

FLIC VOICE

Official Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Independence Center

Winter 2017

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YMCA is Breaking Down Barriers with Help from FLIC

This past fall the Finger Lakes Independence Center was contacted by the Ithaca YMCA's Director, Frank Towner. Towner reported the YMCA had been awarded a grant to renovate their family locker room and the Y wanted to be sure their new room was aesthetically pleasing and functional for all users. FLIC's Architectural Barriers Consultant (ABC) met with the YMCA team, Towner and Dillon Coon (Facilities Director), to evaluate the locker room layout and discuss the YMCA's goals.

The locker room's design was similar to the expected "ADA Bathroom" – which didn't provide the welcoming feel that the YMCA prides themselves on. Over the course of a few weeks, FLIC's ABC and Mr. Coon created an updated layout using Universal Design principles that offered an open layout with barrier free access to all fixtures in the room.

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability without the need for specialized equipment or assistance.

Some of the key features included into the new locker room were:

- The creation of a barrier free shower. This means the bathroom floor surface is flush with the shower area itself. No bumps or transition strips to trip on or roll over.
- Dual function shower controls. This allows a user to control the temperature of the water and fixture selection all in one unit
- Permanently affixed folding shower seat that improves safety over temporary seats while also offers enhanced aesthetic appeal.
- A specialized flooring that offers slip resistance, impact reduction, and antimicrobial properties further increasing the overall safety and health of the YMCA's users.



(Example of Barrier Free Shower)

FLIC is proud to be the go to resource for accessibility questions and to have been involved in improving access to a local facility that is used by so many Tompkins County residents.

Meet Ellice Switzer, FLIC Board Member

Ellice Switzer joined the FLIC board in November of 2015. After many years working in local nonprofit organizations, Ellice joined Cornell's Yang-Tan Institute on Employment & Disability where she works with stakeholders in New York and across the country, to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

Ellice works with community-based nonprofit agencies, workforce development systems, and private staffing firms to help employment service professionals effectively engage businesses on behalf of job seekers with disabilities, and to improve the quality of their services.

Ellice also works with Regional Transition Specialists employed by the New York State Education Department, to provide information and policy guidance regarding effective transition services to students receiving special education.

In the past, she worked intensively with employers to create effective diversity and inclusion practices via the USDOL's National Employer Technical Assistance Center, and USHHS's Employer Practices Rehabilitation Research & Training Center.

In addition to the FLIC board, Ellice is a member of National APSE's public policy committee, and was recently appointed by the Board of Regents to the New York State Rehabilitation Council.

Our Mission:

To empower all people with disabilities while creating an inclusive society through the elimination of social and architectural barriers



The Repeal of the Affordable Care Act

Most people with disabilities will be impacted if the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also called by the nickname "Obamacare", is repealed. At this time, no policy or plan has been proposed to replace the ACA.

The ACA has helped people with disabilities in the following ways:

- No one can be denied insurance coverage due to a pre-existing condition
- Annual or lifetime limits cannot be imposed by insurance companies
- Accessibility standards for diagnostic medical equipment have been set
- Money Follows the Person and Community First Choice Option
- Medicaid expansion



It's common to feel powerless to change the large machinations of government, but there are things you can do to make your voice heard.

Call or write to your elected representatives and let them know that people with disabilities need access to comprehensive and affordable health care; that Congress must include the disability community in any discussion about repeal of the ACA to ensure that any changes meet the needs of people with disabilities, and show the American people a plan for replacement before voting to repeal the ACA.

A quick way to send a letter to members of Congress is to use this action alert:

<http://cqrcengage.com/cdrnys/app/write-a-letter?0&engagementId=269093>

You can also write an op-ed piece, connect with state and local advocacy efforts, or call FLIC for help to get involved in advocating for comprehensive affordable health coverage for people with disabilities, and for everyone!

■ Jan Lynch, Executive Director

Making Independence a Way of Life

We need your opinions for your elected officials in Washington and New York!

Congressman Tom Reed, Senators Charles Schumer and Kristen Gillebrand and President Trump need to know what you think. So do New York Assembly Member Barbara Lifton and State Senators Tom O'Mara, Jim Seward, and Michael Nozollo and Governor Cuomo.

We are making it easy for you: Come to a postcard party with pizza!

Starting Wednesday, February 15, 12:30 – 5:00 at FLIC 215 Fifth Street, we are going to make reaching your elected representatives fun!

