

Livin'

Official
NEWSLETTER
of LVCIL

Fall : 2020

Special Edition of Livin' - LVCIL's Official Newsletter - Fall 2020

Livin'

Fall 2020

LIVIN' is the official
newsletter of LVCIL

LVCIL is a registered
501(c)3 nonprofit
organization that
provides services
to support people
with disabilities
on their path to
independence.

For info, contact:

610-770-9781
info@lvcil.org

CELEBRATING MILESTONES & INCREASING INDEPENDENCE

Support Amy's Vision 2020 today!

Last year, we served 1,193 Lehigh Valley residents with disabilities. Amy has challenged us to serve 200 more consumers by the end of 2020 and your gift can help us meet that goal!

Make your tax-deductible gift by completing this form or by visiting www.lvcil.org/donate

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How is Your COVID-19 Marathon Going?

By Amy C. Beck, LSW, Executive Director

This year has been such a difficult and unusual time for every one of us. I am one of the numerous LVCIL staff who has been working remotely through the pandemic. I have a long-time muscle disease and COVID-19 could potentially be very serious for me, so I'm in a marathon to stay healthy for myself, my family and friends, and for LVCIL. I stay away from people other than my immediate family, my direct care worker, and a couple medical people. I got my hair cut in my backyard, I wear a mask, I keep a great distance from others and I wash my hands - a lot.

I've really been thinking about those of you who read Livin', and I wonder how your personal COVID-19 marathon is going? I wonder how you are keeping yourself busy (I'm not proud of it, but I watched 15 seasons of NCIS). Are you getting to the medical appointments

(Please see Amy's Column, continued on Page 2)

In This Issue:

Amy's Column	Page 1
Thanks to our Donors	3
SCP Update	4
Meet Our Interns!	5
Financial Stability tips	6
Board of Directors	7
ILS Skills	7
TechOWL services	9
What exactly is AT?	10
Giving Season Starts	11
PATF Solutions	11
Support Amy's Vision	12

(Amy's Column, continued from page 1)

you need? Some estimate that more than 40,000 people in the United States died as a result of not wanting to seek routine or urgent medical care during the pandemic. Most medical facilities are well sanitized with everyone wearing masks; please get the medical care you need. And many illnesses can be treated through a telemedicine appointment (over the phone or computer).

Many of us are experiencing social isolation, and what can we do about it? Call someone, even just to check on them. Reach out to people you haven't heard from in a long time. I found out an Aunt I'd lost track of was alive and well in South Carolina. I wrote her a newsy letter, and she surprised me with a long phone call one Sunday afternoon. Find groups that you can participate in. Many faith communities and other groups have been offering Zoom opportunities, live Facebook streaming, or YouTube broadcasts. And even many basic phones can offer multi-party calls. Why not get a few high school chums together to catch up? I have really been enjoying a four-person Facetime call with my siblings every other week. And if you can get outside, you should! Even a brief walk (roll for me) helps me clear my head and gain a more positive attitude. I plan to keep adding layers until it is frozen out there. My husband and I have walked/rolled the neighborhood so often, I know the names of all the dogs, and they no longer bark at me. I noticed I have really worn down the tire treads on my chair from all the miles. I have experienced the smells, sights, textures and sounds of late winter, spring, summer and now fall, and all of it adds to the marathon.

And please be kind to yourself. This is a hard thing to live through, and we know it. We'd love you to get involved in our Zoom (phone or computer) Peer Support Group which meets three times a week, you attend as much or as little as you like. Our staff are here to provide individual Peer Support as well. We have several other social groups we can tell you about. We can also help you connect to things you may really need like options for food, personal protective equipment or help to keep your apartment. We can also assist you in locating services if you or your family member wants to leave a nursing home, because in Pennsylvania COVID-19 has been most deadly in nursing homes. Call or email us.

I want to leave you with the thought that this truly is a marathon. The world needs the unique and beautiful human you are, so stay in the race! We've come this far, don't quit! Stay home when you can, wear a mask when you go out, wash or sanitize your hands often, and get medical help when you need it. Stay connected to others and keep hope alive!

Welcome to the Giving Season!

By Brian Pedersen, BA
Development Coordinator

Who thought that seven months after COVID-19 swept the nation that we'd still be grappling with the uncertainty of a global pandemic?

