

THE FLIC

NEWS FLASH

News from the Finger Lakes Independence Center

March 2026

SHORT NOTES

- We're having a **FREE Brake Tune-Up Clinic!** Bring us your walkers and wheelchairs. Plus, there will be excellent information available about preventing falls. Read the article 🖱️🖱️ in this e-letter to learn more.
- We have an **accessible scale**. Please stop in if you need to use it. Free of charge, of course!
- **The Parkinson's Caregiver Support Group** meets in-person 12-1pm, on the first and third Tuesday each month, in the FLIC conference room. Newcomers are welcome! For more information, email Carol Grove at carolgrove6115@gmail.com.
- **Free tax prep** for those who qualify. Click here to learn more and to fill out an appointment request.
<https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSe8w3LP2BB.../viewform>
- You can **contact FLIC** by calling 607-272-2433 or by emailing the general mailbox at info@fliconline.org.

Invisible Disability Support Group



Would you like the opportunity to discuss your invisible disability in a supportive virtual environment? Join our new Invisible Disability Support Group where you can share feelings, get support and discuss solutions.

The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.

March meetings are:

Thursday March 12th at 3 pm

Thursday March 26th at 6 pm

The groups will be via Zoom. An email invite will be sent to anyone who is interested in attending a group.

Please send an email to Ben@fliconline.org to be added to the list of group members.

**"Every person on this earth
needs just one person
who sees them and roots for them."**

-- Selma Blair, actress, author and advocate living with Multiple Sclerosis

Please join us!
for a
Brake Tune-Up Clinic
and
**Falls Prevention
Information Session**

FLiC



TOMPKINS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING
Aging Better, Together



FLIC is holding a Brake Tune-Up Clinic and Falls Prevention Information Session from 3-5pm, Wednesday, March 18, in the FLIC conference room. There will be FREE brake adjustments for walkers and wheelchairs as well as important education on falls prevention.

This event is hosted by FLIC and Tompkins County Office for the Aging. There is parking available in front of and around the building.

Questions? Email Ben at Ben@fliconline.org or call 607-272-2433 Ext. 202.

WE'D LOVE MORE GOOGLE REVIEWS, PLEASE!

WE HAVE 50 GOOGLE REVIEWS. WE SHOULD PROBABLY HAVE 500 GOOGLE REVIEWS! WILL YOU LEAVE US ONE?

Leave a Google review [here!](#)

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month



Did you know that March has been Brain Injury Awareness Month since 1993? It's a time to increase understanding, recognize that anyone can sustain a brain injury, and, most importantly, put the person first.

At the Brain Injury Association of New York State, we recognize this month through our **Go Blue! for Brain Injury** campaign, a growing tradition that unites communities in awareness, advocacy, and support.

Going Blue is about more than wearing a color. It's about showing up for brain injury survivors and their families and reminding them they're not alone. Your participation helps advance advocacy, expand education, and strengthen the support systems that make a lasting difference.

Gather your coworkers, friends, and family, choose a day, or even the entire month, and **Go Blue!** while raising awareness and funds for the brain injury community.

You can get involved by:

- Starting a fundraiser
- Supporting a fundraiser
- Making a donation
- Sharing your support and spreading awareness

Together, we can ensure that individuals and families impacted by brain injury are seen, heard, and supported, in March and beyond.

Ready to make an impact? [Click here to learn about Go Blue!](#)

Erin Vallely joins FLIC

My name is Erin Vallely, and I am excited to join FLIC's staff as the new Data Management Specialist.

I spent the last four years working at Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. as the Advocacy Specialist. With an undergraduate



degree in sociology, a master's degree in public policy, and a lifetime of experience as a quadriplegic individual, I'm passionate about social justice and the independent living philosophy.

Data management is important to the success of every agency and business. Data provides information about what the organization is doing well, if they are meeting grant requirements to receive funding, and what types of things they could be doing to better serve the community. As the data management specialist, I will be helping FLIC improve their data collection processes, increase documentation efficiency, and help leadership make strategic decisions about FLIC's service offerings.

In addition to my internal data management responsibilities, I will also be supporting the Student Transition Services program by offering education advocacy services to students of all ages. Navigating the education system when a student has suspected or diagnosed disabilities can be challenging. I can help guardians and students of all ages and education levels:

- Understand education laws and policies
- Request evaluations and testing to determine needs
- Review 504 Plans, IEPs, and college accommodation plans
- Advocate for themselves with the school
- Find additional resources and supports they need

I'm excited to put my skills to use wherever they're needed. I'm looking forward to growing my network in Tompkins County and would love to connect with you. Reach out to me anytime at erin@fliconline.org.



Finger Lakes **Independence** Center

Get support from education advocates with decades of lived and professional experience.

✓ 504/IEP Evaluation Guidance

✓ Policy & Process Guidance

✓ Support at School Meetings

✓ Child-centered Solutions

EDUCATION

ADVOCACY

SERVICES

607-272-2433

info@fliconline.org

215 Fifth Street, Ithaca NY

Welcome to our Newest Cornell Student!

Hi! My name is Winifred Thompson and I'm studying Industrial & Labor Relations at Cornell University as a part of the Class of 2029. In exploring career pathways, I've become interested in learning more about working at a non-profit. This led me to join High Roads Ithaca, the program at Cornell under which my internship falls, and, subsequently, FLIC! I'm excited for the opportunity to do hands-on work in the community and learn as much as possible during my time at FLIC. When I'm not working, I enjoy baking, playing volleyball, and watching movies.



