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Paxon Road Home Makeover

SASi's newest residential site opened September 2, 2008. The IRA, located on Paxon Road in Eden, underwent renovations during the summer and is now a home to four gentlemen. Genuine friendships have begun to develop over the past several months as the men have gotten to know one another better. One common bond they all share is a passion for sports.



Paul, Joshua, Anthony, Mike after a day of picking apples.

Each of the men brings different experiences to their living situation. Paul first came to SASi in 1990. Since then he has participated in the pre-vocational program at the East Aurora Workshop as well as the SASi Recreation Program. He lived with his parents until he moved into the Paxon Road IRA.

Anthony started with SASi in 2006 as a participant in the At Home Residential Habilitation program. He, too, lived with his parents until moving into the IRA. He currently attends East Aurora High School and the Ormsby Educational Center. Anthony is looking forward to his graduation this year and is planning to become involved with VESID to explore future employment opportunities.

Mike has been involved with SASi since 1998 and has participated in numerous programs. Prior to moving into the Paxon Road home he lived at another SASi IRA on Shirley Road in North Collins. Mike had been attending program at Sardinia, but since the move he receives pre-vocational services at the East Aurora Workshop.

Joshua moved from an IRA operated by Aspire of WNY to Paxon Road so that he can live closer to his family. He attends the East Aurora site with his house mates and receives pre-vocational and day habilitation services. Living closer to his family has been very positive for Joshua.

Recently, the men held an Open House to which each of their families as well as all of the other SASi residential sites were invited. The day was very successful and the men really enjoyed showing off their new home.

Welcome Home Paxon Road Gentlemen, Welcome Home!

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Thomas Becker, Executive Director



Almost any current discussion regarding program services quickly turns to the upcoming budget. In reading the newspaper or watching the evening news, we are all being bombarded with information on the sorry state of the economy.

The government response at both the State and Federal level appears to be to reduce their financial obligations. As this process plays out it is being felt by specific programs, agencies and individuals.

We must all let our elected leaders know that reductions are understandable; but, along with the financial obligation there is a human obligation that minimally requires that base services for special needs individuals be maintained.

With the reductions being proposed as “across the board,” our elected officials will hear from a wide variety of concerned people. We need to ensure that the need for our services is clearly presented to them. All of us must do our part. Please contact your representative.



Jack Quinn III, New York State Assemblyman, spoke to the SASi Parent/Caregiver group at their meeting on July 24, 2008. There was a lively discussion about the anticipated budget cuts and how services for people who have disabilities might be affected.

Mr. Quinn emphasized the point that parents, advocacy groups, employees and other concerned individuals need to let their legislators know how they feel. He urged the audience to call, send a letter or e-mail him and other government officials to voice their concerns about how cuts in the budget will negatively impact the current and future development of services for the disabled. If you would like your voice to be heard, you can log onto www.assembly.state.ny.us to contact Jack Quinn and other state legislators.

Hillary Bowen, President, Corporate Board of Directors



Throughout our lives we meet ordinary folks who demonstrate extraordinary accomplishments. When these people pass on, their legacies remain to inspire others to step-up to the plate. On October 31st I had the privilege of celebrating the life of Donald Jackson, our dear Lois Jackson’s husband.

As I sat in the church listening to his family and the pastor relate the milestones in Don’s life and seeing a musical video of the family’s time together, I was struck by how special Don and Lois Jackson are when considering handicapped individuals. Long before it was fashionable to advocate for consumers they, along with several other parents, set the process in motion to establish SASi.

Don’s and Lois’s family life exemplified their commitment to normalcy for all no matter what the issue. The celebration of Don’s life illustrated through word and picture revealed a family dedicated to fun, fishing and strong foundations! I came away with the distinct impression that anyone meeting Don and his family would believe “Love is spoken here.” We should all continue Don’s legacy through our own commitment to quality services and normalcy of life for our consumers. I would add fishing, but there is no way we can best Don Jackson’s ability to catch a huge mess of fish!

Did you know...

Kazoos in the News ... Around the World



A family enjoying a moment of carefree fun with their kazoos

Several months ago SASi's own Original Kazoo Company was pleased to respond to a request by Lifetime Care Hospice of Rochester for a donation of kazoos. The plan was to take the kazoos along on a volunteer mission to the Zululand Hospice Program in Zululand, South Africa as gifts for the children in their care.

