

## Autism Awareness Walk Raises \$19,000

Games, free food, fun activities, and great weather were some of the highlights from this year's Autism Awareness Walk held in the Canton Village Park on September 8th. St. Lawrence NYSARC was able to raise roughly \$19,000 to help fund local programs that support people on the Autism Spectrum.



Participants enter the park area after completing the 2-mile walk.

This year's circus-themed Autism Walk flag and costume contests gave participants an exciting and fresh experience. Many people wore costumes in the park to support this year's costume contest, or just to be part of the theme in general. Among those we saw clowns, a ring leader, a trapeze artist, dog trainers, and many more. For the flag contest, many entrants sported circus animals on their flags for this year's walk, while others focused more on their message. Team A to Z's flag, had a powerful message that stated, "In a world where you can be anything, be kind." Winners of the contests can be seen on Page 3.

Once again, WWNY's own Jeff Cole hosted the walk and kicked it off with the opening ceremony.

Dave Merz of Yes-FM's "Merz in the Morning," hosted some interviews and helped get people down to the park with their live remote, interviews, and promotion in the weeks leading up to the walk.

(See Walk on Page 3)



### UPCOMING EVENTS

SLNYSARC Monthly Dance  
October 5, 2018  
Knights of Columbus, Canton

### Suggestions for Howie

SLNYSARC's Executive Director, Howie Ganter answers questions, addresses concerns, and responds to new ideas. Get the latest on what he had to say starting on page two of the newsletter!

### Call for News!

We are looking for news, staff news and photos! Send your stories to Kolby Weaver by email at [kweaver@slnysarc.org](mailto:kweaver@slnysarc.org).



Zachery Casquette, this year's T-shirt design winner leads this year's walk with Potsdam Elk's Lodge's mascot, Elroy, St. Lawrence NYSARC's puzzle piece mascot, Fitz, and some friends.

**Suggestion:** I know there have been many things said concerning the unpaid and uninterrupted lunches. I am fortunate to have a position that allows me to actually take this lunch as intended for the most part. Across the agency, I have seen several glitches that, as I read through the suggestions and even meeting minutes each time, are never actually addressed. When I get off the clock, I can eat in a space where individuals are also dining with their rooms (not uninterrupted) or I can leave the building (uninterrupted). We have no true employee lounge but I can leave the building because I have a job that affords me the ability and a supervisor who allows it. Being able to get off the clock and NOT work, is apparently a luxury not afforded to all throughout the agency. If we are off the clock, we are not being paid and cannot or should not be told what to do with that time. This is drastically different from the 15 minute breaks (on the clock time). I am based out of one site but need to visit others as the job for that day fits so I have seen and been told some things that prove to me we are not all being treated fairly as far as this area is concerned. It is my understanding that while we are off the clock, we should not be "staff" or be working in any capacity. I have watched as staff get off the clock and continue to work or be present as if they were because they are told they may not leave the area...they may not even go sit in their cars. How is this an uninterrupted lunch? and how is it fair that some of us are granted this luxury and some are not? I am not one of those staff but am a huge advocate for them because they are our "LEGS". When I inquire why they do not stand up for themselves as I would for myself, I get shoulder shrugs and comments such, "we have no choice". If staff in programs such as In Home Day Habilitation cannot get off the clock for a full 30 minutes of uninterrupted time...time to do with as they see fit, then notes should be put in Kronos stating such. That is my understanding and find it a bit discouraging that this ok and continues so that some programs appear to be running better than they actually are. If it were me, and I couldn't even go sit in my car, I would not be getting off the clock. I really hope for the sake of many employees, that this changes.

**Response:** I appreciate the comments; however this is an NYS DOL regulation that a person be provided with 30 minutes of uninterrupted mealtime. This does not mean that the staff can necessarily leave the location but should not be involved in providing services or program during this time. If a staff cannot take 30 minutes of uninterrupted mealtime than they should get paid for that time and it should be the exception not the rule. The other issue is related to staffing, if a staff cannot take a mealtime for 30 minutes then we need to look at the staffing ratio. Some positions have more flexibility than others based on their responsibilities and job functions. This is accomplished in many other organizations across NYS and although there are isolated issues related to coverage we need to find a way for it to work.

