

# news

WINTER 2016



*“Equinox has provided invaluable services to vulnerable and at-risk youths throughout the Capital Region for almost fifty years. I look forward to working with Equinox and their Youth Outreach Center in the future to ensure these services will always be available for those who need them the most – giving our community’s youth the best chance to succeed and live productive lives that give back to our neighborhoods.”*

U.S. Congressman Paul D. Tonko

## \$1.4 Million Grant Helps Keep Youth Outreach Center Open, and Better Than Ever!

With the award of a highly competitive five-year, \$1.4 million federal grant, Equinox will be able to keep the doors of its popular Youth Outreach Center open, and to add new programs aimed at preventing substance abuse, HIV, and viral hepatitis. The grant was awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and provides \$283,875 a year for five years.

“We are very happy, and relieved, to be able to continue serving the youth in our community and to offer them new and enhanced programs,” said Equinox CEO Dorothy Cucinelli, PhD. “Had we not received this grant, we were facing the real possibility of having to close the Youth Outreach Center. We are grateful to U.S.

Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer and Congressman Paul Tonko for their support and advocacy during this process. ”

The Outreach Center had received federal funding – its primary source of financial support – since opening in 1994. Because of increased competition for fewer federal dollars, however, funding ceased in early 2014 – forcing the agency to operate the Center at a significant deficit. Despite vigorous efforts to secure alternative funding sources and several gifts from generous donors, the future of the Center was in jeopardy.

The Youth Outreach Center is an after-school drop-in center for youth from Albany’s highest-needs neighborhoods,

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the CEO	2
\$1.4 Million Grant, <i>cont.</i>	2
Inaugural ThanksGathering Celebration a Great Success	3
Equinox Celebrates Community	4
Getting the Word Out During DV Awareness Month	5
A Gift from the Heart	6

Continued on page 2





## CEO's Message

equinox  
news

I'm so glad to have this opportunity to wish you a happy and healthy New Year, and to briefly share a few of the highlights from 2015:

- We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Equinox Domestic Violence Shelter with a special luncheon and program attended by more than 200 advocates, friends, supporters, and dignitaries.
- We had a "huge" and wonderful surprise when Billy Fuccillo again made Equinox the Capital Region recipient of his efforts to raise funds and awareness to prevent domestic violence (see page 4).
- As you read on page 1 of this newsletter, Equinox was the recipient of a \$1.4 million federal grant, which made it possible to keep our Youth Outreach Center not only open, but thriving.

In 2016, we look forward to using the grant funds to implement new substance abuse and HIV prevention programs in the Youth Outreach Center. These programs will include engagement activities like fitness classes and life skills workshops; onsite availability of a certified substance abuse counselor; free, confidential HIV testing and counseling; trained Youth Leaders who will become trusted sources of peer support and information; and other evidence-based efforts to best benefit the young people we serve.

This year also brings the chance to share our knowledge and experience to better protect the elderly members of our community. Because of our Domestic Violence Services' expertise in the area of elder abuse, Equinox will be a key partner of a federally funded project led by Senior Services of Albany to provide enhanced and expanded services to those who are victims of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

As the year continues to unfold, we will seek new opportunities to serve our clients and our community. As always, we are grateful to have the support of our many friends and donors, like you, who believe in our mission and make our work possible.

With warm regards,

*Dorothy Cucinelli*

Dorothy Cucinelli, PhD

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Dorothy S. Cucinelli, PhD, *CEO*

### \$1.4 Million Grant *continued from page 1*

currently serving about 50 youth a day – close to 1,000 each year. It provides nutritious meals and snacks, laundry and shower facilities, emergency clothing, hygiene supplies, homework help, computers with internet access, and recreational activities. The Center also connects youth and young adults to Equinox's mentoring programs.

The Outreach Center serves a population of young people who often struggle with the impact of traumatic experiences, who are less likely to access health care, and who have higher rates of substance abuse and HIV infection than comparable youth in other communities in the area.

With funds from the grant, new activities will be added to promote healthy lifestyles, build resiliency, encourage participation in substance abuse and HIV prevention activities, and offer youth a safe and positive alternative to the chaos and violence of their neighborhood streets.

"Despite the hardships many of our youth face daily, they are hopeful for a better future. We feel a great responsibility to help them on a path toward that goal, and are optimistic about the impact of our new programs," said Dr. Cucinelli.

