

COMPASSION

EXPERTISE

INCLUSION



From left to right: Jim Ricci, Maggie Rice, Bob Ricci, Gail Orzechowski, and Ed Orzechowski

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

Advocacy Network donates \$17,000 to Whole Children

The Advocacy Network, a local organization with a mission to promote and protect the health, human rights, and safety of people with developmental disabilities, recently donated \$17,000 to Whole Children.

The donation was one of the last acts of the group, which announced that it is dissolving after more than 60 years of work.

“We’re winding down our organization and the Board of Advocacy Network wants to help others with like-minded missions,” said board member Ed Orzechowski. “Every time we’ve visited Whole Children, we’ve seen young people socializing, developing artistic and musical talents, enjoying life in nurturing surroundings. We’re

very pleased to support the programs and staff of Whole Children. We know we found the right place.”

Advocacy Network member, the late Benjamin Ricci, was the father of Belchertown State School patient Robert Ricci. He filed a class-action lawsuit against the school in 1972, claiming that its residents were living in horrific conditions. The judge assigned to the Belchertown case, Joseph Tauro, who died in November, spearheaded a major overhaul of Massachusetts’ state facilities as a result of the lawsuit. Ultimately, that effort led to the closing of the institution.

Amherst resident Bob Ricci, the man named in the lawsuit against Belchertown, came to Whole Children with members of the Advocacy Network to deliver the check to director Maggie Rice.

“We are honored by this generous donation,” said Rice. “We are grateful to be reminded of the hard work of the parents who came before us in advancing the rights of people with disabilities.”

Whole Children, a Pathlight program that was founded in 2004 by a group of parents looking for after-school programs for their children with disabilities, has expanded to serve some 600 adults, teens, and children each year in a variety of recreation, performing arts and enrichment programs.

“This donation will help us keep our classes affordable so all families can come to Whole Children,” Rice said. “It’s important to us that no child be shut out from this amazing community.”

AUTISM, HOPE IN ACTION: ANNUAL AUTISM CONFERENCE

Autism Connections is excited to announce the 29th Annual Autism Conference on April 23 at the Sheraton Springfield Monarch Hotel. The theme of this year's conference is **Autism, Hope in Action: Building Blocks to a Fulfilling Life.**

As always, the day-long conference will be chock-full of information for parents, educators, self-advocates, caregivers and autism professionals to learn, share, connect and be re-energized.

But we're also shaking things up a bit this year. We're moving to a new location at the Sheraton Springfield and we're featuring ten breakout sessions on a broad range of topics

related to autism and the theme of the conference.

We're excited to kick off the day with Gina Gallagher and Patricia Terrasi, best-selling authors of *Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid, a Survival Guide for Ordinary Parents of Special Children*, who will deliver the morning keynote.

Our morning breakout sessions (all of which will repeat in the afternoon) include sessions that cover social skills and intimate relationships, the intersection of ABA and mental health counseling, interpreting neuropsychological tests, dealing with grief, and more.

Our Exhibitor Hall will showcase dozens of local and statewide organizations that specialize in

**29th ANNUAL
AUTISM CONNECTIONS
AUTISM
CONFERENCE
APRIL 23, 2019**

autism and related topics and services. We will also have a table full of children's and general knowledge books related to autism for sale.

Online registration is open now! Visit autismconnections.org to sign up. Information on sponsoring or exhibiting is available by emailing autismconnections@pathlightgroup.org or by calling 413-529-2428.

LET'S DANCE!

Close to 400 people cheered on ten dance teams at Let's Dance! in November. The joyous evening featured some salsa, a bit of Broadway, some raucous hip hop, and a whole ton of cheering, stomping, and laughter.

With support from donors, sponsors and auction winners, we raised over \$80,000 to support the programs of Pathlight. Better yet, the community got a chance to see the skills, talents and amazing moves of the people we serve.

Mark your calendars for **November 9, 2019** for the next Let's Dance! You don't want to miss out on the event of the season!



