

Access Abilities!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the last issue of *Access Abilities!*, I shared some of our Boards of Directors' discussions regarding the future of the Henry Viscardi School. In this issue, I will outline some of our plans for the future of Abilities, Inc.



Abilities, Inc. is dedicated to improving the independence and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities through employment. We provide evaluation, training, and placement services to approximately 5,000 people each year. Abilities, Inc. also creates new models for delivering employment services to people with disabilities and welcomes visitors from around the country and the world to observe its employment programs.

In the future, Abilities, Inc. will maintain its focus on employment for people with disabilities as its core program. Abilities, Inc. will serve only people with disabilities and provide only employment and employment-related services. When necessary, Abilities, Inc. will partner with other provider agencies to fulfill the other service demands of the people we serve.

Abilities, Inc. will become a comprehensive employment resource center for people with disabilities on Long Island. To this end, we will offer workplace-based information and referral services for employees and their families who have or acquire a disability; online information regarding referrals and resources for people with disabilities throughout the greater Long Island region; and employment programs dedicated to veterans with disabilities, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Abilities, Inc. will renovate its training rooms so that they can become a model showplace of universal design. We will demonstrate how to create inclusive environments for people with disabilities, the companies that hire them, and the companies that want to sell their products and services to them.

Finally, Abilities, Inc. will routinely replicate its most successful employment programs (e.g., school-to-work transition, laboratory assistant training, and retail services) in other regions of the State and in other states.

For more information, visit www.abilitiesinc.org. ■

VETERANS TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

Abilities, Inc. has completed its first "tour of duty" with the 'No Man Is An Island' (NMIAI) Basic Computer Skills Training Program. The NMIAI Program, which is sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, was created for veterans of the Vietnam and Korean Wars who are experiencing post-traumatic stress and other health issues. The twenty-four week program is designed to increase veterans' interactions with the world around them through the use of available technology, such as the internet, email, and basic word processing. Program participants enjoyed learning about the computer and many felt that attending the program 'gave them someplace to go' and 'opened up their world' to family and friends via email and the Internet. ■



Abilities, Inc. senior training coordinator Michelle A. Campbell with United States Veterans at graduation ceremony for the NMIAI computer skills training program.

REACH FOR A STAR LUNCHEON

On March 27, 2007, the Reach for a Star Committee hosted their 25th Anniversary Spring Luncheon for the benefit the students of the Henry Viscardi School. Since its inception, the luncheon has raised nearly \$3 million for HVS and has become one of the best-attended social events on Long Island, attracting over 450 influential leaders from the community.



Members of the Reach for a Star Committee



HVS student Kristian Rosado with Martha Wash



Vicki Murphy and HVS students dance while Martha Wash performs 'Its Raining Men'

This exciting afternoon was all about the students at HVS. Entertainment was provided by Martha Wash of the Weather Girls, whose list of hit songs include 'Its Raining Men'. WNBC sportscaster Len Berman, who is best known for *Spanning the World of Sports*, worked with students at HVS on a short video that premiered at this prestigious event. The celebration also included motivating words by Brett Eisenberg, Business Analyst, AIG and a HVS alumnus. Brett's remarks about the quality education and personal confidence he had received at HVS truly hit home with those in attendance. ■

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

On April 25, 2007, Judy Young of Abilities, Inc. conducted a live video-cast training entitled "To Have and to Hold: Sourcing and Retaining Mature Workers with Disabilities." The interactive training was presented to a live audience and was available in real-time to registrants around the globe via the World Wide Web. The customized disability training session covered topics such as America's workforce trends and forecasts; employment barriers for mature workers; recruiting and sourcing of mature workers; ADA compliance and reasonable accommodation; advantages of hiring workers with disabilities and mature workers; and employee retention strategies. This project represents the latest in Abilities! use of web-based technology that enables us to disseminate information to a larger audience than ever before. If you are interested in viewing this training program please visit the Abilities! website at www.abilitiesonline.org and click on the *Sourcing and Retaining Mature Workers with Disabilities* link. ■

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ed Cortez and Joseph Dixon attended the Second International Forum on Children with Special Needs, which was held in Doha, Qatar on April 23-25. The Forum was organized by the Shafallah Center, which is a state of the art program in Doha that provides education and employment services to individuals with developmental learning challenges. The purpose of the forum was to bring together policymakers, educators, persons with disabilities, and leaders in the field to discuss how perceptions of disability are formed and transformed through media, creative arts, and education.

