AURORA
of Central New York
Annual Report 2015

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Serving People who are
Blind, Visually Impaired,
Deaf or Hard of Hearing

United Way

A United Way Agency of Central New York,
Oswego & Cayuga Counties
Contract Agency of Onondaga
County Office for Aging & Youth
AURORA’s Statement of Financial Position

We wish to thank the following donors for their generosity and support of AURORA’s services:

The M&T Charitable Foundation
Specialty Surgery Center of CNY
Druger Eye Care
Geddes Federal Savings and Loan
The Nappi Family
The Allyn Foundation, Inc.
The Pluff Family
Eye Surgeons of CNY, PC
St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center
Dr. & Mrs. H. Kenneth Fitzgerald
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CNY Community Foundation
Lavelle Fund for the Blind
Health Foundation of Western & CNY
Flora Bernice Smith Foundation
Fred & Berthe P. Harder Foundation
KeyBank Foundation
Mr. & Mrs. William Watt
Estate of Edwin & Delores Davis

Funding Sources

- ACCES-VR
- NYS Commission for the Blind
- NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
- Onondaga County Dept. of Adult & Long Term Care Services
- Onondaga County Authorized Agency
- United Way of Central New York, Inc.
- United Way of Greater Oswego County
- United Way of Cayuga County
- Fees for Service
- Fundraising Events
- Memberships & Donations
- City of Auburn Community Development Block Grant
- Corporate & Foundation Grants
- Syracuse Veterans Administration Medical Center
Employer of the Year

Wegmans has a world-wide reputation for customer service and for being the “best grocery store in the world.” In Central New York, we not only benefit from the generosity and philanthropic support of the company, but we also know first-hand that it is a wonderful place to work. AURORA, in particular, and the people we serve have benefited from a long partnership with Wegmans. They sponsor our Musical Feast AND enthusiastically hire and support the individuals we represent in Deaf Employment Services by making innovative accommodations and going the extra mile to ensure smooth and appropriate communication with their employees. We salute WEGMANS for their five-star commitment to hiring, training and retaining employees with different abilities.

Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award

Syracuse Stage has made accessibility a number one priority for all patrons, and in particular those with vision or hearing loss. With audio description, real-time captioning and regularly scheduled sign language interpreting for every run, they employ state-of-the-art technology and commit hundreds of man-hours of preparation each season to ensure that audience members with vision and hearing loss experience everything that the theater has to offer.
**Excellence Award Recipients**

**Norma Porter** of Syracuse is affectionately referred to as AURORA’s “Grandmother in residence” and has served as board member, advocate and volunteer for over four decades. Norma, at 95 years of age, still makes it a point to tell others about AURORA and connect them to our services. Norma is a faithful member of our organization and is an inspiration to anyone who needs to take an obstacle and turn it into an opportunity.

**Christopher “CJ” Sierotnik** of Syracuse is a “glass half full kind of guy” who has never let a diagnosis of retinitis pigmentosa at the age of 13 get in the way of achieving his own version of the American Dream. Even as his vision gradually faded, CJ has obtained a college degree, gotten married, had a family and enjoyed success in more than one career. Currently working in the Accounts Processing Department at National Grid, CJ is described repeatedly by his co-workers as “the kindest, nicest and most selfless person” you could ever meet. All are in agreement: Christopher is “the real deal.”

**Parker Morse** of Lafargeville is a well-rounded young man with a bright future. He has met challenges in his life with a positive attitude and a wisdom beyond his years. Parker is a true citizen and servant who volunteers at his church and manages sports teams, serving as a role model for others. Parker’s interest in politics is a reflection of his intellect, he carries a 90% average in high school, and his desire to have a positive impact on the world. He is well on his way.

**Anna Pluff** of Jamesville embodies a “can-do” spirit that reflects her selflessness and desire to make a positive impact on the world. Already Anna’s intellectual curiosity and gift for writing have garnered her awards and recognition for her poetry and playwriting. Anna has served her community as a volunteer for a host of organizations serving the poor and is involved in many extracurricular activities, including as a member of the highly-competitive varsity tennis team. Anna’s commitment to personal growth and excellence will, no doubt, continue to make a difference in our world.
Bob Haege has been a steadfast and true friend of AURORA since he joined the Board of Directors of The Lighthouse back in 1970. For the past 45 years he has done (and seen) it all! From serving as President of the Board and multiple stints as Treasurer and Secretary to helping out on our Musical Feast and fundraising committees, Bob is best known for his keen business sense and financial acumen. Currently, he puts his talents to work for AURORA as our Assistant Treasurer and as the Chairman of our Investment Committee.

According to Debra Chaiken, “Bob has worked tirelessly for the agency helping in the areas of finance, investments and fundraising. Thanks to his wisdom and guidance AURORA has been able to rise above many of the challenges facing the agency over the years.” We appreciate Bob’s humble presence and sound decision making. Throughout his 32 years at Key Bank, retiring as Vice-President and Trust Officer, Bob exemplified the role of a respected fiscal professional and carried that integrity over into his roles at AURORA. He has also recruited many others who have served on the board or have become loyal contributors because of his example and invitation.

Please join us as we honor Bob and his long time commitment to our organization and thank...
Program Accomplishments

14,900 hours of professional interpreting services were provided to 8 Central New York counties through the Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service (MCIRS).

140 youth and adults received employment and placement services this year.

53 youth received adaptive equipment, technology and/or hearing aids along with instruction on their use to succeed in school and beyond.

319 patients received comprehensive low vision examinations.

614 individuals learned new skills to manage in their homes, jobs and communities and completed orientation and mobility training to remain safe and independent.

931 people received social work support, information and advocacy to develop skills for coping and accessing community resources to deal with a loss in sight or hearing.

185 community presentations were made by staff and volunteers to educate about treatment, care and prevention of sensory loss and promote AURORA and its services.

AURORA of CNY would like to thank the Murad Family for their sponsorship of our Annual Meeting and Excellence Award Ceremony.
## AURORA’s Board of Directors for 2014-2015

- James Granito, Chair
- Scott Gucciardi, 1st Vice Chair
- Jeanne Mathews-Fox 2nd Vice Chair
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- Ken Reger, Secretary
- Jeffrey Eades, Assistant Secretary

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- Laura Smith
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- Jeff Sterly
- Linda & Frank Tyrrell
- Wilfred Wagner
- Frank Warren
- Angela Winfield

## Honorary Board

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- Thomas Dadey
- Robert Dideo
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- Linda Shaffer
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- Dr. Lawrence Stewart
- Hon. Karen Uplinger
- Robert Welcher
- Mary Ann Winters

## AURORA’s Professional Staff

- Nancy Anderson
- Charlotte Ashworth
- Sydney Astafan
- David Cleaver-Bartholomew
- Joel Brennan
- Akemee Capers
- Brad Castellino
- Debra Chaiken
- Michele Chapman
- Kelley Cooper
- Angelo Coppola
- Sheryl Coppola
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- Ross DeForrest
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- Diane LaBeff
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