**Suggestion:** I would like to respond to a suggestion from the last suggestion box responses on 7/5/2018. To quote the specific one: "Suggestion: I appreciate everyone posting comments/suggestions, but how about everyone also helping by providing solutions? It seems as if everyone has an opinion, but how about everyone actually supplying an answer or suggestion? We have a new CEO. Can't change that. We have a change in the whole chain of command. Can't change that. Perhaps, staff should provide some of their own suggestions and help the change occur and take pride and ownership. This is how it was in the beginning"

This is completely absurd. Time to get off that high horse I say! And here's an actual suggestion in regards to this: Instead of just a suggestion box, it seems like the approach from staff in this box is more like an open forum. I suggest we just change it to a forum box where suggestions and open discussion are still welcomed, as long as it's continued moderation is happening. I believe this suggestion box is a good way for some staff in this agency to vent and Howie seems to be fielding things alright. I don't believe Howie has said anything out of bounds to what we as staff here would already expect. He's gotten jokes, poems, and a lot of frustrated responses from staff and some suggestions have flown his way. All of this is probably cathartic for all of us. I say keep it all coming at the very least. Putting a smile on someone's face at the end of the day is welcomed and it can be quite fun to read some of these. I'm getting a kick out of it anyways.

**Response:** Good comments.

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(Walk, from Page 1)

Little Italy Canton also attended the walk for the first time, as they partnered with St. Lawrence NYSARC and served free pizza throughout the walk. There were both kids and adults waiting in line throughout the day for a slice of pizza!

Along with the flag and costume contests (see the winners below), a fun zone was also set up for children to play a few different games. New to the walk this year was a sensory station, where children could choose a sensory-based activity to try to win a prize. Being in a crowded, overwhelming environment can be tough for children on the Autism Spectrum. The

two activities that were at the sensory station really helped many children throughout the day.

This year's Autism Awareness Walk would not have been possible without our sponsors, so we would like to thank them! A big thank you goes out to Rose & Kiernan as our presenting sponsor, as well as, WWNY, YesFM, Olympia Sports, Stewart's Shops, Kinney Drugs, SeaComm Federal Credit Union, Pepsi Cola Ogdensburg Bottlers, St. Lawrence University, Little Italy Canton, Children's Home of Jefferson County, and the Potsdam Elks Lodge. We hope to see everybody at next year's Autism Awareness Walk!



Staff Jordyn Elliot, watches as a walk participant's Plinko chip falls into one of the slots.

### Autism Awareness Walk Contest Winners Announced

#### Flag Contest Winners



**Best Overall:**  
Team A to Z



**Most Creative:**  
Team Trory



**Most Original:**  
JJ's Mutley Dawgs

#### Costume Contest Winners

Single

Duo

Team



**Single Winners:**

Andres Laso  
Age 7-12

Greta Bellardini  
Age 19-29

Rachel Laso  
Age 30+

**Duo Winner:**

Lexy & Andy Gang

**Team Winner:**

Team Noah

**Suggestion:** I think most areas are struggling with staff shortages right now. In the past, it has been effective to place ads in some smaller local newspapers. I am not sure what is available in other parts of the county, but in Gouverneur we have gotten some results when ads were run in the Tribune Press. People want to work close to home, but they are not aware that we are here and are almost always looking to hire.

**Response:** We are preparing for job fairs and advertising in the communities where we are looking for staff. To start, the Gouverneur area is a focus point and another job fair will be held in Massena shortly thereafter. These will be done in the next several weeks. I am also revisiting the sign on and referral bonuses for DSP positions and, most likely, bus drivers. Hopefully these actions will increase interest in working at the organization.

**Suggestion:** As a newish employee I think the agency should look at the 90-day rule for new employees. While I completely understand why it was put in place, it makes life extremely difficult for new employees. I haven't been able to schedule any doctors appointments because I can't take any time. And if we get sick we're stuck. I just wish I had some options for these first few months where I didn't have to skip doctors appointments or battle through an illness just because I was new. Thank you.

