

The RCAL Independent



"Your Independence is Our Mission"

Volume 3, 2018



LOAN CLOSET HOURS

Monday through Friday

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.* If these hours are not convenient, please call 331-0541 x 27 and other arrangements can be made.

* Please note the loan closet is not an emergency service.

RCAL Honors Its Founder and Celebrates 35 Years of Service

KINGSTON, NY -- In 1978, on a stretch of road, a drunk driver caused a head on collision that changed Joan Gundersen's life forever. Joan had two friends as passengers, one of whom escaped with minor injuries. The other, sadly, never made it home to her family. The accident, which nearly took Joan's life, had her trapped in the wreckage for several hours before being taken by ambulance.

Recuperation took more than a year in a hospital where Joan faced physical challenges that changed the direction of her life. Using her wheelchair, Joan was out to dinner with family, when their waitress completely ignored her while taking the family's order, and then asked a family member, "...and what will she have?" At that moment, Joan realized the many challenges she herself would face and decided she wanted to become an advocate for herself and others in the community. That decision led her to founding **RCAL**.

New York State was in its fourth year of the Independent Living Movement when Joan applied for, and won a grant in 1982 to establish the Resource Center for Accessible Living (**RCAL**), which was incorporated in 1983. It was one of the first Independent Living Centers (ILCs) established in New York.

This year we celebrate **RCAL's** 35th year of providing services to individuals with disabilities by assisting them with living more independently in their community. **RCAL** provides respite, community habilitation, support groups, representative payee services, benefits advisement, equipment loan closet, accessibility advisement, care management, special education advocacy, employment services, information, and referral.

RCAL honored Joan and celebrated its 35th Anniversary at its First Annual Founder's Celebration held on Thursday, October 25, 2018 at Ole Savannah in Kingston, New York. Photo collage of the evening's event (on page 2) includes **RCAL's** Board of Directors, staff, friends, family, and supporters of **RCAL**.

FIRST ANNUAL FOUNDER'S CELEBRATION



All photos by Bonnie Brill

LOAN CLOSET

NEWS

THE LOAN CLOSET 30/30:

A WORTHY, REASONABLE FUNDRAISING EXTRAVAGANZA YOU CAN FEEL GREAT ABOUT!

BATH TRANSFER BENCHES CANES COMMODES CRUTCHES

SHOWER SEATS WHEELCHAIRS WALKERS

30 YEARS

Five years after RCAL's founding, we opened the loan closet. 30 years is how long RCAL's loan closet has been offering medical equipment on loan to individuals who cannot afford to buy their own or whose insurance does not cover the cost!

ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIRS HOSPITAL BEDS

30 DOLLARS

That's how much we're asking from each and every person who has been personally helped by the loan closet, whose friend or family member has been helped, who thinks they may someday need the loan closet, or just thinks it's a great resource for the community!

HOVER LIFTS PORTABLE RAMPS RAISED TOILET SEATS

RCAL is a not-for-profit agency in Ulster County that has been helping people with disabilities since 1983. Your donations help us continue its loan closet in your community.

Support RCAL's Loan Closet by donating \$30 or more—for its 30th Anniversary!

Please complete this form and return it with your \$30 donation to:

RCAL

727 Ulster Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please make checks payable to: RCAL

or

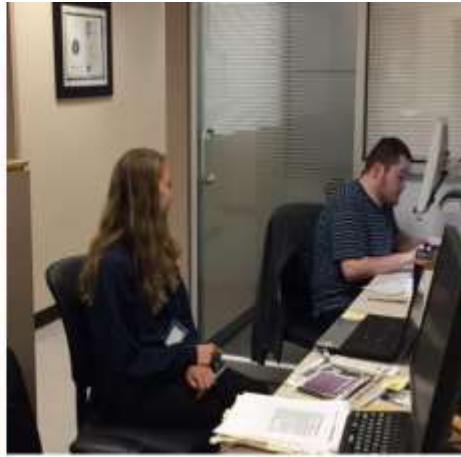
Donate online: <http://www.rcal.org/donate/>

Introducing Doug!