It's certainly changed the way many organizations have operated over the past few months and presented numerous obstacles and challenges for us. I happened to be hired in April, so for me, it's been an unusual and invigorating experience. While hardships and challenges abound, our need to serve people with all types of disabilities never disappeared. In fact, it's only grown stronger and more urgent. Like many nonprofits, we're still fundraising through this topsy-turvy, unsettled year filled with all sorts of surprises.

Such uncertainty can weaken any organization. While we've been thrown some curveballs, we haven't let them dampen our spirit or resolve. Like you, we are hoping to end this year strong!

That's why our theme for Giving Tuesday and our End of the Year appeal is #EndItStrong.

I'm pretty sure we all want 2020 to come to an end sooner rather than later.

That's why, as the end of the year approaches and we get into the last two months of 2020, we want to welcome you into our effort and hope you will support us in our goal to raise \$20,020 by the end of the year. Two months isn't a lot of time, but we're confident that with your help, we can achieve that goal.

We'd like to do that by encouraging you to share with us with what keeps you strong. It could be an image, a phrase, a person in your life, something you physically do, or anything at all! What has

helped you build strength and resilience amidst global uncertainty? What keeps you going strong even when you feel weak? We could all use some of those stories right now and we want to hear them. Send us a photo or a video, along with a donation of any size, and we'll post it on our social media channels. Tell us why you support the CIL and why it's more important to you now more than ever before.

I don't know about you, but I'm ready to kick 2020 to the curb. Hard.

Let's lift ourselves up and do it together, and be strong together, so we can welcome 2021 with open arms!

Funding Solutions for Independence

PATF can help you acquire assistive tech through low-interest & mini loans. Assistive tech includes: Hearing Aids, Smart Home, Adapted Vehicles, Barrier-Free Showers, Tablets & Computers, Scooters & Wheelchairs, Adapted Sports Equipment, and more.



For info: www.patf.us

What exactly is AT?

By Katie Krum, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs

Many people have the misconception that assistive technology is specifically referring to communication devices, expensive communication apps, or wheelchairs. Despite this common belief, assistive technology can be anything that helps us live a more independent life.

Can it really be that simple?! YES!!

For those who have mental illnesses or medical diagnoses that cause memory loss or forgetfulness; we have timers, alarms, and memos that can be set on our smart phones. For those who prefer something less technologically advanced, we have post-it notes. In the world of AT, these examples would be classified as high-tech and no-tech. For the person who needs a walker to get around, to the people who need a LifeAlert.

How would I know if I need AT? Well, that depends. Do you find yourself struggling with something during your daily life? If so, there is probably something that can be recommended to help you.

If you have an idea of what you might need or are just looking to browse, check out the TechOWL website at TechOWLpa.org.

At the TechOWL website, you can look at the lending library to see what's available, check out the free special phone program, request a demonstration, support, training, find trainings/webinars to take for yourself, and even find an Assistive Technology Resource Center anywhere in the state. If you find yourself needing financial assistance to purchase AT, LVCIL can also help.

LVCIL is an Assistive Technology Resource Center, and I am the contact person for these programs. If you or someone you know needs AT, contact us for assistance.

Check out our LVCIL website for info about our assistive technology services at www.lvcil.org/assistivetech

LVCIL's **AccessCheck** is the Lehigh Valley's #1 resource for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and accessibility information.

AccessCheck helps businesses, organizations, parks and outdoor recreation areas, and state/local governments improve accessibility for everyone. We specialize in identifying cost-effective solutions.

Check out www.lvcil.org/adasurveys for more!

Thank you to our recent donors!