The Shafallah Center was established at the behest of the wife of the Emir of Qatar, Sheika Mozah Bint Nasser. The 150 forum participants were guests of the Shafallah Center, which paid for all expenses

associated with attending the forum. Other guests included Anthony Kennedy Shriver, the founder of Best Buddies International; Suzanne Wright, Founder of Autism Speaks; and Ambassador Luis Gallegos, who chaired the UN International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Cherie Booth, wife of Tony Blair, co-chaired the Forum. ■



Opening Ceremony, from left to right teacher and student at Shafallah, Hassan Ali Bin Ali, Chairman Shafallah Center, and Ambassador Luis Gallegos, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations



A crowd gathers in the old souq as a local group performs

STUFF A BEAR



Susan Gordon Ryan, VP Development, with HVS student Jessica Dalonzo

The Reach for a Star Committee sponsored a ‘Stuff a Bear’ enrichment program for elementary students at the Henry Viscardi School. ■



Abilities! board member and Reach for a Star committee co-chair Iris Katz with HVS student Thanasi Papa



HVS school principal Jill Carroll with HVS student Karinn Barrett

YOUR ULTIMATE GIFT TO ABILITIES!

Abilities! is pleased to announce that we have inaugurated a Planned Giving program in our development office. Planned gifts, which help us to build our endowment, are those made by our donors as part of their estate and retirement plans.

The simplest example of a planned gift is a bequest in a will making a gift to Abilities!. Another common practice is a donation of life insurance. Life insurance is a versatile gift vehicle, in which the donor can name Abilities! as a beneficiary of the policy. There are many other examples of planned gifts and each has its own set of benefits, including tax advantages.

If you wish to receive more information regarding our Planned Giving program, please feel free to contact Lynn Drucker at (516) 465-1596 or ldrucker@abilitiesonline.org. ■

ABILITIES, INC.

21ST ANNUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY

On May 2, 2007 Abilities, Inc. held its 21st annual graduation ceremony honoring eighty-eight individuals who had completed skills training programs during the past year. The graduates' backgrounds ranged from those who had never worked before to those with previous work experience. Regardless of their work experience, Abilities, Inc. training programs enabled each of our students to focus on their abilities while fostering the skills required to compete for and maintain meaningful employment in integrated work settings.



Abilities, Inc. 2007 Consumer Graduation "Success Among Us Panelists" and graduates of our training programs, from left to right: Tonka Vukosavljevic, Ernest Butts, Gavendra Kuarlall, Barbara Donohue, with Jessica Swirsky, Vice President, Consumer Services and Provider Relations for Abilities, Inc.



Abilities, Inc. 2007 Consumer Graduation Keynote Speaker, Russ Cusick, Vice President, Corporate Human Resources for Forest Solutions, with Francine M. Tishman, President and Chief Operating Officer, Abilities, Inc.

The ceremony honored a distinguished graduate, Kevin Levy, and included presentations made by the 'Success Among Us' panel, comprised of graduates who recounted how they had been able to apply the direct skills learned through Abilities, Inc. programs to their jobs. It was a deeply moving event for all attendees. ■

NEW STAFF



Lynn Drucker, Associate Vice President for Development joined the Abilities! staff in February 2007. Prior to coming to Abilities!, Lynn was the director of development for the College of Nursing at New York University. A significant part of her work at NYU was implementing activities to enhance alumni relations, create scholarship programs and cultivate and steward donors in the fields of planned giving and major gifts. Lynn and her husband Roy Gold live in Merrick with their two sons Jake and Max.

Denise J. Bedeian was appointed to the Abilities! staff as Associate Vice President for Development in January 2007. Denise brings more than 15 years of experience in fundraising, alumni relations and higher education administration, having served in various capacities at Hofstra University including Director of Development, Associate Director of Alumni Relations and Executive Assistant to the President. Denise and her husband Leon reside in Garden City with their two children, Julia and John. ■



COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

On Thursday, April 19, 2007, the Henry Viscardi School presented at the Council for Exceptional Children in Louisville, Kentucky. The CEC is the leading association for the advancement of education for individuals with exceptionalities worldwide. Presenters were Alberto Bursztyn, Director of the Global Institute; Patrice Kuntzler, Executive Director of the Henry Viscardi School and Jeanette Marinese, English teacher. Also presenting was Barbara Sperrazza, English and Dramatic Arts teacher from Walt Whitman High School, in South Huntington, New York.

The CEC presentation addressed how to establish authentic subject content-based collaboration between adolescents with physical/health disabilities and general education peers. Presenters also spoke about and demonstrated the process of taking the art of writing out of the classroom and into the community.

A DVD of "Dear Journal" the play written by

students at the Henry Viscardi School and performed by non-disabled theatre arts students at Walt Whitman High School, documented how the play was written and performed. The DVD, filmed by the Smeal Learning Center, also shares behind the scenes social interactions between students from both schools along with student commentary about their experiences.

