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(Officers are current as of June 30, 2013)

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Front row left to right: Carol Neiger, Stacy Brown, William Mack, Elaine D. Cottey, Joanna Horsnail, Jay L. Burkett, Ellen Garber Bronfeld

Not pictured: Eric T. Gastevich, Brian Bulger, Joseph M. Levy, M.D., Daniel K. Sabol

Editorial: Sharon Honaker
Photography: David Kindler and Jason Geil | Chicago PhotoPress
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Dear Friends of Anixter Center:

Soaring to Success—those words form the foundation of the Anixter Center logo. They also describe the essence of what we strive to do every day.

While the primary focus is always on helping our participants soar, it is important that every program and every person associated with Anixter Center also strive to reach new heights. Together we can achieve so much more than we can individually.

I am pleased to say in 2013 we all soared in many ways. Across the organization, programs and services were created or expanded to help people with disabilities and related challenges have brighter lives. Our volunteers donated an extraordinary number of hours, helping participants and staff. We forged key alliances with other organizations so that we could reach more children, teens and adults. We worked even smarter, using our resources wisely.

Most important, our participants set and met an array of personal goals. They found jobs, made great strides in living more independently and learned new skills, from how to use iPads to performing in dance concerts.

It is thanks to our very generous donors, supporters, volunteers and the public in general that we were able to achieve so much. The time, talents and treasures given throughout the year were unprecedented. In particular, we were fortunate to have Anton Valukas and Dan Reidy as co-chairs of our Soaring to Success benefit. Thanks to their exceptional leadership, $522,820 was raised, shattering our goal.

In the following pages you’ll discover the many ways we soared this year, often told through our participants’ own stories because it is their successes that really count.

Jeff is making the most of a second chance to change his life. A recovering alcoholic who quit drinking once before but relapsed, Jeff came to Anixter Center’s Addiction Recovery for the Deaf (ARD) program looking for a fresh start. He found it. Through ARD’s counseling sessions and sober leisure activities, Jeff learned to stay focused on his recovery. He also learned to take responsibility. “I had to admit my problems before I could solve them,” he said, using American Sign Language.

Jeff credits ARD and his counselor with making all the difference this time around. Although he has graduated from the program, Jeff stays in touch—he knows keeping his recovery a top priority is critical to staying sober. He is also giving back by mentoring others in the recovering Deaf community.

Thank you to all who make our work possible. With your confidence and generosity, we are all soaring together. I look forward with great anticipation to 2014.

Kevin Limbeck
President and Chief Executive Officer
Anixter Center
Anixter Center is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the Chicago area serving people of all ages with disabilities and related challenges. Each year Anixter Center and its three divisions—CALOR, Chicago Hearing Society (CHS) and Lekotek—help more than 7,300 children, teens and adults by providing residential, educational, employment, socialization and health services.

What makes us truly unique are the array of services we offer plus our ability to help people at every stage of life—children, teens, young adults and older adults.

As the parent organization, Anixter Center itself provides a broad range of programs for those who have physical, developmental, cognitive, psychiatric or sensory disabilities. These Anixter Center programs include: a literacy program for adults with disabilities; 24-hour supervised residential homes; substance use disorder programs for those who are deaf; and employment programs to help people with disabilities find jobs. And there are many more programs that support people with disabilities in a variety of ways.

In addition to the programs provided by Anixter Center, CALOR, Chicago Hearing Society and Lekotek offer numerous services.

**CALOR**

Within the Anixter Center family, CALOR serves people of all backgrounds with disabilities. But since its founding, it has built a special niche supporting people of color on Chicago’s west side, offering hope to those living with HIV/AIDS and other health-related disabilities. In addition to its signature HIV/AIDS prevention services, CALOR provides residential services, substance abuse education, case management and prevention services as well as its Employment to Independence Program.

