100th Year Celebration of Aurora of CNY

A Musical Feast for the Eyes and Ears

Honoring Kathryn Ruscitto, former CEO of St. Joseph’s Health

at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown

Thursday, May 18, 2017

Presenting Sponsors: Sam & Carol Nappi and Dr. Lawrence Stewart

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100th Anniversary Celebration!

A special 100th anniversary celebration will take place at our Musical Feast for the Eyes and Ears fundraiser on May 18, 2017 at the historic Syracuse Marriott Hotel in the Grand Ballroom. Guests will be treated to an evening of fine dining and dancing to the legendary sounds of the Maria DeSantis Band. Presenting sponsors for the Gala are Sam & Carol Nappi and Dr. Lawrence Stewart.

We will be honoring our partnership with St. Joseph’s Health and the vision and leadership of our Honorary Chair, Kathryn Ruscitto, former President and CEO.

Doug Logan will be our Celebrity Auctioneer as we offer once-in-a-lifetime vacations and getaways provided by AmFund.org at our Live and Silent Auctions. These fabulous adventures include airfare and are specially chosen by their highly experienced in-house travel specialists to ensure each traveler receives the very best white-glove service at every step of their travel experience.

Preview our Wonderful 100th Gala Prizes!

Wine, Wonder and Romance of France — This exciting trip for two has it all … the excitement and beauty of Paris and the romantic chateaux and vineyards of the finest wine region of France!

Castles of Ireland — Fields of clover, legends of leprechauns, quaint pubs where playing darts is “serious” business, and living like Kings and Queens … all this will be yours while you stay in grand Castles and elegant Manor Homes during your magical eight-day escape to emerald green Ireland.

Alaska: The Call of the Wild — Sailing the Inside Passage, you’ll discover what life is like at the edge of our vast northern wilderness.
The Pleasures and Treasures of Tuscany — For food, fun and laughter, there’s no better place than Tuscany where, on your seven-day trip, the two of you will see incomparable treasures and art in Florence and learn to be spectacular chefs during your cooking class in an authentic Tuscan kitchen.

Isle of Capri — What better way to renew romance than in the most romantic place on earth… the breathtaking Isle of Capri where you will spend a glorious time drinking in the beauty and glamour of the island surrounded by the sparkling crystal clear blue Mediterranean!

Florida Family Fun! — Enjoy your family vacation of a lifetime in Orlando where you can savor your own flavors of fun in the sun! This deluxe townhouse villa is the perfect place to create memories with family and friends any time of year!

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James Bond’s Secret Hideaways — Like Bond himself, the two of you can enjoy your martinis shaken not stirred on this romantic adventure in Switzerland, Italy and France. It’s 009 days in Europe living the life only Secret Agent James Bond could imagine!

San Francisco Wine Country — Jet to the “City by the Bay” for an incredible escape to Northern California. You’ll explore the quaint streets of San Francisco and the rolling hills and romantic vineyards of the Napa Valley.

Spain: Barcelona & Mallorca — For sightseeing, sun and relaxation there are no two better places than exciting Barcelona and the sun-kissed island of Mallorca in the sparkling Mediterranean.

Greek Island Adventure — Get off the beaten path and escape to the magical islands of Greece! Sunny days, soft sand, the crystal blue ocean and romantic moonlit nights await one lucky couple with the winning bid.

Contact AURORA of CNY at 315-422-7263 to reserve your place at the table for this spectacular evening of fun and help launch AURORA into our next century of service. Sponsorship and underwriting opportunities available. This is a great opportunity for your company to get involved and be part of our history!
It’s Movie Time!

Have you ever heard about a movie that you’d really like to see but either you can’t see what’s happening on the screen or you can’t hear the movie sound track? Beginning in January, 2012, all first-run movies shown in multi-plex theaters were supposed to be accessible through audio description or closed captioning.

In CNY, all theaters have audio description headsets which you can borrow for free. Audio description provides information on what’s happening on the screen that you can’t see and is fit in between the dialogue. Moviegoers with hearing loss can ask for whichever closed captioning device the theater provides to enable them to read in real time what the characters are saying.

But things just got better out at Township 5 in Camillus which is within the Call-A-Bus service area. The Movie Tavern Theater has state-of-the-art audio description, closed captioning AND volume control so that you have a choice between reading the captions or increasing the volume. The audio description and sound control headsets, as well as the closed captioning device can be picked up when you buy your tickets. Just don’t forget to leave them at the desk on your way out.

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, 2016 to December 31, 2016. We apologize for any name that may have been omitted from our list. Please notify us of any changes or corrections. Thank you!!

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HOW CAN I HELP?

Many of the people we’ve served have asked us how they can help AURORA because they want to give back for all that they have received. Here are a few simple ways that can truly make a difference and further our mission:

1) Tell somebody. One of the things that we hear quite often is that we are the “best kept secret” in town! We want this to change, so tell others what we do and how we helped you so they can get the help they need, as well.