Eat pizza and chat and we'll have postcards for you to use to tell your elected officials your opinion. Easy as (pizza) pie.

Are you concerned about the future of Medicaid? Let Washington know that Medicaid is important to you.

Do you want to use Uber but can't because you use a wheelchair? Do you think a tremendously successful company should make its product available to all before it comes to upstate NY? Let the governor and state lawmakers know.

Do you use a CDPAP aide, live in a group home, or does a human service agency provide staff in your own home? Think they should earn a better wage? Let elected officials know.

Helping people who care about disability rights connect to their elected officials is part of FLIC's purpose. Did you know that our vision includes this phrase: 'voice of empowerment'? To make this concept mean something, FLIC engages with elected officials on your behalf.

The staff and board have taken this on, we have always included you and now we need you to get more involved because together, people with and without disabilities, can influence disability legislation, policy, and access to resources. Please help!

You can join our advocacy team and get action alerts in your email box that are easy to do – a quick way to support disability rights! Email Larry (larry@fliconline.org) or Jeff (jeff@fliconline.org) to be added to the team.

Dear New York Assembly Member,

Medicaid is an important program for New Yorker's with disabilities. Please fight to protect Medicaid and associated programs that help people with disabilities lead healthy lives in their community.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizen



Disability Etiquette Tip # 3:

In her 2014 TED Talk, Stella Young said, "I've lost count of the number of times that I've been approached by strangers wanting to tell me that they think I'm brave or inspirational, and this was long before my work had any kind of public profile. They were just kind of congratulating me for managing to get up in the morning and remember my own name. And it is objectifying." (*"I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much"*).

People with disabilities do not want be admired or celebrated for meeting an ordinary expectation of people without disabilities. Give credit when credit is due, but ask yourself, "would I say this if this person didn't have a disability?"

Inclusive Emergency Planning

FLIC is working with the Tompkins County Department of Emergency Response to ensure that the needs of people with various disabilities or life challenges are considered in all disaster planning scenarios.

One effort they have undertaken, along with the Industrial and Labor Relations School at Cornell University, is conducting focus groups of disability populations.

The information shared during these focus groups will be useful to our local emergency officials in inclusive emergency planning.

In October 2015, FLIC held a focus group for people with mobility impairments. During this group FLIC learned:

- Most had a pretty good understanding of emergency preparedness, they would know who to call in an emergency, but have no personal plan in place.
- Training was a major concern, the group highlighted areas

where they need to make sure they had someone in place.

- All participants would evacuate if ordered, but felt the hardest part would be leaving home, and trusting that people at shelters are trained to meet their needs.

In May 2016, FLIC and the Mental Health Association held a focus group for people with mental illness. The group stressed the need for:

- An emotional support “crisis team” that could help with coping skills.
- Access to medication during emergencies lasting several days/weeks. (This was also brought up in the mobility group).
- Planning for pets and other family members.

The most recent focus group was held in September 2016, with a group of 13 Deaf individuals from Ithaca and surrounding communities.

This event was an opportunity for FLIC to increase outreach to the Deaf Community.

Recommendations of this group included having flashing fire and

smoke alarms in public housing, open captioning and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters on emergency news broadcasts, ASL interpreters to accompany first responders, and having an emergency action network or registry.

Facilitators included Heather Shaffer, Deaf Advocate at the Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC), two interpreters from Sign Language Solutions, Shelly Danley of AIM Independent Living Center, David Michael Filiberto of Cornell, FLIC staff Jeff Boles and FLIC Deaf Services Coordinator Amy Jo DeKoeyer.



Presenters showed home preparations they have made for emergencies. Beth Harrington of the Department of Emergency Response of Tompkins County completed the day by giving a short training on how to be prepared in an emergency.

When considering winter safety, take the following precautions to be safe outdoors:

1. Wear loose, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. Trapped air between the layers acts as an insulator. Layers can be removed to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill.
2. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent, and hooded.
3. Always wear a hat or cap on your head, since half of your body heat could be lost through an uncovered head.
4. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extreme cold.
5. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves because fingers maintain more warmth when they touch each other.

Source: www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/publicsafety/winter.cfm



Did you know?

