

THE OPEN DOOR

PROVIDING QUALITY CARE TO DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGH COMMUNITY LIVING

HOME, BUT NOT ALONE

Access to community living for people with developmental disabilities begins with New York State OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities.) The agency supports people with developmental disabilities to live as independently in the community as possible by helping with housing costs.

This help comes in the form of a housing subsidy, which is based on a formula that takes into account the county the person lives in, the number of people who will be living in the home, the number of bedrooms in the home and some other specifics. The individual is expected to contribute a percent-



Emily H. is happy to call Seth Canyon her home.

age of his/her income towards housing costs.

"All individuals have to be registered with OPWDD before we can evaluate and accept them at CLC," says

Shelley Pirre, CLC Residential Office Manager. "So even if someone is referred to us directly, their first step is to contact OPWDD and register with the agency."

Currently, 140 individuals call CLC home. They reside in houses, townhouses and apartments mostly in Westchester County. Some have one roommate while others share a house or apartment with several people. Some individuals need supportive



The Residential Department handles the evaluation, matching and placement of CLC individuals transitioning to their new homes. From left are Allison McKay, Joanna Raynor, Marlena Romanowska and Shelley Pirre.

care, while others require supervised care.

Here's how they arrive at CLC: When CLC has a residential opening, we correspond with OPWDD, providing details about our vacancy. We provide a framework of what we can offer and general info about the type of individual who may be a good candidate. We include age range, services needed, general information, etc.

The next step is OPWDD sends CLC a CRO (Certified Residential Opportunity) packet about the potential new individual, which contains myriad information about the candidate.

This CRO packet is first reviewed by Shelley Pirre (Shelley P.). She then shares it with CLC's placement team, which includes Allison McKay, Senior

Director, Joanna Raynor, Director, and Marlena, Romanowski, Director. This team of three perform their assessments and make a collective determination on whether to proceed.

"Their CRO packet review is critical in determining if the individual would be a good match with a CLC opening," says Shelley P. "The team considers many factors during its evaluation. They look carefully at psychological evaluations, behaviors, school documents and what kinds of support is needed, such as supportive or supervised care." The clinical team of Divine Williams and Val Gaglione also review the CRO packet and weigh in.

CLC will become home for this individual and it is important that the placement will be a good fit all around and that this person will be happy. If everyone at CLC agrees this could be

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New Compliance Director Joins CLC Team

Annette Maksoud

Ondrea Long joined CLC in February 2024 as Compliance Director, where she will oversee the Compliance Department and assist the Quality Assurance Department with maintaining regulatory compliance. She comes to CLC with 10 years of experience and is looking forward to assisting CLC with compliance and keeping up-to-date with being New York State compliant.

Ondrea comments, "Everyone has been very welcoming and very helpful with finding what I need. I am looking forward to familiarizing myself with all the various affiliates and the people receiving supports at each of the programs."

Ondrea has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics, Economics and Law from SUNY College in Old Westbury. She started out as a Job Coach and then became a Medicaid Service Coordinator, which then led her to becoming a Care Manager for a brief period during her transition from Medicaid Service Coordination to Care Management. Lastly, went into Quality Assurance as a Quality Assurance Analyst/ Investigator.

Ondrea's career path includes Quality Resource Manager for two years at YAI in Manhattan. Prior to that, she was an Incident Manager at ARC Westchester in Hawthorne.



Ondrea Long

eNews Updates

We Search the Web to Bring You the Latest News

Proposed Rule Would Expand Rights Of Airline Passengers With Disabilities

Airlines could soon be held to a new standard in assisting travelers with disabilities.

A rule proposed in March 2024 by the U.S. Department of Transportation would mandate better training for airline staff and contractors who assist people with disabilities and those who handle wheelchairs. In addition, it paves the way for greater penalties for airlines and details steps that they must take in the event that a wheelchair or another assistive device is mishandled.

