



40
Years of Service
A VERY SPECIAL PLACE, INC.
1974-2014 Annual Report

Empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to lead fuller lives

Reflections on Four Decades

When we first started AVSP we never truly understood the impact that it would have on the families of the people who attended our programs. We worked in the field beforehand so we knew it would have a beneficial impact on those who would choose to participate in the programs and services that we offered. We envisioned a special place that provided services in a setting that the participants felt were theirs in that they would participate in determining the direction and content of their services. For us, we knew that that aspect would make it very special because as one of the people that we provided services to at Willowbrook State School told us, her new home will be 'a very special place because it will be mine.'

At AVSP, we foster the belief that our programs and services belong to those who participate in them and we are charged with facilitating each participant's individual journey to the fulfilling life that he or she has chosen. This is what is at the heart of our mission to empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to lead fuller lives. We knew that this outcome would have a powerful impact on the people that we serve. However we did not fully appreciate the ripple effect that it would have on their families, their friends and the community. When we read the testimonials of the families and friends of our participants, we are often moved by the deep impact AVSP has had on their lives and their relationships. It is beyond rewarding to learn that by empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to lead fuller lives we have empowered their family members and friends to lead fuller lives as well.

When we first started in 1974, there were few programs in our community for people with developmental disabilities. In 1980 when we started our programs at 241 New Dorp Lane, we were among a small group of agencies providing services to adults in the borough. We, along with a handful of others, endured the anger and hatred from some people in the community that grew out of their fears about encountering people with developmental disabilities.

We knew it was just a matter of getting to know our participants and that they would win the community over in the end. Fortunately, this is what happened and the community gradually changed.

Today people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more a part of the fabric of our community participating in generic activities and programs throughout the Island, the City, the State, and the Country without constantly running into fear or anger or hatred. Of course, there is always more that needs to be done. We are very proud that AVSP has been a part of the disabilities' rights movement for the past forty years. For us and for the people we serve and support, this journey of exploration will never end. They continue to grow and evolve in ways that we never imagined, constantly surprising us by learning more and adapting better. Hopefully, we as people and as a society will grow and learn with them.

AVSP is constantly changing and evolving to facilitate their journey. It is an entity that has been formed from the diverse needs and desires of many participants over these forty years and the ideas, ideals and efforts of the many staff, Board members, and volunteers to facilitate the achievement of a better life. As founders, we have been so fortunate to have been involved from the beginning and to have had a front row seat to this transformation. We thank everyone who has participated in AVSP's programs and services, everyone who has worked in the agency and everyone who has volunteered to join us on this journey. We thank our elected and appointed officials in our City and State for their support and their efforts through the years. We thank the donors for their generous support to keep our services alive and thriving.

It is all of us together who make this A Very Special Place.

Genevieve Benoit
Executive Director

Diane Buglioli
Deputy Executive Director

Susan Montella
Board Member

About Our Name

As the Willowbrook State School was being closed down, many of the residents were being relocated to other settings throughout the state. It was a difficult time of transition for everyone at Willowbrook - residents and staff alike. You never knew from one day to the next whether individuals or entire groups of residents would be moved out with little or no advance notice.

Since most of the residents were facing a completely unknown life outside of their institutional setting, it was a period of enormous anxiety for them. As we prepared them for their transition to a new life, we would talk about how they were going to live in a place all their own when they moved away. We told them that they would have more privacy and shower curtains, dressers for their personal items and closets for their clothes, and even places where they could be alone if they wanted. We said that it would be a special place for them to live.

One of the residents, after giving this possibility a good deal of thought, pronounced that she wasn't simply going to a special place. "No," she said. "It's going to be a very special place because it's mine."

When the time came to choose a name for the new agency, we decided that calling it A Very Special Place was a perfect fit because we wanted the people who came there to know that they, too, would be going to a very special place created just for them.

Beginnings

In 1974, three professionals motivated by the lack of clinically focused programs for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities banded together to establish a multi-purpose center for Staten Islanders. With a firm belief in the benefits of the inter-disciplinary approach to treatment, Genevieve Benoit, Diane Buglioli and Susan Montella founded A Very Special Place, Inc.

Due to a funding crises in New York City and the lack of funding possibilities, in the mid 70's the agency acted as an advocacy and referral service through its membership in the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council. In April 1980 AVSP opened its first Day Treatment Center in New Dorp.

In the ensuing years AVSP has grown and adapted to meet the changing needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A special blend of participants, their families, and dedicated professionals work together to provide the highest quality programs and services that enhance and improve their quality of life and to empower them to lead fuller lives.

