

# matheny **matters**

Summer/Fall 2018

## **Arts** Access 25 Years and Counting



Kendell R. Sprott, MD, JD  
President and CEO



**W**hen I look back to the beginnings of Arts Access 25 years ago, I see a program that quickly established roots and flourished, because the need for this program was immense. I see individuals who had no way of creating art, because their hands could not hold a paintbrush or sculpt clay. Potential artists who were unable to speak, walk, use their fingers to keyboard, dance, or write poetry.

I see other individuals with a passion for creativity, who chose art-making as their profession. These artists were determined to make it possible for others with developmental disabilities to choose art-making as their profession or pastime. Our Arts Access staff understood long ago what most of us did not yet grasp—

that the desire to create art is very much alive in individuals with developmental disabilities; and this desire is often coupled with significant talent.

This 25th anniversary of Arts Access means that hundreds of individuals without prior opportunity have been able to create thousands of paintings, sculptures, poems, short stories, essays, dramas and dances, enriching their own lives, as well as ours. Our artists' creative work "speaks" to us about experiences, thoughts, and feelings that we could not have begun to imagine before. This anniversary is also a time to commemorate the great foresight and achievement of the program's founders and early developers, Robert Schonhorn, Matheny President, and Dr. Gabor Barabas, Medical Director, and the first director of Arts Access, SuzAnne Barabas.

In addition to this milestone anniversary, we have had an abundance of recent, good news, requiring expansion of our magazine. Miles for Matheny 2018 was a great success in every way imaginable. Our volunteer group, Friends of Matheny, once again, made a very substantial donation to Matheny, underwriting a long "wish list" benefitting our students and residents. Our collaboration with the Rutgers Biomedical Engineering Program has yielded concepts for innovative devices that clearly could enhance our clients' lives.

I want to thank everyone who contributes to the well-being of Matheny. We continue to rely on the excellent work of many dedicated staff members and volunteers, who enrich the lives of those we serve.

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*On the cover:* Painter, choreographer, writer, and performer, Chris Saglimbene, started with Arts Access almost 20 years ago and is still going strong.

Photo by Keith B. Bratcher, Jr.

# mathenymatters

Summer/Fall 2018

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enriching lives. growing abilities.

## A Dynamic Partnership

**T**hirteen seniors from the Rutgers Undergraduate Biomedical Engineering Program met with a group of Matheny residents and students with medically complex developmental disabilities last fall to better understand the daily challenges that they face. The goal for the Rutgers students was to figure out how to use their engineering skills to envision, design, and fabricate devices and equipment that could improve the health and everyday life of the Matheny participants. The device-ideas would serve as the basis for the Rutgers students' senior design projects and could be developed in the department's new labs. The growing relationship between Matheny and the Rutgers department is part of a plan to enhance medical device development at Rutgers, while teaching students how best to use their academic training to impact real world problems.

Three teams of Rutgers students, working with faculty mentor Kristen Labazzo, PhD, each invented a device that could better the life of Matheny students and residents: a dynamic headrest for wheelchairs to “reduce reliance on caretakers and allow for a greater range of visual freedom for individuals with cerebral palsy,” dynamic lateral supports that are strong, adjustable, and affordable, and can improve “the functional range of motion [of those in wheelchairs] so they can go about their daily life with fewer restrictions,” and a self-sterilizing IV pole that is “more compact and safe, and collapsible, and includes a germicidal UV LED cover” and solves “the long-lasting issue of contaminated hospital equipment.”

Congratulations to all for a collaboration that quickly moved from conversation to the design of such promising new devices.



Steve Adubato, PhD, host of “One-on-One,” with Matheny President and CEO Kendell Sprott, MD, JD

## Off to a Good Start

**I**f you thought you spotted Matheny's President and CEO Kendell Sprott on your TV screen, you're not mistaken. He appeared on not one, not two, but three episodes of Steve Adubato's popular NJTV talk show, “One-On-One,” which features “conversations with today's most interesting people who do extraordinary things,” according to the station's Website.

In Part 1 of the three-part series, entitled “Right From the Start,” which aired in early spring, Adubato and Sprott, a pediatrician as well as an attorney, discussed the importance of early education and early development, and the challenges faced by many parents when they search for affordable, high quality child care for their infants and toddlers.

In Part 2, Adubato and his panel of eight experts looked at the need for high quality childcare within New Jersey, and the role that teachers, caregivers, and parents play in a child's development from birth to age 3.

In Part 3, State leaders in the fields of education, government, and business discussed advocacy efforts on the state and national levels to ensure that parents have access to affordable and high quality childcare and have time with their children at this most critical developmental time. For those who missed any of these informative programs, you can find them on the NJTV Website.



Rutgers student Jeremy Olivo participates in a collaborative program between Matheny and the Rutgers Undergraduate Biomedical Engineering Program.

## Six Questions for Daniel McLaughlin



Daniel McLaughlin's dedication to volunteerism has certainly not gone unnoticed at Matheny where, during his tenure first as a Board of Trustees member starting in 2002, then as Board of Trustees Chair from 2008 to 2014, and subsequently as a Board member again, he has devoted innumerable hours to ensuring the well-being of its students, residents, and staff members. His reputation as a caring, informed, and effective leader is well deserved. *Matheny Matters* asked the former Chair, and still active Board member, to answer six questions about himself, his commitment to volunteerism, and his abiding concern for Matheny.

### **What inspired your interest in volunteerism?**

I grew up in Livingston, graduated from St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, went on to earn a degree from Boston College, and have been very lucky in business. I always told my kids: "The only thing better than making money is giving it away." I believe that. About 25 years ago, I joined the Board of Trustees of St. Benedict's, which has an active and effective network of alumni supporting its important mission to provide an excellent education and supportive environment to many inner city students.

### **How did you become involved at Matheny?**

In 1998, 20 years ago, the then-new CEO of Matheny, Steve Proctor, invited me to take a tour. When I drove up to the campus, I had zero interest in becoming involved. But after the tour, everything changed. You can't not be passionate about the people, and the place, once you meet them and go on the tour—unless you have no heart. I fell in love.

### **Why did you agree to serve as Chair of the Matheny Board of Trustees?**

I served as Chair for several years and it was a lot of work. It was like having a second full-time job. But I found it impos-

sible not to get involved. My primary mission while I was Chair was to get the word out. Most people don't have a clue about Matheny, unless they live very close by, in Peapack or Gladstone. People don't know it's where we do miracles; they don't know Matheny is a shining light, and a model for other places like this.

### **What do you see in Matheny's future?**

I've always hoped Matheny would be around forever. But can I see Matheny being there in 20 years? It's likely it will be, but maybe it will not be exactly as it is now. We live in New Jersey, and the reality of the situation is that money is a huge consideration. Hospitals in our state are undergoing tremendous consolidation. Going forward, Matheny will look at group home expansion—both adult and pediatric. We're a school, and we're a hospital and residence. We need to build more medical group homes, both on our campus and in our communities.

### **What do you see as Matheny's strengths?**

Matheny is a community—a great community. The people who work here are fabulous. From personal care assistants to the president, everyone knows each other. The commitment of the staff is amazing. They don't work here to get rich; they are just amazingly dedicated. I hope Matheny stays as is—it has a huge reputation within its own communities. I would like everyone to stop by and meet the people who work here. Walk in the shoes of people who live here or who have family here. We don't just give medical care, we give incredible overall care.

