



## Winter Connections

Welcome to the Winter edition of Connections 2024! This newsletter contains updates from each of our departments, including Quality Assurance, Day Services, Residential Services, and Support Services. We also will hear an exciting message from our CEO, Michael Planz.

We also wanted to highlight some important events that have happened here at Community Living recently. First, our Self-Advocacy Committee have been busy this year, including a pin project and two members being accepting into *Partners in Policymaking*. Next, Frederick County's biannual EmployAbility Showcase took place in November, with our Day Services working hard towards the success of the showcase. Fuzz, who receives residential services, recently took a vacation to Disney for his birthday. We have some exciting winter activities on the line up for this season and some words from Carlota in Support Services. Lastly, the 2024 DSP Awards took place in November and four of our staff were awarded!

If you're interested in hearing more about these amazing happenings, then keep reading!



## Message from our CEO: Michael Planz

I am approaching my 15th year with Community Living. It's hard for me to believe! In that time the organization has changed quite a bit. While we mostly focused on residential services when I started, our most significant areas of growth have been Support Services and Meaningful Day Services.



Attitudes and perceptions about people with disabilities have changed and so have the options and opportunities for support. At one time people lived with their families or in group homes. And while those are both still important, we have increasingly been supporting people to live in their own home, apartment, or with friends. And in the past, the only option for people during the day was to work in a “sheltered workshop” where they spent the day only with other people with disabilities perhaps earning a small paycheck. Proudly, CLI now supports more than 30 people in competitive, integrated employment – jobs that are paying at least minimum wage and in which they work alongside non-disabled workers.

We recently celebrated International Persons with Disabilities Day, one of many opportunities to recognize the value of people with disabilities. The changes in perceptions have come about through education and advocacy on the part of families, provider organizations and self-advocates who have shown the world the many important contributions people with disabilities can make. The work will continue though, and while I may not still be working here in another 15 years, I am confident that CLI will still be making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

I hope everyone has a great Holiday Season.





## Meaningful Day Services

On November 19th, Frederick County Certified Rehabilitation Providers, Frederick County Workforce Services, and MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services hosted The Fall 2024 **EmployABILITY Showcase**, Frederick County's reverse job fair for individuals with disabilities. This bi-annual event is offered each spring and fall and is the premier venue for engaging local talent with area businesses.

The reverse job fair format provides a venue for participants to set up booths or displays that allows them to showcase their skills, qualifications, and experience to potential employers, rather than the traditional job fair format where employers have booths and job seekers approach them.

To date, Frederick County providers have hosted **5 EmployABILITY Showcase** events. At our Fall 2024 Showcase, CLI asked Danny Croy, Ashley Seward and Burt Marshall to attend as part of the 15 chosen participants from around the county. Each did a great job preparing their booths and interacting with business representatives.

**Danny Croy:** Danny lives on his own and is very independent. He can ride the city bus to get to wherever he needs to. He rides his bike when coming to CLI. Danny likes to stay busy, is routine oriented, follows directions well and likes to help. He has worked as a floor assistant at McDonald's and as a cleaning assistant at Fredericktowne Baptist Church. Danny would enjoy having a part-time position as a cleaning assistant.

Valerie Mills  
Day Services Case Manager





## Meaningful Day Services

**Ashley Seward:** Ashley comes from a family of hard-working women, mom and two sisters. In the last 5-1/2 years at the YMCA she has accomplished so much and has become independent in many aspects of her life. Ashley walks to and from work and will take Uber to attend required training at the YMCA. During the recent **EmployABILITY Showcase** she was able to tell employers the highlights from her previous employment and what she'd like to do in the future. During the showcase she had an interview with a contractual cleaning company at Ft. Detrick. Ashley plans on completing applications from the contacts made during the showcase. Overall, it was a positive learning experience for Ashley.

Pamela Hanline  
Day Services Case Manager

**Burt Marshall:** Burt lives at home with his mother, niece, sister and brother-in-law. His family is very supportive of him. Burt is also known as "The Vacuum Guy" he loves to vacuum. He has a huge collection of vacuums at home, and he can fix minor issues with them. Burt follows directions well; he likes to stay busy and is very routine oriented. Burt has worked at BJ's and Madrone's in Frederick, as a kitchen helper. He would like to obtain a part-time job as a vacuuming assistant in the cleaning industry.

Valerie Mills  
Day Services Case Manager

The **EmployABILITY Showcase** offers a unique opportunity for job seekers to take control of their job search, while providing employers with a more engaging way to find the right talent. As we continue to gain traction with subsequent events, it is our sincere hope and belief that we will all continue to accept each other for who and where we are in life, and not let our differences define us, as we move forward in all aspects of our search for competitive, integrated, employment and lifestyle betterment.

Randy Kiser  
Senior Business Development Manager

Randy Kiser is the driving force behind the **EmployABILITY Showcase**. He was the one that brought it here, to Frederick County, five years ago. Randy does a phenomenal job putting this together twice a year.

Tom Buttner  
Day Services Director





## Residential



The Residential department has so much to be grateful for! We look forward to the Holidays, visiting family and friends.

For the first time in over four years, we are fully staffed! We have an excellent group of team players that has opened up so many possibilities for everyone that we serve. Thank you to our QA department for helping our staff and people we support to get more active this summer. Going to sporting events, theatres, plays, movies, concerts and so much more. In November, Fuzz realized his dream of getting to Florida (and his very first plane ride). We have more trips to be taken and more fun times to be had. Stay tuned!!!



We have a few homes with openings if you know someone that wants to live with some really cool people, please reach out for a tour!