During the 2013-2014 academic year, 13% of students, nationwide, were participating in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and designated as special education students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(Common Core of Data, Tabulated from Elementary/Secondary Information System, 1/13/2015: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>)



New Core Service of ILCs – Transition

Independent Living Centers like FLIC are peer-run, community-based, nonprofit agencies that provide services and advocacy for people with disabilities.

They provide the following core services (most centers also provide additional services) –

1. Information and referral;
2. Independent Living skills training;
3. Peer counseling;
4. Individual advocacy and systems advocacy; and
5. Services that help persons transition from nursing homes and other institutions to live in the community, assist persons at risk of entering institutions, and help high school youth transition to life after high school.

The fifth service became a core service of all Independent Living Centers in November 2016.

The goal of institutional and youth transition is to be sure persons with disabilities can live as independently as possible in their community.

The Partnership to Expand and Enhance NY Connects, a collaboration between the County Office for the Aging and FLIC, will address nursing home and institutional transition for residents of Tompkins County (see page 8).

Youth Transition at FLIC

Amy Jo DeKoeper, our Student Transition Services Coordinator, assists students with disabilities with IEPs and 504 Plans, to prepare for life after high school.

This additional core service directs us to continue supports to students with disabilities beyond high school into their postsecondary life.

One service students seem to appreciate is helping them write resumes and practice for job interviews.

We work with students at any time of year, but during the week of April 18 – 21, we will offer specific training sessions in our Empowerment Series. We will address:

1. I Know Myself – How learning styles, aptitudes, strengths and interests relate to careers you may like
2. I Can Make Decisions and Solve Problems – Learning to use proven approaches to



make decisions and solve problems

3. I Can Set Goals for Myself – Setting goals and the steps that lead to their achievement
4. I Can Understand My IEP and How CSE Meetings Work – Making sure your goals are on your IEP and how to be confident at CSE meetings
5. I Can Advocate for Myself – At school and on the job, know when to disclose your needs and how to do it appropriately

If you are interested in attending or learning more about the Empowerment Workshop series, please contact Amy Jo at amyjo@fliconline.org or call her at 607-272-2433.

Announcements with more specific dates and times will be made on our Facebook page and on the TC-HSC Listserve in early April. Save the dates now!

FLIC is Redefining Health and Wellness through Community Education

Often, society believes that health and wellness are innately excluded from the definition of disability; that achieving a high level of overall wellbeing is unattainable for people with disabilities. FLIC has been working to combat these stereotypes through community education.

Rachel Ferrara and Jeff Boles, Advocacy Specialists at FLIC, have been talking with local junior/senior high schools students about how people with disabilities can be and are healthy. Rachel and Jeff begin by expanding what the students know about mental illness, other types of disability, and a healthy lifestyle. Both presenters use their personal experiences to help the students make connections to the material.

Rachel and Jeff talk about how people with disabilities can lead successful and productive lives when they put the right tools in their "tool box." They discuss reactive tools, such as coping skills and treatment options, and also ways people can be proactive about maintaining their wellbeing. Awareness raising through education is an effective way to challenge definitions of disability, health, and wellness. These presentations are free of charge, interactive, and open to all groups.

FLIC is also helping people with disabilities break internalized stereotypes about disability and health. FLIC provides educational support groups, empowering individuals with disabilities to come together to redefine wellness, set goals, develop healthy strategies, and improve their quality of life.

"I've seen a lot of individuals who participate in our groups actively work to improve their own quality of life and that of others in the group," says Rachel Ferrara, facilitator of the Invisible Disabilities and Depression Support Groups. Having positive models of people with disabilities leading happy, proactive lives is critical to breaking down old stereotypes and prejudices.

"Remember that wellness is not the absence of illness or stress. You can still strive for wellness even if you are experiencing these challenges in your life."

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016)



Are you interested in learning new skills, building a support system, and increasing your quality of life?

Visit a support group at FLIC!

**Invisible Disabilities –
Weekly, Monday
1:00-2:00 PM
&**

**3rd Wednesday of the Month
3:30-4:30 PM
contact Rachel@fliconline.org**

**Depression –
1st Wednesday of the Month
3:30-4:30 PM
contact Rachel@fliconline.org**

**Friends and Family Stroke Recovery –
1st Thursday of the Month 1:30-3:00 PM
contact
Mitchraymond614@gmail.com**

Our groups are free, confidential, and peer run!

Are you, or someone you know an older adult that needs some assistance at home?

