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ACLD Rolls Out COVID-19 Vaccine

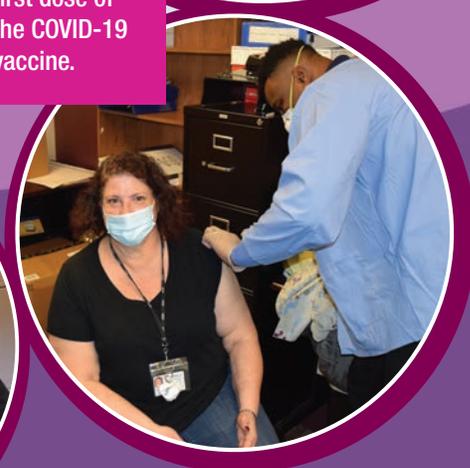
ACLD is one step closer to purging this pandemic from the agency as essential staff members are now fully vaccinated. The first dose of the vaccine ACLD received in January was administered by ACLD's nurses who were trained by Charles Evans Center nursing staff and Dr. Christine Brown, Chief Medical Officer.

Several rooms on the second floor of the 857 building on the Bethpage campus were dedicated to intaking staff, administering the vaccine and monitoring staff post vaccine for any rare adverse reactions. Matthew Waitovich of the Seaford and Oceanside residences, Julie Rava-Young of the Brighton and Spur Drive residences and Denise Hartman, Assistant Director of Nursing, administered the historical first dose. ACLD continued to administer the vaccine to interested staff over the course of the week, and was also able to begin vaccinating consenting residents. Forty residences were successfully vaccinated.

This action was a crucial step towards gaining the upper hand on this dreaded virus and paving the way for ACLD to return to normal operations in the future. This, coupled with safety protocols that have already been in place, not only further safeguards the vulnerable residents and the courageous staff who support them, but also further protects ACLD's families and the community at large. ✕



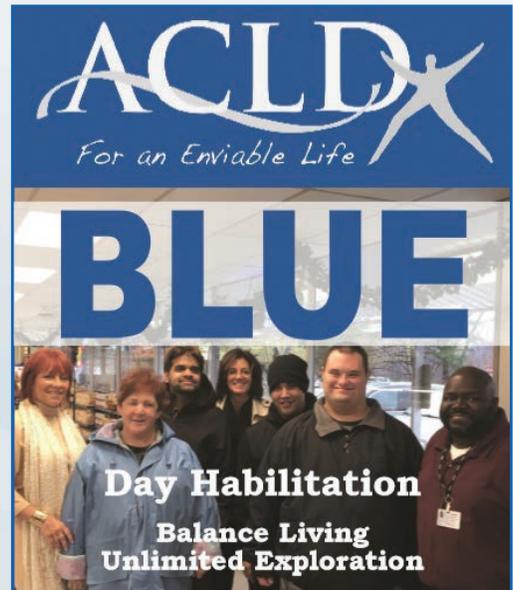
Essential staff receiving the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.



ACLD to Open New BLUE Program

ACLD will be opening its newest program this spring, an autism-focused Adult Day program called BLUE (Balance Living Unlimited Exploration). This program, located in Deer Park, will provide support and services to 30 adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and will have a focus on personal interests and exploration.

The brand new 5,000-square-foot building was constructed by Deer Park Holdings with a specialized focus in mind. From a sensory room to a media arts center, and a fitness center to culinary arts, BLUE is a unique program. The program will have traditional volunteer opportunities and community involvement to foster deeper connections with the community. ✕



New Head of Children's Services



Robin Stevens has been appointed Principal of ACLD's Children's Services. In this role, Stevens will be overseeing both Kramer Learning Center and The Alan and Ellen Spiegel Children's Center.

Stevens has been working with children with autism, learning and developmental disabilities for over 39 years, spending the last ten as Assistant Principal of Kramer Learning Center. Over the years, she has also worked at The Center for Developmental Disabilities and Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center. Other roles she has held within ACLD include Early Intervention/Home-Based Special Educator and Early Intervention Coordinator and Evaluator.

