



support valued
community differentiation
accommodations acceptance
diversity
ability inclusion



Empowering people with vision loss to live, learn, and work independently.

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc.
174 Court Street
Binghamton, NY 13901
607-724-2428 www.avreus.org

Serving Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Tompkins, and Schuyler

CORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Cortland Housing Authority has 380 high quality apartments available in its senior/disabled and family developments throughout Cortland County. A single person could earn up to \$38,400; and a family of five up to \$59,200 and still qualify to live in one of our apartments.



We have senior/disabled **efficiency and one bedroom** apartments located in the City of Cortland. We also have **one bedroom** senior/disabled units in Homer, McGraw, Marathon, Truxton and Cincinnatus.

Our large family apartments (3, 4 and 5 bedrooms) are located in the City of Cortland. We also **two and three bedroom** family apartments scattered throughout the county in Homer, Truxton, McGraw, Cincinnatus and the City of Cortland.

There are short waiting lists for apartments in most of our developments.



Call 607-753-1771 today for an application

The Future is Accessible!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045



PRESORTED STANDARD MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CORTLAND, NY
PERMIT NO. 49

*The Future is
Accessible
for All People
with Disabilities*

Access To Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Fall 2018 NUMBER LVIII

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE!

As we wrap up our 20th anniversary year, we take a look back at our history, share what is present and prepare for the work ahead. Our focus remains to be the people we strive to help. People with disabilities take pride in attaining independence just as anyone else. Access takes pride in providing the necessary resources to reach this goal. All of which, could not be possible without the support of the local community. This holiday season, we say **THANK YOU** to those who support our mission to help people with disabilities today and who have supported us throughout the past 20 years!



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Making the Future Accessible	2
Spotlight on Founder of Access	3
Empowering Our Workforce	4
Many Smiles for Disability Mentoring Day/Vita	5
Reflections on Access Featuring Mary Ewing.....	6
The Value of Independence	7
December Red Carpet Event/Gratitude Event	8
The Impact of Giving	9
Medicare Fall Open Enrollment/Social Security 2019	10
20th Anniversary Night to Shine Red Carpet Gala Flyer	Insert
2019 Sponsorship Opportunities Form	Insert

QUARTERLY QUOTE:

“The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create.”

We are Better Together – Making the Future Accessible

By: Aaron Baier, Executive Director



Greetings friends! As new Executive Director for Access To Independence, I want to take a moment to introduce myself and talk about my hopes and dreams for the Agency and for our community. We are closing out 2018 with a renewed appreciation for our history and with a reinvigorated spirit for the future. I am excited to have the opportunity to lead Access toward a future that is accessible for all people with disabilities!

I am an eternal optimist. I see the best in people and try to inspire and motivate the best from people. I see challenges as opportunities. I see collaboration and compromise as a necessary part of positive change. Most of all, I see that any problem can have a solution when we work together to find it.

For the past 12 years, I helped to bring new programs to the people we serve and helped to make our community more accessible and inclusive. I mentored local youth and helped them find a path to independence. I coached people on interview and job skills. I advocated for people who needed extra support with housing and transportation. Now, I am inspired by our Board, staff, volunteers and allies to continue our important work.

Our mission remains strong – we empower people with disabilities to lead independent lives in their community and strive to open doors to full participation and access for all. To do this, we will overcome the barriers that continue to impede full inclusion. Our three priorities are: 1) access to meaningful employment opportunities; 2) access to housing and resources to ensure that housing is accessible; and 3) access to transportation to and from the places we need to go. By improving our situation in these three areas, we will be able to have a greater impact on other issues, such as social recreation, health care, education, and human and civil rights.

The thing to realize about these issues is that they are BIG! They are complicated challenges that cannot be addressed overnight. We have worked on these issues for years. To improve employment, housing and transportation, we will work together with our natural allies and with new community partners. Together, we can have a greater collective impact if we focus our efforts and programming on a common idea. The idea that people with disabilities deserve, as do all people, equal access to employment, housing and transportation. Let us strive to think about the needs of all people and not only the needs of the majority.

Access To Independence will focus on continuing its education and advocacy for people with disabilities. However, we will improve how we listen to our community. We will make a greater effort to work together with existing and new partners. The barriers that we want to break down are challenging, but I know that we have a strong, connected and motivated community. I know that we are Better Together!

