

FLIC VOICE

Official Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Independence Center

Winter 2018

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The History of the Finger Lakes Independence Center

In May of 1988 The Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) was incorporated and began operating as an Independent Living Center. Originally located in the Clinton West Plaza, FLIC moved to our current location at 215 Fifth Street in 2003.



When FLIC first opened, offering services for Information and Referral, Independent Living Skills Training, Peer Counseling, and Individual and Systems Advocacy, we were one of 20 Independent Living Centers in the state, as part of the NY Independent Living Centers Network (NYILC). Today there are 55 Independent Living Centers operating as part of the NYILC network.

In 1993 FLIC became a United Way Partner Agency and we continue to work with United Way to offer support and programs, to people in the community with disabilities.

Over the years FLIC has continued to add services to meet the needs of the community. Today, we offer Student Transition Services, Community Education and Outreach, American Sign Language Classes and Medical Equipment/Ramp Loans. In 2004 we opened our Try it Room- offering assistive technology and adaptive equipment to aid in daily living. Recently, we also started offering Benefit Advisement and Employment Services (with The American Dream Employment Network) as well as The Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Waiver program.

FLIC works closely with the Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA) offering in-home personal care options. In 1998 FLIC started offering the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP), and in 2010, with funding from COFA, we started offering personal care options with The Registry Program. We are also partnering with COFA in coordinating services through the NYConnects System.

Each year FLIC serves approximately 1800 people in the community. Our goal is to continue to grow and serve more people with more services and to continue to make our community a completely inclusive society for people of all abilities.

Meet Lynn Gitlow, FLIC Board Member

Lynn has been an occupational therapist (OT) for 30 years practicing in the areas of mental health, geriatrics, and assistive technology. She has also been an OT educator for over 20 years in both OT assistant and OT programs.

Her graduate work was in the area of disability studies and this is where she began to understand that people with disabilities were too often not present in discussions of diversity and inclusion. This exclusion is not acceptable as we all are part of the shared human experience. This is one of the main reasons that she wanted to be involved with FLIC in any capacity and feels fortunate to have been asked to join the board towards the end of 2012.

Presently, Lynn is also certified by RESNA as an assistive technology practitioner and has a CAPS certification to provide home modification services. She was the Director of a federally funded assistive technology program in the state of Maine. Her passion is technology and environmental intervention and she is thrilled to be the course instructor for Technology Interventions for Occupational Therapists at Ithaca College.

Other interests include being active, traveling, and volunteering at Wonderful Wheelchairs, which provides refurbished mobility equipment to community members who need it at greatly reduced costs.

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



FLIC is Celebrating 30 Years

The Finger Lakes Independence Center is celebrating our 30 year anniversary throughout 2018. So much has changed in those 30 years – at the national, state, and community level. While leafing through some old materials from the beginning days of FLIC until now, the changes are reflective of a huge cultural shift from people with disabilities being viewed as a burden, and in need of sympathy and charitable care, to being seen as individuals with different needs and abilities, able to take charge of their own life decisions and goals, and a worthy part of our culture's diversity.

That is the “airplane” view of the changes. At ground level there are still many issues to overcome, in continued change to our constructed world to make it accessible to all, and to eliminate stigma, preconceived ideas, and the still prevalent charity view of individuals with disabilities.

This year at FLIC we want 2018 to be a year of celebration as well as charting the path for the future. The 30th Anniversary

Committee is hard at work narrowing down the numerous suggested ways of marking our 30th throughout the year, with participation opportunities for everyone. As the celebratory events become solidified, we will be posting them on our Facebook page, website, list-serves, fliers, radio and any other way we can get the word out. Everyone is welcome, you don't have to have a disability or use our services to attend any of our events.



For those that want to show their support for the work FLIC does, we are suggesting a \$30 donation to FLIC for our 30 years in Tompkins County. Each contributor will be entered into a drawing for prizes that will be held at our final celebratory event in November. Please see the last page of our newsletter for a donation form or email Linda at linda@fliconline.org.

The Importance of Accessibility in Winter Months

The Finger Lakes Independence Center is a community service agency in Ithaca that strives to ensure that the ADA is the standard that is understood and followed by all. Most people have some knowledge of the 1990 law referred to as the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. The ADA guarantees equal accessibility to all public facilities and services for citizens with disabilities. For those of us in the Northeast, maintaining accessibility during winter weather is an important factor in compliance with the ADA regulations.

