Promoting Choice, Self-Determination and Total Participation

Annual Report 2014-2015

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

I’m honored to have served on the Independent Living, Inc. Board of Directors since 2008, and proud to have been elected as Board President this past year. Like so many others who live, work and pass through the City of Newburgh, for a long time before I got involved with the organization I was unaware of the services offered by Independent Living, Inc., in spite of the prominent location of its administrative headquarters and service center on the corner of Lake Street and Washington Terrace. Then, through a colleague, I was invited to take a tour of the Center which marked a turning point in my life and an unprecedented commitment to the mission and vision of this organization.

I have been privileged to get to know the staff and many of the individuals served by Independent Living, Inc. over the last several years. What I have learned about disability issues, stigma, and other significant challenges faced by people of all ages with disabilities of all types in our community, has made me passionate about inclusion and equal opportunities – two of the things for which the Executive Director and staff at Independent Living consistently advocate. My colleagues on the Board are equally dedicated to the sustenance and growth of this organization as we are keenly aware of the need in our community for the excellent services it provides, and the enormous gap in available resources.

In spite of funding reductions and ever-changing trends and factors in the human services industry, each year we see a growing number of people with complex needs at our Centers in Newburgh, Middletown and Monticello. Thanks to strong leadership, a dedicated staff, and supportive community members, we have always risen to meet the challenges and I fully expect that we will continue to do so into the future.

Sincerely,
Charles A. Walwyn, III
Charles A. Walwyn, III, President of the Board

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

July 26, 2015 marked the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - the first civil rights law for people with disabilities and a national landmark that has opened up so many opportunities for people with disabilities to live, work, study, travel and participate fully in social, cultural and recreational activities without discrimination. Independent Living, Inc. has been promoting the integration and inclusion of people with disabilities since our inception 28 years ago. We find there is still much to be done to eliminate stigma and remove environmental barriers that prevent people from living in the mainstream of community life.

In addition to our efforts of providing advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, this past year has produced tangible progress in creating a model of integration called “Independence Square” - a 74 unit, family apartment complex that has helped to improve the landscape in the City of Newburgh.

More importantly, this beautiful, three-story building on the corner of Lake Street and Washington Terrace just adjacent to our office building is now home to 175 people! We had over 800 applicants for the 74 units, demonstrating the tremendous need for safe, affordable housing in the area. Each of the tenants has a unique story; what they have in common is that moving into Independence Square has been a positive game-changer for the direction of their lives, whether they have a disability or not.

Independence Square is a metaphor that symbolizes independence and freedom. It stands as a testimonial to the power of partnerships: public and private funding sources contributed to this project; support from community groups and collaboration among provider organizations helped bring it to fruition, and it stands in contradiction to any negativity about urban renewal. It is a source of enduring pride and ongoing joy each day to observe children on the playground, families and friends enjoying the picnic pavilion, people coming and going to work, and life as it should be for all people. We are truly grateful to Jonah Mandelbaum, owner of Warwick Properties, for making this project happen on time and on budget!

We consider stable housing as one of the most basic needs for people to be independent, yet there are many other important issues to be addressed. In the past year, we contributed to the new transportation plan for the Greater Newburgh area, providing improved access to jobs, health care, shopping and other community amenities. Based on exceptional performance in serving the needs of children with developmental disabilities from birth through age 5, our funding for the Mid-Hudson Regional Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) has been renewed for another five years. We have added staff members to provide education advocacy for students ages 5-21, and to work with students who have psychiatric diagnoses to ensure that they have the adequate resources and support to successfully live in the community. Our peer mental health hospital transition (“Bridger”) and diversion services have been expanded to assist individuals who have been treated at Catskill Regional Medical Center or Rockland Psychiatric Center as they return back to the community; we have also added a peer parent to work with families in Sullivan County.

It has been a very exciting year and I am grateful for the support of our Board of Directors, staff, donors, sponsors and community partners as we continue to address the emerging needs of people with disabilities in our region.

Wishing you wellness in the year to come,

Doug Hovey
Doug Hovey, Chief Executive Officer
CONSUMER DIRECTED PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES (OPTIONS)
For persons with disabilities, including seniors, OPTIONS offers a unique alternative to traditional attendant care at home, giving individuals the opportunity to hire and manage their own personal attendants. Available to qualified individuals in Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Rockland and Dutchess Counties.

DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING SERVICES
Providing a bridge between the Deaf and Hearing cultures in Orange, Ulster, Sullivan and Dutchess Counties, this program is actively engaged in community outreach and education, employment, advocacy, service coordination, counseling and technical support.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTION CENTER (ECDC)
Providing disability-related service and information to families of children from birth to 5 years of age, and offering technical support to schools, day care centers, and child care professionals in Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
Contracted to conduct work-readiness assessments and job placement services for NY State Department of

FAMILY & STUDENT SERVICES
An array of services are available for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, including education advocacy and transition supports for students between the ages of 6 and 21. An after-school learning enrichment program, a Community Independence Program that offers independent living skills training, and a Saturday activity/respite program.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS
Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an approach designed to assist individuals to plan their life and supports. Based on the philosophy that the individual being served by a process should be the primary shareholder in that process, services promote self-help, equal access, peer role modeling, personal growth and empowerment so that, consistent with the Olmstead Ruling of the US Supreme Court, people with disabilities may live in the least restrictive setting of their choice.

