

## FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

# Liverpool grad helping children in

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STAFF WRITER



Central New York native **Jennifer Wetter Grundulis** is making a big difference in the lives of children in Ireland.

And before long, her influence could be felt closer to home in New York City and in countries like England, Sweden and Malaysia.

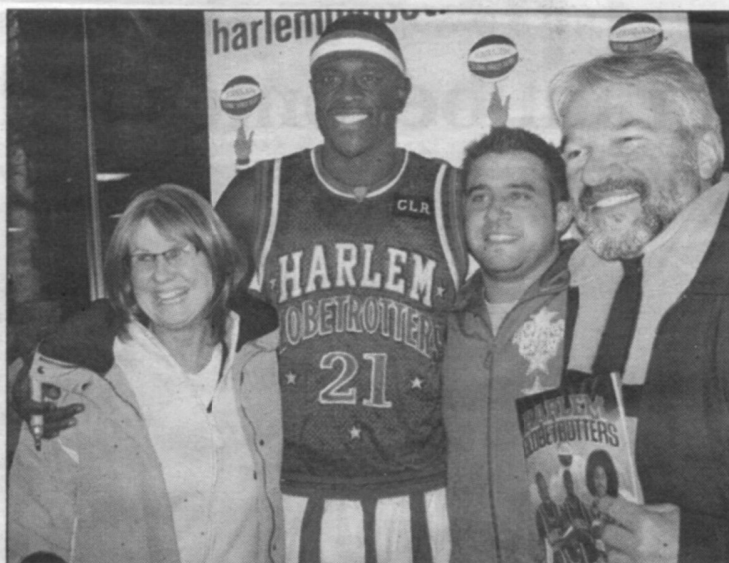
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Grundulis

A 1993 Liverpool High School graduate, Jennifer is the director of speech therapy at Release Communication Intervention, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Dublin. New Jersey-born Tara Cunningham founded the company four years ago and hired Jennifer shortly thereafter.

"There aren't many speech



Submitted photo

**NANCY LICATA**, son Michael Licata, and her husband, Bob, (right) with Harlem Globetrotters team member "Special K."

therapists in Ireland, and they do therapy differently over there," Jennifer said. "They don't have (therapists) in the schools and you have to go through the government to get one and there's nowhere near enough of them to go around."

What Tara, the "business brains," and Jennifer, the "therapy brains," are doing, Jennifer said, is changing the way speech and language therapy is done.

Jennifer, 33, and the other therapists at Release work with children of all ages. Many have Down syndrome or Asperger syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy and other types of language impairments, she said.

In an early-intervention

study using Release's model, 85 children between birth and age 5 got six months of continuous speech therapy ("absolutely unheard of in Ireland") and the results were astounding, Jennifer said.

"We teach the parents the skills and techniques they need to do the therapy at home, because you can reach so many more kids that way," she said. "Our goal is to franchise this model so anybody can take it and use it wherever they are."

The organization is currently having discussions with interested parties in New York City and also in Sweden, Malaysia and England.

"I am very proud of the program," Jennifer said, "and I count success in the stories

the parents come back to me with, and in the little miracles that I see every day."

If you'd like to learn more about the work Jennifer and the rest of the people at Release are doing, visit [www.release.ie](http://www.release.ie)

## More neighbors of note

■ **The Make-A-Wish** Foundation of Central New York has a new manager of volunteer services.

She's **Amanda Griffin**, a 1996 graduate of West Genesee High School who's returned to her roots.



Griffin

"We know Amanda's tremendous and diverse professional experience, her energy and commitment, warm and engaging personality and sincere love for children will make her an invaluable addition to our team," said **Diane Kuppermann**, president and CEO of Make-A-Wish.

Amanda lives in Camillus, where she grew up, with her husband, **Sean Griffin**, and their 18-month-old daughter, Claire. "It's great "to be so close to family again," she said.

Welcome home, Amanda.

■ **If you attended** the performance of the Harlem Globetrotters in Syracuse on



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