



DINNER OF HOPE

Breaking Down Barriers



APRIL 21 2018

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Registration and Cocktails 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Opening Remarks	Tim Coco, Master of Ceremonies
Welcome Message	Daniel Rajczyk, Executive Director

Dinner

Speaker	Daniel Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence
Keynote Address	State Rep. Andres X. Vargas

Awards Presentation

The Bryan Noble Award presented by Thomas Wood	Olivia Richard
The Community Service Award presented by Andrew DeCarlo	After Point Club of Lawrence
The Asperger Works Award presented by Eva Rajczyk	Lysbeth Noyes
Introduction of the Asperger Works Team	Tim Coco
Volunteers Recognition	Lisa Rajczyk

Entertainment

Magic Show	Stephanie Beach Magic Show
Music by	Flash Drive
Door-prize, 50/50, and Silent Auction	Marion Donahue

Dancing

Dinner Committee Members

Marion Donahue, Event Coordinator
Andrew DeCarlo, Thomas Wood, Adam, Eva, Daniel, and Lisa Rajczyk

Cover artwork by M. Eva Rajczyk

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Message from our Executive Director

Daniel R. Rajczyk



Welcome to our **Third Annual Dinner of Hope**. Our theme this year is "Breaking Down Barriers." Many of you may be wondering what that means. It is our hope that in the coming year employers will begin to break down barriers by hiring qualified individuals with Asperger's Syndrome.

Today there is much awareness of Aspergian people living amongst us. Many schools provide wonderful services to children with Asperger's, services that did not exist when I was a child. However, employment opportunities have not increased much for those of us with Asperger's. Statistically, we have the distinction of having the highest unemployment and underemployment rate in the entire disability community!

Why? It is difficult to say. One problem may be that most of us look like everyone else. Our disabilities are hidden. Many of us have problems with social skills. Some of us have sensory issues. Others of us have difficulties coping with stress and anxiety and lash out or have meltdowns. We cannot be quantified like people with other types of disability, so employers' expectations of us are either too high (think Einstein) or too low. But all of us are different with our own quirks and it is important to accept us just the way we are.

So, we are asking employers to look past our idiosyncrasies and not judge us by our quirks. By breaking down barriers to employment, they will discover that they made the right choice and will not regret hiring us. We are great workers - loyal, honest to a fault, hard-working.

Thank you all for coming! We appreciate your support and your belief in us. We will not disappoint your trust in the coming months and years.

Until recently, **Asperger's Syndrome (AS)** had its own diagnosis and most people with AS insist on being classified as those with Asperger's. However, it is now pigeon-holed as being on the autism spectrum. It is characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. It differs from other Autism Spectrum Disorders by its preservation of information processing, conceptual resources, perceptual skill, and language learning. Although children properly diagnosed improve as they mature into adulthood, their difficulties with communication and social skills often continue to persist.

Aspies often fail to pick up on social cues and have difficulty reading other people's body language. Many dislike changes in routines.

Asperger's manifests itself differently with each individual. No two Aspies, as they refer to themselves, are the same, making diagnosis difficult. Some have spatial deficits often manifested by invading another person's space. Some have heightened sensitivity and become over-stimulated by loud noises, lights, or strong tastes, smells, or textures.

On the plus side, adults with Asperger's have the tendency to pay close attention to detail and to focus on their interests that can result in success in higher education and careers (if given the chance). Although Aspies are often associated with careers in technology, there are a number of historical figures thought to have had Asperger's. Such historical figures include physicist Albert Einstein, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, biologist Marie Curie, statesman and U.S. president Thomas Jefferson, physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton, author Jane Austin, director Alfred Hitchcock, author and poet Hans Christian Andersen, naturalist Charles Darwin, puppeteer Jim Hanson of Kermit the Frog fame, cartoonist Charles Schulz of *Peanuts* fame, composer Ludwig Van Beethoven, and inventor Thomas Edison. Comic Dan Aykroyd has recently revealed that he has

Asperger's and Tourette's Syndromes. Singer Susan Boyle, a Scottish singer who blew away the competition on *Britain's Got Talent Show* in 2009, found out that she has Asperger's in 2012 at the age of 51. Recently, rapper Eminem revealed the he, too, is an Aspie. Many believe that entrepreneur, software guru, and former chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, also has Asperger's.

