



OCTOBER 2024

YOUR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR MISSION

## A Letter of Reflection from RCAL's Systems Advocate

Dear readers,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all of you. To my friends, family, and colleagues at RCAL, both past and present, thank you for your hard work, compassion, and steadfast support in the systems advocacy efforts we have taken over the years.



Keith Gurgui: Systems Advocate

After more than ten years as the Systems Advocate at RCAL, I will be moving on to the next stage of my life. Have no fear, I will continue to stay involved in my community. I will continue on the boards of the New York State Independent Living Council and the New York State Spinal Cord Injury Research Program.

For those of you who don't know me, my introduction to RCAL began after I became paralyzed in late 2009. Having become disabled, I needed advice and assistance returning home to the house that I had been growing up in. It needed to be made wheelchair accessible. I would need to establish a routine of 24 hour home care. I needed help navigating my higher education services and transportation logistics. I also needed help understanding the complicated world of Social Security and Medicaid.

When I needed something, and I wasn't sure where or how to get it, I knew someone at RCAL could help me find the answer. That has been my experience.... (Page 2)

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## A Letter of Reflection (Continued)

.....and I will be forever grateful for each and every person who I've had the pleasure of interacting with.

I must give special thanks to RCAL's former Director/CEO Sue Hoyer, who hired me (thanks for driving me to DC!). And thank you to Amy Parks (who encouraged me to apply for the Systems Advocate position), as well as Suzanne Debeumont, Kathy Hochman, Katie Clayton and the amazing team who run the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) Medicaid Waiver Program who helped me come home to a modified, wheelchair accessible home.

All of these interactions greatly informed my world view and helped me grow to be a better voice for others in need of Independent Living Services, and to be able to articulate to our elected representatives where specific policies can be improved.

I'd like to leave you with a quote extracted from a 1957 speech by then Senator John F. Kennedy:

"For in a democracy, every citizen, regardless of his interest in politics, 'hold office'; every one of us is in a position of responsibility; and, in the final analysis, the kind of government we get depends upon how we fulfill those responsibilities. We, the people, are the boss, and we will get the kind of political leadership, be it good or bad, that we demand and deserve."

-Keith Gurgui (RCAL Systems Advocate; 2011-2016, 2019-2024)



Keith with Sue Hoyer RCAL Director (fmr) and NYAIL Executive Director Lindsay Miller in DC in 2016



Keith with RCAL CEO Anthony Mignone and Assemblyman Kevin Cahill in Albany in 2013



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## RCAL Friendraiser

RCAL's Third Annual Friendraiser, held in partnership with the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce, is right around the corner, and we can't wait to gather with you for an evening dedicated to accessibility, advocacy, and community spirit.

Join us on November 7th at Stonehedge Restaurant in West Park, NY, for an evening of music, hors d'oeuvres, pasta, and a silent auction—all in support of our mission to build a fully accessible and integrated community for people with disabilities.

"We are excited to bring our community together for the Third Annual Friendraiser," said RCAL CEO Anthony Mignone. "This event is a wonderful opportunity to mix with members of the community and business community, and to make people aware of our mission and the services we provide."

At RCAL, we believe everyone deserves to live without barriers. Our Friendraiser is not just an event; it's a celebration of the progress we've made together and a vision of the accessible future we're striving toward.

The evening will highlight the vital programs RCAL offers while showcasing the incredible achievements of our community in advancing the independent living movement.

This is a chance to learn more about our initiatives, meet our dedicated team, and connect with like-minded individuals who share a passion for accessibility and inclusivity.

"Together, we can continue to break down barriers and create a more inclusive world for all," said Mignone.

We hope to see you there for this inspiring evening of connection and celebration. Let's continue to make a difference together!

To purchase tickets, visit [rcal.org/fundraiser](https://rcal.org/fundraiser)

## YOUR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR MISSION



THE RESOURCE CENTER FOR ACCESSIBLE LIVING'S

*Third annual*

# FRIENDRAISER

November 7, 2024, 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

*Stonehedge Restaurant*

1694 Rte 9W, West Park, NY 12493

In collaboration with the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce, we invite you for a cocktail party featuring hors d'oeuvres, pasta, music, and a silent auction!

