

NEWS RELEASE

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LOCAL AGENCIES JOIN TO PRESENT INFORMATIONAL SEMINAR ON AUTISM

Middletown, NY, December 8, 2009 — Through a collaborative effort from Family Empowerment Council, Occupations, Inc., NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), the Orange County Department of Mental Health and Orange County Community College (OCCC), a seminar was recently held at OCCC on the topic of Autism. Over one hundred college students, Medicaid Service Coordinators, human service professionals, parents and family members, gathered for the presentation of a documentary film by Susan Hamovitch, “Without Apology”, followed by an informative presentation by Delores McFadden, director of developmental disabilities for the Orange County Department of Mental Health, on the current innovative services for people on the Autism Spectrum. Dr. Douglas Sanders, associate professor of OCCC’s Psychology/Sociology Department was the Master of Ceremony who was joined by guest speaker, Joseph Spring, director of social work and coordinator of Medicaid service coordination services at Hudson Valley DDSO/OMRDD.

“Without Apology” defines the historical travel of changes in the OMRDD system and the overhaul to change the OMRDD system including the de-institution of individuals by placing them in group homes to live fully in the community. The film is based on Ms. Hamovitch’s family’s experience with her brother with autism, Alan, and the difficulties of raising a child with autism during that time. “Without Apology” also uncovers public documentation, medical theories, and institutional framework that forced families with autistic members, to live in a world of shame.

Immediately following the presentation, there was open discussion between Ms. Hamovitch, students, family members, faculty, and human service professionals from several local, county and state agencies. The program concluded with a summary by Amy Anderson-Winchell, executive director of Family Empowerment Council and executive vice president and chief operating officer of Occupations, Inc. This informative presentation was coordinated by Beverly Kelleher, service coordination supervisor at Family Empowerment Council, Inc., and Professor Patricia Guallini, department chair of the Psychology/Sociology Department at OCCC.

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For more than 45 years, Occupations, Inc., a not-for-profit agency, has provided outpatient mental health services, case management, child welfare, emergency services, residential services, and employment opportunities to people with developmental disabilities and individuals recovering from mental illness. Its affiliate, Family Empowerment Council, Inc, provides services to people with disabilities, including service coordination and case management, mental health family support, early intervention, educational advocacy, consumer-directed personal care, residential habilitation and respite services. New Dynamics Corporation, a not-for-profit sister corporation of Occupations, Inc., is a leader in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For information on all programs and services available through the Occupations System of Services call the Service Access Center at 1-888-750-2266, available seven-days-a-week, 24 hours a day.

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From left to right, Susan Hamovitch, Joseph Spring, Beverly Kelleher, Delores McFadden, Amy Anderson-Winchell, Doug Sanders and Pat Guallini