



JIM Murray

## Our Vision

Our vision is a community where everyone is included and respected.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide services for people with disabilities and their families that enhance the quality of their lives.

 ***Annual Report***  
***2021*** 





*Photo: A beautiful sunrise on Winter day at our Route 13 location.*

## Board of Directors

Thomas Turck  
Executive Chair

Stephen Franco,  
Vice Chair

Stephen Geibel,  
Treasurer

Julie Campbell,  
Secretary

## Executive Staff

Ernest M. Dodge,  
President/CEO

Barbara A. Ackley,  
Executive Vice President

Karen Schuepbach,  
Vice President of Services

Judy Miller  
Director of Operations

Karen A. Morgan,  
Director of Information Technology

Kevin Burgher,  
Controller

Della Marshall,  
Director of Facilities & Maintenance

## Board Members

Jeffrey Armstrong

Jim Dempsey

Billi Gizzi

Michael Kilmer

Lenore LeFerve

William Murphy

Jim Nichols

Janet Oechsle

Garry VanGorder

## Honorary Board Members

Anthony Argentine

Karin Burgess

Seth Burgess

Stephen Compagni

Michael Chernago

John Folmer

Byron Horak

Edward Karsch

Thomas Meldrim

Floyd Moon

Stephen Pearsall

Wayne Piotti

Charles Spaulding

Roy Susskind

## Message from the President

Ernest M. Dodge,  
President/CEO



2021 brought JM Murray another year of working around the COVID-19 pandemic. Although vaccines were introduced and we had all hoped to put this behind us, along came the Delta and Omicron strains. As we had done in the previous year, we put our best foot forward and provided quality services to those in need.

Services began the year with a downturn in attendance as the Delta variant took hold. Unlike the previous year, we were able to provide services, but we were constrained by attendance both from the individuals we serve and also due to staffing shortages, that even today, still plague our industry. JM Murray invested in our employees to maintain attendance and supply the necessary and valued services to those in need. We remained diligent in our safety protocols and we are most proud to say not one case of COVID-19 was ever traced back to our company in 2020 or 2021.

Services overcame a slow start and quickly gained momentum as more and more individuals with disabilities sought JM Murray as their provider of choice. All our programs saw substantial growth from the previous year. We also continued to expand our Self-Direction Services to more and more regions throughout the state. The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities once again recognized us as a leading provider of quality services.

The bounce back of our business operations did not achieve the same successes as services. We shared the same frustrations as employers throughout the country of supply chain issues, high wages and lack of a workforce. We also encountered a large loss of experience within our company and industry do to planned retirements and unplanned vacancies. At the culmination of 2021, we had successfully filled the majority of openings and restructured our management team once again. The last, but most important, move being the promotion of Barbara Ackley to Executive Vice President. A role where she can apply her vast experience growing and mentoring our top-level management team while providing invaluable insight into our industry as we look forward to 2022.

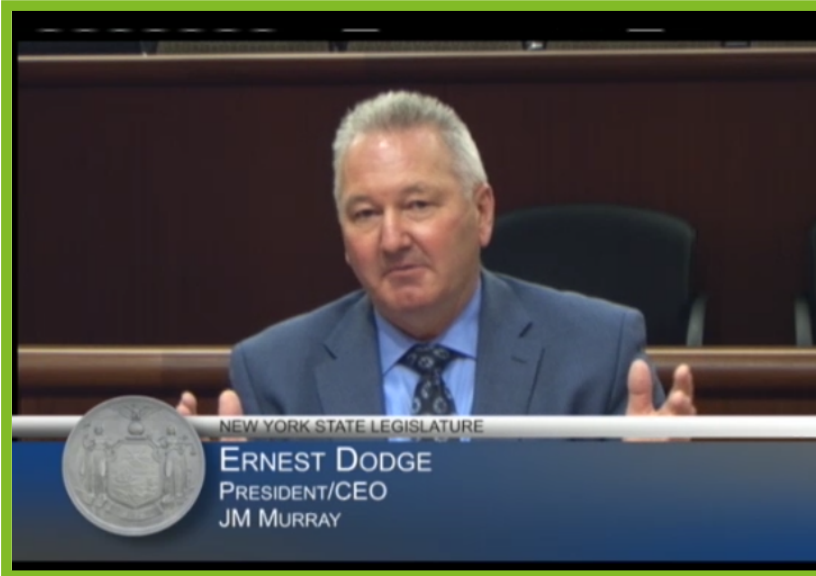
JM Murray has a great deal to celebrate from our 2021 year. We again provided a surplus that will allow us to continue to recognize our valued employees and to enhance the quality of services we provide to those in need. We are in the final stages of our compounding initiative at Rt. 13, the renovations of Bennie Road are nearly complete, and the building is fully occupied.