I want to thank our dedicated Board, staff, volunteers, donors and community partners for all of their hard work and continued support. I also invite anyone and everyone who wants to make a difference to join one of our local coalitions, to advocate, to vote and to participate in this collective impact. I invite YOU because we need YOU to make the future accessible for people with disabilities and because we are better together.



North Main Counseling
 GREGORY MOSS, LCSW/R
 Individual Counseling for Adults
 84 NORTH MAIN STREET
 CORTLAND, NY 13045
 (607)545-4532
 www.northmain-counseling.com
 gmoss@northmain-counseling.com

Got rent?
 The Cortland Housing Authority has a rental assistance program that may be able to help you!!
The Section 8 Housing Program helps qualified people meet their monthly rent bills by paying a portion of their rent directly to their landlord.
 Interested persons may pick up applications at the Housing Authority offices located at
 42 Church Street or 51 Port Watson Street
 Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
 OR
 Call 607-753-9364 or 607-753-1771 to request to have an application sent by mail

MOSCATO & ASSOCIATES, INC.
 Insurance | Employee Benefits
 Edward C. Moscato
 LUTCF, CLTC
 PRESIDENT
 South Hill Business Campus
 950 Danby Rd., Suite 102
 Ithaca, NY 14850
 (t) 607.216.1450
 (f) 607.216.1452
 (e) ed@moscatoassociates.com
 (w) www.moscatoassociates.com

seven valleys HEALTH COALITION
CORTLAND 2-1-1
 Get Connected. Get Answers.
 Finger Lakes Region, New York
WAY2 GO
 CORTLAND
NATIONAL Diabetes PREVENTION PROGRAM
 a program of Seven Valleys Health Coalition
 working for a healthy community

Taskforce To Increase Disability Employment
Next Meeting :
January 28, 2019
10:00 - 11:00 am
All meetings are held at:
Access To Independence
26 North Main Street,
Cortland, NY
For more information,
call 607-753-7363,
or email:
randerson@aticortland.org.

Think of Us For...
 Corporate Business meetings and Presentations
 Graduations • Birthdays • Showers • Weddings
 Anniversaries • reunions or any other large
 Gathering of Friends, Family,
 Clients & Co-Workers
PORT WATSON MINI-CONFERENCE CENTER
 DOUGLAS E. & MARIAN K. WITHEY - OWNERS/OPERATORS
 PHONE: 607-753-1477 FAX: 607-753-1479
 CELL: 607-345-0016 or 607-345-9918 • Email: w2oig@verizon.net
 131 Port Watson Street • Cortland, NY 13045

WISHING WELLNESS CENTER
 24 Church Street Cortland, NY 13045
 (607) 423-7472
 Every single day,
 ordinary people accomplish
 extraordinary things.

K&H Motor Sports
 Makin' Life Fun!
 1813 Little York Crossing Rd
 PO Box 505
 Little York, NY 13087
Lance Price
 Parts & Accessories
 1-800-628-1215 607-749-2821 Fax: 607-749-7895
 www.knhmotorsports.com

Cortland County Area Agency on Aging
 Your one stop connection to senior services
 60 Central Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045
 607-753-5060 • Fax: 607-758-5528
 www.cortland-co.org/ofa
 Email: ccaaa@cortland.org
Offering Assistance in the following areas:
 Medicare & Health Insurance • Long Term Care Services
 Caregivers Support • Home Energy Programs
 Volunteer Opportunities • Home Delivered Meals
 Senior Centers & Other Programs

HCR Home Care
 Local Health Professionals Delivering Innovative Home Care for 40 Years
AWARD-WINNING SERVICES
 Nursing
 Physical Therapy
 Occupational Therapy
 Speech Therapy
 Medical Social Work
 Home Health Aides
 Nutrition Services
 800-270-4904 | HCRhealth.com | f i t v

Medicare Fall Open Enrollment

By: Sue Lewis, Independent Living Coordinator



Believe it or not, Fall is here and it's time to check your Medicare coverage again. The enrollment period runs from now through December 7. This is the time to look at your Medicare coverage and make sure it is the right fit for you. If you decide to change any of your coverage, the change will take effect on January 1, 2019.

You have the option of using regular Medicare (red, white and blue card) with a Medicare Part D plan to cover your prescriptions or a Medicare Advantage Plan. The Medicare Advantage Plans may have their own Part D plan that you will have to accept if you go with their plan.

