



A Message from the Chief Executive Officer



It is hard to believe that nine months have passed since I became CEO. It has been a whirlwind!

Two months ago we began the process of creating a strategic plan to help guide the agency as we move forward together and one of the highlights is that there has been overwhelming support and survey responses from our families, individuals, and staff members to help craft this plan. Thank you to all who submitted their responses, your voices are being heard!

Elizabeth Martin

While we are still in the beginning stages, I wanted to share with you some initial results from the strategic plan survey responses and top level objectives that have been identified. Often times that which is a strength can also be viewed as a weakness. For instance, seen as one of the strengths is our dedicated and caring workforce and one of our weaknesses is that there are not enough of them, there is too much staff turnover, and they would like more training and development opportunities. The workforce shortage makes these challenges even worse. This is not sustainable and is something that we are working to address. It will be a major factor in the strategic plan.

We also heard that one of our strengths is that we have tremendous teamwork, particularly in times of crisis like the pandemic. At the same time, we heard that we are too reactive and need to be more proactive. Communication was also identified as both a strength and a weakness. Top level communication to families/individuals/staff is well received, however a disconnect is seen in communication across departments and day-to-day communication regarding care and activities. All of these strengths and weaknesses will be incorporated into our final strategic plan.

Your input is helping to drive the strategic plan forward and I am personally grateful, thank you!

The **ART** of
Independence

*Please join us for our annual
Art of Independence*

on July 20, 2021, 5:30 - 8:00 pm

The Art of Independence showcases our artists and their personal journey to be working artists.

This event will be filled with artist demonstrations, elbow rubbing, fist bumps,
and a fabulous, fun picnic experience, featuring dinner from **BURGER 21**

Garden party attire is recommended.

With your support, we hope to make this year's Art of Independence the best one yet!

General Tickets: \$125.00 per person, Young Creator (Under 35 years old): \$75.00 per person

Join us! <http://bit.ly/2TNTBfh>



Welcome Back, Brain Injury Services!

When pondering things that return in the summer, thoughts turn to longer days, warm weather, picnics, and more. One of the best things that has returned to our main office this month has been the reopening of our Brain Injury Services. Here, individuals who have suffered brain injuries have the opportunity to establish meaningful post-injury

roles and relationships. At Living Resources, we strive to educate, train, encourage, and patiently guide survivors of traumatic brain injuries and their loved ones throughout this process.



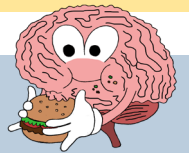
During the long COVID shutdown, this group had the opportunity to connect by Zoom every day, keeping their old schedule as much as they could. But at long last, they have returned for in-person meetings, bringing with them the sights of their smiling faces, sounds of laughter, and the aroma of meals cooking in the kitchen.

The group reflected on the past fifteen months. "I couldn't remember that there was a pandemic going on" said Renee. "I was getting up at 5:30 in the morning, ready to walk out the door by 7:00 every morning, and my mother had to remind me there was no group because of COVID. It really upset me." Laura agreed saying, "I felt very lonely." Lea shared that even though she wasn't by herself, she felt lonely because she didn't have her peers around her.

There were some positives though. Laura was proud to share that she found a boyfriend through the ABI Zoom groups. Jorelle spent a lot of time snuggling with her cats, playing Scrabble with her boyfriend, and exercising, particularly finding peace in the Zoom Mindfulness Group. Routine was critical for her. "Every morning I would make a schedule for myself."

When the big day finally came to return to the office, a surprise awaited the group. While everyone was quarantining at home, their space underwent a transformation. The main group room is now larger and has two entrances. Program Director Todd Del Marter said the instructors have space to comfortably move about the room to give personalized attention to each participant. There is even a new room which may be the group's favorite. It has large windows with a nice view of outside and great natural light. Staff Amanda joked, "During group I find them staring out the window, just mesmerized by the birds and everything else."

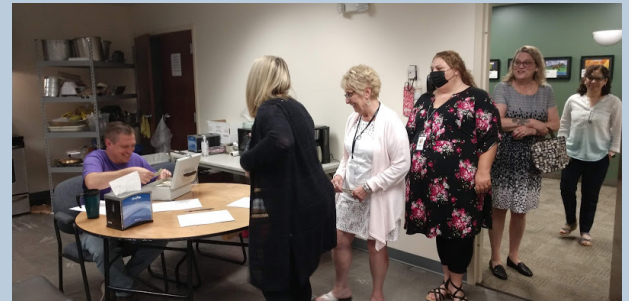
Dan is happy to be back meeting in person. He said, "There's a certain level of support by communications over the internet, but I always think that meeting in person is the way to be. It's more personal." Renee agreed. "You can feel the energy of the crowd versus just sitting in front of a camera." Laura summed it up with one word. Community. Looking forward, the participants are excited about their creative writing group beginning again. Lea said, "I never realized how much stuff you can express on paper. I could probably write a hundred more stories right now."



Scenes from the Brain Food Cafe'

With the return of our in-person brain injury services, this amazing group brings back the much celebrated "Brain Food Café." This weekly event is staffed by participants in the TBI & ABI Program, helping them build basic skills that can help them gain greater independence in their lives.

Participants are given opportunities to practice task-execution, money management, cooking, and socialization skills. Proceeds raised by the Brain Food Café go towards supporting the TBI & ABI program activities.



CEP Cares about their Community



Sophomore Seminar students of The College Experience at The College of Saint Rose participated in a Community Service project to make their neighborhood beautiful!

