Diane Troeller has been appointed to the newly-created position of education advocate. Ms. Troeller is a graduate of New York State’s “Advocacy and Leadership Development Program Partners in Policy Making” initiative. What’s more, she is the parent of a child with a disability. “When my daughter was diagnosed, I leaned how to be an advocate,” Ms. Troeller remarks. “As my daughter grew older, I recognized how important it is to have her learn advocacy skills for herself.” Diane previously worked in Early Intervention as a Service Coordinator, served as a parent member of her school district’s Committee on Special Education, and, through her involvement with Girl Scouts, provided Disability Awareness training for Girl Scout Leaders.

Parents of students with developmental disabilities who have concerns about their children’s education, or who wish to be kept informed regarding self-advocacy trainings, are encouraged to contact Ms. Troeller at (845) 565-1162 ext. 243. She will also be available to provide trainings for any community groups that are interested.

It’s that time of year again – our annual legislative cycle begins anew with many changes both within New York State and the Nation. Our State Association – The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) has developed its annual Legislative Agenda and it covers many critically important topics that will have profound effects on the quality of life for persons with disabilities in New York State. Most notable is the shift toward Olmstead and the Most Integrated Setting, encouraging state agencies and state funded provider organizations to provide people with disabilities the assistance they need to move out of programs and services that segregate on the basis of disability.

As a statewide network of Independent Living Centers, we continue to advocate for inclusion at every level of the system so we create support services that make sense for people with disabilities.

NYAIL’s 2009 Legislative Agenda includes: restoration of the 1.2 million dollar cut to Independent Living Centers; restoration of the proposed cuts to Supplemental Security Income

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Homing in on . . . Access to Home

Why shouldn’t everything in a home—from the layout of each room to the design of the furnishings and appliances conform to the needs of the people who live inside? That’s the basic idea behind a number of movements and programs designed to help people live easily, safely and longer in their own homes.

Baby Boomers are now aging and making it known they want to remain in their homes. According to a survey by the American Association for Retired Persons, 80% of people over 50 want to age at home. Their numbers and their cumulative wealth are pushing the “Aging in Place” movement forward.

“It’s all about choices,” says Ellen Giuliano, Long Term Care Services Manager with Independent Living. According to statistics, 85% of all people become disabled or will experience a disability in their lifetime. Giuliano emphasizes that it costs 33% less to provide services to a person in their home, and since this is what most people prefer, it makes the most sense for everyone.

The Access to Home Program, funded by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), provides financial assistance to property owners to make dwelling units accessible for low- and moderate income persons with disabilities.

If you are facing accessibility challenges at your home, call our environmental modification specialists for a free evaluation and advice. You may qualify for funding to have the necessary modifications made to your home.

Access to Home on the Legislative Level

Add your voice to ours in Albany.

• Support the 2009 Visitability Act

“Visitability” is a movement that seeks to increase the supply of accessible housing through the inclusion of three basic structural features at the time of home construction: a zero-step entrance, wide doorways and at least a half bath on the main floor of the home.

• Incorporate the housing provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act into Law

Housing developers often fail to comply with Section 504’s requirement to set aside a certain percentage of accessible units for people with disabilities when federal dollars are used for construction. By including these requirements in State law, the Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) will be fully empowered to enforce these requirements and ensure that the State is in compliance with federal standards.

Visit our website to sign up for Action Alerts. We’ll let you know when these bills are coming up for vote so you can call or email your representatives in Albany.

A Look Ahead at 2009, continued from page one

benefits for people with disabilities; passage of the Most Integrated Setting Law; shift funding from sheltered workshops to integrated work options; make Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 into NYS Law; establish a clear definition and standard for physical restraint in public schools; adopt Title II of the ADA into State Law; amend social services law section 4-104 (1-a) to eliminate subdivision (4) © and (6) (a-e), which permit termination of parental rights on the basis of mental illness or retardation; eliminate provisions in Section 4-104 (1-a) of the NYS Election Law that allow waiver of polling site accessibility; require taxi services to provide accessible transportation; establish the ‘Visitability’ Act of 2009 requiring all housing constructed with public funds to have a ground level entrance and one bathroom on the main floor.