2) Like us on Facebook (and share us, too). Social media is here to stay and we communicate through Facebook by providing lots of interesting and informative articles and current events. We have a goal of reaching 500 likes by mid-year. Can you help us reach it?

3) Recycle your assistive devices with us. If you have unused magnifiers, hearing aids or devices, old glasses or cctv’s in good repair, we can use them to assist others. Please bring them to our offices during business hours.

4) Designate us as your charity of choice for AMAZON SMILE. If you are a frequent shopper with Amazon, every purchase can help us! Just follow the instructions on the Amazon site and indicate AURORA of CNY, Inc. as the non-profit you wish to benefit.

5) Support your local United Way. Since 1926, AURORA has been a community partner with United Way. If you have a chance to participate in your company campaign, you can indicate where the funds should go. United Ways fund two core programs that help youth and adults find jobs and receive the support and training they need to succeed in life!

6) Make a small monthly donation. Every little bit counts and we rely on supporters and donors just like you to continue our mission. You can even contribute online at our website www.auroraofcny.org

Thank You For Your Help.

Foresight

Save the Date — Monday, September 11, 2017

2017 ForeSight Golf Classic at The Links at Erie Village
Sponsorship Opportunities Available. Phone: 315-422-7263 or E-mail: auroracny@auroraofcny.org for more information.
A CENTURY OF SERVICE

AURORA of CNY has a long history of providing individual rehabilitation, support and employment services, along with professional interpreter referral services through the Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service. AURORA of CNY is the only area non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting independence and opportunity for people of all ages with vision or hearing loss.

1917: Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind was established to provide opportunities for people who were blind to be self-supporting. Federal legislation (the National Defense Act and Smith-Hughes Act) made funding available to provide vocational education through designated community agencies.

The creation of the organization was spearheaded by John C. Fowler. He was described as a highly educated man who was actively involved in advocating the use of a Uniform Type System, as an alternative to the then emerging system of Braille. Mr. Fowler, blind from birth, attended the New York State School for the Blind, graduated from Syracuse University in 1908 with honors in just three years, and worked for Syracuse University as a piano tuner.

During the 1920’s, the agency expanded its mission to provide employment and social opportunities for anyone in the community who was blind or visually impaired. A wide variety of items such as rugs, mats, wicker work, jigsaw puzzles, and towels were sold at community Christmas bazaars to help support the workshop.

1926: Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind, also known as “The Lighthouse,” began to receive Community Chest (United Way) funds and expanded its mission to provide employment and social opportunities for anyone in the community who was blind or visually impaired.

1938: Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind established a layman’s committee composed of business and industrial leaders who will endeavor to further the employment of blind and partly blind persons. Executive Secretary Bertha Armstrong also recommended that the organization form county auxiliary groups in various communities for the purpose of serving as contacting points between association services and blind persons in places
outside of the city. Mrs. Armstrong visited all blind persons in the county and made a complete record of each case, with a home teacher assigned to the Association by the New York State Commission for the Blind. Upon the basis of these findings, the Association, in cooperation with social and health agencies, will endeavor to meet special needs.

1941: Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind purchased a new home for The Lighthouse at 425 James Street to accommodate more space for workers and for demonstrations and social events.

1950s: As well as selling workshop items made by blind workers, Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind often offered demonstrations of talking book machines, seeing-eye dogs, instruction in reading and writing of Braille, and advocacy for blind and handicapped workers.

1965: As the result of changing community attitudes and in response to a study commissioned by the Board of Directors, AURORA’s sheltered workshop was merged with two other sheltered workshops to form Consolidated Industries of Greater Syracuse. Its social programs were merged into the Salvation Army’s Golden Age Center, as well. At the same time, The Lighthouse began offering more specialized direct services to individuals with vision loss including social work, instruction in adapted daily living skills (rehabilitation teaching) and safe and independent travel training (orientation and mobility).

1976: In the mid-1970s, a study was conducted to identify the needs of members of the community who were Deaf. As a result, in 1976, The Central New York Association for the Hearing Impaired (CNYAHI) was established as a sister agency to the Lighthouse. There were two separate Boards of Directors and two separate program staffs, with a single shared administrative staff.

1979: CNYAHI established its Interpreter Referral Service, named after Marjorie Clere, a pioneering professional interpreter and advocate for the Deaf community, to meet the growing demand for high-level, qualified American Sign Language Interpreters.

1981: Summer Education Program for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children was added. Both The Lighthouse and CNYAHI continued to expand programming throughout the 1980s in response to changes in the laws and the emerging needs of people in our community. The emphasis was then and is now to provide services that are personalized and enable the individuals we serve to remain in their homes, jobs and school environments, living as independently as possible.

1991: AURORA of CNY is created through the merger of Syracuse Association of Workers for the Blind and the Central New York Association for the Hearing Impaired (CNYAHI).

