A Message From The Executive Director

Securing Our Future: Exciting Things Are Happening

Dear Friends:

WITH THE INCIDENCE of autism being 1 in 68, it is not hard to imagine that the need for services continues to rise. Each year, we get far more requests for services than we are able to accommodate. This is particularly troubling when the requests are for young children, given the need to start intervention as early as possible. While Eden II was able to expand both its preschool and its elementary school to accommodate additional students, it has left us with a serious shortage of program space. Thus, the goal of searching for a new home for the preschool and elementary program has become more important than ever.

Throughout this edition, you will read about our early childhood capital campaign. We have a building that we are working to acquire. It would allow for larger classrooms as well as additional program growth and expansion. Of course, everything comes with a price. We will need to raise sufficient money to complete all the required renovations to bring the building into compliance with our funders’ regulations, as well as those renovations simply needed for our students. We are fortunate in that we have a very generous community, dedicated hard working board, staff and families all committed to the same thing—securing what we need to make this move happen. I hope you take a few minutes to read through and see what exciting things are happening here at Eden II, as well as all the information and ways you can join us in our efforts.

One of our exciting activities to both raise autism awareness and raise support is our Dine Out 4 Autism event. During the month of April, many restaurants and bars will be joining us in this endeavor. The goal is to make sure that we reach as many people as possible about early signs of autism, and other important information, as well as raise money for the programs here at Eden II. We hope you will take the time during April to support the restaurants who are participating. Look for more details about this in this newsletter.

I want to conclude by thanking all of our dedicated staff. It has not been an easy year given the turnover we have faced. Throughout all of this, however, our staff has remained positive and committed to our participants and families. Eden II would simply not exist without all of you. I just wanted you all to know that your efforts have not gone unnoticed!

Joanne Gerenser, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Executive Director
MILO THE AUTISM ROBOT
Visits Participants at Two Eden II Sites

Milo is part of the latest technology from Robots4Autism, a “comprehensive intervention program that uses purpose-built humanoid robots to deliver developmental instruction modules that teach critical functional skills.”

MILO, guided by Paul Hammond, Northeast Senior Partnership Director, demonstrated a number of useful lessons and games. Playing games like “Follow the Leader” and “Red Light-Green Light,” the classes were excited to work interactively with Milo.

“He was a fun robot. He taught a good lesson and he dances,” shared participant Sam.

Several “modules” were introduced to the students and teachers, including calm down methods like “Count to Ten” and “Squeeze a Stress Ball.”

The students were also able to answer a number of questions in the “Emotional Understanding” module. A video on an iPad played a clip of someone experiencing an emotion, and the students were then instructed to select the correct emotion based off the clip.

Participant Diego thought the demonstration was “good for education.”

When asked how he felt about Milo, participant Jared stated, “I love Milo!”

Jamie Arnold, Director of Educational Services shared, “It’s definitely an interesting way for teachers to incorporate new technology in the classroom. Everyone was engaged, and having the students choose the answers for how to act more appropriately in social situations was really informative for them.”

Through a generous grant, Milo will be joining the Early Childhood program for one year on Staten Island to help support learning.
EDEN II PROGRAMS

Early Childhood

CAMPAIGN

LITTLE MIRACLES SERVES OVER 100 CHILDREN with schooling, as well as children who receive specialized services, such as Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS). The preschool offers a full day program to children with autism or PDD (pervasive developmental disorder).

The goal is to provide children with autism a highly structured, intensive learning environment which includes individualized programming using Applied Behavior Analysis. Programming focuses on learning readiness skills, academics, social skills, play skills and self-help skills. The preschool is certified by the New York State Education Department and is funded through a contract with the New York City Board of Education.

The current space at Skyline Drive, is a building we are outgrowing as the demand for early childhood programs increases. The goal of the new building and its outfitting is to provide the best learning environment to support the development of young children with autism.