Equinox was one of only 54 organizations nationwide to receive this SAMHSA grant. ●



### ● Mentoring Matters to Equinox Youth – and to First Niagara

Equinox is proud to have been selected as one of eight not-for-profit agencies in Eastern New York to receive a \$25,000 Mentoring Matters Grant from First Niagara. For the past five years, Equinox has been fortunate to receive this generous support of its Journey and New Pathways mentoring programs. The Journey Program, for youth ages 13-17, offers positive role models, fulfilling activities, and life-expanding opportunities during high-risk, non-school hours. New Pathways, for 18- to 24-year-olds, offers valuable education activities, and the opportunity, resources, and skill development to help participants achieve self-defined goals as they move toward self-sufficiency.

Equinox is grateful to First Niagara and our mentors for investing in our community's youth. As one Journey participant described: "They helped me to believe in myself and realize I was worth more than the situation I was in."

Pictured above (l-r) at First Niagara's Mentoring Matters press conference on October 8: Kelli Arnold, First Niagara Eastern New York Market Executive; Kathy Fletcher, Equinox COO; Dorothy Cucinelli, CEO; and Peter Cosgrove, First Niagara Upstate New York Regional President.

# Inaugural ThanksGathering Celebration a Great Success



Honorary Co-Chairs Barry and Sara Lee Larner with their son, Eric Larner, President and Partner of Schuyler Companies, a major corporate sponsor.



Guests enjoying seasonal beverage tastings from featured vendors.



Honorees Neil and Jane Golub admiring the inscribed turkey platter held by Mona Golub, which was presented to them for their support, through Price Chopper & Market 32, of the Equinox Thanksgiving Community Dinner – and for serving the community since 1932.

More than 260 Equinox friends and supporters were on hand for the first-ever ThanksGathering Celebration on November 5. The Adirondack exhibit in the New York State Museum provided the perfect backdrop for a festive evening and successful fundraiser. Guests enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres and chef stations by Mazzone Hospitality, seasonal beverage tastings from Adirondack Winery, Brown's Brewing Company, and Joe Daddy's Hard Cider, and music by the Grand Central Station Jazz Trio. Guests generously supported Equinox through the raffle, gift card pull, and "stuff the turkey" opportunities. Congratulations to the raffle winners, who will be enjoying a winter getaway at the Sagamore, a 2016 Yankees game, and a 2016 Syracuse football game at the Meadowlands.

The Golub Corporation was honored for its significant support of Equinox and our Thanksgiving Community Dinner. Price Chopper & Market 32 annually donate more than 830 turkeys (totaling 12,000 pounds) for the 10,000 meals! They also partner with Equinox for Project Soup, providing soup kitchens and food pantries throughout the Capital Region with gallons of turkey soup to feed those in need beyond Thanksgiving.

A special thank you to the evening's Honorary Co-Chairs Barry and Sara Lee Larner of Schuyler Companies; Presenting Sponsor Equinox Companies, J. Eric King, President; Media Sponsor Albany Broadcasting; and all the evening's generous sponsors. The inaugural ThanksGathering was an exciting kick-off to Equinox's Annual Thanksgiving Day Community Dinner (fondly referred to as "T-Day"). It also provided an opportunity to thank our T-Day Committee, whose volunteer time, talent, and tireless dedication are priceless—providing meals to 10,000 of our neighbors in need. ●



## Two Capital Region Leaders Sharing a Great Name

When an opportunity to sponsor Equinox's inaugural ThanksGathering Celebration came across the desk of J. Eric King, he thought it was probably a good idea. When he consulted his wife, Kathy Thiel, she *knew* it was a great idea. Eric, after all, is president of Equinox Companies.

"Equinox actually means a perfect balance of day and night," noted Kathy. "That's a wonderful symbol of our partnership – a balance of our for-profit company and a non-profit social service agency coming together to better serve our community."

Equinox Companies is a family-owned and operated commercial property development and management firm. The firm has approximately 900,000 square feet of commercial, retail property currently owned and managed in the Capital Region and is a franchisee of several Marriott and Hilton hotels.

"We were very excited about the idea of bringing the two Equinoxes together," said Eric.

"After meeting with Equinox Development Director Christina Rajotte, it was clear that it was a good fit for both Equinoxes."

The Presenting Sponsorship of the ThanksGathering celebration was the perfect way to begin the partnership.

