

## Same Mission. New Name.



Campers and staff at the Oakhurst campsite.

TO BETTER REFLECT WHO WE ARE TODAY, on April 18, 2018, we announced our new name: Rising Treetops at Oakhurst. New York Service for the Handicapped, the organization's legal name since 1969, is now part of our history and joins The Crippled Children's East Side Free School and New York Service for the Orthopedically Handicapped as former agency names. While never our legal names, the Summer Home in Oakhurst and Camp Oakhurst have also been "known as" names used throughout the years to reference our property and camp in Oakhurst, New Jersey.

We believe Rising Treetops at Oakhurst is an inspirational name and one that reflects who we are and all that we do. Rising Treetops maintains a reference to our core camp activities, without limiting us to those activities; Oakhurst provides a link to our historical name.

Our new logo, a tree with entwined stylized hands for the leaves, references both our physical and emotional environment. The tag line [Inspiring confidence and joy in those with special needs] communicates to those with special needs that our staff is truly committed to providing a joyous experience that will also inspire confidence for our clients. Our mission remains the same: to enhance the quality of life for children and adults with special

needs, including autism and physical and intellectual disabilities, and provide respite for their families through a year-round camp experience, based in Monmouth County, NJ.

To learn more about our new name and view our new video, please visit [www.risingtreetops.org/about](http://www.risingtreetops.org/about). We hope that our new name and identity will resonate with you!

## Summer Happenings

THIS SUMMER MARKED the second year of having a Young Adults camp session, with a focus on teaching clients basic skills in everyday living and helping them gain more independence. This summer the activities focused on basic skills building in areas such as meal preparation, daily household activities, and exercises in how to pre-



Counselor Ofek with a camper under the new pavilion.

pare for entering the job market. The session offered off-campus trips including shopping for groceries, to help gain experience in purchasing items, meal planning, and negotiating money exchanges.

The agency added two additional autism sessions this summer. The new sessions were designed under an inclusion model to coincide with our traditional youth sessions, to incorporate into both populations all therapeutic recreation activities, including arts and crafts, cooking,

nature studies, iPad based media arts, music, sports and swimming. The inclusion model provides campers an opportunity to make new friends and have new experiences.

In addition to the two new integrated autism/traditional youth camp sessions, this summer a new Midsummer's Respite was added, offered to individuals of all ages. The Midsummer's Respite is designed as a smaller summer session with half the number of campers as our traditional sessions, and the feel of a more intimate school-year respite session with off-camp trips planned.

This summer the agency has its most diverse number of international staff, including individuals from 14 countries, including Bolivia, Bulgaria, England, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, Spain and Turkey. International staff provide an opportunity for campers to learn about different cultures. Each youth session has a different theme, each with an international flavor, with a focus on food, art and customs. This summer themes included Around the World, in which counselors had the opportunity to incorporate aspects of their country's culture through therapeutic activities, such as making traditional dishes during the cooking activity and creating traditional costumes in the drama activity.

Not only are campers exposed to a broad spectrum of cultures, but for the counselors it is a learning experience as well. One of our international counselors, Ofek, a 20 year old young woman, just finished two years in the Israeli army and was eager to share her summer experiences. She said that for her, "Rising Treetops was a life-changing experience. It turns your life around, when you get to know everyone. It's like family. You arrive with one opinion and now you have several."

When Ofek returns to Israel in the fall she will be entering a university to study art therapy. She feels that her experience in Oakhurst was supportive of her decision to pursue her career working with people with special needs. She said one of her greatest experiences as a counselor was the happiness she saw at Rising Treetops: "You see all the people with wheelchairs, people who can't speak or use their hands and legs and it's no big deal to them. They have a joy about them."

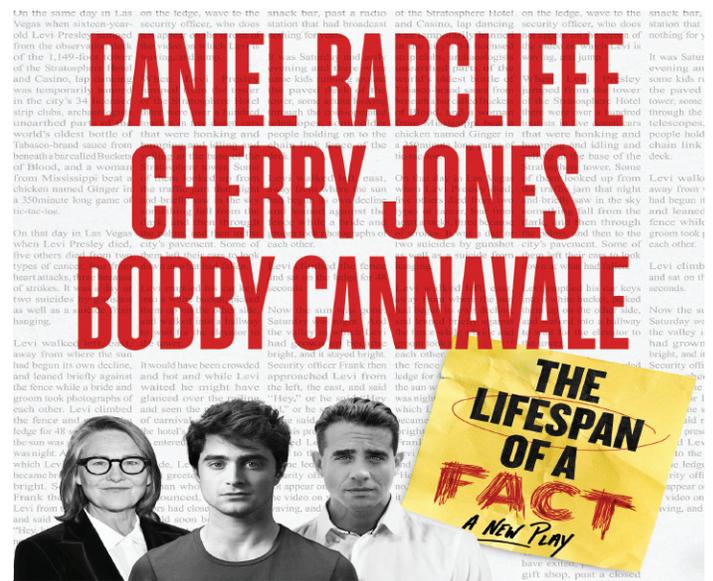
At first Ofek admitted it was difficult and hard work, especially when assisting with daily care needs, but she found herself quickly warming up to the campers. She said, when working with young adults with autism, "If you listen and see their movements to communicate, you learn. They may be smarter than you, but they can't