Little Miracles Early Childhood Program has done amazing things for our daughter, Brianna, in the short time that she has been there. She is more verbal then she was when she started and her self-injurious behavior is nonexistent. A new building would give this school the capability to bring their amazing program to more children who so desperately need it.

~ Brianna’s Mom, Toni

PLEASE SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF EDEN II’S EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, LITTLE MIRACLES.

You Make The DIFFERENCE

Support Eden II Programs’ Early Childhood Campaign

Visit eden2.org/ECC to make your gift to support Eden II’s Early Childhood Campaign.

EVERY GIFT IS 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE & GREATLY APPRECIATED.

MAKE YOUR GIFT ONLINE!
Go to www.eden2.org/ECC

DONOR RECOGNITION WALL

A custom donor recognition wall is being created to acknowledge gifts of $500 or more. The donor wall will have bronze, silver, and gold stars, each engraved with a donor’s name or message.

PRICING
Bronze Star $500
Silver Star $1,000
Gold Star $2,500

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR GIFT, PLEASE CONTACT

info@eden2.org OR CALL 718-816-1422 EXT. 1030
EDEN II PROGRAMS

Early Childhood CAMPAIGN

SET UP YOUR CROWDRISE FUNDRAISING PAGE TODAY!!

With a new building, there are many opportunities to honor someone, continue a person or corporation’s legacy of care and compassion, or promote a business. Naming opportunities have been created, from technology-enhanced classrooms to the nurse’s station. The sponsorship costs range from $5,000 to $100,000, as well as donor recognition walls like the one on this page where gifts from $500 can be acknowledged.

Gifts can be made one time, or over a period of up to three years. For example, a gift of $5,000 can be divided into a plan that works for you. Perhaps a monthly or quarterly check, or an automatic credit card charge by our development staff on a regular schedule. You can also raise funds toward a naming recognition by creating your own Crowdrise page! Our dedicated development staff will work to build the gift and payment schedule that best fits your situation.

Some namings can be found on this page. Additional options will be shared in the next issue of Connections!

- $100,000 Outdoor Site Naming
- $50,000 Playground
- $50,000 Indoor Gymnasium
- $25,000 Lobby & Waiting Area
- $25,000 Classroom
- $25,000 Lunchroom/Cafeteria
- $10,000 SmartBoard or SmartTable
- $10,000 Principal’s Office
- $10,000 Teacher’s Lounge
- $10,000 Conference Room
- $5,000 School Pantry and Kitchen
- $5,000 Nurse’s Station
- $2,500 Gold Star on Donor Wall
- $1,000 Silver Star on Donor Wall
- $500 Bronze Star on Donor Wall

A DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE AT INFO@EDEN2.ORG OR CALL 718-816-1422 EXT. 1030

1. Set up your Crowdrise fundraising page
2. Go to: https://www.crowdrise.com/eden2campaign
3. Click the grey SET UP YOUR FUNDRAISER button on the right
4. Choose to CREATE or JOIN A TEAM
5. Add photos, your goal, and your story
6. Log into CrowdRise (or create an account)
7. Personalize your page via EDIT FUNDRAISER
8. Start raising money today!

Raise money on your crowdrise page, reach your goal, and get recognized with your naming opportunity!
WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM?

I have been working with children with autism for over 21 years. I decided to complete an internship at Eden II during my undergraduate studies in 1995. I acquired a deep sense of pride in the accomplishments of my students, so much that I have stayed for over 21 years and never looked back. Not many people can say that they love going to work in the morning, which reminds me of a quote saying, “Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

WHAT MAKES EDEN II’S EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM UNIQUE? WHAT SETS IT APART?

We are a full ABA program that combines education and lifespan support that focuses exclusively on autism. We form unique bonds with our families, working together to improve the quality of life for our students and their families.

WHY IS THIS EARLY CHILDHOOD CAMPAIGN IMPORTANT TO YOU?

