A Musical Feast For The Eyes & Ears

Honoring
William & Penny Allyn

Thursday, May 20, 2010
The Lodge at Welch Allyn

See Inside for Details!!
AURORA is working on an exciting collaboration with Comm.UNITY, a group of Syracuse University public relations students, to present “Dessert in the Dark,” an awareness/outreach event. It will take place on Wednesday, April 14th from 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel and Conference Center. Parking is free. Guests will have the option of using a blindfold to literally have “dessert in the dark.”

The evening will include a dessert buffet, speakers, music, and education about sensory loss. With the help of the Syracuse University students and their contacts, we plan to invite students, faculty and administrators, as well as members of the community. The event will be fully accessible and a suggested donation of $5 per person would be appreciated, but no one will be turned away if unable to pay.

In addition, the student group is working on print ads, posters and a website update for AURORA. Call us at 422-7263/ VP or TDD 422-9746 if you would like more information about Dessert in the Dark.

This year’s Musical Feast for the Eyes and Ears fundraiser will be particularly special as we honor a very important partner in AURORA’s success…WELCH ALLYN. William and Penny Allyn are the honorary chairs of our event, which will take place at The Lodge at Welch Allyn on Thursday, May 20, 2010.

“We wanted to celebrate the wonderful support and ongoing commitment to our agency by Welch Allyn,” Debra Chaiken explained. Their foundation has provided much needed funds for equipment and programs and Welch Allyn has been the Presenting Sponsor of our annual fundraiser for the past seven years.

And it will be all in the family, with David Allyn and his band MERE MORTALS providing the musical entertainment along with exciting live and silent auctions. Please mark your calendars and plan on making your reservations early.

For more information, call Diane LaBeff (315) 422-7263.

“Dessert in the Dark” to Promote Awareness
Thank you to the following members and donors who are committed to the continuation of AURORA’s vital services for those with vision and/or hearing loss. Names listed are of those who have contributed from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009. Please notify us of changes or corrections. Thank you!!

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It’s that time of year again to renew or consider a new membership with AURORA of CNY. Every year in January we kick-off an annual membership campaign that runs from January to December of the calendar year. Ninety percent of these dollars go directly to programs and services that impact people’s lives. We are the only non-profit agency in Central New York that is dedicated exclusively to assisting people with vision or hearing loss.

Your membership assists us to help people in every phase of life. Some find jobs; others learn new skills, or obtain vital equipment. All learn to cope with loss and come through it with a sense of confidence and pride. As a thank you, our members are invited to special educational forums and events throughout the year. Your donation is tax-deductible. We appreciate your partnership!

Membership 2010 .. It’s Time to Join Us!!
ForeSIGHT Golf Classic Raises More Than $16,000

Our 13th Annual ForeSIGHT Golf Classic, held in September at Foxfire at Village Green in Baldwinsville, raised more than $16,000 for AURORA. ForeSIGHT was held to raise awareness of the needs of people with vision and hearing loss.

Highlights of the day included an on-site interview of our executive director, Debra Chaiken, by WSYR-TV’s Bridge Street, and an inspirational talk during dinner by Susan Storms, a past recipient of our services.

We would like to thank the golfers, donors, and volunteers who made this wonderful event possible. We’re grateful to the tournament’s major sponsors, Tom Rosa of Empire Vision Centers and Joe Power of the Outback Steakhouse on Erie Blvd. in Syracuse. Outback’s employees volunteered their time to provide a delicious dinner. Thanks also to Jim Noble at Foxfire and Jody Pucello of Foxfire’s Pucello’s Restaurant for hosting our event. A special thank-you to committee chairman John McCormick and tournament founders John and Barbara Scala.

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Empire Vision Centers
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*We thank you for your generous support of our event.*
*We hope you will be able to join us again on May 20, 2010!!*
Scholarship Fund Seeks Donations

AURORA’s Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service (MCIRS) is working with the Central New York Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (CNYRID) to set up a scholarship fund to help non-certified sign language interpreters become certified.

“Progress so far has been stupendous,” said MCIRS director Maggie Russell. “We hope local businesses can add to the fund.” To find out how you can help, call Maggie at 422-7263 (voice), 422-9746 (TDD) or 679-4170 (VP), or e-mail aurorairs@auroraofcny.org.

AURORA’S Collaboration to go National

Video, signs to promote safety on school bus

AURORA has partnered with the Public Transportation Safety Institute (PTSI) to produce safety materials that will help school bus drivers communicate with their Deaf and hard-of-hearing passengers.

“PTSI called us, wanting to know how bus drivers can tell the children to keep their feet out of the aisle, for example,” said Maggie Russell, director of AURORA’s Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service.

