



# 2022

# Annual REPORT

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# About RCIL



The Resource Center for Independent Living, commonly abbreviated as RCIL, is an ILC (Independent Living Center). That means we provide resources and services to support the choices of people with disabilities to live independently in their own homes and their communities.

Everyone should be entitled to the right to be gainfully employed, buy their own groceries, and leave the house whenever they so choose. We believe that without these fundamental rights, society is not truly accessible to people living with disabilities.



## Message From Our CEO

As this is our first Annual Report since prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to acknowledge the many who contributed to keeping the essential services that RCIL provides operational throughout the past three years. Dedicated staff, committed board members, and community partners contributed to our ability to provide services and supports to thousands of people living with disabilities in their own homes throughout NY State during a challenging and devastating period for all of humankind.

As you will see in the pages of this report, last year was a productive and impactful one for RCIL. We developed and implemented new services, secured grants and additional funding, and hired multiple new staff.

We underwent significant renovations at the Dorothy Smith Center for Advocacy, and have welcomed Temple Beth El congregation and 4 Elements studio as tenants—bringing our 1607 Genesee Street location to full occupancy.

I am thankful that RCIL continues to have the privilege of supporting individuals living with disabilities in making their own decisions and living their lives the way they choose and where they choose.

Thank you for helping to ensure that RCIL remains a robust organization committed to full and equal access, inclusion, and dignity for all.

Best,

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Zvia McCormick, CEO

# Herkimer Office

## Adapting in an Everchanging Environment

Since returning to a more traditional work setting after the pandemic, LIFE at RCIL's centers have noticed a shift in the landscape. Many long-time community service partner agencies had staff turnover, and many times we found ourselves around the table (whether in-person or virtually) with partners who were not as familiar with our service offerings as had previously been the case.

To meet the needs of the Herkimer office service area, new staff were recruited. In addition to a new full-time information and referral specialist and a new full-time director, the Herkimer center hired two full-time disability rights advocates to work on individual and systemic advocacy issues. Changes in the areas of need for people living with disabilities within the service area have changed as well.

## Homelessness

Herkimer County has seen drastic increases in the number of homeless individuals, and many of them are referred to LIFE for assistance in finding housing. When they come to us, many have no identification or source of income. Staff have assessed the efficacy of the process used to assist such individuals and have determined change is required. Staff began working with individuals on independent living skills and achieving small goals in those areas before tackling the larger goal of acquiring permanent housing.

## Independent Living Skills Training

Advocates have known that knowledge of independent living skills is an essential part of successful independent living, and have therefore routinely offered this service. Herkimer LIFE staff have obtained additional training which will facilitate improved service delivery in this area. Additionally, the center has designed and begun to distribute materials to market this valuable service.

# Amsterdam Office

## Empowering Change

Advocates have been working with the City of Amsterdam for several years to acquire improved accessibility at a park in the city. When the new Mayor was voted into office, LIFE at RCIL advocates requested a meeting to speak with him about inaccessibility at this park. The meeting and subsequent communication proved fruitful. The City of Amsterdam has taken great strides in improving access within this park for people living with disabilities. LIFE's advocacy contributed to these improvements.

## Enhancing Digital Literacy

In April, LIFE staff presented a Basic Computer Skills workshop for seniors at the Horace Inman Senior Center. This five-session series instructed individuals on basic computer use and covered topics such as how to log onto a computer, how to set up an email account and send email, how to use programs such as Microsoft Word, and how to shop online. The older adults who attended learned the basics of computer use in an integrated, peer-based setting.

## Effective Advocacy

LIFE advocates notified St. Mary's Hospital about a consumer's concern regarding care. The individual needed American Sign Language interpreting, but the tablet provided which offered this was faulty. After being notified, St. Mary's Hospital Director of Corporate Compliance sent a letter expressing gratitude for bringing the issue to their attention and committed to enhancing services for patients who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## Insights from Community Service Organizations

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation invited LIFE staff, along with other community organizations that serve older adults or people living with disabilities, to visit the Willie Wildlife Marsh in Fulton County. The tour provided service organizations with the opportunity to observe and experience the accessibility of the park, and to comment on how improvements could be made. Staff pointed out that signage was not accessible to people with low vision/no vision, and suggested Braille signage, which was acknowledged by the department.

