A Musical Feast For The Eyes & Ears

Honoring
J. Daniel & Diane Pluff & Family

Thursday, May 15, 2014
The Lodge at Welch Allyn
The Children’s Hearing Aid Program

“We’ve got to do something!”
We want to give back…”

With heartfelt vision and generosity J. Daniel and Diane Pluff have helped establish AURORA’s Children’s Hearing Aid Program (CHAP), a service to provide low-cost hearing aids, education, on-going support and follow-up for children ages 4-18, and their families.

The Pluffs came face to face with a need that touched them deeply and personally when their daughters Anna, now 16 and Sophia, 14 were born with moderate to severe hearing loss. They established a field-of-interest fund through the Central New York Community Foundation. Financial support through that fund and through a generous start-up grant from the Gifford Foundation has made it possible for this program to be delivered through a partnership between AURORA and Hear 2 Learn, PLLC.

Since the program began in 2012, 23 children and their families have been served. Here’s the experience of one of them:

When Zihair Bowens went to his well-child check at five years of age, his pediatrician discovered a previously undiagnosed hearing loss. This “new reality” for Zahair and his mother April Hathaway set them on a long course of visits to specialists that lasted for years but didn’t provide much help. The fact was that Zihair needed a hearing aid that his single, working mother just couldn’t afford. Given that even basic models of digital hearing aids can cost thousands of dollars, coupled with the fact that as children grow, they need multiple fittings and newly sized molds, Zihair, like many children, found himself going without. That all changed when Zihair and April heard about AURORA’s Children’s Hearing Aid Program. Through the program Zihair was fitted with a hearing aid and since then he has been able to focus, pay attention in school and obviously hear much better. At first April was concerned that Zihair, now 12, might be self-conscious and resist wearing the aid in fear of not fitting in. Instead he embraced it and is really enjoying being able to hear, April couldn’t be happier and said this about the program: “The program is excellent! Frieda was great and pointed me in all the right directions!”
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, 2013 to December 31, 2013. Please notify us of any changes or corrections. Thank you!!

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How YOU Can Help … Become a Member

We would not have been able to serve this community for over 95 years without the generous support of our membership. Our membership provides much needed funds for programs such as our support groups, case management services and skills training for youth. We appreciate donations in any amount and as a thank you we will be inviting members to special informational events throughout the year.

A Planned Gift Goes a Long Way!!

“I became involved with AURORA through my friend, Nellie Seymour who used AURORA’s services when she lost her sight. Nellie was a wonderful example of all that can be done for someone with vision loss. I saw firsthand the difference that AURORA’s services made in people’s lives. During the time that I knew Nellie, I was also diagnosed with an eye condition and was invited to attend the Oswego County Vision Impairment Group Meetings established by AURORA. Again, I met so many people who talked about how AURORA had helped them.

I was so impressed because AURORA was doing so much for each person individually… this is not a blanket service where people are left alone to fend for themselves. Each staff member is so involved and helpful!

When it came time for me to look again at my will, I changed it to enable some of my resources to benefit AURORA…AURORA’s services change lives…and I’m grateful and happy to help.”

Help AURORA through Amazon Smile.
Every purchase generates a percentage to support AURORA!!
“It’s never too early to think about golf”

In CNY, we have to make the most of a short golf season, so mark your calendars for our next ForeSIGHT Golf Classic which will take place on Monday, September 8th, 2014 at The Links at Erie Village. The tournament fills up fast so get your foursome together and call Diane at 315-422-7263 to reserve your spot. We also have plenty of sponsorship opportunities to promote your business or service.

Join us for a day of good food, great golf and friendly competition all to benefit central New Yorkers with vision or hearing loss.

With THANKS to our 2013 ForeSIGHT Golf Sponsors

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Facebook
**AURORA Announces New Board Members**

**Mr. Nasser Fitwi**, of Syracuse is an English Braille and communication skills tutor, as well as a Medical Interpreter for refugee communities of Eritrea and Ethiopia. He holds a master’s degree in Curriculum and Pedagogy and a Bachelor’s in English and Literature. When Mr. Fitwi arrived in America as a refugee, he received mobility, life skills and social work training through AURORA. Since then he has been a generous volunteer and role model for others.

**Mr. Wilfred Wagner** of Syracuse is the president of Wil-Care Transportation Service Inc. He is a member of the Air National Guard and an active community volunteer, helping with Parks and Recreation to organize events to promote community engagement. His interest in Aurora is to assist with outreach to underserved and underrepresented populations.

