Independent Living, Inc., a consumer-directed, cross-disability service and advocacy organization, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for persons 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, Work Incentives Counseling, School-to-Adult Life Transition, Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocacy and support, Traumatic Brain Injury and Medicaid Service Coordination, Access to Home, Long Term Care Planning and Mental Health Case Management and Peer Advocacy.

“Friends of Independence” Gala honors those who have been instrumental to our growth.

On November 15, 2007, over 250 Friends of Independence from areas throughout the Mid-Hudson region gathered at Anthony’s Pier 9 in New Windsor, New York to celebrate our 20-year history.

Attendees watched a moving video presentation about the Center, its mission and its achievements (now available for viewing on the web at www.myindependentliving.org).
New Yorkers with disabilities will be just as interested in how candidates will be elected as they are in who will win this year.

A New York Federal judge has reminded state Board of Election officials that they could be sent to jail if New York doesn’t install new voting machines as required by law.

The state submitted a plan to the court for how it will meet the mandates for new voting machines. The federal judge has ordered that New York have one accessible machine per polling place by September, 2008. All of the lever voting machines must be replaced by September, 2009.

The Justice Department brought a lawsuit against the Board of Elections in 2006 after the state failed to install the machines. New York is the only state which has not complied with the Help America Vote Act, which was passed in the wake of the controversial presidential election in 2000.

Jose “Tony” Lebron receives National Disability Employment Awareness Award.

Jose “Tony” Lebron, CIP Program Assistant at Independent Living, Inc., is the proud recipient of the National Disability Employment Award for his work bringing pre-employment skills to people with developmental disabilities at the store operated by the agency’s Community Independence Program – CIP.

“Working with people in our CIP Store has been one of my most rewarding experiences at the Center,” says Mr. Lebron. According to Mr. Lebron, the program is a great opportunity to learn to shop for and display products that typically include healthy snack foods. Participants also interact with customers, use the cash register and make change. “It’s been very encouraging to see their enthusiasm as well as their progress in acquiring basic life skills,” he added.

Congratulations, Tony!!

In the News . . .

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About our CIP Program

There are currently 20 adult participants in Independent Living’s Community Independence Program, which operates Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Transportation is provided by the Center, and a variety of community-based activities are offered, including: hosting a bi-weekly food pantry, assisting Meals-on-Wheels volunteers, swimming, bowling and a variety of arts and crafts activities. The Community Independence Program is funded through the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Did You Know?

There are hundreds of different kinds of disabilities--some are congenital, but most come later in life. Fewer than 15 percent were born with their disability.
Independent Living’s Founding Executive Director, Doug Hovey, recognized four “Friends of Independence”--

- **David Jolly**, Commissioner of Orange County’s Department of Social Services, who Mr. Hovey described as having been “extremely supportive of our initiatives on behalf of persons with disabilities… a most progressive thinker whose actions match his words”.

- **Mike Levine**, former Executive Editor of the Times Herald Record, who was recognized posthumously for excellence in journalism. Accepting the award was Mr. Levine’s wife, Ellen, son, Ben, and step-daughter, Victoria Frank.

- **Donna Ponessa**, Family Services manager at Independent Living, Inc. “whose life and work exemplify the possibilities of the human spirit”

- **Tricia Haggerty-Wenz**, Executive Director of Safe Harbors of the Hudson for “service and accomplishments on behalf of people with disabilities who face the threat of homelessness.”

  Orange County Executive Ed Diana expressed his appreciation for “all that Independent Living continues to bring to the community.” Mr. Diana renewed his personal commitment to making all public buildings in Orange County accessible.

Among other officials attending were Congressman Hinchey’s spokesperson, *Congressional Aide Chris White* who presented Mr. Hovey a plaque and announced that a resolution detailing the organization’s extraordinary accomplishments has been entered into the Congressional Record, *Commissioner Diana Ritter* from the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) who represented Governor Eliot Spitzer. *Mary Ann Rose* who attended on behalf Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun, Chris Ashman, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Orange County Legislators James Kulisek and William Lahey.

Key sponsors recognized were Provident Bank, St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital, Hudson Valley Office Furniture, CAP Productions, the Law Offices of Bleakley, Platt & Schmidt, insurance brokers Rose & Kiernan and the Times Herald Record.

### 2008 Disability Priority Agenda

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL), an organization of New York State Independent Living Centers, calls on all lawmakers, executive officials, and their staff to make specific proposals a reality for all New Yorkers with disabilities. The Agenda for 2008 puts many issues confronting people with disabilities in front of our legislators. We need you to help advocate for these much-needed changes. Your first step is to familiarize yourself with our stance on the below issues by reading the full copy of the NYAIL Agenda posted now on our website www.myindependentliving.org.

What is on the Agenda for 2008?
1. Increased ILC Funding
2. Health care coverage and community services
3. Integrated employment
4. Housing accessibility and funding
5. Education standards for physical restraint
6. Election reform: polling place accessibility
7. Transportation: accessible taxi legislation
The first few years of life are extremely important to the future growth and development of children. The Mid Hudson Regional Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) provides information about programs and services for young children between birth and age five, who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities.

Families depend on ECDCs to provide the resources they need to help them make fully informed decisions and get the services their children really need, including:

- Direct assistance in obtaining services for children.
- Matching the individual needs of children with the services that are available in the local community.
- Referrals to nearby agencies that provide direct services.
- Coordination of services between multiple agencies.
- Follow-up to be certain that children are receiving all the services that may be necessary.

Anyone with concerns about a child’s development may call the Early Childhood Direction Center to receive materials that can be used to monitor a child’s growth. Any information you provide about your child and your family is strictly confidential. ECDCs can help link you up with parent support groups in your own community. Sibling support may also be available. All services are provided free of charge.

Only the parent or legal guardian makes final decisions about any services that a child receives. ECDC staff will provide information about programs and services in the community, and tell you what options are available to you.

Always trust your instincts and feelings as you watch your child grow, and ask questions whenever you have concerns. Your doctor can provide you with information, and so can your local Early Childhood Direction Center. You can call them any time you have a question or whenever there is a change in your child’s needs.