Jaime Bunt our Disability Awareness Instructor and Peer Advocate was matched with her second Seeing Eye Dog, Doug a two-years-old black lab, on July 25, 2018. Jaime and Doug returned to RCAL in August after two and a half weeks of bonding and training at the Seeing Eye in Morristown NJ. Doug is spunky and energetic with a sweet disposition. Doug enjoys his job as a Seeing Eye Dog especially working outdoors and getting to explore new places. When he is not working he loves carrying around stuffed toys, playing fetch and running around outside with Jonas (Jaime's retired Seeing Eye Dog).



Pictured Above: Doug at his graduation from The Seeing Eye; Doug, Jaime Bunt, and Kristen Lake, Trainer, The Seeing Eye; and Jaime and Doug at Morristown, New Jersey.



Thank You
to our
First Annual Founder's
Celebration Sponsors

❧

Independent Living Inc.
RUPCO
&
United Way of Ulster County

A special thank you to
Deejay Brian Rittie
&
Photographer Bonnie Brill

RCAL was very happy to welcome Thomas Buboltz as a summer intern. Thomas came to **RCAL** as an intern through the Northeastern Association of the Blind in Albany (NABA). During his internship here at **RCAL**, Thomas worked diligently to scan our archived materials into digital format so that they can be accessed and stored in a more efficient way. Thomas was also able to read much of the archived articles to gain a broad understanding of **RCAL's** history and the motivation behind its founding in 1983. Thank you Thomas for all your hard work!

Thomas shared some of his own experience and related it to **RCAL's** desire that all individuals, whether they have a disability or not, should be able to live independently in their own communities and be free to make their own choices.

Thomas' experience:
During the summer after I finished 6th grade I had to have major spine surgery due to a 13 degree curve in my spine. I was born with reverse scoliosis. My doctor said if I didn't have the operation I would spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair due to the damage to my nervous system. I now live with two titanium rods in my back. One rod runs down the back of my neck to the end of my spine. The other rod gives my spine support on the right side. The surgery was risky, but I took that chance to prevent having to be in a wheelchair. When the operation was over and I woke up a few hours later, I was told I wouldn't be able to walk for a few weeks. I stayed hospitalized and in a wheelchair for 6 weeks. By the time I left the hospital, I recovered enough to walk. No one asks to have a disability but, neither did I ask to be legally blind either. My blindness is also a struggle, but I manage to keep my independence. Because of my experience, I can relate to **RCAL's** founder, Joan Gundersen, and her desire to create a community where people can live more independently. What I'm trying to say is no matter what disability a person has we all need to learn to accept each other and work together to maintain our independence.

(Pictured above with Thomas Buboltz is Elizabeth Jankowsky from NABA.)



SPECIAL EDUCATION RIGHTS WORKSHOPS

Dates: January 9, February 13, & March 13
9:30-11:30 a.m.

RCAL, 727 Ulster Avenue, Kingston
845-331-0541

Worried about your child's progress at school?

What are your parental rights with regards to your child's education?

What are your school district's responsibilities and mandates?

What if you disagree with district's recommendation for your child?

Do you know how to access and utilize NYSED regulations?

A child's greatest advocate is his/her parent. You are their first teacher and know your child best. When it comes to advocating in the school environment under the umbrella of special education, there are somethings every parent should know. **Helping parents, and professionals, understand the student's rights is the goal of this workshop.**

RCAL strongly encourages all parents to take this workshop whether for the first time or as a review. Going forth, all new parents seeking special education advocacy will be required to take this workshop.

Feel free to share with your child's PTA, other parents and anyone you feel may benefit from this workshop.

