

## Dimensions of living

# Spirit of serving community lives on

## Winters Bros. Center for Autism opens with ceremony, street renaming

The Winters Family Foundation held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the 14,000 square-foot Winters Center for Autism campus located at 92 Mahan Street, West Babylon, Wednesday, June 15. Over 200 guests gathered to celebrate the opening of the new state-of-the-art campus committed to job training, wellness and employment opportunities for those with autism.

The new state-of-the-art facility includes training spaces for employment in hospitality, food service, technology, horticulture, salon services and even a relaxation room. In addition to Nelly's Empanadas, the campus will be a host to Music Academy for Special Learners, Mike's Custom Kuts, Winters Community Connections and Winters Bros. Gym.

The Center will help to create jobs and provide job placement services for people with autism. The Center will also assist caring Long Island employers develop and implement job-training programs for adults with autism.

The unemployment rate for individuals with autism exceeds 90%. The Winters Center for Autism provides job services including job training, career planning, interview preparation, exploration of volunteer and educational opportunities, and employer assistance to develop easy to implement employment programs for people with autism. Jobs can give people a sense of fulfillment and purpose. Identifying businesses in the Long Island community who want to be a part of making a difference is the key to changing the landscape of unemployment for adults with autism.

The Transition Work Experience Program at Winters Center for Autism offers participants with autism ages 21+ the opportunity to learn the vocational, social and independent living skills important for employment



Cutting the ribbon at the grand opening of the Winters Center for Autism are (from left) Patrick Winters, Sean Winters and Michele Winters, with family and friends.

success. The program will offer hands-on skill development to harness the potential of each person and discover the job that may best fit his or her abilities.

The ceremony concluded with the street renaming and dedication ceremony in honor of Joe Winters, who passed away from COVID suddenly last year, for his devotion to the autism community. Mahan Street is now Joe Winters Way as a 'tribute to a man of honor and integrity who chose West Babylon as his place of business.' Adding to the celebration of this special day, June 15, 2022, was designated as Joe and Michele

Winters Day in the Town of Babylon and Suffolk County by the County Executive Steven Bellone.

Featured event speakers included Michele Winters, Founder, Winters Center for Autism; Patrick Winters, President of the Board, Winters Center for Autism; Christine Ponzio, Executive Director, Winters Center for Autism; Rich Schaffer, Babylon Town Supervisor; and Steve Bellone, Suffolk County Executive

Local businesses which supported the creation and development of the Winters Center for Autism include: John Cameron, Cameron Engineering; Alex Badalamenti, Bld

Architecture; Jeff Ditalia, Giampietro and Associates; Kevin Barry, United Service Workers Union; Long Island and New York Mechanical Contractors Association, Craig Schiavone; Gandy Schiavone, Sav Mor Mechanical; Ken Fulep and Rich Armellino, A&F Fire Protection; Mitch Cooper, Cooper Power and Lighting; John Guadagno, IBEW Local 25; Art Seeberger, FW Sims; John Savastano, All Island Excavating; Eugene Kempey, Kempey Engineering; and Phil DeBlasio, DeBlasio Builders.

For additional information on the Winters Center for Autism, call Chris Ponzio at (516) 301-3531.



Rich Schaffer, Town of Babylon Supervisor, presents a proclamation to Michele Winters, founder of the Winters Center for Autism, while Patrick Winters, President, Winters Center for Autism, and Christine Ponzio, Executive Director, Winters Center for Autism look on.



Street renaming and dedication ceremony in honor of Joe Winters.