

## After 26 years, a scourge of woe retires

### Nancy Ment took ANDRUS from local to international

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If Nancy Ment does not impress – by mission, by life-changing achievement, by look-'em-in-the-eye determination – one is not impressible.

ANDRUS, a small, sturdy-as-a-rock home for troubled children at 1156 N. Broadway in Yonkers would be transformed during her 26 years there into a success story of the highest order and an international template for helping troubled youths. She first ramped up psychiatric offerings as a licensed clinical social worker and for the last 10 years has served as president and CEO.

ANDRUS served 57 children when Ment arrived; today it serves 2,500. She steps down July 1. A successor has already been named: Mimi Clarke Corcoran.

To Ment's impressive bearing, add magnanimity. She sets the record straight on the staff from the get-go. "An incredibly dedicated group of people. We could not do it without them. I feel lucky because I get the credit and everyone else does the work. I have terrific colleagues."

Between 1990 and 1999 – a period tagged "creating a community presence" – ANDRUS established day treatment, abandoned all-private funding for a public-private model, began a relationship with state-connected Westchester County Healthy Families, expanded what had been five cow barns in the '70s into a 150-student K-9 school and began an early childhood initiative.

Ment and the center used those accomplishments – impressive as they are – merely as a springboard. Today ANDRUS operates 17 locations in Yonkers, Eastchester/Tuckahoe, White Plains, Peekskill and New Rochelle and employs 284 full-time and 165 part-time workers. When Ment arrived the operating budget was \$3 million; fiscal 2013-14 is projected at \$32.5 million.

Seventy-three clients live on site today, their presence testifying to dysfunction, and worse, at home. Eighty-five clients attend school dayside. "All," Ment says, "are very seriously emotionally disturbed. They have

had multiple hospitalizations, multiple living environments. They have not had happy lives."

"Client," however is rather a sterile word and ANDRUS is about healing and nurturing. Ment sets the salutations straight. "Some are our children; some are our students; some are our patients, some are our families; and some are our babies," she said. "We think of them as part of our extended family." Clients come from the Hudson Valley, New York City and even Rhode Island; school districts are the conduits for entry and Ment cites Yonkers and Peekskill as "very involved" with ANDRUS.

ANDRUS was founded in 1928 by former Yonkers mayor and so-dubbed "strap-hanger millionaire" John Andrus. He was one of the wealthiest men in America, possessing as Ment says, "a magical ability to create new businesses, though he was never interested in what money could do."

John Andrus' beneficence could be called anti-Ozymandias by design: Behold my works, ye mighty, and rejoice. Rather than a pyramid or obelisk, he left behind a quantifiable engine of love and redemption.

Ment relates the story of a former resident, Andrew Malcolm, who left the site in 1941 and who repays the debt – "He feels his life was saved" – by traveling from his upstate home to play Santa at ANDRUS every year. Doubling the happy ending, the center saved his brother, Charles, as well.

The Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial, named in honor of John's wife, originally housed 56 youths at the North Broadway campus, about the same number as when Ment arrived in 1986.

Julia's story of losing her entire family as a girl in transit from Europe, and John's story



Nancy Ment on the Yonkers ANDRUS campus.

as mayor, congressman and patent-medicine manufacturer, became the story of an eight-child, humble family. "They were an incredibly dedicated couple," Ment said.

The history is important because it is living: Eight direct descendents of John and Julia today sit on the ANDRUS board. Julia's portrait dominates the reception room of Dyckman Hall, the adoptive

home in which she was raised and which now houses ANDRUS administration offices.

John Andrus also began the Surdna Foundation (Andrus spelled backward), based in New York City to foster via grants "communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments, strong local economies and thriving cultures." It is 10 years older than the children's effort and remains associated with ANDRUS' funding.

Ment offers an arm-length list of those who help and have helped for years. The list includes Markham Rollins III of Rye Brook-based Rollins Risk Management and Solutions who was hosting the annual ANDRUS golf outing for 104 at Bronxville's Siwanoy Country Club when she spoke June 3.

The golf outing is one of two big fundraisers in the year and Ment was hoping to

net \$100,000 from it. In the fall ANDRUS will honor James J. Landy, Hudson Valley Bank's executive chairman, at its Oct. 4 Ritz-Carlton gala.

"They have been wonderful partners and resources over the years," Ment said of the bank. She also praises The Business Council of Westchester and the Westchester County Association, the county's biggest business organizations. "They've offered incredible support," she said.

During her tenure, the ANDRUS endowment has essentially doubled from "about \$20 million in the '80s and '90s" to \$39.2 million today.

ANDRUS' success is now quantifiable around the globe through 250 ANDRUS-trained centers in seven countries. ANDRUS Chief Operating Officer Brian Farragher, whom Ment calls "my right-hand man," is headed to Singapore June 14 to teach the "Sanctuary Institute" methods for helping victimized children, which were developed at ANDRUS by Farragher and psychiatrist Sandra Bloom.

"We've taken a lot of steps to get from helping 57 children to helping 2,500," Ment said. "I have been incredibly privileged to be part of that growth."

"We're not here just to do good things," she said. "We're in the business of doing good things."

For now, Ment will relax, though she said she will always help people and her options are open.

Mimi Clarke Corcoran, Ment's replacement, has a master's degree in finance and public policy from New York University. She has worked extensively with children through the foundation of financier George Soros.



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