If you are looking for a Medicare Advantage Plan, here are some questions you can ask before deciding:

How much are the premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance/copays?

What is the annual maximum out-of-pocket costs for the plan?

What service area does this plan cover?

Are my doctors and hospitals in the plan's network?

What are the rules I have to follow to access health care services and my drugs?

Does the plan cover additional health care benefits that are not covered by Original Medicare?

How will this plan affect any additional coverage I may have?

When you are choosing a Part D prescription drug plan, you should ask these questions:

Does the plan cover all the medications I take?

Does the plan have restrictions on my drugs?

How much are the monthly premiums?

How much are my copays for each drug I take?

Is my pharmacy in the plan's preferred network?

Can I fill my prescriptions by mail order?

If I have retiree coverage, will the Medicare drug plan work with it?

If you are unsure of what plans you need, contact me at 607-753-7363 for more information. You can also call and make an appointment with the Benefit Specialists at Cortland County Area Agency on Aging at 607-753-5060.

Social Security Beneficiaries Will See Increase in 2019

The Social Security Administration just announced that the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2019 will be 2.8%. For example, if you are receiving \$1200 in SSDI payments per month now, your benefit will increase to \$1234 in January of 2019.

If you are single and receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) the full payment will be \$771 per month plus an \$87 supplement from New York State. Resource limits for SSI will stay the same for 2019 (\$2000 for a single person and \$3000 for a couple).

Social Security has also increased the amount you can receive in earned income and still receive SSDI. In 2018 you could earn up to \$1180 per month, and this will increase to \$1220 per month in 2019 for non-blind recipients. For SSDI recipients who are blind, the limit increased from \$1970 to \$2040 without penalty.

If you have any questions on how the 2019 COLA will affect your benefit for 2019, call 607-753-7363.

Cortland County Housing Consortium

Next Meeting :

**February 26, 2019
8:00 - 10:00 am**

All meetings are held at:

**Access to Independence
26 North Main Street
Cortland, NY**

**For more information,
call 607-753-7363
or email: abaier@aticortland.org.**

Spotlight on Founder of Access To Independence

By: Rachel Anderson, Community Education Coordinator

On a warm day in the 1980s, a young woman sat outdoors at a picnic table where her dreams and visions sprung forth like butterflies. She dreams of the American promises of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Yet, this talented and highly educated young woman was unable to find a job. In true American entrepreneurial spirit, she decided to create a job. Create one she did. Not only for herself, but also for others.

That young woman was Fran Pizzola. Her dreams and visions on that warm spring day would become Access To Independence. While ATI is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, this anniversary marks 20 years of being incorporated as one of New York State's Independent Living Centers (ILCs). The history of ATI actually goes back 32 years, when it started as a grassroots organization. It started with one woman's dream.

Fran says that her vision, along with the efforts of the Cortland County Accessibility Committee, in 1986 was for Cortland to be more accessible for people with disabilities. The new tagline ATI unveiled in 2018 for the anniversary celebration – "The future is accessible for all people with disabilities" – really brings the agency "full circle." Fran says that it took her 14 years of grassroots volunteer advocacy to get funding for Access To Independence to become a reality and to have a paid staff person.

When Access to Independence incorporated in 1998, Fran Pizzola was appointed as the agency's first Executive Director. It was a volunteer position that paid nothing in monetary remuneration until 2001. Now in 2018, Access has nine paid staff.

When Fran was asked what the most significant positive change she has seen in the Cortland community in the past 20 years, she attributes it to the dedication of ATI staff. "The position Access holds in the community as a place people come because they know we are going to direct them where they need to be. If we don't know it, we will find you help." Fran is very happy and proud to say that she had an influence and played such an integral part in ATI.

Fran's vision for the next 20-year chapter for ATI has not changed since those days back in the 1980s at a sunny picnic table. "I want Access to continue to fight for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Injustice continues in society, people still stuck in nursing homes, limited transportation options, a lack of accessible housing, and employment disparity. We need to provide opportunities to people with disabilities, to help them get out of the poverty level."

Fran stays true to her passionate roots in advocacy encouraging ATI to continue its efforts in Albany and Washington to change the system so that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. Fran explains, "Access itself is a systems change. We started by writing letters to Albany and Washington to be included. It was a fight to get other [Independent Living] Centers to accept us. The Cortland County Legislature gave us office space to begin with and a letter of support."