After her trip to South Africa, Ruth Hogan, Lifetime Care Hospice Volunteer wrote ~ *"The smiles and the joy the kazoos brought was beyond our expectations. Of course, at first, the children tried to blow into the kazoos and we had quite a time trying to teach them to hum. It took some practice but as*

soon as they caught on it was a sweet symphony. What we didn't anticipate was that the adults also wanted a kazoo. For most, never having had a childhood with toys, they truly enjoyed the moment of carefree fun. It was so moving when a hospice staff member started humming the South African National Anthem. The adults joined in and the children smiled at hearing the familiar tune. It was really a beautiful moment to witness."



Children at the Zululand Hospice Program, South Africa

For more information on the Original Kazoo Company and Kazoo Boutique call (716)805-1555 or log on to www.sasinc.org.



Carl working at High Hurdles

OPTS Program Update

(Options for People Through Services)

The most recently developed blended pre-vocational/supported employment program funded through OPTS has proven to be another success story. This Vocational Habilitation project is the second OPTS program of this type for SASi and it has provided another 20 individuals the opportunity to work at various jobs in the community.

Small groups of individuals work at each location under the supervision of a Vocational Technician. A few of the sites where SASi consumers can be found working include Beaver Hollow Conference Center, Absolute Care of East Aurora and High Hurdles Therapeutic Riding program. They also provide janitorial services at the WNY DDSO. Aside from learning good work skills and providing much needed services, the participants are earning larger paychecks which makes this a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Making a Difference

2008 Jackson-Kearney Award



Lois Jackson and Maria Hanes

The Jackson-Kearney Award is given to a SASi employee who demonstrates the outstanding qualities of unsurpassed dedication and compassion. This year's recipient, Maria Hanes, RN has been with SASi for six years. She is extremely flexible and efficient, maintains a positive attitude in all situations, and frequently takes on additional responsibilities.

SASi consumers and fellow staff members benefit from her knowledge, patience and understanding.

Maria is admired and appreciated for her hard work, dedication and positive attitude!

Thank You & Congratulations Maria!



2008 Distinguished Service Award



Margie & Kevin Weber

The 2008 Distinguished Service Award was presented to Kevin Weber, SASi Foundation Board President, in appreciation of his years of leadership, devoted service and outstanding spirit of volunteerism.

His dedicated service as Foundation Board President, "SASi Celebration" co-chairman and golf committee chairman is greatly appreciated.

Thank You & Congratulations Kevin!

Biggest Loser Contest

Over the summer, staff members Jen Feraldi and Amy Layman organized a Biggest Loser Challenge for SASi employees. Twenty-four enthusiastic staff members decided to participate in the ten-week challenge. Half of each participant's registration fee was donated to SASi for a total of \$285.00. The other half of the money collected was distributed among the top three "losers." The first place cash award (\$150) went to Peg Northrup who lost an amazing 31 pounds! Second place (\$75) went to Vanessa Bookmiller with a 17 pound loss and the third place winner (\$65), Tricia Smith, lost 12 pounds. The total weight loss for all participants combined was 118 pounds. Everyone involved agreed that they benefitted from eating a more healthy diet, exercising and losing a few pounds. Sometimes being a loser is really being a winner.

As you begin to contemplate your year-end tax planning we hope you will consider making good use of the income tax charitable deduction option. Your 2008 year-end gift can significantly reduce your income taxes while providing meaningful support for SASi.

No matter what your income, if you itemize your deductions, you can almost always lower your taxable income through charitable giving. The amount of the income tax savings depends on your tax bracket. Consider making more charitable gifts in those years when you have the most income and are in the top federal income tax brackets. If this is the case for 2008, you may wish to consider accelerating future charitable gifts into this year. Please check with your financial/tax advisor to see what works best for you.

Giving is, of course, much more than tax brackets and charitable deductions. Your charitable gifts make an important difference in what SASi is able to accomplish.

2008 SASi Celebration Gala Event is a Success!



Award Recipient, Bruce Korotkin and SASi Executive Director, Tom Becker

On Saturday, October 18th, the Adam's Mark Hotel in Buffalo was host to the 125 guests who attended the annual dinner dance, fundraiser and recognition event.