1997: AURORA moved to its present location at 518 James Street.
2000: The start of the new millennium brought with it a shift in community-wide demographics and an increased demand for AURORA’s services. Across our nation and in our community we know that by age 65, 1 out of every 3 individuals will have some degree of hearing loss that impacts their ability to function, while 1 out of every 6 will lose a significant degree of vision. Additionally, more babies are surviving premature birth than they did just a decade ago, with long term consequences contributing to vision/hearing loss.

2017: AURORA celebrates 100 years and is poised to embark on exciting new ventures as an affiliated partner with Liberty Resources, Inc. to significantly expand our service lines and integrate a total health and well-being approach to services for people of all ages with vision and hearing loss.

The demand for AURORA’s services continues to grow. As a result, we are committed to delivering the highest quality programs and services to meet the emerging needs of Central New Yorkers with vision and hearing loss.

The End of an Era!

Since October 6th, 1970, AURORA has been graced by the presence of Diane LaBeff. She has literally been at the helm of the engine that has kept AURORA moving forward for the past 47 years! Diane embodies the definition of a GO TO GAL: someone who will help you get things taken care of; a person you can rely on when you are in need of extra help; a ‘jill of all trades’ who is capable of doing almost anything; someone you can count on when you are overwhelmed with your own chores and responsibilities; an expert at ...

Just about everything! Debra Chaiken describes Diane as “MY ROCK!”

Diane’s quiet and unflappable style, coupled with her competence and compassion for AURORA’s mission have been a source of constant support to the scores of staff and leaders throughout her tenure. She began as a receptionist and will retire at the end of June as Vice-President of Administration.

We hesitate to say goodbye, but we do want to wish her well and congratulate her as she retires and enjoys a well-deserved rest. Forty-seven years is a milestone that few accomplish and it has been a wonderful reign! Princess Di, you will always be in our thoughts and in our hearts! Be well!
Another Chapter in the Children’s Hearing Aid Program Story...

Several years ago, Mona Smart attended a WOMEN of AURORA event. There she learned about AURORA and met Diane Pluff who, with her husband, established the Children’s Hearing Aid Program (CHAP) in honor of their daughters, Sophie and Anna, both born with hearing loss. Little did she know how providential that meeting would be.

Fast forward to last November when Mona’s five year old twins, Genevieve and Laila, failed their hearing tests to enter into kindergarten. The results didn’t add up because both girls had made all of their developmental milestones and were communicating fine, so it was thought to be a fluke in the test. Yet, Mona with her mother’s intuition knew something wasn’t right. She noticed that in the car, when she wasn’t facing the girls, they often ignored her. Time passed, and the nagging feeling was finally confirmed when Mona’s husband Ryan kissed his daughters good night and while walking away, found that his “I Love You!” was met with complete silence. Then he, too, knew something was wrong.

A second test revealed that both girls, in fact, did have significant hearing loss due to enlarged vestibular aqueducts. They required hearing aids, a total of three. With that diagnosis, Mona knew whom to call.

Since then the Smarts have had a “fast education” into the world of hearing loss. They were fortunate in that they didn’t have to make hard choices because of the high cost of hearing aids. And like the Pluffs, they wanted to do something to give back and help others who are not so fortunate.

The result was the biggest Guest Bartender Fundraising event EVER held at The Krebs restaurant in Skaneateles, organized by Mona and Diane. Over $9,000 was raised in a two hour period for the Children’s Hearing Aid Program! We are very grateful for the thoughtfulness and effort of these two women, their families, The Krebs, and the community for their support of this event and the CHAP program.

And the girls? They are doing just fine. Both rock stylish and “very cool” hearing aids according to their peers at school and are extremely busy with sports such as flag football and hockey. For them, hearing loss is just a normal part of who they are.

For Mona there is still one moment that captures the essence of the bittersweet journey thus far of discovering her daughters’ hearing loss. It is a memory that she will always cherish and speaks to the beauty and resiliency of the human spirit, for when her two little girls put on their hearing aids for the first time, they spontaneously began to sing!

May that sweet song always play in their hearts!
Join Our Mission — Without the generous support of our donors, we would not have been able to serve this community for more than 100 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 ______________________________________________________
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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.)
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My Account # ________________________________ Expiration Date: _______/_______
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Name on Account (if different from above) ________________________________________________
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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.
Volunteer Opportunities

If you have a creative flair, enjoy sales and meeting people, you may want to consider joining our fundraising/development or golf committees. We are looking for volunteers who can solicit sponsorships and help us with our two annual events: Musical Feast for the Eyes and Ears Gala held in May and ForeSight Golf Tournament, held in September.

We need new blood and your enthusiasm and connections will truly benefit our mission. For more information, contact Debra Chaiken at 315-422-7263.

Updates to Mailing List?

We need your help to keep our mailing list up to date. 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 315-422-7263 or e-mail us at auroracny@auroraofcny.org.

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