

Enjoy the latest news from your friends at



Finger Lakes Independence Center
Opening doors to independence

JUNE 2025

“Obstacles don’t have to stop you.
If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up.
Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”

-- Michael Jordan, American businessman
and former professional basketball player

Short Notes:

- FLIC will be closed on Thursday, June 19th , in observance of Juneteenth.
- SAVE THE DATE! July 12 is **Community Paint Day** and we want all of you to come! Read more about it in the article below.
- You can contact FLIC by calling 607-272-2433 or by emailing the general mailbox at info@fliconline.org.



The Mural is Coming!

The Mural is Coming! And We Want You to Come, Too!

The staff at FLIC has been eagerly awaiting the start of the AMAZING wall-size mural that will adorn one side of FLIC building. Think bright! Think nature! Think inclusivity! While the design is a beautiful mystery we can't yet share, the artist is Nico Cathcart, a Muralist and Painter with a great love of nature and ties to New York State. Nico Cathcart is a Deaf/Hard of Hearing painter and muralist from Toronto, Ontario. Nico spent her formative years in Central New York, and she currently lives in Richmond, Virginia. A member of the all-women paint crew, [Few and Far](#), her work creates highly-realistic, socially-informed intersectional activations on both walls and canvas.

An experienced mural painter, she has worked on walls across the country. You can find her paintings in the permanent collection of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC), and her work has been shown at many prominent galleries across the country, including ABV Gallery and Modern Eden. In 2020, Nico was honored as an Agent of Change for her use of activism in art by the VMHC, and in 2023 her work "Age and Grace" won a National Mural Award. Nico worked to curate, and take part in the national campaign, [Artists 4 ERA](#), in support of the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. In 2023, Nico was named one of the Top 40 Artists to Watch by New York Cities [Culture Candy and Up Street Art Magazine](#). Recently Nico's work has been published in [Beautiful Bizarre Magazine](#) and [My Modern Met](#). She was highlighted as one of 50 globally-influential women muralists in the book [Street Art by Women](#) in 2024. In 2025 Nico's work won the Susanna Kelly Art Award, and was awarded a Sam and Adele Golden Artist Residency. Her mural, "Sign of the Times," highlighting women in Deaf Culture, recently won "TOP 3 in

the World" for March 2025 by the global street art magazine [Street Art Cities](#).

You can find Nico discussing her work in the emmy-winning documentary [Mending Walls](#), as well as a 2018 [TEDTalk](#) about her work and disability.

IG www.instagram.com/nicocathcart

Website www.nicocathcart.com

The mural is being funded by a generous anonymous donor.

We would like to invite YOU to attend [Community Paint Day](#) on July 12, the day that Nico will kick off her mural journey. You can paint, watch, gather, chat and enjoy light refreshments. More details to come! Watch for updates on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.



The ADA Turns 35

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990 by President George H.W. Bush. This historic civil rights law protects the rights of people with disabilities. Watch our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages to learn how FLIC plans to celebrate and recognize the ADA!

Photo credit: ADA National Network (adata.org) 1-800-949-4232



Rethinking Communication: Understanding and Embracing Deaf Culture

By Kaitlyn Bell

When I was younger, I learned the ASL alphabet — not because I

had to, but because I wanted to be prepared. I didn't know any deaf people at the time, but I figured that one day, I might. And if I did, I wanted to be able to say hello, spell out my name, or just make someone feel included. That simple act of learning the alphabet was the start of something bigger: a deeper awareness that the world doesn't revolve around one "standard" way of communicating, and it shouldn't.

There's a common misconception that all deaf people want to be "fixed," and that hearing loss is a problem to be solved with cochlear implants or hearing aids. But in many cases, that's just not true. For many members of the Deaf community, being deaf isn't something to correct — it's something to embrace. Deafness can be a source of identity, pride, and connection. And it's time we all began to understand that.

Deaf culture is rich with its own language, traditions, values, and history. American Sign Language (ASL), for example, isn't just a translation of English — it has its own grammar, its own rhythm, and its own way of expressing the world. It's visual, expressive, and deeply rooted in the community.

To many deaf individuals, ASL isn't just a tool for communication; it's part of who they are. Some deaf people do choose to use hearing aids or implants, and that's valid too — but it's important to understand that not all do, and not all want to. Choosing not to "correct" hearing loss isn't a rejection of technology; it's an embrace of identity, and something we should all embrace, too.

