

## Horizon High Cooks Up New Ways to Educate Students



Erica helps with the dishes in Horizon High's new adapted kitchen.

As soon as Erica guided her wheelchair through the door of Horizon High School's adapted kitchen, she began searching for clues. Shredded cheese. Chopped lettuce. Refried beans? She looked to teacher Lyndsay Murphy for another hint. Unable to hold back any longer, Lyndsay revealed a large package of tacos and Erica smiled and clapped with excitement.

"Erica loves cooking," said Lyndsay with a chuckle. "She likes to know right away what our project is for the day. And that's what's so great about our class - our students are having so much fun they don't realize they're learning." The class focuses on life skills, helping students gain practical skills that will help them to live more independently.

"Every skill a student gains here will affect not just them but their families, whether it's learning to use the stove and help prepare food or something as simple as clearing dishes or pouring a drink without help."

Students in Erica's class enjoy a beautiful new and fully accessible adapted kitchen that includes dual sinks, dishwasher, stove, microwave, an island with movable drawers that turn into individual workstations, refrigerator, washer and dryer and even a SmartBoard. The classroom recently underwent a major renovation that included all new equipment.

"Our student population has changed significantly since the school opened in 2005,"

*Continued on page 5*

## HHS UNVEILS ADAPTED KITCHEN

CPNJ's Horizon High School held a grand opening ceremony for their new adapted kitchen on September 21st. Local and state officials joined students, family members and staff to celebrate the fully accessible new classroom that will allow students to learn critical life skills to help them become more independent.



Ed & Barbara Becker (with scissors) open the new adapted kitchen.

The new room was made possible by a generous gift from longtime CPNJ Board member Edward Becker and his wife, Barbara. Ed, who has served on the CPNJ Board for more than 30 years, was honored with a video tribute at the event.

The project was also supported by The Hyde and Watson Foundation, Wells Fargo, The Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation and the Horizon High School Annual Fund.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Our lead story explains how our Horizon High School utilizes cooking to teach students practical life skills and to help them work toward their occupational therapy goals. The example is reflective of our agency's marvelous knack for motivating our consumers to succeed. It is also an inspiring example of how two people can impact the lives of young people for many years to come. Longtime CPNJ Board member Ed Becker and his wife, Barbara, made a gift that allowed us to leverage additional donations and create an inspiring educational/therapeutic space. We are so thankful to them for making this all possible.

You will also read about our annual Steps to Independence Celebration. Serving as the honoree for our event entails a great deal of work, particularly

with regard to fundraising. We are grateful to Bob Marino for his work in raising more than \$420,000 this year. We are also grateful to CPNJ Board member and Horizon High School parent Clark Machemer for agreeing to serve as our 2017 honoree.

Finally, there are a number of photos as well as a story about volunteers involved with our agency. If you are looking for a way to be involved in our work, whether for a day or on an ongoing basis, please call us and let us find a way to get you involved in a meaningful and rewarding way.

Enjoy the issue!

Warmly,  
Purna Rodman Conare

## CONTACT US

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# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## By: Richard I. Miller, Esq.

Recent legislative efforts have focused on the promotion of self-determination for disabled individuals. The Special Trust Fairness Act of 2015 and the ABLE Act of 2014 are examples of this trend.

Special Needs Trusts (SNTs) provide an opportunity to preserve the assets of disabled individuals while allowing them to qualify for government benefits such as Medicaid, SSI and services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

Many government programs have a resource limit of \$2,000 that results in individuals having to spend down nearly all of their assets as a condition of eligibility. SNTs permit individuals to maintain assets to pay for expenses not covered by government programs – thereby enhancing the beneficiary's quality of life. For example, the money in an SNT can be used to pay for the beneficiary's entertainment, travel, electronics and furnishings.

Until recently, an SNT could only be established by (i) the beneficiary's parent or grandparent, (ii) a legal guardian or (iii) a Court. Individuals, however, could not set up an SNT for themselves. As a result, it was often necessary to obtain Court approval to establish an SNT, thereby creating unnecessary legal costs.

