

# news

FALL 2013



## Equinox a Partner in Health Home Initiative

*Multi-agency network designed to improve health outcomes, lower costs*

Equinox is a member of the recently established Health Home care management program called Capital Region Health Connections – the only health home serving Albany and Rensselaer Counties. A Health Home is a network of health and community agencies that work together to help people with serious and chronic health issues get the services and care they need to live healthier and safer lives.

The Health Home approach was developed as part of the federal Affordable Care Act reforms to better address complex health needs, and to reduce the frequency of unnecessary and costly hospitalizations, and thus reduce health care costs. The program is available to individuals who are eligible for Medicaid

and have one or more chronic conditions, such as mental illness, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, substance abuse or obesity.

Each person who joins a health home is matched with a care manager who coordinates services – from medical care to social and housing needs – and assists individuals in getting their needs met.

A primary goal of Health Homes is to reach those Medicaid clients who have had limited or no contact with providers, and end up in emergency rooms because medical issues have escalated unnecessarily or who use emergency rooms for non-urgent medical issues.

Equinox has years of experience and expertise providing case management services to clients with serious mental

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## CEO's Message



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Among the most important resources we have at Equinox are our partnerships with other community organizations and institutions. When Equinox youth recently challenged members of the Albany Police Department to a friendly, but very competitive, basketball game (see *APD vs. the "E,"* page 3), it was a reflection of our growing partnership with the APD and the positive interactions it has fostered. Through "Project Rapport," which is supported by a grant from the Bender Family Foundation, officers regularly participate in Equinox activities and socialize with youth at our Outreach Center, establishing a trust that carries into the broader community.

Equinox, along with Parsons and Trinity Alliance, has also partnered with the APD to form a Juvenile Justice Mobile Response Team (JJMRT), to encourage alternatives to incarceration for youthful offenders, when appropriate. Adolescents who end up in jail are among the youth least likely to make a successful transition to adulthood. It benefits our youth and our community when we can explore alternatives.

It's hard to believe but Thanksgiving preparations have already begun. For information about how you can be involved in this tremendous community tradition, please see the back page of this newsletter.

With warm regards,

*Dorothy S. Cucinelli*  
Dorothy S. Cucinelli, PhD

## Equinox Launches Foster Care Prevention Program

In March, Equinox established a clinical foster care prevention program, which works to stabilize and strengthen families in crisis. The goal of the program is to keep children with their families and avoid placement in foster care.

Research shows that the longer children remain in foster care, the poorer the outcomes for their health and well-being. They are reported to experience physical, mental health, and developmental challenges at much higher rates than the general population of children.



The Equinox foster care prevention program serves families of all socioeconomic levels. It is designed to increase family self-sufficiency and reduce the incidence of child abuse and maltreatment, as well as to safely reduce the number of foster care placements or the length of stay in foster care.

"We do everything from teaching parenting and communication skills, to connecting people with comprehensive community-based programs that provide assistance with food, clothing, and job skills training, to teaching people how to advocate for themselves," said Jennifer Cole, Equinox Family Resources Manager. "We also conduct family therapy, but people can't think about therapy if they have no food or heat, or if their children don't have shoes."

All referrals come to Equinox from Albany County. Schools or doctors alert the County of children who are not in school or who may be being abused or mistreated. The children's safety is paramount, and the County determines if a preventive services program is the best course of action for the child and family.

When a referral comes to Equinox, the agency steps in within 24 hours, and meets with the identified child and the adult caring for the child. A plan is then put into place that will involve the whole family. Everyone older than 5 years is connected with at least two community resources.

"As Clinical Foster Care Prevention Workers, we become immersed into the everyday lives of our client families by doing home-based work," said Equinox's Morgan Masaitis. "We are able to form a bond and rapport with our families that is unique. The immersion into their homes allows for communication and discussion to take place surrounding sensitive and difficult family issues in a safe and comforting environment; it is there that the most work is accomplished." ●

# Celebrating Community, Collaboration and Creativity



## APD VS. THE "E"

Members of the Albany Police Department squared off against teens from the Equinox Youth Center on the center court of the Arbor Hill Community Center on May 8. Dubbed "APD vs. The E", the exciting game was the culmination of a friendly rivalry between the two teams. The relationship between the teens and the APD is the outgrowth of ongoing involvement of officers from the Community Engagement Unit in Equinox's Youth Outreach Center. Rodger Wyland, Sports Director at WNYT-News-Channel 13 introduced both line-ups. The half-time show featured two Equinox dance teams and the Arbor Hill Community Center's Nanny's Double Dutch League. Team jerseys were donated by the Albany Police & Fire Foundation. After a hard-fought and close game, the APD took home the trophy...but there's always next year!



