



GUIDANCE | EXCELLENCE | COMMUNITY

2025 SUMMER APPEAL

Greetings Dear Friends,

JULY 2025

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***"What do you want to
be when you grow up?"***

"Kind," said the boy.

***—From The Boy, the Mole, the Fox,
and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy***
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Warmest greetings and happy summer to our dear friends of GEC! When I first read the quote above, it made me think of my childhood dreams and aspirations. Every adult always asked "what do you want to be when you grow up?" My answer to the question changed with the seasons (astronaut, sailor, priest, actor, scientist, teacher...) but the best answer I've ever heard is the one given by the boy above. How incredibly fortunate I am that life has led me to a career at the Guild

for Exceptional Children, where I am surrounded by kindness every day! I get to bear witness to the kindness that our dedicated staff show to the people we support, often going above and beyond the call of duty, to make sure our people are happy and feel loved. I see it in the compassion and commitment that family members have for all people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and in their appreciation for the support we provide. I feel it in the support staff and families offer each other. In a world where there can be so much turmoil and divisiveness, GEC is an oasis of kindness.

I would like to share with you a few quick stories highlighting some of the people we support.

DEBBIE CELEBRATES HER 75th BIRTHDAY WITH FRIENDS FROM DEFELIPPO RESIDENCE

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We recently celebrated Debbie's milestone 75th birthday at the Greenhouse Café. Her sister, brother-in-law, housemates, and friends were all in attendance, as well as staff and some friends from other GEC residences. Debbie was surrounded by all her favorite people, showered with gifts, shared memories, laughed, smiled and had an absolutely beautiful day. Debbie has been a long time GEC participant, residing at DeFelippo since 1977. She has been considered the mother hen of DeFelippo, always concerned for her friends. Debbie tells it like it is and can be very funny. She has a big presence at home and is well known throughout GEC. Debbie has grown in so many ways since I met her in 1986 (when the life expectancy for people with I/DD was about 50). She loves her house (a lovely brownstone), her friends and her staff. She enjoys going on vacation, learning to use her iPad, and expressing her wants and needs. She is an example of all the wonderful things that can be accomplished here at GEC and she continues to live her best life- learning and growing every day.



Debbie celebrating at Greenhouse Café and at a "Golden Girls" brunch

GIANNA FINDS HER VOICE AT GEC'S PRESCHOOL!

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This school year, four-year-old Gianna has gone from being non-verbal to using words. Her classroom special education teacher and speech pathologist have guided Gianna on this journey through vocabulary lessons and assistance from an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. Both professionals noted that using AAC doesn't interfere with the development of verbal speech; in fact, it can support and enhance it. AAC can help individuals with word-finding, visual language support, and verbal speech development as in Gianna's case. Gianna's AAC device has enabled Gianna to bridge from using a device to speak for her to now being able to use more spoken words on her own. Staff have watched as Gianna has become more social with adults and peers. Her mom marveled proudly that Gianna recently said her brother's name for the first time. Gianna has finally found her voice and we can't wait to see what else she has to share!

Also in June, GEC's Preschool graduated 67 students to move onward and upward, preparing them in the best possible way for continuing their education and for life!



Gianna works on her speech



A happy graduate

GEC RE-OPENS WELLNESS CENTER

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Part of GEC's Mission to support and care for children and adults living with I/DD is to do everything we can to promote a healthy and happy life. For many years, GEC operated a wellness clinic in conjunction with our day habilitation program for adults. During COVID it wasn't viable, but we always knew that one day we would want to start it up again. Thanks to a generous donation from the Callaghan-Pierog Family Foundation, we were able to hit the reset button and get this important program equipped, staffed, and going again. Individuals with mobility challenges are able to receive Physical and Occupational Therapy at the Wellness Center from licensed clinicians, and as you can see, they are very happy! In fact, it is so popular with the people we support that we are already looking for the opportunity to expand the hours and provide additional services such as nutritional counseling and Yoga/meditation. Hooray for the Wellness Center!



Jennifer, working on balance



Maureen, building leg strength

GEC RECREATION PROGRAM CELEBRATES SUMMER FIESTA!