# 2022

## **Hunger Solutions New York's Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) Grant began July 2022 in our Utica and Amsterdam Offices.**

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It is important to acknowledge that hunger is a widespread issue that affects individuals from all walks of life, and it is not always apparent who is suffering from it. The consequences of hunger can be particularly devastating for children and youth who are unable to learn, as well as employees who are unable to perform their duties effectively. As a NOEP service provider, RCIL strives to address this issue by offering free and confidential one-on-one assistance to individuals seeking to apply for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. These services align with the independent living philosophy because hunger and food insecurity hinder an individual's ability to lead a self-sufficient, fulfilling, and independent life.

# Impact in Numbers

RCIL directly employed or was the employer of record for **3,512** staff.

Home and community-based: **3,325** staff  
Office-based: **187** staff

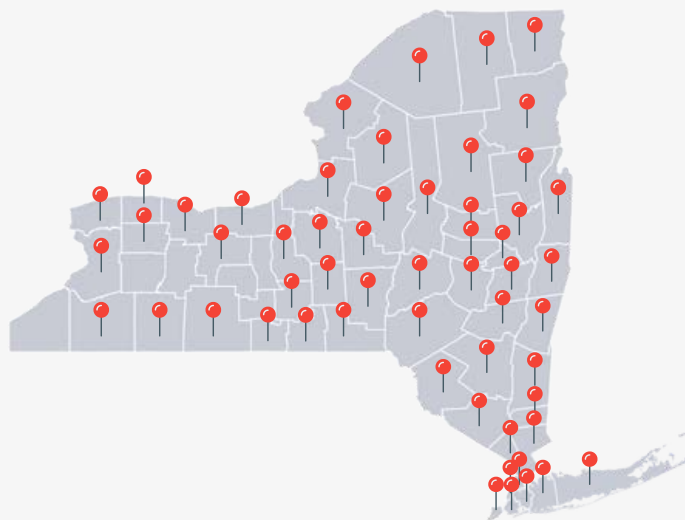
52% of the total workforce (**1,816** staff) is located in the Mohawk Valley & Central New York.

20% of the total workforce (**685** staff) is located in New York City & Long Island.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some services were approved to be delivered through telehealth and the approval of this service delivery modality continues. In 2022, **58** staff were residents of a state other than New York and provided telehealth services to individuals living in New York.

The remaining **953** staff reside throughout the rest of New York State—from Allegheny county to Rensselaer county and from the North Country to the Pennsylvania border.

In 2022, RCIL supported people with disabilities in 56 out of 62 counties in the state of New York. That's 90.3% of the state!







# Impact in Numbers

# 5,524

unduplicated number of individuals  
living with disabilities and their  
families served

An individual may receive supports and services with more than one program, so may be included in more than one of the numbers below.

**Self-Direction (SD)** program supported 1,189 individuals.

**The Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP)**  
supported 1,035 individuals.

**LIFE at RCIL (all services)** supported 4,670 individuals.

**Many Hearts Social Adult Day Services** supported 43 individuals.

**At Home Independent Care (AHIC)** supported 17 individuals.

**The Waiver program** supported 40 individuals.



# Financial Data

## Revenue

- Grant Revenue: \$4,718,456
- Fee for Service Revenue: \$94,214,344
- Contributions/Fundraising Revenue: \$105,234
- Investment Loss/Interest Income: (\$2,763,398)
- Other Revenue: \$69,306

## Expenses

- Program Staff Wages/Benefits Expense: \$67,042,262
- Other Program Expense: \$18,439,308
- Administration Expense: \$4,196,479
- Rental Fees & Fundraising Expenditures: \$69,052

## **THE DOROTHY SMITH CENTER FOR ADVOCACY AT 1607 GENESEE STREET IN UTICA**

RCIL operates three services at the Dorothy Smith Center. Our Many Hearts Social Adult Day Program, At Home Independent Care (AHIC), and OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities) Community Habilitation Waiver Service. Together with 4 Elements Studio and Temple Beth El, the building is fully occupied.

