AnnuAL Fundraising Breakfast raises awareness for Independent Living programs and services.

On Wednesday, October 7th, friends and supporters gathered at Independent Living Inc.’s 2nd annual fundraising breakfast at Anthony’s Pier Nine in New Windsor, NY.

Inspired by the accomplishments of Executive Director Doug Hovey, who shared his personal story and went on to describe some of the programs offered by Independent Living, the crowd also heard testimony from people who have received services that have significantly improved the quality of their lives.

Hovey also spoke of how much more difficult it has been for people with disabilities to find employment in the current economic climate. Statistics point to a remarkable 74% unemployment rate for persons with disabilities (up from 67% last year). As Hovey pointed out, this means that three of four people with disabilities are living in poverty. He stressed the importance of community participation, as many people do not have the support of family and friends, and Independent Living is one place they can count on for support. In keeping with the theme of the breakfast “People First: Believing & Achieving,” Diane Troeller described how advocating for her daughter, Sara, took her on a journey that led from a former career in corporate America to a new position with Independent Living, helping others access the services to which they are entitled.

“I’m using everything that she [Sara] taught me, to help other parents and young adults to understand that there is nothing “wrong” with anyone! All people have unique needs and abilities; it’s just a matter of finding their abilities and using them to overcome the needs.”

- Diane Troeller

“Now with Lemon” Benefit for Independent Living brings generous donations along with equally generous howls of laughter

On Friday, August 7th, the Valley Improv Group (VIG) presented “Now with Lemon” in the historic Green Room at 111 Broadway, in Newburgh. The VIG took suggestions and brought them to life in skits for an evening full of laughs. Independent Living would like to send a sincere thank-you to board member and “VIGster” Jeff Sculley and fellow performers for sharing their time and wonderful talents!
**1st Orange County White Cane Awareness Day**

Over 75 people including media and dignitaries gathered at Independent Living, Inc. on October 15th to celebrate White Cane Awareness Day in Orange County. IL Executive Director Doug Hovey spoke about the significance of the white cane as a symbol of independence rather than a sign of disability. Originally invented in the 1930’s as a way for oncoming traffic to recognize that someone is blind, the white cane now symbolizes the societal recognition of people who are visually impaired. Julie Cardone from the Commission for the Blind (CBVH) gave the crowd an inspirational overview on the number of individuals in our area who are blind and visually impaired, and spoke on the history of White Cane Awareness Day. Frank Gaudioso of Newburgh and Louis Ciccone of Wawayanda, both individuals with visual impairments, spoke of their personal experiences, and helped put the statistics into perspective by speaking about the needs and challenges of people who are blind. In addition, NYS Governor’s Office Regional Director Allison Epstein, Senator Bill Larkin, Assemblyman Frank Skartados, County Executive Edward Diana, County Legislator Jim Kulisek and Mayor Nick Valentine delivered their perspectives of the role Independent Living plays in the community.

IL provided demonstrations of assistive technology, including closed circuit television and screen reader software, which allow access to the written word and electronic media for people who would not otherwise be able to read it themselves due to visual impairments. In an effort to help guests “see through the eyes of the visually impaired,” CBVH made glasses available, simulating how the world looks to people with various types of visual impairments. Ms. Epstein, Assemblyman Skartados and Mr. Kulisek wore blindfolds and walked outside with the assistance of sighted guides.

Reporters from the Mid-Hudson Times and Sentinel and a camera crew from Cable 6 News provided on-site coverage of the event.

**Did You Know?**

- Visual impairment is one of the 10 most frequent causes of disability in America.
- There are 110,000 legally blind non-institutionalized people in New York State. Of this population, it is estimated that 41,000 individuals are between the ages of 22 and 64, and that one in ten are totally blind. (Source: 2000 U.S. Census)

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**Independent Living Awarded Assistive Technology Contract with NYS Commission for the Blind (CBVH)**

Independent Living is proud to announce that the organization has been awarded a contract from CBVH to provide technology assessments and training for individuals who are blind and visually impaired in the Orange, Ulster, Sullivan and Dutchess county region.