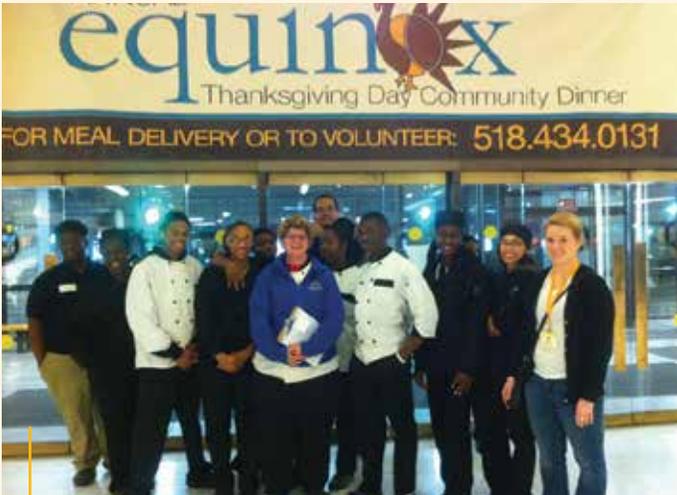
"We loved that it was created to kick-off Equinox's Annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner, which is such a cherished tradition in our area," said Eric. "Every November we receive phone calls from people who want to participate – so we've learned to keep the other Equinox's phone number handy!"

"We are so pleased to include Eric and Kathy and their company as part of *our* Equinox family," said Christina. "Equinox Companies was founded in 1968; the Equinox agency began in 1969. In a way, we have grown up together. We look forward to growing our partnership on behalf of the Capital Region." ●



J. Eric King, President of Equinox Companies, with his wife, Kathy Thiel, remarking on Equinox Companies' commitment as Presenting Sponsor—bringing the two Equinoxes together.

# Equinox Celebrates Community



## An Amazing Corps of Volunteers

The 2015 Equinox Thanksgiving Community Dinner was a huge success thanks to thousands of volunteers from area businesses, schools, clubs, congregations, and families. For many years, students from the Glenmont Job Corps, pictured above, have been a big help. This year they enthusiastically stepped in on a moment's notice to help unload thousands of pounds of frozen turkeys and transport them into the OGS kitchens in the Empire State Plaza. And speaking of OGS, Equinox extends a special thank you to the Office of General Services, which has partnered with Equinox on the Thanksgiving Dinner for 20 years.



## SEFCU's Support of Equinox is No Trivial Matter

On October 13th, Equinox was presented with \$2,500 from SEFCU during its Capital Region's Smartest Company Electronic Trivia Competition, which supported organizations in our community who serve the homeless. Thanks to votes from the community, Equinox's award will benefit the Equinox House for Youth. Above, CEO Michael Castellana presents SEFCU's generous donation to Dorothy Cucinelli at the Trivia Competition.



## Raymour & Flanigan Furnishes Support to Equinox

Thank you to Raymour & Flanigan for its generous support of Equinox and the Thanksgiving Community Dinner. Through its three Capital Region showrooms, the company donated \$2,250 to Equinox. And on November 14, each of the stores encouraged customers to make donations to Equinox. Raymour & Flanigan also worked with local elementary schools to create hundreds of cheerful Thanksgiving cards to accompany the meals Equinox volunteers delivered on Thanksgiving.



## Equinox Named "Ally of the Year"

On behalf of Equinox, Dorothy Cucinelli accepted the "Ally of the Year" award from the New York Capital Region chapter of GLSEN – the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. Pictured with Dr. Cucinelli is Rick Marchant, co-chair of GLSEN's Board. Local chapters focus on issues such as public policy, teacher training, and supporting students and educators around the country. As Albany County's sole provider of emergency housing for homeless and runaway youth, Equinox was recognized for "providing support and encouragement for many youth that also have been involved in GLSEN programs these last 17 years. With over 40% of homeless and runaway youth identifying as LGBTQ, having Equinox as a resource in our region is vital." *Photo courtesy of Jay Zhang Photography*

## From Turkey to Silver Bells

Equinox was delighted to partner with Albany Broadcasting Co. as the media sponsor of the 2015 ThanksGathering Celebration. The Albany Broadcasting stations did a fantastic job helping to raise awareness about the Celebration and about the Equinox Community Thanksgiving Dinner. A special thank you to B95.5 personality Chad O'Hara for serving as emcee at ThanksGathering. Thanks also to Chad for inviting Equinox CEO Dorothy Cucinelli and Director of Development Christina Rajotte to join him at the station to kick off their official holiday music season.



# Getting the Word Out During DV Awareness Month

During October – National Domestic Violence Awareness Month – Equinox worked to raise awareness about the devastating consequences of domestic violence and where help is available.