In addition to restoration and rebuilding of the front staircase, we renovated the inside stairwells and program space. The Many Hearts program moved to the Community Room on the first floor, with no disruption of services. Renovations were done by Adorino Construction. Six bathrooms, the main program area, a social room, the kitchen area, and all staff offices were redone. These changes made the building more accessible and added to the existing beauty and design of the building.

Our social adult day program also took delivery of two brand new accessible vehicles in October. With two wheelchair accessible vehicles, we can transport a larger number of individuals who use wheelchairs. It also allows us to accommodate more passengers to community outings and to program daily.



## CREATION OF MCCORMICK ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP:

Beginning in the summer of 2022, at least one scholarship of \$1,500 per year will be awarded to an RCIL employee with at least two years longevity with the Agency, or their children. This scholarship shall be awarded to a student in good standing that plans to attend college as a full-time student, studying towards an academic degree. Selection will be through a drawing from all qualified applicants. The drawing will be witnessed by a board member. The award is \$1,500 per year for two-year, four-year or graduate level programs. Once a scholarship is awarded, it will continue for the duration of the degree program, for a maximum of four years, given that the awardee maintains the academic performance requirements set forth below and the staff remains employed, in good standing, with RCIL.

Congratulations to the first two students awarded scholarships in 2022—Olivia Furman and Sarah Johnson. Olivia will be graduating from SUNY Brockport in May 2024. Her major is political science (pre-law). This summer she is working at the Public Defender's Office in Utica and is also doing an internship with Congressman Brandon Williams in his Utica office. As for Sarah Johnson, she graduated from University of Buffalo in May 2023 with a bachelor's in nursing and immediately following graduation, began working as a registered nurse at Kenmore Mercy Hospital in Buffalo. Sarah plans to eventually further her studies in the field of medicine.





# Consumer Story

A story of how LIFE at RCIL impacted an individual with disabilities, and how this individual is able to live independently thanks to our continued guidance and support.

The Herkimer office received a call from an individual living with tuberous sclerosis (a rare and incurable genetic disease that can sometimes be the cause of multiple disabilities), epilepsy, and multiple mental/emotional disabilities. They were recently discharged after a stay in the hospital and had found themselves newly homeless. Their family decided their epileptic episodes had become too much to deal with at home, and it was time for them to become independent—their discharge plan from the hospital was to be dropped off at Herkimer County Department of Social Services (DSS) and present themselves as homeless there.

They called our office in tears, having been dropped off in the parking lot of DSS without shoes—wearing only their pajamas and carrying a suitcase. They told the LIFE advocate that when they went into DSS, they were told that they needed to leave the building. After some conversation, it was discovered that the reason they were not allowed inside was due to COVID-19 restrictions.

LIFE provided the consumer with guidance, and they were able to obtain and complete the paperwork necessary to request hotel vouchers without going into the DSS building. They were relieved and thankful that they would have a place to stay for a few nights, before the office closed for the weekend. We also made sure that they would have food to get them through.

Upon meeting with this individual in office, we quickly began working on getting them an apartment. They had never lived on their own and were quite nervous and unsure of how to accomplish this. They worked diligently on completing as many housing applications as possible, making calls and advocating for themselves throughout. The LIFE advocate finally received a phone call from Ilion Housing Authority stating that they had an apartment immediately available, but had some concerns with the application.

**Continued on the next page...**

# Consumer Story, Continued...

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## A POSITIVE OUTCOME...

Together with the individual, advocates called the housing manager and she expressed concerns that this individual had no landlord references, had never lived on their own, and that their epilepsy could be a danger to them living alone. They advocated and together, we explained that they could live independently and care for themselves, and that their epilepsy was being closely managed and monitored. We were able to get the housing manager to consider them by providing a few references for her to call despite them not being previous landlords. The calls went well, and the consumer was approved to move into their first apartment—they were so excited! They are now living independently, and ongoing services are in place to assist them in being successful.





