

## A Message from the Chief Executive Officer



Our single goal at Living Resources, is to make sure each person continues to grow to their fullest potential, pursue happiness in the manner they determine, and live as independently as possible. So at Living Resources, Independence Day is not a once a year event. **Independence day is every day.**

We celebrate the daily victories of learning skills needed for independence such as cooking, using the washing machine, and using the phone to call a friend or loved one. We support our individuals' efforts to gain employment, and we celebrate when they are offered a job, and reach milestones of work anniversaries.

And so I ask you to take a moment and read Jennifer, Kevin, Sonia, and Maurice's stories and note the many steps they took toward the independence they enjoy today.

## Living Resources celebrates Independence Day every day!

Living Resources has been helping individuals reach their independence goals every day since 1974. While we have always strived to maintain the highest level of care through the use of cutting edge technologies, COVID – 19 has really upped the ante.

In the past few months, our direct support Super Heroes have re-invented the delivery of services through creative and compassionate problem solving. They have learned new technologies such as ZOOM alongside our individuals to keep them connected with their families and social groups. They created learning opportunities and made mailbox deliveries so all could keep up their progress.



As a result, Nathan learned to use the phone and can now independently call friends and family, Sonia and her peers in the College Experience continue to learn life skills, Kevin teamed up with his job coach to improve job skills in preparation for his work at the YMCA to re-open, Maurice has navigated the new health and safety guidelines needed to work at Hannaford, and Jennifer lives in her own apartment.

You are an important part of the Living Resources Independence story.  
Help us write a new chapter in our history book!

**[Click Here to Support the Independence  
of our Individuals](#)**



## Black Lives Matter



Two of our very own Living Resources Arts Program Art Instructors had the opportunity to create some very beautiful and meaningful artwork on the front panels of the Pause Gallery in Troy, NY in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. These portraits have been on display for a couple weeks now and were on the path of the peaceful protest marching route in Troy, NY on Sunday, June 7th, 2020.

Both of these employees have been with Living Resources for over 15 years and have made a great impact on so many people in our agency. The sentiment

behind these paintings is more than just leading by example and letting their artwork make a statement, but they contributed to the community in a moving way. More than 11,000 people showed up to support the BLM movement in Troy on Sunday, June 7th, 2020. All 11,000+ people marched by the artwork created by two of our employees along with dozens of other paintings and artful statements on buildings in Troy.

Marcus Anderson painted the portrait of the woman with the purple background. Bianca DiLella painted the portrait of the two little kids holding balloons. Bianca's daughter also got involved and painted the Black Lives Matter panel surrounded by hand prints of all colors. (See detail below)







## Jennifer's Journey Towards Independence

Jennifer lived in large scale institutions until she was 20 years old. She recalls the sleeping dormitories which contained roughly 20 beds. All that changed in 1977 when Jennifer came to Living Resources. She was thrilled to learn that she had only one roommate, and before long she had a room of her very own. While at her new home, Jennifer had the opportunity to attend day programs and a learning center where she received an education. Jennifer thrived in this environment and became one of the first individuals to be approved for our Supportive Living Program.



She moved into her own apartment, with the support of staff giving assistance as needed with tasks such as apartment maintenance, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and money management. She now lives an independent life in the company of her 3 cats, with the continued support of our Direct Support Professionals. She participates in our Art program, where she expresses her tremendous creativity. Assisted by our employment services, Jennifer has a job. She recently celebrated her 25th anniversary at Hannaford. She loves interacting with people there and helping them find what they need. Jennifer brings home a paycheck, with which she shops for her own necessities and uses her left over funds for the joys of life; going on day trips and shopping at the Malls. She takes pleasure that she can sometimes buy a frivolous item just because she wants to. Don't we all?



