

Enjoy the latest news from your friends at



Finger Lakes Independence Center
Opening doors to independence

april 2025

April is Mental Health Awareness Month

"Music in itself is healing.
It's an explosive expression of humanity.
It's something we are all touched by.
No matter what culture we're from,
everyone loves music."

-- Billy Joel, Singer, Songwriter, Pianist

Short Notes:

- FLIC will be closed on Monday, May 26, in celebration of Memorial Day.
- Save the date! May 6 is National Nurses Day. We can't wait to

celebrate some amazing nurses!

- We have **free Covid tests** in our office. You are welcome to come get some.
- Reminder: Starting February 2025, all images in the FLIC newsletters have **ALT Text**.
- April is Autism Awareness month and Paralyzed Veteran Awareness month.
- You can contact FLIC by calling 607-272-2433 or by emailing the general mailbox at info@fliconline.org.

Welcome Mary-Ann Reeter!

We are so pleased to announce that Mary-Ann Reeter joined the FLIC team to assist people with the CDPAP transition. Mary-Ann has held many service-related roles in the Tompkins community, most recently as the **HICAP** Coordinator at Lifelong in Ithaca.



Welcome Mason Douglas!

Mason joined FLIC in the summer of 2024 as an Advocacy Specialist. We're happy to have Mason on our growing team of people dedicated to advocating for the community we serve.



BOCES' New Vision Students Visit FLIC

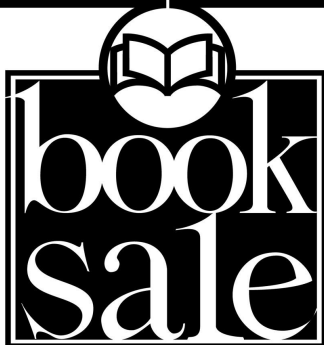
New Visions Health & Medical Sciences is an academically rigorous professional studies program for college-bound high school seniors interested in a career in the medical profession.

During the 2024-25 academic year, FLIC will host 10-20 New Vision students. FLIC is one of the many sites the students visit to learn about different aspects of the medical field.

While here, students visit with FLIC staff members to learn about our roles, the services we offer and to gain an understanding of the rights and needs of people with disabilities and about how our independence center serves the community. Students are also introduced to the Independent Living Philosophy and barriers faced by people with disabilities in society as well as in the healthcare industry.

FLIC has been participating in this program for more than 10 years. "In the last 10 years, the students have had an **amazing** amount of growth in knowledge and awareness when it comes to people with disabilities. That is so encouraging!" --Jan Lynch, FLIC Executive Director.

FRIENDS
OF THE TOMPKINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



**Save the Date: Friends
of the TCPL 2025
Spring
Book Sale
May 3-5, 10-12, 17-20**

IMPORTANT



State Budget Update

Both the NYS Senate and Assembly have released their one-house budgets in response to the Governor's proposed budget.

Independent Living Funding: Both the Senate and Assembly included a restoration of last year's \$750,000 funding increase to Independent Living Centers. The Governor's initial proposal did not include this, so it's great to see both the Senate and Assembly including it! The Senate also supports the inclusion of ILCs to the Targeted Inflationary Increase (like a Cost of Living Adjustment).

Health:

- **Managed Care Organization (MCO) Provider Tax:** Assembly included an increase in Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living residences, and federally qualified health centers.
- **MCO Penalties:** The Senate added provisions to ensure due process is granted to MCOs.
- **Provider Prevails:** Both Senate and Assembly fortunately rejected Governor's proposal to repeal provider prevails.
- **NHTD Waiver Cap:** The Senate rejected the cap proposed by the Governor and attributed an additional \$18.2 million to the program. The Assembly is silent on the issue.
- **Involuntary Commitment:** Both Senate and Assembly rejected the Governor's proposal around involuntary commitment.
- **Medicaid Asset Limit:** The Senate included a Medicaid savings exemption up to \$300,000 for individuals who are Aged, Blind, and Disabled.
- **Medicaid Global Cap:** Senate proposes permanently repealing the global cap.
- **Nursing Home Long Term Stays:** Senate accepts the Executive proposal to shift long-term nursing home stays from MMC to Medicaid Fee for Service, aligning coverage with the Medicaid Long Term Care Partial Capitation Program.
- **Long-term Care Insurance:** Assembly proposed \$2 million to study the feasibility of a public long-term care insurance program.

Housing:

- **Access to Home:** Both the Senate and Assembly included restoration of the additional \$3 million the program received in last year's budget.

Employment:

- **Increasing Tax Credit for Employed Persons with Disabilities:** Both Senate and Assembly included support for the

Governor's proposal.

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit: Senate proposed creating a State match for the credit, funded at \$5 million per year.

The final state budget should be unveiled later in April. We'll be sure to include updates in our next monthly newsletter!



FREE TAX PREP

Federal and New York State returns

LIFELONG @ 119 West Court Street, Ithaca
(additional parking behind the building, enter off Buffalo St.)

TRUMANSBURG @ Ulysses Philomathic Library

DRYDEN @ Southworth Library

- Taxpayers age 60+ (with spouse of any age)
- Taxpayers with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency
- Families with incomes below \$67,000

*Returns are prepared by IRS trained and certified volunteers.
Some returns may not qualify for this service.*

Appointments available January 28 through April 12

- Call OR text **607-379-4045** OR
- Access an appointment request form on our website at **www.tclifelong.org** OR using this QR code



*Taxpayers aged 60+ or whose return we completed last year
may request an appointment beginning January 6*

All eligible taxpayers may request an appointment beginning February 3

See our website **www.tclifelong.org** for more information and
for contact-free and no cost self-prep options



The Tax Counseling for the Elderly program is sponsored by a grant from the Internal Revenue Service with additional funding from Lifelong, Tompkins County, and the Tompkins County Office for the Aging



Small Accessibility Modifications You Can Make in Your Home or Business

Great news! Accessibility and safety in your home or business doesn't have to consist of expensive modifications. Often ensuring accessibility and safety is a matter of making a few simple changes.