## **MERCY COLLEGE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:**

### **Our First Cohort**

In 2022, a team of RCIL supervisors participated in the CERTIFi by Mercy College Women in Leadership Program which is designed by industry experts for professionals seeking advice, strategies and practical tools to grow effectively as a leader. This online, self-paced, eight-module certificate program uses innovative frameworks and peer discussions focused on thought leadership, strategy development and implementation, and is facilitated by real-world experts who provide participants with guidance, mentoring and inspiration.

This group of women leaders within RCIL embraced the opportunity to learn and grow both personally and professionally, as well as to focus on communication with, and encouragement of, one another within a skill-building and impact-driven framework.

# MOHAWK VALLEY GIVES

On September 20, 2022, the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties hosted its first ever “Mohawk Valley Gives,” a 24-hour community-wide giving day to benefit nonprofit organizations serving the two counties.

Nonprofits participated to promote their mission, raise funds for vital needs, and vie for various prizes and incentives throughout the day. RCIL was one of many eager participants.

The organization was able to connect with the community, share information and raise funds to support our mission of assisting individuals with disabilities in our community to live independently.

## Jennifer Camello Selected as Rotary Club of Utica Pride of Workmanship Award Recipient in October

The Rotary Club of Utica honored four local workers at its 31st annual Pride of Workmanship Awards Program on Thursday, October 20th. Jennifer Camello, RCIL's Self-Direction Program Generalist, was one of the four honored that day after being nominated by supervisor Amanda Tuthill.

*"I was honored to receive this award, and surprised at the same time. I do not expect things like this to come my way as I am only doing my job. I am more than grateful for the opportunity to work at RCIL. It is with the support of the Self-Direction staff I am able to be in the position I am today."*

**-Jennifer Camello, Program Generalist**







## **CHILDREN'S BRUNCH & CHARACTER PARTY**

**October 29, 2022**

RCIL held its first in-person fundraising event since the fall of 2019-- our much anticipated Children's Brunch and Character Party, which returned in full swing.

After enjoying a delicious breakfast, everyone that attended had loads of fun dancing, singing, and meeting their favorite characters. Children dressed up in costumes and took pictures with the characters. Everyone who attended had a wonderful time and the party truly brought smiles to everyone's faces.

Thank you to our sponsors: Adirondack Bank; Anjolen; Bank of Utica; Brian A. Gaetano Co.; C. Lewis Tomaselli Architects; Confidata; Crown Risk Management, LLC; Ferrara Fiorenza PC; MVP Health Care; NBT Bank; Park Strategies; Scalzo, Zogby, & Wittig, Inc; Staffworks; Strategic Financial Services; and The Matt Law Firm.

A photograph of a document with a definition of violence, overlaid on a cityscape background. The text on the document is: "Violence is defined as the intentional use of force against one person which".

**Violence is defined as the intentional use of force against one person which**

## **OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN GRANT BEGAN JULY 2022 IN OUR AMSTERDAM OFFICE**

LIFE at RCIL in Amsterdam and Catholic Charities of Montgomery County are working in conjunction with Office on Violence Against Women on a 3-year grant to create a sustainable change for victims and survivors with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence. The goal is to provide access to comprehensive and seamless services, regardless of social status or disability. LIFE envisions a community where we can provide safe, accessible, effective services to meet their needs. We understand that there will be obstacles to overcome, and by collaborating, we can draw from our past experiences and knowledge to pave a way for necessary change.

Women with disabilities are twice as likely to encounter domestic violence in comparison to women without disabilities. This grant provides solutions to strategically improve accessibility and provide barrier-free crisis and healing services to people living with disabilities that experience domestic violence.

# THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SERVED ON OUR BOARDS

20  
22

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Jim Smith - Treasurer - LIFE

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Michael Wade - RCIL, Parent, Foundation, AHIC

\* This is a combined list of the Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc. (RCIL), Living Independently is For Everyone at RCIL (LIFE at RCIL), Parent Corporation, Foundation and At Home Independent Care, Inc. (AHIC) Board Members

# Thank You!



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On behalf of those we  
support, thank you!