### **Do you have any "words of wisdom" for our readers?**

Please come to visit. This is an open invitation. I will personally give you a tour. I can assure you that you will come away with a whole different perspective about Matheny—and even about life.

## Six Questions for Debra DeLorenzo

Debra DeLorenzo's more than 10-year history of volunteerism has given her enormous satisfaction. With a broad range of hands-on volunteer activities in her portfolio, she is taking on (for the first time) a leadership position as a Board of Trustees member for the esteemed Friends of Matheny volunteer group. How did she get started volunteering and why does she donate so many hours to Matheny? Find the answers and more below.

### What inspired your interest in volunteerism?

I retired from my job at age 50 to help take care of my in-laws, whose health was declining, and had some extra time. So I began volunteering for Mane Stream in Oldwick. If you're not familiar with it, Mane Stream has been around for more than 25 years and its mission is to help improve the quality of life for people with physical, developmental, emotional, and medical challenges through activities involving horses.

### Is there a connection between Mane Stream and Matheny?

Yes. First of all, I fell in love with working with all the children. Matheny would bring a busload of kids. Some had feeding tubes, some couldn't walk, some couldn't sit up straight on their own. I saw the children begin to relax on the horses and I saw them smile. There was such big improvement over the six weeks of the course.

### How did that lead you to volunteer at Matheny?

I became very attached to one of my riders from Matheny. So, when her six-week course ended at Mane Stream, I became a teacher's aide in her classroom at Matheny and continued that for years, until she finished high school. At the graduation ceremony, I walked with her. It was wonderful.



**“The people you meet — from teachers to bus drivers to kids — everyone touches your heart.”**

DEBRA DELORENZO

### What do you like best about Matheny?

The people you meet—from teachers to bus drivers to kids—everyone touches your heart. I volunteer now at the Tea Time Cafe, a snack bar run by Matheny students for employees. You can buy smoothies, yogurt parfaits, waffles, cheese and crackers, candy. Everyone who comes in is smiling. It makes you feel really good. If you don't belong here (at Matheny), you know that right away.

### How did you get involved with the Friends of Matheny?

I volunteer at their Second Chance Thrift Shop in Gladstone, which raises a lot of money. Everyone there works very hard and is so generous. The store has more than 123 volunteers, and some of them are there all the time. Each year, the shop raises more than \$100,000, which is donated to Matheny to benefit students and residents. The Friends have donated more than \$3 million to Matheny over the years. Its members also do a lot of other things: we wrap hundreds of holiday gifts, provide food after the Halloween parade, sponsor a Staff Appreciation event, hold a Day of Beauty for the women residents, and order and serve breakfast at Miles for Matheny.

### What do you want to accomplish as a Friends of Matheny Board member?

The Board decides how money that's raised by The Friends can best be dispersed. The new position is just an extension of what I already do. I work on a lot of fundraisers as well as in the thrift shop. I want to help out in any way I can. Matheny is my favorite place to be. You can be feeling horrible about something when you walk in, but just being there humbles you and puts everything in perspective. There are so many ways to volunteer and you get back so much. If you want your heart to grow, join us. This is the best place in the world.

# Art



Jessica Evans, a long-time participant in Matheny's Arts Access Program

# That Speaks Volumes

In a quiet hilly corner of Somerset County, NJ, where you're more than likely to see sheep grazing languidly at the next door farm and hear "the sounds of silence" as you contemplate your tranquil surroundings, stands a newish, light-filled building surrounded by grass and trees. While it surprises with its beauty and calm presence, the building fits without fanfare into its surroundings in an almost painterly way. It's Matheny's Robert Schonhorn Arts Center, and when you step inside, you're in for even more surprises—the art lining the walls of the wide hallways is incredibly good; music wafts out from a large auditorium where a dancer moves fluidly across a wide stage; and in the art studio, two visual artists choose vivid colors to add to their eye-popping canvases, so focused on their work they do not even see our entry into their workspace.

The unfolding story of the program that resides in this arresting building is a good one, maybe one we all need to hear at this time in our shared history. But don't think it's a fairytale. The Center, which opened in 2000, is the home of amazing artistic endeavors, where professional visual artists, writers, and dancers come to assist fellow artists, who, without the ability to move their arms and hands, cannot hold a paintbrush; who, without the ability to use their legs, cannot leap or glide across the stage; and who, without the ability to speak, cannot use their voices to read their poetry aloud. What started as a visual arts program in 1993 (with the rudiments of dance and writing offered in 1995 and 1996) expanded to include digital art in 2001, digital sculpture in 2006, a full-fledged dance and drama program in 2008, and creative writing in 2010.

Arts Access, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, enables those with medically complex developmental disabilities to participate in the human endeavor of making art. Ingenious is the word that most aptly describes the unique process that opens the doors to art-making to those who would not otherwise have the

opportunity because of physical challenges, but whose will to create is very much intact.

Eileen Murray, Program Director, is often called upon to explain how it works. There are two individuals engaged in each art-making endeavor, a facilitator and a client. The process calls for each facilitator

The facilitators provide the tools, physical ability, and technical aptitude so the client can create art.

The clients are primarily adults with complex disabilities, who use wheelchairs for their mobility, have limited range of motion, and are often nonverbal. "They need a conduit," she explains, "to enable

## "If you make amazing art, then you should be noticed for your art, not because you sit in a wheelchair."

KEITH GARLETTS • ARTS ACCESS FACILITATOR

tor to be completely "neutral"; the facilitator and artist engage in a peer-to-peer relationship, one artist assisting another artist (not a teacher and student relationship); there are no restrictions imposed by the facilitator—the artist makes all the choices; the facilitator has no preconceptions of what the artist creates and does not judge it in any way.

them to paint on canvas, put words on the page, or dance on stage." There are 10 full- and part-time program staff, all of whom are artists.

Because most clients have communication challenges, they provide directives to the facilitators through a variety of means, including computer driven communication devices; boards with words, pictures, and numbers; eye movements; and head motions. The facilitator asks questions in a yes or no format, and the client responds, a critical aspect of the program for non-verbal clients who indicate yes or no with eye movements or nodding.

Murray says, "If you can make a choice, you can make art."

### Putting Paint to Canvas: The Visual Arts

Color, shape, form, line, texture are all choices made by the visual artist, as well as choice of paper or canvas, and sometimes non-traditional surfaces, such as vinyl figures. Color charts, shape charts, and brushes provide options; clients also choose from a variety of alternatives for



Arts Access client, choreographer Dani Urso-King (far left), performs in her piece entitled "Simply Wonderful Talented Dancers" at Full Circle 2017: Art of Possibility.



applying paints and mediums. The chart system was created by Matheny's highly trained and practiced facilitators, and it is both very sophisticated and very simple. These facilitators have trained others to be arts facilitators.

While paint to canvas was where Arts Access began, digital art and sculpture were introduced in the early 2000s. Visual Arts Coordinator, and comic book and digital artist, Andrew Edge, who joined the Arts Access staff in 2004, sees how good the artists feel about themselves. Whether clients use a paintbrush or computer, "the process can instill a sense of pride. I sometimes hear clients say, 'I didn't know that I could do that.' For some clients, if they could do this all the time, they would," he observes.

"But overall the most important thing is that the work is theirs," he states. "We have no preconceived ideas about what the client can or can't do. We are the tool to get them from point A to point B."

