

# THE OPEN DOOR

PROVIDING QUALITY CARE TO DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGH COMMUNITY LIVING

## EMPLOYEE HOLIDAY PARTY 2024!

The CLC Group employee holiday party, held at Villa Barone on December 12, was a fun and festive celebration capping off another incredible year. CLC individuals had a wonderful time handing out the employee milestone awards and participating in the raffles. They did a great job!

After the awards and the always delicious dinner, absolutely everyone was on the dance floor celebrating the closeout of the season in style.

- Fabian Patino





## TO SIRs, JOHN AND ROGER

As John Porcella and Roger Cooper take their leave, we want to tell them what is in our hearts and minds. Words alone cannot convey our gratitude, but we'll try....

### TO SIRs, WITH LOVE AND THANKS

*Those many wonderful years  
Of John and Roger at the helm  
have come to an end  
But in our minds  
We know they will still live  
on and on*

*So how do you thank two people  
who have taken us from startup  
to CLC today?  
It isn't easy, but we'll try*

*If you wanted the sky  
We'd try to write across the sky  
in letters  
That would soar a thousand  
feet high  
"To sirs, with love & thanks"*

*The time has come  
For final meetings and long  
last looks, they must end  
And as you both leave  
Please know that you are leaving  
your best friends*

*Friends you guided through  
hard times and rejoiced in the  
good ones  
We all had a lot to learn  
What can we give you  
in return?*

*If you wanted the moon  
We would try to make a start  
But we would rather you let us  
give our gratitude  
"To sirs, with love and thanks"*



John Porcella, PhD served CLC individuals and their families for 35 years, including as Executive Director and most recently as CEO of CLC Group. In 2025, he will join the CLC Board

Roger J. Cooper, PhD held the position of Chair of the CLC Board for decades and spearheaded myriad vital initiatives for the agency.



### GETTING REEL WITH STEPHEN



MOVIE AND PLAY REVIEWS FROM  
CLC'S IN-HOUSE EXPERT

### Wicked! PG-13



On Sunday, November 24, I saw the movie, *Wicked*. Lots of singing and dancing! It was so good. The movie theater was packed.

It stars Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo. It's about the good witch and bad witch when they were friends growing up.

I think everybody in our agency should see *Wicked*! I give it 10 stars!

### Fun Fridays at Day Hab

CLC employees have the pleasure of hearing the lovely voices of the Day Hab individuals on Fridays. The Day Hab individuals are in a music class three times a week. On Fridays, they all sing together to their favorite songs. It's like Karaoke.

Led by Day Hab staff Les Foreman, he asks the group which song they would like to hear, and then he puts the words to the song up on the TV. It's inspiring to hear the group singing! When I went into Day Hab, the group was singing "Can't Help Falling In Love" by Elvis Presley.

Annette Maksoud



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It has often been said that if you enjoy what you do... you will never work a day in your life. I know this to be true because I'm one of those fortunate people who was very, very lucky to enjoy nearly every moment of my work.

If someone were to ask me how all of this came about, I would have to "plead the 5th!" It is amazing how fast everything went whizzing by for a full 35 years... and not one day of it as work.

Of course there were conflicts, of course there were differences and of course there were seemingly endless debates for one's viewpoint or another. What kept this scenario alive was the fact that all of the participants held a deep sense of fairness and respect for one another – it was a terrific place to work, the kind of place you could get lost in.

During these times we watched our mostly young staff raise children and become parents themselves. I watched my daughter grow up in the midst of about one hundred people, all with various developmental disabilities. Today, she is the mother of an eight-year-old with a deep

respect for the efforts of special needs people.

As I look back on this too short journey, there is pride and a sense of joy that creeps in. I am grateful for all the confidence you placed in me. It has been an honor to have served the individuals and families of the larger CLC family.

Almost three decades have passed since we began the CLC story in an old house brimming with 10 disabled people. No one can see the future but if the future is as like the past, then we can all rest easy knowing that we still have the best Agency taking care of their loved ones.

Whoever would have guessed in 1988 that CLC would have grown to its present size? This could never have happened without the leadership of the founder, John Signorelli.

I wish you all the kind of success I have had in my life and when you look back into the past you too can smile the smile knowing how lucky we have

been as this new chapter unfolds before us.

Finally, as I look over this story, I give special thanks to all of our staff from all departments. While not perfect, but always there when we needed them collectively, they are the entity that bares the weight.

On more than one occasion I have been humbled by the skill and professionalism with which our staff performs their assigned duties, day in and day out. Our staff make us look much better than we really are and this correlates directly to the level of care that our individuals receive.