This campaign will give us to ability to be able to expand our services to so many more children and families throughout Staten Island. With the autism rate consistently increasing, the need for a program like Eden II’s Early Childhood program is essential to our community.

WHAT WILL BE SOME OF THE BIGGEST BENEFITS OF AN EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM?

With having an opportunity to expand and continue to grow, we will be able to positively affect not only our current student body and their families, but also the lives of so many more in need of our services.

WHAT WOULD YOU LOOK FORWARD TO THE MOST IN A NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD BUILDING?

The biggest thing is having classrooms that are bigger and able to be adapted to the needs of our students. Other things like a large gym and playground area, bathrooms where the students can complete their Activities of Daily Living (ADL) goals and recreational spaces for the students to take their breaks are very exciting to look forward to.

WHERE DO YOU HOPE TO SEE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

I recently received a letter from a former family whose child we serviced at our early childhood program. They were so grateful for our help throughout the years and wanted to express their gratitude for making their child’s life better.

“You, Nicole and the other SEITS who have worked with him have saved his life. THANK YOU. Due to your hard work.... you have changed another child’s life.”

With that being said, 10 years from now can mean so many more children’s lives touched and changed for the better.

Meet the Staff:
Lauren Grimaldi M.S.Ed., S.A.S., S.D.A.

Lauren Grimaldi is the Director of Early Childhood Education/SEIT-SETSS at Eden II since 2005. She has specialized in the education and treatment of children with special needs since 1995 when she began her career at Eden II as a teacher assistant. Lauren received her Master of Science in Special Education at Wagner College. She also received a Certificate of Developmental Disabilities and Certificate in Supervision and Administration from the College of Staten Island. Lauren has been working with children with autism, and their families for 21 years.

For information on how support Eden II’s Early Childhood campaign, please contact a development associate at info@eden2.org.
EDEN II IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the Genesis Family Support Services Department was awarded a $5,000 grant from Autism Speaks, which will be used to enrich its afterschool program. The additional funding will assist with the hiring of specialty area staff and student materials.

“We are thrilled to have been selected for this local community grant,” noted Dr. Mary McDonald, Interim Associate Executive Director of Long Island Programs.

AUTISM SPEAKS AWARDS $5,000 GRANT FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

STAPLES CONTRIBUTES $3,500 TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CAMPAIGN

DIRECTOR OF OUR LITTLE MIRACLES PRESCHOOL, Lauren Grimaldi, provided a comprehensive tour to Staples employees Carol Bullock and Michael McKenna. Eden II was recently awarded a $3,500 grant from the Staples Foundation towards our early childhood expansion. We are grateful for their continued support, and for Ms. Bullock’s grant recommendation of Eden II. In 2016, Carol received the Corporate Leadership Award for her efforts to raise awareness of Eden II and autism. Carol won the “Staples Community Hero” award in 2015, and Eden II received $5,000 as the organization of Carol’s choice through the 2 Million and Change Program. Because of places like Staples Foundation and people like Carol, we are one step closer to providing services to even more little ones with autism.

“It was a great experience to see the preschool staff working with the students. Their dedication is just inspiring, and I’m proud to support a wonderful program like Eden II,” shared Carol.

Staples has been a steadfast supporter of Eden II, donating $19,500 since 2015. In addition to the early childhood expansion, Staples’ grants have funded needed equipment and supplies for our “Staples Copy Center” at 15 Beach Street.

NORTHFIELD FOUNDATION GIVES $25,000 TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CAMPAIGN

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE a $25,000 grant from Northfield Bank Foundation towards our Early Childhood Campaign. For their generosity, a classroom will be named after the Foundation.

Eden II Programs’ Executive Director, Dr. Joanne Gerenser, shares, “This grant is another example of the astounding commitment from local Staten Island organizations. Diane [Senerchia, Executive Director of Northfield Bank Foundation] and the team at Northfield have proven to be great community leaders. This contribution will help us continue to serve the many early childhood participants that utilize our services.”