## Independence Takes Teamwork

Kevin Steitzer, a graduate of the College Experience and his Career Counselor, Frank Padula are a solid team. Frank started working with Kevin in 2018 when he was a Dietary Aide at the Teresian House. Frank supported him in many ways during this job, but it became evident that it was Kevin's dream to work with animals. Knowing that it was an important part of Frank's job to advance Kevin's career, he worked with Kevin to help him secure employment at the Guilderland Animal Hospital.

Kevin soon realized that this job was not the best fit for him, so they moved on to search for new a work experience. Kevin expressed interest in working near his home, so Frank suggested a position at the Guilderland YMCA, which has been a great partner of Living Resources for many years. The Maintenance Director has been extremely welcoming and supportive. Kevin learned the tasks quickly and is a great addition to the maintenence staff.

When COVID-19 closed businesses, Kevin was furloughed. Frank began working with him in new ways through an expanded dialogue, communicating over the phone, and having very meaningful discussions. Frank has provided an outlet for Kevin to discuss his concerns regarding his job loss, making positive and productive use of his time, and providing areas for work performance improvement in preparation for his return to the YMCA.



Frank Padula

Kevin Steitzer



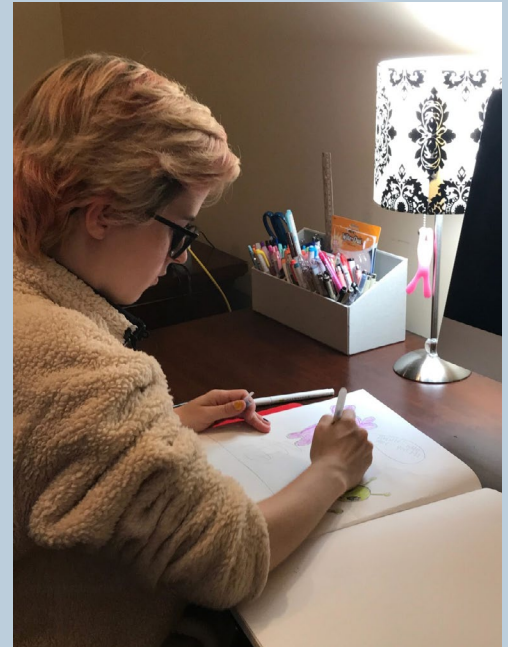
## Independence Through Education

Sonia DeByle's ambition to learn to be more independent drew her to our College Experience Program, where she is currently a freshman. Having been declined acceptance to other college programs, Sonia cried tears of joy when she read her acceptance letter. In her words, "I was so excited and could not believe it." Although she enjoys all her classes, Sonia particularly relishes those that concentrate on life skills, which will lead to her goal of living on her own.

Sonia thought it might be difficult to meet new people, but soon found herself attending events and learning about the many clubs on campus. She now has many friends within the College Experience and the greater College of Saint Rose community. She is passionate about the college's Dance Team and the music genre of K-pop, both of which she learned about from her best friend, Danielle.

Sonia and her peers are currently taking classes remotely from the safety of home. In her free time, she goes for a five-mile walk every day with her mom, practices yoga in her living room, draws, and plays with her English bulldog, Ruby. Sonia states, "The first thing I will do when the pandemic is over is give my friends a hug and go shopping at the mall. I will get a K-pop CD because I cannot think of a life without CDs."

Sonia emphasizes how thankful she is for all of her fellow classmates in the College Experience, the teachers instructing the Zoom classes, and for the assistance from her program's Academic Coordinator, Kelly Weiss. We wish Sonia the best of success until we all meet again!



### Living Resources' Self Advocacy Group is back by popular demand!

- Advocacy means the ability to communicate your needs, make informed decisions and choose the supports you need for success.
- Self Advocacy Group focuses on being a self-advocate, practicing advocacy skills, learning about rights and practicing communication skills making meaningful experiences by reviewing our real life scenarios. We support each other, learn about the Right of the Month, give feedback and practice advocacy skills.
- We meet on Zoom every other Monday at 2 PM.
- This is open to all individuals supported by Living Resources. We have elected officials who co-run the group, organize ideas and support our peers.