*Photo: JM Murray President/CEO Ernest Dodge leads Congresswoman Claudia Tenney on a tour of the Rt. 13 work area.*



## Message from the President

Ernest M. Dodge,  
President/CEO



In 2021, JM Murray continued to be a loud voice and advocate for individuals with disabilities who seek employment. In

October, we presented to the NYS Assembly our position in favor of Section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act. We continue to be vocal advocates both on the state and federal levels and we successfully raised almost \$21,000 for future advocacy.

Looking forward to 2022, we hope to finally put the pandemic behind us. We expect to complete our compounding initiative and we will continue to seek growth opportunities both in services and business operations whenever and wherever we can. This year will be our 56th year of providing quality services, employment, and vocational training to individuals and families to enhance their lives. With a strong leadership team, Board of Directors, and compassionate workforce, we will continue to excel.

## Services Division

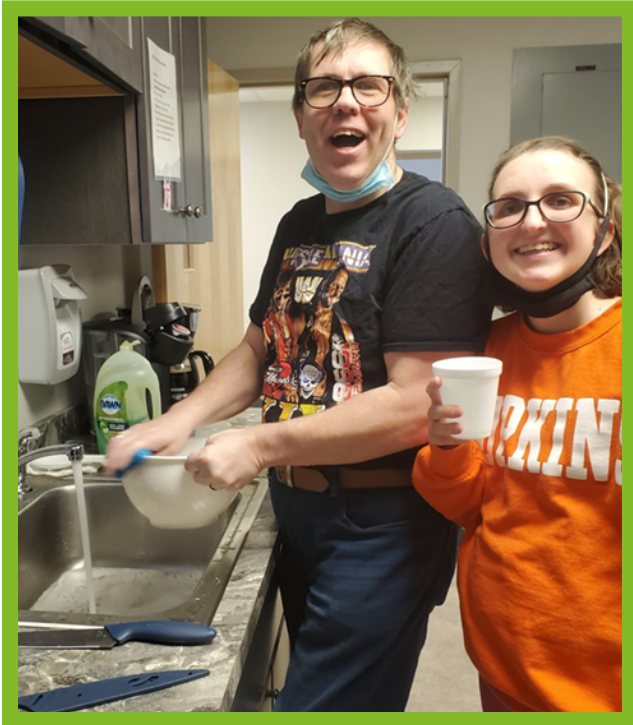
Day Habilitation has seen changes over this past year that have affected both the staff and the individuals we serve. Despite the number of changes, thanks to the dedicated staff, our services continue to be top notch and a true benefit to the individuals and their families.

The biggest change was the move to our new facility on Bennie Rd. Although there were many questions, concerns and unknowns, the move over went smoothly and the staff and individuals settled in and services continued to operate. This was a huge change for many of the individuals that reported to the West Road building for over 25 years. Their routines, their space, their comfort and expectations were all about to change. Thanks to the caring staff, the move was an overall success. The staff and the individuals



*Photo (TOP): President Dodge speaks in Albany on the importance of Section 14c. (BOTTOM): Karen Schuepbach presents Jason with his Certificate of Participation for his efforts in the JM Murray Olympics held at Bennie Rd.*





will benefit from updated equipment, increased space, and new furniture throughout the building and the team rooms.

Although it has been over a year since Day Habilitation resumed services following the pandemic shutdown, several of the individuals we served prior to COVID-19 have not or will not be returning due to health risks. However, over the past year we received several referrals and welcomed several new individuals seeking Day Habilitation Services. We welcomed 9 new individuals and have additional referrals to continue increasing the number of individuals with disabilities we serve.

COVID-19 impacted the numerous activities we participated in at community establishments. Unfortunately, many are still unable to allow us back due to their continued pandemic protocols. Luckily, our Service Development Specialist was able to seek out and secure new placements to offer our individuals including The Cat Program in Moravia, Locke Fire hall, Blodgett Mills Church, Cortland Commerce Building, as well as, packing and delivering close to 1,000 hygiene kits for Guthrie Hospital. Our site-based activities expanded as well. A daily activity has been planned each morning and afternoon for individuals to join in the commons area for social experiences, interactions and enjoyable activities such as BINGO, Arts and Crafts, cooking & baking activities, exercise, and many more.