“Dear Journal” was originally performed for students at the Henry Viscardi School during the day and again for parents in the evening. Additionally, it went “on the road” and was performed at Walt Whitman in the morning for elementary students and again in the afternoon for upper class students. Appreciation letters indicated that this work made an impressive impact on play goers: “The student authors from your school demonstrated great insight, strength of character, and of course, talent when they wrote their play. My students not only enjoyed watching “Dear Journal” but came away from the play with a new and deeper understanding...”. This comment was from an intermediate school teacher in South Huntington.

The conference also afforded HVS educators access to workshops that address issues important to special educators. Some of this information will be shared with the HVS staff on Superintendent’s Conference Day.

The Henry Viscardi School is proud of their young playwrights and proud of the fact that their work has been appreciated by a national conference for special educators (the CEC attracts approximately 5,000 educators to its conferences). ■

Abilities! would like to commend the following National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) member companies for being named to the prestigious 2007 Diversity Inc. Top 50 Companies for Diversity:

Bank of America, The Coca-Cola Co., Ford Motor Co., Verizon Communications, JPMorgan Chase, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Sodexo, Procter & Gamble, Novartis Pharmaceutical Corp., Johnson & Johnson, Merck & Co., Wells Fargo, Citigroup, Prudential Financial, General Motors, Eastman Kodak Co., Wal-Mart Stores, DaimlerChrysler, Ernst & Young, Darden Restaurants, Marriott International, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, and Hewlett-Packard Co.

ABILITIES! BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN
RALPH F. PALLESCHI
PRESIDENT & CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
FIRST LONG ISLAND INVESTORS, LLC

GENE M. BERNSTEIN
NORTHVILLE INDUSTRIES

JOHN R. BRANSFIELD, JR.

EDMUND L. CORTEZ
PRESIDENT & CEO
ABILITIES!

JAMES J. DALY, ESQ.
MCKEEN FUND

JOHN J. GUTLEBER
PRESIDENT & CEO
CASTAGNA REALTY CO., INC.

STEPHEN L. HAMMERMAN

THOMAS J. HOGAN
TAX PARTNER
DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP

IRIS J. KATZ

C. JEFFREY KNITTEL
PRESIDENT
CIT AEROSPACE

JOHN A. KORREICH
SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR
SANDLER CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

ANTOINETTE LABELLE
MANAGING DIRECTOR
LEHMAN BROTHERS

CELESTE V. LOPES, ESQ.
DEPUTY BUREAU CHIEF
KINGS COUNTY DA’S OFFICE CIVIL RIGHTS BUREAU

KEVIN MCGILLOWAY

STEPHEN V. MURPHY
PRESIDENT
S.V. MURPHY & CO., INC.

MICHAEL C. PASCUCCI
PRESIDENT
WLNY TV 55

JOSEPH C. TRANFO, ESQ.
TRANFO & TRANFO, LLC

PRESIDENT’S ADVISORY BOARD

FRANK CASTAGNA
PRINCIPAL
CASTAGNA REALTY CO., INC.

LEONARD GENOVESE
FORMER CEO
GENOVESE DRUG STORES

ERIC KRASNOFF
CHAIRMAN & CEO
PALL CORPORATION

ROBERT J. MALITO, ESQ.
DAVIDOFF MALITO & HUTCHER, LLP

JOSEPH L. MANCINO
FORMER CHAIRMAN & CEO
ROSLYN SAVINGS BANK

THOMAS J. MORAN
PRESIDENT & CEO
MUTUAL OF AMERICA

EVENTS CALENDAR

HVS GRADUATION

The HVS Graduation will be held on Thursday, June 21, 2007. For additional information, please call Jeanette Glover at (516) 465-1673.

2007 KNICKERBOCKER CUP

The Knickerbocker Yacht Club in Port Washington, NY will host their 25th Annual Knickerbocker Cup on August 22 to August 26. Net proceeds from the event will be donated to support education programs at the Henry Viscardi School. For additional information, please call Linda Tibbals at (516) 465-1595.

JOB ABILITY FIRST AWARDS LUNCHEON

Just One Break is hosting its 14th Annual Ability First Awards Luncheon on June 20, 2007 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. This years honorees include Lehman Brothers and Hilton Hotels. For additional information, please contact Jane VanIngen at (212) 785-7300 x15.

HENRY VISCARDI JR. ANNUAL LEGACY AWARDS LUNCHEON

Henry Viscardi Jr. Annual Legacy Awards Luncheon will take place on December 3, 2007 at Mutual of America's headquarters in New York City. The event will honor corporate leaders who embrace and support the employment of individuals with disabilities. For additional information, please contact Linda Tibbals at (516) 465-1595.

Abilities!

201 I.U. Willets Road
Albertson, NY 11507-1599
www.abilitiesonline.org

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
Albertson, NY
Permit No. 7