A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

2020 has been a year like no other. During my 48-year career, none of us have experienced or been challenged by a pandemic virus. There are so many lives to protect to ensure everyone’s safety. We have always been concerned about and committed to health, safety, and a high quality of life for those we serve and our employees. Thus far, we have gotten through this year, because we have been a team that works well together and maintains a culture built on trust among the employees, parents, individuals, and the community.

My hand has been on the wheel every turn we have experienced this year. We were ready and remain so as society worries about a potential second wave. We have dedicated, well trained Superheroes and we listen to and practice all safety precautions expected of us. It’s true this has been a year that called for daily pivots, different approaches, new ideas, and an incredible amount of strength! I am so proud of the Living Resources Team and the incredible work that they have done. There is deep love and reflection in their responsibility.

As an agency, all together, we have adapted and re-imagined the delivery of our services and programs. We created virtual learning experiences, developed new ways to engage, and have worked around the clock to keep everyone safe. As we cautiously reopen our in-person programs and supports, we will do so in the same safe and professional manner you have come to expect over the years.

As amazing as our Superheroes are, none of this could have been accomplished without the support of our individuals, families, friends, supporters, and donors. It is times like these when you realize the true meaning of family. Thank you all for being part of my Living Resources history.

While I am not retiring until the end of the year, it is time that together we welcome Elizabeth Martin as your next CEO. Her Living Resources journey begins on September 1st. Be assured that Elizabeth and I, along with the team, will make this a smooth/seamless transition.

Enjoy the remainder of the summer.

Frederick W. Ellick
Bryan Dumas was never really a people person, that is, until he joined Living Resources’ Moreau/South Glens Falls Day Community Opportunities Program (DCOP). He had been in a more traditional day program through another agency, but didn’t enjoy it much. Then he learned about DCOP where he could participate in a variety of activities throughout his community, and Bryan decided to give it a go.

His mother Ginny said that the DCOP activities are not dictated by the staff, but decided after the group is asked what they want to do. In his year at DCOP, Bryan enjoyed cleaning churches, volunteering at Wunsapana Llama Farm, and going to Moreau beach. Bryan, whose upbeat perspective on life is, “Autism isn’t a tragedy- running out of bacon is a tragedy” has discovered new favorite activities through DCOP. He didn’t think he would like volunteering for Meals on Wheels, but over time, he discovered that he looked forward to visiting the friendly seniors.

Bryan didn’t realize how much the group meant to him until after the Coronavirus shut-down, though. He spent his time in his apartment playing on his computer, but was lonely. Ginny said, “It was honestly a struggle. He needed his group. He’s not usually a people person, but he realized he really needed socialization more than he thought.”

When he learned that DCOP was starting back up at the end of July, Bryan jumped into activities with gusto. Not typically a fan of board games, he played monopoly with the group, and had a ball. He even made friends with a Guinea pig named “Meatloaf.” Ginny noted that he normally wouldn’t do that, but this group has helped him feel more comfortable about trying new things. Bryan is looking forward to cooking again. The group is involved in the whole process – shopping, put it together, and tasting the end product. Ginny stated, “(DCOP) has opened him up to doing more than he ever has in his life. You guys are amazing.”

Join for Burgers, Bogeys, and Beverages at our: 11th Annual Golf Tournament

Thanks to our amazing sponsors who have committed to joining us at our annual event! You can join them for a glorious day supporting the essential work of Living Resources!
Learning Self Advocacy

Independence. It’s the cornerstone of our mission at Living Resources. We encourage each of our individuals to be the hero of their own lives, so they can grow to their fullest potential. The College Experience Self Advocacy and Empowerment Class was recently joined by Michelle Vinokurov, a 22-year-old autism advocate that is profiled in a new book titled This is Autism. Michelle is a paraprofessional working with elementary school students living with autism. She feels she is able to relate to the individual struggles of the students and what they have gone through.

Michelle shared some advice for the College Experience students with regards to honing their self-advocacy skills, saying, “Being a self-advocate is about communication. In general, just talk about what you need so problems that could arise later on can be prevented. That is the most important part of being a self-advocate—just raising your voice to be heard.”

Living Resources’ Self-Advocacy Group focuses on learning how to be an effective self-advocate through education about rights and by practicing advocacy and communication skills through real life scenarios. The group, which is open to all individuals supported by Living Resources, has elected officials who co-run the group supported by Living Resources staff. Members support each other, learn about the Right of the Month, practice advocacy skills, and give feedback. The group has been meeting through Zoom since June.

If you are interested in joining our advocacy group, reach out to Stephanie Fisher at sfisher@livingresources.org.

Thank you for helping make every day Independence Day!

The following people have donated to our Independence Day Campaign:

John and Mary Ann Allen
Sister Virginia Bonan SNJM
Sal and Veronica Casano
Jodi Cronk
Robert H. Day Jr.
Domenick and Katie DeSantis
Michael and Norine Durkin
Donald and Mary Frances Ford
Richard A. Fuerst Esq.
Marjorie Geiger
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Patricia R. Gorman
Tom and Sylvia Gray
Nancy Hill
Carmella and James Hinman
Debra Johnson
Kathleen Kinstel
Anne Kuppinger
James and Angel Lafave
Susan Lieberman
Ira and Sheila Lobel
Jill Losi
The Lounsbury Family Foundation
Ms. Colleen Macaulay
Paul Medina and Sandra Gold
Catherine Merriman
Sandra Nathanson
Martin and Suzan Pollack
Nancy and Bruce Quay
Kathleen Quinn and
James R. Lortsher
Gayla Riccardi
Kathe Sheehan
Nicholas and Marcia Siver
Sandra Stern
Hon. & Mrs. Bruce J. Wagner
Sandra and James Young
Nate Gier: Living Resources’ Leonardo da Vinci

Nate Gier has been making art at Living Resources for more than half of his life. Always fascinated by portraits, at the age of 12, Nate created a 2×3 foot rendition of Leonardo da Vinci’s masterpiece “Mona Lisa.” When asked what attracted him to the “Mona Lisa” at that young age, he said, “I liked her smile.” And he still does. With the encouragement of Sergio Camacho, Assistant Director of the Art Program, Nate re-created her twice, each time starting with a bare canvas, applying his ever growing skills into newer, more detailed renditions, most recently in his preferred medium of colored pencils.

