

Access Abilities!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

At this year's Henry Viscardi School graduation, I was particularly moved by an inspiring speech that was delivered by our Valedictorian. Her words were sensitive, intelligent, and thought-provoking. But it also impressed me that she was able to present her speech via an innovation in technology, a wireless communication device, that provided a voice for everybody to hear.

A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* described the plight of teachers who lack the training and support they need to educate the children with disabilities who are 'included' in their classes. Locally, Abilities! has created innovative programs that bring training and technical support to these teachers, so that the children with disabilities in their classrooms receive the education they deserve.

Innovation, whether in technology or in the way we provide our services, is the key to the success of the students at the Henry Viscardi School and the adults in our employment programs. The attainment of their dreams is directly related to our ability to continue to create innovative programs that allow people with disabilities to lead full and independent lives. The following is a list of some of our other innovative programs:

- *Working collaboratively, The Henry Viscardi School and Friends of the Arts (FOTA) implemented a program entitled Jazz Sampler for Students with Physical Challenges.*
- *Henry Viscardi School students communicated with scientists conducting research in the Panamanian Rainforest through live time interactive broadcasting.*
- *Abilities, Inc. introduced the No Man Is An Island Basic Computer Skills Training Program, which was created for Vietnam and Korean Wars veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress and other health issues.*
- *The Laboratory Assistant Training Program, founded at the Abilities Inc. headquarters in Albertson, NY, was successfully replicated at the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Center in Edison, New Jersey.*

- *The Emerging Leaders Program continues to be a model in placing college students with disabilities in paid internships. This year, 25 interns benefited from the program and nearly 30 corporations partnered with the National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) on this effort.*
- *Wall Street businesses partnered with NBDC on its second annual career event hosted by Goldman Sachs. Over 100 college students and experienced professionals with disabilities seeking employment networked with leading companies in the financial services and accounting fields.*
- *The Kornreich Technology Center has equipped classrooms with assistive and educational technology to enhance delivery of instruction. Classrooms have interactive whiteboards, laptop computers, and individually selected assistive technology, enabling teachers to customize instruction. Video conferencing and podcasting features further enhance learning, giving students, parents and teachers entry to otherwise inaccessible settings.*

In order to continue to provide these innovative programs, we rely on the gifts of hundreds of friends who contribute to our Annual Appeal. Together, they help us to fulfill our mission to create a world in which people with disabilities live simply as people. In this way, we bring the Abilities! experience to future generations of children and adults with disabilities.

Please help us help them.

Sincerely,



Edmund L. Cortez
President & CEO

P.S. For your convenience, enclosed is a response card and envelope, or you can make a donation online by going to www.abilitiesonline.org and clicking on "Support Abilities!" All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you for making Abilities! part of your philanthropic plans. ■

CELEBRITY SPORTS NIGHT

On May 17th Abilities! hosted its 41st Annual Celebrity Sports Night dinner, which raised more than \$1 million in support of programs and services at the Henry Viscardi School and Abilities, Inc. Nearly 800 guests packed Abilities! Albertson facility for the *Subway Series* themed event, raising much needed funds for programs that assist children and adults with disabilities.



Major League Baseball legends Kieth Hernandez, Graig Nettles, and Tom Seaver

Abilities! deeply appreciates the generosity of the many people and organizations who demonstrated their commitment to the Center by supporting our 2007 Sports Night event. We are especially grateful to our major supporters, Lucy and Ralph Palleschi, *Dinner Sponsor*, and Iris and Saul Katz and Family, *Cocktail Reception Sponsor*. We were also pleased to welcome the following new sponsors to the Abilities! family and our growing list of supporters: YES Network, SportsNet New York, American International Group (AIG), SES Americom, Ascent Media, Jeffrey Doppelt, WP Stewart & Co., Intelsat, and XL Insurance. We thank them for their generous contributions.

Abilities! was privileged to honor Joseph L. Mancino, former Chairman and CEO, Roslyn Savings Bank for his outstanding commitment to our organization. John Filippelli, President, Production and Programming, YES Network and Jon Litner, newly appointed President of Comcast SportsNet were recognized as business *Sportsmen of the Year*. Baseball legends Keith Hernandez and Graig Nettles were named *Executive Sports Stars* and Aimee Mullins, President, Women's Sports Foundation and double amputee received the *Roy Campanella* award.

Honoree Joseph Mancino, former Chairman and CEO, Roslyn Savings Bank thanked everyone and stated "by being here tonight all of you are making

sure that every individual that has a disability has a chance to get an education — has a chance to learn a vocation — and has a chance to have a very successful life ... but it takes Abilities! and the Henry Viscardi School to make it happen and by all of you being here tonight you are making it happen."