**Ms. Debbie Bondi-Ellison** of DeWitt is a Loaned Executive to United Way of Central New York from SRC, from which she is retired after 34 years of service. Debbie has a BS in Mathematics from St. Bonaventure University and an MS in Numerical Analysis from Syracuse University. Debbie’s interest in AURORA is personal in that her favorite aunt was legally blind and she feels very connected to those with impaired vision.

**Ms. Pamela Everingham** of the Onondaga Nation is the Administrative Coordinator for the Onondaga Nation Health Center and member of the Snipe Clan. She holds a Bachelor of Science from LeMoyne College and has been a member of AURORA’s Public Relations and Outreach Committee for the past two years. Pam has been working to make inroads to increase awareness of AURORA’s services in the Native American community.

**Frank Warren** of Oswego is a retired teacher and school administrator who has always been active in the Catholic Church as past Director of Religious Education and as a Deacon. He has been involved with Oswego County Visually Impaired for the past eight years and is currently sharing leadership for that group. Frank is an avid leader and a faithful attendee of the Oswego County Book Club for the Visually Impaired.

**Linda R. Ervin** of DeWitt is an Onondaga County Legislator and the Democratic Floor Leader. She has joined AURORA’s Board as an extension of her interest and work with issues concerning senior citizens and people with disabilities in our community. Linda is a Syracuse University Alum and is married to her husband Marion. She has two grown children, Scott and Jessica and three grandchildren, Nia, Laila and Sammy.
Did you know that Syracuse Stage has been offering audio description for its patrons who are blind or visually impaired since 2011? The service provides simultaneous live narration via a headset during select shows throughout the year. Two upcoming shows are:

- **Chinglish** on Saturday, March 15 at 3:00 pm
- **The Glass Menagerie** will also be narrated later in the year with a date to be determined.

Joseph Whelan, Syracuse Stage’s Publications Director, provides the description as well as a detailed account of each show’s costumes and set, twenty minutes prior to the performance. During intermission, he provides biographical information about the cast and information about the second act.

Headsets are provided and the services are free. Also of note is that Syracuse Stage also provides American Sign Language interpreted performances, open captioned performances and infrared listening devices. For more information contact 315-443-3275.

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**AURORA Assumes Leadership of Community-Wide Coalition For Deaf Refugees**

**Monu Dhakal** resettled in Syracuse in 2011 from Nepal to start a better life. As a Deaf woman in a new culture she searched for help to learn American Sign Language (ASL) and gain access to college. Her path led to AURORA where she took a beginning sign language class and was introduced to others in the Deaf community. Monu noticed that traditional services for refugees were not equipped to address the needs of the Deaf so she began teaching ASL herself and helping other Deaf refugees to learn about their rights within their new culture. She is a strong and persistent advocate and an integral member of a community-wide coalition that has recently come under AURORA’s leadership. The Deaf Refugee Coalition is made up of members from Catholic Charities, Interfaith Works, and other members of the Deaf community who are concerned and want to work collaboratively to address issues of education, equal access and communication for Deaf refugees in Central New York. The group meets monthly at AURORA.
EXCELLENCE Awardees 2013

Henry Belloir of Marcellus is a New Hampshire “transplant” who moved to the Central New York area in May of 2012 “for a change of scene.” Prior to that, he was employed at Southern New Hampshire University for 14 years. He is described by Kelley Cooper, AURORA’s Director of Deaf Services, as a “very enthusiastic” employee who never gave up during the job search process. Henry’s dedication and hard work paid off when he received two job offers! He is currently employed at National Grid on contract through DTZ Inc. where he consistently excels and enjoys his work.

Shane Bressette of Baldwinsville has been involved with AURORA for many years, first as a recipient of services and most recently as a valued intern. He served as a role model and integral member of AURORA’s team, working at our first Pre-College Program and revamped Work Readiness Program. With nearly ten years of experience working in early childhood education as a kindergarten teacher and summer camp coordinator, Shane continues to advance his career and will achieve his Bachelor’s Degree in Community and Human Services/Social Work through Empire State College next month.

Charlene Purchas of Parish is a senior at Mexico High School where “she has met every challenge with a positive attitude” according to Tamara Seymour, her Teacher of the Deaf, “and leaves a favorable impression with everyone she meets.” Whether at home, school, or in the community, Charlene is ready to volunteer her time and talents. She has been active for over three years with the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Club through BOCES and participates in many school activities including as a scorekeeper for multiple sports. She recently completed a successful summer employment experience as an IT Assistant where she was asked to continue after school started because of the quality of her work. Additionally, Charlene is a member of the National Honor Society and the Top 25 League at her high school, as well as an honorary member of the Mexico Lions Club. Charlene plans to apply to college at Rochester Institute of Technology/NTID and major in computer repair or graphic design/technology.

