Faith Community Inclusion
All of the services we (OPWDD) provide are not enough if individuals with developmental disabilities do not feel they are a valued member of their community. Our services are not enough if they don’t have access to restaurants, libraries, movie houses, parks, and, especially, our churches, halls, synagogues, temples, and mosques.

-OPWDD Faith-Based Initiative materials.

Spring Workshops at the Advocacy Center  Page 3
Faith Based Initiative Program  Page 4
NYS Partners in Policymaking Class of 2013 is underway!  Page 7

UPFRONT & PERSONAL: Linda Prince

We eased parents’ fears about their children having an outburst or other behaviors at church. We totally understand and are there to serve their needs. – Linda Prince

Their son, Jacob, is on the autism spectrum, has global developmental delays and is non-verbal. While his parents tended to a fast-growing congregation, Jacob successfully attended children’s classes at church with a one-on-one aide. In his teen years, Linda realized Jacob was outgrowing the children’s classes, so she transitioned him to the adult service. While Jacob could glean some information from the adult services, they were “not targeting his particular needs.”

“We know we wouldn’t have gone to church as a family if we weren’t who we are at our church! So we figured there had to be countless families out there who don’t go as a family and the individual probably doesn’t go at all.

I went online and researched what I could do for Jacob and found all sorts of Church curriculum for individuals with a wide variety of special needs.”

Friendship Ministries (http://www.friendship.org/) offered Linda the curriculum partner she needed to address the unique needs of adults with disabilities. Linda observed that local group home residents attended services at Cross Creek and could also benefit from this new initiative.

“We now offer a service on every 3rd week of the month in which we serve luncheon, have large group sessions where we provide music and the lesson in multi-audio/visual ways, and then break to individual mentoring areas.

continued on page 6

Jacob and mentor, Todd
Advocacy Center Upcoming Events & Workshops

Creating a Life After High School
A Five-Part Series for students with developmental disabilities that explores the options available to them when they finish school.

Wednesdays, April 10 – May 8
5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

All sessions held at RCSD Edison Campus, 655 Colfax Street, Rochester NY, 14606

Registration is open to all students in Monroe County NY, ages 15-21, who are living at home and who have established DDRO eligibility. A parent or guardian must accompany the student to all sessions.

To register, please contact Carrie Burkin (585) 546-1700 ext 231 or burkin@advocacycenter.com.

Sponsored by The Advocacy Center in collaboration with The Institute for Innovative Transition, Self Advocacy Association of NYS, Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, Holy Childhood and Rochester City School District

Visit http://advocacycenter.com/events for a complete list of events and programs!

Parents & Family Members
Learn skills for the Special Education Process.

Advocate for your own child and other families, too!

The Advocacy Center, in collaboration with Parent Network of WNY and Allegany Arc, announces a free, five-session training for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities. All interested caregivers should apply.

Saturdays, July 13, 2013 – August 17, 2013
9:45am – 2:45pm

Classes will start promptly at 9:45am
(No Class on July 20th)
Light lunch will be provided each week

Jones Memorial Hospital, Walchli Ed. Room, 191 North Main Street, Wellsville, NY 14895

Priority will be given to those whose children have developmental disabilities. If openings are available, families whose children have other disabilities may register. Parents who complete this training may be asked to volunteer for The Advocacy Center (in your surrounding communities), during the year following the training.

Pre-registration is required by 7/3/13
To request an application, call Linda Chadderdon at 585-546-700 ext. 225 or 800-650-4967 ext. 225 or email chadderdon@advocacycenter.com.

Topics to be covered include:
• Fostering positive interaction between schools and families
• Successful methods to approach CSE/CPSE meetings
• Improving communication skills
• Developing effective IEP and 504 plans
• Accessing and interpreting school records
• Learning about classification, evaluation, and placement options
• Proven techniques that support parents having difficulty with the special education process

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL WORKSHOPS

Do you know someone who stands out in service and commitment to people with disabilities? Or maybe a self-advocate whose work and life direction you admire? The Advocacy Center now accepts nominations for Community awards year-round. Award winners are honored at our annual fundraising event. Don’t miss the opportunity to honor a special parent, teacher, community member, or self advocate! Please contact Rick Wright for further information at (585) 546-1700 or wright@advocacycenter.com.

