VICTORY!

Tomassini Wins Gold

“I started to cry. I knew that as long as I tried my hardest, that’s all that mattered.”

Page 4
Meet Our New CEO
Kendell R. Sprott, MD, JD

Kendell R. Sprott, MD, JD, has been named chief executive officer of Matheny. Dr. Sprott, both a physician and attorney, has been a member of the faculty at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School since 1984, most recently serving as senior associate dean for clinical affairs. He has also served as acting chair of the Department of Pediatrics and vice chair and director of community pediatrics at the Children’s Hospital of New Jersey at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

After 30 very successful and productive years at the New Jersey Medical School, Dr. Sprott is looking forward to a new challenge at Matheny. “I am honored,” he said, “to join the Matheny family, a group of individuals committed to the service and compassionate care of patients with complex needs.”

Dr. Sprott assumed his new duties December 1, succeeding Steven Proctor, who is retiring after 16 years as CEO. Edana Desatnick and Bruce Fisher, co-chairs of Matheny’s Board of Trustees, expressed confidence that Dr. Sprott, “will continue to build on the solid foundation put in place by Steve Proctor. At Rutgers,” they added, “Dr. Sprott was instrumental in successfully integrating the clinical services of UMDNJ and Rutgers University. He demonstrated an outstanding ability to work effectively with a wide array of organizations and instituted a number of innovative solutions. As the new CEO at Matheny, Dr. Sprott and his leadership team will be responsible for expanding Matheny’s capabilities and services against the backdrop of a changing healthcare environment. We are confident that Dr. Sprott has the expertise to guide Matheny in a winning direction that will ensure future growth and prosperity.”

He is currently a member of the board of directors and/or trustees of the Rutgers Community Health Foundation, Children’s Future, Advocates for Children of New Jersey and the Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition.

Dr. Sprott and his wife, Donna, also a physician, reside in Plainfield, NJ.

Kendell R. Sprott, MD, JD

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Neighbors learn about Matheny

Children and adults from Peapack-Gladstone and surrounding communities experienced riding in wheelchairs... met some of the Matheny students and patients... and learned about Matheny’s Arts Access Program and how it works.

It was all part of an informal activity-filled Sunday afternoon in the Robert Schonhorn Arts Center, designed to introduce some of the entertaining aspects of the various therapies that play such a central role in Matheny’s mission of improving the quality of life for children and adults with disabilities.

It was also a time when community residents and Matheny staff members could get to know each other better in a very informal, open atmosphere. Those in attendance thought the event should be repeated, and Matheny is already planning to have another similar program in the spring.

With this issue of Matheny Matters we are pleased to introduce you to our new brand identity, represented primarily in our new logo and tagline. The old logo served us well but our services have expanded and evolved so much over the past several years we decided to revitalize our brand to better reflect the scope, spirit, and personality of what Matheny is today.

You will notice a modernized design; one that we feel satisfies all of the existing expectations of what our original mark stood for, while simultaneously moving the brand forward. We’ve retained the tree imagery, representing growth and stability, but it has been enlivened with fresh colors and a subtle representation of the many people who are part of the Matheny community (look for the people in the tree). We have also devised a tagline, Enriching Lives. Growing Abilities, which is reflective of what we do every day.

You’ll soon be seeing our new branding on our publications, correspondence, and when we launch our new website.
For people with disabilities, a visit to the doctor or dentist can be filled with fear and confusion if that practitioner or the office staff is not accustomed to taking care of special needs patients.

Not so at the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry where our warm and sensitive staff makes the entire office visit comfortable for both patient and caregiver.

The Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry (MCMD) was opened in 2003 to help an underserved population – children and adults with developmental disabilities who were having difficulty finding doctors and dentists who understood how to care for them. Today, the MCMD takes care of over 800 patients annually through a full range of outpatient health services -- medical, dental, therapeutic and assistive technology services -- all conveniently located in one facility. It is one of only a few outpatient facilities in the region designed for, and dedicated to, the healthcare needs of both adults and children with developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, and spina bifida.