Reggie Witherspoon, head coach of the UB Bulls basketball team, served as the evening's emcee. Bruce Korotkin, Director of the Western New York Developmental Disabilities Services Office, was recognized as SASi's 2008 award recipient in honor and appreciation of his many years of dedicated leadership, outstanding service and passionate advocacy for individuals with disabilities in New York State.

The evening also featured live entertainment by the KB Express Band, a silent auction and an inspirational performance by dancers from **Moving Miracles**, a dance and movement program for individuals who are exceptionally challenged mentally, physically and/or emotionally. The event raised over \$20,000 to benefit SASi.



Suzanne Novelli, Event Committee Member & Emcee, Reggie Witherspoon



Moving Miracles Performers Jill, Hillary and instructor, Beth Cournan



Moving Miracles Dance Ensemble

Community Matters

OMRDD Recognizes Bach's Towing at the "Works For Me" Employment Awareness Event

More than 200 businesses, employees and agency representatives attended the NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities "Works For Me" event on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 in Albany, NY.

Local businessmen Don and Jim Bach, co-owners of Bach's Towing in Elma, were recognized as the award winners in the small business category. Bach's Towing may only employ 12 people, but it has found a place for Jason and David in its towing, repair and detailing business.

David and Jason have each been employed part-time at Bach's Towing for more than two years. Both men have always had an interest in working around vehicles and they are very proud of their work. Their jobs have become the focal point of their lives and they are grateful to Don and his team for making them a part of the Bach's crew.

Don Bach also does volunteer work to enhance the lives of people who have disabilities. In his home town of East Aurora, he works with the AKTION Club members to organize social and community service activities. In his role as a member of the East Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Don has helped to develop an "Employment Wanted" section in the local chamber newsletter with the goal of matching disabled individuals with companies in need of their skills.

Hats off to Don and Jim and the entire Bach's Towing team as the "Works For Me" 2008 Small Business Award Winners!



Commissioner Diane Ritter, Don Bach, Jason, David and Jim Bach

"Bridge to College"

Five more SASi employees recently completed the 12-week "Bridge to College" course. The successful participants include:

Colleen Brown, Program Technician
Sarah Lester, Habilitation Technician
Tricia Smith, Resident Instructor
Christine Tocin, Resident Instructor and
Eli Harris, Habilitation Technician

By completing the coursework, these employees are now eligible to enroll in four tuition-free community college courses in the field of human services and to take eleven on-line courses.

The course curriculum specifically addresses the needs of direct support workers and is administered by the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) in cooperation with the State University of New York. SASi pays for all of the books that are required. Following completion of all courses, NYSACRA awards each student with a Certificate in Disability Studies.

SASi Talent Show

On Saturday October 25, 2008 SASi held its third annual talent show and dessert extravaganza. The talent show featured 21 performances that kept the audience well entertained. The show opened with Wendy singing *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*. Other highlights of the night included a duet with Bruce at the piano and Susan as the vocalist, and an original song performed on the electric guitar by Neil. Gayle got the audience to participate in the fun by having everyone clap and sing along with her to the familiar words to the classic *You are My Sunshine*. This year there was a surprise ending to the show. Everyone got up and sang a chorus of *My Wish* by Rascal Flats. "...My wish for you is that this life becomes all that you want it to..." It was a great ending to the evening.

Paying it Forward Continues

In this time of soaring prices we are all extremely appreciative when someone reaches out and offers some assistance. Tamara Goss, house manager of Ransom Road, saw an opportunity for a donation from the Bethesda World Harvest International Church and acted on it. Among the items donated were shampoo, conditioner, hairspray and personal hygiene products. The residents of Ransom Road IRA are fully supplied with these items for the next several months. The quantity of some of the items donated was so large that the individuals showed their giving spirit by sharing with other SASi residences.