"I am excited about my new role, and I look forward to continued work with the Children's Services leadership team as we address today's challenges and work to develop new opportunities for ACLD children and families," said Stevens.

This change comes at the request of Noreen Clemens, Principal of Kramer Learning Center for the past 30 years, as she wished to take on a different role within the program. Noreen is now Assistant Principal of Spiegel Children's Center. We are pleased that Clemens will remain on staff and Linda Eisen will transition to a new role at Kramer Learning Center. ✕

Meet ACLD's New Executive Director, Rob Ciatto

Enviably Life News sat down with new Executive Director, Rob Ciatto, for a question and answer session to get to know him better.

Q. How did you get into this field and what has inspired you to dedicate your career to helping people with autism, learning and developmental disabilities?

A. I got my first internship in the field while I was an undergraduate student studying psychology at SUNY Old Westbury. I chose psychology because I knew I wanted to make an impact on people's lives on a personal level and help them reach their life goals. After graduating, I took my first full-time job as a Direct Care Counselor/Behavioral Assistant at AHRC Nassau. After taking a break from school for a couple of years, I returned to begin working on my Masters at C.W. Post.

Q. What are some of your favorite jobs that you have held in the I/DD field throughout your career?

A. I actually spent 20 years at AHRC including taking on several clinician roles early on, followed by being a Residential Director and then a Day & Vocational Director. Eventually, I became the Senior Director of Administration as I've always been very interested in the intricacies of what makes an organization function. I will always miss being a clinician though, and getting to analyze people and build relationships with them to help them reach their personal goals. However, I still have this approach today.

Q. For the last six years you worked in ACLD's executive office alongside the previous Executive Director, Bob Goldsmith. What was it like working with Bob?

A. In addition to the last six years, I also worked with Bob for six years at AHRC. Bob is an amazing human being, an incredible mentor and an even better friend. He has a wide range of life experiences including owning his own business and serving on the Board of Education for New York City. I've been lucky to be able to learn from him. He taught me a tremendous amount about taking care of the agency financially while also ensuring that all programs have the resources needed to help our staff and the people supported. For that I will always be grateful.

Q. How has the agency handled the ongoing pandemic, and what has impressed you the most in terms of how the staff has performed during this time?

A. I'm sure a lot of people are aware of the lengths we've gone to in order to safeguard our staff and the people we support including the relentless procurement of PPE, the creation of the Respite Center in Bethpage and the sanitization and temperature-taking procedures that have been implemented. The most notable aspect of our response to the pandemic though has been the commitment of the ACLD staff. I've had the privilege



to work alongside them through the toughest days, and I can undoubtedly say that they are all heroes! In times of crisis, you truly see what people are made of, and you see that people do this job because it is a calling. It's not just a job – it's a real calling. So many staff members worked around the clock and performed tasks in extreme circumstances that they never thought they would have to do. They did it without a second thought. It is because of them that we have been able to weather this storm and stay strong together.

Q. What are some of the highlights of the last six years for you?

A. Some of the biggest highlights were the expansion of the Day and Vocational programs, including the creation of Program Without Walls and the increase in the amount of people we help with employment services each year. The Residential Program has also grown significantly, with the biggest accomplishments being the acquisition of the State-run ICFs. It has been amazing to watch the quality of life improve for all those residents under our agency. Another highlight was bringing the transportation of the people we support in-house. Now, those who are transported are not in a vehicle for more than one hour and they are driven by ACLD staff who are able to accommodate their needs.

