



Elizabeth Martin

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

On February 1, Governor Hochul released her Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget proposal. Within that budget proposal is a 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the Medicaid reimbursement rates for non-profit organizations that operate under the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). We have all bought groceries, gas, heating fuel, etc., and we know that inflationary costs have increased substantially more than 2.5% over the past year.

During the month of February, we spent a great deal of time at the NYS Capitol. We rallied, conferenced, lobbied, and met with our legislators to let them know that the 2.5% COLA is not nearly enough to allow us to continue to provide quality supportive services to the intellectually/developmentally disabled (I/DD) community. Additionally, while the Governor is proposing \$50 million in funding to provide substantial salary increases for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who work for NYS, she failed to include any funding so that non-profit providers like Living Resources can do the same for our DSPs who provide similar supportive care. That is clearly unacceptable.

We continue to fight with the goal that when the final budget is passed in April, it includes adequate funding for non-profit providers to keep up with rising costs while also being able to increase the wages of our dedicated workforce. While we have made some noise, we truly need your help and your voice added to ours! The fight is raging on and without your voice, **they will simply think you don't care, and we know you do!**

I urge everyone who cares about New Yorkers who have disabilities and the workforce who supports them to call or write to your state representatives. Your representatives keep records of how many phone calls, letters, and emails they get from their constituents, which helps them determine the most important issues they need to fight for.

Go to <https://www.votervoice.net/.../Campaigns/98432/Respond> TODAY to tell your representatives:

- That a 2.5% COLA increase is insufficient when inflation has been 3-4x that number. **We need an 8.5% COLA to match the inflationary rate.** We need NYS to adequately invest in the services and workforce that support New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities!
- That the Governor's proposal to include raises for the state disability services workforce but not including those who work for nonprofits is unjust. **We do the same work, we deserve equal pay for equal work.**

Please prioritize supporting the I/DD community and reach out today!



We need YOU to
contact your representatives TODAY!



OPENING DOORS INTO A WHOLE NEW WORLD!



Things were looking pretty bleak for Sally. It was 2020, we were in the middle of a pandemic, and she had just arrived in the Capital Region from Guyana with her mother. To make things more difficult, Sally had a congenital defect causing a total loss of hearing and an irreparable cataract impairing vision in one eye. That's when she and her mother learned of Living Resources' Traditional Self-Directed Program.



Sally's support staff, Denise, noticed that Sally enjoyed coloring books and crayons, so she began introducing different mediums for Sally to explore. It was readily apparent that Sally was extremely creative with a true gift for art. When painting ceramic figurines, Denise encouraged Sally to experiment with mixing colors to create various skin tones and Sally took off from there. She began taking private painting classes twice a month and was soon enrolled in the Living Resources Art Program in Rotterdam three times a week.

Her art instructor Lily noticed how quick Sally is to learn new techniques, saying, "She has always been extremely independent in art class. She never hesitates to get the materials and source images she wants." During a recent lesson, Sally picked up the skill of block printing before the demonstration was finished, completing the project by herself. Now, not only does her artwork decorate her home and that of friends and family, it has been shown in two Living Resources art shows.

People close to Sally marvel as she reveals her gifts and continues in personal growth, becoming more independent both around her home and in the community. At home, she helps with laundry, cleans the dishes, and delights in helping make delicious holiday treats. Although Sally initially communicated through improvised gestures, she has begun learning American Sign Language (ASL) through videos and printed material with the support of her staff. Now, Sally uses a combination of ASL and picture images to independently order meals in restaurants. She is always eager to swipe her debit card and sign for any purchases she makes.

Sally has continued to inspire others with her independence, creativity, and appreciation for the beauty around her. Her easy smile and sign language applause say it all!



SALUTING OUR CAREERNEXT STUDENTS!

Congratulations to our Fall 2022 CareerNext Students who wrapped up their Fall 2022 semester with much success!

Our **SUNY Cobleskill** students collectively took 73 classes, and of those, 35 of the final grades were A's and 21 final grades were B's. Congratulations to Colin, Aidan, Adam, and Kerry who earned the Dean's List (GPA 3.5-3.99)! We also applaud James, Gregory, Lindsay, Will, and Isabelle who earned the Dean's Honorable Mention (GPA 3.0-3.49.)



We are thrilled to shine a spotlight on Erik, our first student to graduate from CareerNext at SUNY Cobleskill! Erik received his Associate of Occupational Studies in Culinary Arts. He said, "Without CareerNext, I would definitely have been a goner. I especially liked how CareerNext helped me study for tests. Words cannot describe how much I enjoyed being there every day and how helpful CareerNext was in helping me achieve my degree! "

Likewise, our inaugural semester at **Hudson Valley Community College** was a tremendous success! All students in the program received above a 3.5 GPA, and 3 students received a perfect 4.0 GPA! We are thrilled to announce that one of our new CareerNext students retook one of his prior classes, this time with our support, and received an A in the class!

Our new and returning students at CareerNext at **SUNY Schenectady** had an impressive Fall 2022 semester. One student received a perfect 4.0 GPA making the Dean's List, and three students received above a 3.0 GPA. We salute Hayden, who graduated in December with an Associate in Applied Science in Computer Information Systems. He said his CareerNext staff helped him break down his tasks and assignments into smaller pieces using an online weekly planner system. He credits the program with helping instill a stronger work ethic so he could complete his degree.