1. Adjusting Our Perspective

If someone can't hear, the burden shouldn't always fall on them to adapt. It's on all of us to meet each other halfway. That might mean learning a few signs, using captions when we show videos, facing someone when we speak, or being patient when communication takes a little more effort. Even something like speaking clearly or being the light is important, and something that many may look past. We should all be willing to take small steps toward making our world more inclusive. Accessibility shouldn't be an afterthought, it's about equity, and that is important. It's about recognizing that people communicate in different ways, and that no one way is more "correct" than another.

2. Start Small, Think Big

If you're reading this and wondering where to begin, just start with the basics. Learn to fingerspell your name or watch a few videos in ASL. Get familiar with the idea that communication is diverse. When we take time to understand each other, even in small ways, we send

a powerful message: You matter. Your language matters. Your identity matters. Learning the ASL alphabet years ago was a small act, but it shaped how I think about communication today. It made me realize that we all have a role to play in building a more accessible, respectful world — one where everyone's voice, spoken or signed, is heard.



**Lime Hollow Nature Center
Offers Immersive
Nature Experiences
Regardless of Mobility Challenges
with **Free** Action TrackChair**

Lime Hollow Nature Center is just the second nature center in all of

New York state to offer the **Action TrackChair**, a battery-powered, all terrain “wheelchair” designed to make trails accessible for people with mobility challenges. The tracks make traversing uneven terrain simple and take people deep onto Lime Hollow’s trails which meander through 600 acres of forests, fields, streams, and unique geological features.

Safety features include: four-point harness and lap belt, the chair tilts to adjust the user's center of gravity when going up or down slopes, has variable speeds, and can be controlled either by the person using the chair or by a companion.

Participants are welcome to use the Action TrackChair **FREE OF CHARGE** on many of Lime Hollow’s trails!

To ensure that the TrackChair is available, RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED at least 24 hours prior to intended use. All participants must be accompanied by a companion for the duration of the hike and sign a waiver and an acknowledgement of training prior to hiking.

For more information, visit <https://www.limehollow.org/trackchair>.

15 Ableist Expressions We Should Remove from Everyday Use



Ableism is discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities. It is based on the idea that physical or mental ability is an indicator of superiority, with a non-disabled body considered “normal.” Ableism underestimates people’s capacity and aptitude because of a disability.

This is a list of ableist expressions that discriminate against or marginalize individuals with disabilities. We should remove these expressions from everyday use.

1. “Crazy” or “Insane”

Say “wild” or “unbelievable” to avoid associating mental illness with

negativity.

2. “Lame”

Say “uncool” or “boring” to avoid offending someone with mobility challenges.

3. “Blind to” or “Turn a blind eye”

Say “unaware” or “ignore” to avoid using blindness in a negative context.

4. “Wheelchair-bound” or “Confined to a wheelchair”

Say “wheelchair user” or “person who uses a wheelchair” to emphasize the person first, not their mobility aid.

5. “Retarded” or “Retard”

Say “slower” or “delayed” to avoid offending someone with intellectual disabilities.

6. “Psycho” or “Psychopath”

Say “unpredictable” or “unsettling” to avoid associating mental illness with negativity.

7. “Cripple” or “Crippled”

Say “person with a disability” or “someone who experiences mobility challenges” to be more respectful and inclusive.

8. “Mute” or “Dumb”

Say “nonverbal” or “person with a speech disability” to avoid offensive language.

9. “Hysterical”

Say “overreacting” or “emotional” to avoid reinforcing outdated gender stereotypes and avoid associating mental illness with negativity.

10. “Invalid”

Say “not valid” or “not acceptable” to avoid implying worthlessness.

11. “Crazy as a loon”

Say “eccentric” or “quirky” to avoid associating mental illness with negativity.

12. “Nuts” or “Nutjob”

Say “eccentric” or “unconventional” to to avoid associating mental illness with negativity.

13. “Spaz” or “Spastic”

Say “clumsy” or “awkward” to avoid offending someone with cerebral palsy or a related condition.

14. “Having a meltdown” or “Throwing a tantrum”

Say “struggling” or “having a tough time” to acknowledge difficulties

without trivializing someone's experience.

