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OUR MISSION
A consumer-directed, cross-disability advocacy and service organization, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

OUR VISION
A barrier-free society with opportunities for all people to achieve their maximum potential.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

INTEGRITY:
• I will communicate openly, honestly and responsibly (no excuses, no blame).
• I will always tell the truth regardless of the consequences to me.
• I will take responsibility for my actions and the quality of my work. When I make a mistake, I will admit it, take action to correct it, and work to prevent it from reoccurring.
• I will only make an agreement I intend to keep. If I am unable to keep my agreement, I will notify those who need to know immediately.

Agreement: A specific, measurable, aligned, realistic, time-based arrangement.

RESPECT:
• I will treat others as I would like to be treated.
• I will communicate directly, calmly and professionally.
• I will listen attentively without interruption and paraphrase to confirm understanding.
• I will acknowledge the value of different perspectives and demonstrate that by my actions.
• I will ask clarifying questions to better understand different perspectives.

CUSTOMER FOCUS:
• I will utilize the *H.E.A.T. method to understand and anticipate customer needs.
  *H = Hear
  E = Empathize
  A = Acknowledge
  T = Take-action
• I will ask clarifying questions to identify all-encompassing customer needs.
• I will treat all customers with integrity, respect and maintain confidentiality.
• I will consistently identify and provide tools for customers to reach their maximum potential.

Customer: Anyone within or outside our agency with whom we interact, provide information or services.
A Message from our Outgoing Board President

As my term as president comes to a close in December, I am reminded of the amazing journey that I have taken with Independent Living Inc. (ILI) over the past 9 years. I truly feel blessed to have been a part of this amazing organization. The succession of the board and the second to none leadership and staff at ILI, makes me very confident that there will be continued success in the future as I hand over the board chair seat to Andrew Weyant.

Keeping true to its goal of creating a barrier free society, ILI has continued to serve people in our communities in more ways and with a reach much larger than when I began my journey with them. As the needs of the community have shifted, ILI has evolved to meet these needs. With help from many of our political leaders, our communities, and our supporters, we have been able to ensure appropriate consumer directed services for so many.

The rewards of serving this organization are too vast for me to list. The client successes that I have witnessed first-hand are by far more fulfilling than anyone can imagine. I will continue to advocate for the men, women, and children that are in need of the services that ILI offers. I will also remain a vigilant supporter of this organization, and spread the word about ILI’s services to ensure that as many people as possible know about this amazing organization. As long as there is a need for the services ILI provides, my journey and the journey of each of us that support ILI, is not over.

Thank you, ILI for the opportunity to share in your many successes.

A Message from our Incoming Board President

I am honored to have served on the Independent Living, Inc. Board of Directors since 2010, and now proud to serve as the new Board President. It is an extreme privilege to help lead this dynamic organization, whose vision of a barrier-free society includes creating more fully-accessible homes, transportation, equal employment, and educational opportunities for people with disabilities in and around Orange County.

Since 1987 Independent Living, Inc. has offered a broad range of disability programs and services promoting independence and a good quality of life for individuals of all ages and with all disabilities. I have seen this organization grow from a small grassroots advocacy group to the extremely diverse support system that assists thousands of individuals, families, municipalities, businesses and schools. It never ceases to amaze me when I hear a story on how Independent Living, Inc. has helped someone move out of a nursing home so they can live independently in the community, or connect an individual with the necessary supports for their continuing journey to recovery, or to find gainful employment and become a productive member in society.

This year ILI celebrates 30 years of service on behalf of people with disabilities living in the Mid-Hudson region and I look forward in continuing the journey to be involved in their numerous initiatives to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.
The Magic of Freedom! Celebrating 30 Years of Independent Living!

30 years ago, a door opened in Newburgh… and a remarkable journey began. In that instant, a group of Orange County residents sharing a common belief in the unrealized capabilities of people with disabilities had been transformed into a unified and unwavering voice for the unheard, misunderstood and set-aside. A voice dedicated to reshaping the conversation about the future of those in our community who had long been regarded as the least able to contribute. In 1987 a door opened into a few small offices that were destined to become a vibrant hub of disability services and a catalyst for social change locally, regionally and throughout the State of New York. Today, on the front lines of disability advocacy and services are 41 autonomous independent living centers throughout the state.

As I look around at this incredible center and our dedicated, front-line staff committed to removing barriers, building bridges and paving the way to equality, opportunity, and independence for generations to come, I can’t help but reflect on all that we have been through, and how much we have accomplished. I remember advocating for the ADA in 1988 on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington DC. Just two short years later in 1990 (three years after our Center opened its doors), this groundbreaking piece of legislation was signed into law.