Recently we have been made aware of several situations where snow and ice have presented significant barriers to people with disabilities as they try to go about their daily business. These issues are also problems for many older adults in our community. Rather than “call out” the specific issues that have been brought to our attention, we first want to remind our community of what the ADA requires in these snowy, icy months.



Public parking must be maintained for accessibility, particularly when snowfall gathers in parking areas. When drivers with disabilities exit their vehicles, they may need extra space to enter or exit their vehicles, and snow piled up around parking spaces may make that an impossible task. The ADA mandates clearing snow and ice not only from the parking space, but from the area surrounding the parking space. Curb ramps and access aisles must be cleared completely; this is especially important in ensuring access to public transportation.

Like parking lots, snow and ice build-up around building entrances and exits can make some facilities inaccessible for individuals with disabilities. The ADA requires that snow and ice be completely removed from

around entrances and exits to allow ready access for all users. While a small amount of snow or ice may be an inconvenience for the general population, it can be a major barrier for individuals who use mobility devices.

The ADA provides for equal opportunities and accessibility for all, but does not guarantee equal outcomes for everyone. The ADA does not require service provision for individuals with disabilities that aren't normally provided for the general population. For instance, apartment and rental space managers are not required to clear snow and ice for tenants with disabilities if they don't provide the same service for tenants without disabilities.

Although temporary inaccessibility may occur because of the weather, accessibility must be restored as soon as possible, and facilities must provide alternate access if weather obstacles cannot be cleared in a timely manner. Maintaining access for all has been a big job so far this winter, fortunately there are only a little over 50 days until spring!

Written by Jan Lynch, Executive Director at FLIC. This statement has been widely circulated to community news outlets, businesses, groups, and on social media.

Disability Etiquette Tip # 6:



Often times an individual with a physical disability or speech impediment is ignored in favor of approaching the caregiver first because people may believe that the person is incapable of understanding (The Spread Effect). People with intellectual disabilities may also be overlooked, even when they are capable of communicating.

By approaching the caregiver first, the person with the disability may assume he or she is viewed as invisible, unequal or incapable. Making these assumptions is disrespectful to the person with a disability and may damage the relationship permanently. Always be respectful and speak to the individual. Even if a caregiver or interpreter is assisting with the conversation, direct questions to and speak with the individual.

A New Vision for Disability and Healthcare

The Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) has been hosting students from the New Visions program for a number of years. New Visions is a career exploration program offered through TST BOCES, for high school seniors interested in healthcare fields. Students learn through hands on experiences at Cayuga Medical Center and other locations.

At FLIC, students are introduced to topics related to people with disabilities and health, along with general disability information. Recently, FLIC staff reviewed topics shared with New Visions students, to be sure they represent current thought and practices.



Students begin by learning universal points about disability:

- Disabilities are a natural part of life - some people are born with a disability, others acquire them during their lifetime.
- Social model of disability – many disabilities cannot be cured, a person with a disability is not less of a person, and does not need to be fixed.
- Disability etiquette (how to interact with persons with disabilities) and respectful language.
- Independent living philosophy – people with disabilities should be able to live as independently as possible and make their own decisions; they know what is best for themselves.
- Independent living centers – independent living centers provide services, information and referral, and advocacy for people with disabilities.
- Systems advocacy – removing barriers and providing rights and opportunities for people with disabilities occurs at the

systems level – community, government, educational, legal.

Students also get information about specific topics:

- Community based services, home aide programs, and hospital discharge planning.
- Universal design in healthcare facilities, with an exercise designing an accessible clinic.
- American Sign Language interpreters and communication options for Deaf persons in healthcare.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act and service and assistance animals.

New Visions students may have previous experience with people with disabilities, but many do not. Finger Lakes Independence Center staff enjoys helping equip them to understand and serve future patients with disabilities.



Medical Model of Disability

Disability is a deficiency or abnormality

Being disabled is negative

Disability resides in the individual

Remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalization of the individual

Agent of remedy is the professional who affects the arrangements between the individual and society

Social Model of Disability

Disability is a difference

Being disabled, in itself, is neutral

Disability derives from interaction between individual and society

Remedy for disability-related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society

Agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society.

Source: Carol J. Gill, Chicago Institute of Disability Research

Did you know?

