



The Growing Tree News

A Publication of the E. John Gavras Center

182 North Street Auburn, NY 13021

Operated by U.C.P.A. of Cayuga County, Inc.
Richard M. Hansinger, Executive Director

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A Message from Rick Hansinger

I know the newsletter is jamb packed with great information, so I will be brief. The State of New York continues to work on getting out of a very severe financial crisis, and the reality exists that more cuts will be coming to our programs. Hopefully parents, grandparents and caregivers can voice their opposition to Medicaid, Education and other cuts, but the feeling is that across the board, cuts will be coming. Please do not give up hope! Those of you working in the classroom or programming in the community, we will try and minimize these cuts, as quality of service is our pride and joy. You all work very hard to deliver a quality service, one that families have come to expect. So our mind set will be to continue good quality services and with these State cuts we will try our best to manage it.



Michael Knight and Nancy Roche (Photo by Ellen Baumes)

Meet Michael Knight

By Ellen Baumes

Michael Knight is a member of our community here at the E. John Gavras Center. Mike receives services through our Community Habilitation program, with specialist Nancy Roche. He and Nancy have worked together for over 5 years. I met with these two for a lively hour or so, at Mike's kitchen table in his apartment. He is a gracious host, as he loves to have people stop by for a visit. I asked Nancy to describe Mike for me, and she quickly responded, "He is

responsible, generous, compassionate, and driven to succeed wherever possible. The things he's done, you never would have believed they were possible 5 years ago. Mike is also a real gentleman, he has great manners. He has a DESIRE for improvement, and he is always ready to work."

Mike in turn said "If it wasn't for Nancy herself and how she does the things she is wonderful at, people wouldn't be as well trained as they are today. Without Nancy and people like her, the agency wouldn't run as well as it could; they should put the money where it does good instead of foolish places."

I complimented him on his welcoming and orderly home and he told me he has been cleaning his whole life. He has worked professionally as a custodian since he was 16. He spent 14 years at Goulds Pumps, and many years at the Seneca/Cayuga ARC Workshop, where he is currently employed. Mike is 61, and is looking forward to retirement as an aspiration, but worried about finances. Mike has lived in this apartment about 6 years, and mentioned his great landlord who takes care of whatever is needed.

Mike and Nancy work together 5 days a week for 1 to 1 1/2 hours a session. These training visits take place to work on chosen outcomes, and follow a plan toward the achievement of Mike's goals. Cuts in funding have resulted in cut time with the individual clients, these sessions used to be 2 hours each. It is challenging to squeeze everything needed into such a short span of time. Doing start-to-finish lessons are a challenge, but you find a way. Cooking, for example, is tricky. It is hard to get all the way through recipes. Mike has learned to be more flexible with the routine of his week because of this. There are goals to work on, and then there are general needs as they come up – medical needs, working with his service coordinator, filling out food stamps forms, etc. Another change from cuts in funding is in the transportation for these sessions, there is less available for gas/mileage/agency vehicles, so no out-of-town visits are possible.

Independence comes from being well trained with lots of repetition and a drive to succeed. The goals Mike has chosen to work on now are cooking, meal planning, nutrition, and grocery shopping; money management and budgeting; hygiene, assistance with medical issues, monthly health and safety reviews. Mike pointed out to me that he does not currently read, so he has learned to recognize symbols and certain letters and words, and by repetition and his perseverance he has made huge accomplishments. When he

started with Nancy he had a freezer full of frozen meals and couldn't boil water. Now he shops and cooks for himself and really enjoys this. His favorite recipe is a delicious macaroni salad, and he particularly enjoys baking cakes and pies. His preferred place to shop is the local Wegman's. He knows where everything is and has learned the layout of the store. The staff is very helpful whenever he needs to ask a question. Mike has learned to sort money, use a calculator, and balance his checkbook with some supervision. Additionally, he has learned to take his own medications and call the pharmacy to order refills when needed.

A major goal for Mike is to learn how to read. There are many people in New York around Mike's age that never got the opportunity. He is learning letters, he recognizes certain words, and he is on his way. He looks forward to working with someone on his literacy.

When I asked Mike what he was proudest of accomplishing, he told me he used to be an alcoholic. Mike woke up one morning and said – enough. He stopped that day, got support and rehab, and has 3 years of sobriety. Staff is a phone call away, and he has learned new coping mechanisms. Mike definitely wanted me to include this achievement, and he wants to be a role model for others.

When asked what he does for fun, Mike smiled and told me he loves going out to dance. His favorite place for this is Dilaj's, a local club known for their great country music. He does a good 2-step! He tried a ballroom dance class at Cayuga Community College, partnered up with Nancy. They had a great time attempting the steps, many of them on each other's toes. Kosta's restaurant is in the neighborhood and Mike enjoys eating there. He often has friends over, and loves when people just drop in for a visit.

As a client, you are putting your whole life out there. Staff becomes closer than family in some cases. It's a 2 way street and there's a great bond. In addition to the professional relationship, there's a friendship, it's relaxed and fun. Being in someone's home is an intimate setting, you know them so well. Nancy learns from Mike all the time; he offers good reminders to her, and makes friendly phone calls.

Mike told me he wants to see those who work directly with clients get more money to work with; the people in charge should put it where it does the most good. He wishes costs were lower so he could afford to live without worrying about where the next dollar is coming from. He hopes that the politicians remember the promises they make to people, because what they do affects his life every day. "Spend it in Auburn," he added.

Mike asked ME what I thought would be good for the Gavras Center – I said we should raise our profile, make sure people get to know us, and who we serve, and how well we work together here. Many people know us, and many more should know us. He liked my answer and told me to write that down.