Jeff Boles at FLIC has been performing accessibility walk-throughs for years, and now he does them in tandem with co-worker Ben Bassett. They do assessments at both residential and commercial facilities.

Some considerations and modifications you can make by yourself or with the help of a handy friend, include:

Make the routes to your spaces stable, firm, slip-resistant and well-lit at night.

Make sure the main entrance is accessible.

Make sure entrance stairs have tactical warning strips.

Make sure the paths of travel and stairs are clear ... and kept clear.

Tape down rugs. Throw rugs can bunch up and cause a tripping hazard.

Consider spring hinges for doors. If you want a door to automatically close but you want control of the door's tension, spring hinges are a great option, available at any hardware store. You can adjust the hinge's tension and control the speed of the door closing and/or the perceived weight of the door.

Add grab bars. Grab bars come in different sizes, shapes, and styles and permanent and non-permanent options. Grab bars are common in bathrooms but you can use them other places, too. You'll want a professional to install permanent ones unless you're very confident in your ability to mount them.

Feel safe in your space. With a bit of research, you can make some straightforward modifications that will do just that.

Words from Our

Intern – Kaitlyn Bell

Since January, I've had the privilege of interning at the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC), an opportunity that has been both professionally enriching and personally meaningful.

I'm currently studying Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) at Cornell, where I explore how law, policy, and advocacy shape the workplace and broader society. While I'm still navigating where my career will take me, one thing has always been clear to me: my dedication to advocating for individuals with disabilities.

That passion is more than just an interest — it's a core part of who I am.

My brother has special needs and, being a triplet, I have grown up right beside him. He has been one of the most important people in my life, shaping not only my experiences but also the way I see the world. I became acutely aware of the barriers individuals with disabilities face, from the smallest daily inconveniences to systemic challenges in education, employment and accessibility.

Watching him navigate a world that often doesn't accommodate his needs made me realize how much work still needs to be done to ensure equity and inclusion for all. But my brother has also taught me about strength, joy, and resilience in ways I never could have imagined. He is truly kind, hilarious and unapologetically himself — his smile lights up my life and his perseverance in the face of challenges inspires me every day. Being his sister has been one of the greatest privileges of my life, but it has also given me a sense of responsibility. From advocating for him in all types of settings to ensuring he has access to opportunities and support, I've spent my life fighting for him to be seen, heard and valued. I have also watched my parents do this for him every day and on every level as they advocate for him. They've had to advocate for things you would think are basic rights or things for which you wouldn't believe need to be advocated ... this list is endless.

That's why working at FLIC feels so personal to me — it's not just an internship, but a chance to contribute to something that directly impacts people like my brother.

While at FLIC, I've had the opportunity to see firsthand how advocacy translates into action. Navigating the CDPAP transition, doing personal



research about the issues and having assistance from FLIC's wonderful and welcoming staff, I've been able to apply what I've learned in ILR to these real-world issues. The policies and laws I study in class aren't just theoretical — they impact real people, shaping their ability to live independently and with dignity. If you haven't yet, I urge you to read a little bit about this transition and see that, as good as New York's services can be, this transition is tight and tough. FLIC is handling it amazingly, and I am truly inspired by their quick turnaround on this issue and the diligence of the staff. I am proud to be a part of this mission and represent FLIC.

Seeing the connections to my personal experiences has been one of the most rewarding parts of this experience. Every time I learn something new about policy, read a new article, finish a new task I feel genuinely rewarded, and I think of how these things could affect my brother.

I am incredibly grateful to Jan Lynch, FLIC and the ILR School for giving me this opportunity. The work being done here is vital, and I'm honored to be part of it. This internship isn't just a stepping stone — it's a way for me to continue a lifelong commitment to advocacy, inclusion and ensuring that every person, regardless of ability, has the chance to thrive.

I can't wait to continue learning, growing, and contributing in the months ahead. Yay FLIC!



Try-It-Room **Spotlight** Lazy Glasses

Recovering from a neck or a back injury? These glasses allow you to see in front of you without bending your neck, or watch TV while laying down.

Items in our Try-It-Room can be borrowed for one month with no deposit or cost. For more information, contact Lindsey at: lindsey@fliconline.org or 607-272-2433.



Do1Thing is a non-profit organization that promotes emergency preparedness for individuals and businesses, breaking it down into small

easy steps to make preparing easier.

April's Step:

Have an emergency food supply that will meet the needs of your household for three days without outside help.

An emergency food supply can be part of the food you use every day. The key to good food storage is to plan ahead of time. Replace food items when they expire. Buy extra food supply items when they are on sale. A large duffle bag or plastic tub with a lid makes a great storage place for emergency food. Make sure your family, including your pets, will have what they need when disaster strikes.

Tasks:

Buy a three-day emergency food supply for your household.

Take steps to make sure food in your refrigerator and freezer will stay safe.

Make sure you can meet any special dietary requirements in your household.

For more information visit:

<https://www.do1thing.com/individuals/food/>

<https://www.do1thing.com/>



We Would Love to Hear From You

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Video (607) 216-9683

Fax (607) 272-0902

info@fliconline.org

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

9:00am-5:00pm

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