

LOIS CURTIS JUDY HEUMANN ALICE



Pioneers of Disability Rights

# 2023 IMPACT REPORT

Disability: A Part  
of the Human Experience



**Independent Living, Inc.**

5 Washington Terrace  
Newburgh, NY 12550

845-565-1162 | [www.MyIndependentLiving.org](http://www.MyIndependentLiving.org)





Newburgh



Middletown



Monticello

# Table of Contents

1-2 Letter from the CEO & Board Chair

---

3 Company Overview

---

4-5 Our Work

---

6-7 Organizational Growth

---

8 The ILL Brand

---

9-16 ILL Impact Report  
Independence  
Finding Community  
Inclusion  
Peer Services  
Advocacy

---

17 Funding Highlights

---

18 Future Outlook & Strategy

---

19 Because of You

---

# Message from the CEO



THANK YOU to my dedicated staff and board of directors, and to all our Friends of Independence who are committed to the mission of Independent Living! I am grateful to have the opportunity to serve our organization and community as CEO for Independent Living since our inception. I remember when we first developed the center in 1987, and thinking I'd invest the next 3-5 years developing the best organization possible to meet the growing needs of people with disabilities in our region. There's an old saying, people plan, and God laughs -- I have now entered my 37th year and still love Monday mornings!

For many years now, people with disabilities have come to play an increasingly vital role in the continuing evolution of the human services and health care systems. This has been accomplished, in no small measure, thanks to consumer-run, peer-centric organizations like Independent Living, Inc. that are committed to the empowering principles of advocacy, self-help, mutual support and personal recovery. Our work with individuals and in shaping systems continues to be an invaluable service that we provide to lead the evolution of the system, rather than be spectators.

Despite a difficult economy and challenges with recruitment and retention throughout the health and human services industry, we have one of the lowest turnover rates in the industry. This speaks volumes about the culture our employees have created -- a thriving and supportive environment that maximizes the individual talents of each of our employees, creating productive work teams to effectively meet the challenges faced by people with disabilities. There's no better role we can play than to help others help themselves, teaching self-advocacy and independent living skills, and connecting with employment. Most of our services are provided by highly trained and skilled individuals with lived experience. In 2023 we touched the lives of literally thousands of people with disabilities, family members and care takers, all of whom are such an important part of our network of services and support.

Our work doesn't happen in a vacuum. Effective partnerships with state and local government as well as other community-based organizations and businesses are essential in meeting consumer needs. We are thrilled to expand our partnerships throughout the region in connection with Coordinated Behavioral Health Services and Hudson Valley Care Coalition, two independent practice associations joining as one, and committed to enhancing the coordination of services for people with all types of disabilities. Nothing about us without us!

With gratitude,

  
Douglas Hovey

President and Chief Executive Officer

# Letter from the Board Chair



This past year, 2023, was another great year for Independent Living, Inc. I began my service as a board member in 2019, and now have the privilege of serving as the Chairman of the board. I couldn't be prouder and more impressed at the work that our center does locally and regionally, and the impact we have statewide as we advocate for systemic change. Since I first learned about independent living, I was immediately convinced this was an organization I could fully endorse – the mission and philosophy of supporting others to become self-sufficient to their fullest extent is something that resonated with me and was consistent with my personal beliefs. I can also appreciate the level of passion and diversity of talent that each of our board members brings to the organization, and for embracing the agency values of integrity, respect and customer focus. I am thrilled to serve as the chairman of the board of an organization that is actively engaged at every level of the health and human services system. This year we celebrate our 37th year of service to the region, the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the 25th anniversary of the Olmstead Decision of 1999, all major achievements for the disability community.

ILI has much work to do advocating for the rights and service needs of people with disabilities. We depend on our growing donor base for support in order to keep up with emerging demands; and we always remain committed to our organizational mission which is simply summed up as, "teach a person to fish and they will eat for a lifetime"! We are here to support the unique needs of every person with a disability we work with. As chairman, I'd like to thank all of the members of community who support us in our efforts toward improving quality of life for the people we serve. I am truly looking forward to a great year in 2024, filled with breaking down barriers and helping others to maximize their potential for independence!