always show it. Working with them you get to know their lives and how they think."

At the end of the day, Ofek says she will never forget her summer experience. She wants people from Israel and all over the world to know the joy of Rising Treetops at Oakhurst. "It was a turning point in my life," she says, with a smile in her voice.

## 2018 Fall Theater Benefit

WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE that this year's theater benefit will be held on Thursday, October 4, 2018. The evening will begin with cocktails and pre-theater dinner at the acclaimed restaurant, Feinstein's/54 Below, followed by the performance of the new play *The Lifespan Of A Fact* at Studio 54. The show stars Daniel Radcliffe, Cherry Jones and Bobby Cannavale, and is directed by Tony award nominee Leigh Silverman. We are looking forward to what should be an exciting and memorable evening. Invitations to the event will be mailed in August.



Should you have any questions you can email us at [events@risingtreetops.org](mailto:events@risingtreetops.org).

## A Client's Story

CARRIE IS A 50 YEAR OLD woman with cerebral palsy, autism and profound intellectual disability. Although she was born with disabilities, she was not diagnosed until the age of two. She lived at home with her parents and her sister Erin in Staten Island and started attending school at the age of six. Like many children, she attended summer sleep away camp and enjoyed the loving support of her

family. Her father passed away early on and Carrie was raised at home with her mom and sister, and eventually, when Erin left to get married and raise a family of her own, it was just Carrie and her mother. All of this changed in 2014, when Carrie's mother died. It was at this point that Erin, a newly single working mom with a child of her own, moved back to Staten Island to her childhood home to take care of her sister.

By the end of 2017 Erin knew she needed a break from caregiving and was referred to the respite program at Rising Treetops at Oakhurst. At first Erin was apprehensive about leaving Carrie with others, but she subsequently visited the facility and decided to use the time allowed through state family support services to have Carrie attend weekend respite sessions. Carrie came to Rising Treetops starting in February 2018. With Staten Island less than an hour away, it was easy for Erin to drop off and pick up Carrie and at the same time get a much-needed respite herself, where she could engage in activities with her daughter that she couldn't do when Carrie was at home.

At first Carrie was reserved when she arrived, but she warmed up very quickly. Erin noticed that each time Carrie returned to Rising Treetops she started to exhibit signs of pleasure, clapping her hands and making happy sounds. Now when they pull into the driveway, Erin says, Carrie is already reaching for her suitcase, hurrying her inside so she can personally greet the counselors, who all know her name, and give them a big hug. Erin added "I was bringing her to someplace that was a happy place. She knows where she is going and she looks forward to it."

Erin noticed the difference between Carrie's reaction to her former sleep away camp and Rising Treetops. She has come to know the other clients and exhibits signs of pleasure when she returns. During her weekend stays she enjoys all music-related activities and particularly likes to dance. She has brought home items she has made in arts and crafts, including an airplane and a collage, the latter which was hung up at home. Carrie also loves any kind of gym activities, and loves to swim.

During Carrie's most recent visit she became giddy and squealed when she knew where they were headed. For Erin, Rising Treetops has enabled her to have peace of mind knowing Carrie is happy and safe, while she gets the opportunity to reconnect with her now teenage daughter. As for Carrie, she can't wait until the next time she is at Oakhurst.

## New Pavilion. Built & Beautiful.

IN JULY 2017, eight donors generously contributed to the construction of a first-ever pavilion at Rising Treetops at Oakhurst. At the July 2017 Summer Party in Rumson we promoted the camp's need to build a 20' x 28' fully accessible and landscaped pavilion in the courtyard near our indoor/outdoor pool. The pavilion was needed as a waiting area out of the sun near the pool, and also to allow for shady/rainy day outdoor therapeutic activities and socializing for our clients with special needs. Also, we learned during the recent heat wave it is a perfect cool place for barbecues and outdoor eating!