**CHS**

Another member of the Anixter Center family, Chicago Hearing Society (CHS) supports deaf and hard of hearing people of all ages in a variety of ways, most prominently through its Hearing Health Clinic, which is open to all, and its Hearing Aid Bank, which offers reconditioned hearing devices on a sliding fee scale. CHS also offers Interpreter Services and domestic violence and victim assistance programs for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, among other services.

**Lekotek**

Lekotek, the third member of the Anixter Center family, works primarily with young and school-age children with disabilities and their families. Using therapeutic-based play techniques and a toy lending library, Lekotek helps children learn key life skills and connect with family while enjoying the many benefits of play. Lekotek holds workshops and seminars for professionals who work with children with disabilities and has also formed strategic partnerships with members of the toy industry.

Together, Anixter Center, CALOR, CHS and Lekotek offer 34 programs at 35 locations, stretching from Zion to Chicago.
Those We Serve

Our program participants span the age spectrum, from birth to 90+. They represent all racial and ethnic backgrounds and come from all educational backgrounds. Most have at least one disability (physical, cognitive, developmental, sensory, psychiatric or medical-related), and many have more than one.

While Anixter Center and its divisions serve people of all income levels, many have incomes that are below the poverty line.

No matter what the age, background or income, we offer everyone individualized services tailored to his or her needs. The goal is always the same: to help each person lead as full and as independent a life as possible.

Those four words sum up simply, but eloquently, some of life’s most essential elements. They also touch at the heart of how Anixter Center seeks to help our participants soar each and every day. As the parent organization, Anixter Center offers its own array of programs and services, including housing and residential support, educational services, inside and outside employment opportunities and community support and leisure activities.

The range of programs is wide, reflecting the needs of those we serve. Within Anixter Center, for example, you will find:

- a program that helps adults with disabilities explore and become a part of their communities
- a revenue-generating packaging business that employs Anixter Center participants, teaching them job skills
- a school for students, age 6-21, with disabilities
- employment programs that help people with disabilities prepare for and find jobs
- the only free literacy program in Chicago focusing on adults with disabilities
- a program that helps those with traumatic brain injuries rebuild their lives and reconnect with families
- programs to help people with disabilities recover from substance use disorders
- 24-hour supervised residences for those with disabilities
- respite support for caregivers

Throughout FY 2013, Anixter Center clients, volunteers, donors and staff combined talents, time and treasure to soar in many directions, from learning to performing and working to playing. Whether it was going on adventures with the new Adventure Club, forming critical alliances with sister organizations or setting and achieving personal goals, the year was full of accomplishments.
Early in the year, the Anixter Center literacy program was renamed the Jack Ehrlich Literacy Program in honor of long-time board member and volunteer (now honorary board member) Jack Ehrlich. Jack’s dedication to Anixter Center began in the 1950s when he first started volunteering here. Through the years he tirelessly served Anixter Center in numerous ways, but the literacy program was particularly close to his heart.

Created 20 years ago, the Anixter Center literacy program continues to be the only Chicago area literacy program that focuses on the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. The program is supported by volunteers who give of their time to help students reach their goals, whether that goal is to improve their reading, to complete job applications or to prepare to take the GED test.

The literacy program continued to grow in 2013, serving almost 30 percent more students than the previous year. In total, 70 volunteers gave more than 2,000 hours of their time to help students improve their lives through literacy.

As an offshoot of the Jack Ehrlich Literacy Program, Anixter Center offered in FY 2013 Chicago’s only deaf literacy program. Designed exclusively for those who are deaf, this unique program relied on the generosity of volunteer tutors to share their time and expertise to help students learn.

“Anixter Center gave me a new life. Now I can tell my son you are going to college.”

—FLOYD, JACK EHRLICH LITERACY PROGRAM STUDENT

Serving locally and thinking globally, Anixter Center’s Packaging Services went international in FY 2013. For 53 years, Packaging Services has been providing packaging and assembly services for a variety of small and large clients headquartered in the United States, including Nordstrom, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and Comcast. For much of its history, it has been able to grow revenues year over year. This fiscal year, it generated revenues of just over $1.3 million, up from $1 million the year before.
Helping to drive that revenue growth is a new client from Canada—Sensio, based in Montreal. This is the first time Packaging Services has worked for a client with headquarters in another country. Among other products, Sensio sells coffee and tea products at large U.S. retail stores.