Persons with visual impairments can now come to the Center to receive training, and to practice or upgrade their technology skills while awaiting job placement. IL staff will also be able to give technical assistance to those outside the center— at college campuses or on the job. The technology will also be available to seniors and others in the community who might not otherwise have access to such devices.

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DOMINIQUE DIPETRO: YOUNG CHAMPION

We always suspected that Dominique “Nikki” DiPietro was a champion, and our suspicions were confirmed when the 105th Airlift Wing at the Stewart Air National Guard base in Newburgh, NY honored her for her personal successes during the 11th Annual Young Champions Ceremony on September 20th.

Each year since 1998, the Young Champions Program has recognized children in our community who have disabilities or life-threatening illnesses, for their spirit and accomplishments. Its goal is to inspire and encourage these children to pursue their self-determined goals and attain their maximum potential. The award focuses on the honorees’ accomplishments in overcoming barriers and stereotypes which are too-often present in the larger culture.

Nikki has never let society’s assumptions about “disability” affect her ability to be an active member of her peer group. She welcomes questions about her Cerebral Palsy or her wheelchair as an opportunity to educate people and discuss others’ reactions with an open mind.

At 16, she is an active National Junior Honor Society Student and also a proud member of IL’s Learning Enrichment After-School Program (LEAP). Nikki enjoys typical activities like going to the movies, summer camp, shopping, and spending time with her family and friends.

Nikki and ten other youngsters, ages 9-16, received the Young Champions Medal of Honor at a ceremony, followed by lunch and a tour of the hangar and aircraft at the base. Her family and her fan club from Independent Living attended.

Nikki told IL that it was an experience she will never forget! All of us at IL are honored to call Nikki our friend and wish her the best in all her endeavors!

JOB FAIR CONNECTS JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

On Thursday, October 15th, 2009 at the Cornerstone Residence on Broadway, in Newburgh, Independent Living, Inc. sponsored a diversity job fair. Over 250 job-seekers came to the event armed with resumes for employers who were looking to fill a broad range of positions. There was no cost to participate for either employers or job-seekers at the event. “It was a great opportunity for employers to recruit qualified, reliable employees, and to receive support from state and local human service organizations, including tax credits and other incentives,” said David Owens, vocational case manager at Independent Living, Inc. The event also provided trained and skilled consumers with opportunities to consider and apply for open positions on the spot.* Participating employers included AFLAC, Combined Life Insurance, Crystal Run Healthcare, Empire Blue Cross, Fedex, Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union, Massachusetts Mutual, Nine West, Occupations, Orange & Rockland Utilities, Parse 3, Pathstone, Ralph Lauren Factory Store, Social Security Administration, Time Warner Cable, Valley View Home Care and Wellcare.

Co-sponsors of the Diversity Job Fair with Independent Living, Inc. included the Association for the Visually Impaired, AHRC, Capabilities Partnership, Inc., Orange Works, Local Business Advisory Council, Orange and Sullivan County Employment Alliance Network (OSCEAN) and VESID.

* More than 20 applicants have already been hired, as of November 1st!
**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.

**Believing and Achieving Come to Life!**

In the last issue of our newsletter, we profiled the five individuals participating in our Supported Employment pilot program. We are very happy to report that four of the five have found jobs: Heather is working at Hannaford’s in Vails Gate; Naomi is working at the Children’s Corner Learning Center in New Windsor; Robert is working at Joe’s Pizza in the Town of Newburgh, and Milton is a peer mentor for students participating in the Learning Enrichment After School Program at Independent Living. Our sincere congratulations go out to all of them as well as their respective employers!

**Doing Good Sometimes Costs Nothing**

Look how much you’ve contributed to Independent Living by searching and shopping online through Goodsearch.com!

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With the holiday season right around the corner, you can give twice at no extra cost to yourself! And it’s easy: just go to www.goodsearch.com, type in Independent Living – Newburgh in the box to show who you Goodsearch for, and follow the prompts to make it your default web browser.