To donate to RCAL for our silent auction, please contact Robert Miraldi  
rmiraldi@rcal.org or 845.331.0541 ext. 12



Purchase tickets at  
[rcal.org/friendraiser](http://rcal.org/friendraiser)





## **Governor Announce State Fiscal Intermediary**

In late September, Governor Hochul announced that she was awarding a \$40 billion contract to manage the entire CDPA program to Public Partnerships LLC (PPL). The plan is to transition 250,000 consumers and their personal assistants by April 30, 2025.

PPL has demonstrated that they do not have the capacity to safely manage a transition on this scale. PPL managed the transition in Pennsylvania, which resulted in 60% of their consumers either leaving the program, being forced out of the program, or ending up in nursing facilities. In New York, 60% would mean 160,000 consumers facing the same fate. 60% of you reading this will be at risk of the same fate consumers faced in Pennsylvania.

### **PPL: A History of Failure**

PPL's track record speaks for itself with a history of lost or terminated contracts "managing similar home care programs in New Jersey, Washington, West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee" ([Spectrum, 9/26/24](#)).

PPL lacks long term stable leadership with "at least seven changes in CEO in the last four years." ([Spectrum, 9/26/24](#))

PPL is owned by private equity firms DW Healthcare Partners and Linden Capital Partners. ([Axios, 8/8/22](#))

Private equity "has spent hundreds of billions of dollars acquiring healthcare businesses," and "where private equity has gone, studies show, prices have tended to increase." ([WSJ, 5/30/24](#))

After Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare "rolled out the red carpet" for PPL to take over payroll services, "the transition was, by all accounts, a disaster." ([Bangor Daily News, 11/22/13](#))

An auditor general report found the mismanagement cost the state an extra \$7 million a year. At least 1,500 disabled or elderly Pennsylvanians were so perplexed that they switched to a more expensive model of care that cost the state an additional \$7 million per year, ([Bangor Daily News, 11/22/13](#))

The Auditor General found DPW caused "undue financial and emotional strain on tens of thousands of people" by failing "to provide adequate oversight and demand accountability" of PPL..([Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Press Release, 11/14/13](#))

The Auditor General investigation was launched after PPL "left 20,000 home care workers unpaid." ([The Herald, 03/07/13](#))



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## **Governor Announce State Fiscal Intermediary (continued)**

SEIU Healthcare Workers Union protested PPL and the damage it did to home care workers: “The Corbett Administration’s lack of oversight and preparation for the transition to PPL in January of 2013 resulted in untold and unnecessary financial and emotional hardship for tens of thousands of home care attendants and their consumers.” ([SEIU 11/14/13](#))

### **PPL in Pennsylvania: Accused of Wage Theft**

A lawsuit was filed alleging that “Public Partnerships, LLC, a subsidiary of the nationwide management consulting firm Public Consulting Group, knowingly refused to pay workers for overtime” across Pennsylvania. ([Business Wire](#), 05/13/2017)

A settlement hearing was scheduled for July 10, 2024 between the plaintiffs and Public Partnership, LLC. (5:17cv2165, Talarico V. Public Partnerships, Llc, United States District Court, Pennsylvania Eastern, 06/26/2024)

### **PPL in Pennsylvania: Finally Replaced**

After a failed transition and years of mismanagement, PPL was later replaced by Tempus Unlimited in Pennsylvania’ ([Pennsylvania Health Law Project](#), 12/14/2021)

### **PPL in New Jersey: “Egregious ... Failures”**

In New Jersey, the Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD) released a report detailing the “egregious fiscal and operational failures” by PPL in managing two DHS programs. (Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities, [Advocacy Paper](#), 01/20/20)

ABCD wrote that PPL’s failures were resulting in individuals “being denied life-critical services.” (Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities, [Advocacy Paper](#), 01/20/20)

### **PPL in Colorado: The lowest-rated provider**

In Colorado, PPL scored the lowest of the three Financial Management Services Agencies assessed by a Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing survey on Consumer Directed Attendant Support Services (CDASS) customer satisfaction. (CDASS, [2016 Client Satisfaction Survey Report](#), 02/03/17)



# Jim Garvey Memorial

## DISABILITY RESOURCES FAIR



**November 9  
10 AM - 2 PM**

**At St. James United Methodist Church**

**Parking lot and entrance with elevator:  
29 Pearl Street, Kingston, NY**

Please save the date! You are invited to attend this **free** event designed to connect individuals, caregivers, and professionals to educational workshops and local agency support! Anticipated workshops will include special education law, classroom accommodations for Autism, Medicaid benefits, a teen disability pride art time, and more! Please RSVP for workshops and find updates via the QR code below.