Read the full interview on acld.org/NewED. ✕

Celebrating Direct Support Professionals Week

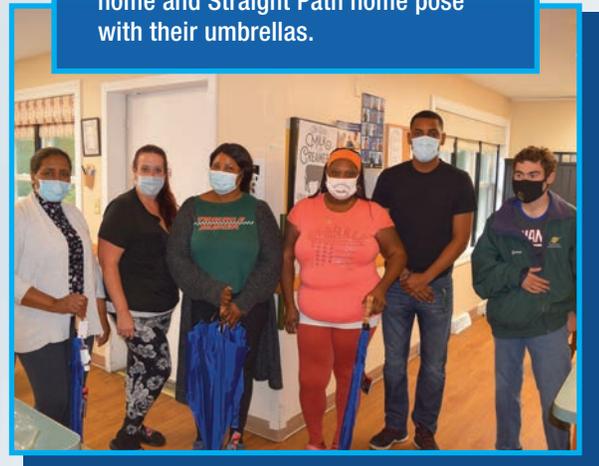
The important work of ACLD's Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) took on new meaning during the 2020 crisis as they became essential workers overnight. Now, more than ever, they are proven heroes on the frontlines, holding the line between a deadly pandemic and a vulnerable population.

Direct support staff were in the community residences and the Respite Center in Bethpage to safeguard ACLD's residents and nurse the sick people who did not require hospitalization back to health. Day habilitation staff were also deployed into the homes, some of which were COVID-19-positive residences, to do day habilitation activities. Exemplifying the person-centered approach, all DSPs worked hard to find out what activities each person enjoyed doing to keep their spirits up, while still staying safe. In addition to the typical duties encompassing a DSP role, they kept families informed about their loved ones, and frequently coordinated Zoom and FaceTime calls so families could visit virtually.

While DSP Appreciation Week activities were scaled back because of the pandemic, DSPs received a symbolic gift with a powerful message. Umbrellas were distributed with the note: "You are the umbrella that shelters the children, men and women who turn to ACLD for support from the many storms that challenge them each day." The gifts were a token of thanks for the integral role DSPs play in the lives of the people supported each day. ☒



Direct Support Professionals receiving umbrellas for DSP Appreciation Week. Clockwise: Rainbow 918 receives their gifts (above and below) and Dix Hills home and Straight Path home pose with their umbrellas.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES EMPLOYEE AWARDS

Congratulations to the winners of the ACLD Board of Trustees Annual Employee Awards presented in December. For the Exemplary Service Award the Board of Trustees had a difficult decision to make and instead chose to recognize three finalists. Longtime Board Member, Don Mitzner, and his wife, Gail, generously donated funds for the Exemplary Service Awards to make this possible.

Exemplary Service Award Recipients



Felicia Cantres, Seaford House Manager, volunteered to work in the Roslyn community residence at the beginning of the pandemic while still running the Seaford home at the same time. With the residents of both homes having to adjust to living without the activities of normal life, Cantres used her creativity to keep everyone's spirits up with games, karaoke and other activities. Her willingness to spend more time with the men and women we support, putting their welfare above her own, demonstrated how huge her heart is and how committed she is to the ACLD mission.



Gina Purser, Community Habilitation Manager, hosted a beautiful wedding in her backyard for a man supported in her program who had to cancel his original dream wedding due to COVID-19. Purser used social media to spread this story in her community, which resulted in businesses and individuals donating food, a cake, decorations and photography and hair-styling services to help make the wedding as wonderful as possible. She exemplified going above and beyond, and her efforts helped to create an enviable life for this man and his new wife.



Amy Schmeling, Chichester House Manager, had the first ACLD home with COVID-19-positive residents, and she worked around the clock to care for each person supported. In addition to also working shifts at the Respite Center in Bethpage, Schmeling reported to work even on her days off, taking the residents' temperatures, helping them bathe, giving them fluids and providing anything else she could to ensure their well-being. With her commitment and strong leadership, the house was able to fight the virus and see all the residents successfully recover.

Gail White-Rison Scholarship Recipient



Artesha Tyler-Granville, Coordinator of Regulatory Affairs, is currently enrolled in the Stony Brook University Master's Cohort Program, a decision she was inspired to make by Gail White-Rison herself. As a decade-plus employee of ACLD, Tyler-Granville is known for her dedication to ACLD's mission, and for safeguarding the men and women we support. She will be graduating this spring with her Master's in liberal studies with a concentration in human services.

Program Continues to Artfully Brighten Lives During Reopening

The ACLD Art Studio has kept the creative juices of the men and women supported flowing throughout the pandemic, initially with their virtual projects on the ACLD YouTube channel, and now with in-person art classes and contests.