Senator Craig Johnson; Frank and Rita Castagna, Castagna Realty Co.; Susan Gordon Ryan; Ed Cortez; and Tom Moran, President & CEO, Mutual of America

Ed Cortez, President and CEO of Abilities! stated "we are extremely grateful for the overwhelming generosity of the individuals who participated in this year's Sports Night—from the celebrity athletes who graciously gave of their time signing autographs, taking photos and having dinner with our guests—to the corporations, foundations and individuals who responded with unprecedented financial support. Our goal this year was to raise \$1 million and thanks to all of you we have once again exceeded our goal." Cortez continued "with the money raised tonight we will continue to grow and create new programs for people with disabilities and the employees of Abilities! will continue to change peoples lives for the better."



HVS teacher assistant Joe Slaninka, NFL superstar Wesley Walker, and HVS student Wilson Guerra

This year's all-star cast of celebrity athletes also include former NFL greats—Leonard Marshall, Wesley Walker, Sean Landeta, Marty Lyons, John

Dockery; former MLB greats—Bud Harrelson, Tom Seaver, Rusty Staub, Jim ‘Mudcat’ Grant; former NBA greats—John Starks, Jack ‘Dutch’ Garfinkel; former NHL greats—Rod Gilbert, Clark Gillies, Michael Hordy, Garth Snow, Steve Webb; figure skating greats—Sarah Hughes, Emily Hughes, JoJo Starbuck; Boxing legend Joe Frazier; WWE champion Mick Foley; and many more.

The 2008 Sports Night dinner is scheduled for Thursday, May 15, “Celebrating the Olympic Games”. Please reserve the date on your calendar so that you won’t miss another exciting evening in support of Abilities! ■

HVS GRADUATION



Mrs. Avermenko with HVS valedictorian Nichole Cavanagh

The Henry Viscardi School (HVS) hosted its annual commencement exercises for the graduating class of 2007 at its Albertson facility on June 21, 2007. With steadfast determination and support from their families and HVS staff, this year’s graduates have overcome a lifetime of extraordinary hurdles. But it does not end here, as these remarkable young adults remain determined to overcoming barriers in their pursuit to become productive members of our society. An astounding 79% of the graduating class will be continuing their education at a college / university, while others will pursue vocational programs. This year’s graduates have been accepted to Briarcliff College; John Jay College; Kingsborough Community College; Nassau Community College; Queensborough Community College and SUNY Old Westbury.

Patrice McCarthy Kuntzler, Executive Director, Henry Viscardi School stated, “I am extremely proud of our students’ accomplishments. I am also proud of our school’s dedicated teachers and staff who have worked tirelessly to successfully prepare our graduates for a bright future—whether going on to college or to a vocational school. These young

adults are an inspiration to all as they remind us that a positive attitude can help you overcome even the greatest of obstacles.” ■



HVS Board member Iris Katz and Ed Cortez present Gabriella Pisani with her diploma at the 2007 graduation ceremony

EMERGING LEADERS



Emerging Leaders Class of 2007

The 2007 Emerging Leaders interns recently gathered in Washington, DC / McLean, VA for a Leadership Development Conference. The conference highlights included presentations by Lana Smart, Vice President Corporate Services, National Business & Disability Council (NBDC), who spoke on the historical challenges faced by qualified individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment commensurate with their skills and abilities. Her presentation also covered the advancements made in the employment and disability arena since the early 1990’s including the Emerging Leaders program. Michael Capobianco, Emerging Leaders class of 2006, and a recent MBA graduate of Rutgers University, also presented on how students can make the most of their internship.

As part of the program, Emerging Leader interns also received a full day of professional development

training from Booz Allen Hamilton's award winning Learning and Development team. Training modules included: working in teams, problem identification, solution generation, interviewing clients, and presenting new ideas to both internal and external customers. At the conclusion of their training, interns were broken down into teams in order to apply what they had learned to a case study on the employment of people with disabilities. The exercise culminated in the development of problem statements and solutions, which were presented by the intern teams at the US Chamber of Commerce Hall of Flags to a distinguished panel which included John Hager, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS), US Department of Education; Richard Gatward, Managing Director, Lehman Brothers; Roy Grizzard, EdD, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), US Department of Labor; Jan Magill, Director of Strategic Partnerships, US Chamber of Commerce; and an audience of more than 100 education, employment, and government leaders.

In addition to providing important feedback to each of the intern presentations, the panelists shared additional information and valuable insights based on their extensive experience in their respective fields. Following questions and answers and brief dialog with the audience, the program concluded with closing remarks by Joseph Suarez, Director of Community Relations, Booz Allen Hamilton, who was joined by Ed Cortez in presenting certificates to each of the interns participating in this rigorous program.

If you are a student with a disability who is interested in participating in this summer internship program—or if you are an employer that would like to find out more about participating in the Emerging Leaders program, please visit our website at www.emerging-leaders.com or contact Lana Smart at (516) 465-1510. ■

NATIONAL IMPACT UPDATE

In 2002, the Peter Jay Sharp foundation provided a generous grant focused on equipping classrooms in the Henry Viscardi School (HVS) with inclusive technology. The grant also provided for the training of staff in the use and integration of this technology into all facets of the curriculum and students' school life. The second phase of Abilities! Inclusive Technology Project (ITP) was to share our experience and expertise with others in an effort to have a *National Impact*. In 2005, the Peter Jay Sharp foundation renewed its commitment to Abilities! and our vision to effectively share and disseminate

our experiences with others.