Crickett's Corner

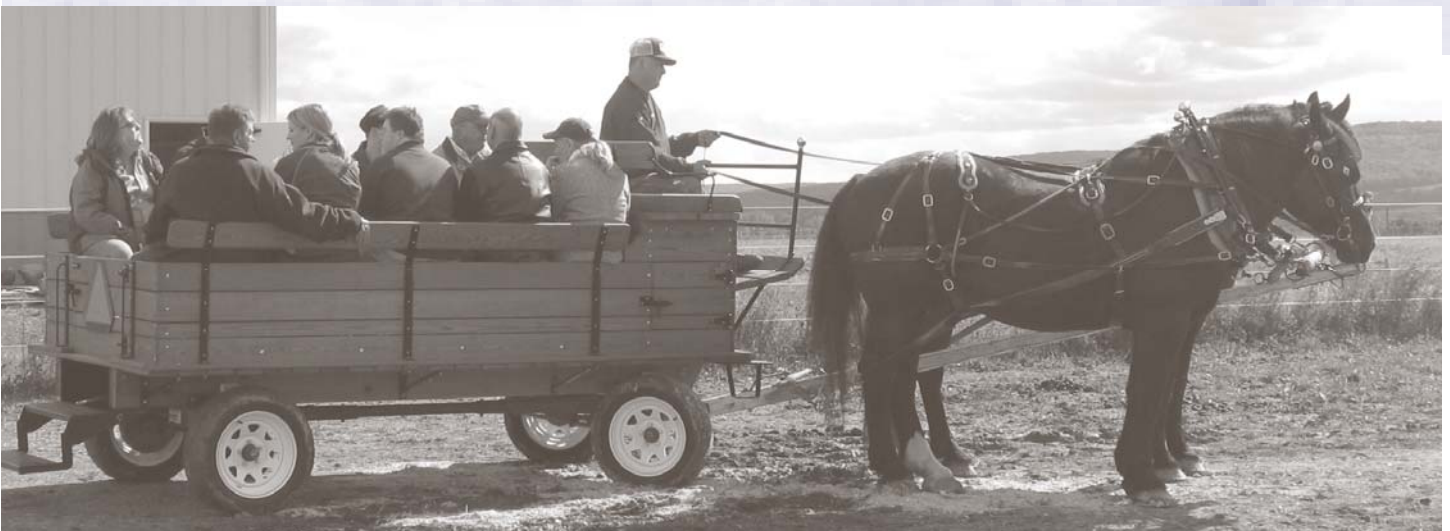
The weekend of October 4th and 5th was pretty busy here at the stable and arena. On Saturday, High Hurdles hosted the Equestrian Special Olympics competition. It was a tremendous event for the 16 riders who participated. Everyone, horses included, is always so proud to be part of this event. On Sunday, we celebrated High Hurdles' 10th Anniversary. Hundreds of people who have a special place in their heart for High Hurdles came for a few minutes or a few hours to share in the success of the program. There were games for the young and young at heart, cart rides lead by Pony the miniature horse, and wagon rides drawn by a beautiful pair of Percherons. All of us horses got lots of attention which is always appreciated. There have been so many riders, so many volunteers and so many horses over the past ten years. I'm told that there were just three when the program started while now we have eight horses plus Sheila the cat and close to 80 riders each week from March through November. I'm looking forward to a little break, although I heard that we might be scheduling some special groups over the winter.



Pony, driven by owner, Marge Rosier, delighted many children

I remember when I came to High Hurdles. I had to leave behind my pony buddies and I was worried that this strange new place might not be as happy as my old home. Before High Hurdles, most of the humans I knew were big and the horses were small, like me. At my new home I've met big horses and little humans. I found out the little humans are called children or kids. They look a lot like the big ones, but their touch is softer as they groom me. Because they are closer to the ground they can easily clean my legs and the itchy places on my belly. They're just the right size to reach out and pat my nose, and their hands are very gentle. Not only am I petted and groomed, I am allowed to carry the small humans on my back! That's when I learned they were called riders, and the big humans helped me learn what to do to keep my riders safe.

I try hard to be gentle and steady when I walk, but some of the riders say they want to trot. They love the "bumpity bump" as much as I do. I have learned that white poles aren't dangerous; that rings can be tossed, hung on cones, or placed on my ears; and the game red light/green light has many variations. Some of my riders are afraid, others are bold, some need help sitting, and some are able to stand up in their stirrups or ride backwards. Sooner or later, most of my riders move on to the bigger horses, but I am the lucky one. I am the one who introduces them to the magic of horses, the one who feels the first pat and gets the first hug. Would I want to leave High Hurdles? Never! I have heard that a human never forgets their first horse. I hope that it true, because I will never forget my first time riders and the smiles I put on their faces. If you want to become a part of High Hurdles as a rider- big or small- or as a volunteer, supporter, or visitor, please contact Judy Feine at 496-5551.



Keith Rosier and his team of Percherons, Captain & Jack, on one of their many trips around the pasture.



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