Equinox partnered with Albany County Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (ACCADA) for its *These Hands Aren't Made for Hurting. These Hands are Made for...* campaign. Individuals were encouraged to write a non-violent activity on purple paper hands distributed at locations throughout the county, such as: "These hands are made for helping," "These hands are made for gardening," "These hands are made for cooking." The purple hands – the color associated with DV advocacy – were displayed in windows and on walls throughout the community.

"Domestic violence happens in all parts of our society – regardless of income level, ethnicity, age, religion, or sexual orientation," said Kathy Magee, Director of Domestic Violence Services. "October gives us an opportunity to shine a light on this insidious abuse, and encourage everyone to support efforts that help victims escape their abusers and take control of their lives."



Throughout the month Equinox used Facebook to share information, raise awareness, and promote activities in the community – lectures, film screenings, a 5K Run sponsored by the Albany Police Department, a Candlelight Vigil, and an information kiosk donated by Colonie Center. ●

Equinox DV Advocate Rebecca Poletto distributes purple hands for the "These Hands" campaign at the kiosk donated by Colonie Center.



## Lt. Governor Adds to Dialogue on Domestic Violence

New York Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul visited Equinox on October 6 in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and to learn more about Equinox DV services. At her invitation, the Lt. Governor was joined by NYS Assemblyman John McDonald, NYS Assemblywoman Pat Fahy, Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, and Gwen Wright, Executive Director of the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. The group was given a tour of the DV offices and counseling area by CEO Dorothy Cucinelli and Kathy Magee, Director of DV Services. Following the tour, the Lt. Governor, above in red dress, led a discussion about the challenges Equinox faces in providing such a comprehensive range of services to DV survivors and the role of government in meeting those challenges. The Lt. Governor, who spoke at the 25th anniversary commemorative luncheon of the Equinox DV Shelter in May, shared her interest in a continued dialogue with Equinox and other organizations as part of her DV advocacy.

## It's HUGE (Again)! Fuccillo Donates \$79,000 to Support Equinox Domestic Violence Services

Equinox received a (huge) check for \$78,900 from the Fuccillo Automotive Group to support its domestic violence services at a ceremony on November 10. Billy Fuccillo donated \$100 for every car sold at his dealerships in New York State during October to five organizations.

"Mr. Fuccillo's gift was an extraordinary act of generosity," said Equinox CEO Dorothy Cucinelli. "We were thrilled to be a recipient of this campaign last year, and are overjoyed that he chose to partner with Equinox again. This donation will help us continue to ensure that domestic violence survivors and their children get the desperately needed assistance to escape their abusers and build a safe and independent future. We are also deeply appreciative that Mr. Fuccillo used his frequent commercials to raise public awareness about domestic violence."



## STAY CONNECTED!

Visit us at [equinoxinc.org](http://equinoxinc.org) and at [facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany](https://www.facebook.com/EquinoxAlbany). Or visit us in person.  
Call (518) 434-6137, ext. 5366 to schedule a tour.  
We'd love to see you!



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[www.equinoxinc.org](http://www.equinoxinc.org)



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## *A Gift from the Heart In Honor of Nikki*

Equinox extends a special note of gratitude to the family of Nikki Hart who "adopted" four families receiving help through our Domestic Violence programs as part of our holiday gift drive. Three years ago, Nikki lost her life as a result of a heinous act of domestic violence. She was a loving mother of two little girls, a loyal daughter and sister, "a sweet and loving soul." With compassion and generosity, Nikki's cousins, nieces, aunts and uncles and other family members came together to provide gifts to families affected by domestic violence. This act of extraordinary strength is a meaningful tribute to Nikki and her memory.

## A GENEROUS COMMUNITY MAKES THE HOLIDAYS BRIGHTER



Teens in our Youth Outreach Center are happy to show off their gifts.

Thanks to the community's generous response to Equinox's Holiday Gift Drive in December, we were able to distribute toys, clothing and other gifts to many of our clients through our Youth and Domestic Violence programs. Thank you to all of the individuals, families, organizations and businesses who donated gifts. Below are some of our community partners in this effort.

Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Fraternity  
Blue Shield of Northeastern NY  
Capital Hospitality  
CDM Smith

Church of Immaculate Conception,  
Scotia  
Congregation Beth Emeth  
Crisafulli Bros. Plumbing & Heating  
Keller Williams-The D'Angelo Team  
McGeary's  
Meyers & Meyers, LLC  
Office of Right of Way NYS DOT  
SEI Design  
Siena College  
The Pink Store-Crossgates  
Verizon  
Victoria's Secret-Colonie Center  
Victoria's Secret-Crossgates