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“Who Cares About Kelsey?”
Rochester Premiere and Conference

Presented by The Advocacy Center and the University of Rochester’s Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities and Warner School of Education

April 16, 2013, 7:00 pm, Film Screening and Discussion
April 17, 2013, Conference

Both events at Strong National Museum of Play, One Manhattan Square, Rochester, NY 14607

Kelsey Carroll
“Who Cares About Kelsey?” is a documentary that tells the story of Kelsey Carroll. She lived with homelessness, self-mutilation, abuse, and ADHD and was a likely high school dropout — until she encountered an education revolution that's about empowering, not overpowering, teens with emotional and behavioral disabilities. On April 17, they present a conference: “We Care: Supporting Students with Emotional and Behavioral Challenges to Succeed.” Advance registration is required for both events.

For questions about the film screening or conference, please call (585) 546-1700 ext. 272.

The film contains mature content and language. Adult discretion is advised.

Spring Workshops at The Advocacy Center

The following will be held at The Advocacy Center, 590 South Ave,, Rochester, NY 14620

Working Together to Plan for Adulthood: Transition from High School 101
Thursday, April 11, 2013, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

What’s in Your Tool Box: Preparing for the Annual Review
Tuesday, April 23, 2013, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Starting The Journey to Adulthood: Transition from High School 201
Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Committee On Special Education: An Overview
Monday, May 6, 2013, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Pathways to Graduation
Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 6:30-8:30 pm

IEP, 504s and RtI- What are they all about?
Monday, May 20, 2013, 6:30-8:30 pm

Workshops are FREE to parents of individuals with disabilities

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED
Register at our website http://www.advocacycenter.com/news-events
Email: registration@advocacycenter.com or call (585) 546-1700 ext 399

FREE ADVOCACY WORKSHOPS IN LYONS

For parents, care givers, school nurses and others working with children with disabilities

Sponsored by Wayne County Public Health
Location: Wayne County Public Health, 1519 Nye Rd., Suite 200, Lyons, NY 14489

Supporting a Child with Challenging Behaviors at Home
Thursday, April 11, 2013 10:00 am – Noon

Supporting a Child with Challenging Behaviors at School
Thursday, April 18, 2013 10:00 am – Noon

Pathways to Graduation
Thursday, May 23, 2013 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.
To register, e-mail: brown@advocacycenter.com or call:
Wayne County Public Health at 315-946-5749 or 1-800-724-1170
A $10 gas card will be given to Wayne County residents who attend.
Light refreshments will be provided.
Faith and Disability

"Believe, Belong, Become"
New York State Office for Persons With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

Faith Based Initiative Program

People with disabilities want to be active participants and meaningful contributors in their community. They want the same choices to grow spiritually, to enjoy community life, and experience relationships.

Faith Based Supports offered by program:

- Assist individuals to have their Individualized Service Plan (ISP) reflect their choices
- Provide training and resource materials to state and voluntary agency employees
- Assist OPWDD regional offices to provide spiritual supports to individuals who do not reside in the community
- Work with faith leaders and congregants to integrate individuals into the faith community

-OPWDD Faith Based Initiative Program materials

"Human beings are 'spiritual' beings. One of the ways we connect with our inner joy is through our beliefs and faith practices. As with any other community organization, you naturally look for people who have the same interest as you and seek to become a valued member of that community. Our goal at OPWDD is to support and assist every individual to attend the house of worship of their choice, and to practice their faith beliefs according to their interest. We will soon complete our Spiritual Inclusion Guide that will assist individuals and their circle of support to identify faith and spiritual interest they would like to explore/pursue in their community.

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It is important instill in children with intellectual and developmental disabilities the importance of advocating for their choices and interest in their lives. Children as they grow will accomplish so much in their lives when they are given the tools/faith/practice early in their lives.

