



SHARING THE JOURNEY

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



ELIZABETH MARTIN, CEO

January is a wonderful time of hope—a fresh start filled with promise. As we embark on this new year, we hold onto the hope that we can expand our services, ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the support they deserve. We also hope to continue increasing wages for our dedicated staff members, whose commitment makes a profound difference in the lives of so many.

However, hope alone is not enough. We must also advocate. Each year, Living Resources’ staff and board members, supporters, individuals, and families take on the critical task of advocating for the resources necessary to promote dignity, independence, and happiness.

This year, we are calling for:

- A **7.8% Medicaid Rate increase** to strengthen Disability Services.
- The establishment of a **Human Services Wage Commission** to address low wages and pay inequities in disability services.
- **Capital Funding** to help agencies like ours align with New York State’s climate goals by becoming more energy efficient.

We cannot achieve these goals without you. Over the coming months, you will have opportunities to lend your voice—by attending rallies, reaching out to legislators, and standing with us in our fight for change. Your advocacy is essential in creating a future where everyone has the support they need to thrive.

Together, let’s continue to build a world of hope and compassion. Thank you for being part of this journey.



Scan for Advocacy Resources



UNWINDING WITH YARN CRAFTS

Are you caught in the January doldrums? You might want to consider taking a stitch from our Brain Injury participants and trying a yarn craft. Knitting, crocheting, looming, and latch hooking are not your average hobbies. They are truly off the hook! Staff member Althea Pestine-Stevens started the “Comfort Crafts” group which meets once a week. She said, “I love crocheting. It provides me great stress relief and is a source of pride that I can make things out of yarn. I wanted to enable other people to share in those good feelings too.” This idea created a chain reaction of excitement and spread like fleeced- lightning!

The Comfort Crafts group provides strategies to compensate for the reduced fine motor skills that often occur after a brain injury. The first group project was the creation of hand-made pom-poms. Group members worked deliberately on wrapping the yarn around a cardboard template, tying off the bundle and cutting the loops evenly. These can be difficult tasks after a brain injury, but the participants are up for the challenge with the support of upbeat staff and tight-knit group members. Glen said, “As someone who is legally blind, it’s gratifying when you finish something. Even if you mess it up, you can see what you did wrong and next time you make sure not to do that.” Colors can be an issue for Michelle who is also legally blind due to a non-cancerous brain tumor near her optic nerve. She said that craft activities work best for her when she uses colors that contrast against the color of the table. “Althea recommended that I put my latch hook on a piece of white paper so I can see the colors better.” Tina is also hooked on latch hooking. She said, “I had a stroke and have aphasia. I have reduced function in my right hand, but I figured out how to use a latch hook. It feels wonderful to be able to latch hook. It's relaxing.”



Sometimes, group members need a helping hand, literally. During a recent Comfort Crafts session, Molly carefully held a pom-pom for Sue, who experiences gross and fine motor difficulties on the right side of her body. With this support, Sue could trim her pom-pom, making it just right. Similarly, Brian utilizes a loom to provide structure for the creation of a hat. He said, “I enjoy finding out what works for me. I don’t have the full use of my left hand anymore, but this I can do.” He added, “Before I started coming to Living Resources, I never did any of this stuff. Like everything else I make here, it makes me feel that I accomplished something.”



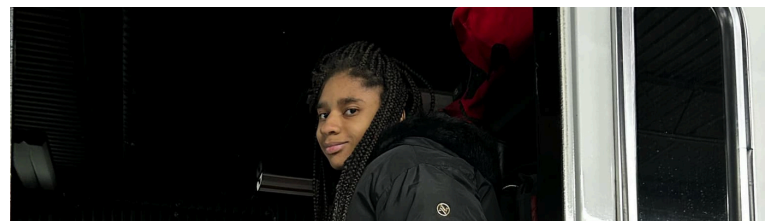


LEARNING ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

With the roaring L.A. wildfires, fire safety is at the top of everyone’s mind. While our hearts go out to those affected, we here in New York wanted to use this opportunity as a teaching moment for our individuals. Recently, a group of our individuals visited the Catskill Firehouse to learn about fire safety and see some pretty cool trucks.

The fire fighters at Catskill Firehouse were incredibly welcoming, showing the individuals around the station and giving an in-depth tour of the different fire trucks that they use to fight fires and assist the community each day. When talking with the individuals, the fire fighters stressed the importance of fire safety, detailing the importance of having a mapped out escape plan and designated meeting spot, and how important it is to practice the escape plan regularly. All-in-all, it was an incredibly fun and informative day at the Catskill Firehouse. Our sincerest thank you to the brave fire fighters who took time out of their day to show us around!

While they were busy learning about fire safety downstate, two groups from Saratoga DCOP spent the morning with the Wilton Fire Department where they were giving a tour of the fire house and the truck bay. Individuals got to learn about their processes and protocols and what each different fire truck does. They also got to go inside of the trucks and try on some of the fire fighter's gear. The group talked about fire safety and what to do in fire emergencies. Individuals learned about what it takes to run a fire house, how they have to be prepared at all times to respond to a fire and the best practices to prevent fires at home. Thank you to the Wilton Fire Department staff for showing us around and teaching us about fire safety, we had so much fun and can't wait to go back!





