



INDEPENDENT



MAY, 2023

YOUR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR MISSION

A Letter From the Director

Summer is upon us again, with sunshine and outdoor gatherings. It is a wonderful season, and we are celebrating it as a part of our 40th Year of Celebrations. Just around the corner, on June 14th, RCAL will be having an open house BBQ here in our parking lot. If you are joining us, make sure to park next store at Jane's Ice Cream. We will be serving lunch from noon to 2:00pm and dancing in the sun. Come learn about our programs and see our facility.

Later in the Summer on July 15th we are having a Disability Awareness Parade in partnership with Harambee of Kingston. If you are interested in participating in or sponsoring our parade, details will be on our website soon on how to sign up and participate. We will be marching from Academy Green down to Frank Guido's Little Italy, where we will gather for some fun.

There will be more activities in the fall as we move through our 40th Year of Celebrations. I hope you will come and celebrate with us.

-Anthony Mignone



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Legislative Disability Awareness Day in Albany

Every year, the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) organizes two separate advocacy days during legislative session. The first, occurs in the midst of budget negotiations (usually in February), where advocates schedule meetings with lawmakers and staff to discuss Independent Living policy that have a financial impact or require funding from the state. Following the budget's passage, advocates gather once again (usually in May) prior to the end of session in June, to focus on policies that do not require funding language. This second round of advocacy usually takes place on Legislative Disability Awareness Day, organized and hosted by the Assembly Committee on People with Disabilities. Below is our legislative Disability Priority Agenda (DPA).

HEALTH

A.6058 (2022)(Gottfried) and S.5474 (2022)(Rivera) - The New York Health Act..

A.6346 (Paulin) and S.328 (Rivera) - Repeal cuts to home care eligibility advanced during the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) II.

A.1926 (Gonzalez-Rojas) and S.1683 (Hinchey) - Require the Department of Health to publish aggregate data related to home care and CDPA on their website.

EMPLOYMENT

A.4347 (Steck) and S.3434 (Skoufis) - Prohibit the practice of paying people with disabilities below the minimum wage in New York State.

A.6541 (Kelles) and S.1164 (Sanders) - Waive the State's sovereign immunity to claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504.

A.2458 (Epstein) and S.1125 (Skoufis) - Increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by setting a 7% hiring goal for state agencies, contractors, the legislature, and the judiciary..

ELECTIONS

A.4282 (Paulin) and S.3505 (Skoufis) - Change local, village, county, and City of New York elections to coincide with the dates of state and federal elections.

HOUSING

A.1625 (Simon) and S.763 (Krueger) - Create minimum standards for the design and construction of new homes that receive state or federal assistance to make them more accessible.

A.1686 (Hunter) and S.3139 (Mannion) - Mandate annual reporting on Access to Home Programs to provide greater transparency in how the limited funds are being expended and to assess unmet needs.

TRANSPORTATION

A.4165 (Steck) and S.4739 (Kennedy) - Require counties to expand paratransit beyond ADA minimums.

RCAL Thanks the offices of Assemblymember Shrestha and Senators Hinchey & Oberacker for meeting with us!



Assemblymember Sarahana Shrestha (AD 103), RCAL Systems Advocate Keith Gurgui, CIDNY Organizer Mbacke Thiam



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THE ULSTER COUNTY OLDER ADULTS EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL
ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE JEN METZGER
PRESENT

Is Anyone There?
Older Adults and Social Isolation
*How Having a Community & Social Connections
Can Help Prevent Fraud & Abuse.*



June 15, 2023

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Via Zoom

Or Contact OFA for local places to view the event
845-340-3456 (those in attendance will receive a bag of info.)

PRESENTATIONS BY:

Nicholas R. Nicholson, JR., PhD, MPH, RN, PHCNS-BC Professor of Nursing at
Quinnipiac University

Ulster County Enhanced Multi-Disciplinary Team (EMDT)

Panel: Office for the Aging, Adult Protective Services, Jewish Family Services (EMDT),
UC Sheriff's Office, and UC Mental Health, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley

This event will be virtual (via Zoom), is FREE of charge, and is open to the public.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

[Click above to register}

If you are unable to connect directly, please copy the following into your computer browser:

<https://bit.ly/3LLlwFT>

Questions or to Register over the phone: Call 845-340-3456





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FY 2023-2024 NYS Budget Details

ILC Funding – ILC are level funded, which is not different from initial budget proposals. Advocates made a persistent effort to get ILCs included in the human services Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Ultimately, the COLA for human services is 4%, short of the 8.5% that was advocated for.

