

THE THERESA NEWS



THE THERESA ALESSANDRA RUSSO FOUNDATION

Winter 2010

TAPA: From Vision To Reality

By Vincent J. Russo

The Theresa Academy of Performing Arts (TAPA) for Children with Special Needs became a reality this past September. Susan, Theresa's mom, had a vision, and The Center for Special Needs Trust Administration, Inc. (The Center) have been instrumental in making it a reality.

More Than a Vision

At the Theresa Awards Dinner in 2008, we were privileged to honor NAELA Past President, Becky Morgan with the Theresa Award. In attendance was a very special person, a friend and supporter of Becky and Stetson University College of Law. At the end of the evening, Leo Govoni, co-founder of The Center, introduced himself and shared with me that he was touched by an angel, and that Theresa's eyes spoke to him of love and giving. At that moment he made a very generous donation to the Theresa Foundation on behalf of The Center. Little did I know that this was just the beginning!

The next morning Susan and our family met with Becky, her husband Jay, and Leo for breakfast. Susan spoke of her vision to provide dance, music, art and drama classes for children with special needs and their siblings. Without hesitation, Leo



shared with us the goals of The Center and let us know his door was open for us to seek their assistance. A steering committee was formed consisting of Susan, Elizabeth Einhart, Marvin Rachlin, and Robert and Laury Gelardi. The committee put together a two year plan to get TAPA up and running, but the big question was: "What about funding?"

The Center

The Center, headquartered in Clearwater Florida is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and the nation's largest provider of pooled trust and special needs trust administration services. The Center's charitable mission and purpose is providing comprehensive services to the entire community of people with disabilities. Leo Govoni and attorney John Staunton are the founders of The Center.

The Meeting

In the fall of 2008, we travelled to Florida and met with Leo. The start-up of TAPA would require a significant amount of funds. We were worried about asking Leo for assistance; the stock market had just crashed and our nation's economic outlook was bleak. I opened our conversation with Leo stating the obvious: this was probably not the best time to ask for funding. Leo politely replied, "This is a great time to start up a wonderful program." Boy was I relieved to hear those words! We shared with Leo how excited we were about starting this project and

Leo simply stated, "I will do what I can" and gave us The Center's commitment to Theresa and TAPA.

Reality

Since that day, we proceeded to start up the program which came to fruition in September 2009, eighteen months after our meeting with Leo. We are all very excited for the future of TAPA. To date, The Center has donated \$75,000 and committed to continue to support TAPA in 2010. These funds will allow us to continue building our program, while paying for necessary construction and salaries for staff and faculty.

Leo loves his family and loves helping others. Through The Center, he has provided vital support to people with disabilities all over the country. At a time when charitable organizations have found shortfalls in funding, we have been blessed by an angel who just so happened to have met our little angel on a very special night.

We thank all of you who have helped us get started down the path of making our vision a reality, especially in these tough financial times. We will need your continued support



THE TAPA Faculty



Patti Finkelberg, her daughter, Sydney and music teacher, Heather Olsen at the TAPA Open House

Let the Good Times Roll!

16TH Annual Theresa Awards

Introducing Our 2010 Award Honorees

Stephen W. Dale, Esq.

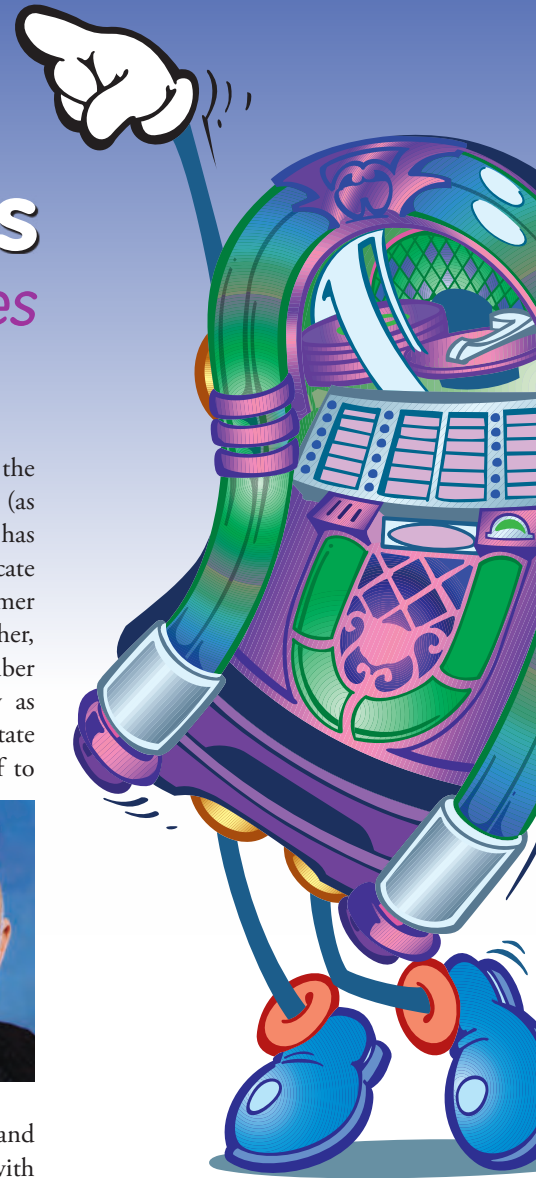
STEVE DALE, founder of his law firm, the Dale Law Firm, P.C. in Walnut Creek, California, is dedicated to providing quality estate planning. Steve is also a celebrated disability rights advocate who spends much of his time attending disability rights activities, such as legislative hearings, and serving on boards and committees of several disability-rights organizations. He regularly teaches courses to financial professionals, attorneys and the general public on special needs trusts and trust administration with a special emphasis on achieving independence while maintaining essential government benefits. He also teaches continuing education courses accredited by