Since that time, Abilities! has been designing educational modules that focus on the use and integration of inclusive technology for pre-service and in-service teachers and other related service professionals. These modules and services concentrate on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities into less restrictive educational settings. Each module demonstrates how the use of assistive and instructional technology (a pairing Abilities! calls inclusive technology) can be combined within contemporary frameworks for curriculum design such as: Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, and Understanding by Design, to create inclusive classrooms which facilitate curriculum access for all students.

To further its impact, Abilities! has been working with local school districts to modify their curriculum and infuse inclusive technology into their classrooms. In addition, Abilities! has also been working with local and national universities to provide their students with direct instruction as well as support their faculty with key competencies for integrating inclusive technology into the classroom. Using a collaborative curriculum modification process, Abilities! assesses current technology usage and resources, develops recommendations to support instructional objectives, and facilitates the implementation of these recommendations. Abilities! has also added the power of a rich web based course management system which enables Abilities! partners to access Abilities! content from anywhere at anytime. As a result of this powerful new tool Abilities! is now providing:

- Both on-line and on-site training to facilitate the application of new curricula
- Web based modular activities for learning about and integrating Inclusive Technologies and;
- Educational materials for use by university and school district training specialist

These materials deliver rich web experiences for eLearning, professional development, and live online collaboration, enhancing the communication and training Abilities! provides.

Abilities! impact plan is simple, ***For every teacher we work with—there's the potential to impact the life of every student taught!*** The work Abilities! has begun with the assistance of the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation has easily touched the lives of 750 parents, teachers and students and that number

continues to grow every day. When Abilities! modules are infused into our university partners' curricula, we have even greater impact. Instead of working with one teacher at a time, we are able to work with and instruct ten to twenty teachers at a time. Therefore, the number of individuals impacted through our training modules, video podcasts, and direct instruction continues to grow exponentially.

As an organization, Abilities! knows it has just begun to address the needs it witnesses every day—needs not only acknowledged by Abilities! but also by the U.S. Department of Education. In their 2000 National Educational Technology plan, they stated, “. . . that most teachers have not been prepared to use technology effectively, that they are in essence... out of step with what is needed to prepare the nation's students for the challenges they will face in the future.” It is important to note that this statement does not include the teachers who serve students with severe disabilities and it is this deficiency which Abilities! is addressing through its *National Impact* efforts. ■

AUDIO & VIDEO PODCASTS

Abilities! continues its commitment to disseminate information which will improve the lives of people with disabilities. In so doing, Abilities! has created a series of free audio and video podcasts. Placing content and learning within reach 24 hours a day, podcasts have the potential to reach thousands of parents, teachers, students, university faculty, employers, etc. each day. Abilities! has already created four online training programs, 12 audio podcasts, nine video podcasts—with a plan to launch at least one additional video podcast each month. Online training and podcasts are available via Abilities! website at <http://www.abilitiesonline.org>. Visit the “Online Presentation & Training” pod for a complete listing of available materials. ■

HVS SENIOR LUNCHEON



HVS Board member Margaret Cuomo-Maier with HVS students Nichole Cavanagh and Linda Joo



Reach for a Star Committee member Vicki Murphy with HVS student Helen Cranch



Reach for a Star Committee members Nan Bernstein (left) and Denise Wolfbiss with HVS students Parmanand Singh and Kilby Pena



HVS teachers, administrators, and Board members celebrating with the graduating class of 2007

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EVENTS CALENDAR

2007 KNICKERBOCKER CUP

The Knickerbocker Yacht Club in Port Washington, NY will host their Annual Knickerbocker Cup from August 22, through August 26, 2007. Net proceeds from the event will be donated to support the employment and education programs at Abilities!. For additional information, please call (516) 883-7655 or log on to www.kyc.net.

CHAMPIONS FOR CHARITY

Abilities! welcomes you to shop at the Americana Manhasset during Champions for Charity® from November 29, through December 1, 2007. This annual holiday shopping benefit is designed to raise funds for local Long Island not-for-profit organizations. During this event participating AMERICAN MANHASSET and Wheatley PLAZA stores will be donating 25% of designated pre-tax purchases to the not-for-profit organization(s) of the customer's choice when they use their CHAMPION CARD. To register for a complimentary CHAMPION CARD visit www.championsforcharity.org.

HENRY VISCARDI JR. ANNUAL LEGACY AWARDS LUNCHEON

The Henry Viscardi Jr. Annual Legacy Awards Luncheon will take place on December 3, 2007 at Mutual of America's headquarters in New York City. The event will honor corporate leaders who embrace and support the employment of individuals with disabilities. For additional information, please contact Linda Tibbals at (516) 465-1595.

EMPLOYER RECOGNITION BREAKFAST

Abilities, Inc. will host its Annual Employer Recognition Breakfast on December 11, 2007. The event honors New York metropolitan area corporations that employ and promote persons with disabilities. For more information contact Anita Zimmerman at (516) 465-1546.

Abilities!

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