Yours for a barrier free society!

*Chris Seger*

# Independent Living, Inc.



Independent Living, Inc. is a consumer-directed, cross-disability advocacy and service organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. Our vision is a barrier-free society with opportunities for all people to achieve their maximum potential.

With a comprehensive range of over 35 programs and services, we provide personalized support that empowers individuals to live independently, exercise control over their care decisions, and maintain their autonomy.

Grounded in the principles of the peer services movement, our organization is driven by lived experience, employing experts in their respective fields.

We are trusted partners and collaborators, offering guidance and expertise to Hudson Valley organizations in the realm of disability supports and services.

## Pioneers of Disability Rights



**Lois Curtis**, top left  
**Judy Heumann**, top right  
**Alice Wong**, bottom left  
**Ed Roberts**, bottom right

*Scan QR Code to learn more about our Disability Rights Trailblazers*



# IN OUR EMPOWERMENT ERA



What does it mean to know  
Independent Living Inc.  
exists?

”

That there's people out in the world that have so much love and care in their souls to take the time out of their days to fight for people with disabilities and mental health struggles. It warms my heart.

-Christina , ILI Consumer

2023



# Our Work

## Through our Key Service Areas:

We strive to be the bridge that supports individuals, regardless of age or disability, to embrace their full potential and thrive in a fully integrated and barrier-free society.

**Advocacy**

**Information  
& Referral**

**Peer  
Support**

**Benefits  
Advisement**

**Transition &  
Diversion**

**Consumer-  
Directed  
Care**





# Expansion of Services



Independent Living diligently evaluates the needs of the communities we serve, reaffirming our dedication to tailoring our services to meet those needs directly. As a result, we expanded our service offerings to include new initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

## Facilitated Enrollment

Provide outreach and assistance to individuals who may be under or uninsured to enroll in benefits such as Medicare.

## Safe Options Support

SOS Critical Time Intervention Teams will use an evidence-based approach to provide intensive outreach, engagement, and care coordination.

## ADA Policy & Advocacy

An expansion upon existing services, Independent Living, Inc. established an ADA Policy & Advocacy team to address local and legislative barriers.

## Youth Program

A service for individuals 18-25 who are aging out of school and/or the foster care system to be better connected to community supports and services.

## Recovery Center

Independent Living, Inc. opened our Recovery Center, dedicated to providing peer support to individuals in mental health or substance use recovery.

