special Recreation, and Marjorie Madfis, who is the founder and director of Yes She Can, which provides intensive training to young women on the spectrum. Gregg Ireland founded Extraordinary Ventures in North Carolina over a decade ago, which has provided the template and the on-going mentorship to EVNY. FECA's 2019 Honoree Bud Wentz, of Wentz Financial Group, and the Wentz Family Foundation, recently joined as an EVNY advisor and member of FECA's Board of Trustees. They each offer their own extraordinary insight into both the business world and the particular needs and challenges of a workforce on the spectrum.

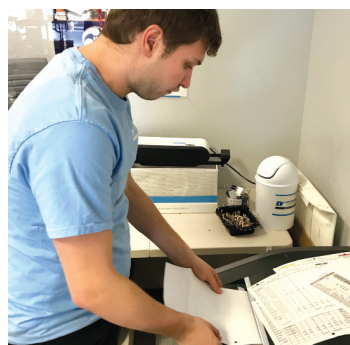
EVNY's landmark site in Mt. Kisco is always bustling with activity as employees work throughout the day to keep the three distinct businesses humming. Employees can stay within their comfort and skill zone at an individual business or move between businesses during their shift. As the

laundry machines are operating, they can move to the Office Solutions station to tackle a shredding project or sit at an EV Gift table to create a bracelet or decorate a candle for sale. Each employee is attended to by a job coach and all require training and supervision as the businesses continue to expand in depth and breadth. Our employees are expertly supervised by Noelle Cordero who serves in the vital role of Floor Supervisor.

EV Office Solutions has expanded its shredding operation substantially, having brought on new clients, including a major international law firm among several local businesses and private clients. The Mental Health Association of Westchester recently hired EV to digitize their extensive client records, opening up a whole new area of opportunity for adults who are particularly adept in the computer world.

EVNY's enterprises continue to grow and thrive through the critical continued support from yearly grants from FECA.

FECA urges everyone to visit EVNY's newly launched and revitalized website and shop for the holidays: [www.evny.org](http://www.evny.org).





# 24th Annual Spring Gala – April 3, 2019



## SCHOLARSHIPS

### Scholarships to Further the Graduate Education of Three

For more than two decades, FECA has been offering and providing scholarships to worthy students who are seeking to further their education to better serve the autism community. This year, three scholarships were presented; John Ranone, Caitlyn Hoenscheid and Kaitlyn Darmientto. John will be pursuing his Masters in Special Education. He has long been a teacher at Devereux Cares, the school FECA co-founded with the Devereux Foundation. Caitlyn and Kaitlyn are both pursuing their BCBA certifications at the Teacher's College at Columbia University.

## GRANTS

### Grants to Providers of Adult Programming

FECA continues to provide support for local day hab and residential providers. The Devereux Adult Program continues its Friday recreational program through SPARC, this semester offering dance to its consumers and an iPad training program through a partnership with The Arc Westchester. Critical behavioral therapy training for staff at Cardinal McCloskey was considerably enhanced through a significant grant from FECA.





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Foundation for Empowering



Citizens with Autism!

# Save the Date

25th Annual  
FECA

# Spring Reception

**Thursday**  
**April 16, 2020**

6:30 – 9:30 PM

New York City • Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction • Invitation to follow

HONORING  
**EY's**  
**Neurodiversity**  
**Centers of**  
**Excellence**