Kelley Cooper of AURORA modeled the American Sign Language (ASL) for a picture book and posed for a visual communication manual. Kelley, who is Deaf, is a supported employment specialist. She is featured in the manual signing a variety of directives for the drivers such as “feet- aisle- no,” for example. Her signing will include facial expressions. To see the poster, visit the home page on our website at www.auroraofcny.org.

New Deaf Education Workshops at AURORA

Based on the success of AURORA’s Deaf Empowerment workshop during Deaf Awareness Week, AURORA has developed a Deaf Education series of workshops.

“We had 35 people attend the Deaf Empowerment workshop! I believe that knowledge is power. In this new series we want to provide education to people in the Deaf community on topics where there hasn’t been a lot of awareness before,” said Maggie Russell, director of AURORA’s Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service.

All workshops will be held in the Rosamond Gifford Community Room at 518 James Street, (lower level) in Syracuse. They will be held from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Topics will include:

- “Changing Times at AURORA”
  - March 25, 2010
- “Services in the Community”
  - June 17, 2010
- “Choices as You Get Older”
  - September 16, 2010
- “You Talk-We Listen”
  - December 16, 2010

For more information, call Maggie at 422-7263 (voice), 422-9746 (TDD) or 679-4170 (VP), or e-mail aurorairs@auroraofcny.org
On Dec. 5th, AURORA’s David DeFrancis and Adele DeSavio were special guests and speakers at a meeting of the Syracuse chapter of the National Action Network (NAN). The NAN is a nationwide social and activist organization founded by Al Sharpton. David and Adele told the group about the services AURORA offers. From left in the photo are Syracuse NAN president Walt Dixie; AURORA intern and NAN member Donna Reese; Adele DeSavio; David DeFrancis; and NAN member Tim Simmons.

**Vision Screening at the Spanish Action League**

AURORA’s David DeFrancis and Anne Costa visited the Spanish Action League on January 11th. In one three-hour session, David tested the vision of a dozen people. “This service is important in that we reach people who, because of language barriers or lack of insurance or regular physicals, don’t get their vision screened as often as they should,” David said.

**“Speech Friendly” or “Talking Tax Forms”**

The Internal Revenue Service has made available accessible “Speech Friendly” or “Talking Tax Forms” at [http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/article/0,,id=98135,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/article/0,,id=98135,00.html). These "talking tax forms" work with Microsoft Active Accessibility (MSAA) compliant screen readers as well as Dragon Naturally Speaking Voice Recognition Software. The IRS is using the Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) as a means of distributing government forms as well as other documents. The IRS has made over 650 tax forms available in accessible PDF format. Access the URL to learn more about the accessible tax forms, including software requirements and instructions on how to navigate the forms.
EXCELLENCE AWARDEES 2009

AURORA’s Annual Excellence Awards celebrate the accomplishments of some of CNY’s more extraordinary people.

Joyce Knighton has been involved with AURORA’s Visually Impaired Support Group since 1997; group facilitator Nancy Anderson calls Joyce “a friend to everyone” and says Joyce phones group members between meetings with words of encouragement. Joyce has volunteered to help with AURORA’s mailings and other projects for the agency. She is always willing to lend a hand and is known for her gentle and caring style.

Lisa Roszyk is a junior at Paul V. Moore High School in Central Square, where she is exploring her career options. Her choice to become a teacher of the visually impaired has not been made lightly. Blind since birth, Lisa knows what a difference a good teacher and mentor can make. She is a young lady who radiates confidence. At school Lisa belongs to several clubs, including the Science Club, SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and GSA (Gay/Straight Alliance). Lisa lives in Brewerton with her parents, brother, dog and cat.

Donna Wine is a residential habilitation counselor at Transitional Living Services and the editor of the Siracusa newsletter. She is very active in the Deaf community as a member of the Deaf Advocacy Council and with other organizations. She graduated with high honors from St. Mary’s School for the Deaf and won the National High School Students for Excellence Award. She went on to Rochester Institute of Technology, graduating with an associate of fine arts degree.

When Songtha Cosby of Syracuse was born Deaf 20 years ago, his doctors told his mother that he would never talk or learn. Today Songtha is a successfully employed young man with a bright future ahead of him. He works at the East Syracuse Walmart where he loads trucks. He enjoys his work and works hard at it. Songtha learned his strong work ethic as a student and then Counselor-in-Training at AURORA’s Summer Education Program. Many of the younger campers looked to him as a role model. Songtha’s long-term goals include college and a possible electronics major.
Back to School for AURORA Consumers

New program gets job seekers ready with customer service skills

As American workers wait out the recession, a group of AURORA consumers took a step toward securing their futures through a new vocational skills program developed through a collaboration among AURORA, the NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), and the SUNY Educational Opportunity Center (EOC).