CareerNext through Living Resources offers personalized academic and executive function support for students with autism and learning differences. It is focused on helping students who need guidance to complete an accredited Bachelor's Degree, Associate's Degree, or Career Certificate as they transition out of High School or a previous college endeavor.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Living Resources CareerNext Program.



LIFE IS A HIGHWAY



February is the time when many people travel from the cold Northeast to warmer points south, but for our College Experience freshmen, travel means something entirely different – Independence!

The mission of Living Resources is to support and empower individuals with disabilities to live with dignity, independence, and happiness. One important path to independence is travel.

Therefore, our freshmen class members learn how to utilize the CDTA bus transportation system to travel around Albany, first with staff support, and then, when they are ready, they take a “bus test” to travel independently. The students enjoy the fruits of their labor by taking a group trip to downtown Albany.

Canaan learned how to utilize the STAR bus system, saying, “I take the STAR bus to Bethlehem for my job at the IT department there. I did not know about the STAR bus system and how it worked before, but now I know how it works and how to schedule my STAR bus on my own. I really appreciate the kindness of all of the STAR bus drivers!”



A special thanks to our College Experience instructors and to CDTA for helping our students become more independent.

HE WILL ROCK YOU



If joy was a picture, this would be it! At Living Resources, we have a fundamental belief that growth and happiness are unique for each individual. Our goal is to ensure that each person continues to grow to their fullest potential, pursue happiness in the manner they determine, and live as independently as possible. For Kevin, who has been part of the Living Resources family for more than 20 years, happiness takes the form of music, particularly the drums, so was not a huge surprise when he asked for drum

lessons for his 2022 Christmas gift. He started learning to play shortly thereafter and is now experiencing the thrill of making music.

Even when he isn't playing drums, Kevin loves life! When he gets laughing, it's infectious. He has such a zest for life, that whether he is going to a movie, play, or musical, exercising at the YMCA, or just lounging home with tv, if you're hanging out with Kevin, it's sure to be a good time.

Living Resources' Residential Program provides support to individuals living in a variety of settings. To learn more go to <https://www.livingresources.org/services/residential-services/>



TWISTIN' THE NIGHT AWAY



Vicki Baum said, “There are shortcuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them.” Our Brain Injury Program participants took a shortcut to happiness by holding their Annual Winter Ball at the Schenectady VFW- Draper Rd. They celebrated with friends while dancing to songs offered by a DJ and eating a fabulous meal prepared by the program staff.

The participants said they look forward to the night which allows them to get dressed up and gather in a community setting far away from their traditional program site. The party was open to family members which also changed their typical group dynamic. One participant had such a great time he suggested that they hold these events every season!



OUT OF THIS WORLD!



Our Orange County Day Community Opportunities Program has been finding many ways to have fun in the winter months. They had a “far out” experience at the UFO and Paranormal Museum in Pine Bush, NY. Located southwest of New Paltz, the museum allowed the group to immerse themselves in the paranormal happenings of the Hudson Valley area, exploring the museum’s UFO and Paranormal Galleries, and even taking advantage of the “Alien Abduction” photo-op station.

They also enjoyed a gnarly and totally tubular 80’s themed post-New Year’s party. The group “just wanted to have fun” and having a “Flashdance” was just the ticket. The Orange County DCOP site office is located in the Goshen Reformed Church, and Pastor Sam was kind enough to let them use the youth center for their dance. On the day of the party, the group danced the day away channeling Madonna, Cindy Lauper, Michael Jackson, Hulk Hogan, and more.



The DCOP is a “without walls” program offered for adults 18 years and older who reside as far north as Warren County and as far south as Westchester. Individuals participate in a wide variety of activities throughout their communities. The DCOP has created an environment that fosters community inclusion, self-sufficiency, and self-advocacy for its participants. The Orange County DCOP has been running since 2020.



SPREADING LOVE ON VALENTINES DAY



Our Day Community Opportunities Program (DCOP) of Warren and Saratoga counties were treated to a Valentine’s Day dance and luncheon, courtesy of the Clifton Park Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of Lodge 2466. The groups assembled at the Lodge, excitedly greeting their friends from other counties and spending time catching up on each other’s news.

They were then treated to a delicious lunch including pasta, meatballs, sausage and peppers, two different kinds of chicken, and more. Everyone agreed that the feast was as delicious as it was abundant. Afterward, they jumped onto the dance floor to sing, dance, and have fun together. It is obvious that this group really knows how to party!

This exciting party was all thanks to Bob Lumpkins (Lumpy) and Elks Lodge 2466. Bob said that our DCOP teams do extraordinary volunteer work at the Lodge, cleaning and setting up for BINGO and dinner. This inspired the Elks to give back to the program by writing a grant to help pay for some of the DCOP activities.

The grant covered the costs of this thank you luncheon where the attendees were warmly welcomed as extended members of their Elk family. In addition, they presented a \$1,700 check to Living Resources for future DCOP activities.

Frank Prevratil, Director of Living Resources Day Services, thanked Lumpy, saying that Living Resources and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks have much in common, most notably, that we both have a gift for helping people, spreading kindness, and spreading love.

A special thanks to Bob and all the Clifton Park Elks of Lodge 2466 for helping to spread love on Valentine’s Day and beyond!



[Click HERE to read January's Newsletter](#)