At Independent Living, Inc. (ILI), we’re privileged to share new beginnings with the people we serve. It is both joyful and encouraging to witness their progress and we are delighted to hear of their successes when they return, as they so often do, to tell us about their accomplishments and say thank you for the assistance and support they received.

Looking Back and Ahead (continued from page 3)

“Warren” is a young man who has autism, who had become severely depressed as a result of a very dysfunctional home life. He moved into his own apartment at Independence Square in June and is delighted to have found a safe, affordable place to live that is located near his job. He is enjoying simple freedoms such as being able to maintain a clean living environment, invite friends over to watch a movie or play video games, and control how his earnings are spent.

When we met “Angie” a 38 year old woman with bi-polar and posttraumatic stress disorders, paranoia, and severe agoraphobia, she was frustrated, angry, and had lost hope because she had been shuffled from one provider to another and felt she was not getting anywhere. She did not feel comfortable going to a therapist but needed support, so our initial engagement was by telephone. Angie’s priorities were to develop concentration, learn coping techniques for anxiety, make plans for her future, and increase consistency and follow through. Having created safety plans at home to reduce paranoia, Angie has become more open to different perspectives and possibilities. She has mastered several anxiety-reducing techniques and now has sufficient confidence to leave her home as she develops confidence in social interactions. Angie is now able to recognize and address symptoms and is better able to manage her anger and other negative emotions, taking walks alone or with friends for the first time in 8 years.

“Marco” is hard-of-hearing and his 1st language is not English. Despite holding a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering, Marco had difficulty finding work. Through the job development efforts of ILI’s employment specialist and ACCES-VR, Marco has been gainfully and happily employed and his employer is delighted to have found such a dedicated and competent worker. (continued on page 2)
**New Board Members**

JoAnne Nanton  
JoAnne Nanton has worked with independent living centers in the US Virgin Islands and New York since 1986; assisting with implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act since 1993. She has always been passionate about resources and services to address the needs of people with disabilities. Originally from the island nation of Trinidad, JoAnne graduated from the University of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas with a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work. She also pursued studies in Assistive Technology, later receiving certification in Benefits Planning at Cornell University. A talented poet, author and designer, JoAnne currently resides in the Town of Newburgh and is active in her church. “I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve on the Board at ILI, as this will allow me to continue my lifelong mission of creating awareness regarding disability issues and promoting equal access.”

Joseph Ranni, Esq.  
Joseph Ranni, Esq. founded the Ranni Law Firm in Florida, New York and conducts his practice based on the philosophy that a good attorney takes the time to learn what is important to his clients; understand their goals and priorities, and explain their legal rights and options in order to help them come to an intelligent decision regarding what is right for their individual situation. “That’s empowerment,” says Joe who specializes in employment, elder law, special education and disability rights. Joe received his law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1987 and Masters of Law degree in Elder Law from Stetson College of Law in 2014. He has a long history of service to the community, as a former judge for the Town of Chester; Member of the NY State Surrogate Decision Making Committee; chester Academy Mock Trial competition; past president of the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation, and with the Orange County Citizens Foundation.

Looking Back and Ahead (continued from page 1)  
“Murray” was hospitalized as a result of severe depression, and first began working with ILI’s peer mental health “Bridger” while he was a patient in the behavioral health unit, to address issues of loneliness and social anxiety. With new coping skills, Martin now has the will to live and has expressed the hope that one day he, as a peer mentor, will be able to assist someone else who may be contemplating suicide.

“Eric” has a physical disability and was incarcerated. He did not want to be reliant on Social Services, but had difficulty finding work after being released from prison. In collaboration with his Employment and Training Administration (ETA) caseworker, ILI’s employment specialist directed Eric to a job opportunity at a local factory and arranged for him to take a tour of the facility to determine if he would physically be able to perform the job tasks. Eric was granted an interview and hired. He continues to enjoy his work and has found stable housing.

“Carmen” is elderly, lives alone, and was referred to us after being evaluated at the behavioral health unit. She needs some assistance with activities of daily living, and is terrified of being alone for extended periods of time. Carmen was afraid that she would have to go into an assisted living facility or nursing home. After consultation with her doctor and family members, Carmen decided to enroll in ILI’s consumer-directed home care program. This solved many problems for her and her family: not only is she able to stay in the apartment she loves, where she has lived for a long time, she is able to receive the care she needs and companionship provided by people she knows and trusts.

“Kathy” was able to overcome agoraphobia and severe anxiety with the support of independent living skills specialists and mental health peer advocates at ILI. Her initial accomplishments included doing laundry, going to the grocery store and using a cell phone. She later learned to use a computer and got an email account. Karen now works at a local grocery store and has developed a product designed to engage and entertain children that she hopes to market and sell.

“Phil” is Deaf and uses a wheelchair. In June he made a smooth transition from a group home to his own apartment at Independence Square. His Medicaid Service Coordinator at ILI trained Philip on how to use the adaptive equipment in his new apartment and arranged for an American Sign Language interpreter to assist Philip in communicating with the nurses who set up his care plan. For the first time in his life, Philip is living independently in the community.

“Janice” a 22 year old female, had dropped out of high school due to anxiety issues and was having trouble even leaving her house. After working on stress management and confidence building with ILI’s Young Adult Mentor for 3 months, she returned to GED classes and ultimately completed the course and was able to take the examination. This has opened up so many new opportunities for Janice.

(continued on page 4)