MEDICAID SERVICE COORDINATION
Aimed at helping individuals with Developmental Disabilities to make connections with needed services and community supports that enable them to live with the maximum degree of independence.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Aimed at helping people with psychiatric disabilities, including those at continuing risk of homelessness, to overcome stigma, connect with needed supports, build constructive relationships with peers, advocate on their own behalf, define and pursue their personal journeys to wellness, and make the transition from system dependence to independence.

Transition and Diversion Services - Serving persons with psychiatric & co-occurring addictive disabilities with the goal of aiding in the prevention of hospitalization and homelessness, this program provides wrap-around support, including core independent living services. Our Bridges are on-site and on-call at local hospitals to assist individuals being discharged from the mental health units to connect with necessary supports for their continuing journey of recovery.

Forensic Connections Program
- In collaboration with the Orange County Department of Mental Health and the Port Jervis City Community, this program assists individuals ages 16 and up with mental illness or co-occurring disorders who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Recovery Center Services
- Reach One - Proactive peer engagement services for adults with psychiatric diagnoses and/or chemical addiction in Dutchess, Ulster, Orange and Rockland Counties, in collaboration with PEOPLe, Inc. and the Mental Health Association of Rockland County. The Mid-Hudson Regional Recovery Center provides traditional peer support, educational opportunities, integrated social and recreational activities, assistance with employment and health home integration.

Young Adult Outreach & Engagement Program
- Developed for young adults in Orange County between the ages of 18 and 25, to assist them in identifying priorities, skills and strategies to overcome challenges and achieve the individual, self-determined goals. While learning independent living skills and constructive tools for self-expression through mentoring, peer counseling and life coaching, young adults may also participate on the advisory board to further develop the program.

Promoting Choice, Self-Determination and Total Participation

ACCESS TO HOME SERVICES
Home modification services to help persons with disabilities to remain at home, or return home, and live with dignity in the community setting of their choosing.

ADA CONSULTATION/ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION SERVICES
Directed to individuals, local municipalities, commercial property owners, employers, businesses, schools and provider agencies, these services play a vitally important role in ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

BENEFITS ADVISEMENT
Offering consultative and supportive services aimed at increasing independence for recipients of SSDI and/or SSI benefits throughout the Hudson Valley by providing information and education on available work incentives.
Our Early Childhood Direction Center, which provides disability-related service and information to families of children from birth to 5 years of age, and offers technical support to schools, day care centers, and child care professionals in Orange, Sullivan, Ulster and Dutchess Counties, has been operated by Independent Living, Inc. since 2005. More than 65 trainings are provided each year on topics ranging from behavior management to making the transition from pre-school special education to kindergarten.

Mid-Hudson Regional Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC)

Building on excellent results achieved by our mental health peer “bridgers” in Orange County over the years, we are now working in collaboration with the Sullivan County Department of Community Services, Catskill Regional Medical Center and Rockland Psychiatric Center to assist individuals who have been hospitalized due to mental health issues to make a successful transition back to community living. Bridgers offer peer counseling and supports related to housing, employment and social connectedness. We have also established a peer parent position at our Monticello service center to engage parents of children with psychiatric conditions and offer resources and support to address any challenges they may be experiencing.

WHO WE SERVE

Headquartered in Newburgh, with satellite offices in Middletown and Monticello, Independent Living, Inc. serves people with disabilities throughout the Mid-Hudson Region. Many of our programs, including our Early Childhood Direction Center, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Medicaid Service Coordination, Reach One and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Services, have a strong presence in our neighboring counties and work cooperatively with area agencies to address the needs and represent the interests of persons with disabilities.

Independent living means controlling and directing your own life and being as self-sufficient as possible. It means taking risks and being allowed to succeed and fail on your own terms. It means participating in community life and pursuing activities of your own choosing. Whether we’re providing peer counseling to a newly disabled adult or offering technical assistance through partnership with a local industry or municipality, Independent Living, Inc. serves as an important voice for systems change, and a vital resource for persons with disabilities within our local and regional communities.
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- Continued on page 10
- Continued from page 9

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Lisa Silverstone
Sean Soliva
Daniel Southard
Stefanie Sovak
Julie Stainton
Douglas Sturomski
The Bechtle Family Charitable Fund

We have made every effort to include all and to respect the wishes of those who requested to remain anonymous, but please let us know of any errors or omissions.