"There are millions of Americans with disabilities who do not travel by plane because of inadequate airline practices and inadequate government regulation, but now we are setting out to change that," said Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

"This new rule would change the way airlines operate to ensure that travelers using wheelchairs can travel safely and with dignity."

The proposal would make it an automatic violation of the Air Carrier Access Act if airlines damage or delay the return of a wheelchair or another assistive device, which would allow the Transportation Department to more easily impose penalties.

The rule includes new standards for on-board wheelchairs and a requirement that passengers are notified when their personal wheelchair is loaded or unloaded from an airplane's cargo compartment. If a person's wheelchair does not fit on the plane, they would need to be immediately notified.

"When somebody cannot travel because somebody else has decided that it's too hard to accommodate them, the world shrinks. And importantly, it shrinks for that would-be traveler and it shrinks for everyone else, everyone who would benefit from having that traveler with them whether it is for a family gathering or whether it is for a board meeting," Buttigieg said at a White House gathering touting the proposal. "We know that we can do better."

Sourced from: *The Disability Scoop*

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

In the movie, *Bruce Almighty*, Jim Carey plays Bruce Nolan, and receives all the power in the world to do what he wants, whenever he wants. He can even change the moon's orbit to raise the tides. But that is not the hand we are dealt.

I recently had the opportunity to participate in one of those lunchtime gatherings that covers every topic from world peace to global disasters. It was easy to find problems, but solutions were far more elusive.

At some point, the discussion turned 180 degrees and focused not on problems, but solutions. How could things be identified, improved and corrected? The leading issue was a resounding call for more program money. The problem here is that funding is finite and oftentimes can't be sustained.

There will always be a greater need than available resources. So, we need to find better ways to manage what we have.

One of the possibilities of getting more out of what we have is through compassionate leadership. Understanding our dedicated employees and inspiring them

to not only come to work, but to *love* coming to work.

What is this magical elixir that will provide such a result? It's kindness amongst our fellow daytime and nighttime workers; our second family. A two way street of respect for all employees and the tasks we endeavor to accomplish every day. Not always easy.

Per Maya Angelou, "It takes courage to be kind." It sure does.

In *Evan Almighty*, God tasks Evan to build an ark to save the world. But Evan is very, very doubtful.

God then asks Bruce, "Want to know how to change the world? Simple, one random act of kindness at a time."

So as we move mountains every day for our clients, let us all remember that it's the little interactions that also really count. Not as an order, but as mutual appreciation for our efforts.

One doesn't have to be Bruce Almighty to have a huge impact. Because, in the words of Philosopher



Lucius Annaeus Seneca, "Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness."

Seneca died in 65 AD, so this concept has been around a while. Let's try it.

THE END

Be well!

John Porcella

THE OPEN DOOR

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Editor: Deb Descloux swissx@optonline.net

Editorial Assistant/Reporter: Irene Quill iquill@clcgroup.org

Lead Reporter: Annette Maksoud amaksoud@clcgroup.org

Columnist: Jack Mungovan

Special thanks & photo credit:

Annette Maksoud, Sarah Fiske, Denyele Urciuoli, Jack Mungovan, Irene Quill, Shernette Carter, Sarah Fiske, Shelley Pirre, Sue Ferro, Vickie Wolf, Devika Lallman

Got News?

Share It!

We welcome your CLC news!

Story suggestions, events and especially the name of someone you think would be a good interview candidate.

Email Deb, Annette or Irene (emails at left)

HAPPENING AT WINSLOW

Vickie Wolf



The group has been doing a lot of cooking (empanadas and guacamole, pizza, carrot cake cupcakes for Robin's birthday, etc.) with Linda, Pam and Fran. They even had their own Chopped Culinary Challenge, where some members chose random ingredients from the kitchen (balsamic vinegar, black beans and grape jelly!). The others had to help Linda develop a tasty recipe. The end result? Delicious brownies!

True to form, Winslow's day program clients have been keeping the place decorated according to holidays. January brought many different handmade snowflakes, Valentine's Day was full of hearts, but they really went all out to celebrate Leap Year! They made strings of leaping frogs and celebrated by having a game day.