Northfield Bank Foundation has been a consistent supporter of Eden II events, and in 2012 provided a $25,000 grant towards the funding of a classroom in the Honorable James P. Molinaro Center for Autism.

DRIVE FOR AUTISM AWARDS $10,000 GRANT FOR SHERWOOD HOME

DRIVE FOR AUTISM recently awarded Eden II Programs with a generous $10,000 grant for the purchase of a generator for our most recent Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) group home on Sherwood Avenue. The generator will provide much needed security in the event of a power outage.

Drive for Autism Trustee, Thomas Trezza shares, “Our mission has always been to provide funds to programs (such as Eden II), so they can acquire needed items that are not in their regular budget. The needs for individuals on the autism spectrum continue to grow and our foundation is thrilled to be able to assist programs in their mission of educating and treating individuals with autism.” The Drive for Autism Foundation is a private charitable foundation that was established to raise funds and distribute them to schools and non-profit organizations committed to the education and treatment of persons with a diagnosis under the autism spectrum.

GIVE THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS
WHILE WORKING WITH VVLEAD FELLOWSHIP, a program run by Vital Voices, an American Organization for African women leaders, Jaki met her friend, Agnes Mam Fallah-Kamara. Agnes had taken an extra course in autism at her University, and her practical posting was at Eden II’s preschool. After listening to Jaki’s concerns about Arthur, Agnes urged Jaki to come to America, saying “Bring him to America, to Eden II, they do this thing called ABA…”

A WORLD OF POTENTIAL: Arthur’s ABA Journey From Kenya

Autism is one of the fastest growing developmental disabilities in the world. Getting the best care and services for your loved one can be daunting in the USA, where we have some of the best resources available. Now imagine being the parent of a 10-year old boy in Kenya, where they have only two Board Certified Behavior Analysts... This is Jaki’s world where she lives with her son, Arthur. At the urging of her friend, Jaki learned of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and Eden II.

After poring over documents on ABA therapy, Jaki decided to make the journey with her son, Arthur, to the United States. While in the US, Jaki stayed with Agnes and her sister, Regina. Her son spent three weeks enrolled in Eden II’s summer camp. Arthur was diagnosed with autism at five years old. Prior to his visit with Eden II, he had not had the benefit of ABA services. Eden II’s Executive Director, Dr. Joanne Gerenser, notes, “There were challenges simply because he didn’t have access to these services at home. He had to
'unlearn' things he had learned.”

Working with Eden II’s Executive Director, along with members of Eden II’s Psychology and Education Department, Arthur flourished.

“He worked on several goals including learning readiness, academics, daily living skills and leisure skills. I created a data book for him and worked on these goals each time he was here. On every occasion I worked with him I saw small advances. He was staying in his seat for longer periods of time and was able to focus and complete tasks when his behavior intervention plan ran appropriately. He was a very happy and smart little boy,” shared Jessica Krakower, Coordinator of Academic Programming.

Jaki’s mom noticed the immediate changes in Arthur once he started receiving ABA services.

“I was prepared to have to take it easy, not to push him [Arthur] too hard, but he adjusted so easily to ABA and life in Staten Island,” shared Jaki.

Dr. Gerenser reflects on her experience, saying “This was a child who has a world of potential. He was so eager to learn. Many times, his behavior stemmed just from not being able to communicate or others not being able to understand him.”

It has been about 6 months since Arthur visited Eden II, and his mother says he continues to learn and utilize the ABA skills he learned during his time on Staten Island. He uses his Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) token board at school to express his wants and needs. Jaki was able to take a comprehensive report of Arthur’s progress back to his teachers at home, which has helped them carry techniques over into his program.

“He now says ‘Bbbrrr’ to let his teacher know he would like to take a break. It’s easier for him to focus now, and that helped him to write independently for the first time!” shares Jaki.