Achieve, a non-profit education organization, surveyed all the states and found that 95 kinds of diplomas were conferred on graduating students in 2015 in their “How the States Got Their Rates: 2015 Graduate” study.

(<https://www.achieve.org/how-the-states-got-their-rates-2015-graduates>)



Changes in Regents Testing Requirements for Students with Disabilities, Cause for Concern?

In December 2017, the NYS Board of Regents expanded their safety net options for students with disabilities to earn a local diploma.

State Education Commissioner Mary Ellen Elia said, “The rules adopted today by the Board of Regents maintain the rigor of our graduation requirements, while providing a new mechanism for students with disabilities to demonstrate they’ve met the State’s graduation standards.”

The chancellor of the Board of Regents, Betty A. Rosa, said, “This isn’t about lowering the bar for what a student must know to graduate. Rather, these students need multiple ways to demonstrate they know it. The Board’s action today provides them with that opportunity.”

One criticism of Regents testing was that students with disabilities (SWD) were not given the testing accommodations granted on their Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Section 504

Accommodation Plans (504 Plans) needed to pass the Regents and earn a Regents diploma. Regulations require principals to ensure that SWD receive the testing accommodations specified in their IEPs or 504 Plan when they take State examinations. However, investigation revealed some schools are not complying with this regulation.



Under new rules, SWD are given multiple pathways to graduation. If they fail the Regents test after two tries, they can appeal a score if they are within a few points of passing.

A superintendent determination can give even greater leeway in considering granting a student a local (not Regents) diploma. Students still must show proficiency in English Language Arts and Math through coursework instead of state examinations.

Critics of the ruling believe it perpetuates a system of lowering expectations for people with disabilities. Offering a separate, different diploma to students is not moving toward equality in education. In addition, it may further be a disincentive to provide required testing accommodations.

Some see this ruling is positive as it will permit SWD to graduate with a local diploma, which will be accepted by colleges, the military and employers; providing them opportunities for continuing education and to be productive tax paying citizens.

You can offer your public comments by February 26, 2018 at spedpubliccomment@nysed.gov.

If a SWD is denied their testing accommodations, remind the school of their obligation to provide them, or contact the Finger Lakes Independence Center for help with advocacy.

For additional information on these changes visit the NYS Education Department Website at www.nysed.gov

Interested in equipment for inclusive fitness and recreation?

Come see the Try-It Room at FLIC and check out:

**Exercise pedals
Hand exercisers
Exercise Pulley
Adaptive sports balls**

Adaptive game equipment

**Transfer equipment
And more!**

The items in our Try it Room can be borrowed for a month. There is no deposit or cost associated when using items from the Try it Room.

Inclusive Fitness and Recreation Programs

All individuals should have the opportunity to recreate and fully participate in any recreational endeavor they choose. Recreational providers should be committed to providing experiences that support the full access and participation of all individuals. Inclusive recreation is a universally important objective in this community.

Through inclusive recreational opportunities connections are made, relationships are fostered, and long-standing barriers are broken down. The focus is on individual abilities instead of disabilities, which promotes individual growth as well as sets the foundation for a stronger and more inclusive community.

The Finger Lakes independence Center looks to create an inclusive society for all individuals with disabilities, their family members, and their friends. FLIC believes that an inclusive society benefits all of its members and works to eliminate barriers to inclusion. One of the agency goals at the Finger Lakes independence Center is to promote inclusive fitness and recreation programs to both fitness centers and the people we serve.

Being a strong advocate for inclusive sports and recreation for all individuals with disabilities is an important part of promoting greater community inclusion for those with disabilities. In 2018, Finger Lakes independence Center wants to partner with at least one fitness/recreation program in Tompkins County to implement more inclusive policies and procedures. The underlying goal is to develop relationships with many fitness/recreation programs in the county and assist multiple fitness programs to provide more inclusive services.

This year, FLIC hopes to continue working toward the creation of more inclusive recreational/fitness opportunities in this community. FLIC looks forward to working with program providers, and encourages them and any others interested in this project to contact Jeff at 607-272-2433 ext. 217 or jeff@fliconline.org



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 FLIC at 272-2433 - The Registry



What Did You Say?!

What? Can you say that again? The caller can hear you, but you can't hear them?

Get a **CapTel phone!**

CapTel phones work like any other phone with one important addition: they show the words of everything a caller says.

They also have features like adjustable ringer volume and changing the size and color of the captions.

