

# ACCESS news

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Western New York  
Independent Living, Inc.  
3108 Main St.  
Buffalo, NY 14214  
(716) 836-0822 (Voice/TDD)  
(716) 835-3967 (Fax)

## **New program is exciting, but still within the Independent Living umbrella!**

*From the Desk of the Executive Director, Douglas J. Usiak*

We have a new scourge in our country, according to the news, and that is this opium addiction epidemic. Well, for us in this business of working with people, this is not new, it's just getting way out of hand. I, for one, find the attention given to this problem encouraging, since it is only when Americans get serious about an issue that we can get our arms around it and, if not tame the beast, beat it to a pulp.

So, why am I even bringing this up? Well, this past summer, the Governor made an announcement about a new program WNYIL, (through its Mental Health PEER Connection department) has started, and that is the program of using peers to work with the substance abuser and their families as they seek recovery from this black hole of drug addiction.

So what's so new about what we are suggesting?

Nothing! What we are doing is bringing the addict out of the closet, and using the sins of their past to end the sins of the present, and hopefully give people the opportunity to begin.

The program "Addict to Addict" will be a critical response team that, when contacted, will react within hours to assist the person who is READY to end the addiction. (Please see page 3 for more information)

The person who is READY to end the craving for the drug.

READY to end the lies about hiding, stealing, spending, and living for the drug.

The person who is READY to end the way of life that has only one dismal end.

READY to get on a path for life, and not a path to addiction.

Our program Addict to Addict will work with the individual on identifying resources, methods, support, and alternatives to drugs. While the person with the substance abuse is climbing out of the hole of hopelessness, we will have staff working with relatives, as well, assisting the family to understand what is happening, and how they can help. Identifying what resources and techniques are available for them to support the addicts on their road to recovery, and not destroy their lives as a result of the addiction.

Addict to Addict is an exciting program for WNYIL, but not a new one. Our entire philosophy of Independent Living is based on Peers helping Peers with all disabilities. This is only another example of people with disabilities showing the rest of society how we can help solve the problems of our communities. That we, the people with disabilities, can be contributing members of the neighborhoods, supporting growth, and encouraging a better quality of life for all. So if you are READY to put the addiction behind and BEGIN, call 716-836-2726 to start.

## **OAHIIO Updates**

*Cynthia Printup-Harms l*

I am writing this column on the day before 'Sweetest Day' and 'How Sweet It Is'! Finally, after 15 months of waiting to relocate to our own site, it has arrived. By the end of October OAHIIO will be moved into our new location at 473 Third Street, Niagara Falls, New York. It will be wonderful to be able to unpack everything out of boxes and set up our 'new home'.

And what are we up to in the coming year? At the top of the list is program development. Currently, OAHIIO is in the process of hiring an Independent Living Specialist (ILS) which will give OAHIIO a total of three ILS'. In the meantime, resumes are being reviewed for a Part Time Administrative Assistant.

Our biggest excitement is the announcement of a grant awarded to OAHIIO as a result of much team work, especially by WNYIL's Director of 'Community Engagement, Katie Trombley. The grant is the Native American Independent Living Demonstration Project through the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

As a capacity-building strategy, Independent Living Administration proposes that the

Native American Independent Living Demonstration Project will support Native American Independent Living (IL) Specialists who have similar responsibilities to the non-Native American IL Specialist counterpart in the Center for Independent Living, but with a focus of Native American Indian communities.

The ACL recognizes there is a need to develop capacity-building within existing Centers for Independent Living (CIL) for serving individuals with disabilities within Native American Indian communities.

The Project will provide the five Independent Living Core Services:

1. Information and referral;
2. IL skills training;
3. Peer counseling;
4. Individual and systems advocacy; and Services that facilitate transition from nursing homes and other institutions to the community, provide assistance to those at risk of entering institutions, and facilitate transition of youth to postsecondary life.

Through the implementation of this Project, ACL intends to gain an increased understanding of service needs of Native Americans with disabilities living within Native American Indian communities; improve cultural competence; and capture lessons learned and best practices for outreach and service delivery for Native American Indians with disabilities, a traditionally underserved population.