“I believe Arthur benefited greatly from discrete trial instruction (a method of teaching in simplified and structured steps) through the method of applied behavior analysis. With a strong supportive team, like the one Arthur had around him, I think using ABA in his school and home environment is the best decision for him. My hope is that the methods of ABA become more mainstream in countries such as Africa. I was able to see the transformation of skills Arthur acquired, even in the short time he was here,” noted Janine Kipp, Eden II’s Coordinator of Speech Services.

“Our mission statement states that we support people with autism, not just people who go to Eden II. We’ve done conferences in Sri Lanka, China and Canada. We are dedicated to doing as much as possible for the global autism community. Having Jaki and Arthur come to us gave us the invaluable opportunity to teach them one on one,” said Dr. Gerenser.

She continues, “It cannot be said enough that as years pass, without any kind of communications system, kids like Arthur become at risk. If we can somehow get these kinds of supports and services, even in the US where it is still very much needed, we can, in a way, save lives.”

Reflecting on her experience, Jaki stated what every parent ultimately wishes for their child, saying, “I want Arthur to live the best life possible. I am determined that he continues to move forward.”

For information on programs and services available at Eden II, please visit us online at eden2.org or email us at info@eden2.org.
White Post Farms, a family operated animal farm and petting zoo located in Huntington, NY, has been the host of numerous volunteer opportunities for students of the Genesis School and Day Habilitation program.

**DURING THE SUMMER AND FALL OF 2016**, participants would come to the farm twice a week and fill up feed cone buckets with animal food. They then had the opportunity to walk around and feed the animals. The experience provided vocational training while also teaching the students about the many different kinds of animals on the farm.

“Everyone at the farm was always very welcoming and accommodating to our students and staff. They made it an enjoyable experience for everyone,” shared Olga Goodman, Director of Long Island Programs and Services.

The experience provided vocational training while also teaching the students about the many different kinds of animals on the farm.

Genesis teacher, Lauren Hopper, worked at the farm for seven years, making this job site close to home for her.

Lauren shared, “The students loved it. The friendly staff would set up our work station, and the students were great at making sure everything was filled just right. It was heartwarming to see our students perform tasks that I did when I worked there! I look forward to returning there in the spring.”

White Post has been a frequent supporter of Eden II’s events, donating passes to our annual Staten Island and Long Island galas. For their dedication to enriching the lives of our students, White Post Farms will be honored at our next Genesis Gala on April 7, 2017 with the “Making A Difference” award.
Shortly after the terrible tragedy in which 14-year old Avonte Oquendo eloped from his Queens public school in late 2013 and subsequently drowned, a bill was proposed by Senator Schumer at that time, known as Avonte’s Law. This bill, now known as Kevin and Avonte’s Law, is in the final stages of revisions, after being approved by the Senate in July 2016 and by the House in December 2016, in slightly different versions. Kevin Curtis Willis, the second person the bill is named for, was a 9 year old boy with autism from Iowa who drowned in a river in 2008 after wandering from his home.

A city law known as Avonte’s Law was also passed in NY in August 2014 by Mayor Bill de Blasio. This law requires that the NY Department of Education along with local police evaluate public schools to determine whether doors should be alarmed. To clarify, Kevin and Avonte’s Law is a different, federal law.

If signed by the President after differences in the bill are worked out, Kevin and Avonte’s Law would authorize $10 million in Justice Department funding to be used for grants for training and wandering-prevention systems in schools and other organizations. Police departments would also have access to funding so that GPS tracking devices can be available to parents of children with autism and other disabilities who wander from safety. Although the exact details are not known at this time, it seems that parents would be able to request those devices through their local police department.

Eden II continues to do everything possible to keep our individuals safe. Our employees receive intensive training in the special risks that people with autism face, including wandering and elopement, and our individuals are assessed for this risk upon intake and on an ongoing basis thereafter.

The need to understand supervision requirements for each individual and to provide vigilant supervision is continually stressed by leadership.