Armed with claw grabbers, plastic bags, gloves, and a bucket, they got to work on tackling the trash around them. The Sophomore Seminar students and their instructors Kathleen Murray and Emily Padula, filled two garbage bags with the litter that had built up over the course of the long and dreary winter.

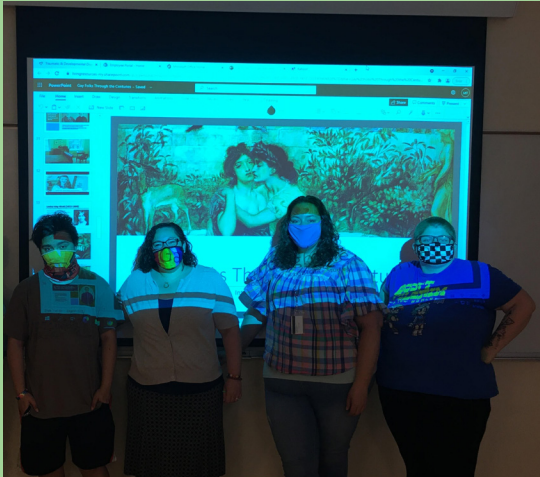
The Litter Collection Project is a continuation of an effort by our College Experience Volunteer Coordinator Jesse Saperstein. His message is that although we can't prevent the litter from accumulating, "The best we can do is roll up our sleeves once in a while to undo the damage."

Thanks to the efforts of The College Experience students, their part of Albany is now looking amazing!



College Experience PRIDE

There is a lot of pride at College Experience! Many students are taking an Introduction to LGBTQIA+ Studies class. Not everybody in the class identifies as being a part of this population, but they are certainly passionate allies who believe in supporting their peers and those around them.



Students pose for a picture in their classroom

Instructor Megan Taylor-DiCenzo shared that the students are learning about the history of the LGBTQIA+ movement, the meaning of each letter of the acronym, the flags associated with each of the letters, and all of the relevant terminology. They are exploring the science of being gay, famous (and not-so-famous) gay people throughout history, what it means to 'come out,' discrimination toward LGBTQ+ individuals in the US and abroad, and important advancements in law.

A group of students also attended the annual Capital Pride Block Party on Central Avenue in Albany on June 12th. The students enjoyed the festive vibe of the event, taking in music, food, games, vendors and even a drag show! The atmosphere of inclusivity and acceptance resonates with the students because, at College Experience, they are encouraged to embrace who they are and accept others as they are as well.



Abigail and Anna



Alix, Abigail, and Jack ready for the Pride Block Party

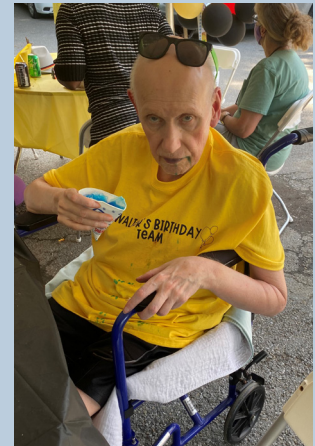




Ready for a Good Time in Mahopac

It was Walter's 49th birthday and his Living Resources family was ready for a party. His staff did it up in style. They had it catered and even went the extra mile to include a snow cone machine, bubble machine, and DJ Ray. The residents wore matching shirts that said "Walter's birthday team." Staff Desi, Wayne and Manager TinaMarie wore shirts that said "Walter's Crew."

This was the first get together since the pandemic and it felt amazing! They spent the day dancing, singing, and experienced nothing but laughter. Walter even got to see his cousin, girlfriend and friends from other homes, all of whom are fully vaccinated.





Giving Back, Uplifting Spirits

Meet James Hall In 2016, James began his career with Living Resources as a Direct Support Professional and now is a house manager. Here's James' story...

I was raised by my grandmother who told me I was going to be a leader one day. She told me to always be passionate, always give back, always care for people, and love more than hate. My grandmother had a stroke and later passed away. In 2016, after her passing, I came here from Long Island to buy her house, but when I got here, it had already been sold. It bothered me, but guess what? **I found a career at Living Resources.**



My cousin was working at Living Resources, she encouraged me to apply and I'm so glad she did! It's about growth here – when you're ready and if you want to, advancement opportunities are available. For my story, I started as a Direct Support Professional (DSP). While working as a DSP, I was encouraged to get more experience so I became a medical assistant. Once I mastered that, I felt that I was equipped with the skills needed to be an assistant manager, so I interviewed and got the position. Shortly after I was made an assistant manager, one of the directors here inspired me to become a manager. During the COVID crisis, we

needed extra staff to work in the houses. Guess who took on some of those shifts? The director of the program. She went in there to do the work. That's when I realized that I wanted to be a manager. Who wouldn't want to work for someone like that? I became a manager to make her job easier. Now I get to manage the house, bring more love and lift everyone up.

Living Resources is the best place to be! Living Resources doesn't feel like a job, it's more of a family. The individuals I work with are very loving and caring. They are just like family members. Some need more attention than others, but they are all great. I love the freedom. We get to spend the day getting out of the house and having fun with the individuals. You want to take them to a baseball game? You can! Take them out for ice cream? You can do it! I also love the leadership. If you need support, you will get it here. If you have a problem, they are here to help.

I love my job because I get to do what my grandmother taught me. I get to be passionate, give back, help people, and uplift spirits.

I love my job. I love Living Resources!



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