This inequity was rectified on December 13, 2016 when President Obama signed the 21st Century Cures Act which incorporates the Special Needs Trust Fairness Act of 2015. This Act enables individuals with disabilities, who have capacity, to create their own SNT. As a result, disabled individuals with capacity no longer require a parent, grandparent, legal guardian or court to establish an SNT on their behalf. The Act applies to trusts established on or after December 13, 2016.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act was signed into law on December 19, 2014. An ABLE account is a tax advantaged savings account for individuals with disabilities (similar to a 529 account). Like a Special Needs Trust, (SNT) the funds in an ABLE Account are not treated as a resource for Medicaid, SSI or DDD. Disabled individuals are permitted to establish and control their own ABLE account. This provides an advantage over SNT's which cannot be created or controlled by the disabled individual. ABLE accounts do, however, have certain restrictions that limit their use and benefit. By way of illustration, an individual must be disabled prior to turning age 26; the total annual contribution cannot exceed \$14,000; accounts in excess of \$100,000 will cause disqualification from SSI and the account must be established in the State where the eligible individual resides.

Due to the intricacies and differences between SNTs and ABLE Accounts it is important to seek the appropriate legal and tax advice to learn which option is right for your situation.

*Legislation can have a major impact on special needs families. To help those we serve stay abreast of the latest developments, we are pleased to share an article by Richard I. Miller, Co-Chair of the Special Needs Practice Group at the law firm of Mandelbaum Salsburg ([lawfirm.ms/special-needs](http://lawfirm.ms/special-needs)).*



## STUDENTS BRING "MOTIVATION IN MOTION" TO ATC

Men and women of all ages were spread around the physical fitness room of CPNJ's Wayne Adult Training Center, all carefully watching two young women who were leading them in stretching. When one participant stopped, he was met with encouragement from the instructors: "Common John! Bored already!" The enthusiasm of the participants soon matched that of the instructors. When the group was asked which activity they wanted to do next, they immediately screamed in unison, "Freeze dance!" and the new activity was quickly underway.



Jocelyn (2nd from left) and Magdalena (3rd from right) at the Wayne ATC.

The leaders of the exercise group were Jocelyn Nackley and Magdalena Budkiewicz, graduate students studying occupational therapy at Seton Hall University. The students wanted to help adults with disabilities live a more active lifestyle, since a sedentary lifestyle dramatically increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other health challenges. They developed the concept of "Motivation in Motion," a fitness group for adults with disabilities that makes adapted exercise fun and motivating. Jocelyn and Magdalena recently piloted their new program at CPNJ's Wayne adult day program. "Our consumers loved the exercise program," said Marcia Smith-Gooden, who manages the Wayne center. "Every week they would ask when we would be doing it again. It's a wonderful model that I hope we can carry over and continue on our own."

## MARINO RAISES OVER \$420K FOR CPNJ!

CPNJ honored Robert A. Marino, Chairman, CEO & President of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, at its 2016 Steps to Independence Celebration at the Crystal Plaza on November 3rd. The event raised more than \$420,000 to support the agency's programs. "We are very grateful to Bob," said event co-chair and longtime CPNJ board member Kelly Marx. "He visited our schools to learn about our services and our consumers and he invested a great deal of time and energy to ensure that this event was a success."



Robert A. Marino (left) receives the Kelly Marx Steps to Independence Award from event co-chairs Kelly Marx (center) and Barry Mandelbaum

Guests also heard from speaker Joann DeSimone, the mother of a student at CPNJ's Horizon High School, who shared some of the challenges facing special needs families. She was acknowledged by a standing ovation from the crowd.



CPNJ CEO Purna Rodman Conare (left) with guest speaker Joann DeSimone and her husband, John.

Thank you to the members of the event committee:

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### *Continued from page 1*

said Horizon High School Principal Dr. Christopher Lynch. "We now have many more students who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices, so we needed instructional space designed to meet their needs." The new design features an island centered around the stove so students in wheelchairs can observe and work as a group as well as a separate instructional area with accessible desks and chairs.

