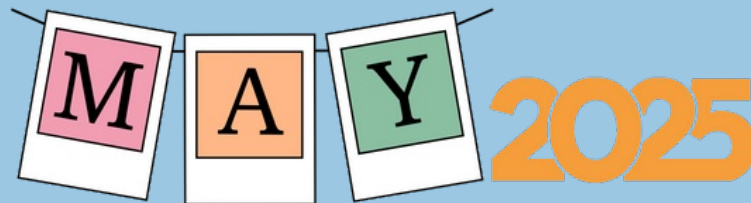


*Enjoy the latest news from your friends at*



**Finger Lakes Independence Center**  
*Opening doors to independence*



*May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month  
and  
National High Blood Pressure Education Month*

**"Don't ever make decisions based on fear.  
Make decisions based on hope and possibility."**

-- Michelle Obama, attorney, author,  
former First Lady of the United States

## **Short Notes:**

- FLIC will be closed on Monday, May 26, in celebration of Memorial Day.
- FLIC will be closed on Friday, May 30, for an internal cleaning/purging/organizing day.
- May 22 is Harvey Milk Day. Join the LGBTQ community

honoring the contributions made by Harvey Milk, remembering his life, accomplishments, and the LGBTQ+ community's continuing fight for recognition and equality under the law.

- Friends of the TCPL 2025 Spring Book Sale runs May 3-5, 10-12, 17-20. **Senior & Student Day is 10am-8pm May 14, 2025.**
- You can contact FLIC by calling 607-272-2433 or by emailing the general mailbox at [info@fliconline.org](mailto:info@fliconline.org).

## It's Brain Tumor Awareness Month

Go gray for May. Raise awareness for brain tumor treatment and research by wearing gray ribbons and clothes.

## Out and About: Where Can You Find Us?

We will be set up to share information at the following events:

**3pm Saturday May 3:** Vanessa and Jeff will be at the NAMI Walk-a-thon Event at Stewart Park.

**4:30pm Wednesday May 7:** Tracy and Jan will be at the Mac & Cheese Bowl at Steamboat Landing.

**11am Saturday May 10,** Andrea and Jeff will be at Better Together for Mental Health Event at Stewart Park.

## New York State 2026 Budget

Though Governor Hochul, the Assembly, and the Senate have reached some agreements, the complete 2026 budget is still in process. Governor Hochul provided an update on 4/28/25 on her priority issues for the budget. The total NYS budget for 2026 will be approximately \$254 billion. Stay tuned for our June Newsletter, which will have a fuller update on the state budget and how it fits in with the New York Association on Independent Living Budget Disability Priority Agenda.





## Today is National Password Day!\*

\* This is true only if you are reading this on May 1. If you aren't, well, don't worry. You can still celebrate with a good old-fashioned password change!

Protect yourself by updating your passwords annually on May 1. Make them stronger, coming up with nonsense phrases you can remember, adding spaces, and changing letters to numbers. Create passwords that an identity thief would never be able to guess.



Have you been denied housing due to using a Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher or another type of housing assistance?

In 2019, NYS passed a law stating that landlords are required to accept any and all sources of legal income, including Section 8 vouchers and DSS rental assistance programs. However, we know that many landlords are continuing to refuse to rent to tenants that use these programs, especially after a local judge declared the law was unconstitutional. If you have experienced this and would like to share your experience, please reach out to Andrea Champlin at [andrea@fliconline.org](mailto:andrea@fliconline.org).



## The Little Things That Aren't So Little

### Everyday Ways to Support People with Disabilities

By Kaitlyn Bell

Growing up with a brother who has a disability shaped the way I

view the world — and how I move through it. I have attempted to view the world through his eyes, and I have learned a lot about how people interact with a person with disabilities. There needs to be change, a recognition that people with disabilities are their own people and deserve to be treated with respect. But advocacy doesn't just happen in courtrooms or with campaigns. Advocacy needs to happen at everyday locations in everyday ways: like bus stops, in grocery store lines, during casual conversations, and in the choices we make when no one's watching. Some of the most meaningful acts of inclusion come from the smallest, quietest gestures.