Day Habilitation Services, as always, continues to offer supports for people to engage in person centered activities, community involvement and goal development in a healthy and safe environment. In 2021, the Community Habilitation program experienced significant growth despite the continued challenges associated with COVID-19. There was an increased focus on expanding to counties outside of Cortland County and the program welcomed seven new members from Tompkins County in 2021. Staffing was another priority this year and Community Habilitation saw its highest staffing numbers in the history of the program. This lead to shorter wait lists and faster turnaround times for new intakes. For the first time since the pandemic began, Community Habilitation was able to resume group activities. Community Habilitation offered two art groups, a cooking class, a walking group, and a manicure group on a weekly basis. Towards the beginning of the year, West Road services were moved over to Bennie Road and this had a positive impact on the Community Habilitation program. The new building provided the space for

*Photos: Cooking class helps individuals work on various skills needed in the kitchen. That includes shopping, meal prep, & clean-up.*





Community Habilitation to have its very own multipurpose room, which the program had never had before. The multipurpose room has been a popular choice of location for many individuals' services. Individuals have enjoyed playing games, doing puzzles, hosting holiday parties, participating in the art and manicure groups, utilizing the computers and treadmill, and having the opportunity to interact and establish friendships with other members of the program. Both staff and the individuals they serve have enjoyed personalizing this space and have regularly changed out the wall and door décor, as well as, using the space to display craft projects and picture collages of various Community Habilitation activities.

## Employment Success Stories

In the summer of 2021, Susan began receiving services at JM Murray and she indicated that she was motivated to improve her mental health, her life, and to become a meaningful member of the community. Susan was a dedicated mother and homemaker but her mental health was suffering. Years of childhood trauma and the tragic loss of a family member resulted in poor mental health for Susan. She has a passion for helping and communicating with others and strives to develop positive relations with customers and co-workers at Cortland ReUse, where she volunteers. Through volunteering, her well-being, mental health, and sense of self-worth have all improved and she hopes to be hired one day. Susan's enthusiasm and compassion for her work and those around her have all been noted by her supervisors and co-workers. With the support from her team at JM Murray, and the peer support of the ACE group, Susan has been able to heal and move forward in her life. Keep up the great work Susan!

In December 2019, Larry started working at JM Murray where he completed packaging and assembly tasks and was paid based on his productivity. Since joining JM Murray, Larry received daily support with developing the work skills he needed to be successful in a community job setting. In April



*Photo (TOP): Lummel and Patrol Officer Bush gave a demonstration of the police work they do together over at Bennie Rd. (BOTTOM): Susan is seen happily volunteering at Cortland ReUse in 2021.*

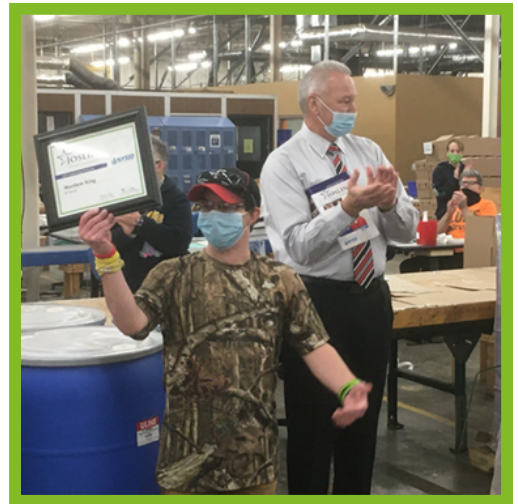
2021, Larry started receiving Community Based pre-vocational Services and experienced a wide variety of community-based work experiences to further develop his work skills and interests. One of the businesses was Tractor Supply in Cortland. Tractor Supply's management staff quickly recognized Larry's skills and his ability to perform the job well. The manager felt he would be a great addition to her customer service team and approached Larry, and his support staff, about offering him a paid position with the retail chain. Larry quickly said "YES" and his support team started the process of bridging Larry over to Supported Employment service. Larry has been employed at Tractor Supply since November 2021 as a part-time crew member. He takes great pride in his work and always gives 100% while providing excellent customer service. Congratulations Larry!

## 2021 Joslin Award Winner - Matt King

Matt King began working on NYSID contracts at JM Murray in 2009, when he was 19 years old. At that time, Matt was an energetic teenager with a BIG personality, outgoing and fun-loving! He is now 30 years old, still works on NYSID contracts at JM Murray, and continues to have the spunk and energy of his teenage self.