Visual Arts Facilitator Keith Garletts, who credits his father for piquing his interest in art when Keith was just 5, first came to Matheny to attend Full Circle in 2002, and was hired later that year. "I was completely moved by what I saw in the gallery and on stage. It was absolutely stunning," he says. "The philosophy of the program resonated with me. The relationship of the facilitator with the artist was more intimate than an assistant. As a facilitator, I would be interacting with the clients' creative minds."

What has impressed him over and over again through the years is the immense talent of many of the clients. "There are artists here who are brilliant, whose work should be hanging in a gallery," he observes. "If you make amazing art, then you should be noticed for your art, not because you sit in a wheelchair."

## Dancing the Dance

Arts Access offers clients the opportunity to express themselves in many artistic disciplines. The chart system used for creating unique paintings has also been developed for writing, digital art and digital sculpture, and choreography.



### Meet the Artist

## Cheryl Chapin

Cheryl Chapin sings and performs with several choirs. A resident of Matheny's group home in Basking Ridge and an Arts Access participant since 1993, she also loves painting, creating digital art and sculpture, composing original dances, acting, and writing poetry, short stories, and plays. A passionate reader, she's often seen out and about with a book in hand. She ranks Amy Tan as her favorite author; and *To Kill a Mockingbird* as her favorite book.

Cheryl's play, *Words From A Fish Tank*, was among the works featured at Full Circle last year. It's a humorous take on a day-in-the-life of fish that live in a tank. "The type of plays I write are mainly comedies," she says. "I like to try to lighten the mood."

She has participated in several acting classes at Raritan Community College. "We formed a whole acting troupe, 10 able-bodied college students and 3 of us," she describes. "Everyone got comfortable with each other. It's fun to act."

Appreciative audiences have enjoyed her acrylic paintings and digital art on display in venues around the state, including the Atrium Gallery in Morristown; Grounds for Sculpture; the Wallace Art Gallery at

Overlook Hospital; Rutgers University; and Johnson & Johnson. "I paint freehand, but I particularly love digital art," she comments.

Over the years, Cheryl has won several awards for her art. Most recently, Gallery 24/7 selected one of her original digital paintings, *Lights in a Far Off Galaxy*, for its public art project entitled *Art on Traffic Control Boxes*. Hers was one of 22 original artworks by New Jersey artists chosen through a professionally juried selection process. Many have viewed the painting at the busy intersection of Mountain Avenue and Stirling Road in Warren Township.

"My favorite colors are cobalt blue and green. I like a lot of color—that's what I think makes my artwork come alive. I like texture, too, and work with different tools, such as sponges, paint brushes, palette knife, or stick to make unique designs. I go with what I'm feeling at that moment and turn it into something that pleases me," she explains.

"I want everyone to know how much Matheny means to me," she concludes. "If I wasn't here, I would be sitting home watching TV."

Matheny's dance program offers choreography, which gives clients the opportunity to work with dance facilitators to create a unique dance, as well as creative movement, a chance for clients to get out on the stage, joyfully moving alone or with others to music.

While the performing arts were only a small part of the initial offerings of Arts Access, they are integral to the current program. Client-choreographers choose from a broad repertoire of dance movements, working with professional dance

facilitators and able-bodied dancers who perform the moves. The clients' original works are often performed for events on the Matheny campus and in the community.

All dance facilitators are highly trained in both ballet and modern dance technique, like Arts Access Performing Arts Coordinator Heather Williams, who earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance Pedagogy and Performance from The Hartt School of Music. Passionate about dance since early childhood, she

says, "At Matheny, I saw an opportunity to share what I love with a population I never danced with before."

"There are plenty of programs that offer the arts," she explains, "but they don't offer facilitation. We become the arms and legs of the dancers. I think this program offers the most independence and freedom of expression for clients."

Williams feels strongly that other populations, such as veterans and those with traumatic brain injuries, could greatly benefit from Arts Access. "I would very

## Meet the Artist

### Chris Saglimbene

**P**ainter, choreographer, writer, performer. Chris Saglimbene started with Arts Access at age 13 and he's still going strong. Showing us one of his paintings-in-progress, *Mario X DC, the Crossover*, he explains that this is one of his most ambitious pieces to-date. He set it aside several years ago, but is ready to dive in again. "There's still much more work to be done on this piece," he says.

Chris has been with Arts Access since 1999. "After my mother's passing, I found out that I could either be miserable or channel that energy into something positive," he explains. He went through a period when all his art was "dark but it has gotten lighter through time."

Chris explains that his artwork has gone through "so many different phases. People expect a certain thing from you. Meanwhile, you think you did something awesome, but it doesn't sell. It's hard to gauge."

"People like my splatter paintings, but the technique is not cerebral," he says. "Video games, movies, comics, things rooted in pop culture—that's what I find most inspiring. When my wheels start turning, it's hard to stop them. Arts Access helps me to make my creations come to life." Sports, particularly baseball, are also a recurring theme in his paintings.

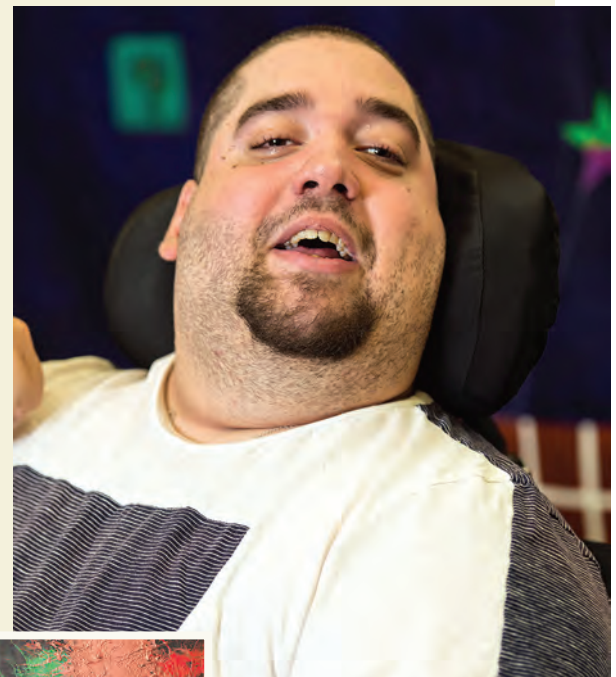
Choreography would not necessarily come to mind when meeting Chris, who

has grown to love this form of artistic expression. He describes his dances as "stage combat." His first foray into choreography involved a tribute to Michael Jackson.

His dance-fight piece, *Reptile Theme*, inspired by the video game *Mortal Kombat 9*, was featured to great acclaim at Full Circle several years ago. Chris, who choreographed all of the movements, was on stage with two able-bodied dancers for the performance, calling out the moves. "As far as I know, I'm the only choreographer who's done a dance based on a video game," he states. (Read more about it on Matheny's Website.)

What is it like to be an artist with physical challenges? "When I make art," he says, "it feels like a ton of rocks has been lifted off my shoulders. That feeling is unbelievable."

Chris, the writer, has worked on action screenplays, poetry, and has had several pieces published in *Writes of Passage—A Collection of Prose by Arts Access Writers*. In March 2018, his romantic musical comedy, *Rock Opera*, was one of five original plays by Arts Access playwrights presented



by the New Jersey Theatre Alliance Stages Festival in partnership with Premiere Stages at Kean University.

And Chris, the film star, is one of three Arts Access participants featured in the

documentary, *Into the Light*, which follows these artists as they prepare for the 15th anniversary celebration of Arts Access. If you have just a half hour to invest, you can witness the joy of these Arts Access artists at work.

much like to see this program offered to more people," she states.