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The entire GEC community came together at Gargiulo's Restaurant in Coney Island on June 25th to kick off the summer in style with a dinner-dance, Fiesta style. The adults we support in our Residential and Day Habilitation programs, along with staff and family members, came dressed up and ready to party! DJ Tom Hoeful provided constant fun and music for dancing (something our folks love to do) and the Hoeful family donated a special ice cream sundae station as an added treat. This was not a fundraiser, but rather a heartfelt sharing of happiness and love for each other...an oasis of kindness, and everyone had a great time!



Happy people celebrating at the Summer Fiesta!



WORKFORCE CRISIS

GEC, like any nonprofit 501c3 charity has our share of challenges. We are no strangers to challenges and have been meeting them, head-on, since 1958. What is most concerning to us now, is a shortage of staff willing and able to do this important work. We are seeing it on all levels (DSP's, supervisors, and professionals). We aren't certain what is driving the shortage, but it is not specific to GEC. It is being felt across the field of agencies providing these services. It takes a very special kind of person to provide the personal and emotional support these beautiful individuals need. It is the type of work that you must be wholly present for; and once you give yourself over to it, you can't imagine wanting to do any other kind of work. The people we support are appreciative and loving. They are the happiest people I have ever known! I cannot help but smile at their amazing ability to be themselves, free from judgement, and live in the moment. These are lessons most of us are still trying to learn, but they get it! In 39 years working in this field, I still learn from them every day.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are many things that may motivate people to come to work at a nonprofit like GEC. Altruism is an important one. Some people want to help others; to serve; to make a difference in the lives of the people we support. Salary is also important. Although nobody takes on this work expecting to get wealthy, we have some staff who are food and housing insecure. The majority of our funding comes from Medicaid, and the State determines our rates, which in turn, determines the salaries we are able to pay. A successful fundraising appeal can help us provide additional incentives to our staff beyond salary. We are piloting a Staff Achievement Award, a tuition reimbursement program, a mentoring program that pairs senior staff with someone new, and other supports to help staff make ends meet. A recent staff survey indicated that these things are as important to staff as salary. The proceeds from this appeal will help to fund these incentives. If writing a check isn't your thing you can donate through our website gecbklyn.org, or you may choose to include us in your estate planning or name GEC as a life insurance beneficiary. You can also help by spreading the word about us. Maybe you know someone who would like to give working at GEC a try. That's what I did in 1986.

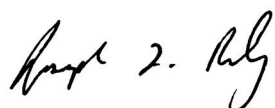
I guess I figured out what I want to be when I grow up!

"Asking for help isn't giving up," said the horse. "It's refusing to give up."

—From The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy

I hope you all have a peaceful and happy summer; and may kindness touch your lives in all the best ways!

Sincerely,



Joe Riley
GEC Executive Director



2025 SUMMER APPEAL

Donation Reply Form

____ Yes, I would like to support the GEC's Summer Appeal with my enclosed tax-deductible gift of:
____ \$25 ____ \$75 ____ \$150 ____ \$200 ____ other

This is a ☐ One time donation ☐ Recurring donation ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

My gift is in Honor of _____ or in Memory of _____

Please make your check payable to the GEC.

Credit Card Payment:

Preferred Method of Payment: _____ Visa _____ Mastercard _____ Discover _____ AmEx

Name as it appears on card: _____

Card No. _____ Exp. Date: _____ 3 or 4 digit code: _____

Zip Code: _____ Amount: \$ _____ Signature: _____



Other Giving Opportunities

Securities, Trusts and Real Estate

Donations in the form of: stocks, bonds, mutual funds, securities or real estate can offer the contributor a substantial tax benefit. Please consult with your tax advisor for current IRS rules and regulations.

Planned Giving

Planned gifts such as: gift annuities, deferred payment annuities and remainder annuity trust can offer the donor numerous tax benefits. The Development Department can provide information that would allow you and your tax consultant to choose a plan that meets your financial needs.

Wills & Bequests

The most important reason to have a will is to ensure that you are the one who decides how your estate will be divided. By remembering the GEC in your will, you will help perpetuate a legacy of care that has existed since 1958. If you already have a will, a codicil can be added. Please consult with your attorney.

Matching Gifts

To double or perhaps triple your donation, please inquire if your employer has a matching gift program. Please include the matching gift form with your donation. The Development Department will complete the form and return it to your employer for processing.

Questions? Please contact the Development Department at **718-833-6633 x 228/229** or **cmansuetto@gecbklyn.org**.