Fran continues that it is through the advocacy efforts such as "Action Alerts," letter writing and legislative visits which are critical both to our local center here in Cortland and to the advocacy network across the country. Two key functions that began the grassroots efforts and brought awareness to the community are education and advocacy. Those roles ring true today and will continue to carry Access into the future.



Above: Fran Pizzola with Rachel Anderson

 **CORTLAND EYE CENTER**
Jacqueline Ferguson, MD
Michele Baro, OD
Shelly Skjolaas, OD
Bridget Frio, OD

1160 Tompkins Street Tel 607-753-7528
Cortland, NY 13045 FAX 607-756-8163
www.cortlandeyecenter.com

 **Cortland Regional
MEDICAL CENTER**

 **R.H. OSBORNE'S**
WORLD OF FLOOR COVERINGS
4073 West Road (Rte. 281) - Cortland NY 13045
607-753-9504 - Fax 607-753-3830
www.osbornesflooring.com

CERTIFIED EMPLOYEE INSTALLERS

Hours: M,T,W 8:00 am - 5:30 pm
Thursday 8:00 am - 7:00 pm
Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Closed Sunday

COMPLETE LINE OF
CARPET - WOOD - CERAMIC TILE - VINYL - LAMINATE
ORECK DEALER SALES & SERVICE

Empowering Our Workforce

By: Stacey Sholar, Public Relations & Fundraising Coordinator



On October 2, at the Center for the Arts, Access To Independence in partnership with the Taskforce to Increase Disability Employment (TIDE) presented its first Employment Forum. The forum titled "Employment in Cortland County: Empowering Our Workforce" shared stories of challenges and successes for people with disabilities in the workforce. Guest speakers included Connie Mantey from Employment Connection, Jessica Patterson from Monroe Wheelchair and John Robinson from Our Ability. Each speaker shared compelling stories in the workplace as a person with a disability.

Connie Mantey asked the audience "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Connie is living her dream job and gets a tremendous satisfaction in helping someone else do the same. It was not always that way. Connie experienced mobility issues with her arm and was not able to perform the same duties at her job anymore. She worked with a job coach at Employment Connection to learn new skills and now works for them.

Director of Business and Marketing at Monroe Wheelchair, Jessica Patterson, expressed her life changed when she was in a car accident. The result was paraplegia. Jess faced years of rehab and questions of what she would do with her life. She celebrates her abilities and utilizes her gifts. She started out as a cashier at Price Chopper during her college years. They made accommodations with a stool so she could be at the height level needed to ring out customers. This job offered a sense of pride and independence. Jess ventured out to other jobs. From a top performing customer relations person to insurance sales, Jess stayed determined to find her passion. Jess's proudest endeavor was holding the title of Ms. Wheelchair America which brought her to her current employment. As she traveled for pageants, she needed sponsors. Jess reached out to Monroe Wheelchair. In turn, she did video presentations for their business. Her positive spirit is undeniable and Monroe offered her the marketing position. It was not easy but she offered, "Every scar has made me who I am." She encouraged the audience listening to keep going until you find what fits for you. She added how important it is for employers to provide accommodations.



Above: Speakers, Jess Patterson, John Robinson

When keynote John Robinson, CEO of Our Ability, which provides inclusive workforce and employment consulting, workshops and seminars on disability began his presentation, the audience was hooked. John commanded the room with a strong, honest voice. John is 3'9" tall. He does not have hands. His arms stop at his elbows. His lower legs are attached to his hips without knees. John began by applauding the first two speakers. John addressed the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" John's dream was to run a TV station. He always wanted to be in the media world and headed to Syracuse University. After college, the only offer he received was for a sales position with 100 percent commis-

sion only pay at a local TV station in Syracuse. He asked the audience, "Do you think I took it?" He said yes, I did. "Why?" he said because it was an opportunity. It was an opportunity he didn't have from anywhere else. John shared the biggest barrier people with disabilities face in employment is the word No. John faced obstacles. He rose to be the top producer in sales through tenacity and talent. After 20 years in corporate America, he decided to start his own company to help people with disabilities have opportunities to succeed in employment. John speaks to business leaders, schools, advocacy groups, state leaders and more.

For Connie, Jess and John, it is not always easy but through their inspirational stories, they taught us to not give up and to challenge yourself to be your best.



