

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Elizabeth Martin**

This summer, we're raising a toast to fifty years of uplifting and empowering others to lead lives filled with dignity, independence, and happiness!

Despite the hurdles posed by the recently passed FY 2025 New York State Budget (more details in the newsletter), there's plenty of cause for celebration here at Living Resources. Friday, June 21, 2024, marks fifty years of our agency's commitment to providing enriching support and services.

When I think about the impact we've had each day, compounded over five decades, it's truly awe-inspiring. I'm filled with pride and gratitude for the remarkable individuals who've shaped our agency from its inception, turning it into the beacon of success and positive change it is today.

As we set our sights on the next fifty years, a thrilling cultural shift is underway at Living Resources. We're fostering a culture where we always believe in the potential of those we support to achieve greatness in their own unique ways. We are dedicated to helping them reach their aspirations by prioritizing the use of technology, education, and employment support.

Please plan to join us as we celebrate a half-century of impact at our "Golden Jubilee," event details below. I look forward to seeing you there!



## Half a Century of Impact A Golden Jubilee



Friday, June 21, 2024 at 5:30 P.M.

300 Washington Ave. Ext.

Albany, NY

Click or  
Scan here  
to get tickets



Please Join Us for Food,  
Drinks, and  
Celebration!



## Third Annual Tribute to Transforming Lives - A Day at the 1863 Club

Sunday, August 18, 2024 | Saratoga Race Course

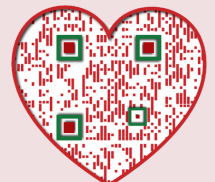
Presented by



Presenting Sponsor



Benefitting



Scan here for tickets



## BUDGET ADVOCACY RESULTS ARE LESS THAN DESIRED: BUT DON'T GIVE UP!

**“Invest in who? Invest in ME!”** The well of the Legislative Office Building in Albany was jam-packed with hundreds of people cheering and clapping, all united in the call for adequate investment in the intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) community as budget negotiations reached their final, most pivotal moments.



At the April 3 rally organized by New York Disability Advocates, lawmakers, a direct support professional, and the father of an individual with a disability each approached the podium to share personal stories and energize the crowd. Senator John Mannion and Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, chairs of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Disabilities respectively, were among those who made impassioned pleas for action.

All budget season, our agency and others like it have been calling for a flexible 3.2% Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) reimbursement rate increase and a \$4,000 Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE) to help us keep pace with inflation and provide meaningful pay increases to the workers at the forefront of our programs and services.



Ultimately, the final FY 2025 budget, delivered three weeks past deadline, included only a 2.85% COLA increase in our reimbursement rates. And instead of the \$4,000 DSWE, the

2.85% COLA includes a stipulation that agencies provide certain staff with a 1.7% wage increase. This is far less funding than what we need and what we advocated for.

Our CEO Elizabeth Martin writes, “We are told to increase wages 1.7%. What does 1.7% look like? Well, according to the most recent survey from New York Disability Advocates, the average Direct Support Professional (DSP) hourly wage in NYS is \$16.48/hour. A 1.7% wage increase would only mean another 28 cents per hour, which is just over \$2 more for an 8 hour shift! I'm sorry, but it's just not enough for us to start putting a real and sustained dent in the never-ending, chronic workforce issues. Nor is a 2.85% rate increase enough to keep up with inflation related to employee health insurance, home maintenance, transportation, energy, food costs, etc. That’s why we were calling for both a flexible 3.2% COLA rate increase AND a \$4,000 Direct Support Wage Enhancement.

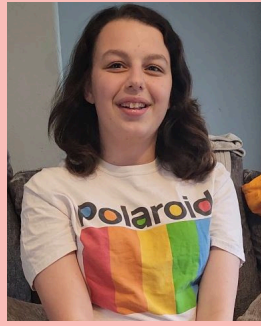
For those of you who worked so hard to help us advocate, it can be frustrating and discouraging when the budget doesn’t include what we asked for. But don’t give up and don’t think your advocacy efforts don’t work; they do. While we are disappointed in the outcome of the final state budget, our advocacy worked to deliver a better outcome than the meager 1.5% COLA rate increase the Governor had initially proposed. We will regroup as an industry and strategize on how we can be more successful in next year’s budget.”

We deeply appreciate every person connected to our organization who got involved in our advocacy efforts, whether you attended a rally, went door-to-door at the Legislative Office Building, sent an email, made a phone call, or shared our social media posts. We promise to never stop fighting for our workers and the individuals we support!





## APRIL IS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH



If you feel like you need to fight for something, absolutely fight for it. You don't have to back down."

That's the message 22-year-old Abby Censabella has for those still working to find out who they really are and where they truly belong.