We believe that children and adults who have disabilities deserve a lifetime of excellent health care, and we are committed to making their entire visit a positive experience, treating each patient with dignity and compassion.

For more information about services at the MCMD, Call (908) 234-0011, ext. 785

Matheny’s #GIVINGTUESDAY Campaign Extended Through February 16

When you make a contribution to Matheny’s #GIVING TUESDAY campaign, you will be giving a gift to a family that can’t be purchased in a store. Funds raised will support the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry, where New Jersey’s kids, teens and adults with disabilities come for the best care possible.

Unfortunately, less than 50% of the cost of that care is covered by insurance. But Matheny remains steadfast in our mission to meet that need regardless of the patient’s ability to pay for it. You can help fill that gap with your donation.

Matheny’s #GIVING TUESDAY campaign will remain open until February 16, 2015.

Visit our website and follow the link from the #GIVING TUESDAY announcement. Or contact Janice Kriegman at 908-234-0011, ext. 315.
Finding dental care for someone with Larissa’s condition, however, was a problem until her family discovered the dental clinic at the Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry during a visit to The Matheny School four years ago. “I was crazy,” her mother, Rosemary Wood recalls. “I was wondering, ‘Where am I going to take her for a dentist?’”

Going to the dentist is a stressful experience under any circumstances, but for someone with Larissa’s disability, it could be frightening. At Matheny, says Wood, “They’re so caring. Everybody makes her comfortable. Dr. Yang, the dentist, is so patient. If she starts screaming, he says, ‘All right, Larissa, we’ll give you a break.’ He’s a really great guy. It means a lot to me.”

The Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry specializes in healthcare for people with mild to severe developmental and intellectual disabilities in an outpatient setting. Dental services and treatment include x-rays, cleanings, treatment of cavities, extractions, restorative dentistry, oral surgery and root canals. Services are provided in partnership with the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine.

Taking the Fear Out of Going to the Dentist

When Larissa Garcia was born, everything seemed normal. Then, a few days later, she had difficulty breathing. Genetic tests revealed that she had Trisomy 13, a chromosomal condition associated with severe intellectual disability and physical abnormalities in many parts of the body. Because of the life-threatening medical problems that present themselves shortly after birth, many Trisomy 13 patients don’t survive past infancy, but Larissa is now nine years old and attending school in Mount Olive, NJ.

“We just love it at Matheny. Everybody is so compassionate. It makes a difference in Larissa’s life because she has gone through so much.”

- Rosemary Wood
Matheny Adult Resident Excels
at USA Special Olympics

Matheny adult resident Shaleena Tomassini won gold medals in the 400-meter and 200-meter wheelchair races at the USA Special Olympic Games held this past June in Princeton.

Tomassini, the first Matheny patient to qualify for the national games, also won a silver medal in the shot put and 4th place in the 100-meter race. “It really hit me during the opening ceremony that I had made the team,” she told her fellow residents and staff members at Matheny. “I started to cry. I knew that as long as I tried my hardest, that’s all that mattered. Now, I want to go to the World Games.” The next Special Olympics World Summer Games will be held in July 2015 in Los Angeles.

Participation in Special Olympics is an important part of Matheny’s recreation therapy program, which provides a range of recreation choices to improve physical, emotional, cognitive and social well-being. Students, patients and community residents are encouraged to partake in several adaptive sports teams throughout the year, including track and field, adaptive karate and power wheelchair soccer.
For several years, artwork created by artists in Matheny’s Arts Access Program has been hanging throughout the Adult Day Center of the Visiting Nurse Association of Somerset Hills in Basking Ridge NJ.

“We are thrilled to have the Arts Access artwork here,” said Maria M. Keenan, VNA Adult Day Center manager. “Our patients may not be able to put in words what the artwork means to them, but you can see the enthusiasm in their eyes.”

This past September, two Arts Access artists visited the VNA and spoke about their artwork and life at Matheny to a group of VNA members who come regularly to the Day Center. Jess Evans pointed out that, in addition to painting, she dances, choreographs, writes drama, directs plays and acts. She told the Day Center patients, “I would like to dance for you one day.”