Call The Registry

The Registry is a listing of qualified individuals who can help with:

- Grocery Shopping
- Cooking
- Dr. Appointments
- Companionship
- Personal Care
- Housekeeping

WHO YOU HIRE IS YOUR CHOICE!

The Registry program is made possible through funding from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.
Call Cheryl Baker at FLIC 272-2433 - The Registry

Article Update!

Update on “Help FLIC update our Try it Room (TIR)!!” from Spring 2016 Issue:

In May 2016, FLIC staff members Rachel and Ann created and released an Amazon Wish list in an effort to update the equipment we have available for loan through the Try it Room program.

To date, we have had over 40 items donated for the Try It Room.

One of the most useful items we have available is our oven rack guard. Please stop in today to see this and other items we have available for short term loan.



Don't forget to check out our Amazon Wish list (which changes monthly), to see what items you might like to donate to FLIC.

Disability Awareness Presentations and Trainings

The Finger Lakes Independence Center mission statement is – “To empower all people with disabilities while creating an inclusive society through the elimination of social and architectural barriers.” The educational outreach program focuses on inclusion and eliminating social barriers.

FLIC staff cover topics including

- types of disabilities, including visible, invisible, and mental health conditions
- their experiences living with a disability
- dispelling misconceptions, and tips on how to interact with persons with disabilities
- including and being friends with persons with disabilities, anti-bullying
- information about the Americans with Disabilities Act, civil rights, and disability advocacy
- accommodation, accessibility, and universal design



Audiences include people of all ages from young children to adults, at schools, universities, summer camps, human service agencies, community groups, businesses, and local government.

Presentations with younger children and students are general in nature, with interactive activities, games, or stories.

Trainings are on specific topics to enable educators, service professionals, and others to serve their students, clients, and patients.

FLIC staff would be glad to speak with your staff or constituents about disability awareness topics, at a time that is convenient for you.

Please contact the Finger Lakes Independence Center at 272-2433 or contact@fliconline.org

Learn American Sign Language – It's useful and fun

American Sign Language (ASL) is a way of communicating with your hands, used by people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. You make shapes and movements with your hands for each word, along with facial expressions and body language.

The Finger Lakes Independence Center offers beginning ASL lessons each fall and spring. The instructors are lifelong users of ASL.

Join us for the Spring 2017 ASL I class, which begins Thursday March 3. There will be a free preview lesson Thursday February 23.

Information and the registration form is on the FLIC website www.fliconline.org You can also email, call, or stop by to get the information – contact@fliconline.org, 272-2433, 215 Fifth St, Ithaca NY



Partnership to Expand and Enhance the NY Connects Initiative

Thanks to the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL) obtaining funding from the New York State Office for the Aging for the Partnership to Expand and Enhance NY Connects: A Balancing Incentive Program, FLIC is now covering Tompkins County as part of a regional partnership.

What is NY Connects? NY Connects is a locally based system that provides access to free, objective, comprehensive information and assistance for people of all ages needing long term services and supports, and for their caregivers.

The intention of NY Connects is to be a one-stop resource throughout the area, providing assistance managing transitions in service needs, with an overarching goal of assisting people in their desire to move to, or remain in, the least restrictive setting for as long as possible.

Locally, there have been ongoing monthly “No Wrong Door” meetings led by Tompkins County Office for the Aging to share information and enhance collaboration among the key partners of the NY Connects Implementation Team.

Lisa Holmes, Director of the Tompkins County Office of the Aging commented “NY Connects aims to increase access to non-institutional, community-based long term services and supports for people of all ages. The Office for the Aging is glad to partner with FLIC to expand our local reach and to insure that NY Connects is fully inclusive of individuals with disabilities.”



NY Connects is a natural fit for Independent Living Centers where our philosophy has always been grounded in efforts to support people in self-determination and avoiding institutional care settings.

We are excited that RCIL has taken the lead with this region and are pleased to partner with our local Office of the Aging on this important initiative.

YES! I want to help support FLIC with its mission

\$100 Sustaining Member

\$50 Contributing Member

\$25 Business / Organization

\$15 Individual

\$5 Student / Senior Citizen

\$ _____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Making Independence a Way of Life...

Please help us continue providing your community with the important services and programs we offer. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Let us know if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically by email

A United Way of Tompkins County Partner Agency



Return to Sender

Ithaca, NY 14850

215 Fifth St.

Finger Lakes Independence Center

