

## Grand Opening and Dedication of Harmony Park Adaptive Playground and Sensory Garden Opened on June 15, 2019 at the David G. Osterer Center in Rye Brook, NY

June 17, 2019, Rye Brook, NY— Saturday morning, June 15, local officials, CPW’s Board of Directors and staff, funders, and supporters gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the grand opening of Harmony Park Playground and Sensory Garden at CPW’s David G. Osterer Center at 1186 King Street. Attendees included the Mayor of Rye Brook Paul Rosenberg, Westchester Deputy County Executive Kenneth Jenkins, NYS Assembly Member Steven Otis, Director of the Westchester County Office of People with Disabilities Evan Latainer, Debbie Reisner, Chief of Staff of the Town of Rye, Debbie Friedman on behalf of Westchester County Legislator Nancy Barr, CPW Executive Director Linda Kuck, and CPW’s Board President Richard N. Osterer. The playground is a fabulous addition to the organization whose programs ensure that children and adults with disabilities receive needed services and enjoy activities regardless of the level of their abilities.



At left, Harmony Park ribbon cutting at CPW’s David G. Osterer Center. L-R: Kenneth Jenkins, Westchester Deputy County Executive; CPW Board Member Venita Osterer; Debbie Reisner, Chief of Staff, Town of Rye; Debbie Friedman, Legislative Aide to Nancy Barr; CPW Board Member David Fisher, CPW Board President Richard N. Osterer, CPW Board Vice-President David Kelson, Mayor of Rye Brook Paul Rosenberg, CPW Board Member Laura Klein, NYS Assemblyman Steven Otis, CPW Exec. Dir. Linda Kuck. At right, Trying out the Merry-go-round - BRIDGE School Principal Barry Wasser with graduation seniors, family and friends. Photos by Warren Rosenberg.

**Overview:** Harmony Park is a new adaptive playground and sensory garden installed at CPW to benefit both children and adults with autism, cerebral palsy, and other disabilities. It is the first-of-its-kind in the region with innovative, wheelchair-accessible equipment and sensory activities so individuals with mobility issues can swing, play, experience nature, and practice critical skills. The park enables CPW participants to play as typical children do, improving their health and functioning, reducing their stress, and granting them and their families a whole new sense of “normalcy” and well-being.

Linda Kuck, CPW’s Executive Director, remarks, “We are thrilled to dedicate the Harmony Park Playground and Sensory Garden – providing a source of exercise and recreation, intellectual stimulation, socialization, and emotional well-being for our participants for years to come.”

The playground includes a wheelchair-accessible merry-go-round and glider, waterplay table, Pulse Tempo interactive music and sensory game installation, xylophone, giant bongos, umbrella pavilion area, outdoor musical and raised planter beds with colorful flowers, aromatic herbs and plants that sway/whistle; all

focused to encourage physical activity, stimulate the senses, and promote imaginative, interactive play that helps children build problem-solving skills, social skills, and frustration tolerance.

The park will benefit hundreds of children, students and adults of CPW's wide-ranging programs at the David G. Osterer Center, including The BRIDGE School at Rye Brook, CPW's Adult Day Program, Saturday Explorers, Adaptive Recreation, Jimmy Vejar Summer Fun Program, and Teen and Young Adult Social Clubs.

The project took considerable collaborative planning. Funding was secured through major gifts from JRM Construction Management, LLC, New York Elks Association, Mid Westchester Elks Lodge 535, Elks Mamaroneck Lodge 1457, Executive Association of Westchester, New York State Building Conference-Westchester Chapter, TD Securities; Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, CPW's Operation Hope, CPW's Board of Directors, and individual donors.

### **About Cerebral Palsy of Westchester**

Celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> year in 2019, Cerebral Palsy of Westchester (CPW) provides essential services and programs for children and adults in Westchester and Fairfield Counties with all developmental disabilities including autism, neurological impairments, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy and cerebral palsy. The organization's mission is to advance the independence, productivity, and full citizenship of people with developmental disabilities, dedicated to the principle that all children and adults with disabilities and their family members have a fundamental right, and deserve every opportunity, to choose and participate in lifestyles that fully integrate them into society to every extent possible.

CPW was founded by a dedicated network of volunteers committed to helping children access medical treatments and services that were just becoming available in area hospitals. One volunteer, Martie Osterer, recognized the need for a strong organization with structure and financial stability to support the efforts of its volunteers. Although the original focus was on individuals with cerebral palsy, the mandate has continually expanded to reach children and adults with a variety of developmental disabilities.

Today, CPW operates with a professional staff of over 450 who exhibit the grassroots enthusiasm of its founders. CPW's David G. Osterer Center in Rye Brook serves as the nucleus of a network of more than a dozen locations throughout Westchester and Fairfield Counties. These satellite programs and residential sites have been developed to provide for the ever expanding and changing needs of disabled individuals throughout the community.

### **Additional Quote**

*According to CPW's Executive Director Linda Kuck, "Outdoor play helps develop physical and social skills and build confidence. However, disabled children have very few play opportunities. Research reports that children with disabilities exercise 4 ½ times less than children without disabilities, largely because they lack adaptive sports and recreation programs and equipment. Many parents are frustrated by the lack of programs that accept disabled children, and their children are often frustrated by not being able to "keep up" with their "typical developing" peers. Our adaptive playground gives children with disabilities the same opportunities for play as other children have."*

**For High Resolution Images and More Information:** Tia Levinson, Development & PR Coordinator:

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Harmony Park ribbon cutting at CPW's David G. Osterer Center. L-R: Debbie Friedman, Legislative Aide to Nancy Barr; David Fisher, CPW Board Member; Richard N. Osterer, CPW Board President; Mayor of Rye Brook Paul Rosenberg; NYS Assembly Member Steven Otis. Photo by Warren Rosenberg.



Harmony Park ribbon cutting at CPW's David G. Osterer Center. L-R: Evan Latainer, Director, Westchester County Office of People with Disabilities, Kenneth Jenkins, Westchester Deputy County Executive; Linda Kuck, CPW Executive Director; Venita Osterer, CPW Board Member; Richard N. Osterer, CPW President of the Board; Steven Otis, NYS Assembly Member; David Kelson, CPW Board Vice-President; Laura Klein, CPW Board Member. Picture by Warren Rosenberg



Harmony Park ribbon cutting at CPW's David G. Osterer Center. L-R: CPW Board Members David Kelson (Vice-President), Venita Osterer, Richard N. Osterer (President), Laura Klein, Linda Kuck (Executive Director), and David Fisher. Photo by Warren Rosenberg.



Xylophone at CPW's Harmony Park. Photo by Tia Levinson.



The Merry-go-round at CPW's Harmony Park. Photo by Tia Levinson.

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