JANUARY IS BLOOD DONATION MONTH!

January is Blood donation month and Living Resources’ staff member Cathi Butryn wants to spread the word!

Blood donation is a very personal matter to Cathi. When she was in elementary school, her father was diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer of the body’s blood-forming tissues. Her family often organized blood drives to compensate for his frequent need for life- saving transfusions. Since Cathi was too young to donate, she took on the role of cheerleader, giving out stickers, cookies, and juice to those who participated, but she longed for the time when she could do more. When she reached the eligible age of 17, she was frustratingly sidelined due to medical issues of her own. As time went on, she gave up trying, believing that blood donation would never be possible for her. That was until 2022 when the American Red Cross of Eastern New York teamed up with CEOs in the Capital Region for a “Blood Battle.” Living Resources joined the friendly competition, working at blood drives and encouraging people to donate.



This was the motivation Cathi needed to battle her own demons, meeting with her doctor to review her past medical history and current state of health. Once given a green light from her doctor, Cathi immediately registered. As if to test her resolve, on morning of her appointment the region was hit with a powerful winter storm, but after 40 years of waiting, nothing was going to stand in her way. Once the weather abated and the plows made the roads passable, she brushed the foot of snow off her car and took off for Albany.



I am a power red donor!

Remembering that day, Cathi said, “The Red Cross employees were a hardy crew, extremely

upbeat and encouraging, even more so after they heard it was my first time donating. Their masterful balance of joking and attentive care helped put my 50+ year-old nerves at ease. It wasn’t until after the procedure was completed when they asked me how I felt that a tear escaped and ran down my cheek. In that moment, I had become deeply aware of the presence of my dad who passed away when I was 16. I whispered to his spirit, ‘This was for you!’”

Three years later, Cathi is a seasoned pro, making regular appointments to donate blood. She is a proud “power red” donor, giving two units of red blood cells during one session through a specialized machine. Through this process, she knows she can help double the amount of people with each donation.

If you are able, we, together with Cathi, urge you to make an appointment to donate blood today!



WILD FOR BIRDS

Six months ago, a local wildlife rescue organization, Whispering Willow Wild Care, brought their inspiring exhibit of birds of prey to Living Resources Acquired Brain Injury program, offering both educational enrichment and a meaningful connection to nature. All the program participants were captivated by the impressive array of raptors, including majestic ravens, magnificent owls, powerful hawks, and chatty crows. All who attended the program were moved by the stories of the birds that were rehabilitated after sustaining life threatening injuries, and one was inspired to act.

Jim was so moved by the stately birds last summer that he spent many months drawing their portraits, using photographs as reference for his art. He carefully recreated the likenesses of Hionon the broad-winged hawk, Sweet Leonore the raven, and Hamlet the barred owl with amazing detail. When Joyce Perry, owner of Whispering Willow and her assistant Joanne returned to Living Resources this month to showcase a new set of raptors, they never



imagined the surprise in store for them. Jim presented them with his art work, in large, beautiful frames. To say the gifts were well-received is an understatement. Joanne said, "These are our favorite birds and he is an amazing artist. This was a really nice thing that he did for us!" Joyce agreed adding that she was going to make arrangements to hang the artwork in their rehabilitation room where all the staff can enjoy them.



Kudos to Jim for not only creating these impressive works of art, but generously sharing his talents with the team from Whispering Willow. Thanks to the Living Resources instructors who nurture the skills of all who take part in our Brain Injury Program. And much gratitude to the staff at Whispering Willow Wild Care for not only providing close-up encounters with these apex predators, but showcasing the powerful reminder of the resilience and recovery possible for all beings, whether they have wings and are at home in the sky, or arms, making their homes on the earth.





BILLS FAN DREAM DAY

January is a time for the three F's: Friends, Food, and Football! There's nothing better than getting together with friends, enjoying some delicious food, and watching your favorite team play. Well, maybe one thing is better than that, and that's seeing your favorite team play live from the front row! Frederick is a die-hard Buffalo Bills fan. He can talk for days and days about different stats, players, and games, right down to the team's very first playoff game in 1963. However, he's never seen a game in person.



When the chance came for him to see his team showdown against the Baltimore Ravens in the AFC Divisional game he jumped right on it! Staff assisted him with purchasing his ticket and off they went to the new Highmark Stadium in Orchard Park, New York. It was a chilly day, but Frederick donned his Buffalo Bills best and bundled up for the excitement to come!



When he reached his seats, he was in awe; he was right up front in the end zone! The game was a thrilling one, with Frederick barely able to contain his excitement. In the end, Frederick's team was triumphant, winning 27-25 over the Ravens. Still in awe from seeing his idols, Frederick didn't want to come home! All-in-all it was an exciting day both Frederick and staff won't soon forget!





IN LOVING TRIBUTE

We are grateful to those who give to Living Resources in the name or memory of a loved one.



In Honor of Ed Brennan
Kevin Brennan

In Honor of Cathi Butryn
Mary Giordano

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**Help us purchase a new
wheelchair van!**



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