A Friend Remembered…

It is with great sadness in our hearts that we dedicate this newsletter to one of our dearest friends Amelia Greiner, who passed away recently after gracing us with her presence for 99 years! Indeed 70 of those years Amelia spent sharing her light with AURORA of CNY and the people we serve in a variety of roles from volunteer, to Interim Executive Director to Board Member, and finally Honorary Board Member. But most of all, she was a friend and confidant to AURORA of CNY President Debra Chaiken, who remembers:

“I am extremely grateful for the friendship, support, and guidance Amelia Greiner so generously gave to me as the President of AURORA. It’s hard to come to terms that Amelia is no longer on this earth as she had such a presence in all those who were lucky enough to have her in their lives. I will forever be inspired by her dedication to making our community a better place for all of us!”

Amelia was an iconic figure who shaped the landscape of human services in Central New York. Her no-nonsense style may have ruffled a few feathers along the way, but few people have achieved her level of success. With uncompromising common-sense, high standards for excellence and a passion for getting the job done, Amelia founded an innovative after-school program for mothers with small children, created Home Aids of Central New York and contributed to expanded senior services in our community. Amelia also led AURORA of CNY through many rebirths and continued that leadership through her final days.

There is no greater legacy than a life well lived and we at AURORA of CNY are deeply honored to have been a part of Amelia’s, to share in her distinguished history. Please join us as we remember and celebrate Amelia’s lifetime of giving and service to others.
Candidates Forum Draws Crowd

On October 6, a Candidates Forum was held in the Rosamond Gifford Room at 518 James Street to enable citizens, advocates and people with disabilities to ask the “tough questions” of this year’s field of political candidates. In attendance were Joseph Nicoletti, Jr. who occupies a seat on the Syracuse Common Council; New York State Assembly Member Democratic incumbent Al Stirpe of the 127th Assembly District, and Vince Giordano, Mr. Stirpe’s opponent. Republican incumbent John Katko squared off against his Democratic opponent Colleen Deacon.

The room was at full capacity as the candidates fielded some challenging questions such as why City Hall remains inaccessible and how the concerns that Uber drivers are refusing to transport people who use service animals and other violations of ADA will be addressed. The forum was organized by a coalition of organizations and agencies which advocate for the rights of people with disabilities including Access CNY, ARISE, AURORA of CNY, and Disabled in Action of Greater Syracuse, which started these annual Candidates Forums back in the early 1980s.

FORESIGHT

The day couldn’t have been more perfect for a golf outing that netted AURORA’s program and services over $25,000! This year’s ForeSight Golf Classic celebrated its 20th Anniversary with Stephen Koldin as the Honorary Chair and John McCormick and Jack Mott as co-chairs of the organizing committee.

To top it off, long-time supporter and friend of AURORA George Townsend of Honda City achieved a Hole-in-One! Thank you to all the golfers and valued sponsors who made this such a successful event!
A First for the Deaf Community in Central New York

On Thursday, September 29, history was made in the Central New York Deaf community when AURORA of CNY used five sign language interpreters for a workshop which was sponsored by AURORA and presented by Legal Services of Central New York. The workshop, entitled “Self-Advocacy in the Legal System”, was developed specifically for members of the Deaf community.

Attorneys Susan Young and Josh Cotter of Legal Services of Central New York explained the different types of courts and what consumers should be prepared to expect, stressing the importance of self-advocating for “effective communication” so that they can actively participate in their case.

The topic of wills aroused the most interest with active participation from the audience of between 25 and 30 members of the Deaf community who were from Onondaga, Oswego, Madison, Cayuga, and Cortland counties. Questions such as what happens if there isn’t a will, which court makes decisions in the event that there is no will, and what are the rights of relatives were answered.

Effective communication for this workshop was provided by a team of 5 interpreters: Maggie Russell Director of MCIRS Interpreter Referral and Lucia Castellani—AURORA Staff Interpreter, Joanne Jackowski Interpreter Practitioner and Deaf interpreters Lisa Alfieri and Rebecca Dadey, both in the process of securing certification as a Deaf interpreter.

The use of five interpreters enabled Maggie and Joanne to interpret spoken English to the Deaf Interpreters Lisa and Rebecca who were able to break-down the court terminology further and provide the information in a more accessible format to the Deaf community members. Lucia voiced what the Deaf audience members were saying and signed for Josh Cotter and Susan Young. The process achieved full access for all in attendance.

This is the first of what we expect to be an on-going series for members of the Deaf community. We invite you to pass along suggestions for future workshops to members of our Deaf Services staff.

Pay It Forward

Do you have any gently used aids or devices that you are no longer using? We can repurpose the following items:

- Lighted Magnifiers
- Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTV)
- Gently-used Hearing Aids
- Amplified Telephones
- Assistive Listening Devices
- Wrap Around

Bring them down to our office between the hours of 8:30 and 4:30, Monday through Friday. We are located at 518 James Street in Suite 100. There is free off-street parking next to and across from the building. THANK YOU for sharing your unused equipment with others!
WOMEN of AURORA Event: Reaches Out and Invests in Others!

Women of Aurora Reach Out 2016, our annual fall gathering, reached a beautiful crescendo with the largest gathering yet, with almost 75 women who attended to learn about and support AURORA and its programs. Surrounded by the elegance and beauty of the home of Sam and Carol Nappi, and accompanied by the ambient music of classical harp and piano provided by Maria DeSantis Music, the guests were treated to delicious food and drink while hearing the stories of two inspirational and successful women.

