DISABILITY PRIORITY AGENDA FOR 2010

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is dedicated to removing barriers to the full community integration of people with disabilities of all ages. NYAIL represents Independent Living Centers and the people with disabilities they serve, and has proposed the following legislative priorities, to address barriers to community living and ensure that the civil rights of people with disabilities are protected:

• Incorporate housing provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act into State law.
• Establish standards for “visitability” in State law to require all newly constructed single-family houses, townhouses and ground-floor units of duplexes and triplexes built with public funds to be made accessible.
• Make discrimination by landlords based on a tenant’s source of income illegal.
• Incorporate Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) into NY State Human Rights Law.
• Waive the State’s sovereign immunity to claims under the ADA and Section 504.
• Eliminate provisions in State Election Law allowing waiver of polling place accessibility requirements.

Require polling places to comply with ADA accessibility guidelines, conduct access surveys, and make training in disability etiquette and use of Ballot Marking Devices mandatory for election workers.

• Amend State Social Services Law to eliminate provisions for termination of parental rights on the basis of mental illness or mental retardation.
• Cap fares for paratransit transportation at levels no higher than the base fares for transportation of non-disabled adults utilizing the transit system.

NOW OPEN: NEW ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING AND DEMO CENTER

On Wednesday, March 10th, a group of approximately seventy “Friends of Independence” gathered in the lower level of our building at 5 Washington Terrace in Newburgh for a donor appreciation and ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the official opening of the newly created training room and assistive technology demonstration area. Newburgh Mayor Nicholas Valentine, Commissioner Chris Ashman of the Orange County Department of Mental Health, and representatives from the offices of Senator Bonacic and Senator Larkin were among the attendees.

“It takes a community to accomplish what we are celebrating today,” said founding Executive Director Douglas Hovey. “Every single person who donated his or her time, talent or money can feel proud of where we stand today.” Special recognition was given to Melanie
Milton Santiago is “Student of the Year”
In recognition of exceptional achievement, Milton Santiago was awarded the “Spirit of Literacy” Student of the Year Award on February 9, 2010 at the Literacy Orange Annual Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Dinner. Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther congratulated Milton and other students, as well as the dedicated volunteers who tutor adults in our community in reading, to assist them in reaching their goals. Milton is a participant in the Community Independence Program at Independent Living, and was recently hired as a peer mentor and program assistant for the Learning Enrichment After School Program.
Warmest congratulations to Milton from all of us at Independent Living for this well-deserved honor, and best wishes for continued success!

NOW OPEN, continued from page one
Martin Construction for the “amazing transformation of what used to be nothing but a dirty old cellar;” to Frank Ricciardone of The Cabinet Store in Marlboro, NY, for his donation of custom cabinets and counters for the new kitchen; Donna Cornell and Dan Riemer for the installation of the counters and cabinets; Hudson Valley Office Furniture, for the donation of modular tables for the training room; Provident Bank for a $10,000 donation; Rich Alfano of R.A. Electric, and Jim Loughran and the catering staff at Loughran’s for the sumptuous buffet and beverages provided for this special occasion.
“We dedicate this training room and the assistive technology center to the people we serve, and offer its use to other provider organizations in our community who partner with us in serving individuals with disabilities and their families throughout the Mid-Hudson Region,” said Hovey. He then announced that Independent Living had recently purchased 2+ acres of property adjacent to its existing lot, and is making plans to develop a high-rise complex of affordable, fully-accessible homes.

AGENDA, continued from page one
• Require transportation service providers, such as taxis, limousines and shuttle services, to purchase accessible vehicles.

On February 1st, a group of approximately 40 service recipients, staff and board members from our Center met with legislators in Albany. The SSAN (Statewide Systems Advocacy Network) invites you to sign up to help move these important issues to the Governor’s desk for signature this year: Email sstockburger@myindependentliving.org and put volunteer in the subject line.