Abby was diagnosed with Autism just a few years ago, and she had to move from Rhode Island to New York to get her diagnosis

fully recognized. She found community, direction, and purpose as a student in The College Experience, entering the program in 2020 and graduating two years later.

"It's hard to get diagnosed, especially for women. Often it's overlooked and not acknowledged," Abby shares. "I'm just so happy that New York finally diagnosed me. I had been waiting forever for a diagnosis or just something to explain what was going on with me. Just knowing what it was, I was like, 'oh that makes sense.'"

Abby is not alone. According to [an article published by UCLA Health](#), boys are four times as likely as girls to receive an Autism diagnosis, with recent research showing 80% of girls and women on the Autism spectrum remain undiagnosed at age 18. Going without a diagnosis can mean going without life-enhancing supports and services. "I'm always saying, if I were to just walk down the street no one would know that I have Autism," Abby explains.

Abby has always had a passion for supporting others and she's put that energy into her career in childcare. She currently works at an afterschool program, with support from her job coach and is starting a new chapter of her life: living on her own in an apartment. "Getting to be a young adult is great," she says, "I finally get to make decisions for myself, do something new, and be independent!"



Our "Infinity Tree" has deep roots! Check out our Albany office's Autism Acceptance Month display!



Team members, supported individuals, and visitors were invited to add the ways they are promoting inclusion, awareness, and acceptance, by writing on colorful infinity symbols.



Andrew Maggio, a graduate from The College Experience (furthest to the left) was invited to speak at the podium during Autism Action Day at the New York State Capitol, hosted by Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara. He posed for a photo with fellow self-advocates, the assemblyman, and event emcee and News10 ABC anchor Christina Arangio.





## TITANIC TRIP

Chris is a history buff who prides himself on knowing everything there is to know about the Titanic! He lives at one of our residences in Colonie and recently he and his direct support professional David took a trip to Springfield, MA to check out all of the artifacts housed at the Titanic Historical Society’s museum! Both guys agree they had a really fun time on this educational adventure.



## FUN ON THE FARM



Our Day Community Opportunities Program (DCOP) recently ventured out to Indian Ladder Farms in Altamont to explore everything agricultural! The farm is currently hosting its highly-anticipated Baby Animal Days, where young goats, rabbits, chicks and other barnyard animals are proudly showed off to adoring crowds.

Program participants from Saratoga County made their way through the many exhibits, petting the animals’ soft fur and feathers as they learned all about them from Indian Ladder staff members. These pictures show just how much fun everyone had!

After all of the exhibits were fully enjoyed, participants stepped into Indian Ladder’s country store, where they shopped for souvenirs, baked goods, candy, and other farmer’s market fare. At the end of this rural adventure, everyone agreed that these kinds of excursions lead to lasting memories and a whole lot of fun!







# OUR ANNUAL DAY SERVICES AWARDS CEREMONY

IS COMING SOON!

COLUMBIA GREENE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 13  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

## A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME PHENOMENON



On April 8, we were treated to a rare astrological sight – a solar eclipse took over the sky in the afternoon and when the clouds parted, the sight was truly something to behold! Those inside our office at 300 Washington Avenue Extension filed outside, with their glasses in hand, to watch the moon cross in front of the sun from the parking lot. Office staff joined together with participants in our Brain Injury Structured Day Program and many ooohs and ahhs were heard among the crowd.

For several students in The College Experience, the Albany Skyway was a picturesque setting for eclipse-viewing. The skyway is an elevated park that connects the downtown

area to the Hudson River waterfront and our students were in good company there. Downtown Albany’s BID organized a city-wide watch party right in the park.



While our Day Community Opportunities Program opted to cut regular programming short on eclipse day to ensure traveling could be done safely, a couple of Saratoga County DCOP team members got a celebrity guest in on their sky-watching fun. We spy their office neighbor Jake from State Farm, decked out in some stylish eclipse-specs.

We are pleased so many from our Living Resources family took time during their busy day to safely appreciate this astrological event!







## CELEBRATING SPRING

Camaraderie, cuisine, and celebration were found in abundance at our Brain Injury Program’s annual Spring Fling!

On Friday, April 26, program participants, staff, and family members gathered at Harmony Hall in Schenectady to spend an elegant evening together.

The room was decorated beautifully, music was played, and a full three course dinner was shared among friends, many of whom say the program has become like a second family. Party-goers talked, laughed, and danced the night away in each other’s company!



Our Community Living Program is also ready for warm temperatures and blossoming flowers! Near the end of March, program members came together for a Spring Fling! Pizza was served, games were played, and community was built among friends old and new!



[Click HERE](#) to read March’s Newsletter