"Arts Access is truly a client-driven program. That's what makes it unique," states Dance Facilitator Shannon Johnston, who joined the staff in 2016, after graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a Master's in Dance Education from Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts. She has worked with and performed works by various esteemed choreographers.

"There is no other program like this anywhere that I've seen," she says.

## Writing Words That Tell the Story

When writing facilitator and prolific writer and editor Sonya Kimble-Ellis came to Matheny in 2010, Arts Access had no structured system for writing. She liked what she heard at the interview and saw it as an opportunity to take her love of writing and apply it to working with a new group of people.

"My goal was that anyone who could give a yes or no response would be able to write original work," she says. "I figured I could break down language into parts of speech using pictures, and clients who are nonverbal could build sentences by making choices." Writers can now choose pictures from charts and build words, sentences, poems, short stories, plays, essays—whatever they want. One writer has even completed a couple of novels.

Sometimes a poem is finished in one session or writing a short story may take years—with the client putting it aside and coming back to it again and again. Clients' works have been read and enjoyed at various venues around the state, including the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival, the Montclair Literary Festival, and the Bridgewater and Fairlawn public libraries.

The writers of Arts Access have published three books of poetry, so far, and are currently working on a book featuring all male writers. "Our two solo books have been written by women," says Kimble-Ellis. "But we have enough male writers here to do an all-guy book. I think it will be very cool." *continued on page 18*

## Meet the Artist

### Jessica Evans

Jess has an exuberance and smile that radiate across the art studio and down the Matheny hallway, engaging those around her in much the same way as her art reaches out and captivates viewers. Bold colors, vivid expression, strong emotion, and humor characterize her personality, as well as her paintings, digital art, poetry, storytelling, choreography, dance, acting, and writing and directing plays.

She's passionate about her art and equally passionate about her family, who often figure into her creations. "I have an identical twin sister, Jamie, who lives in Pennsylvania," she tells, "and we share many interests. My sister works with her husband to write music for the church. My nieces are a big part of my life."

Jess is a huge fan of rock and roll music. "I like to get my energy out there. I listen to music a lot," she says. "Music provides me with many ideas for my own art, and makes me feel good." She sang in the Matheny choir for several years.

Jess is the author of a published book of poetry entitled, *In My Heart Like a Key*, and is currently working on a second book of poetry. "Writing makes me feel free and good and it's good for my soul. Before I started writing, I didn't know what to do with some of my emotions. I would hide them. When I started writing, everything came together."

"When everything else pushes me down, art pulls me right up," she continues. "When I paint, the light colors and even the dark colors make me feel something. Every painting I do is different. Most of them are vibrant, but I occasion-



ally paint darker pieces. I'm just excited to be able to keep making all kinds of art."

Last March, the New Jersey Theatre Alliance Stages Festival, in partnership with Premiere Stages at Kean University, presented staged readings from plays written by five Arts Access playwrights. *Adventures Waiting to Happen*, a whimsical comedy written by Jess, was one of them. The event is part of the state's largest annual theatre festival.

And in 2017, Jess was "excited that my piece, *My Brother's Really Cool*, was chosen for Full Circle. My family makes me feel safe and secure and warm," she describes. "My brother is very special to me because he drove my power chair everywhere. My brother is younger than I am. He was curious about my chair and he could drive it better than I could at first. He showed me how to drive it. I was nervous but then I got the hang of it."

The Paper Mill Playhouse, Full Circle, the Grounds for Sculpture, the Visiting Nurse Association, Arts Unbound Gallery, and Johnson & Johnson have all exhibited her paintings. Jess, who always has multiple works-in-progress, says her art "expresses things people don't know about me yet." She choreographed and will be performing in "If Tomorrow Never Comes" at this year's Full Circle. It's a tribute to her friend, Dion Alston, an Arts Access client who passed away in 2017.

# A Life of Their Own



What awaits students with complex developmental disabilities after they graduate high school? For those who participate in the Adult Learning Center at Hillsborough and who live at one of Matheny's group homes in the community, life can be very busy—full of challenging and meaningful experiences.

## What a Day

It's just after 9 on a rain-slicked Wednesday morning in June and 42 mostly young adults are streaming into Number 216, Route 206 South, home of the Adult Learning Center at Hillsborough. All are in wheelchairs; all have medically complex developmental disabilities that affect their ability to walk and speak; but all are ready for close to six hours of stimulating activities that will keep their minds and bodies moving.

At the entryway stands Hillsborough Day Program coordinator Todd Deremer, a familiar face to all the participants. Most make the daily trek here, Monday through Friday, from their residences at the Adult Services Program on the Matheny campus in Peapack or one of the five Matheny group homes located in communities in Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties. A few live independently with home-care support or with family.

Even after almost 20 years working for Matheny, Todd still has the energy and enthusiasm of a new hire. And, in fact, his current job overseeing day-to-day programs here is still somewhat new to him after just 18 months on the job.

He began his Matheny career as a community instructor (responsible for taking clients into the community on day and overnight outings) in November 1998, a few months after graduating college, and moved from the main campus to the Hillsborough day program in the same capacity in 2000. As a student at East Stroudsburg University, one of the few area colleges to offer a recreation therapy major, he knew that he wanted a job “where I could help people.” And that is certainly what he has done.

What he didn't realize at age 22 was that he would have the opportunity to “grow with the residents and clients,” he says. “The majority are my age—in their late 30s and early to mid-40s now—and they've been with Matheny forever. Many were there already when I came.”

In 2005, he became the adapted sports and fitness instructor at the Hillsborough Day Program. He had no clue how much ingenuity would be required for the job, which he truly came to love. Underlying



Hillsborough Day Program  
Coordinator Todd Deremer



(l-r) Client Faith Stolz, staff members Stacy Grier and Kelly King, RN, and client Tammy Hepner share a few moments of celebration.

his enthusiasm is an unwavering belief that sports, fitness, and exercise activities in general promote greater independence and self confidence for most people, and that they're also a lot of fun.

"Many of our clients can't grasp a ball with their hands or move their arms to throw a ball into a basketball hoop or hold a golf putter. Spasticity is an issue for many of them," he says. But those challenges never stopped Todd and his colleagues from finding a way for clients to enjoy their sports of choice.

"It's just about being resourceful and figuring out how to do it," he explains. "The job of the instructors is to help make that happen, even for clients with extremely limited range of motion, and when it does happen, the sense of satisfaction for both instructor and client is enormous."

Instructors become creative with such implements as light resistance bands, specially designed "sleeves," ace bandages, and velcro to help keep equipment in position, as well as pulleys, ropes, and ramps; and they devise ways to move and position clients for play. For each client, that process is unique.

"The process is individualized for each client during every activity they participate in, whether sports and fitness, technology, residential or sensory-based," says Todd. "Also, giving all clients the

opportunity to direct their participation in meaningful program activities is an important component of their self-expression. It is also a core value of the staff."

Matheny has operated this Center for many years, adding new offerings to keep up with the times. Right now, "technology is a big part of our program," he explains.

The Center's technology/computer lab has 14 computers and six iPads, all with special switches and assistive technology, allowing students to work independently to gain and practice new skills, including playing computer games. "We have a technology instructor who trains clients on new technology at the Center," Todd says, "and she also visits the group homes weekly to help clients with their personal devices and technology needs." Many clients communicate via emails and have iTunes accounts.

