

# THE OPEN DOOR

PROVIDING QUALITY CARE TO DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGH COMMUNITY LIVING

## A GALA TO REMEMBER

The 18th Annual CLC Foundation Gala, held on Sunday, November 12, was a resounding success with guests packing the ballroom at Greentree Country Club in New Rochelle. An art show presented by Hidden Treasures kicked off the day, followed by a cocktail hour, dinner, dancing, and awards presentations.



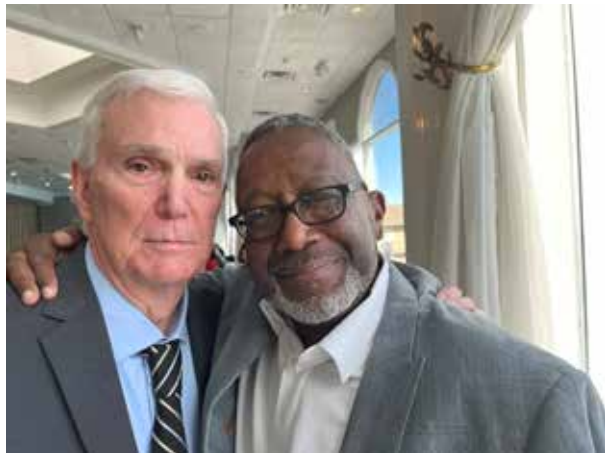
Every year, we recognize outstanding individuals and companies that have demonstrated extraordinary leadership, commitment and support for the disabled community. This year's Gala honorees were no exception and included one very special honoree.

*Photos P. 2; Story continued P. 3;*





A GALA TO REMEMBER



GALA  
2023



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

The Greentree Country Club of New Rochelle was the perfect venue for CLC Foundation's 18th Annual Gala and Fundraiser. Each year, CLCG selects a few people or corporations to be honored at the event.

This year the two nominees included Valley National Bank from the corporate sector and myself (a surprise and great honor!)

As one of the three original founders of the agency we now know as CLC, I am proud that we have grown exponentially since it was created more than 33 years ago. I expect it to continue to flourish.

Successes such as this do not occur in a vacuum, nor do they just magically appear. It takes a real team of like-minded people, all rowing in the same direction. This is the precise collaborative spirit CLC has found with the Valley National Bank of New York. We thank you for your assistance and look forward to working together in the future.

Next, I would be completely remiss if I failed to direct thanks and accolades to the entire staff, without whom this agency could not function. This group, our direct care staff, is often unseen but re-

mains vital to our success. I thank them for every single thing they do every single day.

You may or not be aware of the special luncheon which occurs every December. This is the ceremony in which we recognize our staff at various levels of employment. This year we recognized 16 people for more than 15 years of service. Nine people have been here more than 20 years! Two individuals have been with CLC for more than 30 years.

Things certainly have changed. At the end of this year's luncheon, the conversation drifted to old stories about how the person "found" his or her way to CLC. Imagine the first person to say they found us in the PennySaver! Their story continued and three more PennySaver recruits were found.

We were reminded of a time when you could simply place an advertisement in the PennySaver and a few days later you were scheduling interviews with the many responses received. The changes that we face today are beyond challenging; especially when compared to the current staff shortages and the larger issues.



To be cited for recognition by those we serve is, indeed an honor, and one that could never have been considered without the day-to-day efforts of dozens of staff, morning, noon, and night.

I was flattered and yes, a bit overwhelmed to read so many nice things printed for all posterity in the event Gala Journal. Looking out at the sea of faces served to validate what I felt.

I thank all of you for your participation in making this a very, very special day.

Be well!

*John Porcella*

A GALA TO REMEMBER

CLC's CEO, John Porcella PhD, was lauded for Excellence and Influential Leadership. Several people spoke about John's steadfast commitment and exemplary service to CLC over the years. Also of note is that this is John's 30th year with the agency.

Valley Bank was also celebrated for Outstanding Service and Community Support, a fitting honor for this local bank that gives so much back to the community.

As in years past, 100% of the proceeds from this year's event will go towards our core programs, which greatly enhance quality of life for the disabled. This year the CLC Pooled Trust provided financial assistance to over 330 dis-

abled individuals. The Winslow Therapeutic Center served over 1,000 adults and children with special needs utilizing the horse in therapy and education. Over 100 developmentally disabled adults participate in weekly classes through our Hidden Treasures program, which teaches self-expression through studio and performing arts.

The Annual CLCF Gala represents our greatest fundraising effort of the year. More importantly, it is CLCF tradition that the Gala also serve as a celebratory event for our clients and their families. This year over 140 disabled adults joined the party! We are most grateful for all our guests and supporters, and if you missed us this year, we hope you can join us in 2024!