## **WELCOME!**

**...to MHPC's newest service for people dealing with drug addiction, which also supports their family and other loved ones:  
the Critical Peer Response Team**

*Maura Kelley, CPRP  
Director of Mental Health PEER Connection*

Since July 2016, Mental Health PEER Connection (MHPC) has branched out, and is targeting Peer Services to those with substance use disorders and their loved ones. We began a new program, run by Peers with addiction issues, and/or who have families with addiction issues, called the Critical Peer Response (CPR) Team. The Team shares stories about their recovery, their hopes, and their strengths with those who are still engaged in their battle with substance use, or with family members who are still struggling, in an effort to forge ahead toward recovery.

We have three full-time staff, and one part-time Peer, to serve this population in Erie County.

In the past, too often people seeking help, or those they love, are turned away, or turned off, when they seek traditional avenues to recovery such as medical or clinical services, twelve-step programs, or religious counseling. Our Peers help individuals forge their own path into recovery, taking a person-centered approach of what works best for the person who is “READY.” For those of us in recovery, we know that the decision isn’t always reached Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. This decision comes at our desperate moments. Our Critical Peer Response Team is available 24 hours per day, so it can respond to your being “ready” within 24 hours of your call to 716-836-2726.

The CPR Team will assist you in determining what path to recovery is best for you. They can link you to Peer Services, Medical Care, Clinical Care, Addiction-Family-Member-Specific treatment, or any other avenue you decide to take. The CPR Team can be Advocates, supply Information and Referrals, and provide Peer Counseling. The Peers on the Team are experts in this, because they have already experienced navigating a path of recovery, themselves.

In the months since the CPR Team started, all the calls we received from people who have decided they were “ready” have been answered in less than 24 hours. The result: people have taken their first steps on their personal path of recovery. The Team also offers monthly Peer Support Meetings for loved ones and family members of those with substance use disorder. The facts and experiences that can help them understand addiction and recovery are shared. Of course, support and encouragement are provided to all those who attend.

If you, or someone you know, can use this Substance Use/Family Peer Service, just call the CPR Team; again, we are at 716-836-2726, or you can email Shannon at [sveiders@wnyil.org](mailto:sveiders@wnyil.org).

The CPR Team is funded by the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse and has the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Erie County Government, and the County Department of Mental Health Commissioner, Michael Ranney, CRC-R, LMHP.

## **I Can't *HEAR* You!**

*Sue Ann L. Sehl*

The holidays will soon be upon us and with that comes not only the stresses of the season, but also the added stress of trying to hear and communicate in the noisy environment of parties, restaurants and family gatherings with increased background noise. Take the time to focus on the true meaning of the season and keep things in perspective. Planning ahead

and evaluating how you can best hear and enjoy the activities can make all the difference in the world. In spelling out the words, give thanks; take time to think about what you can do to make your holiday time happier and less stressful on you.

**G-ratitude:** Count your blessings-each night take time to write down 3 things that you are grateful for in your life.

**I-nform:** Educate others as to what you need them to do so you can understand them better. Model the behavior that you want to see.

**V-isualize:** Watch facial cues, lip read, watch body language for additional information.

**E-xercise:** Eat healthy and take care of yourself.

**T-hank** your family and friends when they accommodate you.

**H-onesty:** Don't bluff or hide your hearing loss; address the problem when it happens.

**A-ssertiveness:** Ask for what you need as far as communication.

**N-eeds:** Problem solve ahead of time what works best for you — i.e. pick your seat early, move to a quieter spot to hear conversation, use a personal FM.

**K-indness:** Give it and it will return to you and make you feel better.

**S-tress Management Techniques:** Pick what works for you and practice often (i.e. walk, swim meditate, sleep, do things you enjoy).

Our attitude and approach can help make things easier. When we tackle the minor problems we can create major improvements. As frustrating and tiring as it can be, we need to not only ask others to repeat but explain that they need to face us or speak slower and more clearly. Even those who don't have hearing loss often need sentences repeated. Choosing a seat in the corner away from the center of the noise is often a good solution. Take time to play a game or read with the kids off in another quieter room. Help out in the kitchen or serving snacks. Find the joy in the moment and appreciate the family and friends that you have with you. Find the humor in situations and try not to take yourself or others too seriously! The holidays will always be stressful but by planning ahead, and making minor adjustments it can be a whole lot more enjoyable!