Living with A Disability... What Does That Look Like?

By Jeff Boles, Advocacy Specialist



Living with a developmental disability is a journey of navigating physical, emotional, and social obstacles. It's a journey that requires resilience, adaptability, and most of all a strong support network.

Support systems play a crucial role in this journey. Families, friends, healthcare providers, and educators all contribute to creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Peer support groups and community organizations can also provide valuable resources and a sense of belonging. **It's important to remember that support is not just about helping; it's about empowering individuals to advocate for themselves and make their own choices.**

One of the key aspects of navigating life with a developmental disability is fostering independence. This can involve everything from learning self-care skills to pursuing education and employment opportunities. It's essential to set realistic goals and celebrate every achievement, no matter how small. For example, learning to use public transportation independently or managing personal finances can be significant milestones.

Living day to day with a developmental disability may involve dealing with the emotion of encountering someone who only sees your disability and not the person you truly are and the many capabilities you do have. In my case, I encounter individuals who pre-judge (make false assumptions) about my intellectual ability based on my speech impairment as well as individuals who ignore me because of my disability and my speech impairment.

Socially, I have made many life-long friends over the years but, this is difficult for others with developmental disabilities because it difficult to find life-long friends willing to accept you for who you are.

Over the years, I have been active in the Lansing community, but for others with developmental disabilities, community and social participation can range from difficult to almost impossible due to the attitudinal, systematic, policy, technology, and physical/environmental barriers people with developmental disabilities must deal with from day to day. As a result, many people with developmental disabilities remain highly isolated leading to possible mental health issues and robbing them of a joyful life.

Thus far, I have tried to give you a day-to-day insight into with what a person with a developmental disability may have to deal as well as mentioning the importance of support systems and fostering independence. **Now, for the remainder of this article, I would like to focus on ways we can be more inclusive of people with developmental disabilities.**

First and foremost, I think it all starts with awareness, education, and a willingness to look at disability from a perspective that embraces acceptance and inclusion. We must look at disability as natural, part of the human condition, and that disability doesn't mean lack of ability. We must focus on ways accepting and including people with disabilities because until we embrace acceptance and inclusion the attitudinal, systematic, policy, technology, and physical/environmental barriers aren't going anywhere.

Fact: A person may have a speech impairment making communication difficult, but they can be highly intelligent, highly intellectual in written communications, and can have adult conversations.

SNAP BENEFITS ARE CHANGING

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Rules

Recent Federal SNAP Work Rule changes mean that some adults aged 18 through 64 without dependents must meet ABAWD work rules to keep SNAP

1 Do new work rules apply to me?

Use this [screening tool](#), or contact DSS directly to confirm individual requirements



If you have one or more of these exemptions, you may not have to meet the work rules

- You are currently working 30 or more hours a week OR earning at least \$217.50 per week
- You are pregnant
- You are receiving disability benefits, such as NYS Disability benefits or SSI, or are an applicant for SSI
- You are receiving Unemployment Benefits
- You are participating in a substance use treatment program
- You are responsible for the care of an ill or disabled person (even if they do not live in your home)
- You are a student enrolled in any recognized school, job skills training, or institution of higher learning at least half time and meeting the student eligibility criteria to receive SNAP

2 Don't meet an exemption?

You have options. If you don't meet any of the exemptions contact to DSS for more information at (607) 274-5680,



tompkins-opportunity.org

Keep your address current with DSS and the post office so you don't miss important mail!

Awareness Spotlight

March is Gender Equality Month

Gender Equality Month is dedicated to honoring the social, political, cultural, and academic achievements of women while actively fighting against gender bias, discrimination, and inequality. The additional awareness is designed to shine a spotlight on the rights of women, girls, and gender minorities by empowering women, advocating for policy changes, and educating others.

What is one step can you take to celebrate Gender Equality Month?
Support a local women-owned business! Try to support one or two or ten or twenty women-owned businesses this month!

Increased Awareness is a Powerful Tool.



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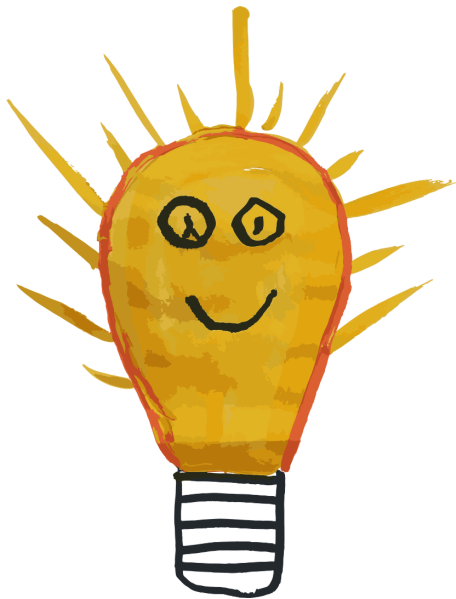
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We'd Love to Hear From You!

Voice (607) 272-2433
Video (607) 216-9683
Fax (607) 272-0902
info@fliconline.org

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
9:00am-5:00pm
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