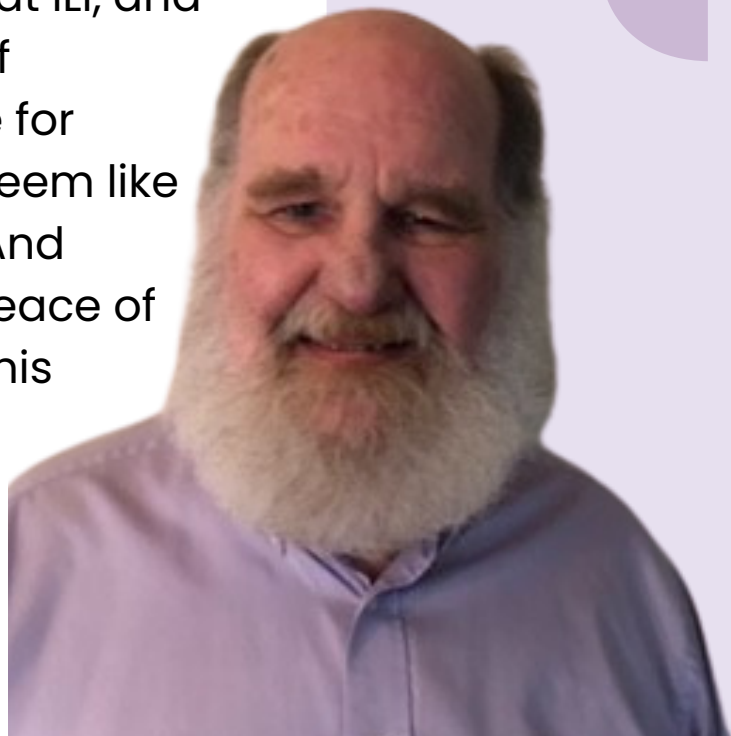


2023

Today, at the ripe young age of 76, I open my eyes every morning and humbly realize that I have value for others not despite my disabilities but because of them. This awakening has taken place during my years at ILI, and is the very source of the gift of compassion that I experience for others still facing what may seem like insurmountable challenges. And therein lies, at long last, the peace of knowing my true purpose in this marvelous journey called life.



**- John Harper**  
Independent Living  
Systems Advocate



# We have a new look!

Independent Living, Inc. went **PURPLE**. Purple is the internationally recognized color for **Disability Awareness**, which we decided to re-coin as **Disability Appreciation!**



# Our 2023 IMPACT

Embarking on the journey to access disability supports and services can feel overwhelming, especially when you're unsure where to begin.

## Independent Living, Inc. is here.

We offer comprehensive support and guidance tailored to individual needs and circumstances. With Independent Living, Inc., nobody is alone in their journey.

**5,983**

Individuals and their families received services from Independent Living, Inc. in 2023.

**102,600**

More than 102,600 individualized services were provided in 2023.

**76%**

Individuals served who accessed more than one Independent Living program.

**3%**

Increase in services provided to the community from 2022 to 2023.

**62,350**

Hours staff dedicated to providing services to our community.



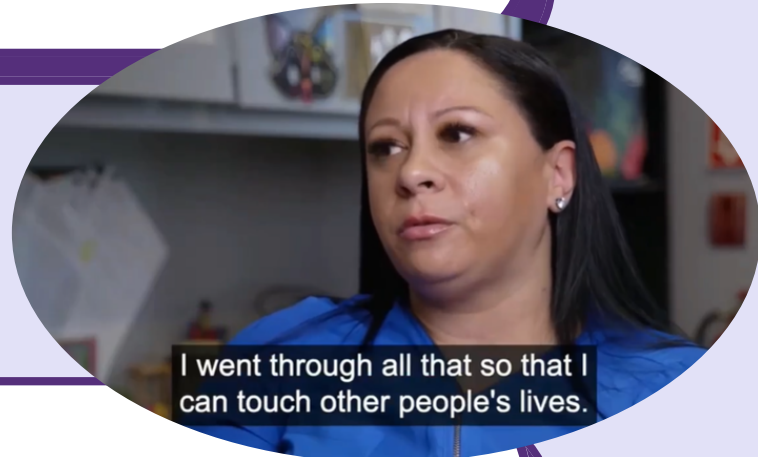
"When they said a peer could meet me where I was at, it was about my mental state, my soul's desires, the steps I would take to live a better life. They would meet me without judgment. They would come to me with understanding because they too lived and experienced their own traumas."

– Independent Living Onward Recovery Consumer



"My Peer [counselor] helped me battle my doubts of my falls and successes. He helped me take my life experiences, what so many have viewed as my detriments, and turn them into my unique strengths."

– Independent Living Onward Recovery Consumer



"IL helped me get my foot in the door of the services that I need. The people were more than just staff, they felt like family."

– Independent Living Consumer

2023

# IMPACT:



## 98%

of Self-Directed Care Consumers achieved a personal wellness goal in 2023

## 100%

of Community Independence Program participants achieved a wellness goal in 2023

## 80%

of individuals receiving Supported Employment services experienced an increased level of independence

*“Independent Living, Inc. – this name says it all. The greatest human dignity you can give a person regardless of their age or condition is to help them be as independent as possible. This is the hope that has been given to me now that I am working with Independent Living.”*

*– Independent Living Benefits Advisement Consumer*

## \$26,384,069.79

Cost Savings to New York State by preventing and terminating 261 Institutionalizations

## 7.8

Average years consumers have been consistently and stably housed in our Case Management Housing Program

## 8

Institutionalizations Terminated

## 253

Institutionalizations Prevented



# IMPACT:

# Finding



## In 2023, we held our first Home Care Gratitude Mixer

Encompassing the core values of Independent Home Care, the event offered guests a person-centered experience, providing an afternoon of gratitude, acknowledgments, celebrations, connections to community resources and services, food, activities, and empowerment.