## **A fond farewell to a great service!**

*Lynnette Torgalski*

Western New York Independent Living, Inc's Family Reimbursement Program (FRP) will come to an end December 30, 2016. Western New York Independent Living, Inc (WNYIL) was awarded our initial contract for Family Reimbursement in May of 2011. New York State's Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) provides funding to each region of the Empire State for Family Support Services (FSS), under which FRP falls. FRP makes payments to relatives of a family member who receives services through OPWDD to

offset “extra expenses” that directly relate to the individuals’ disabilities. WNYIL has been providing family reimbursement to Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans, Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties.

WNYIL would like to thank all of its volunteer Family Reimbursement Committee’s Review Members for their time and dedication over the past five years.

WNYIL Family Reimbursement Committee is made up of WNYIL Board and Council Members, Service Providers, Family Members and Individuals with a Developmental Disability. They review requests and determine if the expenditures to be reimbursed were based on criterion, so that they enhanced the health and safety of each individual, to ensure that dollars were allocated appropriately. The Committee would also identify other resources that should be pursued, prior to authorizing Family Reimbursement, since it is a funding of last resort. FRP would apply for such resources in the community when the expenditure did not meet the requirements under the OPWDD guidelines, or if other options were available for the requested items, so that the family could save the available FRP dollars for other additional expenses.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all of the families with lived shared experience for their conversations, phone calls, heart-felt letters of gratitude, information and resources that you have passed along to myself, as well as to my staff. The general information that you shared (regarding resources) was made available to other families; you greatly enhanced their lives and lessened the time taken away from their loved ones to search out those resources. WNYIL families are a wealth of information on services in our community; please continue to share resources and experiences with each other!

Moving forward, families and their Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs) should reach out to the Developmental Disabilities Regional Office (DDRO) to identify all agencies participating in the Family Reimbursement Program so they can obtain applications, OPWDD family reimbursement guidelines, and other information prior to January 1, 2017. Review the guidelines and identify what can and cannot be reimbursed through this program. Reach out to those providers and request any additional agency documents that are required when submitting your application, so it is complete when submitting. Remember, if it relates to the disability, and cannot be covered by another resource, it is an “extra expense”.



When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Western New York Independent Living, Inc. Bookmark the link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2316065> and support us every time you shop.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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**Bus to Albany – IL Day**  
Monday, February 13, 2017

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*ILNC's Policymaker's Breakfast Friday, April 7, 2017*  
*8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.*  
*Antonio's Banquets, Niagara Falls, NY*

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**MHPC's Healing Voices Showing**  
Thursday, April 27, 2017  
Time & Venue – TBD

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**4th Annual Night for Independence Gala**  
Saturday, May 20, 2017  
5:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Salvatore's Italian Gardens

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**ILGR's Policymaker's Luncheon**  
May 2017  
Time & Venue – TBD

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**Olmstead Day (ILNC)**  
Thursday, June 22, 2017  
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Hyde Park, Niagara Falls, NY

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For more information contact Heather at 716-836-0822, ext. 146  
or [hmattiuazzo@wnyil.org](mailto:hmattiuazzo@wnyil.org)



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- B) Respects the property
- C) Respects the neighbors
- D) ALL of the above



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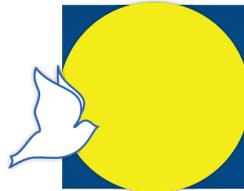


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A Night for Independence

*Gala*

*Western New York Independent Living, Inc.*

*To benefit Independence Express Transportation*

*Saturday, May 20, 2017*

*Salvatore's Italian Gardens*

*6461 Transit Rd., Depew, NY 14043*

*Save the Date!*

Inclusion, Awareness, Visibility



# Disability Pride

**FREE!**

# Celebration & Parade

# July 2017

Western New York Organizations invite you to join us to celebrate the Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Pride with **FREE** food, fun, and games will be provided. We look forward to having you celebrate with us!

*Thank you to our 2016 sponsors:*