However, the civil rights movement for people with disabilities and our fight for equal access and independence remains a work-in-progress, and reshaping individual and systemic attitudes and actions requires our continuing perseverance. In that sense, as we celebrate our 30th year we are also standing at the next threshold of our work to address perceptions, remove barriers, transform systems and fully embrace the equality of people with disabilities.

Although deinstitutionalization began many years ago, with the downsizing and ultimate closing of many state hospitals and developmental centers, the culture of institutional care remains largely unchanged in many community-based agencies. Attitudes that once segregated people with disabilities have continued to shape prejudicial policies and barriers to independence.

In response to this unfortunate reality, our center has continued to grow, from a founding staff of three in 1987 to over 95 employees and 650 consumer-directed home care workers in 2017. Our services now impact the lives of people living throughout the Hudson Valley Region, and are centered around local and regional partnerships that allow our innovations to reach more people in need.

Last year, we opened a Peer Recovery Center supported by a grant from the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Doing so enabled us to create 5 new peer positions, adding a new and complementary dimension to our existing array of peer-centric services. Our 74-unit affordable and fully accessible apartment complex, Independence Square, is fully occupied and has a waiting list, confirming our expectation that there is a considerable need for this type of housing in our region. The Center’s Peer Mental Health Hospital Transition and Diversion services have been highly effective at reducing inpatient lengths-of-stay as well as hospital readmission rates by harnessing the power of highly trained peer staff. Reach One – our Regional Recovery Center, offered in partnership with PEOPLE, Inc. and the Mental Health Association in Rockland County – has continued to successfully engage and guide people diagnosed with mental illness as they overcome isolation and loneliness and begin their personal journeys toward wellness and recovery.

I am truly grateful for the commitment and support of our Board of Directors, donors, sponsors and staff, as well as our local and regional partners. Together, we are striving to make our community a better place, where people with all disabilities can fully participate in every aspect of daily life and can feel safe, respected, accepted and free to pursue their highest aspirations.
SERVICE STATISTICS

Our Mental Health service providers assisted 3,400 people with mental health and/or substance use disorders. Independent Living Skills Specialists assisted 4,500 people with accessing needed resources that included services for personal growth, self-empowerment and referral. The Early Childhood Direction Center staff provided 78 trainings to 343 parents and 874 professionals in Orange, Ulster, Sullivan and Dutchess Counties. This number included a 5 session series provided on Saturdays that focused on Behavior Management. Our Family and Children services and programs offered an array of services to 1,200 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

FUNDING SOURCES

Independent Living, Inc. is funded by both federal and state government agencies which include fee for service contracts and grants, in addition to private donations. 66% The Department of Health (Medicaid); 15% Office of Mental Health, 8% NYS Education Department, 8% Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), 4% Other.

WHO WE SERVE

Headquartered in Newburgh, with satellite offices in Middletown and Monticello, Independent Living, Inc. serves people with disabilities throughout the Mid-Hudson Region. Many of our programs, including our Early Childhood Direction Center, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Medicaid Service Coordination, Reach One and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Services, have a strong presence in our neighboring counties and work cooperatively with area agencies to address the needs and represent the interests of persons with disabilities.

Independent living means being in control of your own life and being as self-sufficient as possible. It means taking risks and being allowed to succeed and fail on your own terms. It means participating in community life and pursuing activities of your own choosing. Whether we’re providing peer counseling to a newly disabled adult or offering technical assistance through partnership with a local industry or municipality, Independent Living, Inc. serves as an important voice for systems change, and a vital resource for persons with disabilities within our local and regional communities.
OUR SERVICES

ADA CONSULTATION/ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION SERVICES
Directed to individuals, local municipalities, commercial property owners, employers, businesses, schools and provider agencies, these services play a vitally important role in ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

HOME MODIFICATION CONSULTATION SERVICES
Designed to help people with disabilities to remain at home, or return home, and live with dignity in the community setting of their choosing.

BENEFITS ADVISEMENT
Offering consultative and supportive services aimed at increasing independence for recipients of SSDI and/or SSI benefits throughout the Hudson Valley by providing information and education on available work incentives.

CONSUMER DIRECTED PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES (OPTIONS)
For persons with disabilities, including seniors, OPTIONS offers a unique alternative to traditional attendant care at home, giving individuals the opportunity to hire and manage their own personal attendants. Available to qualified individuals in Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Rockland and Dutchess Counties.

DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING SERVICES
Providing a bridge between the Deaf and Hearing cultures in Orange, Ulster, Sullivan and Dutchess Counties, this program is actively engaged in community outreach and education, employment, advocacy, service coordination, counseling and technical support.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTION CENTER (ECDC)
Providing disability-related service and information to families of children from birth to 5 years of age, and offering technical support to schools, day care centers, and child care professionals in Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.”
- Theodore Roosevelt
OUR SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
Contracted to conduct work-readiness assessments and job placement services for NY State Department of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), Commission for the Blind (CB), and Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Supported employment services and ongoing employment supports are provided. Vocational services are also available for all tenants at the Cornerstone Residence in Newburgh.

MEDICAID SERVICE COORDINATION
Aimed at helping individuals with developmental disabilities to make connections with needed services and community supports that enable them to live with the maximum degree of independence.

FAMILY AND STUDENT SERVICES
An array of services are available for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, including education advocacy and transition supports for students between the ages of 6 and 21, an after-school learning enrichment program, a Community Independence Program that offers independent living skills training, and a Saturday activity/respite program.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS
Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an approach designed to assist individuals to plan their life and supports. Based on the philosophy that the individual being served by a process should be the primary shareholder in that process, services promote self-help, equal access, peer role modeling, personal growth and empowerment so that, consistent with the Olmstead Ruling of the US Supreme Court, people with disabilities may live in the least restrictive setting of their choice.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Aimed at helping people with psychiatric disabilities, including those at continuing risk of homelessness, to overcome stigma, connect with needed supports, build constructive relationships with peers, advocate on their own behalf, define and pursue their personal journeys to wellness, and make the transition from system dependence to independence.

Case Management
Offering a holistic, person-centered approach to facilitating connections with provider agencies and community amenities, and aimed at ensuring long-term residential stability, personal recovery, health and general well-being.

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”
- Christopher Reeves
Forensic Connections Program
In collaboration with the Orange County Department of Mental Health and the Port Jervis City Community, this program assists individuals ages 16 and up with mental illness or co-occurring disorders who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Transition and Diversion Services
Serving persons with psychiatric & co-occurring addictive disabilities with the goal of aiding in the prevention of hospitalization and homelessness, this program provides wrap-around support, including core Independent Living services. Our Bridgers are on-site and on-call at local hospitals to assist individuals being discharged from the mental health units to connect with necessary supports for their continuing journey of recovery. Our Diversion Specialists proactively engage individuals who have been evaluated but not hospitalized, providing intensive peer intervention during periods of crisis.

Recovery Center Services - Reach One
Proactive peer engagement and services for adults with psychiatric diagnoses and/or chemical addiction in collaboration with PEOPLe, Inc. and the Mental Health Association of Rockland County. The Mid-Hudson Regional Recovery Center provides traditional peer support, educational opportunities, integrated social and recreational activities, assistance with employment and health home integration.

Recovery Center Services - Onward Recovery
The Mid-Hudson Substance Use Recovery Community & Outreach Center serves people 18 and older who live with a substance use disorder (alcohol/chemical dependency). The purpose of this center is to provide intensive peer support, social activities, recovery support, vocational support and community connections to these individuals.

Supported and Supportive Housing
Case management services and rental subsidies for permanent housing for qualified individuals with disabilities in Orange County, funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD), NYS Office of Mental Health and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Services include, but are not limited to, independent living skills training; wellness coaching, peer mentoring, assistance with employment, and connections with social and community resources.

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”
- Francis of Assisi
The Mid-Hudson Recovery Community and Outreach Center, a New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services funded initiative, was awarded to Independent Living, Inc. in June of 2016. This $1.75 million, 5 year grant, is intended to address the need of providing a regional network of peer supports and empowerment services to individuals who are living with alcohol and/or substance use disorder and the family members who are impacted by it.

Independent Living, Inc. has been providing Mental Health Peer Services for 25 years and has a proven track record of delivering exceptional Peer Support to residents of Dutchess, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster Counties. Our network of Peer Specialists in the region coupled with OASAS funded staff and an extensive volunteer component will enable this program to span across a large area to connect, support and build a strong recovery community.

The center is located at 135 Grand Street, Newburgh, NY with regional network connections in Monticello, Valley Cottage, Kingston and Poughkeepsie. The startup of the project began in September of 2016 with stakeholder meetings, recruitment and interviewing of viable candidates, and location scouting. Development of the center continues with the intention of our ribbon cutting to occur in June of 2017.

In direct response to ongoing community needs we have grown from a staff of three in 1987 to employing over 95 people and have a consumer directed homecare program that employs 650 homecare workers in the region.

We now have 5 service offices in Orange and Sullivan Counties – Newburgh (3), Middletown (1) and Monticello (1). Our emphasis on Peer Mental Health and Substance Use Services, advocacy, housing, homecare, employment and social connectedness is essential for helping people to live a better quality of life.