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Parents should start with talking to the leaders of the church (with child present) about their family. Parents should not feel they are in this alone, churches inherently are of a compassionate nature, wanting to help but don't how they can help if you don't take time to educate the congregants. OPWDD does provide an “All are Welcome Guide” to assist in congregational awareness. A good contact resource for parents is Parent to Parent of New York State. (see Parent to Parent of NYS box on page 5)

– Catherine Patterson, Faith Based Initiative Program Coordinator
NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
518-474-8652

Brockport

Family Autism Community Together in Supports (FACTS)
11:00 am – 12:45 pm Sundays
Spring session
4/7/13, 4/14/13, 4/21/13, 4/28/13, 5/5/13

The aim of the Sunday morning respite program is to provide families with a respite from the day-to-day responsibilities of raising a child on the autism spectrum. Activities are designed with your child's interests and abilities in mind. Key characteristics of the program include:

- Social opportunities
- Best strategies to adapt to your child's strengths and challenges
- Small student-to-staff ratio from talented, trained, enthusiastic volunteers form the College at Brockport (SUNY) Department of Psychology

The Autism Respite ministry follows the College at Brockport's academic year. There is no program when SUNY Brockport is on break.

Contact: Tami Sullivan, PhD, NCC
Assistant Professor, Psychology The College at Brockport
Roberts Wesleyan College
Sulllivan_tami@roberts.edu
585-594-6283

“Believe, Belong, Become”
New York State Office for Persons With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

Faith Based Initiative Program

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Natalia Vazquez

Rochester teen sees personal hardships as stepping stones to future mission.

Natalia Vazquez has a big heart. Her mother, Mirna, describes Natalia’s very early displays of generosity and concern for others: “When she was three years old, we were at Charlotte Beach and Natalia saw someone who needed shoes. She took her shoes off and gave them away. At four years old, Natalia gave her coat away to someone at the YMCA.”

“We are Christian. We don’t go to church, but we have always believed in God. We taught our kids to ‘give what they got and not what is left.’ Sometimes this philosophy gets Natalia into trouble. She has given away hundreds of pencils and even her lunch money.

Natalia is diagnosed with autism. Due in part to her disability, Natalia has suffered traumatic experiences in her life, among them isolation and bullying at school, and multiple school placements.

At 10, Natalia began therapeutic riding at Heritage Christian Stables in Webster. The therapy helped to heal her emotional trauma and provided an activity that she loves. Natalia’s caring nature is still evident: She befriended a new rider and helped him to overcome his fear of riding. “I will go with you,” she assured him. She also trains miniature horses to work with riders using wheelchairs.

Mirna credits Natalia’s school success to advocates from The Advocacy Center who worked with the family and school professionals to eventually find a successful academic placement. Today Natalia is on the honor roll, speaks up for herself and other students, and is going on a school trip to Washington, D. C.

Natalia and her mother have prayed together for strength and wisdom, and for God to open doors. Her mother says that Natalia is “in some ways, immature; in some ways, she is an old soul. She speaks often of God, miracles, and how because of all that she has been through, she is a stronger human being. Natalia believes that every experience teaches her something.”

Natalia now helps other students who are struggling and takes them under her wing. She wants to be a social worker. Her mother marvels at this, “The little girl who ran and hid from social workers now wants to be a social worker!”

She speaks often of God, miracles, and how because of all that she has been through, she is a stronger human being.

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Parent to Parent of NYS

http://parenttoparentnys.org/site/
The Finger Lakes Office, Parent to Parent of NYS, The Advocacy Center, 590 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, Contact: Susie Nettleton fingerlakesp2p@frontiernet.net Phone: 585-546-1700 ext. 244 1-800-650-4967. Counties Served: Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Yates, and Wayne

Philip Greenauer

My favorite Jewish holiday is Passover because of the food. I love matzah. I like spending time with my family and friends and playing driedel during my Hanukkah party that I have every year. I have had a party every year since I can remember. I’m proud I am Jewish.
Joe Jackson is a cherished member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in (Warsaw, NY?). He helps prepare and pass the sacrament, leads men’s music in the priesthood meeting, teaches the young men’s priesthood lessons one Sunday per month, and gives prayers at church.

“Joey” was featured in a previous issue of The Bridge (Vol. IX, Issue IV, Dec. 1999) that shared the same theme, Faith and Disability. In the article, his mother, Gretchen, said, I came to realize I had a daily teacher of faith in my life…No one can display such unconditional love as Joey does. No one has such a strong desire to keep on trying in the face of adversity. No one can be more sincere when they say Heavenly Father loves them and will take care of them than Joey does.

WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP?

We connect Friends with a consistent mentor. This relationship provides the optimal environment in which the friend and mentor can grow in their love of God together. These relationships help foster full inclusion in the life of the church - on Sunday morning and beyond.