Looking for a local packaging service for its coffee flavors, Sensio did an Internet search and located Anixter Center. Their first order involved packaging 40,000 single-serve containers of coffee. They have since come back with a reorder for 80,000 units and have inquired about a much larger order that would potentially be sold through an online shopping network.

“Whatever needs to be done, I’m happy to do,” says Faye, who has worked at various jobs within Packaging Services for eight years.

That willing attitude coupled with her conscientiousness and quick smile made Faye an easy choice when it came time to staff the receptionist desk in the remodeled back lobby at the 2032 N. Clybourn Ave. building.

Faye, who has a mild intellectual disability, starts work at 7 a.m. at the receptionist desk and then, when her shift ends, moves into the packaging area to work there. She enjoys the extra responsibility of working at the receptionist desk and is especially proud of being able to handle the sometimes chaotic back lobby with everyone arriving at about the same time. In particular, she takes great pride in making sure everyone gets to where they are supposed to be going.
Residential Services soared as well during FY 2013—most notably when residents across multiple Anixter Center homes joined together to form the Adventure Club. Run by residents who range in age from 18 to 60, the goal of the Adventure Club is to help club members realize their “bucket list” dreams. One of their first outings was to see a White Sox game. They’ve also been to a monster truck rally, a concert at Allstate Arena in Rosemont and Polar Adventure Days at Northerly Island.

Club members are in charge when it comes to selecting outings, raising the money needed and deciding how to spend that money. While residential staff are on hand at meetings and outings, they are strictly advisors. Club members run the show.

Learning to work together to set priorities and accomplish goals are two of the many benefits of being part of the club. It is also a chance for members to see new places and meet new people. Next up on their agenda is a holiday outing and then some serious fund-raising. They want to go camping but need to raise funds to purchase the equipment.

“It’s great to make new friends and go to cool places.”
—Ben Scott, Adventure Club President
Early in 2013, the New Focus program took their dance show on the road, performing for students and teachers at Columbia College. One of only a few free rehabilitation programs in Chicago helping people with traumatic brain injuries put their lives back together, New Focus offers a full range of services, including dance movement therapy. Dance movement rebuilds connections between the mind and body and helps improve strength, coordination and balance. It also fosters teamwork and lets the spirit soar.

For the New Focus performers, the performance was a chance to share their accomplishments with a live audience.

In turn, students and others in the audience saw what dance movement therapy is all about and heard firsthand from the New Focus performers how this therapy has helped them.

“My short-term memory is better because I don’t ask the same question ten times before I remember the answer.”
—Qawwee, New Focus

No one knows exactly how Qawwee suffered his brain injury, but it was followed by a stroke and the damage was significant. He did not interact with others, avoided eye contact, was agitated and couldn’t always recognize his daughters and mother. When he talked, his words were confused. That was three years ago when he first came to New Focus.

Those three years have been filled with hard work, but Qawwee is making progress, and both he and his mother are thankful. He now remembers family members, initiates conversations and looks people in the eye with confidence. In January he performed with others from New Focus at Columbia College. He’s even set a goal of getting his GED and studying architecture.

“I thank God for New Focus. As his mother/caregiver it has been the most difficult task I have experienced in my life. New Focus has made this journey a lot smoother,” says Linda, Qawwee’s mother.
Throughout the year, participants and their unlimited creativity soared as part of the creative arts therapy groups offered by Community Resources & Support (CRS). Good for the soul and the body, these popular art, dance/movement, music and drama programs build self-esteem, pride, dexterity and balance, just to mention a few of the many benefits.

Held in an “open studio” format, the arts therapy groups let each person choose which art to do. Some spend their entire day doing several forms of art while others get involved in one or two. For many, the highlight is seeing their art displayed throughout Anixter Center or out in the community. In the case of drama, dance/movement or music, the climax is performing for live audiences.

