

NEWSLETTER

NEW HORIZONS - BIG LAKES ANNUAL BANQUET



The Annual Banquet is one of Big Lakes' most anticipated events, bringing together clients, staff, donors, families, and community partners to celebrate the accomplishments, connections, and support that makes our mission possible. This year's *New Horizons* Annual Awards Banquet was held on Thursday, April 16th, 2026 at Blue Sage Barn at Prairiewood.

The evening began with a happy hour, where guests mingled while listening to live music performed by Grateful Dudes.

Tom Brungardt, Chair of Big Lakes Board of Directors, welcomed attendees and recognized the generous sponsors who made the event possible. Thank you again to Carpet One of Manhattan, Fox Home Innovations, KS StateBank, Central National Bank, Mark and Ann Knackendoffel, Schultz

Construction, and BHS Construction.

One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of the Client of the Year Awards, which honor individuals who have demonstrated exceptional personal growth and achievement. Recipients are nominated by staff then selected by their peers. This year, we proudly recognized:

Matthew Woellhof, 2026 Clay Center of the Year
Cedric Helms, 2026 Manhattan Client of the Year

Both recipients were celebrated with special video tributes and enthusiastic support from friends, family, and fellow clients as they accepted their awards. The banquet also provided an opportunity to recognize staff members celebrating milestone anniversaries and to honor the dedication they bring to Big Lakes each day.

YEARS OF SERVICE HONOREES

5 Years

Tari Slaight
Angie Tibbitts

10 Years

Craig McCormack
Stacy Sterling
Monica Tillman

15 Years

Kayla Howard
Amy Phillips
Melisa Reeder

30 Years

Michelle Crumpton
Phillip Korenek

We also recognized Jim Hart, who retired April 1st after more than 38 years of service. Lori Feldkamp shared remarks reflecting on Jim's lasting impact, leadership, and commitment to the organization throughout his career.

Jeff Oliphant, Chair of the Big Lakes Foundation Board, highlighted the Foundation's accomplishments over the past year. He shared updates on the progress of the 10 in 10 Endowment Campaign and the successful completion of the Raise the Roof Capital Improvement Campaign. He also recognized Foundation-supported initiatives, including DSP Appreciation Week and the Tuition Reimbursement Program.

Lori Feldkamp also presented a special tribute recognizing Tom Carlin and his retirement, celebrating his 30+ years serving on the board.

The evening concluded with remarks from Liz Holle, who reflected on her transition into the role of President and CEO following Lori Feldkamp's retirement. Holle spoke about organizational changes, ongoing challenges such as workforce recruitment and retention, and the many achievements of Big Lakes staff and the individuals we serve. She also recognized Jim Hart once more and welcomed Amy Phillips into her new leadership role, marking another important transition as Big Lakes looks toward the future.

The Big Lakes Annual Banquet served as a meaningful celebration of the people, partnerships, and accomplishments that continue to strengthen Big Lakes and expand opportunities for those we support.



GROW GREEN

Every year, Big Lakes participates in Grow Green Match Day hosted by the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation to raise funds. This year's event was held on Wednesday, April 22, at the Colony Square Atrium. Donations made during the event supported our "Big Improvement" campaign, helping fund important upgrades and enhancements to our group homes. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the 50% match provided through Grow Green Match Day, we raised an incredible **\$68,270**.

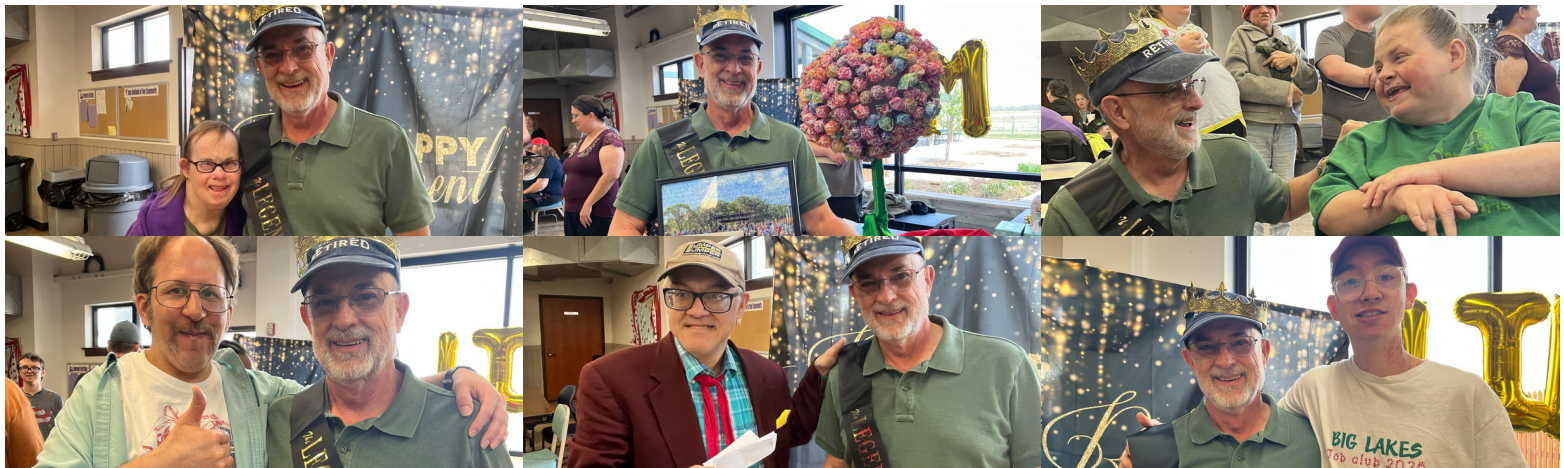
We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated, advocated, and helped make this campaign a success. Your support continues to make a lasting difference in the lives of the individuals we serve.

HOPPY EASTER

On April 5th, we had our Big Lakes Easter celebration! We hid eggs outside for our clients to find! Our clients could trade them for some chocolate or other goodies, generously donated by Barry's Drug Center.



JIM'S RETIREMENT



We had the honor of celebrating Jim and his incredible 38-year journey at Big Lakes. Starting his career working directly in the group homes, Jim rose through the organization and became the Chief Operations Officer, helping shape our residential and day services programs along the way. His leadership, dedication to staff, and advocacy has made a lasting impact at Big Lakes and the clients we serve.

CHICKENS



We had the opportunity to witness the transformation from egg to chicken! Clients and staff eagerly followed each stage of the journey, from incubating the eggs to welcoming the newly hatched chicks into the world. The chicks have now been transported to their new home at a coop on our farm. It was an exciting and educational experience for everyone involved!

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

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