### **Speak TO Them, Not ABOUT Them**

I've lost count of how many times people have spoken around my brother, asking me or my parents, "Does he want something?" Even if someone is nonverbal or takes time to respond, acknowledge them first. Make eye contact, say hello, ask them directly. It's powerful to feel seen and heard.

### **Assume Intelligence, Not Inability**

My brother is the smartest person I know. Just because someone communicates or moves differently doesn't mean they don't understand. People with disabilities can tell when others are talking down to them or treating them like they are invisible. It hurts them AND the entire fight for disability advocacy. Never underestimate someone's mind just because their body or speech is different. If you're unsure, ask how they prefer to communicate or engage.

### **Don't Just Make Space. Share It.**

Ramps, accessible bathrooms, elevator buttons — these aren't "extras." They're essential for many people. Whether it's making sure you aren't blocking a ramp or not using the accessible stall unless you truly need it, small things like this can have a big effect. I was once at a busy restaurant where someone had parked a stroller across the accessible path. No harm was meant, but my brother's wheelchair couldn't get through. Accessibility needs to be top of mind for everyone, not just those directly affected.



## Reframe “Awareness” as a Daily Practice

Awareness isn’t a one-time checkbox; it’s a way of thinking, living, and interacting. Following disability advocates on social media, reading firsthand accounts, unlearning outdated ideas, educating yourself are all forms of advocacy. There are many powerful disabled voices — activists, writers, artists, creators — sharing their lives, wisdom, and frustrations. Centering those voices in your feed and conversations is a meaningful step toward inclusivity.

## Use Your Voice — Even When It’s Uncomfortable

Ableist jokes, dismissive comments, people saying “Oh, it’s just a joke” — those moments stick with you. They sting even more when nobody says anything. I’ve learned to say gently but firmly: “Hey, that’s not okay. Can you try not to say that?” It’s not easy, but I’ve seen how much it matters, especially to people like my brother who rarely get the chance to speak up for themselves. This fight is ongoing, and, most times when I speak up, I receive a reaction that makes me uncomfortable, but, working toward inclusion isn’t always comfortable. But it IS necessary.

## Inclusion Starts with the Invitation

If you’re hosting an event or meeting, think about accessibility from the beginning. Is there a ramp? Is the entrance wide enough? Are the instructions clear and available in multiple formats? Even something as simple as writing, “Let us know if you need accommodations” on a flyer or invite can make someone feel welcome and seen.

Advocating for people with disabilities doesn’t always mean carrying a sign or writing a policy. Sometimes it means asking someone how they’d like to be included. It means slowing down, listening more, and remembering that being seen as a full human being is a right. My brother is one of the most observant, funny, and thoughtful people I know. And every time someone treats him with the dignity and agency he deserves, it reminds me: *These small choices we make? They aren't just acts of kindness; they're acts of justice.*

**We still have free Covid tests available in the office!**

## **Let Us Come to You: Would Your Business or Organization Like to Be More Inclusive?**

The staff at The Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) can assist businesses and organizations in Tompkins County to become more inclusive.

**Why should you become more inclusive? So you can ...**

- Demonstrate that your organization can be adapted or modified to include people with disabilities
- Enjoy a broader appeal to community members who may choose to be employed by you, volunteer with you, buy from you, or work with you
- Earn a greater awareness of legislation and requirements for your organization
- Experience increased opportunities for funding
- Enjoy an increased organization profile
- Enjoy a more positive, enriched environment

**We can provide **free of charge**:**

- Accessibility audits
- Staff Disability Awareness Trainings
- Assistance with policies which center on inclusive and reasonable accommodations
- Assistance with accessible technology
- Assistance with accessibility in communication
- Marketing to and connecting with people with disabilities

If you are interested in becoming more inclusive, email Jeff Boles at [jeff@fliconline.org](mailto:jeff@fliconline.org).