A key reason participants soar so high is that Anixter Center is one of only a few organizations serving people with disabilities to offer such an extensive set of creative arts therapy groups led by a dedicated staff, all with creative art therapy degrees.

Liz never knew she could string beads for jewelry let alone make money doing it. But last winter she was selling her beaded necklaces to help raise money for CRS special events and outings.

Dexterity isn’t easy for Liz, whose hands are severely affected by cerebral palsy. But with a mantra of “just try it,” she keeps conquering challenges, including recently learning needlepoint in arts therapy. “I try to encourage everyone,” Liz says. “I’m very determined, and if I want to do something, I’m going to do it. I tell others they can do things, too.”

Liz is one busy person. Besides her art, she escorts peers around Anixter Center, is part of the Recycling Club and is on the Human Rights Committee. She also is learning job skills through CRS’s Vocational Enhancement services.

While Liz enjoys her many roles, her favorite is being mom. “I keep working and learning at Anixter Center so I can make my son’s life better.”
Forming two key alliances were important milestones for Day Mental Health this year. The first new alliance—a collaboration with Thresholds—will help more Day Mental Health participants find jobs in the community. Thresholds, also a nonprofit in Chicago, helps those with mental illness reclaim their lives. Working together, Day Mental Health and Thresholds will be able to find more employment opportunities for participants and provide more counseling to help those who have jobs keep them.

A second significant alliance was formed when Northeastern Illinois University reached out to Day Mental Health for internship opportunities for its students. This has become a win-win for both organizations as the students get valuable field experience and Day Mental Health has extra resources to assist staff.

“Our were things that I didn’t even know I could do until I tried them.” –Liz, CRS

“I want to contribute to myself and to the world,” –Paula says of her goal to get her GED

About two years ago, Paula decided it was time to set some goals. As part of the Day Mental Health program she’d been learning food service skills working in the Anixter Center Canteen. Her dream was to become a waitress, but first she needed her GED. So she moved taking the GED test to the top of her list of goals and began studying.

Working with Lloyd, a volunteer tutor from Anixter Center’s Jack Ehrlich Literacy program, Paula has conquered math, science, reading, social studies, writing and the U.S. Constitution. And, after many months of studying, she has taken the GED test. Although the results won’t be known for a while, she isn’t worried, preferring to bask in the personal satisfaction of setting and reaching goals. “I’m very proud of myself and all who helped me get so far,” she says. “I’m on top of the world.”
For CALOR, 2013 was a year to continue to expand the range of people it serves and the services it offers.

For almost 25 years, CALOR (which means “warmth” in Spanish) has offered hope and help to people in Chicago’s Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Belmont Cragin neighborhoods. From a grassroots organization started to help Latinos impacted by HIV/AIDS, CALOR has grown into a well-respected provider of services to people with disabilities and related challenges on Chicago’s west side.

In 2013, CALOR continued its efforts to expand its client base beyond its Latino roots, reaching out in particular to the African American community. Those efforts paid off with the number of African American men and women served growing to 20 percent of CALOR’s clients.

Partnering with other organizations, CALOR also extended its geographical reach by offering key services at two new locations. In January, CALOR partnered with Prius Urgent Care to provide free rapid HIV testing at the Prius Urgent Care Center (3650 W. Armitage Ave.). In April, CALOR began offering free rapid HIV testing at the Consulate General of Mexico (204 S. Ashland Ave.).

Also during 2013, CALOR organized the National Latino AIDS Awareness Day Health Fair in October, bringing together 21 community-based organizations to participate. In November, it hosted the Post-XIX International AIDS Conference Hub—Turning the Tide Together at the Local Level.

“When CALOR opened the door for me and I got the job.”
—Fernando, Employment to Independence Program
Chicago Hearing Society

As it closes in on 100 years of service to deaf and hard of hearing people, Chicago Hearing Society (CHS) made several changes during 2013 to ensure it could keep providing clients with the best possible care well into its next century of service.