Asperger Works Connection

Although the people above prove that those with Asperger's Syndrome could live successful lives, a large percentage are not so lucky. According to the latest report from the CDC, 80 to 90 percent of adults with Asperger's are either unemployed or under-employed and are unable to support themselves. They rely on their families and the state for their livelihood.

Contrary to claims by some politicians and lay people, Aspies hate being thought of as "takers." Their goal is to find jobs that reflect their talents and education – jobs that will allow them to live independent, productive lives. It is this that Asperger Works was formed to facilitate through employer education and client job-skills preparation.



HONOREES

The Bryan Noble Award

Olivia Richard



The *Bryan Noble Award* was created in the memory of Paul Bryan Noble, who died way too young, but who lived a full life despite his medical problems

and other challenges. This award is presented yearly to a person who has strived to show that disabilities do not define or limit a person.

This year, we honor Olivia Richard for her strong advocacy on behalf of the disabled community of Massachusetts and indeed the country.

Olivia Richard is a disability rights advocate and activist, focusing on advancing the cause for community integration for all people with disabilities. She was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2000 when a senior in high school, then sustained a Spinal cord injury in 2009. Olivia graduated with degrees in Electrical Engineering and Psychology from UMass Lowell in 2006. She works with the Boston Center for Independent Living on various campaigns and initiatives around housing and healthcare, often engaging with state and federal government to work on making policies, programs like the One Care demo, and laws better for all. Olivia is a co-founder of Mass ADAPT, the Massachusetts chapter of National ADAPT, who are a grassroots disability rights organization that fight for people to be fully integrated in the

community and out of institutions. In her spare time, she loves to explore everything about the MBTA trains and public transit rolling stock, solve mechanical logic puzzles, play games, build with LEGO, and swing in her hammock on nice days.

The Asperger Works Award

Lysbeth Noyes



The *Asperger Works Award* is given to a person in recognition for their commitment to individuals and/or nonprofit organizations, like Asperger Works, that try to make life better

for all in their communities.

This year, we honor Lysbeth Noyes of Community inRoads, where she is the Program Director and the leader of the Healthy Board Development Program that galvanizes nonprofit Boards to optimize their mission.

Lysbeth is an advocate and change agent for social justice. She has administered nonprofit programs at the Federal, State, and community level in Maine, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. For fourteen years she was the Executive Director of New Hampshire's Region IV Development Services that served people with disabilities and their families. This consumer-driven organization became the cornerstone of a nationally recognized service system. Lysbeth was honored for her

leadership by the establishment of the annual Noyes Management Award.

She served as the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Task Force for Women and Recovery where, using a peer recovery support model designed for women, she provided leadership training within the justice system.

Lysbeth received her doctorate in Law, Policy, and Society from Northeastern University, where she teaches Advocacy and Community Organizing in the Graduate School of Urban Public Health.

Community Service Award

Point After Club of Lawrence



The ***Community Service Award*** is given each year to a local organization that provides unwavering support for people with disabilities, including those on the Autism Spectrum.

This year we honor the Point After Club of Lawrence. The focus of Point After Club is on self-help, peer support, and empowerment of its membership, with staff and members

working side-by-side to manage all of the Clubhouse operations and governance. The Clubhouse focuses on the strengths of each individual, providing membership the opportunity to live, learn, and engage in meaningful work, while contributing their talents to the Point After Club community. Point After Club services include supports geared toward employment, education, social activities and relationships, life-skills development, housing, connecting to community resources, health and wellness, arts-based rehabilitation, and advocacy.

Point After Club was awarded a three-year accreditation from Clubhouse International in 2017, the maximum level offered by Clubhouse International, an independent, multi-national nonprofit organization whose mission is to help communities around the world create sustainable solutions for mental illness by developing and nurturing new and existing Clubhouses.