I sincerely hope you all can find the happiness I found so many years ago.

Be well!

*John Porcella*

### Circus, Circus!

The folks from Highland Ave, or *The Highlanders*, as they liked to be called, went to *Do Portugal Circus*, a 5th generation family run circus company on tour in the US. Their talented artists come from all over the world and have spent years mastering their acts.

Stephen, Joseph, James and Joyce were accompanied by staffers Sueli and Shernette, who organized the trip, as they headed for the big top this fall.

The group was awed by the incredible skills of the aerialists and jugglers, held their breath as fearless performers rode motorcycles in the Globe of Death, and laughed at the antics of the hilarious clowns. All agreed it was a great day under the big top!





# CLC FOUNDATION ANNUAL GALA 2024

The CLC Foundation Gala held Sunday, November 17, 2024 at The Greentree Country Club not only celebrated the agency's 19th annual event, it also marked CLC's 35th year in operation. Stronger than ever and thanks to the generosity of our guests, we continue to raise the funds needed to support various programs that enhance the lives of special needs individuals under our care.

This year we honored Matthew Persanis, Esq. and Mark C. Harnett for their outstanding dedication to our organization. Over the many years, these and other individuals have showed steadfast resolve, enabling the CLC Group to be what it is today. For this, we are forever grateful.



CLC's amazing Program Team



CLC guys having a blast!



Hidden Treasures Choral Group performed.



Jenny & brother Ross Moskowitz



Matthew Persanis, Esq. & Family



# FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF CLC

There's a new group in town,  
*Friends and Family of CLC.*  
We hope you will join us.

(Please note: The Parent Support Group is run by CLC parents and not by the Agency)

Our inaugural meeting on November 9th included CLC family members, Interim CEO Denyele Urciuoli, Amy Berman, ED of CLC, and Priscilla Orr, Board Member. Together they developed the framework and goals for the new CLC peer group and how it would create a community for their loved ones who live at CLC.

## Our Goals:

- To collaborate with the CLC agency in achieving our shared goal of delivering the highest quality programming for our loved ones
- To facilitate strong communication between CLC agency and the member families
- To offer mutual support and foster a sense of camaraderie

Headed up by Yan Ni, participants will meet monthly in a hybrid format, via Zoom and at the Radio Circle building. A meeting agenda will be sent out each month. A meeting was held in December, and next gathering is scheduled for Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup> at 2pm, at the CLC Group building and virtually.



Join us and spread the word!

Please Contact:

Yan Ni:  
nigyan@gmail.com

or

Deb Fischer:  
debisc2006@gmail.com

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

This new feature will profile a staff member who has been selected by his or her peers to be "in the spotlight." The nominee will receive a \$100 Amazon gift card.

A CLC staff member since January 2010, Renett Gordon is currently the Assistant Residence Manager of Mose-London Avenue. She was a DSP at Moseman for many years, was promoted to Shift Supervisor in March 2020, and then promoted to ARM in March 2023. All can agree, Renett is a great team player, a good friend and a hard worker.

Renett enjoys attending church, shopping, cleaning, listening to music and traveling to Jamaica.

When asked what is the best part of her job, Renett replies, "The best part is the interaction among myself and our individuals and coworkers." She also mentions she likes that it takes a lot of creativeness to complete the workday.

Amy Berman, CLC Group Executive Director, comments, "My experience working with Renett has been very positive. She is very friendly and will call me directly if she needs something. She always responds to email and phone calls and

is a pleasure to work with. CLC is very lucky to have her as part of our team."

Renett values happiness above all else. "Happiness is paramount," she says. "And it make me happy assisting the elderly and encouraging others to maximize their full potential."

She was recognized at the CLC Group holiday party in December as the winner of the Employee Spotlight. Renett says she was "surprised at her nomination!"





# WINSLOW GOLDEN GALA 2024

Vicki Wolfe

Winslow's Golden Gala was a resounding success as more than 400 people showed up to celebrate their 50th Anniversary on Saturday, September 28th. The Gala raised over \$125,000 from donors to support Winslow's mission of providing equine-assisted services to encourage individuals with disabilities to grow and learn through our diverse and educational programs.