## EQUINOX TEENS SHINE AT FIRST "DRAWING UP CENTRAL"

Tulip Fest 2013, held May 11, featured the first annual "Drawing Up Central" sidewalk chalk art contest, held in front of Equinox at 95 Central Avenue. Talented artists from throughout the area, including Equinox teens, like Savannah, below, created beautiful artwork.



## KATHY TANNER GALLERY OPENS AT EQUINOX

Named in honor of Equinox's former Executive Director, pictured, the new Kathy Tanner Gallery will feature artwork by Equinox youth and clients. The current exhibit showcases photos of the chalk drawings from "Drawing Up Central."



Above photos by Caitlin Orbenak



## EQUINOX HIRES NEW DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Equinox is pleased to announce that Christina Rajotte has been hired as our new Development Director. With more than 23 years of experience in development and marketing, Christina brings extensive experience and talent to the position. Most recently, she was at the Center for Disability Services for 17 years in various roles, including Director of Major Gifts & Annual Giving and Director of Marketing & Communications. Christina has also worked at Wildwood Programs, The Community Hospice and Albany Institute of History & Art.

"I am delighted to join Equinox," said Christina. "Together with our staff, leadership and board of directors, I look forward to addressing the ever-changing needs of our community and expanding opportunities for our clients. Of course, we cannot accomplish this alone—our generous and caring community is an integral part in achieving our mission of changing lives and strengthening communities."



### KEYBANK MAKES A DIFFERENCE AT EQUINOX

Equinox was honored to be among the area's nonprofit organizations chosen to benefit from KeyBank's Neighbors Make the Difference Day, an annual community service day. On May 22 a team of KeyBank employees volunteered their time, energy and resources to conduct a car wash at Equinox's 500 Central Avenue site. With hoses, buckets and sponges in hand, the team went to work washing and detailing several Equinox-operated cars and vans. THANK YOU KEYBANK...you saved us valuable time and resources, plus our vehicles never looked so clean!

### 2013 EQUINOX CELESTIAL CELEBRATION

#### MEMBERS OF THE EQUINOX BOARD GATHERED FOR A PHOTO AT THE CELESTIAL CELEBRATION.

Seated, left to right: Gail Hill Gordon, Lorraine D'Aleo, Rose Jackson, CEO Dorothy Cucinelli, John Carl and Terri Crowley. Standing: Dennis McDonald, Elmer Streeter, Steve Baboulis, Linda MacFarlane, Karen Asher, Lauri Rosmarin-Plattner, Mark Holtzman and Scott Fein.

More than 200 guests joined us at the Albany Country Club on May 3 to support Equinox and enjoy a wonderful evening of delicious food, exciting auction items, music and dancing.

Equinox Board Chair Karen Asher, left, shared a moment with event Co-Chairs Kevin and Sari O'Connor.



### GREATFINDS RE-OPENS!

GreatFinds, Equinox's award-winning thrift boutique for women, had a most successful re-opening on June 3. The sunny day brought a steady stream of loyal and new customers excited to check out all the new merchandise. Equinox staff members (L-R) Raydale Baylock, Jill Rafferty-Weinisch, Destony Stewart, Karla Gareau, Christina Rajotte, and Rebecca Beeman had a great time modeling (and buying) some of the fantastic fall fashions they found at the shop. Supporting Equinox has never been so fashionable! GreatFinds is located at 260 Washington Ave., Albany, at the corner of Henry Johnson Boulevard. To make a donation of high-quality, gently used women's clothing or accessories, please call Susan Taylor at 518.449.7715.



# A Caring Community Makes Our Wish Lists Come True



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## PROGRAM WISH LISTS

Most of the items on our wish lists are in demand and need continuous replenishing. These modest items make a world of difference to someone who may be going without them. To make a donation or for more information, contact Christina Rajotte at [crajotte@equinoxinc.org](mailto:crajotte@equinoxinc.org) or 518.434.6137 ext. 5366.

### YOUTH SERVICES & OUTREACH (AGES 13-24)

- Hoodies (Sizes: M, L, XL)
- Personal Hygiene Items (i.e., deodorant, shower gel, shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste/toothbrush, dental floss, feminine products)
- Diapers (newborns & infants)
- Underwear & Socks
- Laundry Detergent
- Art Supplies
- Group Tickets to Sporting Events
- Movie Passes

### YOUTH SHELTER (AGES 13-17)

- Twin Sheets Sets
- Towels & Washcloths
- Personal Hygiene Items (travel/trial sizes)
- Underwear & Socks
- Art & Craft Supplies
- School Supplies
- Ping Pong Table