**Response:** This is normal policy for most organizations and unfortunately, this cannot be changed. Although you accrue time during your first 90 days, you are not able to use it until after that time period. The only possible solution would be to take unpaid time if allowed. It would be an expectation that someone applying for employment would not be expecting to take time off in such a short period of time. We also realize things come up that are out of a staff's control; however that time would be unpaid and approval required.

**Suggestion:** Dear Howie—In the spirit of staff recognition and promoting positive feedback, I would like to suggest a system like the hospitals use. They have a "Caught in the act" program where people can write a note about a positive experience they had with a staff member. They will then drop the note in a box anonymously if they want. I was thinking we could adapt a similar system and at the end of each month or week the supervisors could review the notes with the recognized staff. Each site would simply need a drop box. As a supervisor, I think we often forget to say "good job" because we are caught up in programming issues etc. I feel that such a program is needed to remind supervisors to give that positive feedback. I also feel that its up to supervisors to remain professional and positive as the agency goes through the current changes. I think we forget how powerful our words and actions can be. I also think we need to embrace the change and remain united and positive toward what the future brings. That's my outlook on things anyway. I also want to say thank you for your diligence and creating an outlet for staff to voice their concerns via the EAC or as it seems lately the suggestion box.

**Response:** You are right, we do not recognize the good work and dedication of our staff often enough. Everyone has a role here in meeting the interests, needs and dreams of those we support. Staff is engaged and passionate about their programs and services and we should take every opportunity to acknowledge when this work is observed. We are looking at a recognition program to acknowledge good work related to our Values - Person Centered/Responsibility/Involvement/Dignity and Excellence. We will implement a program like this here soon for gas cards, gift cards, etc. It is being worked on and will be reviewed by EAC for approval.

**Suggestion:** A suggestion for the conference room at RLL... Mount a smart TV on the wall, which will get rid the bulky TV and cart that are currently in there, and eliminate the need to set up a projector for presentations (computer could be connected to the smart TV).

**Response:** Great idea and one that has been discussed. We will look at moving forward on this suggestion. That old TV would make a great boat anchor.

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Awesome job by staff members from both St. Lawrence NYSARC and JRC, who recently completed a Therap training in Rochester, NY. Therap is a program that we are implementing to help aid with daily communication among departments, for the people we support. It will also eventually be used throughout the Agency for formal billing, documentation, and paperless record keeping!

In the photo, from left to right, are Sherry Wilson, Vanessa Silver, Meaghan Voss, Alison Garrow, Christine Lauzon, and Russ Backus.

### Letter to the Editor

Gary Cooper recently celebrated his 19<sup>th</sup> year with the agency. At Bottles and Bows, he isn't just a team member, he is a team leader. Everyone looks up to him, respects him, and knows that he's the go to guy for any questions. He knows when someone is not feeling well, when they need help, and when they need a laugh. He knows all the customers by name before they get out of the car. He is not only an asset to the agency and Bottles and Bows, but Gary is the model of what a team leader who loves his job looks like.

Sincerely,

Edyn Toussainte

Production Manager—Bottles & Bows



In the photo: Crystal Delorme

Individuals from St. Lawrence NYSARC, in conjunction with Candlelite Farms from Colton, had the opportunity to participate in a four week Horsemanship 101 program. Laura Zellweger, a PATH Certified Instructor and owner of Candlelite Farms, created a program that featured anatomy, various tack identification, proper bridle and saddle application, and general care of horses. The program was a huge success and individuals were presented with certificates of completion at the end of the program celebratory picnic. Extraordinary job to those who attended the program!



In the photo: Candlelite Farm owner Laura Zellweger with Flora Cyrus

**Suggestion:** COMMUNICATION...There continue to be lots of rumors and speculation about what is happening in SLNYSARC. The most common phrases that accompany these is "I don't know.." or "No one knows..." or "So much for transparency..." Overall morale is going down the tubes, fast. It seems the issue (at all levels) stems from a lack of communication. While emails are great, nothing will replace face-to-face communication...from the top. It's been a long time since the initial meetings in October.

