AURORA launched the inaugural year of our Pre-College Program at Le Moyne College for 16 students from across the state. The 17 and 18 year olds all finished the program and worked hard to achieve personal milestones and complete college level coursework.

Students enjoyed a full array of recreational options including a day at Wonderworks where many conquered their fears on the high ropes course. They were treated to a fencing class, a self-defense course at the dojo of Master Sensei Robert Webster of Agogi Marshal Arts, and enjoyed karaoke and ‘battle of the sexes’ contests, bowling, swimming, movies, and just hanging out.

Students learned how to deal with the challenges of college life including sorting out their adaptive technology through a distance learning course and learning how to advocate for themselves with professors and other campus staff. Some other highlights include a motivational speech on Parents’ Day from Angela Winfield of Blind Faith Enterprises and, of course, the keynote address at the Graduation Ceremony that was delivered by former New York State Governor, David Paterson. The students were amazed as he shared his own struggles and story with the assurance that, “I’m not just some Governor who came by to wish you well, I’m one of you!”

A special thank you to all of the staff of AURORA, volunteers, and Le Moyne Staff who made this program possible. This program was the first year of a five year grant funded through the NY State Commission for the Blind.
United Way Campaign Gets Under Way

Chances are that you or someone you know has benefitted from the United Way. With over 35 agencies and over 95 programs funded throughout Central New York, nearly everyone probably has a United Way story to share. Not only are there stories of how the funded programs have helped, but how helping has impacted donors, as well. Here’s an example:

Career-long donor

“I've been working in and around the Syracuse community for over three decades in non-profits. Most of them have received United Way funds to support various programs that serve people with all kinds of challenges. I still remember the first time I ever made a pledge to United Way. I was still in college and working at my first ‘real’ job. It felt important to be doing the work because I was helping people and making a difference. Yet, when I heard someone speak for the first time about donating to the United Way, it moved me to want to ‘share the wealth’ of my own experience. It was another way to help that was just as rewarding. Over 30 years later, I still feel the same satisfaction when I fill out the pledge card. The good feeling of giving just never gets old.”  ~ Anne

AURORA receives funding for programs through the United Ways of Cayuga County, Greater Oswego and Central New York. These dollars provide vital support for our core services. We ask you to be generous and get involved in your community through the UNITED WAY:

United Way of Central New York    www.unitedway-cny.org
United Way of Cayuga County    www.unitedwayofcayugacounty.org
United Way of Greater Oswego County    www.oswegounitedway.org

Accessible Voting Machine Demonstration

An accessible voting machine known as the Ballot Marking Device (or BMD) will be available through Friday, November 1st at AURORA’s offices at 518 James Street in Syracuse, for anyone interested in learning how to use it. Appointments can be scheduled weekdays between 10:00 am-2:00pm by calling Starr Guckert at (315)422-7263 or by emailing her at sguckert@auroraofcny.org. The demonstration takes approximately 30 minutes.
New Grant Will Expose Youth to the World of Technology

The Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Inc. has awarded AURORA of CNY, Inc. as the lead agency of a multi-year collaborative with a grant to fund an exciting new Children’s Adaptive Technology Training Program. It will serve youth ages 10-14 who are blind or visually impaired, across Upstate New York. AURORA, along with two other Upstate blind service agencies, A.V.R.E. in Binghamton and CABVI in Utica, will develop and deliver a technology exploration curriculum and provide a train-the-trainer workshop for Teachers of the Visually Impaired. Up to 100 students and their parents (approximately 33 students from each region) will learn about technology that will prepare students to be successful in school and beyond.

The Lavelle Fund supports programs that help people who are blind and visually impaired lead independent, productive lives, together with eye care programs working to prevent and treat vision loss.

17th Annual ForeSIGHT Classic
A HUGE Success!!