*"Independent Home Care has significantly changed my family's life and the overall trajectory of my son's life."*

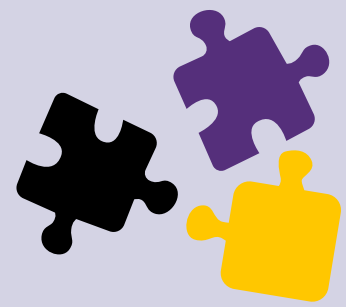
*– Independent Home Care Designated Representative*

60

New individuals using our consumer-directed home care program, allowing them to remain in their home rather than an institution

522,144

Hours of consumer-directed home care provided in 2023



# IMPACT: Inclusion

# 90%

Education Advocacy: 90% of students served achieved one or more goals for inclusion in a district placement and / or received more supports and services for their child.



*"I just wanted to write to you in praise of your Education Advocacy Program. I can't tell you how grateful we are for the expertise, advice and support. This has been an incredibly difficult year for our family, and walking into my son's most recent CSE meeting knowing that ILI was on our side gave me so much comfort. ILI was as invested as we were in getting our son the appropriate supports to succeed in school.*

*We have been requesting an IEP and co-teach class for our son for 5 years now, and with ILI's help we finally got him those supports. ILI helped us strategize before the meeting, supported us during the meeting, and celebrated with us afterwards. We are so relieved to enter next school year with adequate supports in place and we feel so much more optimistic about next school year."*

*-Parent Advocate*





2023

Home care means  
allowing people to stay  
in their homes. It means  
loving them the way  
they want to be loved.

–Marie

IHC Designated Representative

# IMPACT: Peer Services



Grounded in the principles of the peer services movement, our organization is driven by lived experience, employing experts in their respective fields.

Peer Services at Independent Living, Inc. encompass a unique and invaluable approach to supporting individuals with lived experience with disability, substance use, mental health, and/or trauma and recovery. Peers are individuals who connect with members or program participants through the lens of their own personal experiences, serving as allies and guides in the journey toward independence, recovery, and wellness.

1,159

People in crisis directly served by Independent Living, Inc.

90%

Of the **1,322** referrals received from PeerRX accepted services from Independent Living, Inc.

96

Number of individuals experiencing a non-fatal overdose who received follow-up support

532

Peer-to-Peer Community Groups were held and offered support through lived experience