Susan Ferro and Associate Executive Director, Nikki Ferro, were presented with a plaque from Warwick Town Supervisor Jesse Dwyer, a Certificate of Recognition from Mayor Michael Newhard and a Certificate of Recognition from Senator James Skoufis, who presented \$60,000 via a grant from New York State to assist with hardscaping. Dawn Cosgrove and her daughter, Winslow client Parimala Cosgrove, gave a heartwarming presentation about their experiences at Winslow. Parimala gave a live



Left to Right, Matthew Persanis (CLC Board Member), Denyele Urciuoli (ED CLCF), Susan Ferro (ED Winslow), Jennifer Winslow (CLC Board Member), Nicole Ferro (Associate ED) and Robert Brody (CLC Board Chair.)

demonstration of a therapeutic riding session. Susan Ferro remarked, "We are so humbled by the A heartfelt thank you goes to the Gala Committee, the community leaders, and everyone who joined us or supported our event."

Winslow Therapeutic Center is an agency of CLC Group. Healing with Horses since 1974.



CLC individuals & staff had a wonderful time at the Winslow Gala.

# EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Annette Maksoud

CLC's 2024 Employee Milestones Luncheon was held in November at Mardino's Restaurant to celebrate staff achieving 15, 20, 25 and 30 years with the organization.

A special gesture came courtesy of CLC and all its affiliates. Flowers were presented to Roger Cooper, Priscilla Orr and John "JP" Porcella to thank them for their dedication and many years of service. Congratulations to our dedicated employees:

## 15 Years

Community Living Corporation

Sean Brown, Lesford Foreman, Devika Lallman  
Kami Quast, Nikolai Shevelchinsky

Epilepsy Foundation Damian Bursztyn

## 20 Years

Community Living Corporation

Joanna Peart-Raynor, Carol Robotham-Grant

## 30 Years

CLC Group Services, Inc Penny Ayotte



From left, Kami Quast; Nikolai Shevelchinsky; Sean Brown; Carol Robotham-Grant; Joanna Peart-Raynor



# INTRODUCING CLC'S NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS

## A STRONG FUTURE AHEAD

CLC Group is thrilled to announce the appointment of the new Officers of our Board of Directors.

As of our November Board of Directors' meeting, Robert Brody was appointed as Chairman of the Board. Robert was previously the Board Treasure and Vice Chairman. His years of experience with CLC will foster growth and lead CLC Group through this transformational change. He will be pivotal in steering CLC towards our long-term goals.



Matthew Persanis, Esq., having held leadership position as Board Secretary, was appointed to Vice Chairman.

As a family advocate and labor attorney, Matthew will be crucial in continuing the great mission at CLC Group.

Jennifer Winslow, now Board Secretary, grew up with a personal relationship with Winslow TRC.

She brings her professional experience with Nestle to incorporate a mix of both worlds ensuring innovation and support to our employees.



Priscilla Orr returns to her position as Treasurer. Priscilla, formerly Comptroller and Deputy CEO, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field. Priscilla is a

distinguished member of our organization and will navigate the financial future for CLC Group.

Our new Officers join Board Members Pam Conford, Sandra Dammann RN, Christine Johnston, Leo Kaytes, Mina Sallis, Linda Sampson, Esq., Blanca Vasquez M.D. and John Signorelli, Vice Chair Emeritus. We extend a warm welcome to our Board Officers and look forward to the exciting journey ahead.

## HIDDEN TREASURES

Hidden Treasures is a studio and performing arts education workshop for people with special needs. Classes include Arts & Craft, Studio Arts, Musical Drama, Modern Dance and the CLC Choral Group.

Workshops are held weekly at CLC Group main offices at Radio Circle Drive in Mount Kisco, NY.



Hidden Treasures is sponsored by CLC Foundation, Inc. [htreasures.org](http://htreasures.org)



**CLC GROUP**  
**135 RADIO CIRCLE DRIVE**  
**MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549**  
**(914) 239-4700**

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## **CLC GROUP BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Robert Brody, Chair; Matthew Persanis, Esq., Vice Chair  
Jennifer Winslow, Secretary; Priscilla Orr, Treasurer  
Pam Conford, Sandra Dammann RN, Christine Johnston, Leo Kaytes, Mina Sallis,  
Linda Sampson, Esq., Blanca Vazquez, M.D., John Signorelli, Vice Chair Emeritus

Denyele Urciuoli, Interim CEO, CLC Group Services

## ***THE OPEN DOOR***

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**Editor: Deb Descloux [swissx@optonline.net](mailto:swissx@optonline.net)**

**Editorial Assistant/Reporter: Annette Maksoud  
[amaksoud@clcgroup.org](mailto:amaksoud@clcgroup.org)**

**Columnist: Jack Mungovan**

**Special thanks & photo credit:**

**Denyele Urciuoli, Sarah Fiske  
Irene Quill, Vicki Wolf, Marlena Romanowska  
Patti Hurley, Fabian Patino**

## **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 or Annette  
(emails at left)**