**Response:** I plan on doing department meetings again soon. With all that has been going on I have not had the opportunity to get out as much as I would like at either organization. But, I do understand the importance of such and the need for answers to questions. We will be scheduling a round of meetings in the next several weeks.

**Suggestion:** Staff value: Rumblings of people leaving (or considering leaving)the agency are getting louder. Rumblings that seem to be largely a result of not feeling appreciated and/or feeling anxious about their future with the agency. Any insight into how this can be changed? Can people's minds be set at ease? Can the agency afford to not "fight" to keep quality staff?

**Response:** Change is always tough and I agree we need to keep our long term staff who have dedicated their careers to working at St. Lawrence. Communication is key and being provided with information regarding change is essential. I believe we will be in a better place as a result of this merger from a programmatic, fiscal and work environment perspective. We are looking at ways to recognize longevity and also retain and attract staff.



Suzy, Anita, and Jacklyn Hoffleit, recently celebrated Anita's 50th Birthday in Gouverneur with a Wizard of Oz themed party. The Gouverneur Dollar Tree found out that they were having a party for Anita and out of the kindness of their heart, they decided to donate some supplies! Join us in wishing Anita Hoffleit a happy Birthday!

# **SIGN ON & STAFF REFERRAL** Bonus

## **Sign on Bonus for Direct Support Professionals and Drivers**

**Full time (FT):**  
Get \$300 after 3 months and \$350 after 6 months

**Part time (PT):**  
Get \$150 after 3 months and \$175 after 6 months

## **Staff Referral Bonus for DSPs, Drivers and LPNs**

**For FT Hire referral:**  
\$200 after 3 months of service and \$250 after 6 months

**For PT Hire referral:**  
\$100 after 3 months of service and \$125 after 6 months

**Contact the Human Resources Department at (315) 379-9531 or [cbryant@slnysarc.org](mailto:cbryant@slnysarc.org) for referral cards to earn your bonus!**



and



## Rob Voss: Supporting Roger to Capture His Outcomes

Rob Voss is a Direct Support Professional at St. Lawrence NYSARC, a non-profit membership association dedicated to full inclusion and integration for persons with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in St. Lawrence County. Rob is willing to do anything to support people to achieve their outcomes. Although there are many examples of the successes that Rob has helped people achieve, his relationship with Roger Smith is one of the best illustrations. Over the past four years in his role as Direct Support Professional, Rob has learned to anticipate Rogers's desired supports and guide him through any problems that arise.



**In the Photo: Roger Smith takes a photo of a waterfall**

Roger achieved his goal of living independently and Rob's involvement helps to guarantee that this living situation remains successful. They speak almost every other day to ensure Roger's daily routines are intact and that appointments are kept. They work together to maintain Roger's apartment, supplies, and budget too.

They also try to meet weekly to identify recreational activities and have a plan in the works that keeps Roger interacting in the community. Within the next month, the two are going to New York City to see a Yankees game. Rob has taken Roger to a variety of concerts, including one at Turning Stone Casino.

Roger's family is important to him, so Rob helps him to maintain these relationships with regular communication, as well as planned visits to family and friends that live out of the area.

Roger is an accomplished photographer, who through the Personal Outcome Measures, has shared that he wants to make photography a full-time job. Rob assists Roger in training on computer skills, developing products to display his photography, and researching locations to sell products. He guides Roger in methods to help him achieve the best possible photo and encourages him to bring appropriate supplies.

This duo has taken a bevy of trips specifically designed to give Roger a chance to add to his collection of nature photography. Over the years, they have gone hiking to find several waterfalls in Northern New York and even traveled to Niagara Falls!

Roger is grateful to have Rob's assistance and companionship. Rob takes pride in being part of Roger's life. He states, "No matter what happens, I'll be there to support Roger. He can count on it!"



**In the Photo: Rob Voss**