Yasin Reddick said he writes stories, plays and is working on his autobiography. He paints and also creates computer-generated digital art. “I don’t let my disability stop me from doing anything,” he added. Evans interjected that, “Anyone can paint, even you guys.”

“Knowing that their work is on display is a matter of pride for our artists and gives them a sense of accomplishment”, noted Eileen Murray, director of the Matheny Arts Access Program. “Coordinating exhibits such as the display at the VNA is just one of the many ways Matheny provides opportunities for our patients and students to integrate within the community.”

The Matheny Arts Access Program has several exhibits within galleries and businesses across the state, and all of the work is for sale. Sales of the artwork or any licensed Arts Access products, such as scarves, ties, and notecards, directly benefit our artists and the mission of Matheny to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

For information on purchasing artwork or hosting an exhibit, contact Haeree Park at haeree@artsaccessprogram.org
Weyatta Golafaly came to the United States from Liberia in 2006 through the USA Green Card’s Diversity Immigrant Visa Lottery, also known as the “Green Card Lottery”.

She was living with her in-laws in East Orange, NJ, when she heard about the Matheny Medical and Educational Center from a fellow countrywoman, Jebbeh Gunone, who was already employed by Matheny.

In April 2006, Golafaly, now a resident of Budd Lake, NJ, began working as a personal care assistant on Matheny’s red zone, home to adult residents. Matheny’s students and patients need a maximum amount of assistance in many areas, including eating, transferring, bathing, dressing, oral hygiene and toileting. These functions are carried out by PCAs. “I had never seen people with cerebral palsy before,” Golafaly recalls. But she quickly adapted. She enjoys interacting with Matheny’s students and patients. “My days at Matheny are awesome,” she says. “It’s like family here. You really bond with the patients.”

Golafaly was selected to participate in a series of management courses at Rutgers School of Continuing Education. These courses, she says, taught her about team building. “In team building,” she explains, “every job is counted and respected because every department is highly needed in a company.” In addition,

Golafaly has received special training as a mentor to new PCAs through a comprehensive program that was introduced in 2013, and has been named one of two lead PCAs on the red zone. Golafaly, according to Kathleen D’Urso, red zone unit nurse manager, “has been a great asset to the red zone and has performed at an exemplary level. She is a professional, well-respected member of the team.”
"I Love My Job"
Volunteering Leads to Staff Position

Eight years ago, Rose Sherman began volunteering at Matheny. Now, she greets volunteers from the community when they come to visit or participate in special recreational activities.

A resident of nearby Bernardsville, NJ, Sherman had been working as a substitute teacher at both the Bedwell Elementary School and Bernards Middle School when she heard about an opening for an instructor in Matheny’s Adult Services Program. She applied for the job, was hired and can’t imagine working anywhere else.

“I really enjoy the relationship that I can build with the adults,” she says. “We work together to achieve a goal. I love it when the patients get very excited about a project, such as having a fundraiser to support our community garden or making a sale in the community garden. And it’s also nice to see how excited they get when volunteers come in, especially when they can interact one-on-one with the volunteers and build new friendships. Matheny is a great place. I love my job.”

A particularly enjoyable volunteer experience occurred this past fall when a team of volunteers from Bridgewater, NJ-based Sanofi came to Matheny to help the adults decorate pumpkins for Halloween. It’s part of a volunteer effort at the diversified global healthcare company called Season of Solidarity, which encompasses more than 200 initiatives across North America.

Clockwise, from bottom right: Matheny adult residents, Rasheedah Mahali, Tony Santia and Natalie Tomastyk and Sanofi volunteers Terri Pedone, Deborah McGarrity, Anita McDonnell and Janeen Goodrich.
“Teaching at Matheny,” says Dawn Williams, “requires more than simply instructing students about English, math, science and social studies.”