He was diagnosed with a severe sensorineural hearing loss in both ears at the age of 2. His hearing is very limited, and even with hearing aids, he relies on limited American Sign Language, lip reading and gestures to understand and communicate with others. Matt is blind in his left eye and has limited sight in his right causing him to wear glasses to correct and protect his vision. He is also diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and ADHD. He has a loving extended family with whom he spends much time. He is an outdoorsy type of guy who loves all kinds of sports, action-packed movies, and World Wrestling Entertainment. Having all that energy has to go somewhere, and we quickly discovered that Matt's energy could be channeled very productively. He is a dependable and enthusiastic worker who learns tasks by demonstration and is always eager to learn new ones. Matt's physical and intellectual disabilities are not deterrents or limitations to his potential. A skilled worker, he is assigned to work on a variety of jobs, which include packaging toothbrushes and toothpaste for NYSID contracts.

Being nominated through NYSID's Joslin Awards Program makes Matt feel happy and important. "I like the work I do at JM Murray, and it makes me feel good that people feel I deserve receiving this award," he said. One of Matt's most admirable qualities is his optimistic outlook on life. He is always in a great mood with a smile on his face. He's an inspiration to others and finds happiness doing the things he loves to do. "Disability" is just not a word in Matt's vocabulary.



*Photo (TOP): Matt receives his award and praise from his co-workers on the work floor.*

*(BOTTOM): Matt, Cathy Peterson, and President Dodge pose for a photo after Matt received his Joslin Award.*



## Business Division



2021 was a challenging year to say the least. Overall, sales continued to fall short of pre-pandemic levels, and to further complicated matters, the availability of a workforce combined with increases in material costs and supply chain issues, created a frustrating year. Essentially, we worked harder and smarter to get product out the door at reduced margins to

meet our customer's demands.

The silver lining of 2021 was that it forced us all to re-evaluate our book of business and our processes. The business team took a hard look at our products and customers with the goal of maximizing margins. In many cases, we were able to find efficiencies within our operations that reduced lead times and increased our margins. In some cases, we simply could not make the numbers work and we voluntarily gave those product lines up. 2021 was a good test year for our entire manufacturing and production team to regain our focus, to not becoming stagnant, and to look towards our future.

The liquid compounding venture continued on in 2021, albeit at a much slower pace than anticipated. We were able to receive and locate our 500L mixing kettle and our water filtration system was also added. Towards the end of 2021, we did have a brief conversation with our consultant and the ADA on the approval process for our fluoride paste and gel formulas and we anticipate approval in 2022. Once those are approved, we have submittals ready for bubblegum paste and gel formulas.

Through all the challenges of the past two years of Covid-19, we are continually reminded of the commitment and desire of our disabled workforce. In 2021, the number of individuals with disabilities working within our business division at Route 13 exceeded 85. The vast majority of these individuals work under our 14c certificate and are leading examples of the pride and dignity that an earned paycheck affords people. As long as we have individuals seeking work, we will continue to advocate for their rights of choice.

We also need to recognize the workforces we have at the Preble and Whitney Point rest areas. Throughout the two-year pandemic they have continued to provide cleaning and grounds services to those rest areas 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It been no small task to do so during this pandemic yet our workforce continues to provide these services to all those who travel up and down the NYS I-81 roadway.



*Photo (TOP): The new bottle filling line at Rt. 13  
(BOTTOM) as well as, the compound mixing kettle.*

Like most small businesses, OraLine is slowly getting back to business as usual before the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of our larger customers are fully open and getting back to ordering oral care products at pre-COVID levels. We are challenged with trying to find a home for all of the PPE products purchased for the pandemic and are expanding beyond our core target markets of dental offices, distributors, correctional, institutional and promotional organizations. The Global Supply Chain crisis has affected us as well and we are subject to the same scenarios that are beyond our control. We have adjusted our work force accordingly to meet these challenges and strive to regain our place as a niche oral care products provider offering quality products at a value price.

## Alan F. Brown Award Lawrence Podoluck

Lawrence “Larry” Podoluk started work at JM Murray in 2018, at the age of 57 years old. Earlier that year, Larry decided he wanted to earn money and try something new, after previously being engaged in Unity House’s day habilitation program, as well as, Pathway to Employment services. His Pathway to Employment service report determined that Larry was not ready to seek out competitive employment, and suggested site-based pre-vocational services to further his vocational skills. When first enrolled in JM Murray’s site-based program, he spent his three-day work week socializing with his coworkers rather than working on his daily tasks. Slowly, but surely, Larry realized that he wanted to earn more money to fund his favorite hobby, fishing. This motivator was truly a turning point in his life. Since that moment, when speaking with Larry, you can almost hear the motivation to better himself in his tone of voice and in his can-do attitude. Larry grew to be a very reliable, quality-driven trainee in the site-based pre-vocational program.