To donate online, visit our website at www.lvcil.org/donate

Here is a list of people who made donations to LVCIL, which we received from July 1, 2020 to Oct. 30, 2020

Ann Baker	Rev. William Horn	Dawn Reidenbach
Jason Barnett	Diane Hyzinski	Kelly Rindock
Jayne Bayer	Jodi Jones	Jennifer Rupnik
Christopher Beamer	Peter Juhasz	R. Richard Schall
Sharon Beamer	Carrie Kane	Winona Schappell
Amy Beck	Jason Kluska	Jan Schwoyer
David Beck	Kim Kluska	Katie Schwoyer
Dorothy Beck	Joe Krycia	Adrian Shanker
Deborah Berger	Eugene W.F. Kunkel	Stuart Shaw
Scott Berman	John Kurtz	Lisa Shuryn
Bernadette Berry	Elaine Lebo	Jeffrey Stein
Polly Beste	Paul Mack	Rebecca Strobel
Melissa Blocker	Jim McLean	Ignacy Studzienko
Lindsay Bonde	Joe Michener	Diana Sweeney
Chrissy Bott	Bob Michener	Bill & El Sugra
Katherine Boyle	Michelle Mitchell	Marsha
Lisa Brinks	Amy Newman	Timmerman
Mary Charon	Laurie Newman-	Elizabeth
Ceil Connelly-Weida	Mankos	Turbedsky
Deborah Einhorn	Kathy Nickerson	Patricia Walkup
Walt Fort	Dennis Oplinger	Daniel Wilson
Dean Foulke	Sharon Polaha	Paula Whitefell
Janis Geist	Caitlin Polek	John Zayaitz
Arthur Hoffman	Terri Purdy	

For SCP, we continued to strengthen and empower for a successful year in 2020

By Catherine Bogdanski, BS, Statewide Coalition Project coordinator

A year ago, advocates from Centers for Independent Living across Pennsylvania converged in Camp Hill, near Harrisburg for what was the first ever in-person meeting of the entire Statewide Advocacy Group. In total, there were about 30 advocates who took over a small conference room excited to meet in person and put faces to names and voices they had learned from and with over the last year.

As we embarked on a second year with the Statewide Advocacy Group there were plans for increased chances for in-person meetings – one in March at the mid-point and another in September to celebrate another successful year. As so many events have been in 2020, these meetings just could not be due to the pandemic. We long for the return of in-person meetings. However, on a beautiful early Autumn day in September, this same group of advocates converged on Zoom coming from their homes in rural and suburban communities, from home offices, spare rooms and kitchen tables to celebrate another 12 months of effort and to look to the future.

Here are the numbers behind their story of strength, advocacy and collaboration:

(October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020)

As of June 30, 2020, advocates facilitated a little over 1,650 individual interactions across the network of CILs.

-- 28 monthly calls across the 3 Priority Areas (Emergency Preparedness/Accessibility, Voting & Census 2020, and Advocacy)

-- Each of the 30 advocates averaged 20 hours of collaboration with the network of CILs.

-- 3 additional calls to address specific needs/concerns were held.

-- 4 Guest Presenters were invited to share with members of the Statewide Advocacy Group in one of the 3 Priority Areas.

-- 1 Hybrid (In-person and Virtual) training on ADA Standards for members of the Statewide Advocacy Group was held.

How was this all done you may wonder? Independent Living Skills classes, group events, consumer advocacy groups at CILs, CIL advocates engaging with local groups/committees, CILs supporting and presenting information at summits/expos and community or CIL consumer presentations.

The keystone of these amazing efforts can be summed up in one word – STRENGTH. Advocates utilizing and in turn strengthening the network of CILs made it possible to improve availability of and access to the over 1,000 opportunities for Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

In that strengthening of the network, our Statewide Advocacy Group grew in their own personal strength and skills as advocates. So while 2020 may not be the year anyone envisioned it would be, it was a year of strengthening and empowering which is what Centers for Independence are known for among their consumers.

Meet our Interns! (Continued from page 8)

Next up is **Sonia Reyes**

Q: What's your college and major?

Reyes: I am majoring in Human Services.

Q: What are your career plans?

Reyes: My career plans are to gain employment in a company whose vision is to help the individual as well as the community as a whole. I would like to give back to the community and make a difference in someone's life.

Q: What services are you working in?

Reyes: I am a fulltime student striving to attain my degree in Human Services after 23 years in insurance.

Q: Why are you interning at LVCIL? Or, what is the best part of interning at LVCIL?

Reyes: I am interning at LVCIL so that I can attain the skills that I need to help those in need in the Lehigh Valley. It is an opportunity to help people get back on their feet after they have faced hardships such as loss of housing.



If you have trouble using a regular phone, we may be able to get you a Free Special Phone.