Our organization makes every effort to provide programs and services that are individually tailored to meet unique needs of the individual.
MEMBERS OF THE FRIENDS OF INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

Luis & Beth Abarca*  
Allan E. Atzrott*  
Richard & Alice Carpenter  
Maureen Crush &  
Robert Whelan*  
John & Kara Dorsey*  
Steven Gleason  
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Bernadette Keelan
George & Dolly Kohler
Lewis Kornish
Betty Koshy
Kim Kreutzberg
Alice Kurman-Kostrubal
We have made every effort to include all and to respect the wishes of those who requested to remain anonymous, but please let us know of any errors or omissions.
Robin called Independent Living, Inc. (ILI) in extreme distress, explaining that she is in a crisis situation with no income and a child she believes may have special needs. Our two departments ILSS and ECDC called her together to see how we might be able to assist her. She explained that she took a family leave from her job towards the end of her pregnancy, lost her infant son just weeks after his birth, and was deeply depressed. She had fallen behind in her rent, and believed that she was about to be evicted.

In spite of her depression and stress, she attempted to resume the job she has had for 10 years, but was told she would have to wait for the results of her background check. She applied for a second job, and was called back for a follow-up interview. We made an appointment with Robin to meet with us as well as making several suggestions to her: to pursue help with her delinquent rent payments; options for counseling and support groups; how to have her daughter evaluated for a possible hearing impairment. Before Robin met with us, we reached out to a number of our contacts in the community to seek assistance for this young woman, who was clearly trying and determined to get back on her feet financially.

During our meeting with Robin, she stated that she received a shut-off notice for her electricity, and owes too much money to be able to get on a budget plan. She also mentioned that her child’s father is not paying child support, and we immediately encouraged her to go to Family Court and request payment through the Support Collection Unit. She agreed to do so.

After exhausting most of her options, we were finally able to secure financial help with Robin’s electric and rent bills, and to assist in negotiations with her landlord to create a reasonable payment plan. Robin called us back to express her deep gratitude, and to share the news that she had been rehired at her job and was waiting to hear back about her possible second job. We will follow up with her on her mental health supports as well as making sure her child gets the services she needs.
Since 1987, Independent Living, Inc. has served as a common voice for persons with disabilities living in our community. A freestanding, locally controlled, nonprofit agency operated by people with disabilities, we offer a wide range of programs and services dedicated to ensuring universal access and opportunity in every aspect of community life.

Our efforts are directed to individuals of all ages having any disability, as well as to families, businesses, agencies, and municipalities. We are committed to the universal elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers, as well as assisting individuals with disabilities to successfully make the transition from system-dependency to independence. Over the past twenty-nine years, Independent Living, Inc. has touched the lives of literally thousands of people. Having a uniquely recipient-based perspective and approach to addressing disability issues, we have consistently exemplified cost-effective ways of improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

During the past year, our Center provided a diversity of important resources to residents of our community. We assisted thousands of persons with disabilities, family members, educators, service providers, public officials and businesses. The impetus for all that we do derives from a philosophy that is no different today than it was twenty-nine years ago when Independent Living, Inc. was founded: we believe that the widespread poverty, segregation, and isolation of people with disabilities is unacceptable, should not be tolerated, and requires immediate change. We are dedicated to making positive, systemic changes through advocacy, education and legislation, and to providing full access, power, and self-determination for all people with disabilities. With an unwavering focus on integration, community living and assisting people to reach their greatest potential, we support a culture that encourages risk-taking, creativity, and innovation. To address broader public policy issues, we are committed and deliberate in speaking about the problems and obstacles faced by people with disabilities. We exist as an organization that on all levels abides by a living code of ethics which mandates respect, appreciation, honesty, integrity, empathy, trust, active involvement, and accountability.

We will work tirelessly toward reshaping the culture of our society into one that is truly inclusive of all its citizens.
The Heritage Society was founded in 2010 by the Board of Directors to sustain the well-being and growth of the Independent Living System. It is a planned giving program designed to ensure that the services and resources that the Independent Living System provides remain available and grow to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their families – today, tomorrow, and for generations to come. Its goals are:

- To provide seed money for programs and services that are not presently available
- To supplement available funding that is restricted or inadequate to meet program needs
- To provide matching funds when required for grant opportunities
- To build an endowment fund to generate operating revenues
- To provide scholarships and support for individuals with disabilities that would otherwise be unavailable
- To reduce annual fundraising costs and more effectively utilize development resources

To become a member or for more information, contact our Development Office at (845) 565-1162 x202.