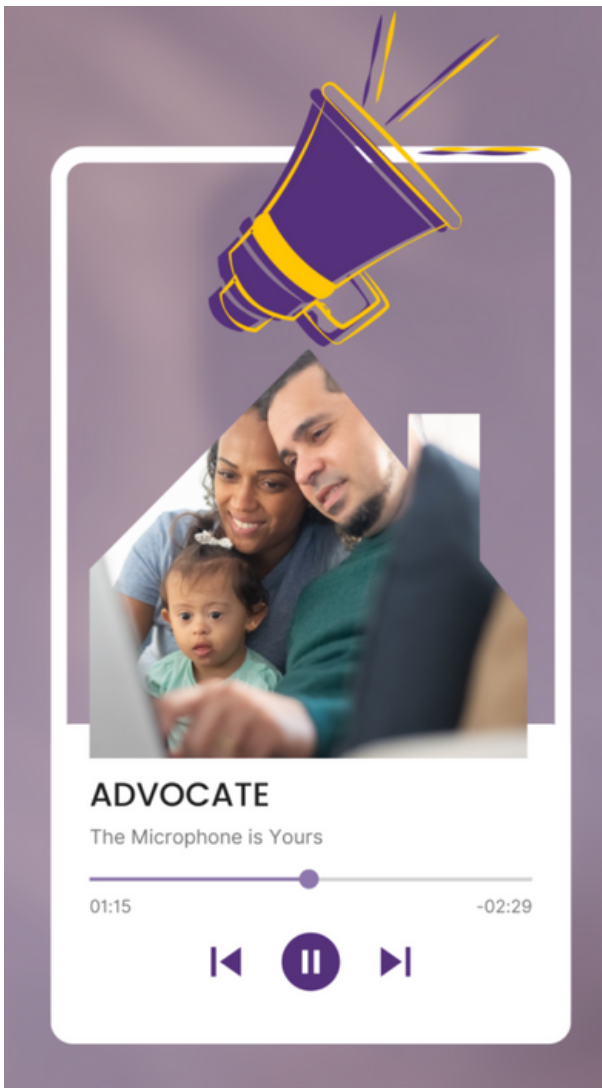
599

Peer Transition Groups were held for 3,077 participants transitioning out of hospitals and into the community

406

Average number of days a person works with a peer throughout their recovery process

# IMPACT: Advocacy



57

Educational Action Alerts were disseminated



300+

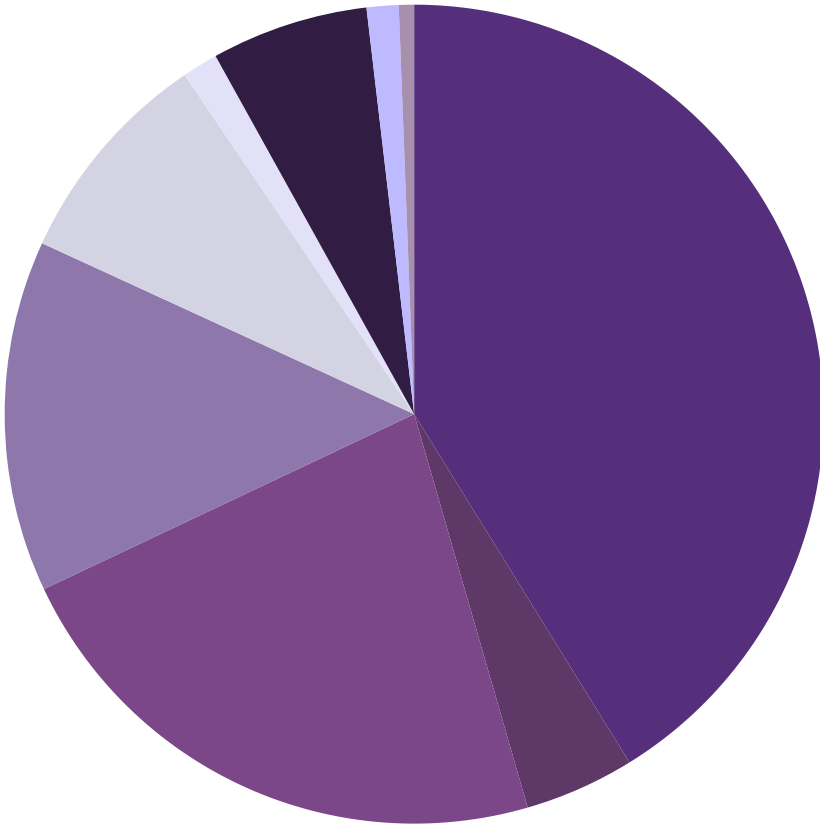
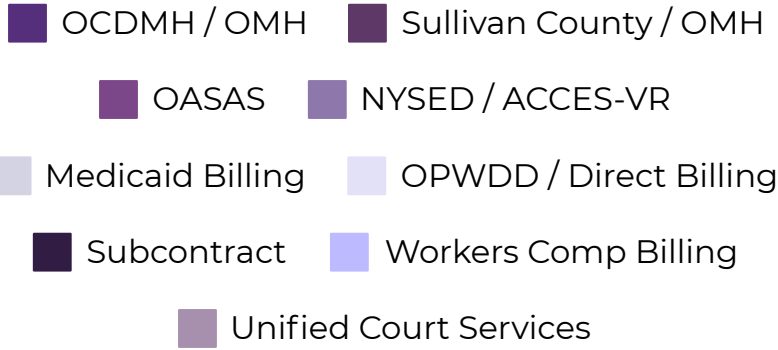
More than 300 parents attended at least one of the 16 trainings provided by the Education Advocacy department, learning about Disability Rights and expanding upon advocacy skills