For details visit TechOWLpa.org/service/tddp

Meet our interns! (Continued from page 5)

Next, we have **Alexandra Garcia**

Q: What's your college and major?

Alexandra: I am a Master's in Social Work student at Kutztown University.

Q: What are your career plans?

Alexandra: I plan to earn my degree in 2022 and find a social work position within Allentown, Pennsylvania or West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Q: What services are you working in?

Alexandra: I am currently working with the Statewide Coalition team to expand independent living opportunities across the state of Pennsylvania. I am also involved with our Transition and Employment Services, specifically LIFE and S2L.

Q: Why are you interning at LVCIL? What is the best part of interning here?

Alexandra: I am interning with LVCIL to expand my knowledge and gain experience when working with different populations. I am excited to have this opportunity and I plan on making the best of it!



Next is **Quaddriya Rivers**

Q: What's your college and major?

Quaddriya: I currently attend Kutztown University. I am majoring in Social Work with a minor in Psychology and Sociology.

Q: What are your career plans?

Quaddriya: My career plan is to graduate with my Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, then obtain my Master's in Social Work. I would also like to open my own community center back in my hometown as a way to give back to the community but also provide a safe place for children, teenagers, and young adults.

Q: What services are you working in?

Quaddriya: I work in the LIFE Services program that is part of the Transition and Employment Department.

Q: Why are you interning at LVCIL? What is the best part of interning at LVCIL?

Quaddriya: I am interning at LVCIL because it is the agency I personally picked to fulfill my internship requirements for my major. The best part of interning at LVCIL is being able to work with consumers and help support them to achieve their goals.



(Please see INTERNS, Continued on page 9)

Meet our new interns at LVCIL!

First up is **Kaitlin Lambert**

Q: What's your college and major?

Kaitlin: M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Scranton.

Q: What are your career plans?

Kaitlin: My career plans? Well I always imagined myself as a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor at OVR or the VA. But I also would love to work within the prison systems and help individuals transition from prison back into society. I am very open to other career paths and especially with COVID-19, my outlook on my future profession has shifted a little.

Q: What services are you working in?

Kaitlin: I am working in the Transition and Employment department.

Q: Why are you interning at LVCIL? What's the best part of interning here?

Kaitlin: I am interning at LVCIL because it will provide me the skills I need to enhance my knowledge in working with individuals with disabilities in different capacities. The best part of being an intern at LVCIL is that I get to work with so many different consumers and within so many different programs. Each staff member is so open, friendly and willing to help me further add on to my knowledge. Thanks for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful company!



Next up is **Chelsea Gringas**

Q: What's your college and major?

Chelsea: I am graduating in December with my undergraduate degree studying Rehabilitation and Human Services from Pennsylvania State University.

Q: What are your career plans?

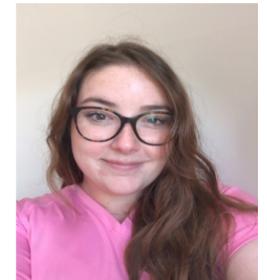
Chelsea: I am currently figuring out exactly what my career plans are. I want to get my master's degree in special education and later work in the school setting. I also would love to become a program developer for children with disabilities through therapeutic recreation.

Q: What services are you working in?

Chelsea: I am currently working within the Transition and Employment Services at the CIL.

Q: Why are you interning at LVCIL? What is the best part of interning here?

Chelsea: I am interning at the CIL to become a well-rounded individual to provide the best services I can for people with disabilities. The best part of interning at the CIL this far is working with consumers and creating activities that are used in group sessions. The other best part of the CIL is how open every staff is to help me learn the field.



(Please see INTERNS, Continued on page 8)

To achieve financial and housing stability, it pays to use better judgment

By **Debbie Rozear, AAS**
Supervisor of Core & Housing Services

Life is never easy; however, it is what you make of it. At this time of the year, with the wind howling outside, can you imagine being homeless? There are people losing their homes and apartments each and every week, because of the economy, low income, bad judgment and the pandemic. I get calls from people telling me stories of how they are being evicted and that there is nowhere for them to live. It's not so easy being on the outside looking in. We all think – "this will never happen to me". Think again. I have worked with people that are living in a shelter that have a Master's Degree. This can happen to the best of us.

