



Serving children and adults with Down syndrome,
autism and other developmental disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Great Turnout for a Great Cause at Annual ACDS Fundraiser

PLAINVIEW, ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NEW YORK, April 12 2016—ACDS, now celebrating its 50th Anniversary, held its Annual St. Patrick's Celebration on Saturday, April 2, 2016 at the St. Agnes Parish Center in Rockville Centre. More than 600 guests attended the fun-filled event in support of ACDS' programs and services for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities.

The festive celebration featured live Irish music performed by crowd favorite Martin Flynn, exciting raffle prizes (including an all-expenses-paid trip to Ireland!), a silent auction and delicious food and drinks catered by Kasey's Kitchen & Cocktails of Rockville Centre. The event also provided a chance to raise a glass to longtime ACDS staff for their years of dedicated service, helping to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of individuals and families across Long Island:

Residential Coordinator Pat Albertini was honored for her outstanding 32-year career at the agency, where she started as a volunteer, then worked her way up to Assistant Teacher in the preschool. In 1986, Pat became the first assistant to work in ACDS' 5Plus Program and later became the first house manager of ACDS' first group home. She was soon named Residential Coordinator there, a position that she proudly still holds today. Pat's kindness and compassion has helped enhance lives of all ages – from toddlers to young adults.

As a social worker at ACDS, Julie Laufer also brings heart and soul to her role, as she guides families through the process of raising children with special needs. The warmth and encouragement she provides is an instrumental part of their journey, along with vital information and resources to ensure the best developmental outcomes for their children. A member of the ACDS team since 1994, Julie holds a Masters in Social Work from Adelphi University.

ACDS Bilingual Social Work Assistant Maritza Villegas joined the agency in 1996 as a teacher assistant before becoming a social work assistant seven years ago. In her role, Maritza has become a valuable asset to Latino families, working closely with social workers to translate important health information while providing advocacy, comfort and support. She also helps coordinate food, toy and clothing drives at the agency, helping to put a smile on the faces of many families in need.

Social worker Caren Sweeney has been helping to transform lives at ACDS since 2007. With a career spanning two decades in mental health clinics, hospitals and group homes, Caren's skills and experience are essential to meeting the needs of children with a variety of developmental disabilities and genetic disorders. Recently appointed ACDS' new Early Intervention Ongoing Coordinator Supervisor, Caren helps to facilitate evening support groups and educational workshops for parents. She holds an MSW from the Hunter School of Social Work.

"We're delighted to recognize the work of exemplary staff who are committed to our mission of outstanding service and touching lives," said Michael M. Smith, Executive Director, ACDS. "As in previous years, our St. Patrick's Celebration was a sellout, demonstrating the wonderful support of this community that enables us to provide high quality care to everyone we serve – something we hope to do for at least another fifty years."

About ACDS

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, ACDS, located in Plainview, NY is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. A provider of programs and services in and around Long Island since 1966, ACDS currently serves over 1,000 children and adults, delivering services that include Early Intervention and preschool special education programs, respite and recreation programs for children, teens and adults, adult Medicaid service coordination, day habilitation and eight supervised group homes. For more information, please visit acds.org or call 516-933-4700.

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