COMING SOON TO MIDDLETOWN & MONTICELLO…

This fall, we will be opening new Independent Living service centers in Middletown and Monticello, as a result of new contracts with New York State Education Department (ACCES-VR). These new office locations will provide greater access to our services by people with disabilities living in Western Orange County and Sullivan County.

We have also been granted new funding by the NYS Office of Mental Health to provide hospital diversion services, in collaboration with the Orange County Department of Mental Health and Mobile Mental Health. This program is designed to assist individuals with psychiatric disabilities by providing proactive peer outreach and engagement services. The overall goal is to reduce hospital admissions and assist individuals in achieving a better quality of life. Our peer diversion specialists will be demand-responsive to the needs of individuals referred by the hospital emergency departments, Mobile Mental Health, the Orange County provider network and the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team.

In these challenging economic times, with more people seeking our services than ever before, we are grateful to be able to expand supports to people in need in our community.

In Memoriam

MARIO CIPOLLINE, HUMBLE SERVANT OF HUMANITY.

Whether it was bringing fresh herbs and vegetables from his garden to share with everyone at the office, or calling the bus company to alert them that a woman using a wheelchair was getting left behind at the bus stop every day because the driver couldn’t see her, to stepping out of his role as advocate for housing and into his role as Good Samaritan and paying the rent so a veteran would not be homeless, Mario was a man of action.

Mario worked at Independent Living, Inc. since 2010, but he worked for the independence of people with disabilities all his life. He is deeply missed, personally and professionally.

“He was my Secret Santa last Christmas: he was a very friendly and generous man.” (Rose)

“His desire to absorb and share knowledge was unparalleled. He was so thorough and attentive to details.” (Stu)

“He was so dynamic, generous, kind, compassionate, and passionate about many things: his faith, solutions for homelessness, respect for all people, disability rights, social inclusion, the betterment of our community…the list goes on.” (Anne)

“He was a star in New York State in developing accessible housing and helping people live in better homes. I had great respect for him and am saddened by his passing and the loss to our community. The world needs more people like Mario.” (Rob)

Mario touched many lives. We are all affected by this loss. Deepest sympathy to his wife and family.
BACKYARD BBQ FUN!

Over 200 guests of all ages enjoyed a fun-filled day of games, music, raffles and all-you-can-eat food with family and friends at Independent Living’s Backyard BBQ fundraiser at Thomas Bull Memorial Park on Sunday, June 5th.

Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union (HVFCU) sponsored the event, and employee volunteers helped with decorations, games and parking. Eric Rassin (DJ Razz), provided lively music throughout the afternoon, and Larry Siegel joined the festivities with his guitar and creative vocals which added merriment and induced a little spontaneous line dancing. The basket raffle was a big hit, rivaled only by the cupcake-throwing contest (pun intended): Board Member Jeff Sculley, who volunteered to be the target of the cupcake toss, found himself covered from head to toe with whipped cream. Who’d have guessed so many little kids had such great aim?

Balloon creations ranged from simple animals to elaborate headgear; kids and grownups of all ages and abilities had a great time playing kickball, and enjoying Rita’s Ices to top off the superb menu provided by Loughran’s Catering.

Themed baskets were donated by Brooks Funeral Home; Rider, Weiner & Frankel, PC; Sedore & Company; 1st Presbyterian Church of Washingtonville; Walden Federal; The Byne Group; Prisms Promotions; Orange County Trust; R.I. Suresky; Coffee System of the Hudson Valley; Inspire; The Palombo Group; Maggie Abrams, Maureen Crush, Lucia Granite and other generous individuals. To see more photos and a complete listing of BBQ sponsors and donors, please visit our website. Thanks to all who came out to support us, as well as those who couldn’t make it but contributed. We’ll definitely do this again!

Photos by Cheryl Fils-Aime, Cherfoto Images, Harriman, NY
FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT

Ben Lohrke – “Employee of the Month”

In June, Ben Lohrke was named “Employee of the Month” at True Value Hardware Store in Pine Bush. “This award was not just given to Ben; he earned it by working hard,” said General Manager, Al Howard. Both Howard and his assistant Denise Vega agreed that Ben is “Mr. Quick Draw” on the Walkie-Talkie radio.

Independent Living’s Senior Job Developer and Coaching Specialist Michael Collins, referred Ben to True Value. He was hired in April and quickly became a valued and dedicated employee. “So often, the talents of individuals with disabilities are overlooked when in fact they add diversity to the workplace and thrive in supportive business environments,” says Collins. “Kudos to True Value Hardware, Pine Bush, for setting an exemplary model for others to emulate.”

Warmest congratulations from all of us at Independent Living, Inc. to Ben for this well-deserved honor, and best wishes for continued success!

Independent Living’s Employment Services Team works with people with a wide range of disabilities to help them prepare for, locate and, most importantly, succeed in meaningful employment. Please visit our website to read more about successful employment outcomes.

ADA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Executive Director Doug Hovey and several staff members of Independent Living, Inc. attended a celebration of the 21st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at the Rockland Independent Living Center, at which Julie Cardone, a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the NY State Commission for the Blind (CBVH), was honored for her work in assisting people across the region to access services. “We all need guidance and help finding our way,” said Julie. “This award meant so much to me. It made me remember that the starting point for all of us is having access to what is available.” Julie coordinates a support group for people who are blind and visually impaired that meets at Independent Living’s Newburgh office on the second Tuesday of every month from 6-8 p.m. Members of the group come from far and wide -- Rockland County, Kingston, Middletown and Beacon.

At a recent meeting, participants were entertained by Avenger, a local band whose leader and keyboard artist is Marie Collard, a member of the support group. Independent Living, Inc. is the only non-blindness agency in New York State to hold a contract with CBVH to provide assistive technology training and evaluations.
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, Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocacy and support, Medicaid Service Coordination, Access to Home, Mental Health Case Management, Hospital Diversion & Bridger Services, and Peer Advocacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

At 111 Broadway, Newburgh, NY:

- **National Wellness Week** – Sept. 19th - 25th
  
  *Visit our website for a listing of Wellness Center activities.*

- **Diversity Job Fair** – Oct. 13th from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

At 5 Washington Terrace, Newburgh, NY:

- **American Sign Language (ASL) Classes** – Tuesdays, beginning Oct. 11th from 6 – 7:30 p.m.

- **White Cane Awareness Day Celebration** – Oct. 14th from 9:30 – 11 a.m.

- **Friends of Independence Tours** – Nov. 3rd & Dec. 1st from 5:15 – 6:15 p.m.

- **Support Group for people who are blind and visually impaired** – Nov. 8th & Dec. 6th from 6 – 8 p.m.

Did You Know?

One in ten children has a serious mental health condition, but only one-third receive treatment.

*Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)*

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.