There are several steps that someone could take in order to keep a roof over their head. When a person has a disability, it is very difficult living on a fixed income, especially with today's new covid lifestyle. When one has a set amount of money coming in each month, however, there are different programs that are in place, in order to subsidize things like food, heat, etc. A person that is on SSI or disability payments will more than likely qualify.

There are income criteria for most every program. If you don't know where to turn, just call and ask one of the staff members in our core and housing services at LVCIL. One of our services is Information and Referral and someone would be glad to help you locate the information that you are requesting. We can also provide help for getting onto waiting lists for the low income housing in the valley.

Another reason for receiving notices of eviction is just plain old bad judgment. First of all, remember when budgeting to make sure that you can balance your income with your expenses. It can be quite difficult in certain circumstances. I have not been the exception to this; I was raising four children on my own on disability while buying a home. You just learn to be very frugal with everything. Always remember the first bill that should always be paid every month is the rent or mortgage.

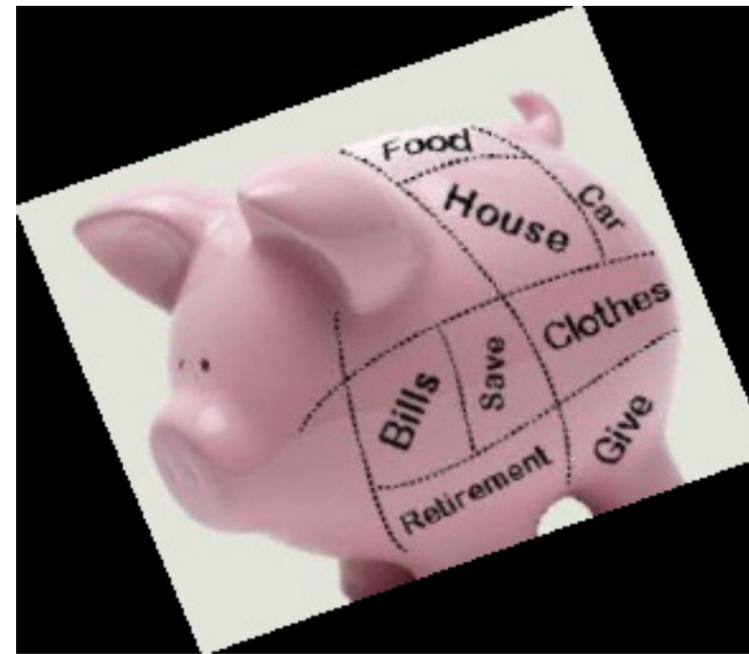
When paying the bills start with the most important and work your way down. I would say the next important is the utilities. The lowest on the totem pole are the bills that do not accumulate interest.

If you keep up with your rent, there should be no reason for an eviction notice, unless you are causing trouble or the landlord is looking to sell the property and is making tenants move when their lease is up.

If you have difficulty with money, there are ways to get help with your bills. You can get a rep payee, or give someone close to you power of attorney for your money management or have the most important bills taken directly out of your bank account each and every month.

Why would someone with limited income want to have a credit card? Don't forget that a credit card has a bill that appears in your mailbox every month...with interest. If you cannot pay that amount in full the interest keeps accruing and it snowballs and becomes this enormous bill that is impossible to pay back.

For people with high debt, think about debt relief or consumer credit counseling. You can be your own worst enemy. Use better judgment, not just for housing but in everything that you do.



Take Charge of Your Life! Take our Independent Living Skills classes

LVCIL will host the following Independent Living Skills classes virtually.

- Wednesday, December 9, 10 AM to 12PM Learning about Social Security with Ed Lafferty
- In January, we will offer a Weatherization program. A flyer will be mailed to consumers with current email addresses. If you would like to be added to the email list or our mailing list, please contact Debbie Rozear. RSVP is required.

Peer support Monday, Wednesday and Friday 3 PM to 4 PM this group is ongoing on Zoom. If you are interested, let your support coordinator know or call our core and housing support coordinator, Debbie at 610-770-9781 ext. 124.

Community Club is starting up again via zoom. Please contact Debbie Rozear or Julie Coridotto and express your interest.

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