WHO CAN BE A FRIEND?

Youth in their teens through adults of all ages with cognitive impairments.

WHO CAN BE A MENTOR?

Mature High Schoolers through adults of all ages who desire to serve God and show his love to those with cognitive impairments.

WHEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?

We begin each month with a luncheon for friends and volunteers prior to the large-group session. Lunch will be followed by an interactive Large Group time and then one-on-one time for Friends and Mentors to reinforce the day’s lesson.

DO I NEED TO ENROLL?

If you would like to enroll a friend, use the “Enroll A Friend” button at our website. If you are interested in being a Mentor, email us at friendship@crosscreekonline.com.

Luncheon begins at 1:00 pm followed by Large Group time and One-on-One time April 21, May 19.

Located just east of the village of Palmyra at 3700 State Route 31. Service times: SUNDAY 8:00 AM, 9:45 AM, 11:30 AM. Children’s Programming is provided at all services.

Cross Creek Community Church Friendship Ministry http://crosscreekonline.com/

UPFRONT & PERSONAL: Linda Prince

continued from page 1

Each “friend” is paired with a trained mentor who stays with that friend the entire year and beyond if it works. Some of our pairs have been together since we started in the fall of 2010! We encourage the mentors to get to know the friends’ interests and invest in their lives as much as possible outside of church.

Jacob, now a young adult, is one of the 21 adults who participates in the ministry.

The program runs from September to May. “We try and do one big event like a picnic in the summer and again, encourage our mentors to keep in touch with their friends over the summer.”

Pastor David and Linda founded the church in 1995 with 20 members; today they serve about 1000 members and offer 3 Sunday services.

(See above for more information on the Friendship Ministry)
From the Editor

My son, Nick, has always been at home with his Catholic faith – church is a comfortable place for him, a good fit for his spiritual growth. He attended religious education classes and the idea of being a part of God’s family resonated with him.

I remember timidly asking about 10-year old Nick becoming an altar server at our church. “Could Nicky train to be an altar boy at Holy Trinity? He might need extra time to learn what to do. Are you OK with that?” Becky, the trainer at that time and mother of four, looked at me with a surprised expression, “If this church is not an appropriate place to welcome Nicky’s participation, then where is??”

Parents, have you been reluctant to take your child to church? Why not give it a try? Find out what kind of support is available; you may be surprised...

Maria Schaertel

The OPWDD Faith Based Initiative Program – www.opwdd.ny.gov
Contact: Reverend Catherine Y. Patterson, Faith Based Initiative Coordinator
OPWDD, 44 Holland Avenue, Albany, NY 12229. Phone: 518-474-8652
Email: catherine.patterson@opwdd.ny.gov

Editor’s Note: Look for all three publications, All Are Welcome, Faith Community Inclusion Guide, and Spiritual Indicator Guide- excellent, comprehensive resources!

Friendship Ministries – http://friendship.org/
Guiding Principles & Strategies for Inclusion in the Liturgy of Catholics with Disabilities

Disabilities and Faith website
http://www.disabilitiesandfaith.org/resource/Resources include Guidebooks, Fact sheets, Journals and Newsletters.
Including Religious/Spiritual Ideas in the Individualized Service Plan

The DDPC*…initiated a project with the Consortium on Innovative Practices (CIP) to include religious/spiritual consideration in the Individualized Service Plan (ISP) process. The ISP is the cornerstone for laying out the services and supports that a person will need for an inclusive, productive and connected life. Spiritual connection plays a major role for many individuals. The DDPC project provides technical assistance as well as documents the obstacles, success and other considerations faced by individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, the service delivery system and individual congregations when these individuals express a religious preference or spiritual desire. A training curriculum, the Spiritual Handbook and the Connecting People through Faith were developed for direct support professionals and are being utilized by service coordinators and residential habilitation plan writers. Evaluation tools and a website have also been developed. Technical assistance is provided by the project coordinator to direct care workers. For more information, contact James Huben at: james.huben@ddpc.ny.gov.

*The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYS DDPC) is responsible for developing new ways to improve the delivery of supports and services to New Yorkers with developmental disabilities and their families. The Council focuses on increasing the opportunities for consumers to become more involved in the community, secure education, employment and housing.