Thanks to the creative and generous Bill McDaid and Twin Resources, who donated their services managing the project - preparing the site, spending months patiently working with the Township on the permit, and donating the stone pavers and plantings around the pavilion - the pavilion was built and ready for use at the start of our summer camp sessions in June!



Our sincere thanks also to the Marrus Family, Stephanie & Kevin Cuskley, Maria & Jack Lehman, Krista & David Long, Megan & Doug Ross, Roseanne & Brian Ansell, and Judy & John Horan for their support of this project.

The pavilion is now a huge part of what we do every day at the camp. Our campers and our staff consider it now a central part of our beautiful facility.

## Saying Farewell to Old Friends

IT IS NEVER EASY to say goodbye to old friends, especially members of our board of directors who we have known for many years as part of the Rising Treetops at Oakhurst family. Over the past year and a half we have lost some of our oldest and dearest members. Long time board member Jane Rau passed away in late December 2016, shortly after celebrating her 100th birthday. She was a dedicated director for over 70 years, including serving as secretary. As a member of the building committee, she was actively involved in the many changes that

occurred at our facility in Oakhurst. Her love of nature was instrumental in keeping the camp's natural wilderness a beautiful place for campers to explore.

Charles De Bare passed away in spring 2017. He was a warm and kind man and a dedicated and generous supporter who served as vice-president for over 25 years. He thoughtfully established the Charles A. and Mary De Bare Fund many years ago as a permanent fund to provide income in perpetuity to support Rising Treetops at Oakhurst. We are grateful for Chuck's dedication and wise counsel.

At the end of 2017, Hope Bach resigned after more than 60 years on the board of directors, including serving as chair of the camp committee, vice president and president. During her tenure the agency developed an independent living program for adults with special needs and an integration project, in which children with special needs were mainstreamed into after school recreation programs. All of us at Rising Treetops at Oakhurst wish her well and thank her for her dedicated service.

In April 2018 we lost Adele Block, who served on our board of directors for more than 70 years, as president in the 1950s and 60s and as chairman since the 1970s. A generous supporter with a deep commitment to our work with children and adults with disabilities, Adele led the transformation of the agency from a small country home affiliated with a private school at the end of World War II to a vibrant independent year-round modern respite and camp facility open to all individuals with varied special needs. We miss Adele and her amazing commitment to the agency.

## From the Desks of the President and Executive Director

In 2018 Rising Treetops at Oakhurst has continued to make significant improvements to our beautiful 15 acre campus. Since the beginning of the year we replaced the roof on the Oaks Cabin residence, completely re-built our pool pump house, repaired and painted the wood exterior siding on our Peter's and Marion's Cabins, built a first-ever landscaped pavilion near the pool (see pavilion article), and replaced all the paved pathways and building landings throughout the camp.

Our facility has 2,741 feet (a little more than ½ mile) of paved pathways and building entry ways/landings throughout the camp's nearly 15 acres. These are

critically important to the safety and well-being of our clients and staff for moving around the campus, especially for those utilizing wheelchairs. Clients (with direct support staff) move about the camp all day long, to and from their residences, dining hall, activity building and gym/pool buildings several times a day to each destination. The old paths were continually in need of repair, and were too narrow in places, and were not always flush with the grass on either side of the paths. We completed the full replacement of the pathways this spring. The work involved fully excavating and removing all the existing paved walkways, and creating wider flush-to-the-ground surfaces. Now, today, we have new surfaces throughout the camp and with the grass all regrown, the grounds are truly transformed.

We could not do all that we do without the generous support of individuals, foundations, business and government. We rely on this support to provide scholarships to clients who cannot afford our modest fees, and to fund the repairs and improvements that our facility requires. In the next few years, we must tackle the following projects:

- Major renovations (floors, bathrooms, roofs) of our Maples, Marion's, and Lehman's Cabins, each of which is expected to cost \$77,000.
- Renovations of our Pines Cabin (\$67,800-bathroom, roof) and Peter's Cabin (\$15,000-roof)
- Replacement, repair and re-painting of the exterior siding on our nearly 25 year old 9,000 square foot gymnasium, which will cost \$25,000.

We would appreciate any contributions or suggestions of potential funders for these essential and worthy projects.

From all of us at Rising Treetops at Oakhurst, we wish you a happy and healthy end to your summer!

Marilyn Friedman, President  
Robert Pacenza, Executive Director



Inspiring confidence and joy  
in those with special needs

For more information or to submit articles or commentaries, please contact: Wendy Eager, Editor, Rising Treetops at Oakhurst, 1140 Broadway, Suite 903, NY, NY 10001, email weager@risingtreetops.org or call 212-533-4020.