As Erica's classmates settled in, occupational therapists Melissa Higgins and Shannon Hearty handed students instructions for the day's recipe, which included a series of picture symbols demonstrating each step in the process. The therapists went from student to student working on each step, such as spreading refried beans on a tortilla. "The tasks involved in preparing food offer wonderful opportunities for our students to work on their occupational therapy skills," said Melissa as she encouraged a student to spread the beans evenly. "Therapy can be challenging and frustrating for our

students at times, so we invest a lot of time and effort into integrating our therapy into activities the students really enjoy. When they don't even realize they're doing therapy, then we know we've succeeded."

As class wound down, students finished their tacos and gathered to sample their work together. "Ok, let's get our kitchen cleaned up before your next class!" announced Lyndsay. Erica volunteered to help with the dishes, deftly maneuvering her wheelchair up to the accessible sink. Working at a task many of her non-disabled peers work hard to avoid, Erica was excited throughout. "Having the chance to work, to do what other students their age take for granted, is a great source of pride for our students," said Lyndsay.

# VOLUNTEERING AT CPNJ



Teen volunteers visited with consumers from CPNJ's community residences. Everyone had a great time painting, coloring and playing fun games outdoors. The volunteers were part of **Mitzvah Mania** through the Jewish Federation of Greater Metrowest, joined by teens from Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun. Thank you to these young volunteers for creating such a wonderful event.



Volunteers from Seton Hall University's Service on Saturdays program helped host a fun event for our group home consumers. The group made cave paintings, experimented with clay stamping and did puzzles. Thank you to **Seton Hall University's Division of Volunteer Efforts** for all their continued assistance.



Volunteers from the **Phi Sigma Sigma Sorority** and **Sigma Pi Fraternity** from **William Patterson University** spent time with consumers at CPNJ's adult day program in Wayne. They helped consumers make funky artwork using paint and chalk and everyone had a great time. Thank you to all the volunteers who participated.



Students from the **Pingry School** in Basking Ridge visited both our Horizon Elementary School and Horizon High School. At our elementary school, volunteers did some fun science experiments with our students. At the high school, volunteers engaged in some spooky Halloween-themed activities. Thank you to the students of the Pingry School for visiting our schools and volunteering.

## EVENTS SUPPORT HORIZON ANNUAL FUNDS



More than 130 guests turned out to support Horizon Elementary School's Cocktails for a Cause fundraiser on November 4th at the Hanover Manor in East Hanover. Guests enjoyed great food, a live band and a tricky tray with more than 30 prizes. The event raised more than \$15,000 for the school's annual fund. Thank you to event organizers Alisa DeAngelo, Tami Pantiliano, Gina Wagner and Hetty Kintiroglou.



Horizon High School enjoyed their second successful Beefsteak Dinner on November 11th at the school. More than 75 guests were treated to an all-you-can-eat feast and helped to raise more than \$3,000 for the school's annual fund. Thank you to event organizers Ken Brucato, Ted Groh, Daniel Machado, Carmen Martinez, Lyndsay Murphy, Grace Pisani and Fanny Velandia

## Tribute Gifts

If you would like to remember someone with an "in memory of" gift or celebrate a special occasion with an "in honor of" gift, please contact the CPNJ development office at (973) 821-8113. We will notify the person of your choosing with a special card telling them that a gift was made.

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## CPNJ TO HONOR MACHEMER IN 2017



CPNJ will honor real estate developer Clark Machemer of the Rockefeller Group at its 2017 Steps to Independence Celebration on October 17th at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston, New Jersey.

Clark's daughter, Amanda, attended CPNJ's Horizon Elementary School for more than a decade before graduating last year to Horizon High School. Clark and his wife, Michelle, have been the leading fundraisers for the schools' annual Wheelin'-n'-Walkin' Challenge every year since

their daughter enrolled. Clark joined the agency's Board of Trustees in 2014.

"Rarely is there an opportunity to honor someone who is so committed to CPNJ at so many levels," said longtime CPNJ Board member and event co-chair Kelly Marx. "We look forward to working with Clark over the coming months to make this event a success."

For information on purchasing tables, tickets or journal ads, please contact the CPNJ development office at (973) 821-8108.