Dinner of Hope, 2015

SPEAKERS



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Andres X. Vargas, this year's Keynote Speaker, serves as the State Representative for the 3rd Essex District (Haverhill). He previously served on the Haverhill City Council.

Representative Vargas is a graduate of Haverhill High School and Boston University. He has a background in marketing and communications management, while also working closely with entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Andy is a Haverhill native and is proud to represent his hometown.



Tim Coco, our Master of Ceremonies, first entered communications in 1978 as an intern at WHAV AM and FM in Haverhill and within a few months landed a job there in the news department. He

would remain in news throughout the 1980s – serving as City Hall reporter for the then-daily *Haverhill Gazette*, regional reporter for the *Daily News* of Newburyport, and editor of an environmental trade publication based in Manchester, New Hampshire. He was later tapped to create the communications department for Ogden Corporation, Fairfield, New Jersey.

He founded COCO+CO., an advertising agency, in 1991. In 2004, coming full circle, Coco acquired the WHAV name and founded Public Media of New England Inc. Today, the non-profit corporation operates 97.9 WHAV FM, the only Haverhill-based news source.

Coco is also a commissioner of the Haverhill License Commission, past president of the Trustees of the John Greenleaf Whittier Homestead, and a commissioner of the Essex National Heritage Commission.

Coco holds an associate degree from Northern Essex Community College and a Bachelor of Science in Management from Lesley University School of Management.



Daniel Rivera (Mayor of Lawrence, MA) is the 47-year-old son of a single mother who emigrated from the Dominican Republic to find a better life for her family. He is married and has a young son

and a new baby daughter. Mr. Rivera graduated from Lawrence High School, where he served as a co-chair of the LHS Model UN and as the Senior Class Secretary.

He earned his Master's degree from Suffolk University in Business Administration going to school at nights and weekends.

He worked as Project Manager at the public housing project where he grew up and was the Economic Development Director for Congressman Marty Meehan. Prior to becoming mayor in 2013, Mr. Rivera was an At-Large City Councilor. Throughout his political life, but especially since he became mayor, Mr. Rivera's goal has been to put Lawrence on the map as the vibrant, energetic immigrant city it is.



Dinner of Hope, 2016

WITH HEARTFELT THANKS



Mekhi Mendoza, who contributed an original art piece for our Silent Auction, is a young artist, born and raised

in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Working from home, he creates mixed media art (including digital) with many references to abstract concepts both physical and ideal. In his most recent work, he is drawn to the uniqueness of faces, especially the significance of eyes. The way he plays with different materials, tools, and concepts, including form of line, color (or the absence of) and emotion is almost a child-like creative and reflective response to different states of life experiences. Besides creating for himself, he is also an art director and youth leader for Elevated Thought, allowing him to have built some experience in collaborative works, murals, and shows, as well as some graphic design.



Marion Donahue is not only a member of our Board but she has also served as this year's Event Coordinator.

She comes to us from Pentucket Bank where she is an Assistant Vice President and Senior Branch Manager at the bank's North Andover branch. She received the bank's Community Service Award in 2013 and is an active participant in various community organizations. Initially, she joined Asperger Works as our Fiscal Advisor.

She enjoys volunteering at local nonprofits like Asperger Works; and, in her spare time, she does gardening. In addition, Marion is a talented painter.

Marion has brought to our organization her enthusiasm, organizational skills and her artistic talent.



WITH HEARTFELT THANKS

Stephanie Beach Magic



**Make your event Magical with Stephanie Beach Magic.
Visit StephanieBeachMagic.com or call 978-486-4242**

THE GALLERIA BANQUET ROOM

85 ESSEX STREET
HAVERHILL, MA 01832



*Event Dining in a Beautifully Restored Building once part
of Haverhill's Shoe Manufacturing History*

<http://www.thegalleriabanquetryroom.com/>
mariafamilyrestaurant@verizon.net
978-521-1472