- Pre-registration is required. As we are a not-for-profit agency, *RCAL* requests a \$5.00 donation to cover cost of workshop materials.
- The workshops are designed for parents, educators, and human service professionals.
- Workshops may also be scheduled and held at a location more convenient to specific groups of participants.
- Please call Gloria Toporowski, Special Education Advocate at 845-331-0541 ext. 14 for more information.





Do you still have holiday shopping to do?

Amazon Smile: You shop, Amazon Gives!

How does it work?



- ♦ Go to www.smile.amazon.com
- ♦ Enter your Amazon username & password
- ♦ Choose **RCAL** as your charity
- ♦ Shop Amazon Smile to donate 0.5% of your eligible purchase to **RCAL**

For questions call (845) 331-0541. Happy Shopping!

ACB Applauds House on Final Passage of Marrakesh Treaty

WASHINGTON (Sept. 26, 2018) — The American Council of the Blind applauds the U.S. House of representatives after passage of the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act (S. 2559) late Tuesday evening. The House vote moves the implementing legislation to the President's desk for signage, and the treaty to the State Department for final preparation of the diplomatic papers allowing the U.S. to become one of the official Marrakesh countries committed to the expanded availability of accessible published works from around the world.

"We're excited that Congress was able to move Marrakesh over the legislative finish line during its final days of business before leaving for the October recess," said ACB President Kim Charlson. "But what is most exciting is that U.S. citizens who are blind or have other print disabilities will soon be able to have access to special format materials available in other countries in English and other languages, as well as people with all types of print disabilities around the world who will soon be able to gain access to American published works for the first time in an accessible format."

The Marrakesh Treaty was the product of years of deliberations between the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), publishers, libraries, and disability rights advocates. The treaty was a response to the grave concerns over the cumbersome international copyright laws that make it difficult to gain access to published works in accessible formats like braille or audio format.

The act, which was brought to the House floor by Rep. Bob Goodlatte, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, amends U.S. copyright law necessary for full implementation of the treaty. Hearing no objection, the legislation passed with unanimous consent.

"We've had countless numbers of advocates who have helped make this treaty a reality in the United States," said ACB Executive Director Eric Bridges.

"We wish to thank the U.S. Congress, particularly House Chairman Goodlatte and Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker for showing true leadership by shepherding this treaty through the legislative channels."

The American Council of the Blind is a national grassroots consumer organization representing Americans who are blind and visually impaired. With 70 affiliates, ACB strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and to improve quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people. Together, we make a bright future. Learn more by visiting www.acb.org.

Meghan Parker

Director of Advocacy

New York Association on Independent Living

Email: mparker@ilny.org



Winter Open House

**Wednesday, December 12, 2018
12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

RCAL

**(Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc.)
727 Ulster Avenue
Kingston, NY**

**Please RSVP to Carol
(845) 331-0541 ext. 20**

Come join us for our delightful and diverse buffet!

Last week more than 150 members of Congress launched a new group focused on expanding and preserving Social Security benefits for seniors, people with disabilities, and their families. The Expand Social Security Caucus was co-founded by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Representatives John Larson (D-CT), Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Conor Lamb (D-PA) in the House. It is an exciting development in the effort to push for a Social Security program that truly meets the needs of the millions of seniors, people with disabilities, and families, who depend on their benefits to pay for housing, food, medicine, and other basic necessities.

The members of the caucus highlighted the importance of Social Security for the 63 million individuals currently receiving benefits. According to the Supplemental Poverty Measure from the U.S. Census, [Social Security lifted 27 million people out of poverty in 2017](#), including 17 million seniors age 65 and over. The caucus is focused on promoting the idea that our country should be expanding Social Security, rather than limiting or cutting it, because of the critical role the program plays in allowing people to retire in dignity, and allowing families to stay afloat financially in case of a working family member's disability or death.