the California Department of Insurance and the California State Bar on estate planning, special needs trusts, pooled trusts, and tax planning. Through his work, Steve has committed to serving the disability community through activism, advocacy and education. Recently, he has committed his time to the National Academy of Elder Law's (NAELA) Special Needs Law Section. Steve holds a J.D. from Armstrong Law School and an LL.M. in Taxation from Golden Gate University. He, and his wife Terri, reside in California.

New York State Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg

EVER SINCE his election to the State Assembly in 1989, Harvey (as he's know to his constituents) has distinguished himself as a staunch advocate for people with disabilities. As a former lifeguard, police officer, school teacher, administrator and City Council Member in the City of Long Beach, and now as Assistant Speaker Pro Tempore of the State Assembly, Harvey has dedicated himself to removing barriers, improving access, and enhancing the quality of life for people with physical and mental challenges. He has secured hundreds of thousands of dollars for agencies and organizations that work with and provide services to adults and children with physical and mental disabilities, and has received numerous awards and honors from many organizations and institutions for his tireless work on behalf of the special needs community. He created the Ricky Awards to recognize the tireless contributions of outstanding medical professionals and direct caregivers who work with children and adults with mental and physical disabilities. This meaningful award, which was named



after Harvey and Ellen Weisenberg's own special child, is a symbol of the gratitude of those who cannot always speak for themselves. Harvey holds degrees from New York University, Hofstra University and C.W. Post University. He and his wife, Ellen, have five children and six grandchildren, and reside in Long Beach, New York.

Let All The Children Play!

By: Judy Murdaugh-Jackson

THE GROUNDBREAKING ceremony for the Let All the Children Play Foundation's all-inclusive playground at Eisenhower Park in Nassau County, New York had all the fanfare that one could hope for, and more! Despite the rain on a cool October day, the smiles from the children's faces and the attendees were positively radiant. The children stood with signs indicating their playground equipment preferences, and

while there were quite a few "sliding board" posters, they may have been outnumbered by the "swings;" the children's excitement was contagious and everyone was smiling ear to ear!

New York State Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg (2010 Theresa Award Honoree), who secured funding for the playground, had the crowd cheering for this wonderful and long awaited project to become a reality. The momentum continued with then-Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi, who was also instrumental in securing funding. David Weingarten, Executive Director of the Let All the Children Play Foundation, recognized the Theresa Foundation for our support in his speech. His exuberance was only matched by the excitement in the crowd as this long awaited dream took one giant leap toward fruition.



TRAVELS WITH TAPA

OUR goal for TAPA this spring is to double our enrollment and prepare for a wonderful summer camp experience. To do this we have been travelling around Nassau County talking about our wonderful program and teaching Master classes. On the right is a list of a few places visited and events attended, including some upcoming. If you know of a program or a SEPTA (Special Ed PTA) in your area, please tell them about TAPA. We can visit your school or SEPTA meeting!

January 2010

SEPTA- Rockville Centre, New York/
Exhibitor

Kulanu Camp Fair- Cedarhurst, New York/
Guest teaching artists

Kulanu Respite Program- Cedarhurst,
New York/Guest teaching artist

SEPTA- Oceanside, New York/Guest

SEPTA- Long Beach, New York/Speaker

February 2010

Lindell Elementary School "Food, Fun and
Fitness Fair," Long Beach, New York/Guest
Teaching Artists - February 5th

Kulanu Respite Program-
Cedarhurst, New York/
Guest teaching Artist-
February 7th

March 2010

BOCES- Carmen Road-
Massapequa, New York/
Lecture and demonstration
of wheelchair dancing



Susan Russo with
the Amato Family
at the Oceanside
SEPTA Meeting

Thank You's

We'd like to thank the following groups and people for their generous donations to TAPA:

Pilates for Everybody – art supplies

Dana Michielini, Garber, Atlas, Fries and Associates – art supplies

Fred and Marcia Friedman (Clinipix Corporation) – Canon Power Shot Digital Camera

Kristie Arden – art supplies

The Brodwin Family – iPod docking station

Katherine Lapelosa and Family – iPod docking stations (2)

Jay Goldstein/The Barbizon School – iPod docking station

Barbara Fischkin – art supplies



Special thanks to Bennett Russo for hanging our dance mirrors

THE THERESA NEWS

Save the Dates!



16th Annual
Theresa Awards

April 30, 2010

The Bridgeview Yacht Club,
Island Park, NY



**Theresa
Golf Outing**

June 24, 2010



**TAPA
Summer Camp**

Non-Profit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #17
Westbury NY
11590

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250 Lido Boulevard Lido Beach, NY
11561-5015