



# NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Patti Archiere  
Public Relations Director

Tel: (845) 692-4454 ext. 101

E-mail: [parchiere@occupations.org](mailto:parchiere@occupations.org)

## For Immediate Release

**ORANGE COUNTY, NY** – Over 250 people gathered on December 5th to honor **RJ Smith** with the **Occupations Vision of Hope Award** and in support of the Occupations System of Care. Former **Governor David A. Paterson** was the Keynote Speaker who shared some stories about his personal journey and his appreciation and value for the Occupations System of Care, as well as other human service organizations, who work tirelessly every day to provide opportunities and choice for people with special needs. Governor Paterson, who is legally blind, reflected back to personal experiences of overcoming obstacles and challenges he faced with employment, education, and politics, all of which assisted him in creating a pathway to both personal and professional achievements, including becoming the first Governor of New York of African American heritage. Governor Paterson also expressed gratitude to Senator Bill Larkin, who was also present that evening, for his professional and personal support throughout his years in government.

Honorary Chairs for the event were Jonah Mandelbaum, President of Warwick Properties, Inc., and Donna Applegate, and event co-chairs were Jim and Eileen Taylor together with Jim and Nancy Smith. Together, with the Inaugural Vision of Hope Award Recipient, Jim Ottaway, Jr., they presented RJ Smith with the Vision of Hope Award. Mr. Ottaway commented, "RJ, we admire your motivation and thank you for caring so deeply about all people in our community and for the visions of hope you have given others." Jonah Mandelbaum added, "RJ, no one is more deserving of this award than you are."

RJ Smith is a lifetime Orange County resident, and a well known and respected active member of the community and volunteer for many years. Along with others and based on their mutual desire to connect people who care with cause that matters, Mr. Smith worked to establish the Community Foundation of Orange and Sullivan County, and has served on many other not-for-profit boards. R.J. Smith models dedication and commitment to community service.

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Occupations Foundation, Inc.

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The Occupations Foundation partnered with KeyBank as the Cocktail Reception Sponsor; Jonah Mandelbaum and Donna Applegate, and Relph Benefit Advisors as Platinum Sponsors; Provident Bank as the Entertainment Sponsor; Wayne Cortis as Gold Sponsor; Advance Testing; Rider, Weiner and Frankel, Advance Concrete, E.Tetz & Sons, Mercurio-Norton-Tarolli, PC, and Carpet Network as Silver Sponsors; and Alders Wholesale Florist as Floral Sponsor, along with several other community organizations and leaders to sponsor this elegant event. The Occupations Foundation, Inc., would like to thank all of the sponsors, guests and contributors who supported the 2011 Gala and Vision of Hope Award Dinner and Cocktail Reception.

The funds raised through this special event enable the Foundation to support the immediate need to create safe, comfortable home environments for the foster care children served by Occupations, Inc. Two group homes are in dire need of major renovations. Renovations of these homes will further enhance quality of life, assist with educational and training needs, life skills development, and provide a comfortable, safe environment. For more information on the needs for the Foster Care program and renovations and how you can help, please visit [www.occupations.org](http://www.occupations.org).

For more than 48 years, Occupations, Inc., a not-for-profit agency, has provided outpatient mental health services, case management, child welfare, emergency services, residential services, transportation, recreation and employment opportunities to people with developmental disabilities and individuals recovering from mental illness. Its affiliate, Family Empowerment Council, Inc, provides services to people with disabilities, including service coordination and case management, mental health family support, early intervention, educational advocacy, consumer-directed personal assistance, community habilitation and respite services. New Dynamics Corporation, a not-for-profit sister corporation of Occupations, Inc., is a leader in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For information on all programs and services call the Service Access Center at 1-888-750-2266, available seven-days-a-week, 24 hours a day.

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(photos attached/below)



Former Governor of New York, David A. Paterson, speaks at Occupations Foundation Vision of Hope Award Reception on December 5, 2011.



(from lt. to rt.) RJ Smith, Recipient of the 2011 Occupations Foundation Vision of Hope Award, with the event's Honorary Co-Chairs Donna Applegate and Jonah Mandelbaum



(from lt. to rt.) .) RJ Smith, Recipient of the 2011 Occupations Foundation Vision of Hope Award, with wife, Lizz, Amy Anderson-Winchell (COO of Occupations, Inc., and Exec. Director of Family Empowerment Council, Inc. and Jim DeStefano, CEO of Occupations, Inc.)



RJ Smith, Recipient of the 2011 Occupations Foundation Vision of Hope Award, with Senator Bill Larkin and his wife, Pat Larkin.