Creative arts; yoga, meditation, and sensory stimulation sessions; group exercise programs; and opportunities for other group activities with peers are also part of the curriculum. Greater independence, self-expression through the arts, mental and physical stimulation, and team-building are the goals. All clients choose their own program schedule.

Not all activities happen at the Center; clients also get out into the community. Once each month, they can choose to go

on a shopping expedition or to lunch at a restaurant, such as Spain 92 in South Raritan, where they can build relationships with people in the community. Twice each week an adult instructor takes a couple of clients to the Bridgewater Library for volunteer work. "Some of our clients enjoy organizing books and sorting magazines. Others choose to engage in tasks at a nearby TJ Maxx. Maintaining a job is difficult for our clients due to the care-supports they require out in the community, but they enjoy the socialization and sense of accomplishment that comes with each vocation-related experience," Todd explains.

Four times per year, several clients, accompanied by a program activities instructor who is also a certified therapeutic recreation specialist, visit kindergarten and first grade classes at an elementary school in Manville to participate in a disability awareness program. "The kids are fascinated with the clients' communication devices," says Todd, "and they are learning early to accept people with disabilities. They look forward to our clients making return visits."

Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg welcomed three Hillsborough Day Program clients into a six-week Theater Productions course two summers ago, where they interacted with the college students—on the stage. Two of the Hillsborough clients use communication devices. "Between the first class jitters and the likelihood of having had little or no experience working with developmentally disabled people before this," says Todd, "the college students initially appeared nervous and uncomfortable. But our clients as well as the others in class experienced so much growth—from the beginning of the program to the end." The course culminated in a final on-stage performance. This summer, several clients from the Hillsborough Center participated in a class, Theater Productions III, at Raritan Valley Community College, also culminating in a final performance on campus.

Back at the Hillsborough facility, clients also enjoy writing with a writing facilitator who comes there weekly from Matheny's Arts Access program. Dance, choreography, painting, and digital art are also offered through the same program.

Clients can look forward to monthly visits from a librarian from the Hillsborough Public Library, who reached out last year, wishing to establish a relationship, and has been coming to the Day Program ever since. She reads aloud to about 10 clients who attend the group regularly. "It's been a positive experience for our clients as well as for the librarian, who loves coming here," Todd says.

Add to those activities an "alternate positioning class," where staff get clients out of their wheelchairs and onto giant bean bags and low physical therapy mats; a power wheelchair-driving group; cooking classes; and even a self-advocacy group, which meets monthly, with several members attending the national conference each year. (This year's group went to Birmingham, Alabama.)

"If there's a need or an interest, we run with it," Todd states. "Things get old. We need to keep things fresh, so we are always coming up with new ideas."

Todd himself does more administrative tasks now, and less hands-on work with clients. He describes the Center's employees, which include instructors; personal care assistants; nurses; and social work, Arts Access, dietary, and kitchen staff, as "wonderful. They all contribute to the success of the program. They will do everything to make the clients happy and to assist them to be independent. I love working with all of them."

For Todd's two children, now ages 4 and 7, who have visited Matheny regularly and participated in its special events over the years, the Hillsborough Day Program clients are "Daddy's friends at work. They jump at the chance to visit," he says. "They're not afraid of people who are different from them. They've known my friends all their lives."

"Matheny was my life before having children," he concludes. "It means a lot to me to have the opportunity for my kids to share time with the great people here."

## This Is Their House, This Is Their Home

**W**ilner Cenophat is a man of great practicality and also great vision. On paper his job is to run a large household—called a group home—efficiently, methodically, and with absolutely no glitches. And if you chat with him, his humility makes that job sound uncomplicated, even mundane.

Clearly, that's not the case. The physical challenges of each client, the variability of each day, the 24–7 staffing needs, the chronic medical issues that can become acute at any moment, each client's need for multiple medications, and the group home manager's unwavering desire to make this a "happy home" for its six long-term residents are always uppermost in his mind, even when he's not on

site, even during his down time. Wilner is always connected and in charge of Matheny's Franklin, NJ group home for adults with multiple complex developmental disabilities, and he never forgets that.

In 1983, Wilner began working at Matheny, and over the course of 35 years has served in multiple capacities—as assistant teacher, instructor for the Adult Services Program, personal care assistant (PCA), then PCA supervisor, and, most recently, group home manager. Each job has given him an opportunity to learn new skills; and meeting each set of new challenges has propelled him into a position of greater responsibility.

He currently supervises the work of 12 community resident assistants (CRAs). Routine tasks are challenging, and frequently impossible, for most group home residents to do without help, and



**“I have a good relationship with the clients. I’ve known many of them since they were kids. They feel comfortable with me and I with them. I advocate for them.”**

WILNER CENOPHAT

that’s where the CRA steps in. Feeding, clothing, helping residents to get up from the bed and move about in wheelchairs and walkers are all part of the CRA’s job. Doing laundry, administering oral medications at specified times around the clock, general housekeeping, all “ADLs,” or activities of daily living, including daily



Bari-Kim Goldrosen and Chet Cheeseman, group home residents, with Group Home Manager Wilner Cenophat

showers, come under the aegis of the CRA, as well as sometimes driving clients in the van to appointments and recreational activities.

Scheduling, coordinating, and monitoring the activities of group home residents and their CRAs are at the core of Wilner’s job. Residents often have appointments at one of Matheny’s many outpatient clinics on the Peapack campus, such as dental, medical, orthopedics, podiatry, and seating. If clients don’t have an appointment, most go to the Hillsborough day program, Monday through Friday, leaving the Franklin group home around 8:30 AM and returning between 3 and 4 in the afternoon. Some of the CRAs accompany clients to the program.

Shared housing in the community helps adults with developmental disabilities live more independently. Matheny operates five group homes in Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties with each home providing a residence in the community for five to six adults. Most residents enjoy shopping, interacting with neighbors, and working or attending adult day programs, where they participate in athletic activities, create art, take classes, volunteer their time, and become proficient in the use of technology. (See accompanying article about the Hillsborough Day Program.)

An important goal of the Franklin group home is to engage residents in the community in which they live. Wilner and the group home staff make sure that residents have an array of opportunities to get involved in the arts, in religious activities of their choosing, volunteering, participating wherever they can and want to.



While the majority of residents have cerebral palsy as their primary diagnosis, they can also have a long list of associated medical conditions, such as vision and hearing deficits, seizure disorders, and dysphagia, with resulting aspiration problems. Because of these medical complexities, every group home is also staffed with a nurse.

On a typical day, Wilner arrives at the house in Franklin around 7 AM, and first spends time visiting with the residents until 8:30, when they leave the house for their day programs or medical appointments. “If someone on the staff is sick or needs to call out, I’ll substitute for them, since we need all hands on deck,” he explains.

The rest of his day is spent on the many organizational tasks of running the group home. Frequently, telephone conversations with residents’ parents take precedence over these tasks. “I’m in constant contact with parents,” Wilner says. “That’s very important.”

Then he might work on staff timesheets or start on his long list of other calls. “I spend a lot of time on the phone—with the State and with vendors to order food and other supplies, making sure whatever is needed is at the house.” Often, he attends meetings on Matheny’s campus. “There’s never time just to sit around,” he comments.

*continued on page 19*

# His Mantra Is **team**

Jim Hintenach's school spirit is "infectious" — in a very positive way.