These Forty Years

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
<p style="text-align: center;">AVSP Founded as Advocacy and Referral Service</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AVSP Opens First Office on Joline Lane at the Down Syndrome Foundation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AVSP Starts Parents Focus Group</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AVSP Moves to Camp St. Edwards</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SIRRDC Approves AVSP for Adult Day Program</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Community Board 2 Approves Opening of New Dorp Day Treatment Center</p>

December 20, 1978

A Plan to open a training center on New Dorp Lane to serve mentally retarded and handicapped adults was approved last night by Community Board 2.

1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
<p style="text-align: center;">Board of Estimate Approves Funding for Community Center</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">New Dorp Day Treat- ment Center Opens</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community Center Opens</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A Very Special Auxil- iary Organized</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">First Annual Pioneer Luncheon Held</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carol Bellamy Re- ceives Inaugural Very Special Person Award</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Elizabeth Connelly Receives Very Special Person Award</p>

October 21, 1979

The Board of Estimate yesterday unanimously approved a \$70,000 contract that will enable a training center for mentally retarded and handicapped adults to get off the ground. A Very Special Place, a non-profit group, will open a day and evening training center for retarded and handicapped adults in the former RAP center building on New Dorp Lane.

1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
<p style="text-align: center;">Anthony R. Gaeta Receives Very Special Person Award</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TeleRide Ser- vice Begins Offering the Only Transpor- tation Service of Its Kind</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John Johnson & Geraldo Rivera Receive Very Special Person Award</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Great Kills Day Treatment Center Opens</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John J. Marchi Receives Very Special Person Award</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Seaview Center Opens</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Senior Care and Activity Center Opens City's First Specialized Senior's Programs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Robert A. Straniere Receives Very Spe- cial Person Award</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Willowbrook Officially Closes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Leonard D. Murphy Receives Very Special Person Award</p>

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
William P. Bozza Receives Very Special Person Award AVSP's First Newsletter: A Very Special Newsletter is published	1 st Annual Special Strokes for Special Folks Golf Outing Ralph J. Lamberti Receives Very Special Person Award DDPC Grant Awarded for Senior Integration Project	Harry P. Doherty Receives Very Special Person Award	Employment Train- ing Alternatives Supported Employment Opens Comprehensive Case Management Opens Community Board 2 Approves Two AVSP Group Homes	Residential Services Begin Supportive Apart- ments Open Hylan Residence Opens Benton Residence Opens 1 st Family Consumer Circle Group Meeting College of Staten Island Moves to Willowbrook Campus

January 22, 1992

Community Board 2 last night voted resoundingly in favor of two group homes in Dongan Hills and Grasmere after an impassioned public session. Both homes would be operated by A Very Special Place, a New Dorp based not-for-profit organization, and monitored by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Monsignor John Servodidio, pastor of St. Joseph's R.C. Church in Rosebank, compared prejudice against retarded people to prejudice against any minority group. "If you're not a believer, they have a Constitutional right to live where they want to live. We have a responsibility to protect this right because, remember; when one person loses a right all of our rights are in jeopardy..."

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
AVSP Celebrates 20 th Anniversary Community Center International Pen Friends Begin Corre- sponding Residential Habilita- tion Program Starts	Case Management Open House Held	AVSP Celebrates Empowerment of Pioneer Luncheon Senior Network Day Habilitation Begins	Guy V. Molinari Re- ceives Very Special Person Award Pre-Vocational Day Habilitation Program Starts AVSP Feature on Cable Television's Disabled Hotline	American Golf Corpo- ration Receives Very Special Person Award "Planning For The Future" Workshop Held



1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Quintard Center Opens AVSP returns to Cable TV on Disabled Hotline Weekend Respite Services Begins AVSP Celebrates 25 Years of Service 10 th Annual Special Strokes for Special Folks Golf Outing	AVSP goes online with new website	Glenwood Residence Opens	Great Kills Center begins offering Day Habilitation Services	634 New Dorp Lane breaks ground AVSP opens After School Program at Quintard Center

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
15 th Annual Special Strokes for Special Folks Golf Outing	New Dorp and Great Kills Day Programs move to the New Dorp Center @ 634 New Dorp Lane	Amboy Residence Opens Creative Arts Network opens at Snug Harbor Teen Weekend Respite opens at Quintard Center	A Reel Special Event was held as part of the SIFilm Festival @ SI Academy New Dorp Center participants join the New Dorp Community Garden	Jefferson Residence Opens

