White Cane Awareness Day Commemorated in Newburgh and Monticello

On Tuesday, October 15th, Independent Living, Inc. hosted the 5th annual Mid-Hudson Valley White Cane Awareness Day event at its Newburgh service center, and the 1st annual Sullivan County White Cane Awareness Day event at its Monticello service center. More than fifty individuals with visual impairments, elected officials, Lions Club representatives, family members and friends participated at each location.

The goal of this annual event is to increase public awareness regarding visual impairments and the capabilities of people who are blind and have low vision; addressing some of the barriers and challenges they face both globally and in our local communities, as well as the importance of making our society inclusive for people with all disabilities.

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Guest speakers at the Newburgh event included Senator William J. Larkin, Orange County Legislator Patrick Berardinelli, Newburgh Mayor Judy Kennedy, and Julie Cardone, representing the NYS Commission for the Blind. In Monticello, Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther and Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature, Scott Samuelson spoke about the significance of White Cane Awareness Day and the importance of community education regarding visual impairments. Robert Gumson, Manager of Independent Living Services at ACCES-VR shared the story of his own experience growing up, when he learned to advocate for himself to prevent being excluded from summer camp and other activities due to his blindness. At both centers, assistive technology demonstrations were provided, and members of the support groups for individuals with visual impairments spoke about overcoming challenges and the impact of isolation which so often affects people who are blind or have low vision. The Newburgh Lions Club presented a check for $500, to be used toward transportation for members of the Newburgh-based support group.

For more information about programs and services, or for dates and times of support group meetings in Newburgh, call (845) 565-1162 or (845) 794-3322 in Monticello, visit our website: www.MyIndependentLiving.org or follow us on Facebook.

5th Annual Breakfast, continued from page one

and the work that Independent Living, Inc. is doing to address the barriers encountered by people with disabilities of all ages that prevent their full participation at work, school and in the community.

This year, Jo’Van, a participant in our Young Adult Outreach Program, spoke about how the opportunity to serve on the Young Adult Advisory Board has changed his outlook and made a difference in his life. Attendees also heard a moving presentation by Doug M. who lives in his own apartment and values the ability to make decisions and exercise control over how, when and by whom he receives services through our OPTIONS Consumer Directed Personal Assistant Program.

The annual breakfast event is one of Independent Living’s most important resources for unrestricted revenue that allows us to cover the costs of programs and services that would otherwise be unavailable due to limited public funding. Executive Director, Doug Hovey, spoke of the many achievements by and on behalf of individuals with disabilities in spite of economic challenges, and expressed appreciation for the ongoing financial support from loyal donors who attended this year’s breakfast as well as those who have previously made multi-year pledges.

Special thanks to our sponsors for their generous support: D&D Mailing Services, Empire State Bank, Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union, McGowan Art Works, ND Pro Media, and Ulster Savings Bank.

Photo Credit: ND Pro Media
WIPA - Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

Funding for the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program (also known as “WIPA”), a national program funded by the Social Security Administration, has been restored, and Independent Living, Inc. staff have resumed their excellent work in providing important services that enable people with disabilities to go to work. WIPA services are offered by Independent Living, Inc. in Orange, Rockland, Ulster, Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester Counties, and in the Capital District (Albany, Columbia and Greene Counties) through a regional partnership with the Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley, which has service centers located in Troy and Hudson, NY. “Benefits advisement is a critical service for individuals with disabilities who are working or considering going back to work,” said Doug Hovey, Executive Director. “We are very pleased that the Federal government recognizes the value of WIPA services. With the knowledge gained from our Community Work Incentives Coordinators, hundreds of individuals each year who would otherwise be almost entirely dependent on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) are returning to work and becoming financially independent without fear of losing their medical benefits.”

For more information please contact Ian Weinstein at 845-561-4061 x267.

Did You Know?

Disability Etiquette

People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Don’t make decisions for them (based upon your own attitudes, preferences and experiences). Here are some basis rules.

- Don’t assume everyone with a disability needs assistance. Ask before you help!
- Offer assistance only if someone appears to need it.
- If you do assist someone, ask how you should assist before acting.

Education Advocate Diane Troeller Honored

Diane Troeller, Education Advocate at Independent Living, Inc., was recently awarded the 2013 PULSES Outstanding Service Award as a Service Provider. PULSES is an acronym for “Parents United Learning the Special Education System.”

DIVERSITY JOB FAIR, continued from page one

In addition, community providers were on hand to offer assistance and information to job seekers, including individuals with disabilities and veterans. A number of employers conducted interviews and immediately extended job offers for positions including commercial truck drivers, healthcare and production workers.

The Diversity Job Fair was established as an initiative to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It soon became evident that a job fair in Newburgh in October was a highly productive event for all job seekers as well as a broad range of employers. Collaborating with Independent Living, Inc.

to present the Diversity Job Fair were: the Association for the Visually Impaired, Capabilities Partnership, Inc., the Mental Health Association in Orange County, NY State Commission for the Blind, NY State Department of Education ACCES-VR, Orange Works, 511 NY Rideshare and Safe Harbors of the Hudson, Inc.
Support Groups for Individuals with Visual Impairments

2nd Tuesday of every month
from 6-8 p.m. at
5 Washington Terrace, Newburgh

There is no cost to participate. Light refreshments are provided.

Friends of Independence Open House and Tour

5:15 – 6:15 pm: We start & end on time!

- Wednesday, January 15th - Middletown
- Thursday, February 6th – Newburgh
- Wednesday, March 19 – Monticello

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