DIRECTIONS
in Independent Living, Inc.
DIL, inc.
2626 W. State St., Suite 202 / 512 W. State St., Olean, NY 14760

Helping those with disabilities live more independent lives.

DIL, inc.

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Directions in Independent Living, located in Cattaraugus and Allegany counties in the Southern Tier of New York State, is mission-driven to help individuals with disabilities live with greater dignity and independence

www.directions-olean.com

Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9 am - 12 p.m. & 1 - 4

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Spring 2022

Dance is Back!

As everyone knows, the pandemic has taken a toll on many aspects of all our lives. Here are Directions, one of the biggest effects it had on our programs was that we were unable to continue to provide our recreational dance program. Our dance program is a way for developmentally disabled individuals to socialize, have fun, get exercise, and build their self-esteem. When we decided it was safe to begin the classes again, Developmental Disabilities Manager, Deb Coble had to build the program from the ground up. She was able to hire two wonderful employees for the program, Skye Johnson the Dance Director, and Malibu Peelman the Dance Assistant. Both Skye and Malibu have an extensive background of many styles of dance and were exited to work with consumers not only on line dancing, which the classes had been traditionally, but in all styles of dance. On May 7th the program held its first recital where the participants got to show their loved ones all of the hard work and new dances, they have been learning over the last several weeks. Several families expressed their gratitude for the program being back up and running as it was very difficult during the pandemic with the changes and lack of activities for their loved ones. To participate in the program, you have to be Office of People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) eligible, live with others, and be 12 or older. If you would like more information on the program lease call Deb Coble at 585-933-0136.

STRAWW Life Hacks

Life Hacks is a group put on by the STRAWW program where participants do crafts or activities based off life hacks, things that make daily living easier or more organized. It is intended to support socialization, build social skills and skill development. STRAWW held the Sweet ReLeaf event on April 21st at the American legion where participants were invited to join a variety of different spring crafts, food and door prizes. They made bird houses, heating packs, cactus rocks and many other spring crafts. On May 31st participants enjoyed snacks and ice breaker games as well as an open discussion group for ideas of interest on upcoming groups. The life hacks group will take place monthly and is free and open to the public. This group will provide an opportunity for participants to socialize and enjoy practicing different life hacks and skill building activities. Groups will take a rotation between Wellsville and Olean to accommodate both counties. For more information contact Cerssia Lynch at

On May 25th Sara Hillyard, Veteran Peer to Peer Coordinator, Gold Star Mom, Candice Clemons, and Brigadier General Arthur Austin, placed 1,000 roses on the headstones of all the veterans at the Allegany Cemetery in honor of Memorial Day. In addition to placing roses, they did a clean-up of the Civil War Monument and maintained other veteran headstones.

Message From Our Board President, Brad Monroe

Directions in Independent Living's Board of Directors has appointed Co-Executive Directors to lead the Agency. We have Kate Steigerwald as Executive Director of Services and Krissy Wagner as Executive Director of Operations. Kate and Krissy bring a unique blend of leadership with their extensive knowledge and experience; Kate with our services and programs and Krissy with operational management. They have been running the agency for over a year and proved to be very effective.

Kate and Krissy have certainly faced their share of challenges while navigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am sure you can imagine the affect the pandemic has had on a non-profit agency providing services to the community for those with disabilities. As Board President, I can say that I am very proud of the performance of our Co-Executive Directors in assuring that our Consumers continued to receive the services needed and, ensuring that both the consumers and employees were safe and protected.

Kate and Krissy did not of course, do this alone. They have put in place three Managers who have specific focus and responsibilities for the 18 different Programs and Services that Directions in Independent Living provides to the community. They are Deb Coble, Developmental Disability Programs Manager, Sue Hannon, Mental Health Programs Manager, and Caitlin Metler, Specialized Programs Manager. Together, the leadership of our Directors and Managers and the entire agency team are executing the comprehensive Strategic 3-Year Plan which is improving our performance in delivering our many services and moving Directions in Independent Living for future growth in serving those with disabilities and basic community needs as well as our Veterans.

I can speak for the Board of Directors in saying that we have the utmost confidence in the Leadership Team, our consumers and employees are in the best hands for care and guidance.

Thank you

Warriors Unified Basketball

While most of the area schools have participated in a one day annual Unified Basketball event, Salamanca City Central School District was the first school in Cattaraugus county to establish a team and join the NYSPHSAA established league play. About 5 years ago, the Warriors joined the Section 6 league and played a schedule consisting mostly of schools in Erie County. This year, Salamanca was joined in the league by more local schools from neighboring Chautauqua county, with Frewsburg, Fredonia, and Southwestern fielding teams. Directions in Independent Living, Inc. hosted a pizza party for the teams at the last home game of this season. Salamanca City Central School District has also been recognized previously for its Unified sports programs at the Accessibility Awards hosted by SCALE and DIL.