## Try-It-Room **Spotlight**

### Honey the Signing Bear

"Honey" the Signing Bear is a wonderful tool used to teach sign language to children. The "sleeves" allow a person to slide their hands through and sign as Honey. We currently have two available.

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](mailto: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.

### May's Step:

Disasters can happen at any time. Do you know what the emergency procedures are for your workplace or your child's school? Talk to your employer about emergency plans for the building where you work. Talk to the administrators at your child's school about their emergency plans.

If you would like help planning for your individual needs in an emergency, contact Jeff at [jeff@fliconline.org](mailto:jeff@fliconline.org).

For more information visit:

<https://www.do1thing.com/individuals/work-school-community/>

## Art Opening

**WE ARE LA VOZ: RESILIENCE THROUGH ART OPENING  
RECEPTION**

All are welcome at this powerful exhibition in downtown Ithaca, showcasing the intersection of textile art and social justice through the work of Latine artists whose work weaves together resistance, storytelling, and culture.

This exhibition is in collaboration with the Latino Civic Association & Cornell's Rural Humanities Grant.

<https://yenospina.com/pages/upcoming-oro-zco-events>



## Summer Storm Season is Coming: Be Prepared!

### Steps you can take now to prepare for power outages:

- Consider filling plastic containers with water -- leaving an inch of space inside each -- and putting them in your refrigerator or freezer. This will help keep food cold.
- Most medications that require refrigeration can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours. Check with your physician or pharmacist about your prescriptions.
- Plan to have an alternative cooking source, such as a camp stove or outdoor grill. Follow appropriate safety rules.
- Consider buying a generator. If possible, have your generator installed by a qualified electrician. Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. Follow appropriate safety rules.
- If you have a telephone or computer that requires electricity, plan for



alternate communication such as a standard telephone handset, cellular telephone, or radio.

- If you have an **electric garage door opener**, locate the manual release lever and learn how to operate it.
- If you have a **computer**, regularly back up files and operating systems. Turn off all computers, monitors, and other devices when they are not being used.
- Try to keep enough **cash** on hand for one month of expenses.

### **Steps to take during the power outages:**

- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Call your utility provider to notify them of the outage.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors shut to keep food from spoiling. Later, be sure to throw out the spoiled food. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Remember to provide fresh, cool water for your pets.
- Turn off major appliances to prevent damage from a possible surge when the power comes back on. Keep one light turned on so you know when power returns.
- Use only flashlights for lighting; candles pose the risk of fire.
- Do not use a charcoal grill or generator indoors. Do not use a gas stove for heat. All could give off harmful levels of carbon monoxide.
- In hot weather, wear lightweight, light-colored clothing, drink plenty of water and move to the lowest level of the house.
- If you are in a tall building, take the stairs and move to the lowest level of the building.
- If you are trapped in an elevator, wait for assistance. Do not try to force the doors open. Remain patient; there is plenty of air and the elevator is designed for passenger safety.
- If you go outside, avoid downed power lines. Report them to the utility provider. Assume all downed power lines have live electricity.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals won't

work during an outage, creating traffic congestion and dangerous driving conditions. If you must drive during a blackout, remember to obey the 4-way stop rule at intersections with non-functioning traffic signals.

## Want to Make A Difference? May Is Also...

ALS Awareness Month

**Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Awareness Month**

Mental health Awareness Month

Vascular Anomalies Awareness Month

Family Wellness Month

National Dental Care Month

Better Sleep Month

National Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month


Skin Cancer Awareness Month

World Meditation Day (May 21)

And many more ...

***Increased Awareness is a Powerful Tool.***

 Share This Email

 Share This Email

 Share This Email

 Share This Email

**We Would Love  
to Hear From  
You**

Voice (607) 272-2433

Video (607) 216-9683

Fax (607) 272-0902



info@fliconline.org



**Office Hours:**  
**Monday-Friday**  
**9:00am-5:00pm**  
**215 Fifth Street,**  
**Ithaca NY 14850**



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