121

Independent Living, Inc. assisted 121 individuals in obtaining employment, advocating with employers to provide reasonable accommodations, create jobs for people with disabilities, or to hire a person with a disability based on their interests and associated skills



# Funding Highlights 2023



**92%**

of Independent Living, Inc. funding goes directly to Programs and Services.

Medicaid Billing	8.68%
Office of People with Developmental Disabilities	1.41%
New York State Education Department (NYSED)	13.88%
Orange County Department of Mental Health (OCDMH)	0.96%
OCDMH/ OMH Office of Mental Health	40.23%
Sullivan County/ OMH	4.34%
Subcontract	6.20%
Unified Court Services	0.60%
Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)	22.45%
Workers Comp Billing	1.26%

# Future Outlook

## In 2024, we look Beyond Barriers to Build an Accessible Future.

At its core, Beyond Barriers represents our collective commitment to breaking down the physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers that prevent the full participation of individuals with disabilities in our community.

Access, equality, and inclusion lie beyond these barriers; they are the pillars upon which we strive to build a more inclusive society.



## Strategic Plan 2023-2025

**Integrity      Customer Focus      Respect**

Independent Living, Inc. embarked on a strategic planning process to proactively adapt to evolving needs, align with its mission, and ensure long-term effectiveness in enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities.

### Advocate

Change systems through advocacy.



### Community

Expand reach into the community through community outreach and engagement.

### Human Resources

Cultivate a qualified, dedicated, compassionate, and satisfied staff.



### Advancement

Diversify and increase funding streams to achieve sustainable programmatic growth.

# Friends of Independence

Our **Friends of Independence** are passionate advocates for breaking down barriers and promoting equal rights and access for people with disabilities. Members of Independent Living's Friends of Independence Society are committed to fostering inclusivity, supporting the mission of Independent Living, Inc., and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest.

- Allbar Steel Inc.**
- James Distefano**
- MediSked, LLC**
- Mutual of America**
- Ranni Law Firm**
- RBT CPAs, LLP**
- Rhinebeck Bank**
- Standback General Contracting**
- Walden Savings Bank**
- William & Carol Moriris**



## 2023 Event Sponsors

- Rhinebeck Bank
- NFP
- Mutual of America
- Hudson Valley Credit Union
- Amazon
- Ranni Law Firm

- Garnet Health
- Elderplan
- Hudson Regional LTC Pharmacy
- Standback General Contractors
- Adams Fairacre Farms



# 2024 Board of Directors



We are united and committed to advocating for the rights and inclusion of all people with disabilities, recognizing that disability can touch any one of us at any moment in our lives. Our advocacy efforts are grounded in the principles of the peer services movement, where lived experience is our guiding force, and experts from diverse backgrounds join together to create a more accessible and inclusive society for all.

We remain committed in our mission to break down attitudinal, societal, and systemic barriers that obstruct the independence and full potential of people with disabilities. Together, as advocates, we will create a future that is accessible and inclusive for all, because it is through our shared human experience that we discover the true value of investing in a more equitable and inclusive world.

## Thank you to our dedicated Board of Directors!

Christopher Seger, Chair  
Audrey Lark, Vice Chair  
Andrew Weyant, Treasurer  
Joseph Ranni, Esq., Immediate Past Chair  
Thomas Gordon  
Tom Sylcox  
Charles Walwyn  
Colin Jarvis  
Jean Minkel  
Donna Ponessa  
Justin Kimple

## Take Action Today!

### You can find us on Social Media

@MyIndependentLiving  
@MyIndependentHomeCare



## Thank you to ALL of our Supporters!

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