Above: Connie Mantey

The Impact of Giving

By Stacey Sholar, Public Relations & Fundraising Coordinator

For Access To Independence, the twentieth anniversary year is coming to a close. We look forward to the work ahead for 2019. The past prepares us for the future. Our focus remains to be the needs of the people we serve. People with disabilities take pride in attaining independence in their life choices, just as anyone. Access takes pride in being a vehicle to provide the necessary resources to help someone reach this goal. All of which, could not be possible without the support of the local community. This holiday season, we say thank you to those who support our mission to empower people with disabilities today and who have supported us throughout the past 20 years!

As a donor, you make a difference in the lives of others right here in our community. Access is dedicated to preserving our traditions and embracing initiatives that enable people with disabilities to achieve their dreams. Facts don't inspire, people do. Inspiration is the key to taking action. Recently, I met with a donor who asked me, what is a typical day like at Access? It's a great question because a great deal happens at Access. A typical day is never typical because independence is a process that can take months and even years. One day, "Mike" may stop in and is looking for assistance in getting his resume together and uses our computer lab before meeting with our community education coordinator to set up a job shadowing opportunity. Another day, "Janet's" family stops in to sign out a wheelchair and shower bench after her surgery because insurance does not cover it. On a Thursday, "Glen" calls to find out how he can get an accessible ramp because of an unexpected accident that does not allow him to climb stairs anymore. Other times, we are working with someone age 46 confined to a nursing home because of a lack of home health aide workers, lack of family support, or not knowing there are other options. We strive to provide quality services and these examples are just a tiny glimpse of the stories that make an impact.

We are lucky to have a passionate board, volunteers and staff who work tirelessly to provide information and support to help others. Ultimately, I think there is no real way to adequately communicate how crucial the work is that staff do, because it's so important. They deliver a message of hope in the journey of other's lives every day. Without compassion or the desire to support others, our agency would not be what it is today just as it is not possible without the contributions from our community.

Success is not final and as we embark on the 2019 *Make the Future Accessible* campaign, we have more work to be done. As fortunate as we are to have an independent living center in a rural community, it is not about us. It is about the people.

We are working to build a community where the future is accessible for all people with disabilities and I feel privileged to be part of this meaningful work. Access To Independence needs your encouragement and support to continue these efforts. We work hard to develop a culture where donors know this is an investment in your community.

I hope you will consider a donation to Access To Independence this giving season. Help us to continue to transform lives with honesty, integrity and respect.

We are deeply grateful to our loyal donors for their generosity!

MAKING A
WORLD OF
DIFFERENCE
LOCALLY

Dedication to Local Businesses and the Community
KIK Custom Products turns to local vendors for packaging materials
and to its people to manufacture our high quality products.

www.kikcorp.com

KIK
CUSTOM PRODUCTS


BUILDER'S BEST

Do it center

3798 Luker Road, Cortland, NY 13045

607-756-7871

buildersbestny.com

December Red Carpet Event

Access To Independence is excited to host it's annual fundraising event at the Cortland Repertory Theatre on Saturday, December 8th from 5:00 to 8:00 pm. This year's theme is in celebration of our 20 years and named "A Night to Shine" Red Carpet Gala.

We will host staff, volunteers, Board Members, sponsors and community supporters to an evening of amazing food from M & D Deli, cash bar, door prizes, raffles, silent auction and a wine pull. A wine pull is a "drawing" for wine. Attendees pay \$20 for a wrapped bottle of wine. They will pull a numbered cork to see which one they win. Some even have an extra prize attached!

New to the event this year is a live DJ. CNY DJ will be spinning tunes and getting people to groove to the music. In addition to such a fun evening, the Gala served as a great way to bring donors and longtime supporters together for a great cause. All proceeds benefit resources and advocacy efforts for people with disabilities.

The event costs \$25 to attend and includes a drink and raffle ticket. You can purchase tickets online at aticortland.org/events/gala-celebration or stop into our office at 26 North Main Street. Dress is semi-formal.

We look forward to an evening of fun and celebration to raise money for programs and resources for people with disabilities.

GET YOUR DECEMBER 8, 2018 RED CARPET EVENT TICKETS TODAY!



Gratitude the Attitude

Access To Independence held its annual "Gratitude the Attitude" social event on Thursday, November 15. The craft project this year was kindness rocks. We painted different designs on rocks to make each one unique. Some folks kept their rocks to brighten their day, and some folks shared their rocks with other people to cheer up someone else. For those that hide their rocks in the community, the goal is to bring a smile to someone's day by finding something beautiful in an unexpected place.