Gigantic Jenga was the hit game with Connect Four, Dominos and Horse Jeopardy close behind. (Nicole D. and Julie J. are the rival Jeopardy champions). They just finished making a huge rainbow going into a pot of gold on the wall to add to the plethora of handmade St. Patrick's Day decorations all over the offices.

There is a lot of excitement about the new building that will be home base for their program. Most of the work is



going on inside now, so the suspense of what is happening behind closed doors is really building up! The appliances for the kitchen are currently being installed, and it will probably be one of their favorite rooms.

This season, the gang has gone on a number of field trips since it's been very cold outside. Rebecca, Linda, Dawn and Fran took them to play indoor black light mini-golf, to the movies, the Bear Mountain Zoo, the mall and (their favorite) bowling!

The clients have accepted Winslow's request to work with our donkeys and they are doing a super job! Eeyore needs to get exercise to help him lose weight, and Faith is learning how to walk on a lead line with a human partner so she can be used more for ground lessons.

This has been a great match! The donkeys love them all and the group is so committed to giving them the best care possible.

Stay tuned for more Winslow news in the next newsletter!

Cookin' Good with Jenny



We are pleased to present another cooking column by our own Jenny M.



Jenny's Spring Health Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch of Romaine lettuce chopped
- 1 green onion peeled and chopped
- 5 cherry tomatoes cut into halves
- 1 small apple cored and chopped
- 10 seedless grapes (green or red) cut into halves
- 1/2 cup of blackberries
- 2 celery stalks cut into small pieces
- 1 cucumber peeled and cubed

Preparation:

Wash and chop all ingredients.

Place everything into a large bowl. Toss gently.

Dressing: You can add dressing to the salad (to taste) and toss again, or you can serve a choice of dressings on the side. Suggestions: Balsamic Vinaigrette or a light French dressing.

A VALENTINE'S SOIREE AT YOLO

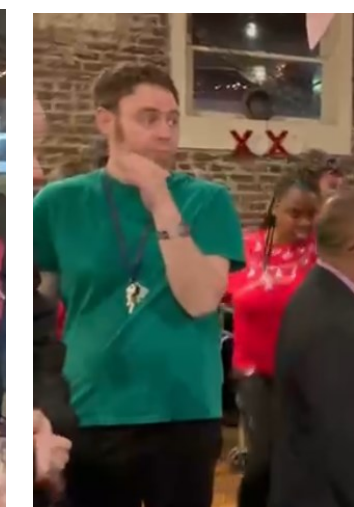


On a moonlit night in February, over 70 delighted dinner dance attendees gathered at The YOLO Lounge for a Valentine's Day party to beat all parties. The event was held at the CC Life restaurant in Pelham, where the Coffee Shop, Baking Studio, Barista program is located. It is the hub of the lower Westchester CC Life program.

"Having their own nightclub is amazing for this group, and there are plans for more soirees in the future," says Jack Mungovan. "Everyone agreed that the music was 'awesome,' the food 'delicious,' and the dancing 'electrifying!'"

Here is a note received by Jack from one of the individuals who was employed for the event (they received a stipend to serve; all wore red chef's coats while working.) "Jack, the party was a blast! All trays of sandwiches but one were gobbled up. Jillian (another consumer server) was right on the ball. She kept on serving and we killed it." Jack commented, "You can practically hear the excitement in her voice!"

Please excuse the blurry photos. Few wanted to stop dancing long enough for the photographer to get clear shots!



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS LIFE GROWS!

J. Mungovan



Angela P., Sean K., Mousy L., Jennifer S., Jennifer F. and Tom G visited SIFT, the hottest bakery in Mystic, CT. The group enjoyed chocolate and raspberry croissants, coffee and pecan sticky buns while dishing up laughs and cups of cheer.

Community Connection Life in concert with CLC has grown our Day Program from 26 attendees to a roster of 100, from which 60-75 attend daily. The referrals keep coming. Here’s how we did it.