Access to Home – We were successful in achieving a \$2 million increase to Access to Home! This is a big step forward in a long-term effort to increase funding for this program. As New York puts together a Master Plan on Aging we will continue to emphasize the need to ensure access to home modifications.

Expanding the Medicaid Buy-In – An expansion of the Medicaid Buy-In program passed! The resource level is increased to \$300,000 and income limit for eligibility for this program would increase from 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 2,250% of the FPL and would incorporate premiums on a sliding income scale for incomes 250% of the FPL and greater. Premiums are now capped at 8.5% of income. The program would also remove the age limit, currently set at 65 years old. The state must get federal approval and the anticipated effective date is 1/1/2025.

State Employment in 55-b/c – We have successfully secured an increase in the number of positions designated under the 55-b and 55-c programs to 1,700 positions from 1,200.

Fair Pay for Home Care - The additional \$1 per hour home care worker wage scheduled for October of this year is pushed back to January 2024 (this is the last portion of the \$3 raise passed in last years budget). Starting in January 2024 until January 2027, a wage schedule will go into effect that sets forth rates for downstate and upstate (see schedule below). Wage parity will be reduced, impacting the downstate region. Beginning January 2027 there will be a home care wage adjustment every year above minimum wage. Home care wages are capped at \$3 per hour over the minimum wage.

Rate schedule (excluding wage parity downstate):

- 2024: Downstate \$18.55; Upstate \$17.55
- 2025: Downstate \$19.10; Upstate \$18.10
- 2026: Downstate \$19.65; Upstate \$18.65



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FY 2023-2024 NYS Budget Details (Continued)

Office of the Chief Disability Officer - The budget includes restoring the Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing, within the Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO). The CDO will help coordinate council operations, engage with stakeholders across the State, gather data, and formulate policies to serve the community.

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program - The budget includes a \$2.5 million increase, up from the current \$4.4 million. Additional funding means more paid staff and consistent oversight of all facilities.

Open Meetings Law - An agreement has been made to allow hybrid meetings where a person with a disability that is unable to attend in-person can join remotely and count for quorum purposes. This would be effective immediately, but the public body must create rules consistent with the permitting language.

Other - The Department of Health is authorized to create regulations on Electronic Visit Verification for health care providers assisting individuals at home.



Advocates for the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) gather in the Well of the Legislative Office Building in Albany.



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RCAL's Open House

BBQ



727 Ulster Avenue

June 14, 2023

12-2pm

**Learn about our
programs**

**Meet new
people**

**Dance and
Have Fun!**

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Staff Column: The 2023 Housing Crisis

My Perspective on the Increased Issues Faced by Renters Struggling to Find Affordable Housing by Taneesha Skinner, Olmstead Housing Specialist



"Ulster County is at the forefront of a nationwide housing crisis. In addition to the limited availability of apartments and houses, nearly a quarter of Ulster County renters are considered housing insecure, as well as homeowners." Deputy Majority Leader of the Ulster County Legislature, Abe Uchitelle, Chair of the Health, Human Services & Housing Committee and Author of Local Law No. 2

I wanted to take a moment to share my perspective on the current state of the housing crisis based on my experiences as a future first time homeowner, current renter, as well as a housing specialist responsible for finding affordable and accessible housing for people to re-enter the community.

Safe and secure housing is a necessity to everyone's quality of life. Lack of secure housing creates instability and insecurities that negatively impact physical and mental health, which eventually hinders progression in the community. These communities already face barriers, whether it be financial instability, accessibility requirements, or discrimination. Such barriers create debilitating effects for the disabled and elder populations, many of who are often on fixed or extremely low incomes.

The Olmstead Housing Subsidy (OHS) Program was created to assist seniors and people with disabilities with these barriers by working with community-based services, allowing a fair chance to improve their quality of life. The supports we provide include rent subsidy vouchers, apartment search assistance and landlord support.

This task has become more difficult recently and the repercussions are felt at a community level. Those fortunate enough to have subsidies and housing vouchers are experiencing landlords refusing to accept them or creating pre-qualifications like credit score checks, income limits and expensive non refundable application fees. Additional problems I face when trying to find affordable and accessible housing for participants in my program have included: a lack of accessibility, unsafe living spaces, architectural barriers, long waitlist periods, high application fees, absentee landlords, housing scams, spam ads, and illegal rentals. *(This story continues on the following page)*



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Staff Column: The 2023 Housing Crisis (Continued)

I also perceive the increase in people considered homeless or unstably housed. I've witnessed the mental health decline and public health impacts resulting from homelessness. Shelter, stability and security are the foundation for well being.

Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger recently signed local law No. 2 of 2023, designating affordable housing as a public purpose, opening the door to increased funding for housing and finding solutions to avoid this crisis. Governor Hochul has also proposed a Housing Compact plan, increased federal housing (HUD) funding, as well as expanding Section 8 and community subsidy programs like (OHS). Unfortunately her housing proposals were abandoned during final budget negotiations this year.

Homeless Persons

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Region	9	14.1	16.7	18.4	16.9
Columbia, Greene	7	13.4	18.3	18.8	15.5
Sullivan	8	22.3	25.1	21.5	N/A
Dutchess	1	13.2	13.6	18.1	20.0
Orange	.	9.2	12.6	15.3	11.7
Ulster	3	23.0	26.0	24.3	24.1
NYS(excluding NYC)	5	11.7	11.9	12.1	11.7
U.S.	0	17.0	16.9	17.3	17.5

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Census
Notes: Rate is per 10,000 residents. Figures represent point-in-time

This is a nationwide crisis that requires government action and community support to combat the negative effects communities face. Effects like squatters, loitering, violation of rights, poor hygiene & physical and mental health prove how the housing crisis can become a humanitarian crisis. Subsidies, property restoration and new housing developments are solutions to prevent homelessness, improve stability and security and improve the quality of life for those facing barriers and hardships. Homelessness will cost the community much more in the long run than the financial investment necessary to resolve the current issues with housing. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (Hud.gov) has resources to assist with housing needs.



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DISABILITIES AWARENESS PARADE



AND

Harambee

"The Coming Together of People"



JULY 15, 2023

**COME MARCH FOR VISIBILITY FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES !**

**PARADE LINE UP: ACADEMY GREEN @ 9:00 AM
PARADE STEP OFF: 10:00 AM
PARADE ENDS: MUNICIPAL LOT (ACROSS FROM
FRANK GUIDO'S LITTLE ITALY)**

Go to:

**www.rcal.org/parade to
register to march!**

**Parade followed by guest
speakers, activities, and face
painting**



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May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and a time to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around these issues. Mental health, including our emotional and social well-being, is just as important as physical health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness each year, and it is a common health condition in the United States. A number of factors can contribute to the risk for mental illness, such as traumatic life experiences, medical conditions, family history, use of alcohol or drugs, and access to a supportive social network. In addition, an individual's mental health can change over time and can determine how they handle stress and conflict, relate to others, and overall behavior.



Highlights

-The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released two notices of proposed rulemaking that together would further strengthen access to and quality of care across Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the nation's largest health coverage programs. If adopted as proposed, the rules would establish historic national standards for access to care regardless of whether that care is provided through managed care plans or directly by states through fee-for-service (FFS).

-In May 2022, The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) launched the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline. The hotline (1-833-943-5746) is available 24/7, 365 days a year, and provides free, confidential emotional support, information, and referrals to any pregnant and postpartum individuals facing mental health challenges and their loved ones. Professional counselors staff the Hotline and provide support in English and Spanish via voice and text, interpreter services are available in 60 additional languages, and a relay service is available for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

-In partnership with the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregiving and the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (SGRG) Advisory Councils, HHS's Administration for Community Living (ACL) released the first National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers outlining nearly 350 actions the federal government will take to support family caregivers in the coming year and more than 150 actions that can be adopted at other levels of government and across the private sector to build a system to support family caregivers - many of whom have been under great strain during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: (HHS.gov)



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WHAT IS MEDICAID POOLED TRUST?

ARE YOU PAYING FOR MEDICAID
SPEND DOWN?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KEEP
MEDICAID AND YOUR HARD EARNED
MONEY?

IT'S POSSIBLE AND YOU CAN LEARN
HOW



REGISTER FOR OUR MEDICAID
POOL TRUST WORKSHOP

(PRESENTED BY DEBBIE DENISE, BENEFITS ADVISOR)

WORKSHOPS HELD THE 2ND
WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH.
COME IN PERSON OR
PARTICIPATE VIA ZOOM!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
DEBBIE DENISE AT 845-331-0541 EXT 24
OR EMAIL: DDENISE@RCAL.ORG



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