**T**he newly named Assistant Principal/Director of Curriculum and Instruction at The Matheny School, Jim Hintenach, is anything but a new man on campus. It was while mowing Matheny's extensive lawns during two summers of his undergraduate college years—about 20 years ago—that he first came to love the place. At the time, his father was working in Matheny's rehabilitation technology department, modifying wheelchairs.

After growing up in Holland Township in New Jersey's Hunterdon County, Hintenach chose elementary education as his major at York College of Pennsylvania, a small school where he could get a good education without incurring significant debt, he explains. What he gained at his summer job at Matheny—where he went "in and out of buildings, interacting with the students"—was a "real appreciation for these students' abilities," he remembers. His Matheny experiences

proved pivotal, sparking an interest in teaching students with developmental disabilities, and steering him to choose special education as his college-minor.

Exactly one day after earning his Bachelor of Science degree (BS) in 1999, he started work in the Youth Advocate Program in York, providing one-on-one support for a 10-year-old boy on the autism spectrum. But when Hintenach's father alerted him to an opening at Matheny the following spring, he jumped at the



Jim Hintenach sits on a bench dedicated to the memory of Matheny student Mackenzie Grace Plick.



# nwork



opportunity to return to the campus to fill in for a teacher on leave. At the conclusion of the year, he was hired as an activities instructor in the Adult Services Program. He liked his job, and “always looking to improve myself and what I could offer students,” he went back to school in 2002, and was certified as a teacher of the handicapped in 2005.

He enjoyed his work as a classroom teacher during the next few years. “I was able to explore some creative instructional opportunities with administrative support from Linda Mullin and Sean Murphy,” he says, recalling a science experiment “where we drove my jeep over rocks to see if the rocks would break or not and to validate students’ predictions, support their data collection, and most of all to have some fun.”

Sports were always front and center in Hintenach’s classroom and life. In 2009, he was able to marry his love of sports with his love of teaching when he successfully applied for the job of adaptive physical education (PE) teacher at The Matheny School. “Our goal is to give every student the chance to move and participate in sports just like anyone else,” he tells. “We wanted to give the students the opportunity to play basketball, football, and baseball, to swim and box, to play lacrosse, mini-golf, golf, you name it. Our job is to

figure out how to make this possible for each and every student. It was challenging but inspired the team’s passion.”

Why such a push for sports? “It builds confidence, gives students opportunities for movement that they may not have sought out, or had an opportunity to engage in, before. It challenges them; and there’s nothing like a little competition amongst peers,” he says smiling. Teaming up with Sean Bielefeldt, Director of Recreation Therapy and Adult Day Health Services at Matheny, as well as physical and occupational therapists, he even helped introduce students to surfing, water skiing, ice skating, and snow-boarding, activities that prove challenging for many able-bodied persons.

“Learning how to adapt the equipment to each person helped me to become a better teacher,” he says. In addition, from 2001 to 2009, he was the power lifting coach for Matheny students training to compete in the Special Olympics; and in 2009, he also earned a Master’s degree in special education.

Always intent on learning more for the benefit of his students, Hintenach went on to earn his supervisor’s certification in 2011, opening the door for him to add educational administration to his list of job-responsibilities. In 2012, he was given the chance to practice his new skills when

he added administrative duties on a part-time, one-day-a-week basis to his busy teaching schedule.

Over the next three years, Hintenach concentrated much of his efforts on (successfully) leading the teachers of elementary level students to collaborate to form teaching centers—moving away from single-teacher instruction to a more collaborative teacher-team approach. In 2015, he took on a full-time position as supervisor of curriculum, where he has continued to develop the collaborative teaching approach, as well as striving to individualize the curriculum to each student’s skills and needs. “The curriculum has to make sense for each student,” he states. “That’s really important.”

He and his team also started a “literacy program for a group of students we felt could benefit from an expanded language arts program,” he says. Working with speech therapists, the teachers encourage students to identify and verbalize words in their environments.

“For some students, this encourages them to use words more in their daily lives, not just in the classroom,” he explains. “We felt we needed to ‘amp-up’ and challenge students to reach higher levels and learn more vocabulary.”

Adding new classes to match the needs of students has also been among his top

priorities. “We want to offer electives to our students—just like other high school students are offered,” he states. “Mat Math” is a class that he is proud of, because it provides students the opportunity to learn math outside of their wheelchairs or in alternate positioning. “Math teacher Laura Sackerman has done a great job introducing movement into the study of math,” he says.

Working on the school newspaper, *The Bulldog Bugle*, is another such elective that has proved popular. Students learn to write articles; take photos; write captions; and plan, edit, design, and produce the issue, just like professionals. Social Media

**“Our team has been addressing the needs of each student for such a long time. Why wouldn't we make sure that the next step is a beneficial one?”**

JIM HINTENACH

is another elective, as is Twenty-First Century Skills, which incorporates technology into the curriculum. Students research topics, communicate via email and social media, and even produce videos.

For instance, “Students have found areas in the community that are not accessible to wheelchairs and they publicize these shortcomings by making short videos of the inaccessible spots,” he says. “They also learn to post Tweets online and take photographs using adaptive technology.” Another elective, which is near and dear to Hintenach’s heart, is the All About Me (PCAST) program for high school students. (See sidebar.)

“We offer 10 or 11 electives now that were not available before,” he says. “That has significantly changed the high school experience here.”

In 2017, Hintenach earned a second Master’s degree—in educational leader-

ship—and a principal’s certification in 2018. Then, on February 1, 2018, he was proud to be named Assistant Principal of The Matheny School, a position he now fills in addition to, not instead of, his role as director of curriculum.

How has his job changed since he assumed the role of assistant principal? “I see myself as a representative of Matheny to the outside world,” he says, “And I take that role very seriously.”

Working more with parents is also a major priority for him. “Parents need more support,” he explains. “While Matheny does everything it can to expand opportunities for students during their school years, resources are often not available in the community after the student graduates. And the parents do not know where to turn.” Since most of the students will not be able to hold jobs, “those post-graduation resources are critical to their well-being.”

Greater student-safety, as well as working more with the human resources aspects of running the school, particularly in the area of staffing, are also important pieces of his job, as is ensuring that each graduate is “equipped” for life after graduating from Matheny. “Every student leaving here needs access to the technology that he or she can productively use,” he says.

Among his future plans are working to secure more State funding for post-graduation programs for Matheny’s students in the community, but, he admits, that may take several more years.

A husband to Andi and father of two children, Jimmy and Rylee, Hintenach leads a busy life when he leaves Matheny’s campus each day. He spends most of his nonworking hours with his family and has consistently served as coach of his children’s soccer, basketball, and baseball youth teams for years.

“Working with teams to bring out each person’s best” and “always working to improve yourself” are the underlying themes that have guided and moved his own life. It is those very principles that he strives to help implement for every new student coming through Matheny’s doors, and every new graduate going out to live life beyond Matheny’s classrooms. **MM**

## Getting to Know You

The new PCAST program makes all the difference.

**H**igh school graduation is a joyous and much-celebrated occasion, but one that often stirs up feelings of apprehension for both student and family. Where will students go after graduation and what will they do? Will the passage to adulthood present the student with increased opportunities for independence and self-expression or be fraught with anxiety? Can family members provide the necessary guidance to the graduate or do they need support and assistance?

Students with complex developmental disabilities, like those at The Matheny School, will likely not go on to college or employment. Their families often need help when approaching this major life transition. “We want to provide the best individual transition possible for our graduating high school students and help connect each student to the community,” says Matheny School Assistant Principal and Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jim Hintenach.

