



MARCH 2023



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Elizabeth Martin**

I find it a bit ironic that March is Developmental Disability Awareness Month (DDAM) and that we – an organization that supports individuals with developmental disabilities – spent a majority of the month educating and advocating for much-needed funding within the Developmental Disability community. We shouldn't have to meet legislators multiple times, rally, call, email, mail, shout, and more just to get the basic support for the I/DD community – it really shouldn't be this hard!

This year's DDAM campaign encourages us to go "Beyond the Conversation." OPWDD Commissioner Kerri Neifeld asks us to celebrate the progress we have made toward community inclusion while also thinking bigger and bolder about "what's next?" We appreciate this inclusion; however, without adequate funding, the "what's next" ends up being just about keeping the lights on instead of achieving real success and providing supportive services that truly enhance lives.

Asking for funding to continue to provide supportive services to individuals who need the support in order to achieve their goals and live lives with dignity, independence and happiness should be an easy, but it isn't. So fight, we must and we can use everyone's help.

Every Voice Matters! Contact your representatives today!

Click [here](https://p2a.co/i90TPGq) or Go to <https://p2a.co/i90TPGq>



*SAVE THE DATE!*  
**A Tribute to  
Transforming Lives**

A Day at the 1863 Club  
Saratoga Race Course  
Presented by  
Saratoga Trunk  
LADY'S TRUNK



August 20, 2023

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## BAKING UP ADVOCACY – ONE COOKIE AT A TIME!



There's no sugarcoating it - Living Resources **kneads** more dough, literally. Over the past month, our program staff and participants have been advocating for an 8.5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and a wage enhancement for Direct Support Professionals – and taking some **whisks** to get their point across.

Governor Hochul's Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget proposal includes 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). It is no secret that inflationary costs have increased substantially more than 2.5% over the past year and that a 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 New York State, she has 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.



With this knowledge, the groups used a St. Patrick's Day theme, creating hand-made sugar cookies in the shapes of shamrocks to tell their representatives "We're not searching for a Pot of Gold, just equal pay for equal work." They mixed, baked, and decorated the cookies themselves, adding a little bit of love to each into every treat. Then, on March 7, 2023, ten groups from our Day Community Opportunities and Supportive Living Programs went to the Capital to hand-deliver a cookie to each representative while communicating their needs. This wasn't exactly a piece of cake, they had to secure parking, walk the long Concourse, and navigate the large and sometimes confusing structure that contains the Capitol and Legislative Office Building, but it was worth it. When the morning was over, staff and individuals alike felt empowered (you could even say "**Flour-powered.**")

Everyone who cares about New Yorkers who have disabilities and the workforce who supports them is urged to join the advocacy by calling or writing 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, so please keep up your advocacy efforts.

**Click here to see the cookie advocacy in action:** <https://youtu.be/RflnRvWDHUA>





## STANDING UP FOR THE TBI WAIVER



**"Be bold enough to use your voice, brave enough to listen to your heart, and strong enough to live the life you've always imagined." - Anonymous.**

The Brain Injury Advocacy Day in Albany gave the participants of Living Resources' ABI structured day program and others the opportunity to listen to their hearts and use their voices so that they can live their lives to the fullest.

The event, which took place at the Legislative Office Building in Albany, was organized by the Brain Injury Association of New York State. Those in attendance advocated for the continued funding of brain injury services through the New York State Department of Health (DOH) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver Program. Started in 1995 and funded by Medicaid, recipients choose where in the community they wish to live, which services they want to receive, and the agency that will provide those services.

Proponents of the waiver included members of the New York State Legislature, brain injury survivors, and their families. Senator John W. Mannion, Chairman of the Senate Disabilities Committee, expressed the need to improve the quality of life for brain injury survivors through services and activities that bring dignity, respect, and equality, saying, "We need to ensure that everyone gets the services they need – and right now, there are too many obstacles and barriers."

Many Living Resources Brain Injury Program participants took the podium to express gratitude that their service coordinator, transportation, and the programs they attend are all paid for by the TBI Waiver. Sarah shared that since her brain injury, she has had difficulty communicating, memory loss, and physical disabilities. Susan used a tablet app to communicate how her stroke affected her life. Jorelle shared that a car accident caused a brain injury which left her dependent on a wheelchair and affects her ability to communicate verbally. Brian said that after his stroke, the staff of Living Resources helped him to grow as an individual, recovering many of his previous skills, and discovering new abilities in art and self-advocacy. Andrew shared the story of his TBI diagnosis at the age of 25 resulting from brain tumors. Bobby said that a fall off his bike when he was five years old left him with a TBI, adding that although he struggles with memory and other cognitive impairments, "Just by looking at me, you may not know I have a brain injury."

Living Resources Brain Injury Services offers a comprehensive treatment program for people with traumatic or acquired brain injuries. Learn more at <https://www.livingresources.org/services/brain-injury-services/>



## HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!



Individuals from three of our residences met up for a group St. Patrick's Day Party from the top of the morning until the evening came. It wasn't luck that brought them together, though, it was a coordinated effort by the amazing Living Resources direct care staff. In addition to enjoying tasty food and singing and dancing to the tunes played by a DJ, the group chatted the day away before relaxing in front of the classic Disney movie Aladdin. Even the regional QIDP, Riki stopped over to enjoy the fun!