*Denyele Urcioli, ED, CLC Foundation, Inc.*



## A GALA TO REMEMBER



*Heartfelt thanks to all the staff and volunteers who helped make this an outstanding event!*





## WALKIN' IN THE WINTER ON THE FARM

The Winslow community has been in full gear during the year end holidays. Offices and classrooms decorated. Check. Plenty of wholesome food. Check. Doing charitable deeds. Check.

Three trees were beautifully decorated in the school and offices with handmade ornaments. A Menorah also on display, crafted in the studio, and snowflakes hanging from the ceiling. Very festive indeed.

Winslow clients have been busy baking and cooking up a storm in Winslow's kitchen during November and December. They have been hands on with so many things, like cookies, home-made pizza, tomato sauce from the tomatoes they grew from seed in our garden, soup, and an applesauce cake for Lawrence's birthday. Linda and Fran have helped them learn a lot about ways to make recipes healthier utilizing ingredients from our garden they harvested and froze this fall. Yum.

Naturally, everyone loves the animals at Winslow. Seasonally appropriate, one of our favorites is Eeyore, our Nazarene Donkey. Rebecca led a number of animal behavior sessions, where the group learned about one of our seven herds in the indoor arena. (Baby, it's cold outside.) She explained to the group the horses' behaviors towards each other. A large number of the participants understand and read a horse's body language very well. Of course, the horses *love* to interact with them.

Last, but definitely not least, the group collects bottles and cans to recycle all year long. They bring them from home and our staff does as well. Sometimes they buy things for a horse they're working with regularly, or they buy Winslow shirts for their group. This year, they decided that they wanted to buy a few toys to donate to our local Knights of Columbus Toy Drive, which was so generous!

A great way to celebrate wintertime, the holidays and our wonderful Winslow community. Triple check!



## ROGER COOPER HONORS JOHN PORCELLA

*(Roger Cooper's speech delivered at the 2023 CLCF Gala.)*

Dr. John Porcella has spent his entire life helping make the lives of others the best they can be. His selfless dedication has touched many thousands of individuals, and we can all learn from him, how a life dedicated to service should be led.

In the 1970's and 1980's, John worked diligently, helping the developmentally disabled at the Rhinebeck Country Vocational School. Here, hundreds of children were taken care of, leading to individuals with a far happier life thanks to the efforts of John and others.

In 1988, John was teaching Psychology at Hunter College when Mezoff Associates was converted to Community Living Corporation (CLC) under the direction of John Signorelli. John Porcella was asked to become the first Chairman of the CLC Board. It was at that time when I first got to know JP, (as John Porcella is called within CLC). Ever since then I am honored to call him a close friend. In 1990, JP was hired as Deputy Executive Director of CLC.

John Porcella took over as Executive Director of CLC in July 1998 and has done an outstanding job leading the Agency ever since. He cared deeply about each and every person that entered the program. Not only did he make it his duty to know the name of each individual, but also to know the likes, dislikes, family, and history of the individual and then to work diligently to find ways in which the life of that person could be made more productive and joyous.

One such individual, Jo-Jo, is a typical example of the extent to which John went to help each person. She was a resident who did not want to



JP & Roger at 2023 Gala

participate in anything. John chatted with her and asked – What is it you like to do Jo-Jo? "I like to eat," came the reply. So, Jo-Jo's Café was born. She sold drinks and food to staff and learned that she needed a loan to buy a refrigerator, which she soon paid off. Over time this has created the Café at our head office that employs many residents and makes it today the center of social activity.

This is just one of the many ways that John has helped the developmentally disabled. He, with Delores Lulgjuray created a behavioral model that is the envy of the industry and being adopted by others. It was through his leadership that CLC became one of only 6 "COMPASS" Agencies in NY State being recognized for excellence in internal control, and he also helped mentor other agencies to attain COMPASS status.

Everywhere John turned his attention, such as opening new houses and apartments in record time; opening specialty programs like Prader-Willi homes and houses for the elderly, as well as caring for staff and everyone that John met along the way,

have made him a luminary in the field. We have been very fortunate that he has dedicated his life efforts to CLC.

In 2020 when work began to merge all the Affiliates into the CLC Group, John was named as the first CEO of the Group that now serves some 2,500 people in 8 different fields. Today, as he starts considering the possibility of retirement, we honor him and the legacy he has left behind.

Can I ask all of you to stand so we can join me in a toast to John, and his 35 years of dedication to CLC?

John, it has been and continues to be a great joy for all of us to have known you, learned from you and indeed consider you a friend and a legend in the field of the developmentally disabled.