Eden II will keep you informed about this law, and you can also check for updates on the following websites: aware.org and autismspeaks.org.
dine out 4 autism

Support Autism Awareness & Services

Italianissimo is celebrating autism awareness & services in April & May where 100% of the proceeds for every Blue Sangria and Chef’s Special Hot & Cold Antipasto (fresh burrata mozzarella in crostini with roasted peppers and arugula, grilled lobster tails, seafood salad in a radicchio leaf, baked clams, grilled shrimps, grilled seppie, grilled bay octopus) will be donated to the Eden II & Genesis Foundation.

Get ready to support autism awareness & services by visiting some of the greatest restaurants on Staten Island, Long Island, Brooklyn, and in NYC!

LAST YEAR, we started with a few restaurants in a new initiative called Dine Out 4 Autism, where participating restaurants support autism services and awareness by promoting specialty items with proceeds coming to support the Eden II and Genesis Foundation. Funds raised go directly to projects that serve children and adults living with autism. With last year’s success, it was clear we wanted to expand this great initiative! This year, we have had a great response from several restaurants that were eager to jump on board.

The Event Chair is CEO of TAO Group and Foundation Board Member, Bill Bonbrest. Bill shares, “Tao Cares is always looking for a way to give back to the communities that touch us. It is very inspiring to see the community, educators, and parents all come together - like a family - to support the Eden II participants throughout their lives and to give them a skillset to be independent. Eden II is a shining example of that quality of love, commitment and the community coming together.” The Long Island Event Chair is Eden II Board Member and parent, Steve Kirschbaum. The Staten Island Event Chair is owner of Italianissimo, Franco Ortega.

Eden II’s Executive Director, Dr. Joanne Gerenser, shares, “We are excited to have so many fantastic restaurants be a part of this new event. The incidence of autism is 1 in 68 today; over 5 times greater than what it was in 1995. We need the community’s support as we look to help children, adults, and their families through their autism journeys, and we are grateful for everyone’s involvement in raising funds and awareness with this event.”

Each restaurant offers something unique and different, please check our website, www.dineout4autism.org, for an ongoing list of participating restaurants and menu items. If you are a restaurant owner and would like to join the event, please contact our development team at 718-816-1422 x1030 or info@eden2.org.

Eden II’s Executive Director with friends at Bayou Restaurant during last year’s Dine Out fundraiser.
THE EDEN II & GENESIS FOUNDATION PRESENTS

dine out 4 autism
APRIL 2017

Support Autism Awareness & Services

HELP CHILDREN & ADULTS WITH AUTISM
YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

NEW RESTAURANTS ADDED EVERY DAY!

VISIT US ONLINE TO GET INVOLVED AND VIEW OUR PARTICIPATING RESTAURANT LIST!

#eden2dineout dineout4autism.org
Amazon Smile is a free and easy way to help raise funds for Eden II’s programs and services. Visit www.eden2.org/smile for more information. When you choose “Eden II School for Autistic Children” as your charity of choice, a portion of every purchase you make will benefit Eden II.

Meet the Board:
Steve Kirschbaum

Steve Kirschbaum is the Regional General Manager of the Catering division of Lessing’s Hospitality. Providing services to 12 Country Clubs, eight restaurants, concessions in five States, and off premise catering in the Hamptons, Manhattan and the Tri-State area. His son, Brandon entered the program in 2002, and since then, Mr. Kirschbaum has worked tirelessly to help fundraise to support Genesis. For over ten years, Mr. Kirschbaum has served as the President of the Genesis PTO. He has successfully raised funds through Fight for Charity, Texas Hold’em events, and other events. Mr. Kirschbaum’s work with Fight for Charity allowed the Genesis PTO to receive donations of over $100,000 over the years, to support its mission. Mr. Kirschbaum is also a regular member of all Eden II and Genesis Foundation Long Island event committees.