### TRANSITIONAL LIVING APARTMENTS (AGES 16-20)

- Lamps
- Fans
- Pots & Pans
- Afghans/Throws

- Blankets
- Laundry Baskets
- Garbage Cans with Covers
- CDTA Bus Swipers

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES & SHELTER

- Pots & Pans
- Dish Sets & Utensils
- Twin Sheets Sets & Comforters
- Blankets
- Pillows
- Towels & Washcloths
- Personal Hygiene Items
- Diapers (newborns & infants)
- Toys, Games & Books
- Decorative Wall Decals

### ADULT RESIDENCES (SERVING ADULTS LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS)

- Sweatshirts & Sweatpants (all sizes)
- Twin Sheets Sets & Comforters
- Pillows
- Towels & Washcloths
- Personal Hygiene Items
- Pots & Pans
- Dish Sets & Utensils
- Matching Lamps
- Small Flat Panel TV

## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Is your volunteer group, school, congregation or business looking for a great community service project? We have some great opportunities for you!

### Hold a Drive!

Collect frequently used items by Equinox clients, such as personal care items, school supplies and gifts for the holidays, and make a big difference in the lives of those who need them.

### Provide Welcome Bags

The Equinox House for Youth (EHY) is Albany's sole provider of emergency housing for runaway and homeless youth, ages 13 to 17. The average stay at EHY is 17 days. Our staff would like to make it a bit more comforting to our young residents by providing them with "welcome" gift bags. This could be an ideal project for your group by conducting a drive to collect items such as travel or trial size shampoo/conditioner, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, deodorant and making up the gift bags.

### Provide Apartment Warming Baskets

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides supervised apartment living for homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, to help them make a successful transition to life on their own. Residents of TLP have access to counseling, medical and mental health care, social support, independent skills training, and education, and employment assistance. Help us welcome TLP residents to their new apartments by conducting a drive to collect donated laundry baskets and items to fill them, such as twin sheet sets, blankets, pillows, and laundry detergent.

## Health Home *continued from page 1*

illness through its former Intensive Case Management and Supportive Case Management programs. These programs have helped clients access a range of services, such as psychiatric, addiction, medical, and dental services, as well as social, financial, housing, educational, and vocational services. Current clients will move seamlessly into the health home.

"Health Home Care Management allows us

to manage clients' needs more holistically," said Jessica Whitaker, Program Manager, Health Home Care Management. "As a Capital Region Health Connections member, we will be able to establish a continuity of care for our clients – many of whom do not have a regular health care provider – which will lead to their better overall health."

Currently being developed is a health information technology system that will allow the care managers and providers to communicate, and to be informed when their clients

access services – such as when they've been to a medical appointment or filled a prescription.

Capital Region Health Home Connections is a program of St. Peter's Health Partners. Other members include AIDS Council of Northeastern New York, Albany County Department of Mental Health, Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services, Samaritan Hospital, Unity House of Troy, Rehabilitation Support Services and Whitney Young Jr. Health Services. ●

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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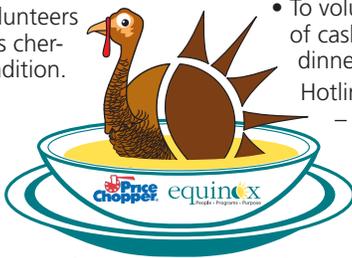
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## Thanksgiving Day Community Dinner

### NOVEMBER 28

- This year, volunteers will serve 500 dinners at First Presbyterian Church and deliver more than 9,500 to individuals and families who are homebound, lonely or in difficult circumstances.
- More than 3,600 volunteers will play a role in this cherished community tradition.
- The Thanksgiving Dinner is entirely funded by donations from individuals, groups, schools and businesses.
- **PROJECT SOUP**, a partnership between Equinox and Price Chopper, provides soup kitchens and food pantries with turkey stock, vegetables and other ingredients to make soups and stews that will feed those in need beyond Thanksgiving.
- To volunteer, make a donation of cash or goods, or request a dinner, call the "T Day" Hotline – **518.434.0131** – beginning October 24.



**PROJECT SOUP**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**October** National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Visit [equinoxinc.org](http://equinoxinc.org) for more information.

**November 28** Annual Equinox Thanksgiving Day Community Dinner. Hotline open Oct. 24 through Thanksgiving: **518.434.0131**

**December** Holiday Gift Drive. Join this annual effort and help make a brighter holiday for someone in need. Call today for more information.

**April 11, 2014** Save the date for the 2014 Equinox Gala at the Holiday Inn Albany on Wolf Road.

Call 518.434.6135, ext. 5311 for information about any of our events.



Donate on line  
[www.equinoxinc.org](http://www.equinoxinc.org)



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