Victoria “Tori” Everett of Syracuse has achieved the Honor Roll eight times as a student at Henninger High School where she is currently in the tenth grade. Not only does she excel at academics but she is also a dedicated volunteer with the Destiny Christian Center where she attends. As a member of the worship team she has participated in outreach activities to distribute toys and clothing to those in need, and has been involved in raising money for missionaries. Tori is described as a “bright and friendly young lady with a great attitude toward life” by her Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Ross DeForrest. She is looking forward to a career in the human services, possibly in the medical field.
The Syracuse Rescue Mission has opened its doors wide to hire employees with vision and hearing loss and we want everyone to know it. Within the past year the Rescue Mission has hired nine deaf workers and offered work experience opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The Rescue Mission’s enthusiasm and willingness to provide creative worksite accommodations is a stellar example for the employment community to follow. Denise Soles, Supervisor of Donation Centers, has been an instrumental partner and has worked very closely with AURORA Employment staff to ensure the success of workers by making accessible communication a priority. We value our ongoing relationship with the Rescue Mission and salute them for their commitment to an inclusive and supportive working environment.

Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award

Geremy Cope is the Deputy Chief of Police at the Department of Veterans Affairs through the Syracuse VA Medical Center. He is a retired New York State Trooper and is on active duty with the United States Air Force. He holds a Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Keuka College.

We know him as ‘The AC’ and as a staunch advocate of AURORA and our switchboard operation at the VA. AC Cope truly understands the issues that face the switchboard team and has offered his time, leadership and problem-solving expertise to improve their working environment and relationships within the hospital. AC Cope is highly respected and an invaluable source of support for switchboard supervisor, Sydney Astafan. He acts as mentor, teacher and guide as together they tackle issues head on. According to Sydney, “whenever AC Cope’s name is mentioned around the switchboard, the operator’s comments are flooded with positive feedback.” It’s that kind of partnership, mutual respect and warm regard that has been the hallmark of our working relationship and the reason why we gratefully honor him.

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 is pleased to announce the hiring of **Dr. Donna Konick** as AURORA’s new Low Vision Specialist. Effective January 1, 2014, Dr. Krol is turning over his low vision practice to Dr. Konick, who has been training with him over the past several months becoming familiar with procedures, equipment and low vision aids. Dr. Konick will assume a part-time schedule similar to Dr. Krol’s and will see patients who are legally blind.

Dr. Konick is a Doctor of Optometry and has recently become certified as a low vision specialist. She is a graduate of the New England College of Optometry, Boston, MA, and has many years’ of experience working in full scope, comprehensive family practice. Dr. Konick is nationally certified in the treatment and management of ocular disease and will also continue working part-time at the office of Drs. Weiss, Savedoff and Ciccone. According to Dr. Konick, this opportunity is “a perfect fit” and exactly what she was looking for to enable her to spend time with patients and really make an impact in their lives.

Dr. Krol concurs and is “excited that his good friend and colleague, Dr. Konick will bring a fresh approach to low vision care, especially in this time of technological advancement.” He also adds that he “wishes the best to all the wonderful people he has met and examined and worked with over the last twenty years at AURORA!”

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**To Dr. Krol from the Staff & Board of AURORA**

We will be forever grateful to **Dr. Bob Krol** for his tireless dedication and commitment to the consumers of AURORA’s low vision services. For the past twenty years, Dr. Krol has provided excellent and professional care with his thorough and patient approach, coupled with his extensive knowledge and compassionate heart. Hundreds of Central New Yorkers with low vision and their families have been helped by Dr. Krol, and their lives have been made better for having known him. So have ours at AURORA and we take this chance to say **THANK YOU DR. KROL** from the bottom of our hearts for your service.
Please return this membership form to:
AURORA of CNY, 518 James St., Syracuse, NY 13203-2282...Thank you!!

AURORA OF CENTRAL NEW YORK, INC.

2014 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address ___________________________________________________________________________

City ______________________________State _________Zip ________ - __________

Phone _______________________________

Please enroll me as a member of AURORA of Central New York for 2014. 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

My Account # ______________________________Expiration Date: _______________

V-Code (three-digit number on back of card) ________________________________

Name on Account (if different from above) ___________________________________

Please Print

Billing Address___________________________________________________________

I am aware and 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 donation to AURORA is tax-deductible.
Once again this year we will feature our **PAY IT FORWARD** Auction in memory of **BRUCE SODEN**.

Bid from the ♥️ on items that directly support AURORA’s
- Children’s Hearing Aid Support Services
- Deaf Refugee Language Assistance
- Pre-College Program
- Youth and Technology Program

Bruce lived by the motto **“Leave it better than you found it”** and we can attest to the fact that AURORA has been made better for having known him.

Long time friend of
AURORA
Bruce Soden