Community residences working on virtual art projects at home.

Each week until the day programs reopened, the Facebook and Instagram followers would see the smiling face of Diane Salome-Diaz, Art Studio Program & Community Coordinator, teaching a variety of projects such as canvas paintings, stunning graffiti and beaded initials with yarn, just to name a few. When the day

habilitation sites began to reopen in phases in September, the men and women supported got right to work creating some masterpieces in the class.

In December, the Art Studio held a contest to decide the new cover of the ACLD Orientation Manual for new employees. Men and women supported in community residences and Day Habilitation programs submitted their own designs for the cover and the winning design was chosen a couple weeks later. The winning design, "The Boat," was created by the group of Tina B., Allison R., Stephanie M. and Abby L. from the Levittown Bridges Day Program. The two runners up, "People Holding Hands" and "The Rainbow," were made by Robert K. and Sean D. respectively, both from the Bethpage Day Program. The Art Studio thanks the Program Without Walls day program for collecting all the voting ballots from the residences and delivering them to the Art Studio to be counted. ❌



Corey, from Bethpage Day Program, painting upon program reopening.



Diane Salome-Diaz instructs a virtual art project.



Winners of the ACLD Orientation Manual art contest.

Local Community Holds RewearAble Drive

For the second year in a row, the parishioners of St. Bernard's Church in Levittown came together to support RewearAble, a program of ACLD. The drive was hosted by Catholic Daughters of the Americas. RewearAble, which began 2016, collects new and gently used clothing while providing jobs for adults of different abilities.

The clothing drive was held in October and collected almost 8,000 pounds of clothes, shoes and other accessories. This clothing drive surpassed the success of the drive that the parish held in 2019 that totaled an impressive 5,000 pounds. Drives like these help support the jobs of the men and women with disabilities who are employed in the program, help them earn a paycheck, increase their independence and give them additional opportunities to foster supportive relationships in the community.

Thanks to the Pastor of St. Bernard's Church, Father Ralph Sommer, Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Pius X #1690 for organizing the successful drive, and co-chairs of the drive, Susan Maher and Louise Cassano.

If you know of any organization or event that could hold a drive to support RewearAble, call RewearAble at (516) 822-2099. ☒



RewearAble staff and Catholic Daughters of the Americas showing the almost 8,000-pound load.



Catholic Daughters of the Americas posing with the RewearAble truck.

PLAYING SOME TUNES

ACLD music classes were back in session at the Day Habilitation Program in Bethpage as the men and women ACLD supports excitedly tapped out tunes. Everyone was overjoyed at seeing each other, once again playing sweet music together. ☒



Spiegel Center Expansion

The Alan and Ellen Spiegel Children's Center in Bay Shore is currently under expansion. **The project will add four additional classrooms and connect the gym to the main school building to ease the transition to and from gym class.** The construction will also add more seating for the gym, which also serves as a stage for graduation. The project is expected to be completed by the start of the summer. The project was partially funded through a variety of generous donors including a large gift made by the Fay J. Lindner Foundation. ☒



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Founded in 1957, ACLD is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit agency whose mission is to provide opportunities to children and adults with autism, learning and developmental disabilities to pursue enviable lives, promote independence and foster supportive relationships within the community. ACLD employs more than 1,300 people and operates more than 100 program sites including community residences and apartment programs across Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Services include early childhood services, day habilitation, residential alternatives, vocational training and job placement, recreation programs, respite, family support services, and occupational, speech and physical therapies.

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HOLIDAY FOOD DONATION

Thanks to ACLD's friends at Progressive Marketing Group, Inc. (PMG) for their gift of catered holiday lunches from The Rust & Gold. This generous donation, received by the East Northport and East Islip community residences, put smiles on the faces of residents and staff. ✨



IN MEMORIAM

ACLD honors the memory of the men and women who passed away over the past year during the pandemic. While they may no longer be with us, they will always be remembered. See ACLD's heartfelt tribute video at acld.org/In-Memorial.



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