The Help Center
The J M Foundation
The Rx Diaries
Karolyn Thompson
William Thorpe
Ina Tietjen
Rosy Torres
Diane Troeller
Pawel Urbanik
William Vacca
Cindi Vasta
Julie Vesei
Howard Wagner
Sonia Wagner
Charles A. Walwyn, III
Sharon "Jellybean" Warantz
WB Mason
Ron & Carol Weathers
Marjorie Weidkam
Andrew Weitant
Roy & Paula Weyant
Rachel & Karsten Wilson
Stuart & Ilene Wizwer
Joseph Wojciechowski
Alta Wood
Derrick & Allison Wynkoop
XLT Businessvision Consulting LLC
Gail Yonnetti
Dawn Young
Debra Zambito

SERVICE STATISTICS

- Advocacy / Legal
- ADA/ AT
- Benefits Advisement
- Children, Youth, and Family
- Collaborative/ Inter Agency
- Employment
- Housing and Shelter
- Independent Living Skills
- Information and Referral
- Mental Health
- Recreational
- Transportation

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- Transportation

Key Services

Key Source of Revenue

- NYS Education Department 8%
- Office for People With Developmental Disabilities 7%
- Office of Mental Health 14%
- Department of Health (Medicaid) 68%
- Other 3%

100%

1500

1000

500

0

Number of People Served

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11

12
Home – where independence begins. It’s hard to find safe, affordable, accessible housing in our area, but Independence Square has become home to 74 individuals and families – people from many different cultures, at different stages in their lives. All the residents feel extremely fortunate to have secured an apartment there. All have different reasons to be happy; all have different stories. More than 800 applications were received for the 57 units; a lottery process was used to select the tenants.

Pat and Brian sat together at the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Independence Square. “Do you believe we are really here?” they tearfully asked one another. After losing her home in Hurricane Irene, Pat had to move in with her son, Brian and they have been sharing his small apartment ever since. As she watched Independence Square being built day by day, she dreamed and prayed that she would have the opportunity to have a safe place of her own once more. She knew a lot of other people wanted to live there too, and worried that she would not be one of the chosen, so she was overjoyed to learn that her name had been selected by lottery for an apartment at Independence Square. Brian told us how important it was to him to have his mother living nearby (but not sharing the bathroom) in a place she could afford. “I can see the rooftop of her building from my deck and go to bed at peace each night knowing that she’s in a good place and I can get to her easily if she needs anything.”

Kimmy is living on her own for the first time, and she is so happy as anyone can tell from the big smile always on her face. When she moved in, her sister stayed over for the first few nights; however, when she arrived after work on the third night, Kimmy handed her pillow to her and said, “Go home; I’m fine. You will be too.”

Independence Square offers many amenities: a playground, community rooms, two elevators; all apartments are accessible and several have been adapted to the special needs of residents. There are roll-under sinks, roll-in showers and lowered counters for individuals who use wheelchairs; audio-visual features have been added for tenants who are blind or Deaf, and automatic door openers to accommodate mobility impairments.

"Millions of Americans know that feeling of walking through the front door of their own home for the first time - the feeling of reaching for opportunity and finding it." - Kamala Harris

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned." - Maya Angelou

To become a member or for more information, contact our Development Office.

A society grows great when men and women plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." -- Unknown

Integrity, Respect, Customer Focus

The Heritage Society was founded in 2010 by the Board of Directors to sustain the well-being and growth of the Independent Living System. It is a planned giving program designed to ensure that the services and resources that the Independent Living System provides remain available and grow to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their families – today, tomorrow, and for generations to come. Its goals are:

- To provide seed money for programs and services that are not presently available
- To supplement available funding that is restricted or inadequate to meet program needs
- To provide matching funds when required for grant opportunities
- To build an endowment fund to generate operating revenues
- To provide scholarships and support for individuals with disabilities that would otherwise be unavailable
- To reduce annual fundraising costs and more effectively utilize development resources

www.myindependentliving.org
Since 1987, Independent Living, Inc. has served as a common voice for persons with disabilities living in our community. A freestanding, locally controlled, nonprofit agency operated by people with disabilities, we offer a wide range of programs and services dedicated to ensuring universal access and opportunity in every aspect of community life.

Our efforts are directed to individuals of all ages having any disability, as well as to families, businesses, agencies, and municipalities. We are committed to the universal elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers, as well as assisting individuals with disabilities to successfully make the transition from system–dependency to independence. Over the past twenty-eight years, Independent Living, Inc. has touched the lives of literally thousands of people. Having a uniquely recipient-based perspective and approach to addressing disability issues, we have consistently exemplified cost-effective ways of improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

During the past year, our Center provided a diversity of important resources to residents of our community. We assisted thousands of persons with disabilities, family members, educators, service providers, public officials and businesses. The impetus for all that we do derives from a philosophy that is no different today than it was twenty-eight years ago when Independent Living, Inc. was founded: we believe that the widespread poverty, segregation, and isolation of people with disabilities is unacceptable, should not be tolerated, and requires immediate change. We are dedicated to making positive, systemic changes through advocacy, education and legislation, and to providing full access, power, and self-determination for all people with disabilities. With an unwavering focus on integration, community living and assisting people to reach their greatest potential, we support a culture that encourages risk-taking, creativity, and innovation. To address broader public policy issues, we are committed and deliberate in speaking about the problems and obstacles faced by people with disabilities. We exist as an organization that on all levels abides by a living code of ethics which mandates respect, appreciation, honesty, integrity, empathy, trust, active involvement, and accountability.

We will work tirelessly toward reshaping the culture of our society into one that is truly inclusive of all its citizens.