Welcome New Board Members!
The Independent Living, Inc. Board of Directors is delighted to welcome new members Criss Ittermann and Andrew Weyant.
Criss has been a long-time advocate for persons with disabilities. She recently published her autobiography about living authentically with a mental health diagnosis that is usually considered seriously debilitating. Criss has a son who has special needs, and has worked with individuals who are Deaf. Criss is a holistic practitioner, life coach, interfaith minister and Internet guru. She currently runs her own business from her home office in Middletown, NY. “I am continually impressed with this organization and excited about the great work that we can do together.”
Andy decided to join the board because he shares our vision of a barrier free society for individuals with disabilities and has a strong desire to work toward creating more accessible housing in and around Orange County. Andy is currently self-employed as a stock and commodities trader and resides in Blooming Grove, New York.
“I’m very excited about utilizing my experience and talents to help this organization grow, and to be involved in their numerous initiatives to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.”
Be Counted!
Participation in the 2010 Census isn't just important—it’s mandatory

If you haven’t yet done so, take 10 minutes now to fill out the 10 questions on your census form.

Every household in America received the “Be Counted” form by mail from the U.S. Census Bureau. Remember to fill it out and return it, so you will be a part of the accurate count of members of our communities for the next ten years!

Census counts mean money for better infrastructure, more services, and a brighter tomorrow for everyone. In fact, the census data helps to determine how more than $400 billion dollars of federal funding each year is spent on infrastructure and services like hospitals, job training centers, senior centers, and emergency services.

Additionally, we can use census data to support community initiatives involving quality-of-life issues and consumer advocacy. People from many walks of life use census data to advocate for causes, rescue disaster victims, prevent diseases, research markets, locate pools of skilled workers and more.

And don’t forget that numbers in the House of Representatives for each state are determined from census data.

If you have a census related question, need language assistance, need help completing your “Be Counted” form or have misplaced or lost it, call 1-866-872-6868 for help in English or 1-866-928-2010 for help in Spanish, or 1-866-783-2010 for TDD.

Honoring & Remembering Loved Ones

Remember loved ones who have passed away with a gift to Independent Living in lieu of flowers. Or consider giving a gift in honor of someone for a birthday milestone or other special occasion.

You will know that your gift will be something treasured, and will last as it helps ensure that services for people with disabilities will continue to be available for our children and theirs in generations to come.

Donations may be made online at www.myindependentliving.org, by mail or in person at Independent Living, Inc.’s Development Office, 5 Washington Terrace, Newburgh, NY 12550.
Our Mission

Independent Living, Inc., a consumer-directed, cross-disability service and advocacy organization, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. Our vision is a barrier-free society with opportunities for all persons to achieve their maximum potential. Programs and resources offered by our agency provide needed support to individuals with all disabilities at literally every stage of life and include services in the areas of: Early Childhood Direction, Personal Attendant Care, Employment, Work Incentives Counseling, Education Advocacy, School-to-Adult Life Transition, Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocacy and support, Nursing Home Transition & Diversion Waiver, Traumatic Brain Injury and Medicaid Service Coordination, Access to Home, Long Term Care Planning, Mental Health Case Management, Bridger Services, and Peer Advocacy.

Save These Dates!

“Friends of Independence” Open House & Tour – May 6th, June 3rd & July 1st
For more information or to register, call (845) 565-1162 x242 or email: bjudge@myindependentliving.org

5th Annual Regional Early Childhood Conference – June 2nd at the Newburgh Ramada Inn. For more information/registration, call (845) 565-1162 x240 or visit our website: www.myindependentliving.org

10th Annual Orange County Healing, Wellness & Recovery Conference - June 3rd at Anthony’s Pier 9 in New Windsor. For more information/registration, call (845) 565-1162 x242 or visit our website: www.myindependentliving.org

Accessibility Options: Assistive Technology Show – October 6th at Empire State Convention Center, Albany, NY. For more information, call (845) 733-4476. Online: www.nichewnewsny.com

Diversity Job Fair – October 14th in the Green Room at the Cornerstone, Newburgh, NY. For more information, call David Owens at (845) 561-4061 or email: dowens@myindependentliving.org

1st Annual Hudson Valley Assistive Technology EXPO
Tools for Living Life to the Fullest
Showcasing the latest products & services to enhance independent learning and living
Interactive Exhibits • Special Events
Saturday, May 15, 2010
10:00 - 4:00
Orange County Community College
Middletown, New York
Hosted by:
SUNY Orange Center for Assistive & Rehab Technology
INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.
INSPIRE: Orange County Center for Independence
ORANGE COUNTY OFFICE for the AGING
For additional information please contact: jjames@sunyorange.edu or 845.341.4323

Also featuring CARFIT, a joint program of AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association – 3 CARFIT Evaluators will be making appointments to assess an individual’s seating in an auto.