We overhauled programming and presented it to schools for the various transition teams for individuals who are about to age out of school. One of these is The Westchester Consortium, a group of 12 or so teachers and advocates to help ease the transition

from high schools into Day Programming like ours.

We also brought in a top-notch PR consultant from London to promote our innovative programming. Once people learn of the engaging, gentle teaching, and therapeutic nature of our programming, they are eager to join.

Aside from our Baking Studio, Two Café’s, a Recording Studio, a Movie Studio, a Night Club; The YOLO Lounge, and incomparable outings like

fishing, tennis, and the driving range let alone bowling, movies, museums and Library Tai Chi.

Holiday Market stands where our members produce and sell items and profit from their sales. Accompany that with a thriving Instagram page, and voila, a nearly a 300% growth in attendance.

Yet I omit one incomprehensible experience to every other Day-Hab out there...The business trip! We’re on the Barista Business trip as I write this in early March. We have a retreat house in Noank, CT and another in Cotuit, MA. Outstanding homes where individuals take free trips for three days to discuss and experience the various aspects of our businesses.

Producing the items for our upcoming Market was the focus of our last business trip two weeks ago. Visiting coffee shops, bakeries, learning how to cater, and now we’re facilitating sports camps and friends retreats.

To make life fun, engaging, edifying, rich in experience, and then to laugh, smile, and make friends on the way and be the envy of every program out there is the best way to recruit!

The adage “If you build it they will come,” is true. We’re continuing to build and they’re continuing to come. Now that’s a CC Life!

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HOME, BUT NOT ALONE

a good fit, a Zoom call is initiated, which includes the individual and that person’s family, care manager, and members of CLC’s care team.

If this goes well, an in person visit at the residence is set up. Once the in-person visit goes well, the individual is invited to dinner and to meet the other residents. Again, if all are still positive, an overnight visit takes place.

At this point if everyone believes this is a good fit, CLC sets a date for moving in and notifies OPWDD that the individual has a new residence.

After the individual moves in, there usually is a settling in period. CLC staff work closely with the individual to solve any issues with the living situation. “I can’t stress enough how important it is that we find a good match for each individual,” notes Shelley P.

“We hope that they will make friends and find roommates that they get along with, people with like-minded interests.

Says Shelley P., “We aim to provide a place where they can feel comfortable, relaxed and have fun. A place they are happy to call home.”

THE CIRCUS CAME TO TOWN!

Shernette Carter

The Big Apple Circus? Yes, please! Staffers Shernette and Lawrence escorted an enthusiastic group of CLC circus fans to one of New York’s iconic shows, which is now called *The Big Apple Circus and Circus-Theater Roncalli*.

Highlanders Steven, Kate, Billy, James, Joseph and Chrystina started off the trip with a sing along in the van on the way to the show. They belted out all the show tunes they could think of!

Once at the big top, the show did not disappoint. The group’s favorite was the magician and his endless bag of tricks. Another of the highpoints were the clowns riding bicycles on the tight rope (don’t look down!) The acrobatic performances wowed everyone as we held our breath when balance was lost even a bit. A trip to Wendy’s for dinner topped off the day. All agreed it was a “big top terrific time!”



ROBERT’S 83RD BIRTHDAY

Devika Lallman

Everyone yelled “Happy Birthday to Robert!” The group then sang that well known birthday song we all know and love. That was the first surprise on this octogenarian’s special day.

On January 16th, surrounded by his brother and family, Robert celebrated his 83rd birthday. He was thrilled to have everyone there to mark this day.

For lunch, Robert and guests feasted on his favorite Italian foods. Another surprise came with swirls of blue and white icing...a huge cake. Of course, Robert got the first slice! Staff member and expert party planner Benniqua Coleman did it again, making sure everything was beautifully decorated for the event.

Everyone had a great time, especially *Robbie*. He smiled throughout his entire party!



CLC GROUP
135 RADIO CIRCLE DRIVE
MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549
(914) 239-4700

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