“We were eager to join CBVH in this venture because demands on customer service employees are changing,” explained Debra Chaiken, AURORA’s executive director. “For example, receptionists have to do much more than greet customers and answer phones. They need to be current in their knowledge of computers and be able to multi-task in a busy work environment.”

SUNY EOC’s ten-week Customer Service Office (CSO) program included business basics in English and math, as well as training in Microsoft Windows, Word, and basic keyboarding. CBVH provided funds for adapted computers and software for the program. AURORA staff developed an orientation to prepare the three “pioneering” participants to re-enter school and work with confidence. Each participant also completed a month long paid internship. We are grateful to ENABLE and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield for their partnership in providing these invaluable experiences. It seems the benefit went both ways.

Excellus human resources manager, Leslie Rapson noted, “We’d never worked directly with AURORA; we usually have interns from schools and colleges, and we hadn’t had a customer service intern before. This was a great opportunity for both organizations.”

Plans are under way to continue this program in 2010. If you are interested in participating, call CBVH at 423-5416.

Congratulations, Donna!

We are happy to announce that Vocational Skills program participant Donna Reese has won first prize in a SUNY EOC essay contest. She was awarded $75. Her essay was submitted to SUNY EOC at the state level and she won $250. An award ceremony will be held in Albany in February.
United Way News

The United Way of Central New York has just completed the community needs assessment phase of its allocation cycle. Later this year, programs will be submitting applications for funding for another three years of vital human service programming in our community.

The Cayuga County United Way says goodbye to Director Gail Homick, who has been affiliated with the United Way organization since 1979. She has been a tremendous positive force in the community and will be missed. Her successor is Tim Kelly, who has served in several United Way posts, most recently as the director of the United Way of Monroe County in Pennsylvania since 2000. Mr. Kelly grew up in Venice, New York and according to United Way Board President Daniel Larson, he has “exhaustive experience” which helped him stand out from other applicants. We welcome Mr. Kelly and look forward to working with him.

The Oswego County United Way invited AURORA’s Outreach Director David DeFrancis, who was accompanied by intern Donna Reese, to present at HUHTAMAKI during their campaign to raise much-needed funds.

Please support your local United Way and let them know that programs to serve individuals with disabilities and promote independence are important to you.

Thanks to the Syracuse Corvette Club

The Syracuse Corvette Club (SCC) made a generous donation to AURORA and several other non-profits at a November 19 ceremony at Borio’s Restaurant in Cicero. Adele DelSavio (second from right, back row) represented AURORA.

Looking for Captioned Movies??

If you are looking for first-run captioned movies playing in your area check out www.captionfish.com. This easy to use website asks for your zip code and provides the location and a brief description of each film that is captioned within your community.

Please Help Us!!

We need your help to update our mailing list. Please let us know if you have any changes to your contact information or would like to be removed from the mailing list. We also welcome new names, so if you know of anyone who would like to receive our newsletter please call 422-7263 or e-mail us at auroracny@auroraofcny.org
AURORA OF CENTRAL NEW YORK, INC.

2010 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Please enroll me as a member of AURORA of Central New York for 2010.
I would like to contribute at the following level:

☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ $500 ☐ Other $___________________

☐ Please send me information about AURORA’s Planned Giving Program.

I am paying by ____Check _____MasterCard _____Visa _____American Express

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I allow the company to charge my card for the above purposes.

Date _____________________ Signature __________________________________

Please make checks payable to AURORA OF CNY, Inc. and return to:

518 James St., Suite 100, Syracuse, NY  13203-2282

Gifts may be acknowledged in our newsletter; if you wish to remain anonymous please check here.   ☐

In return for your gift you received no material goods or tangible services for supporting AURORA. Your membership in or contribution to AURORA is tax-deductible.
AURORA Welcomes New Employees

AURORA would like to welcome the newest members of our staff.

Donna Delaney of New Woodstock joined AURORA as a general office clerk in our Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service. She has an associate degree in administrative assistant from Bryant & Stratton College and worked for more than eight years in the medical field. In her free time she spends time with her grandson and her pets - two dogs and a cat. She enjoys reading and tending to her plants.

Howard Fung of Syracuse joined AURORA as a scheduling clerk in the Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service. Before coming to AURORA he worked at Communication Services for the Deaf. Howard attended SUNY College of Environmental Sciences and Forestry, where he majored in environment and forest biology.

Cassie Landry of East Syracuse works for AURORA as janitorial and clerical support person. A graduate of East Syracuse/Minoa High School, Cassie attended BOCES CNA classes. She plans to continue her education and eventually become a nurse.