DARREN FUND BRINGS SUNSHINE & SMILES TO THOSE SERVED BY PATHLIGHT

As we all know, January and February can feel like a particularly long stretch of time. It's a period when people start mentally planning their summer excursions or take a vacation break from New England.

It was around this time last year that Michael O'Connell, and his alternative care provider, Chad Chevalier decided to do just that with a February getaway to Ft. Myers, Florida. The pair's four day vacation was made possible with support from The Darren FUNd.

The Darren FUNd enables individuals from Pathlight's Shared Living and Adult Family Care Programs to have fun and memorable experiences they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. It was established in 2007 by Anne Marie Corrieri and John Perrin. For over 25 years the pair has opened their home to provide caregiving and respite care to individuals with disabilities served by Pathlight. In 2006, Darren was welcomed into their family.

It was Darren's positive attitude and never-ending smile that inspired Anne Marie and John to create the FUNd. They wanted to pay forward the overflowing love and joyfulness he brought to their lives by giving others the chance to also create meaningful



memories. The Darren FUNd is there to support whatever will bring someone happiness. This past year that happiness took many forms, ranging from a membership to a local Y (an everyday indulgence we might take for granted) to a trip to The Bushnell to see *The Lion King* with a church group. It helped pay for storage units during a stressful move, and not just the one visit to Florida, but another trip to Universal Studios to boot!

Describing their trip to the sunshine state, Chad said, "Michael really enjoyed it! He especially liked the baseball game." The two dedicated Red Sox fans made sure to attend the February 25 game vs. the Orioles at JetBlue Park. In addition to the excitement of the BoSox taking home a win, the guys hit the rest of their vacation out of the park with an amazing itinerary. They visited a



reptile museum, went to the beach (of course!), and saw the movie that Michael had been waiting to see - *Black Panther*. Back at the hotel they had fun taking frequent dips in the pool and indulging in a vacation favorite – the continental breakfast.

The laughter, smiles, and memories from Chad and Michael's trip are what The Darren FUNd is all about. It helps others answer a resounding "YES" to Darren's favorite phrase, "How 'bout be happy!" and furthers the rippling effect his happiness started so many years ago. Since his passing, Darren's sunny disposition and loving spirit have manifested through the FUNd as it continues to be a ray of sunshine to those served by Pathlight. His legacy of joy continues on.

ANNUAL PATHLIGHT AWARDS CELEBRATION

**SUNDAY
APRIL 7, 2019
12 P.M.**

**THE LOG CABIN
500 EASTHAMPTON ROAD
HOLYOKE, MA**

This year we are changing up the annual Pathlight Awards Celebration a bit. We hope you will join us for a Sunday lunch, and after the recognition and celebration of accomplishments in the Pathlight community, we will be closing out the

event with a DJ and a dance party! We look forward to seeing you there and hope you will be ready to get down on the dance floor.

Look for more information soon at pathlightgroup.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Intelligent Lives: An Evening of Film & Discussion

February 10, 5-7 pm
Eric Carle Museum
Amherst, MA

Whole Children and Five College Realtors present A Focus On Disability. This year's screening is a thought-provoking and powerful film called *INTELLIGENT LIVES*. The screening will be followed by a discussion and Q&A. This event is FREE, but to support community events at Whole Children, we welcome all donations.

Join us! Reserve your FREE ticket at wholechildren.org

SSI/SSDI Workshop

February 12, 6-8 pm
Family Empowerment
Hadley, MA

Completing paperwork for social security benefits properly can make a big difference, so come learn to successfully apply.

Picky Eaters Workshop

March 12, 6-8 pm
Family Empowerment
Hadley, MA

Learn strategies and tips on how to expand food choices for kids, including those with disabilities.

RSVP by calling 413-585-8010
or email [michelle.mendes@](mailto:michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org)
pathlightgroup.org



Milestones & Whole Children Annual Theater Production

March 15, 7-9 pm
March 16, 2-4 pm
Hallie Flanagan Theater
Smith College
Northampton, MA

For more information visit
wholechildren.org



220 Brookdale Drive, Springfield, MA 01104