One major milestone was changing the name of the Audiology Clinic to the Hearing Health Clinic. The new name better communicates, in consumer-friendly terms, the services the clinic offers and also makes the critical connection that hearing is an important component of overall health.

An important part of the Hearing Health Clinic is the Hearing Aid Bank, which accepts donations of hearing aids, refurbishes them and then provides them on a sliding fee scale to clients who would not otherwise be able to afford them.

To improve efficiency, CHS began in 2013 the shift from paper to electronic patient records, which are quicker to access and update—a great example of working smarter.

As it has been for several years, CHS’s Adult Role Models in Education of the Deaf (ARMED) program continued to be very popular throughout 2013. Through this program, deaf and hard of hearing adult volunteers travel to schools to share their challenges, successes and motivating life stories with deaf and hard of hearing students.

Everyone needs a dream and every dream deserves a chance. That’s why over the past seven years Chef Matt, a deaf volunteer in CHS’s ARMED program, has made more than 70 presentations to grade school students. He knows all about following dreams. He gave up a successful stint in education to follow his dream of being a professional chef. His culinary career keeps him busy, but every year he finds time to go back to the classroom to share his story with students.

With a flair for spicing up his presentations with cooking demonstrations, Matt has become one of the most requested volunteers in the ARMED program. He enjoys the popularity because it means he’s achieving his goal—showing students that nothing is impossible and they should follow their dreams just as he did. He also hopes they see that cooking is fun!

“My goal is that students learn nothing is impossible. That they feel empowered, capable of doing what they dream of doing.” –Chef Matt, ARMED Volunteer
National Lekotek Center

Lekotek is constantly looking for opportunities to share its therapeutic-based play expertise with three key audiences: children with special needs and their families; professionals who work with children who have disabilities; and members of the toy industry.

In 2013, Lekotek expanded its presence among all three groups.

In January, Lekotek launched “Sensory Storytime for Children of All Abilities.” This new outreach initiative, being piloted at several Chicago suburban libraries, is for children age 3 to 8, their parents or caregivers and their siblings. Lekotek’s play specialists lead the programs, designed for children with disabilities but open to children of all abilities. Emphasizing inclusion, programs focus on vocabulary development and making reading fun.

Throughout the year, Lekotek continued its training services for parents, teachers and professionals by offering monthly webinars hosted by prominent professionals and thought leaders from the special needs community. Supported by social media marketing, the webinars continue to grow in popularity each year. This year there was a 200 percent increase in the number of people participating.

Not surprisingly, Lekotek has earned a national reputation for its work with children who have disabilities and has become a resource for toy manufacturers and retailers, helping them with all areas of production, from idea generation through post-production evaluation, including training and sales initiatives. In 2013, Lekotek added 22 new clients to its industrial roster.

“For the first 19 months of Emma’s life, there was no sign anything was wrong. She grew, laughed and played just like others her age. Then she lost interest in toys and the world around her. She wandered aimlessly; her giggling and smile were gone. Emma was diagnosed with Rett Syndrome, a neurodevelopment disorder that affects speech and motor functions.

Emma’s lack of interest in playing was heartbreaking for her parents. They knew she wasn’t getting the stimulation she needed, and, more important, they knew she wasn’t happy. When Emma stopped talking, her mom, Karen, no longer knew how to connect with her.

While there was a lot Emma’s parents didn’t understand, there was one thing they did know—she was being robbed of her childhood. Lekotek helped change that.

Lekotek’s play specialists showed Karen the toys Emma could enjoy and how to use the toys to play with her. Then, they helped the entire family reconnect with Emma through play.

Slowly Emma’s giggling has returned, and once again Karen hears her squeal with delight when playing.

“Lekotek has given Emma back her childhood and brought our whole family closer.” —Emma’s mom, Karen
“Through Lekotek, Emma has been given back the gift of play.” —Karen, 2-year-old Emma’s mom
This year’s *Soaring to Success*, Anixter Center’s annual Benefit for Ability, truly lived up to its name. The gala soared to new heights by raising $522,820 to support people with disabilities. The evening was a salute to volunteers everywhere and the critical work they do for so many organizations.