15. "Handicapable" or "Special needs"

Say "capable" or "unique needs" to emphasize inclusivity and respect without seeming patronizing.



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.

Senior Facilities Generally Appreciate these Donations

Large print books
Regular print books
Books on CD
Notebooks
Playing cards
Coloring books, crayons, markers and pencils
Stuffed animals
Craft kits
Paint-by-number kits
Games
Small items that would be appropriate for rewards for community games, like Bingo and Scrabble

If you have any of these "entertainment" items to donate, the point of contact at most facilities is the Activities Director. You can simply call and ask if these items are needed.

We still have free Covid tests available in the office!

We have a NY Connects Specialist on Staff

What does he do?

NY Connects offers the public free, unbiased information about long-term services and supports available in New York. The information is for people of all ages or with any type of disability, including medical and non-medical services needed to improve/maintain health and independence. Our NY Connects Specialist is Ben Bassett; Ben can help link clients to those services. Contact Ben at ben@fliconline.org or 607-272-2433.



Try-It-Room **Spotlight:**

Tactile Writing Liquid

You can apply tactile paint onto almost anything, including paper, wood, cloth, plastic, rubber and metal. Once it dries, the bright-colored liquid leaves 3-dimensional, raised markings to create easily identifiable tactile symbols for visually-impaired individuals. Create circles, lines, squares, and dots to make different markings for different objects. We currently have three different colors in the Try-It-Room.



Items in our Try-It-Room can be borrowed for one month with no deposit or cost. For more information, call 607-272-2433.



SMALL STEPS TOWARD BEING PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

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.

Here's June's Step:

Be aware of any unique family/household needs and prepare to meet those needs in an emergency.

Talk to your family members to identify the unique family needs. For example:

Is there an infant or young child in your home?

Does someone in your home have a disability and is there an evacuation plan in place?

Does someone in your family have a medical condition that requires medication?

How will you take care of your pet's needs?

For more information visit:

<https://www.do1thing.com/individuals/unique-family-needs/>

If you would like help planning for your individual needs in an emergency, contact Jeff at jeff@fliconline.org.



Get Outdoors and Get Together Day!

The annual Get Outdoors & Get Together Day will be held Saturday,

June 14, 2025 at Department of Environmental Conservation facilities and State Park Lands across the State to bring people of all abilities, ages, identities, and backgrounds together for fun, healthful activities as part of the Governor's initiative to **Get Offline, Get Outside**, and to ensure inclusivity of access to state public lands.

Adaptive equipment will be available for select activities across participating sites.

Some of the activities include:

Fishing: Participate in free catch-and-release fishing clinics for everyone! Learn about fishing equipment, techniques, regulations, consumption advisories, and good places to fish. Participants may bring their own gear, but rods and reels will also be available for loan.

Camping 101: Try your hand at camping basics by pitching a tent on the lawn and learning how to pack for a camping trip. When the day is complete, you'll be prepared to plan your next outdoor adventure.

Paddling: Learn the basics of this fun fast-growing sport and try getting out on the water.

Archery: Try hitting a bullseye with a bow and arrow and learn about important archery safety tips.

Birding: Learn how easy and fun it is to enjoy birdwatching almost anywhere.

Hiking: Take a short hike and learn the basics of finding the perfect trails on your own.

Outdoor safety: Learn the basics of being prepared and safe, so all outdoor adventures are good ones.

Accessible outdoor recreation: Experience and learn about accessible outdoor recreation opportunities on state lands, including hiking, camping, birding, fishing, and boating.

Locally, you can enjoy the day at Taughannock State Park. For more information, visit:

<https://www.ny.gov/programs/get-outdoors-get-together-day#:~:text=The annual Get Outdoors %26 Get Together Day,ensure inclusivity of access to state public lands.>

Headline

Want to Make A Difference? June is ...

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

Aphasia Awareness Month

National Safety Month

June 1-30: National Migraine & Headache Awareness Month

PTSD Awareness Month

June 13 is Rare Chromosome Disorder Awareness Day

June 14 is World Blood Donor Day

June 19 is World Sickle Cell Day

June 22-June 28 is Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

June 25 is World Vitiligo Day

June 27 is National HIV Testing Day

And many more ...

Increased Awareness is a Powerful Tool.



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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



Finger Lakes Independence Center | 215 Fifth Street | Ithaca, NY 14850 US

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