That is the underlying philosophy behind a program initiated at Matheny just over two years ago, called “All About Me,” which is already being acclaimed for its positive effects. The program is part of a New Jersey Department of Education initiative entitled, “Person Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition,” or PCAST, and helps high school students identify their likes and dislikes, the activities they enjoy and those they do not, and in so doing start to make plans for the future that reflect what is important to them as individuals and what will enhance their growth.

Hintenach explains that during this class, offered in the last three years of high school (students with complex

needs graduate at age 21), each student participates in an array of planned experiences, such as a swim class, a music class, a yoga class, and specific community trips. “We then gather each individual’s responses to these experiences and use this data to make suggestions for what the student would benefit from doing post-graduation,” he says. “It helps students answer the questions: ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What can I do after I graduate?’”

After graduation, students either go to Matheny’s Adult Day Program or participate in a day program in the community, according to where the student resides. Members of Matheny’s team of speech, physical, and occupational therapists; social workers; and an SLE (Structured Learning Experience) certified instructor go out to collect data on the area’s day programs.

“That is also part of our person-centered approach,” explains Hintenach. “Our team visits the program to assess how effectively it could meet an individual student’s needs. We ask, ‘How would this be for the student? Does this program have activities that the student would like?’ Then we make a recommendation that will work for that individual student, although ultimately the choice is up to the student and family.”

Instructors from Matheny’s Adult Services program visit the “All About Me” classroom twice each marking period and lead an activity for students, both building a rapport with them and introducing students to what they can expect if they go to the Matheny program. Students are invited to try out the classes in Adult Services several times during the year to gauge which aspects would be a good fit for them.

Ultimately, “All About Me” classroom activities are geared to generate information about the student that is valuable in planning next steps. “The team gathers and then shares all of the data with the parents, and based on that information about the student, recommends day programs for the family to visit,” explains Hintenach. “One or two of us will go out with the parents on these visits.” The Assistant Principal is often one of the group.

In November of graduation year, each

family, including the student, is invited to “Lunch with PCAST”— an opportunity to sit down and chat with PCAST teacher Felicia Querrey and speech-language therapist Brynna McGinnis, who team-teach “All About Me”; the Assistant Principal; an adult services instructor; and other team members. At this intimate



Brad Goldman, a graduate of The Matheny School, at the Hillsborough Day Program. An artist and designer of customized greeting cards with his own business, Brad delivered the address at this year’s graduation.

lunch, parents and the team discuss the information that has been gathered on the interests, communication and learning styles, and everyday-living details of the individual student.

“At that point, we still have six months to explore future opportunities for the individual student,” says Hintenach, who says the lunches have been very positive.

In the spring of the final high school year, each student makes a presentation of what he or she learned about himself through “All About Me” at a gathering called “The Reveal.” Last year there were six students and each student spoke, using voice-technology or communicating through a staff person whom they chose to speak on their behalf.

During class instruction, students prepare a brochure entitled “All About Me,” detailing vital information about themselves. That brochure will accom-

pany them to their next home and day program to quickly let staff know about their preferences and personalities.

Cathi Kattermann, a special education teacher whose 22-year-old daughter Katy attended The Matheny School from age 7 until graduation last year, says “This is a fabulous, fabulous program. We all have hopes and dreams for our children. The Matheny team is fantastic at helping parents and their children take that next big step. And we leave with a beautiful snapshot of our child’s abilities and challenges. The team helped me with my goal, which is to do everything I can to make Katy’s life complete.”

“The parents’ response to the program has been amazing,” states Hintenach. “They have been so complimentary of the process.”

He says that the meetings at times can be emotional for parents and the team, but “we all know that we are there with the best interests of the students in mind. Some priceless interactions among the team, families, and students have taken place,” he says.

Maryanne Tortorello, mother of 22-year-old Mary Rita, who also graduated from The Matheny School in 2017, says the PCAST program helps students to understand that they are leaving school and entering the adult world, and also helps to prepare parents. “The program is exceptional, truly preparing students for what’s next,” she says. “And the brochure is fabulous. Anyone reading it would quickly know Mary Rita’s likes and dislikes, her needs and her favorite activities, what makes her happy and what makes her sad, and her hopes for the future. My daughter understands what’s happening and loves to be challenged even though she’s trapped in a wheelchair. This program is awesome.”

“Our team has been addressing the needs of each student for such a long time. Why wouldn’t we make sure that the next step is a beneficial one?” says Hintenach. “At times, it’s tough for our team to remain the neutral party, but we understand that we are here to ensure a smooth transition for every graduate.”

## Art That Speaks Volumes

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### The Nuts and Bolts of Making It Happen

As you might imagine, Arts Access is a very popular program. The weekly schedule—with half-hour time slots blocked off and four different disciplines ongoing at one time—looks overwhelming. There are even evening classes.

“We conduct 220 sessions per week to accommodate everyone who wants to take part,” Murray explains. Group home residents are welcome to participate. Arts Access also offers programs at other locales, such as the Hillsborough Adult Day Program.

“One of the notable things that we’ve observed is that signature styles emerge over time,” says Murray. “That reaffirms the integrity of the process by demonstrating that it does not matter who the facilitator is. It’s always the artist’s unique style coming through.”

Murray herself is an artist. She had a well-established career in corporate advertising and design, and is a fine artist as well, continuing to practice her own art as a painter, printmaker, and jewelry designer. She first visited the campus in 2001 but knew nothing about Arts Access until she did some background research. When she witnessed with her own eyes how the process of art facilitation works, “I felt I was meant to be here.”

“I knew what making art had always meant to me,” Murray says. “Our clients have art, creativity, vision inside them. They just need another tool to enable them to express that.”

### Keeping an Audience in Mind

Choosing which pieces of art to display at the annual Full Circle event is one of the challenging responsibilities of Arts Access Project and Event Coordinator Haeree Park. She examines more than 2,000 artworks in the digital database, choosing pieces by 60 or so artists, a huge undertak-



### Running With Champions

**F**acilitation Assistant Peter Giessner holds two degrees from Rutgers: a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Master of Library Science. “I like to study people and I’m also a big fan of books,” he explains. He worked for many years as a librarian and as an assistant editor for a large publishing house.

In 2010, he was looking for a new opportunity where he could work more closely with people, something that would be “very fulfilling. I’m from a large family and I have an autistic brother. My strength is connecting with individuals.”

His current job entails moving clients around the campus, ensuring that everyone gets to the right place at the right time safely, even in bad weather, which can be challenging. “I push clients up and down the Matheny hill on a regular basis,” he says. “I’m happy to help make it hap-

pen. That’s my job—to make the logistics work.”

As part of his current job, “I find out what works to calm each person. I know books and I get to know which books work with each client. I love to read aloud, different parts in different voices. I can make the client comfortable.”

He also often reads the clients’ work aloud, both for the writer and in public presentations. “I love to make the words come alive,” he says. “Some of the work is hilariously funny. Sometimes, writers have never heard their work read aloud.”

“Before coming here, I had never heard that individuals with developmental disabilities could do their own art,” he states. “When I heard that at the job interview, it brought tears to my eyes. I wished my brother could have had this.”

ing. She wants the entire show to tell the story—to be cohesive—and wants to tell the individual stories, too. She also sets up art exhibitions on and off site, and submits clients’ artwork for juried art shows.

Park came to Matheny 10 years ago. “I fell in love with the program,” she says. “You get more and more involved. It happens to everyone.”