Unified sports is identified as the fastest growing sport in the Special Olympics movement, with over 700,000 teams established worldwide since 2013. Salamanca has 2 Unified programs….bowling in the winter and basketball as part of the spring sports schedule. The Unified sports movement, also known as Project Unify, offers opportunities for inclusive sports involvement, youth leadership and advocacy, and whole school engagement.

Whitewater Rafting Fun!

On May 21st the Cattaraugus County Joseph P Dwyer program held a White-Water Rafting event at Adventure Calls Outfitters in Letchworth State Park. The event was described as exhilarating, fun, adventurous, a once in a lifetime experience, team building and an overall successful day. Veterans were able to bond and lean on each other to successfully navigate a level 2 white water rafting excursion. During the trip, they were able to exit the raft and explore the exquisite sights Letchworth Sate Park has to offer.

Riding for Hope

Caitlin Metler, Program Manager, Alec Wankel, Cortney Lathrop, Representative Payee Coordinator

Directions in Independent Living will be supporting Alec Wankel's cross-country cycling event, the Journey of Hope, the premier service event of the Fraternal world. Directions' goal is to help raise awareness for Alec's cause and is seeking help from the community. For Alec to participate, he must raise $3000 by June 1.

Directions' mission is to help those with disabilities live more independent lives. Alec's cross country cycling event raises that awareness, spreading a message of positivity, and providing support for those with disabilities across the country.

Alec, a native of Duke Center, PA. was introduced to the agency by his sister, Cortney Lathrop, Representative Payee Coordinator at Directions. Alec, an alumnus of the Eta Lambda chapter of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity at SUNY Brockport, is a Finance major at St John Fisher College and a midshipman of NROTC in Rochester.

Those who would like to donate to Alec's journey, can donate directly to his page by visiting, https://www.classy.org/fundraiser/3666747.

Alec's cross-country trip will begin in San Francisco, where he will ride through Utah, Nevada, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and end in Washington DC by Aug 14. The event starts in early June and teams will be traveling from 3,663 to 4,370 miles. Along the way his team will make stops in various cities to conduct "Friendship Visits".

"This is our opportunity to have a one-on-one with the various individuals we aim to help the most," Wankel said. When I decided to join this opportunity, I really thought of it at first as a way to allow me to experience the jewels of the country while meeting fellow brothers from different walks of life. After some reflection, however, it came to me that this journey is more than that.

"This trip is a chance to impact hundreds of lives without even speaking a word. It is about giving those who feel separated or different because of an uncontrollable ailment that they are not different, that they are human no matter what and they deserve the same quality of life and life experiences anyone else might have." Wankel added "It is my goal to raise enough money and help those who can't help themselves by inspiring them to live their lives and provide perspective, that life is worth living and it only requires heart."

Journey of Hope started with one man in the summer of 1987. Bruce Rogers from the Chi chapter (Stetson) rode from Florence, Oregon to Norfolk, Virginia. The next year, another brother James Karlovec from the Delta Sigma chapter (Bowling Green) led a 21-man cycling team across the country. Today, 100 brothers of Pi Kappa Phi participate in this quest to raise money and awareness by traveling three different routes that on average ride 75 miles per day, across a combined 30 states and 12,000 miles. After each day's ride, the team gathers for a "Friendship Visit", an event that allows the team to interact with people with disabilities and promote a greater understanding of the person and their true ability. Annually, this trip raises approximately $600,000 and reaches 100 million people through social media.

To show support for Alec's trip, Directions will host a 5K Walk/Run/Ride July 17 through July 23. Details will be released in the upcoming weeks. Check the Directions website at www.oleanilc.org or our Facebook page, Directions in Independent Living, Inc.

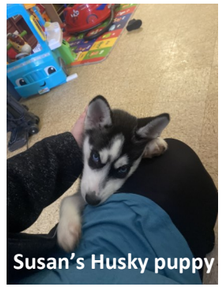
Featured Consumer:

From Consumer to Employee

After several attempts at getting help with her addiction and mental health, Susan Alvarado decided it was time for a change. She joined the Health Homes of Upstate New York (HHUNY) program at Directions in Independent Living (DIL) to get the support she needed for her mental health. Susan had recently moved from Chautauqua County and was very unfamiliar with the area. Her Care Coordinator helped her connect with a primary care doctor in Olean and helped to get her established at Foundations for Change. Susan states, "I wouldn't have had any clue where to get connected in the area without the help of my Care Coordinator, I was by myself with no family to help me." Her Care Coordinator was someone to talk to, she helped her quit smoking, and helped her practice her coping skills for her mental health symptoms. Susan's Care Coordinator linked her with a variety of services including Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) at DIL. Through her HCBS services, Susan was able to get help with budgeting, resume writing, applying for ACCES-VR services to go back to school, and social opportunities. Due to all the supports and services her Care Coordinator was able to link Susan to, she has accomplished a lot. She has overcome her addiction, she manages her mental health symptoms, she graduated from Empire College with her bachelor's degree in May 2022 and will begin to work on her master's degree through Syracuse University's online program in the fall of 2022. Susan was able to advance in her career going from a Direct Support Professional, to Case Manager at the Genesis House, to a Homeless Intervention Specialist at Connecting Communities in Action, to now a Care Coordinator herself, here at DIL. Susan stated that she likes working at DIL because "everyone is understanding, supportive, accommodating, and family oriented which is important as a single mom." She also likes that she gets constructive feedback from her supervisor, not just the negative but what she is doing well. Susan enjoys being a HHUNY Care Coordinator because she loves to help people and she has been in her consumer's shoes can relate to them. "Change can happen through the program if both the consumer and the Care Coordinator are working together. Great things can happen through the program, and I am proof of that," Susan states. Another remarkable thing Susan accomplished was recently buying her first home where she can spend time with her four sons and her husky puppy. We at DIL are happy and appreciative to have Susan as a member of our team as she brings so much to the table for her consumers and the agency as a whole.

Susan and her sons

To be eligible for the HHUNY program you must have Medicaid, a mental health condition or 2 chronic conditions. For more information, call Mental Health Program Manger Sue Hannon at 716-373-46602 ext.8731


Susan's Husky puppy

Compeer Park Day

Compeer played yard games including cornhole, latter golf (toss), and yard Yahtzee. Compeer members were encouraged to bring friends and family members. Thank you to the family and friends that came and support the Cattaraugus County Compeer programs and that you to the support you provide to your loved ones that deal with mental health difficulties and symptoms.

Partnering to Raise Awareness

On April 6th Together We Thrive collaborated with Connecting Communities in Action Trauma Informed Care Trainers, Alan Meyers and Daniel Butcher, to provide an educational workshop on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and trafficked youth titled "Little Red." There is a powerful ripple effect when your work in identifying, preventing, and supporting the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and trafficked youth. Identification of a youth survivor can lead to the recovery of other youth under the exploiters control. Thus, who you are and what you do, can halt cycles of abuse and exploitation. During the training, knowledge and tools were available on working with CSEC and trafficked youth. The combined expertise, experiences and resiliency found in each gathering of engaged participants can and will expose the underbelly of our county, and together we can do better for our children and future generations.

Alan Meyers and Daniel Butcher

Welcome New Board Member Amy Bowser!

My name is Amy Bowser and I am honored to be part of Directions and Independent Living Board of Directors. I have lived in the Olean community my entire life and I am currently employed at Big Picture Academy in Cuba, NY, where I wear many hats. I teach 3 electives, including Visual Arts, Introduction to Business, and Creative Writing. I also run a student advisory and I am the internship coordinator for students 9-12. Prior to my position here, I worked as a Program Coordinator for Southern Tier Health Care System and as a CHUNNY Program Coordinator for Directions in Independent Living. I currently hold a Bachelors in Human Services and plan to return to school in the fall to obtain my teaching certificate in Visual Arts. I have an undeniable passion for people and it is my mission to spread joy and light to others. Outside of my profession, I enjoy spending time with my husband, our two children and our two, wild pups. I look forward to representing DIL in the best light and serving such a wonderful agency!

Amy Joins Board Members-

Brad Monroe– President

Jason Miller- Vice President

Larry Knight– Secretary

Randy Green—Treasurer

Jeff Black

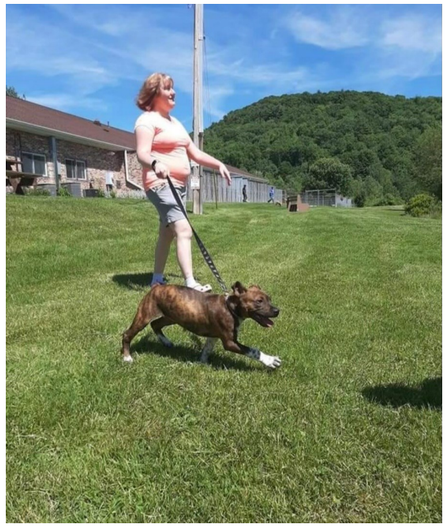
Brenda Blackwell

Jason Yaworsky

Directions out in the Community

On May 14th DIL's Dwyer Veteran program had fun paintballing at GRC Paintball Fields & Proshop in Angelica

Transitions program spring craft event

Transitions program consumers volunteering at the Olean SPCA

Catt Co Compeer members and their families met Saturday May 14th at the historical Rail Museum in Salamanca NY. The Director, Ms. Jare Cardinal, gave an interactive tour of the old station and showed off the tools of the trade. It was fun and enlightening for both young and old.