Thanks to the generosity and support of 115 golfers and our valued sponsors, the ForeSIGHT Golf Classic raised over $23,000 for programs and services to serve individuals with vision and hearing loss. Our Honorary Chairs, Glenn “Gomez” Adams and Dave Coombs of TK 99 FM Classic Rock, kicked us off for a beautiful day of golf. Huge thank you’s to The Links at Erie Village which offered a superior golfing experience, and to the Golf Committee, headed up by John McCormick and Jack Mott, and all of our dedicated volunteers!

Glen “Gomez” Adams, Jack Mott, John McCormick & Dave Coombs
Nominations Sought for Annual Excellence Awards

EXCELLENCE- The quality or condition of being outstanding.

Do you know someone with a vision or hearing loss or someone who is Deaf who fits this description?

If you do, then we invite you to nominate them for AURORA’s Annual Excellence Awards which are given to adults and young adults who are role models and sources of inspiration for others.

We also give out the Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award, recognizing an individual or group that has advanced accessibility, advocacy and the promotion of people with vision or hearing loss in our community.

Please call AURORA with your nomination or visit our website to view the criteria and download the forms at www.auroraofcny.org. We look forward to bestowing these distinguished awards at our Annual Meeting in November. For further information contact 315-422-7263 or fax completed forms to 315-422-4792. Deadline for nominations is November 1, 2013.

Syracuse Host Lions Club Makes Assistive Devices Available

AURORA recently received a generous donation from the Syracuse Host Lions Club to help establish the Syracuse Host Lions Club Lending Closet of Assistive Devices. People who are Deaf or hard of hearing throughout Central New York will benefit from this donation that will make important items available for those who can’t afford them. Such assistive devices include vibrating alarm clocks, flashing doorbells, flashing fire alarms and carbon monoxide monitors.

We value our on-going partnership with Lions Clubs throughout the state and, in particular, our collaborations with the Syracuse Host Lions Club. We commend their commitment to people with vision and hearing loss and look forward to serving them together through this wonderful project.

For more information contact Kelley Cooper, Deaf Services Director, at 315-679-4168, or 315-422-9746 tty; Email: kcooper@auroraofcny.org

Syracuse Host Lions Club President Dave Chayka presents the check to Anne Costa, Assistant Director of AURORA of CNY.
Deaf Awareness Week 2013

Communication requires effort. Everyone has a right to hear the message.
~Joanne Dermody, Panelist

In recognition of Deaf Awareness Week 2013, AURORA presented ‘Access That!!’ an engaging panel presentation to provide information and a forum for dialogue between the Deaf and hearing communities. The two hour workshop addressed barriers to access, explained the impact of the Americans with Disability Act and stressed the importance and role of qualified interpreters.

Panelists included: Joanne Dermody, Certified Interpreter, President CNYRID; Michael Schwartz, Supervising Attorney at Disability Rights Clinic, SU; Monu Dhakal, ASL Teacher at BOB School, and OCC student; Michael Mazzaroppi, Education Advocate at ARISE. The lively discussion was moderated by Kelley Cooper, Director of Deaf Services.

Women of AURORA Reach Out

A new and exciting initiative, spearheaded by Kathy Grossman, a former Honorary Chair for our annual Musical Feast for the Eyes and Ears Fundraiser, has been established to benefit programs and services. Called the Women of AURORA Reach Out, the group held its inaugural event in September, calling for founding members at the home of board member Diane Pluff, who generously hosted. “We received an overwhelming response!” commented Debra Chaiken, AURORA’s Executive Director. Nearly forty women gathered to enjoy good food, and a woman-to-woman networking opportunity to benefit the community. Proceeds raised from the evening went to support AURORA’s Children’s Hearing Aid Program (CHAP). Future gatherings will be planned to highlight other human service initiatives throughout Central New York.

AJ Straus, Amelia Greiner & Patricia Himberg
New Employees Join AURORA’s Team

**Brad Castellino** of Baldwinsville joins our Employment Services Department as an Employment Specialist working with job seekers who are blind or visually impaired. He works part time providing job coaching and assistance with job development.

**Beth Burns-Epperson** of Lakeport joins Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Services as a full-time office clerk. She has worked many years in the psychiatric field and will be assisting the team as a scheduler.