In addition to kindness rocks, folks at the Gratitude the Attitude event also listened to music, ate pizza and played games. The next social event at Access To Independence will be the Cabin Fever event this winter. Come join the fun!

Many Smiles for Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) 2018!

Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) was held on Wednesday, October 17, 2018. DMD is a national initiative that is on the third Wednesday of October each year. This year, Access To Independence was very fortunate to have received a grant from the National Grid Foundation to fund all of DMD as well as the Youth Transition Event at OCM BOCES as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

Thirty students ages 14-18 from three different school districts spent the day shadowing local business professionals at their jobs. There were nineteen job sites across Cortland County. Each student received a certificate for their participation that they were able to use to fill a work readiness requirement for high school graduation.

The morning started with a hearty breakfast at the Cortland Elks Lodge. Elijah Fagan-Solis of Youth Power! shared his personal story with the students inspiring them to reach for their goals and to use your mentors to help you along the way. Youth Power! is a network of young people in New York State who mentor each other based on lived experience with disability, LGBTQ, or being part of a system such as foster care or juvenile justice.

The Cortland Elks Lodge provided each student with a bag lunch to take with them to their worksite so that they could maximize the amount of time spent at each business. Students spent an average of two hours with employers learning more about what they do.

Job shadows, internships, and volunteer connections are services offered year round to both youth and adults at Access To Independence.



Above: Students job shadowing at area businesses.

VITA Will Be Offering Free Tax Preparation in 2019

The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program will be doing taxes again this year for people who qualify. The program will complete your income tax return at no cost to you. If you made \$54,000 or less in 2018 you may qualify for this free service. If you have VITA e-file your taxes and you use direct deposit to receive your tax return, you usually get your refund within 10 – 14 days.

Every VITA volunteer completes training with the IRS to be able to provide the service. The VITA program will be doing taxes at various sites throughout the county from January until April. Access to Independence is proud to be a host location for the program.

There will be more information about locations and contact information direct from the VITA volunteers in the near future.



**Family
Counseling
Services**

Experienced professional staff offering comprehensive private counseling services

- Mental Health Clinic
- Family & Youth Counseling
- Prevention Services
- Alcohol & Substance Abuse Treatment
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Integrated Primary Care Services

Same Day Access!
Simply walk in to
our new clinic at
165 Main Street

165 Main Street, Suite A
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 753-0234

DON'T BE FOOLED
We will beat any written tire quote from any chain box store in the Cortland area.

OUR EVERYDAY PRICE BEATS ALL OTHERS!

Lowest Prices Guaranteed – Get Your FREE Quote Today!

GOODYEAR BRIDGESTONE
Continental Firestone

VOTED #1 People's Choice 2017 "BEST OF THE BEST" OUTSTANDING AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

O'SHEA TIRE & Service Center 270 TOMPKINS ST. CORTLAND (607) 753-3329
www.osheatire.com

Family owned and operated since 1945
Fast Friendly Service • Best Quality Products at the Lowest Prices!!!
MON-FRI 8:00am-5:00pm SAT 7:30am-12:00pm

PRIME PAYROLL RELIEF
607-299-4191

ALWAYS CLASSIC X101
P. O. Box 386 - 12 S. Main Street
Homer, NY 13077

Cortland County Chamber of Commerce
Vision: To be the premier business resource in Cortland County and beyond

37 Church Street Cortland, NY 13045
www.CortlandAreaChamber.com

Ph (607) 756-2814
Fax (607) 756-4698
info@CortlandAreaChamber.com

Reflections on Access – 20 Years Later

Aaron Baier, Executive Director Interviews Mary Ewing



Above: Mary Ewing

Access To Independence has a rich history. The past 20 years were full of challenges to overcome and achievements as we improved accessibility for people with disabilities. I took some time to sit down with Mary E. Ewing, who served as Executive Director from 2003 – 2014, to reflect on the Agency's 20 years of service to the Cortland community.

Aaron: When you think about the last 20 years, what stands out in your mind?

Mary: I think about our beginnings with Fran Pizzola and the founding Board of Directors. We were able to raise the funding necessary from local contributors to get our first major program up and running. That was the SHAPE (Sherriff's Handicapped Accessible Parking Enforcement) program. That brought a lot of volunteers and allies to support our mission.

Aaron: What were some challenges you and ATI faced back in the early days?