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
AF Bennett Spa and Wellness Center hosts fundraiser that benefits AVSP CAN Artist wins F.E.G.S. 2009 Annual Haym Salomon Arts Awards Competition	New Dorp Supported Apartments Open	Harvest Café Opens Executive Office Moves to 49 Cedar Grove Avenue	Hurricane Sandy hits Staten Island affecting multiple AVSP locations—over 1 million in damages AVSP hosts disaster relief effort @ Cedar Grove Avenue AVSP restores services in record time despite Hurricane	AVSP restored to 100% on 1 year Anniversary of Hurricane Sandy Dos Dudes Productions approaches AVSP for filming opportunity. CAN Artist wins F.E.G.S. 2009 Annual Haym Salomon Arts Awards Competition

Today

2014
"Bad Hurt" filming at AVSP 25th Annual Special Strokes for Special Folks Golf Outing

Today AVSP operates a range of programs and services addressing the needs of over 1,000 individuals. Since 1980, the agency has maintained certified settings with both OPWDD and NYCMHMRAS. It has been the professional reputation and commitment of the agency to provide the highest quality of care while addressing identified programs/issues with the same intent of striving to continually improve peoples' lives.

At A Very Special Place, Inc. participants, their families and advocates join with staff to inspire focused services and a caring atmosphere. Through a system of comprehensive, yet individually tailored services, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are assisted in meeting their immediate needs, as well as defining their future goals and dreams.



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Staff & Volunteers

A Very Special Place, Inc. employs over 315 staff members from all appropriate fields including medicine, nursing, psychology, social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy and speech therapy. In addition, the Agency employs a staff of teaching and direct care personnel who have a wide range of activity specialties to provide training. Presently over 96% of those employed by AVSP are Staten Islanders. Approximately 40 volunteers contribute their time to the Agency throughout the year, serving as escorts on day trips, on advisory panels and assisting with fundraising projects and special events.

A Very Special Place, Inc.—Statement of Activities

Year ended June 30,	2014
Program Revenue	
Fee for service revenue	\$ 15,906,893.00
Program Contracts with government agencies	\$ 640,251.00
Client fees	\$ 684,923.00
Contributions and fundraising activities	\$ 63,646.00
Special events, net of expenses of \$32,694, \$35,560, \$45,775 and \$38,482 respectively	\$ 101,667.00
Interest income	\$ 3,424.00
Other revenue	\$ 153,096.00
Total Program Revenue	\$ 17,553,900.00
Expenses	
Program Expenses:	
Teleride Program	\$ 167,502.00
Residential Programs	\$ 6,076,716.00
Day habilitation programs	\$ 6,068,120.00
Employment, training and support services	\$ 2,581,377.00
Total Program Expenses	\$ 14,893,715.00
Supporting Services	
Fundraising	\$ 84,028.00
Management and General	\$ 2,218,100.00
Total Supporting Services	\$ 2,302,128.00
Total Expenses	\$ 15,251,772.00
Excess (deficiency) of support and revenue over expenses	\$ 2,302,128.00
Extraordinary Items:	
Loss on extinguishment of debt	\$ -
Contributions received related to damages from Superstorm Sandy	\$ -
Recovery of funds related to damages from Superstorm Sandy	\$ (150,748.00)
Loss from impairment of assets related to Superstorm Sandy	\$ (8,543.00)
	\$ (159,291.00)
Change in net assets	\$ 198,766.00
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 5,910,144.00
Net assets, end of year	\$ 6,108,910.00

AVSP Service Location Information

AVSP Executive Offices	49 Cedar Grove Avenue
Residential Services	Staten Island, NY 10306 718.987.1234
New Dorp Lane Habilitation Services	634 New Dorp Lane
Milton Avenue Habilitation Services	Staten Island, NY 10306 718.351.6129
After School Program	55 Quintard Street
Employment Training Alternatives	Staten Island, NY 10305
Community Center	718.979.4744
Recreation/Respite Services	
Residential Habilitation	
Senior Network	
Service Coordination	
TeleRide	
Weekend Respite	
Teen Weekend Respite	694 New Dorp Lane
Creative Arts Network	Staten Island, NY 10306 347-857-6888
Harvest Café	

For detailed information about the programs and services offered at A Very Special Place, Inc. please visit our Web site at www.avspny.org.

A Very Special Place, Inc. is registered with the New York State Office of Charities Registration and has received a 501(c)(3) tax determination status from the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit agency. Contributions made to AVSP are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed under state and federal laws.

A Very Special Place, Inc.
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