When the in-person art classes were discontinued due to COVID-19 safety precautions, Nate greatly missed them. He was sad to be away from the classrooms, his amazing instructors, and all his fellow students. He also missed the routine that the classes afforded him. Not allowing barriers to inhibit his creativity, Nate actively participated in the online classes presented by the art department. He was very proud of himself, taking pictures of his work and posting it on social media.

Art has been very therapeutic for Nate. The sadness he experienced during the pandemic shut down led him to decide to create Disney themed Sketchbook. It was a way for Nate to remember the good times and positive feelings he experienced this past fall during his very first trip to Walt Disney World in Florida. He is determined to draw all the characters to fill up his sketchbook. To date, Nate has over 20 characters in his notebook. His mother, Kate said, “He is having a blast with that.”

In addition to taking art class, Nate holds down two part-time jobs. An essential worker, he cleans at Corpus Christi church twice a week and works at Precision Valve and Automation (PVA) three times a week. He has become acclimated to the preventive measures necessary for working at these locations such as wearing his mask, social distancing, cleaning his hands, etc.

When Nate found out that in-person art classes were re-opening, he began jumping up and down, saying, “I’m so happy!” Once back in class, he plans to continue interpreting Disney characters to complete his sketchbook. He hopes that, with the guidance of his instructors and a lot of practice, he will fulfill his dream to be a Disney Animator. It was Walt Disney who said, “If you can dream it, you can do it,” so Nate is half way there!
Out and About, Enjoying August!

Saratoga Day Community Opportunities Program has been making the most of the beautiful August weather at the many parks in Saratoga.

Tie Dye art on shirts.

When You’re Smiling, the Whole World Smiles with You

Do you need some inspiration? Spend a moment with Josh Miller. No mask made by man or machine can cover Josh’s radiant smile, which is seen through his eyes and heard in his voice.

Josh, who recently described himself as “happy-go-lucky” participates in our Employment Services Program. With the assistance of his job coach Brian Roman, Josh has worked at the same elementary school in Albany for almost 15 years. He began as a Lunchroom Attendant and over time was given additional hours and expanded job opportunities. His was given the responsibility of training new hires and helped operate the “school store” on Fridays, giving out prizes to students who have excelled academically. This was, of course, until COVID-19 shut down the schools.

Josh said that time was “nerve wracking because I didn’t know what I was going to do. I kept my sanity by striving to be courageous and cheerful.” Josh has spent his time during the past few months going for walks and spending his time thinking, calibrating, and focusing on what matters to him most, which, for Josh, is staying in tune with God.

A natural motivational speaker, Josh’s mission in life lies in “helping people who need help.” Josh finds his inspiration in spreading joy and lifting people up when they are down. Although he keeps a healthy physical distance from people, he still succeeds in connecting with them, predominately through Facebook Live and Zoom conferences.

Josh is looking forward to September, and “super excited about getting back to work.” His job coach Brian told us that the current plan for the school where Josh works is that the children will be eating in the classroom. Josh will be working the same hours he did last year, the only change will likely be, instead of working in the cafeteria, he will be assigned classrooms where he will assist.

The upcoming year is, in his words, “going to be phenomenal!” Adding, “It makes me feel great that I have been at the school for 15 years. A lot of stuff is changing but I still love what I do! There’s nothing else I would rather do but to help out as much as possible.”
Superstar Staff!

The Community Habilitation staff in Saratoga Springs took on the huge task of assisting with and managing 13 separate apartment re-locations for individuals served by Living Resources.

For close to 20 years, these individuals lived in their own apartments in Saratoga Springs. Community Habilitation staff worked on site every day to assist them with activities of daily living and to ensure they lived happy and healthy lives. The Intrada in Saratoga Springs, NY opened in January 2020 and included brand new apartments in the middle of Saratoga Springs that were significantly more affordable, so the decision was made to make the move.

Michelle Summerlin-Yergan, Lorenzo White, Bill Stanley, Karen Palmucci, Patti Turner, Pat Laviana, and Lindsey Ryan were absolutely essential to this moving process. Every day involved packing, planning, transferring utilities, lifting, and all the other activities that need to be completed before someone moves. These staff performed exceptionally well in all roles and under pressure. With the assistance of the LR maintenance department, these staff helped move all 13 individuals into their new apartments, ensured their rent was paid and utilities were transferred, and provided a great deal of physical and emotional support to people who had just moved into a new place after 20 years in another.

These staff were led by their program manager, Lindsey Ryan, but also by the mission of Living Resources. Their commitment to the happiness and security of the people they serve guided them through stressful days and nights. The Living Resources family is enhanced when the mission is carried out by staff who are dedicated, caring, and understanding of the challenges in the field. Most importantly, the people they serve, with their support, continue to live happy, healthy, and independent lives.

SAVE THE DATE!

Here’s an Upcoming Event you don’t want to miss!

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.