What she has come to know over the years, is “that the artists share their raw emotions through the arts and trust us to exhibit them in different venues. This work is second to none.”

So, when you drive through the Somerset Hills to attend Full Circle in November, know that you will see picturesque views of the rolling countryside, and even pastoral scenes of sheep grazing in the fields. But when you enter the Robert Schonhorn Arts Center, those views—beautiful as they are—will be eclipsed by the incredible work created by the Arts Access artists. And know that if this is your first visit, you’ll get hooked; and next year you’ll be back to join with the artists once again to celebrate their amazing artistic achievements. **MM**

## A Life of Their Own

*continued from page 13*

Running any household requires an ongoing commitment to the many details of daily living. This household requires that and much more. All meals are prepared and all laundry is done in-house while the clients are away. Cleaning is also done during those hours, as well as taking care of repairs to the house and general upkeep.

As the “point of contact for everything” that goes on in the home, Wilner says he responds to calls 24 hours a day, and comes in on Saturdays and Sundays if needed.

**“The feeling you get when you solve a problem for them — it’s really rewarding.”**

WILNER CENOPHAT

This group home manager feels deep personal satisfaction fulfilling his job duties, approaching it in much the same way as he has approached his other Matheny jobs. “I worked to be the best personal care assistant and the best instructor that I could be, and I try now to be the best group home manager,” he says.

There’s a lot that can go wrong running a house like this one. “It’s challenging,” he comments. “But I have a good relationship with the clients. I’ve known them since they were kids. They feel comfortable with me and I with them.”

“I advocate for them,” he continues. “I have strong relationships with the parents, too. They also feel comfortable talking with me.”

Wilner uses the word “preemptive” to describe his approach to keeping everything running smoothly. Each morning, he asks clients: “What’s going on? How are things going?” with the hope of hearing about concerns and potential issues, and heading off problems.



Group home resident Paul Santo with Wilner Cenophat

“I’m there for them, to give them professional care for all aspects of their life,” he tells. “I talk seriously with the clients, but we also joke and go to activities together where we have fun.”

Problem-solving on behalf of his clients is what motivates Wilner each work day. “The feeling you get when you solve a problem for them—it’s really rewarding,” he says. “The best feeling for me is when the day is over and I am going over things in my mind, and I know that the clients have had a good day.”

Knowing that he makes a big difference in the lives of the clients that he serves is Wilner’s greatest satisfaction, but he never searches out praise or glory for the tough job he does, keeping the residents’ lives and their home running smoothly night and day.

“This is their house, this is their home,” he says simply. “And their accomplishment is my accomplishment.” **MM**



## Miles to Go for Matheny

It was a day of fun, festivities, and excitement. It was also a day of camaraderie, team-building, and amazing fund-raising success. This year's Miles for Matheny, held on June 3rd in Peapack's Liberty Park, was an event to remember, featuring a plethora of outdoor activities including bike races; wheelchair, walking, and running events; kids fun; and food provided by the always generous Friends of Matheny volunteer group. The event was also a celebration of the life of Charles Matheny, son of the founders of The Matheny School, who was an icon of determination, hope, friendship, and achievement for those with developmental disabilities. He lived his life on the Matheny campus and died there at his home on December 14, 2017.

The hundreds of participants arrived ready for a day of fun, but they also had another goal in mind. Volunteers, staff, parents, friends, and large and small businesses joined hands to raise more than \$120,000 to help support Matheny and its many vital activities on behalf of students, residents, and patients. This was the 21st year that "Miles" was held and it was bigger and better than ever.

So many individuals, teams, and corporations deserve resounding applause for their outstanding contributions. We want to name them all, but space is limited. Here are the names of some who helped place this year's event in the annals of Matheny history, and the pictures serve to tell the rest of the story of this memorable milestone day.

Thank you to all who supported Miles for Matheny 2018.



## Top team fundraisers (over \$500) include:

Rolling With Scott \$18,125 • Team Andy Lash \$8,537  
 • Team Desatnick \$6,670 • Ambroziak Crew \$1,500  
 • Ally's Allies \$1,011 • Team Tammy \$1,000 • Lewis Family \$600

## Top individual fundraisers (\$200 and up)

**include:** Russell Eike \$805 • Todd Smith \$800 • John Taurozzi \$600 • Clive Morgan \$475 • Geeta Acharya \$250 • Kimberly Foreman \$250 • Michael Movsovich \$250

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## Remembering Gerald Sydell

**G**erald Sydell, DDS, a long-time advocate for Matheny, died on September 8, 2018. His extraordinary career included 42 years practicing general dentistry and orthodontics in Cranford, NJ, followed by an almost 20-year term as Chairman of the Board of Delta Dental of New Jersey, and his simultaneous involvement on Matheny's Board of Trustees.



In his early years with Delta Dental, Sydell was part of a decision to give a grant of \$1,500 to Matheny to provide orthodontic work for several Matheny residents. However, those funds were never used because it was impossible to do the orthodontics without the proper equipment.

Rather than walk away from the project, Sydell worked with Delta Dental to come up with funds to create a clinic on the Matheny campus that could accommodate patients with special needs. Delta Dental has made annual contributions to purchase new equipment and take care of renovations.

Over the years, Sydell's involvement in Matheny grew. When he was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees, he readily consented. He gave particular attention to decisions related to the dental clinic.

Sydell served on the Board of Delta Dental until 2016, helping to guide its enormous growth. Contributing to Matheny was a pervasive theme throughout his tenure. "Our entire Board was so enthusiastic about Matheny," he said. Among his wishes for Matheny was a full-time dentist. "Patients have to wait such a long time for treatment."

"I know that anyone who is thinking of volunteering or giving a charitable donation will find this place hard to resist," he stated. "My passion for Matheny has been my primary hobby for years. I think Matheny is God's gift to New Jersey."

## contact us

**Matheny**  
 908-234-0011  
[www.matheny.org](http://www.matheny.org)

**Assistive Technology**  
 908-234-0011, ext 764

**Friends of Matheny**  
 908-234-0011, ext 282  
[www.friendsofmatheny.org](http://www.friendsofmatheny.org)

**Matheny School**  
 908-234-0011, ext 234  
[mathenyschool@matheny.org](mailto:mathenyschool@matheny.org)

**Rehabilitation Technology**  
 908-234-0011, ext 785

## Generous Grant for Arts Access Program

**T**he New Jersey State Council on the Arts recently awarded a grant of more than \$37,000 to Matheny's innovative Arts Access Program. The prestigious FY19 award is part of a three-year funding cycle. The grant demonstrates New Jersey's commitment to the arts for people with disabilities and for underserved populations. The Arts Council also announced Matheny as an FY19 Major Presenting and Service Organization and awarded it a Citation of Excellence.

Matheny's Arts Access Program has greatly benefited from the long-term and strong support of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, which also helps to bring the artists' work to the public eye through events such as Full Circle. Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, Arts Access is one of the leading fine arts programs for people with disabilities in the State.





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**Saturday, November 3, 3:00-6:00pm**

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Event proceeds benefit the Matheny Arts Access Program



Register online: [artsaccessprogram.org/event/full-circle-2018](http://artsaccessprogram.org/event/full-circle-2018)  
Admission: \$50 • Tickets: 908-234-0011 x260 • [pcats@matheny.org](mailto:pcats@matheny.org)



All event proceeds will benefit the Arts Access Program at Matheny. Arts Access is a unique fine arts program where individuals with disabilities can fully express themselves in the creative arts.



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