One internet version even has a touch screen! You can save a record of a live phone call. Voice mail messages are also transcribed so you can read them later.



Come see our demo phones at FLIC! The internet phone and the captioning service are FREE to people with impaired hearing.

You must have high speed internet AND a landline. Non-internet phones are not free, but the closed captioning service IS free.

To learn more, call Kassey Granger at 518-681-9445 or email her at kassey.granger@oeius.org

Upcoming Self Advocacy Training

Finger Lakes Independence Center is one of many Independent Living Centers around New York State. Independent Living Centers are organizations designed to assist individuals with disabilities in gaining independence through the provision of several core services including peer counseling, information and referral, independent living skills, and individual and systems advocacy

Being a strong self-advocate is important for everyone, but it can be especially difficult if people lack the skills and comfort level to advocate effectively for themselves or others. Sometimes, people can be daunted by the prospect of learning how to self-advocate because they don't know how to start, what to ask, or where to go for help. Fortunately, Finger Lakes Independence Center is pleased to announce that it is currently developing a six-part workshop series designed to help workshop attendees improve their advocacy skills.

The workshop series will be held once weekly through July and August 2018, from 1-2:30pm at FLIC. The projected schedule is:

Session 1: Course Introduction - An introduction of the different types of advocacy, series overview, and skills developed upon course completion.

Session 2: Self-Awareness - Exploring how personal interests, strengths, goals and support needs develop and contribute to effective self and systems advocacy.

Session 3: Knowledge of Rights - Discussing individual, human, and Civil Rights under the Law, and Disability Rights under the ADA.

Session 4: Communication - How developing good communication skills and techniques helps improve advocacy efforts. Techniques covered in this session include assertiveness, sending effective messages, active listening, body language and other methods of communication,

Session 5: Ten Steps to being an effective Self Advocate - This session will serve as a review of communication and advocacy techniques already covered, and give additional information and support to help hone self-advocacy skills.

Session 6: Asking for Help - This session will provide attendees with additional information and community resources that can assist with future advocacy efforts.

This series is free and open to the public, and people with and without disabilities are encouraged to attend.

Free parking will be available.

Stay tuned to Finger Lakes Independence Center for additional details, and contact Emily or Jeff at 607-272-2433 with questions.

ADVOCATE



FLIC Extends a Big Thank You to Local Author

This January, Merritt Walker visited the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) to take a tour, learn about FLIC services, and donate a portion of his book proceeds.



Merritt presenting Rachel, FLIC Program Manager, with a signed copy of his book

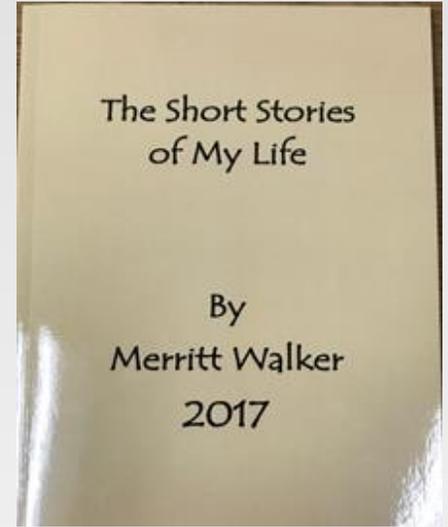
The Short Stories of My Life, is a collection of autobiographical short stories and poems written by Merritt with assistance from his Tompkins Learning Partner (TLP) tutor, Janet Steiner. Merritt included pieces about early memories, such as "One Christmas," past jobs, and current hobbies.

Merritt, being the compassionate individual that he is, wanted to ensure that his book could benefit others in more ways than one. Therefore, he decided to donate the proceeds from his book sales. FLIC was chosen because they provide services to blind and visually impaired individuals like Merritt.

While receiving his tour of FLIC, Merritt recalled borrowing an item from FLIC's Try-It Room that helped him with his studies in TLP's Adult Basic Education Program.

At the end of his visit, Merritt presented FLIC with a check for \$250.00 and a signed copy of his book. If you interested in reading *The Short Stories of My Life*, stop by FLIC's library.

From everyone at FLIC, a big thank you to Merritt for supporting our services!



Front Cover

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.

YES! I want to help support FLIC with its mission

- \$30 for 30 Years
 \$ _____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____



Finger Lakes Independence Center
215 Fifth St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Return to Sender



A United Way of Tompkins County Partner Agency

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