Roger J. Cooper  
Chairman of the Board  
CLC Group



## A TRIBUTE TO JOHN PORCELLA

John Signorelli

(This tribute was presented at the 2023 CLCF Gala.)

I have known John Porcella for half a century. We first met at Sagamore Children's Hospital when we were both in our twenties. Before working together at CLC we ran the Rhinebeck Country School together and a public company in the Equine industry. So, it's fair to say we know each other pretty well, my deepest condolences for having to put up with me.

We have been through a lot together and have been very successful. And, when you work with someone for so long and in so many different capacities you learn the measure of a man. And by all measures Dr. Porcella is at the very highest level.

I bet a lot of you didn't know John has a PhD. in Psychology... well, since he was always too modest to share that, I will. You see, for John, it was always about the people he helped and the agency or company he oversaw, it was never about himself.

At CLC John has accomplished what most only dream about. While being Executive Director and CEO of CLC for

the last 25 years he has helped hundreds of disabled individuals have independent and fulfilling lives and provided hundreds of jobs for healthcare professionals. All the while, paying most attention to the safety, good emotional and physical health of all involved.

When we think of John we immediately think of his caring, great intelligence and reliability. In over 50 years I can't think of one time whereby I didn't trust his judgment and his compassion for those less fortunate.

Having the honor of not only knowing John all these years professionally but also personally I can tell you without question that his greatest love and passion is for his daughter Allison and his grandson, Ryan. If you ever want to see John's eyes light up and hear him talk proudly, just mention his daughter or grandson. As a matter of fact, if you don't jump in he really will keep talking about them forever!

This brings us to John's sense of humor. We have all had the great pleasure of enjoying John's dry sense of humor and quick wit. Oftentimes it

takes us a second or two to catch up! Which of course makes it even funnier when he sits stone faced and waits patiently for us to get it. Then we all have a good laugh together.

In closing, we are here to honor Dr. Porcella, an exceptional and caring colleague, friend and CLC leader. Not a moment has gone by whereby John wasn't acutely aware of everything that is important to CLC and its families, clients and staff. Always demonstrating that the mission of CLC is to serve those that are less fortunate.

John, you are in a league of your own. It's been an honor to work with you the last 50 years... it's been quite a run! We honor you today and going forward for your unwavering commitment to helping those that are less fortunate and thank you with all our hearts for your tremendous leadership, great wisdom and selfless service to all.

John Signorelli  
Vice Chair, CLC Group

### eNews Updates

We Search the Web to Bring You the Latest News

In a new study, researchers examined the experiences of more than 22,000 adults across the nation who participated in the 2021 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, a federal government survey that asks about people's experiences with health care. They found that those with cognitive disabilities including intellectual and developmental disabilities were significantly less satisfied overall with their health care services and had worse experiences with providers.

The biggest issues had to do with provider communication and the amount of time they spent with patients with disabilities. Researchers said that adults with cognitive disabilities should do more to prepare for interactions with healthcare providers, including requesting any accommodations that could improve their experience.

Disability advocates have pushed in recent years for a requirement that all medical schools include specific training on treating people with these disabilities.

Sourced from: *The Disability Scoop*

People with Intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely than others to say that physicians don't listen to them, spend enough time with them or offer advice that's easy to understand.

## HOWARD B. HONORED BY NOR-WEST

Howard B. was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Nor-West during their 50th Anniversary Gala on October 7th, 2023.

A participant at Nor-West since its beginnings in 1973, Howard is regarded as a legend at the organization, always eager to assist with their programs. He is affectionately referred to as the "Mayor of Nor-West."

During his tenure, Howard was a star athlete with Nor-West's Special Olympic team, earning the nickname "Downtown" for his remarkable ability to sink long shots on the basketball court. An avid New York Knicks fan, he was also a skilled goaltender for the Nor-West hockey team for many years.

When asked how he felt receiving this honor, Howard replied, "I was happy and emotional to get this award because I was at Nor-West for so long!"



At the Gala, Peekskill mayor Vivian McKenzie presented Howard with a special proclamation from the City of Peekskill. Congratulations to Howard B. for receiving this prestigious honor! Your CLC family is so very proud of you.

## HIDDEN TREASURES ANNUAL SHOW

An Arts Education Program for People with Special Needs



The Hidden Treasures Annual Show struck the right note again this year with magical performances. Titled "The Time of Your Life," the show offered a medley of pop and old time tunes, poetry, dance and drama.

Emcee Lawrence Cherry opened the show with Janet Calciano, who sang the classic "God Bless America."

Highlights included The Choral Ensemble, who sent the audience down memory lane with "Be My Baby" and "Under the Boardwalk." The Modern Dance group wowed with "Come on Eileen," and Musical Drama's "The Circle of Life," gave everyone chills!