Kelley Cooper, AURORA’s Deaf Services Director, shared what it was like to grow up Deaf in a hearing world, explaining the challenges of communicating with friends and the need for equipment that was too expensive for her family to buy.

Monica Johnson, who lost her sight at the age of 29 to Type 1 diabetes, demonstrated the vital technology that helps her run her own motivational speaking business and live independently. She pointed out that the women were there not just to make a donation, but to make an investment in the lives of others.

Both women spoke to the (Continued next page)
essential need for the establishment of a “Lending Closet” for adaptive equipment and devices such as flashing smoke alarms, check writing guides, and talking money identifiers to be available to people of all ages with vision or hearing loss, regardless of their ability to pay.

The evening was dedicated to the memory of AURORA’s Honorary Board Member and longtime friend Amelia Greiner, who passed away the previous evening. The event was a perfect way to celebrate Amelia, who truly embodied everything the Women of AURORA stand for. We are grateful to all who contributed to the event and especially want to thank Carol Nappi for opening up her home to us and so generously and graciously offering her gift of hospitality to us all.

President of AURORA Debra Chaiken with Gloria Hooper-Rasberry (Honorary Board Member).  

Carrie Lazarus (News Channel 9) with Motivational Speaker Monica Johnson.

2017 Campaign Kicks Off In Style...

AURORA of CNY has been a proud participant and recipient of United Way funding support since 1926 and we continue the tradition in this important year as we get set to submit our proposal for the next three year funding cycle for the United Way of Central New York. We are also supported by the United Way of Cayuga County and Greater Oswego County. This year we kicked off our in-house campaign with a make-your-own sundae bar and an informative talk from Stephanie of CONTACT Community Services who explained the 2-1-1 service in Onondaga and surrounding counties. AURORA staff members are active in the United Way campaigns through the Speaker’s Bureau and we expect to make our in-house goal for funds raised this year. Thank you to all those who contribute to the United Way!
Monu’s Mission

Monu Chhetri, AURORA’s Deaf Interpreter and Caseworker, will be embarking on a very special journey at the end of the year, back to visit the Nepalese refugee camp that she called home. She travels with a purpose and a personal mission to share her experience, strength and knowledge with those she left behind when she came to America for a new life six years ago. Her sister still lives in the camp and she will reunite with another sister whom she hasn’t seen in over 20 years.

During the three week excursion, Monu will meet with Deaf Leaders in four refugee camps and conduct three days of workshops. She will teach what she has learned about navigating the immigration, medical and human service systems here in the United States. She will relay simple, practical things like what a traffic light is for and where to find traditional ingredients to make native dishes. She will also clarify the role of the police here, as being helpful friends, and not politically motivated authority figures who are out to do harm, as has been the experience of many people who are refugees. Her message is one of empowerment and hope.

There are an estimated 500 individuals who are Deaf and are still residing in camps among the 16,000 refugees left from the Bhutanese genocide of the early 1990’s. During the height of the persecution over one hundred thousand people fled and were displaced to Nepalese refugee camps where they held no citizenship and had no rights. To date, the Bhutanese resettlement program has been one of the most successful, touting 100,000 people who have been resettled, 85% of them in the United States.

Monu embodies why resettlement has been so successful. She states through a sign language interpreter, that the Bhutanese are a highly disciplined and hardworking people who have many dreams. They do not seek handouts but take hold of opportunities to work, study and contribute to the community they live in. And from observation, they are a generous and committed people, as well.

In fact, since coming to the United States, Monu has worked tirelessly to help other immigrants, who are Deaf like her, learn the ropes and assimilate into the culture. She came here “terrified and isolated” without knowing the language or the culture and shed many tears from loneliness and culture shock. She turned her trauma into triumph with her dedication and hard work ethic and the help of AURORA of CNY and other local organizations. She learned American Sign Language and everything that she could about the American way of life. Recently, she proudly became an American citizen.

Monu’s mission is truly one of the heart. She will return to a place that offered so little in the way of a future with a heart full of wisdom and hope to offer others who can still only dream.

“I want to tell them not to be afraid and that they don’t have to be alone; that they can enjoy a good life and be independent when they come to America,” Monu explained.
Join Our Mission — Without the generous support of our donors, we would not have been able to serve this community for more than 99 years. Donors like you provide much needed funds for programs such as our support groups, social work services, and skills training. We appreciate donations in any amount and thank you for your assistance.

Please complete & mail this form to:
AURORA of CNY, 518 James St. Ste. 100, Syracuse, NY 13203-2282

AURORA of Central New York 2017 Donation Form

Name ________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________
City ______________________________  State ________  Zip __________
Phone ____________________________ Email __________________________________

I would like to make a contribution to AURORA of Central New York 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 (Please make checks payable to AURORA of CNY, Inc.)
☐ MasterCard  ☐ Visa  ☐ American Express

My Account # ____________________________  Expiration Date: _______/_______

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

Name on Account (if different from above) ____________________________________________

Billing Address (if different from above) ________________________________________________

I am aware and allow AURORA of Central New York to charge my card for the above purposes.
Signature: ____________________________  Date: __________________________

* 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 of Central New York. Your donation to AURORA is tax-deductible.
Save the Date

100TH YEAR CELEBRATION OF AURORA OF CNY
15TH ANNUAL
A MUSICAL FEAST for the EYES and EARS

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2017

A United Way Agency of Central New York, Oswego & Cayuga Counties
Contract Agency of Onondaga County Dept. of Youth & Aging