During the pandemic shut down, Larry missed the engagement he previously had with the JM Murray staff and his coworkers. With some of the COVID-19 regulations waning, Larry was able to meet with pre-vo-

*Photo (TOP): Larry gives the camera a wave while working at Tractor Supply Co.*



cational staff to volunteer in the community, starting with outdoor sites to limit potential exposure to COVID. The staff was immediately blown away by Larry's attention to detail, motivation, and love of the outdoors. Larry continued to engage in these volunteer activities with staff, even after his regular programs resumed, and was officially enrolled in community-based pre-vocational services in April of 2021.

With Larry's official enrollment, he was then able to explore various sites he previously did not attend. Larry became a "go-to" participant in this service, as he was a consistent top performer and was extremely reliable. These attributes were noticed by a business in which Larry frequently volunteered at, Tractor Supply Company. In November of 2021, Larry was approached by the manager of the store to fill out an application for employment and Larry was thrilled. With the help of Supportive Employment staff, as well as, community-based pre-vocational staff, Larry was hired at Tractor Supply in December of 2021. Larry continues to work 12 to 15 hours per week as a store associate, helping customers locate products, loading product into vehicles, and keeping the store clean. Larry is now known by regular customers and community members as an incredibly helpful, friendly employee of Tractor Supply.

Larry currently lives in a supported apartment run by Unity House. Within the past two years, He made the move from a more restrictive setting and has enjoyed his new independence, which includes going fishing and looking for lures at Dryden Lake regularly (when the weather is nice)!

Larry is diagnosed with mild intellectual disability, as well as, an anxiety disorder. Larry's debilitating anxiety along with his lack of confidence were factors that lead his previous Pathway to Employment services to determine that he was not ready for employment. Now Larry is a confident man who does not let his disabilities define him. He wanted to make his parents proud by working in the community and worked for a steady three years towards this goal. Since gaining his preferred employment, Larry has already gained multiple service awards and a raise from Tractor Supply, as they truly value him as an employee. Great job, Larry. Keep up the great work.

## Employer of the Year - Price Chopper

Employment Connection and Price Chopper have partnered for more than 20 years to create employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In 2021, there were two individuals who celebrated their 20th year of employment with Price Chopper. Nancy, who is their last standing bagging associate and Jeni, who is one of their bakery assistants. In addition to these two women, Price Chopper employs several other individuals who we support. David, who is a full-time cart pusher, and Renee and Benjamin work part-time in the bakery department.

Typically, when an individual is referred to Employment Connection, and they are unsure of what they are interested in or what they are capable of, employment staff will complete vocational assessments with the individu-



al giving them a hands-on experience to evaluate the person's ability and interests. Price Chopper is always welcoming of these assessments and has permitted Employment Staff to complete assessments in the following areas: stocking (both dairy and general grocery), cart pushing, re-shelving, and bakery. In addition to paid employment opportunities, Price Chopper works well with other individuals who receive our pre-vocational services for community-based work experiences to develop and improve their work skills to enhance their readiness for employment. During 2021, Renee participated in community-based work experience, with assistance from our pre-vocational services, in the Price Chopper bakery. When the bakery supervisor recognized Renee's potential and efficiency, she encouraged Renee to apply for one of their openings and in December 2021, Renee joined Price Chopper's bakery team.

Price Chopper is very flexible and provides accommodations for individuals when needed. For example, Renee relies on the public bus system for transportation to and from work and Price Chopper scheduled her work hours around the bus schedule and Renee's availability.

Congratulations, to Price Chopper for being selected as our Employer of the Year.

*Photo (TOP): Jeni and Nancy take a quick break for a photo while working at Price Chopper in 2021.*

*(BOTTOM) Jeni shows off some of her baking skills while working in the bakery at Price Chopper.*



## Past Award Winners

2000 Auxiliary Services Corp.	2005 Cortland Denny's	2009 Ames Linen Service	2013 American Food & Vending	2017 Elizabeth Brewster House
2001 K-Mart	2006 Hampton Inn & Cortland Regional Med.	2010 ASC	2014 Friendly's	2018 Walden Place
2002 GSG Vincent	2007 Ponderosa	2011 First Transit	2015 Wal-Mart	2019 Elizabeth Brewster House
2003 Cortland Country Club	2008 Tractor Supply Co.	2012 Harford Glen Water	2016 Rescue Mission	2020 Cortland Plastics International
2004 Vermeer Northeast				