If you are supported by Living Resources and are interested in joining our advocacy group, reach out to Stephanie Fisher at [sfisher@livingresources.org](mailto:sfisher@livingresources.org)

## Happy Father's Day

From  
LIVING  
RESOURCES







# Independence and Employment during COVID



It has been a memorable Spring for Maurice Vanness, who resides in one of Living Resources residential homes and receives supported employment coaching. Working with his employment Coach, Maurice has been a valued employee of Hannaford Supermarket on Wolf Road for nearly 20 years. During his time with Hannaford, he learned to navigate and manage his commute utilizing the Star bus system, plan his daily activities, and accomplish his many job related challenges. This year certainly presented Maurice with challenges like no other.

In order for Maurice to continue to work at Hannaford, he had to agree to strict guidelines at the store and at his house. He is required to wear a mask at all times "while on the floor" at work. When he gathers carts, he wears gloves. When Maurice returns home at the end of his day, he must remove his clothes, put them directly into the laundry and shower immediately to keep himself, his housemates, and staff healthy and safe. These are all "the

new norm" and he, like all of us in this pandemic are getting accustomed to new ways to work, remain safe, and journey through each day.

Lori Ira, a Living Resources Employment Specialist, has worked with Maurice for five years. Lori states, "Maurice loves his job and it shows in his commitment to this job each day." According to his Hannaford manager Candy Collins, "Maurice will do anything we ask and is always reliable."

Maurice's house manager Anthony has also been instrumental in Maurice's success and continues to support Maurice at his

home, navigating the new guidelines

he must adhere to. A variety of communications within Maurice's team, including his family advocate Rhonda, have ensured a smooth transition. While change can be daunting, Maurice has navigated this new normal with vigor in order to ensure the health of those around him.

We look forward to Maurice continuing to maintain his independence and negotiating this new norm and new world of employment!





## Quarantine from the Parents' Perspective

Lisa and John Razanousky's son Joe lives at one of our residences. They shared photos of Joe which were taken in his back yard, saying, "They are really special." Lisa went on to say, "This has been a very hard time for us, not being able to see Joe in person since March 18th, so when I saw these pictures, I could see that he looked happy and well taken care of."

Lisa, who also works at Living Resources, says, "We have missed so many holidays. Joe celebrated his 3rd anniversary living at his residence; there was Easter, Passover, birthdays, Mother's Day, and soon Father's Day." Adding to their stress, during the early Zoom chats, Joe seemed to look anxious with all the changes in routine. Concerned that Joe might think that his parents just didn't want to see him anymore, she contacted his team and they all worked together to help him adjust.



As a result of these communications, their family has a new routine - every night at 7:00 pm, they have a Zoom chat. They ask about Joe's day and what he ate for dinner. ("There's a lot of grilling, it sounds delicious. My son eats better than I do.") They then do a stretching exercise routine and play some music before Joe gets ready for his evening snack." It's not the same as it was, but they have all made it work. Lisa commends the staff for all their hard work and compassionate care. "The house manager and staff have been phenomenal. They send pictures that warm our heart. Staff are safety conscious, always wearing masks and checking temperatures every day."

Lisa has concerns about visiting Joe in person with the distance regulations in place. His old routine involved getting into their car and going to Stewart's, which isn't currently an option. She feels at this point, a visit could cause him anxiety or agitation. When they do finally get to have an in-person visit, the Razanouskys hope to make it a party, "We are anxiously awaiting the time when we are able to give Joe a great big in-person hug! We will combine all the holidays together with a cake and presents to catch up."

## SAVE THE DATE!

Here's a list of Upcoming Events you don't want to miss

**Art of Independence** goes Virtual! Stay tuned for more information!

**Living Resources 11th Annual Golf Tournament** will be held on **Friday, September 25, 2020** at the **Colonie Golf and Country Club**. All proceeds will benefit the many programs of Living Resources, including the **College Experience**.



[www.LivingResources.org](http://www.LivingResources.org)

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