Held at the picturesque Winter Garden in the Harold Washington Library Center, *Soaring to Success* honored Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) for its 75-year commitment to volunteerism. Karen M. Atwood, BCBSIL president, accepted the award.

Despite being held on one of the rainiest days Chicago has ever seen, nothing dampened the enthusiasm of the large crowd. They were treated to an elegant dinner, followed by an inspirational program emceed by Rob Johnson of CBS-TV Channel 2 and featuring benefit co-chairs Anton R. Valukas, chairman, Jenner & Block, and Dan Reidy, partner-in-charge, Jones Day (Chicago).

The evening ended with a raffle of two round-trip tickets donated by American Airlines.
Financial Overview

Total Net Assets @ 6/30/2013  $23,358,069

**EXPENSES**

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Employers of People with Disabilities 2012-2013

American Greetings
Burger King
Carson Pirie Scott
Certifiq
Chase Bank
Chicago Carriage
Chicago Transit Authority
Chuck E. Cheese’s
College Pro Painters
DC Tricore Inc.
Department of Human Services
– Home Services
– Design Pac
Dunkin’ Donuts
Ela Public Library
Good To Go Fresh
Goodwill Great Lakes
Grand Prairie Transit
Help At Home Inc.
Helping Hands
Holiday Inn
Home Depot
ITW ChronoTherm
ITW Buildex
Jewel-Osco
– Chicago
– Deerfield
– Elk Grove Village
– Hoffman Estates
– Mount Prospect
– Schaumburg
Jiffy Lube
Kellogg’s Snacks
Key Lime Cove
Little Lady Fingers
LiveOps
Lovett Elementary School
Mandel, Lipton, Roseborough and Sharma, Ltd.
Mariano’s
McDonald’s
Meijer
– Niles
– Rolling Meadows
Menards
Munoz Inc.
Opportunity Secure Data
– Destruction
Portillo’s
Renaissance Hotel
RichLee Vans
Rocket Learning Inc.
SCR Medical Transportation
Securitas
Security Management Group
7-Eleven
Strack and Van Til
Target
– Arlington Heights
– Broadview
– Chicago
– Evanston
– Glenview
– Highland Park
– Rosemont
– Streamwood
Wal-Mart
– Antioch
– Chicago
– Crystal Lake
– Forest Park
– Niles
– Northlake
– Palatine
– Rolling Meadows
– Waukegan
Westfield Ford
XSport Fitness
– Chicago
– Mount Prospect
– Schaumburg
Youth Guidance

In-Kind Gifts 2012-2013

American Blues Theater
Midge B. Anixter
Dennis Aron
Artists Frame Service, Inc.
Susan Atkinson
Richard Bartley
Beamz Interactive, Inc.
Gail Bedessem
Richard Binder
Bottle & Bottega
Amy Bowers
Donna and Michael Brandwein
Rosie M. Burke
CannonDesign
Century Theatres Evanston
Jane Charney
Joe Chiappetta
Chicago Bears
Chicago Cubs
Chicago Flower Company
Chicago Sky
Chicago White Sox
Chicago’s Pizza
ComedySportz
Kathleen Cummings
Robin F. Davies
Dinkel’s
Divia Circle of Friends
Dr. R. Dykun
Mary Ann Einarson
Elmhurst Bicycle Club
El’s Kitchen
Executive Construction Inc.
Field Museum
Fireside Restaurant
Joan and Bob Fiske
Debra Foreman
Bruce Goldberg
Bill Grainge
Bruce Grossman
Anne C. Haffner
Donald Hechmann
Michael B. Herschberg
Barbara Howe
Jayson Home
Jet’s Pizza
Jewel Food Store
Laur Johnson
William Johnson
Jones Day
Martha Kaplan
Cynthia King
Vince Klepetka
Ralph V. Laviere, Jr.
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