Williams embraces those intangibles that make a special education teacher truly special. She’s perfectly willing to be a little foolish just to make her students smile. For example, she sees nothing wrong with painting her feet green and running across the classroom on St. Patrick’s Day, pretending to be a leprechaun. She also once made the outside of her classroom look like a life-size gingerbread house. “I comfort them when they’re upset,” she says. “I laugh with them when something is funny. I believe in them, and, most of all, I never look at them as students with disabilities.”

Perhaps that’s why Williams was nominated this year as Matheny’s Educator of the Year. She currently teaches the preschool class, but she has also worked with middle school and high school students. “Matheny,” Williams says, “has changed my life for the better. Not only is it the most challenging job I have ever experienced, but it is also the most rewarding.” Sean Murphy, Matheny School principal, says Williams is, “a very patient and compassionate individual who takes each student’s unique goals, needs and interests into account every day. She takes extra steps to ensure that each student is in a safe and comfortable environment that fits his or her needs.”

Williams discovered Matheny when her assistive technology class at Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ, visited the Matheny School. “I remember leaving the school and telling myself I would be a teacher there one day.” After graduating from college in 2012, she was subbing at three schools, including Matheny, when she was offered a full-time job.
“What happens when a mailman gets old? He loses his zip.” That’s one of several riddles programmed onto Chet Cheesman’s communications device, which he demonstrated recently to three nursing students from Seton Hall University. The nursing students were visiting Matheny’s Adult Learning Center in Hillsborough, NJ, as part of a community nursing program that requires Bachelor of Nursing candidates to spend time at a variety of community nursing settings. “You never know what you’re going to have to be able to do,” explained Jenna Mason, one of the students. “We want to cover all bases.”

Cheesman, who lives in one of Matheny’s community residences, communicates through a device called the ECO2. He accesses his device by using a single switch placed on his laptray. The device auto scans through the icons, and, when a light gets to the icon he wants, he hits his switch to activate the area.

In addition to visiting with Cheesman, the students learned how other Matheny non-verbal adults communicate. In some cases, that meant trying to understand an eye-gazing system. “It helps us to see what some of the obstacles are,” said Tara Gillespie, “and how to overcome them.”
2014 Honor Roll of Donors

We are honored to recognize individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations for their generosity during Fiscal Year 2014. Your compassion and commitment to our mission truly makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the children and adults we serve.

Thank You!

The donor list below represent gifts received between July 1, 2013 thru June 30, 2014.

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thank you for your generosity and include you in our 1946 Society. If you have included Matheny in your estate plans, please let us know. We would like to thank you for your generosity and include you in our 1946 Society.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our donor listing. Should the information presented here conflict with your records, please call the Development Office at (908) 234-0011 ext. 315

We invite you to join our 1946 Society, by including Matheny in your estate planning. Such gifts might include a bequest in your will or a beneficiary designation of your retirement assets or life insurance policy. Legacy gifts provide critical future support of Matheny, ensuring the fulfillment of our mission well into the future. For more information about these giving options, please visit Matheny.plannedgiving.org

If you have included Matheny in your estate plans, please let us know. We would like to thank you for your generosity and include you in our 1946 Society.
Doug Kimmelman, left, with Matheny resident Raven Bennett and Matheny transportation manager Brad King in front of the Toyota Sienna donated by Kimmelman.

In addition to providing medical care and education for children and adults with medically complex developmental disabilities, Matheny does everything possible to support and normalize all aspects of their lives. A key factor in accomplishing that is the ability to transport its students and patients, all of whom are in wheelchairs, to activities in the community.

Matheny has several multi-person vans, but, up until very recently, it did not have a wheelchair accessible minivan that could carry just a single individual to a specific destination.

That has all changed, thanks to the kindness of Bernardsville resident Doug Kimmelman, who owned a handicapped-equipped 2008 Toyota Sienna XLE, which he donated to Matheny in October.

“We are very excited about this donation and it’s so timely,” said John Garrity, Matheny’s director of social services, who just one week earlier had expressed his desire for this type of vehicle to be able to accommodate patients’ needs to travel off campus to visit with family and attend events.

The minivan will be used to transport students or patients to family functions, volunteer jobs, to club activities such as Girl Scout meetings, or on shopping trips when bigger vans would be impractical.