Please help us spread the word about this free event by sharing this flyer with someone you know who is interested in learning more about these workshop topics!

*Brought to you by the Resource Center on Accessible Living (RCAL) and Saint James United Methodist Church*

**For more information please contact:**

- Roxanne Ferber at RCAL: (845)331-0541 ext. 33.  
rferber@rcal.org
- Pastor Rebecca Leibowitz at St. James: (845) 331-3030.  
kids.saintjames@gmail.com

**Scan to RSVP for  
workshops and  
event updates**





## October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Observed each October, during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, or "NDEAM," we celebrate the value and talent workers with disabilities add to America's workplaces and economy. NDEAM's purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring disabled workers have access to good jobs, every month of every year. That's the spirit behind this year's official theme: "Access to Good Jobs for All." [Watch the NDEAM Animated Video to learn more](#)

Source: United States Department of Labor

#NDEAM  
[dol.gov/odep](https://dol.gov/odep)



# Access to Good Jobs for All

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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# WE ARE HIRING

**Part-Time Benefits Advisor:** (21 hours) Assist individuals with their Social Security Benefits, Medicaid, Medicare, TANF, Section 8, and other low-income benefits. Social Security Retirement, Supplemental Income, and Social Security Disability.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Associate's Degree or prior experience with Benefits Advisement. Belief in the Independent Living Philosophy. Ability to learn fast and take online courses to expand your knowledge. A valid NYS driver's license and automobile insurance that meets the requirements set by the program and our insurance company are also required. Ability to work on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** Assist individuals with obtaining, retaining, and re-certifying their benefits. Understand and explain the impact of working on an individual's benefits. Assist with management of needs and other tasks. Keep records. As a working part of the team, assist with Durable Medical Loan Closet and tasks around the office. Contact Robert Miraldi, at [rmiraldi@rcal.org](mailto:rmiraldi@rcal.org).

**Respite:** RCAL is seeking a compassionate and responsible individual to join our team as a Part-Time Respite Provider. In this role, you will provide care and support to individuals with disabilities, allowing their primary caregivers to take a break and recharge. The Respite Provider will assist clients with daily living activities, engage them in meaningful social interactions, and ensure their safety and well-being during the respite period. Salary is \$16.75/hour.

**Com Hab:** RCAL is seeking compassionate and dedicated individuals to join our team as Part-Time Community Habilitation Support Staff. In this role, you will provide direct assistance and support to individuals with developmental disabilities to help them achieve their goals, enhance their independence, and participate more fully in their communities. The Community Habilitation Support Staff will work closely with clients, their families, and other members of the support team to implement individualized plans and promote meaningful engagement and skill development. Salary range is \$16.50- \$18.50/hour (Clean driver's license and own transportation required.)

Please contact Leah Gherardi at [lgherardi@rcal.org](mailto:lgherardi@rcal.org) if interested



# WE ARE HIRING (continued)

## Part-Time Systems Advocate

**Description:** As a member of the Statewide Systems Advocacy Network (SSAN), the Systems Advocate's primary role is to educate the public and elected officials about relevant policy priorities that support the Independent Living philosophy and advance the independence of individuals with disabilities in key areas including; healthcare, education, employment, transportation, election reform, and housing. The System's Advocate will work in coordination with other members of the network with guidance from a central coordinating body.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Applicants should have the ability to communicate well, either through written word, orally, or both. Familiarity with social media platforms, PowerPoint, Excel spreadsheets and other modern means of communication is highly beneficial. Applicants should also have a comprehensive understanding of how local, state, and federal government work intersect.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** the Systems Advocate is responsible for completing quarterly reports towards their progress in completing the required number of annual deliverables including: Building new local partnerships and coalitions, disseminating educational alerts to local volunteers, conducting publication education activities, participating in and planning grassroots community organizing activities and developing oral or written public testimonies on relevant current issues.

Please contact Leah Gherardi at [lgherardi@rcal.org](mailto:lgherardi@rcal.org) if interested

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SEPTEMBER 2024

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