Kudos to our teachers for working all year with student performers to put on a "really great show." Special thanks to HT Director Sharron Sinnott!



Spring and Fall HT classes include:

Studio Art  
Arts & Crafts  
Choral Group  
Modern Dance  
Musical Drama





## WHERE THE CC LIFE WINDS BLOW

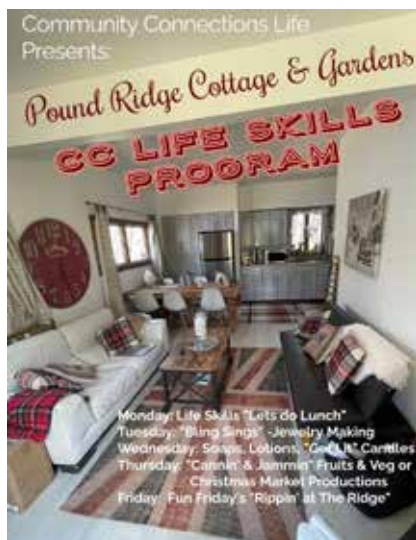
Jack Mungovan

The Community Connections Life fall whirlwind blew into autumn bringing with it the opening of the Pound Ridge Cottage and Gardens. A delightful chalet became Santa's workshop in November and December, where jams and jellies, scenting and melting wax for candles, perfuming lotions and holiday crafts were made for the big event.

Trips and retreats continued to Mystic CT and Cotuit MA with more to be announced. Who knows, we may even ski this year. The ideas keep coming.

*The Creatives* film and recording studio, a new division of CC Life, generated artistic postings for our Instagram page: Community Connections\_Life. Recording software and green screen technology became the stage for our folks to shine. The theatrical Christmas medley will reach as many email inboxes as we can find. And of course, on Instagram.

October brought back the YOLO Lounge (You Only Live Once), a pop-up nightclub held in a real Pelham restaurant. Newly furnished and trendy, folks costumed up, dined, danced and won cash prizes at our October Halloween Party. A spectacular spooky success!



Our Café in Mount Kisco was revitalized with a new menu, but the coup de gras was our Christmas Markets debut at the main offices held in mid-December. Festive tables of gifts, lotions and body scrubs, candles and jewelry became a platform for entrepreneurship leading to our individuals creating paintings, stuffed animals, necklaces and bracelets. Let's not forget the holiday brownies and hot chocolate stand. It inspired initiative, marketing, sales, and profit for those making and selling their own goods.

It's been a great finish to 2023 with abilities being found, encouraged and enjoyed. CLC's Community Connections is a platform for our nearest and dearest to shine and set new standards for their lives.



The YOLO Lounge at Halloween!



Santa Jack



## CELEBRATING EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Employees celebrating service milestones from 15 to 30 years were honored at a luncheon on November 29. Board members and executive directors of the CLC family of companies joined the festivities, which were held at Mount Kisco's Mardino's Restaurant.



JP, Sarah & Roger



### 15 Years

CLC:  
Claude Ferdinand  
Nixon Ngaji  
Robert Pavelka  
Diana Robinson  
Kevin TeCarr  
Sheila Thompson

### 20 Years

CLC:  
Tom Okiro  
Carol Smith  
  
EFMNY:  
Elise Zaussmer



### 25 Years

CLC:  
Joseph Nyaware  
Joan Varricchio

### 30 Years

CLC:  
Norma Jones  
  
CLCGS:  
John Porcella

CLCGS:  
Sarah Fiske  
Irene Quill



Joan & JP



JP & Norma

## CLC HOLIDAY PARTY & MILESTONES



CLC's holiday party on December 7 at Villa Barone in Mahopac was another holiday success. Everyone was in a festive mood as they enjoyed a night of great dining, lots of dancing and plenty of good cheer.

Employees celebrating service milestones for 5 and 10 years were honored, and those staff who were in attendance received years of service awards. In the CLC tradition, the night ended with a raffle of gift cards for everything from Amazon to Target to gas to local restaurants.

### 5 Years

CLC: Christopher Chambers, Bhushani Kumar  
Janelle Petrie, Crystal Cureton,  
Velvett Kennedy, Layla Calderon, Sherri Dais

CLCGS: Kara LaMay, Dina Thompson  
CLCT: Desiree Antonini CLCF: Justin Endrikat

### 10 Years

CLC: Suzette Barrett, Kim Lake,  
Yuribel Mejia

CLCF: Nicole Ferro



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## ***THE OPEN DOOR***

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## **Got News?**

### ***Share It!***

We welcome your CLC news

Story suggestions,  
events and especially the  
name of someone you think  
would be a good  
interview candidate.

Email Deb, Annette  
or Irene (emails at left)

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