For a complete version of the NYAIL Legislative Agenda, see our website at www.myindependentliving.org, or www.nyail.org.

Did You Know?

It costs New Yorks State taxpayers far less to support people who live outside institutions. In fact, every dollar invested in ILC’s programs to help people live independently at home rather than an institution represents a $9 savings for New York State taxpayers.
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT LIVING . . .

. . . to ensure that we can provide the same standards of service tomorrow that we offer today.

Independent Living’s Board of Directors has established an endowment fund with the Community Foundation of Orange and Sullivan counties to provide long-term stability for the organization, demonstrate wise financial planning to potential funders and have a lasting impact on our community.

Through the Community Foundation we accept gifts of all sizes and in a variety of forms – real estate, stocks, bonds, cash, bequests, life insurance, retirement assets, and tangible assets.

Specific ways to help Independent Living through planned giving include:

• A contribution to the capital campaign to develop a regional assistive technology and durable medical equipment center
• An unrestricted donation as a way to provide ongoing support to Independent Living, Inc.’s operational and programmatic needs
• Establishing a Named Fund
• Gifts that will provide you with income for life
• Contributions to Independent Living, Inc.’s established endowment fund in honor or in memory of someone special

In Lieu of Flowers

Remember loved ones who have passed away with a gift to Independent Living.

You will know that your gift will be something treasured, and will last as it provides new growth opportunities for people with disabilities.

IL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HONORED BY INSPIRE

Inspire, formerly the Orange County Cerebral Palsy Association or “CP” Center in Goshen, honored Doug Hovey, Independent Living, Inc.’s Executive Director, for his outstanding service to people with disabilities.

Speaking at its Shining Stars Celebration on November 22, 2008, Inspire’s CEO Marcel Martino said, “Mr. Hovey has long championed the cause of equal rights, access and opportunity for persons with disabilities.”

ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST’S HAMPTONBURGH PRESERVE “BRaille TRAIL” BECOMES A REALITY

We’ve often thought our organization might well be called “Interdependent Living”. Independence for the people we serve is often the result of a group effort fostered by many individuals and organizations working together toward a common goal. An example of “interdependence” is the planned trail through the Hamptonburgh Preserve, a 103 acre area abutting the Wallkill River that the Orange County Land Trust (OCLT) acquired on Route 416 bordering Hill-Hold Museum and Thomas Bull Park. The parcel of land stretches along a section of the winding Wallkill River. Of the eight properties acquired by the Land Trust since its inception in 1995, this would be the only one to be completely accessible for people with physical or visual disabilities. Doug Hovey, Independent Living’s executive director and Kara Dors-ey, president of the board of directors have been working closely with Jim Delaune, executive director of the Land Trust and will continue to provide design and planning suggestions on “The Braille Trail.”

Lianne Rittberg currently volunteers as a receptionist at Independent Living and has known Doug Hovey since she was 5 years old. Rittberg co-presented the award with Mr. Martino and told of how her life had been enriched over the years by the experiences made possible by Doug and the staff at Independent Living.
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, 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.

A Fond Farewell to Frank LaRosa

Some people don’t just “have” positions, they become the position itself. After years serving as Orange County Director of Mental Health Programs, Frank LaRosa has retired. We knew him for years and to us he stood for the services he provided. He retired from his position as we might have predicted, without a lot of pomp and circumstance, but with the good wishes and deepest respect of all those who worked with him. We remember how he always included the people he helped in all decisions. Things were done with the individual requiring services rather than for that individual. That is a difference we respect and admire--that is the difference that Frank LaRosa made in the lives he touched. We thank him for touching ours as well.

Is it Fact or Fiction?

Myth: Persons with disabilities need to be protected from failing.

Fact: Persons with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences including success and failure. Employers should have the same expectations of, and work requirements for, all employees.