To learn more about our Residential services, go to  
<https://www.livingresources.org/services/residential-services/>

## ST. PATRICK'S DAY DONATION

Míle buíochas (many thanks) to Leonardo Martinez and our four leafed friends at the Plaza Diner in Hudson, NY for turning the Columbia Greene Day Community Opportunity Program (DCOP)'s shamrock charcuterie into a feast fit for a leprechaun.

Amanda Doty, the Assistant Manager of Living Resources' Columbia County Day Community Opportunity Program said, "When asked if they would be willing to donate to our participants, they agreed without hesitation. They not only made sure we had enough to feed everyone, but they also gave extra portions and worked around our schedule to ensure that it would be ready for us when we needed to pick it up!"

The diner manager, Ally Alesi said, "We've been in business for 10 years and without all the support from our community we wouldn't be able to feed our own families so we like to give back whenever we can." And they certainly gave a lot. The meal included traditional corned beef, a vegetable platter, rolls, potatoes, soda bread and more.

Everyone in the program felt luckier than a four leaf clover and that's no blarney! While words fail to express our gratitude to Mr. Martinez and his staff, but we wish them a traditional Irish Blessing: May the dreams you hold dearest be those that come true, and the kindness you spread keep returning to you.





## IN CELEBRATION OF LIFE WITH AN EXTRA CHROMOSOME



In honor of World Down Syndrome Day, March 21, we are honored to introduce you to Dee who attends Living Resources Day Community Opportunities Program (DCOP). Dee is 25 years old and her hobbies include swimming and coloring, and she enjoys eating popcorn while watching movies. She calls herself “a special needs kid,” not only due to her Down syndrome, but she also shared that when she was three years old she was diagnosed with leukemia and required a bone marrow transplant. Dee’s optimism is palpable. As she said, “I survived it and I feel good about it. My grandfather said, “I am strong like a bull!”

Dee has been participating in the DCOP program for about a year and she loves it. She smiled while saying “It is really helpful, I like it- it’s fun!” She particularly enjoys holiday-themed parties such as Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, and Easter. If she had to pick a favorite activity, she would choose art class day, but honestly, Dee enjoys every small moment of her day, including socializing with her friends while having lunch. As she said, “I enjoy myself in the moment, I enjoy myself in life.” Wouldn’t it be amazing if everyone had such a positive outlook?

Down syndrome is a condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome. Typically, people are born with 46 chromosomes, but babies with Down syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes, chromosome 21. World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated annually on March 21. The date, March 21st, signifies that people with Down syndrome have an extra copy of the 21st chromosome.

## TRULY INSPIRING WOMEN ARTISTS

Four participants of our art program had their artwork shown in the 2023 Inspiring Women Project Art Exhibit sponsored by The YWCA of NorthEastern NY and C.R.E.A.T.E. Community Studios. This inclusive event showcased local artists through an exhibit designed to empower and celebrate the accomplishments of all women and non-binary persons.

The artworks of Crystal, Christina, Katie, and Debbie were featured alongside those of YWCA residents, clients, staff, and other talented community members for a truly inclusive exhibit. An artist reception kicked off the weeklong art show that took place at the YWCA of Northeastern NY in Schenectady, NY.



Christina’s painting was a still life of red roses in a blue vase with a bold yellow background, Debbie’s design depicted a vibrant red structure with a multicolored background, Katie’s painting was an abstract piece suggestive of flowers done in greens, reds, and oranges, and, Crystal’s geometric design featured diversely colored rows of squares and circles.



Living Resources’ Arts Program began in 1997 and is designed for individuals with a variety of disabilities to receive art instruction from an exceptionally talented staff of highly trained artists in a stimulating and imaginative setting. To learn more, go to <https://www.livingresources.org/art-program/>



## RESTAURANT WEEK – LIVING RESOURCES STYLE

Members of one of our residences celebrated Developmental Disability Awareness Month in style by creating their own version of “Restaurant Week.” The Residential House Manager, Alison Farron, and her staff brought their idea to their individuals with suggestions of which restaurants they might like to visit and the residents selected their favorite venues such as Texas Roadhouse, Hooters, Sake Japanese Restaurant, and a Ramen Bar.

Developmental Disability Awareness Month highlights the many ways in which people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities. The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, as well as awareness to the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.



## LASHA WRIGHT- CAREGIVER OF THE YEAR



Congratulations to Lasha Wright, winner of Capital Regional Pharmacy Services’ Caregiver of the Year Award! Lasha was one of seven caregivers honored at a recent luncheon that celebrated the hardworking and dedicated Direct Support Professionals and their crucial role in providing care and support to individuals with disabilities. OPWDD Commissioner Kerri Neifeld presented the awards and shared her gratitude to the honorees, making this event even more special.

Lasha began her career at Living Resources as a Direct Support Professional in July of 2021, and since then, she has made quite an impact on the lives of those whom she supports. She has ensured the best quality of life for her individuals, empowering them to live with dignity, independence, and happiness. Because of her professional and personable manner with individuals and her team, she was promoted to Assistant Manager of her site in 2022.

Lasha has continuously proven to be a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities while putting their needs above all else. For example, an individual Lasha supports had a tradition of independently taking a plane to visit with her family. Unfortunately, due to an increased level of dementia, she was unable to continue this level of independence. Lasha stepped up and volunteered to fly along with this individual, allowing her to visit her family and continue to build those wonderful family memories! We are grateful to Lasha for coming up with a creative solution to this problem and for the many ways she has ensured that her individuals pursue happiness in the manner they determine, and live as independently as possible.



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