## Quality Assurance

### Self-Advocates in Action

#### **Community Living Self-Advocates: Making an Impact**

The Community Living Self-Advocates have had a productive year, participating in events and contributing to meaningful initiatives in our community. Their recent activities highlight their commitment to advocacy, education, and service:

- **Pin Project:** The team plans to make personal care bags to donate to those in need using the proceeds from this fundraiser project, supporting the Frederick County community. This project was also featured on Key 103 & Dina Carole's Cup of Joy segment!
- **Partners in Policymaking:** Two members were recently accepted into this prestigious program, where they will gain leadership and advocacy skills to further empower the ID/DD community. Most recently, they attended a session about state laws, policy, and who creates them at our state capitol, Annapolis.
- **Regular Meetings:** With ongoing attendance at the Self-Advocates of Frederick County meetings, our advocates stay engaged and informed on local issues.
- **Dark Legacy of Rosewood:** Members attended a screening at Frederick Community College, broadening their understanding of the historical challenges faced by those with disabilities.



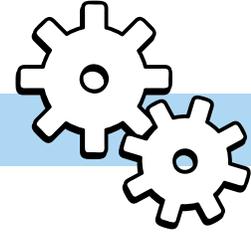
Through these efforts, the Self-Advocates continue to foster positive change and bring our mission to life.





## Quality Assurance

### Tech Corner



#### **Digital Transformation: How Our Organization is Moving Forward**

Community Living is making strides in its digital transformation, which aims to enhance communication, streamline operations, and improve services. Microsoft 365 has become a central part of our technology landscape, and it's changing the way we work. Support Services is now using Microsoft 365 for service documentation when providing Personal Supports and Respite services.

Soon, all employees will have a Microsoft 365 account, enabling easier and more efficient communication and collaboration. We continue to refine the SharePoint pages for each home and individual we serve, making it a one-stop shop for relevant resources and information. To enhance accessibility, Microsoft 365 applications are mobile-friendly, allowing employees to use any device to access Teams messages, Outlook emails, calendars, and news.

Stay tuned for more updates on how technology is empowering us to serve our people better, and ways you can contribute to making sure our systems stay up to date and accurate.

### Winter Holiday Party

QA held their Winter Holiday Party this month and it was a hit! There was a charcuterie board, DJ, music and dancing, visits from Santa and the Grinch, and gifts for all. Everyone who attended had a fantastic time!





## Support Services

Wishing you a fantastic winter season and to be eager and able to enjoy all that nature and the community has to offer.

Many activities that promote fitness and fun are coming up— snowshoeing, biking, hiking, bowling, fishing, cooking events, shows, train rides, various trips to explore new sights, and eating out. Come join in the fun. Fitness is important for many that are in the workforce because it helps with the stamina to carry out work tasks.

It is amazing how when new things are proposed, folks participate, and the community becomes a great venue for exploration.

Some of the things that make me happy to hear are:

- A vendor calls a person by their name and say thanks for visiting today
- Do you want your usual coffee and bagel?
- Did you like the shoes that you bought last time, and can you show me how you tie your shoes?
- Did you like this show better than the other one?
- Do you still like your work and what clothes do you need today?

Visiting some of the same places creates familiarity and social interactions that are genuine. Going to state event and visiting with friends from around the state is so special and memorable.

The folks that are employed love to earn money and the save it to go places just like others do. Learning to save to go to a ball game is huge. - Carlota





## DSP AWARDS 2024

The Maryland Department of Disabilities and Maryland Department of Health - Developmental Disabilities Administration hosted the 2024 annual DSP awards ceremony. This year, Community Living had four of our Direct Support Professionals awarded a Governor's citation from the State of Maryland recognizing their excellence.

Laura Parker exemplifies the true spirit of community participation for individuals with disabilities. Her passion and dedication as a job coach have directly impacted the lives of several individuals. Laura Parker's dedication to empowering individuals with disabilities, enabling them to engage fully in their communities, makes her a shining example of service.

## Luara Parker- Day Services



## Ruth Vickers - Support Services



Ruth Vickers' sincere and genuine approach to job coaching aids individuals to achieve their professional and personal goals. Ruth is also committed to lending a helping hand wherever and whenever is possible. She frequently does the medication runs, even those in the middle of the night. She is always eager to help out and pick up a shift when she can. Another thing Ruth does is help host Support Services' weekly Friday night dinners. Ruth is also the Special Olympics Area Director of Frederick County; a position in which she is proud to be doing and being able to impact and uplift those in ways that get people active as participants in the community.



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Ron Lloyd exemplifies exceptional service that supports and encourages full community participation for individuals with disabilities in Maryland through his dedicated and person-centered approach. With 26 years of experience in the Residential Department at Community Living, Ron has been a steadfast advocate for those he serves. His advocacy is rooted in empowering individuals to speak for themselves, ensuring their voices are heard by directly involving them in conversations rather than speaking on their behalf. This practice fosters self-advocacy and independence, essential elements for full community integration.

### Ron Lloyd - Residential



### Tomi Rifenburg - Support Services



Tomi Rifenburg serves as a shining example of service and dedication, consistently encouraging and supporting full community participation for individuals with disabilities in Maryland. His approach to job coaching has transformed workplaces, where he provides ongoing support and mentorship to individuals. Known for mentoring individuals on healthy life choices and showing unwavering dedication—even staying overnight with them during difficult times—Tomi's influence is felt both personally and professionally. His exceptional service has significantly enriched the lives of the individuals he supports and helped integrate them into the broader community.



## Connect and Stay in Touch with us!

Community Living, Inc. (CLI) is a nonprofit that provides supports and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To learn more about CLI and what we do, visit <https://communitylivinginc.org>



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HOLIDAYS