Nancy told me, "He's one of my superstars." I wholeheartedly agree.

Cornerstone: Supporting the Building Blocks of their Lives

By Diane E. deRoos, BCBA, Family Trainer



We have an exciting new program to offer to families who are involved in our preschool program. The Cornerstone Program is a new program entirely funded by your United Way donations. We are hoping to "bridge" the gap between the school and home and provide assistance to families within their home environment.

My name is Diane deRoos, and I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst as well as a speech and language pathologist, who has 27 years of experience working with parents and their children. My role is to share information, work with each family, and contribute to goal making for each session. The frequency of the visits, depends on the family needs, some determining factors include the specific goals identified, individual family needs, the ability to work on goals between sessions, and the motivation of each family for success. You and the family trainer will decide together what the focus will be for you, your child and your family situation. We will set goals to be met, and then work together on learning the tools and skills needed to achieve these goals.

This program is designed to meet your individual needs and we will work together, sharing information to teach each other something new about your child. We can help your child learn how to play with their friends and siblings, learn the expectations when they go to the store with you, how to get them to bed on time, how to work through temper tantrums, as well as how to be safe in all environments. Experience has taught us that children learn in many environments, and research has shown that when families take an active role in their child's program, the outcomes are more successful.

Our ultimate goal is to help all children learn the skills they need to successfully and independently participate in everyday activities, and to improve their overall quality of life.

Please contact your child's teacher for your opportunity to be included in this project. There is no time constraint, so if it doesn't fit into your schedule now, but you think it may in several months, we can easily work around that.

Educational Pursuits

Stephen Smith, our Director of Training and Enrichment, received his Masters Degree in Corporate and Community Education on January 18th from Elmira College. Steve also has a Certification in Human Resource Development and Training. He began this degree in Graduate School 4 years ago, and achieved this while working full time. Congratulations Steve!

Amy Gavras, our Human Resource Director, recently received her Certification in Professional and Human Resources. Congratulations on this accomplishment!



Chili's Fundraiser

On February 15th, the local Chili's restaurant held a Giveback Night, where 10% of a patron's check would be given to the Gavras Center just by handing in a flyer. It was well attended, and according to the Restaurant Manager Jay Davis, one of the best Giveback Nights they have had. We will receive \$220.00 from this event. Amber Reed is a talented staff member at Chili's as well as one of our Gavras Center Preschool Moms, and she submitted the agency for this fun and filling fundraiser. A great time was had by all, and we appreciate the generosity of everyone who participated.



Gavras Board President Andy Tehan, Chili's Manager Jay Davis, Chili's Staff person and Gavras Preschool Mom Amber Reed, and Executive Director Rick Hansinger enjoying a delicious night out for a great cause. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Tehan)

Kindergarten Registration Dates

Kindergarten Registration Dates are set for the Auburn Enlarged City School District.

Monday April 4th – Seward Elementary
52 Metcalf Drive – Phone 255-8601

Tuesday April 5th – Casey Park Elementary
101 Pulaski Street – Phone 255-8798

Wednesday April 6th – Herman Avenue Elementary
2 North Herman Avenue – Phone 255-8718

Thursday April 7th – Genesee Elementary
244 Genesee Street – Phone 255-8678

Friday April 8th – Owasco Elementary
66 Letchworth Street – Phone 255-8721

Important Information:

Child must be 5 years old on or before December 1, 2011.
Registration and screening will take approximately 1 hour.
9:00 to 11:00 Child's last name begins with A-L.
1:00 – 3:00 Child's last name begins with M-Z.

If a parent is unable to register the child on the assigned day, s/he should go to another school during the week to register that child. The information will be transferred to the child's appropriate school.

Parents **must** bring the day of registration:

- The child
- The child's birth certificate
- Proof of residency
- Physician signed documentation of required vaccinations, immunizations, lead screening, dental and physical examinations. No baby books will be accepted as evidence.
- Other health related information about the child that needs to be shared, such as knowledge of any allergies or health problems the child may have.

Questions? Please call the school for more information.



THANK YOU



Thanks to the ladies of the Prayer Shawl Ministry at Weedsport's Presbyterian Church for their donation of hand-made hats and mittens for our Preschool!

Editor's Note: This is OUR newsletter. Please send me your ideas, your articles and your feedback. I can be reached @ (315) 255-2746, via internal email to Ellen Baumes, or at ellenb@gavrascenter.com. Thank you! The Growing Tree is available on our website, view it electronically @ www.gavrascenter.com

Employee Recognition Recipients

July 2010

Robert Whittaker * Julia Gansert

September 2010

Jesse Blaisdell * Jennifer St. Mire-Zammett

October 2010

Nancy Kratz * Jamie Northrup * Dan Coon * Alison Prentice

November 2010

Jackie Drechsler * Kim Rooker * Megan O'Neill

January 2011

Jenn Grove * Lew Davis * Jena Weed

Welcome to...

Nancy Romano * Pam Saraceni * Jennifer Elsworth
Margaret Bishop * Marcia Blaisdell * Nathan Kayn
Amber Kalet * Jessica Nicolucci * Katie Seneca
Chelsea Bizzari * Brian Scutt * Rebecca Caldwell

Farewell to...

Kayley Lovell * Amanda Worden * Gina Abel
Melanie Maloney * Chad Mitchell *

Good Luck at School

Alyssa Wolff * Brian Clare

UPCOMING EVENTS

SB6 – Reading Challenge –
See our webpage for more info

Zumba for kids – coming soon!

Auburn Kindergarten Registration – April 4 – 8

Thought for the day...

I arise in the morning torn between a
desire to improve the world and a
desire to enjoy the world. This makes
it hard to plan the day.

- E.B. White