Mary: Funding was always an ongoing challenge. We pursued several grants and were successful in many of them. But, it was a never ending struggle to find money to support our existing programs and also add new programs that were needed to support people with disabilities. We also continually worked to educate elected officials and advocate for the needs of people with disabilities.

Aaron: Yes, advocacy is a major part of what ATI does every day! What impact have we had over the past 20 years?

Mary: Besides the SHAPE program, we improved sidewalk accessibility in the City of Cortland. We worked to have audible crosswalk signals installed and I continue to see them in new locations all over the City. We also worked with our allies on the state level, such as NYAIL and NYSILC, which allowed us to bring people with disabilities from Cortland County to meet with their representatives in Albany. This level of advocacy brought new voting machines, voter education, youth transition work readiness, and housing services into Cortland, which we were happy to provide.

Aaron: What contributed to the success of ATI's various programs and services?

Mary: All of the people who believed in our mission. People with disabilities have needs and deserve to be treated equally and have their needs met. So, we were able to find funding to support the programs and services people used every day, and we found community partners to assist us. Partnerships were and are very important to successful programs.

Aaron: Thank you, Mary, for taking the time to chat about our history. Any final thoughts?

Mary: Employment and education are so important. These are areas I wish I could have done more with. People with disabilities need to have opportunities for competitive employment and need appropriate education to get them there. I believe this is the key to reaching our vision!

The Value of Independence

By Todd Simmons, Transition Specialist

I met Christine when I was the Transition Specialist for Tompkins County, and she was a viable candidate for moving back into the community. I've always enjoyed helping folks get out of the nursing home and getting their independence back. Christine had quite a few hurdles that needed to be addressed before she could leave. I rolled up my sleeves and got to work.



She didn't have an income at the moment and lacked 'informal supports', a term that describes having family and/or friends to help you out in a pinch. There was documentation that needed to be collected, and all of this proved to be quite the challenge. All the while Christine kept a positive attitude, even when there were moments that seemed like she was not ever going to leave the nursing home. I always admired that about her.

As things progressed she ended up with a couple of appointments for an apartment. I would use the ATI van to transport her to and from these appointments. A 45-minute drive each way we would talk about a variety of different things. Each of these days were sunny and Christine was grateful to be out for a little bit. I remember her singing some of the songs on the radio.

Things had finally lined up for Christine, and it was moving day. I grabbed the ATI van and headed down to pick her up. She already had her things packed, so I put everything in the van and away we went. As we pulled out of the parking lot I turned to her and said 'Today is the first day of a new chapter in your life'.

The next six weeks or so we worked together getting her services in place. There were always hurdles and challenges in doing this and sometimes Christine would get stressed, but then she would just say that it's '...all going to work out'. After she was all set with her services I didn't see her as much, but I would run into her when I would do home visits at her building.

Over the summer she had reconnected with her daughter and was watching her grandson while she worked. I'd never seen her so happy! I would run into her about five times a month, and she would have a grin from ear to ear while her grandson was running around. I would always stop for a minute and see how things were going, and there was a big difference in her mood from when I first met her in the nursing home. Her 'can do' attitude had paid off, she regained her independence and happiness.

Just last week I got the news that she had passed away at home after a brief health issue. It always bothers me when we lose someone we are helping, and this really came as a shock to all of us who knew her. The one comfort that I have is that the last months of her life were filled with happiness and joy. That is the reason why I love working at Access to Independence. That is the reason why I wake up every morning, excited to go to work.

If you're in a nursing home or know someone who is, and are interested in transitioning back into the community, please do not hesitate to give us a call at 607-753-7363.



Above: Christine, all smiles, moving in day.

GENERAL DENTISTRY
www.drclarklowell.com
3773 Luker Rd., Cortland 607.756.8821
We have incorporated full ADA compliance with safety extras in our new dental office on Luker Rd.
Your wheelchair becomes the dental chair!
*Snowmelt sidewalk *Spacious 12'x12' operator
*5 ft wide hallways *Mobile delivery units

Port, Kashdin & McSherry
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
3535 WEST ROAD • CORTLAND, NEW YORK 13045
Phone: 607-756-5681 • Fax: 607-756-8320
Email: portkash@twcny.rr.com

1948 - 2018
70 Years of Building a World Where
All People Know They Belong
Racker
Supporting People with Disabilities
Visit www.Racker.org to learn more!