Unfortunately, the current administration, rather than protecting or expanding the program, proposed earlier this year to cut Social Security benefits by \$72 billion over a 10-year period. There have also been [efforts to cut the Social Security benefits of working families](#) by using those benefits to pay for family leave. These kinds of attacks mean that the caucus must not only push to expand Social Security, but also fight to defend it against efforts to dismantle or weaken the program. There is real hope that their efforts will pay off, however. There are already a [number of proposals in Congress that would expand Social Security](#), such as Rep. Larson's [Social Security 2100 Act](#), which already has 174 Democratic co-sponsors. The support of the caucus and other members of Congress who are committed to preserving and expanding Social Security is key to ensuring that the program provides for both current and future generations of seniors and families.

Justice in Aging is a national non-profit legal advocacy organization that fights senior poverty through law. Formerly the National Senior Citizens Law Center, since 1972 we've worked for access to affordable health care and economic security for older adults with limited resources, focusing especially on populations that have traditionally lacked legal protection such as women, people of color, LGBT individuals, and people with limited English proficiency. Through targeted advocacy, litigation, and the trainings and resources we provide to local advocates, we ensure access to the social safety net programs that poor seniors depend on, including Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

For more information about Justice in Aging go to: <http://www.justiceinaging.org/>

United Way Day of Caring



This year's United Way's Day of Caring was on Wednesday, September 12th. Despite a morning of rain, a team from Woodland Pond came to RCAL to paint the conference room and help with some outdoor clean-up. THANK YOU to the team from Woodland Pond! RCAL's team rescheduled for a later, sunnier day for some playground and garden clean-up at the YWCA.

Pictured above, from RCAL (left to right): Gilles Malkine, Miriam Oreglio, Doug, Jaime Bunt, Katie Clayton, Qiwan Hylton, Rachel Fischetti, Gloria Toporowski, Carol Ray-Hudson, Alex Thompson.

Pictured right: Katie Clayton and Brenda DeBaun (both from RCAL) cleaning-up the playground at the YWCA.



PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE AT RCAL!

RESPITE PROVIDER

Respite is a service that provides relief to individuals who are responsible for the primary care and support of an individual with a developmental disability.

COMMUNITY HABILITATION SUPPORT STAFF

Community Habilitation is a service which provides experience and skill development to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live at home, in order that they may live more independently.

For more information contact Brenda DeBaun, bdebaun@rcal.org or (845) 331-0541 ext. 30.



RCAL Welcomes New Staff:

- * Chris Al-Nazer was hired as Transition Specialist for the Open Doors and Money Follows the Person (MFP) Program. She has been working in the human services field since 2003 and has extensive experience working in Office of Mental Health (OMH) residential programs as well as experience with OMH Care Coordination. She was most recently employed as an OMH Care Coordination supervisor with Gateway Industries. Chris enjoys spending time with family/friends and her beloved dog. She is looking forward to gaining further work experience as **RCAL**'s new transition specialist.
- * Deborah Adams was hired as a Care Coordinator for **RCAL** in June 2018. She has her BA in English Literature from University of Delaware. Prior to being hired at **RCAL**, Deborah worked as a teacher's aide, DSP and Employment Specialist at Cerebral Palsy of Ulster County. She is also a yoga teacher and loves spending time with her two cats and her sponsored goat, Leo who lives at the Catskill Animal Sanctuary. Deborah is so happy to be working at **RCAL**!
- * Matthew Russo was hired as a Care Coordinator at **RCAL** in August of 2018. He graduated from SUNY New Paltz in May of 2017 with a degree in Sociology and a concentration in Human Services. Before joining **RCAL** he worked as a DSP for New Horizons Resources. When Matt isn't working he enjoys going on nature walks and spending time with loved ones.
- * Nicole was first hired by **RCAL** as a Community Habilitation worker in May of 2017. Nicole was then hired as a Care Coordinator. Nicole is a graduate of Dutchess Community college and is getting closer to completing her Bachelor's degree in Human Services. Nicole was previously employed at MHA of Ulster County as a Service Planning Coordinator. Nicole enjoys true crime shows, and spending time with her family and close friends.



JOIN OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

RCAL is recruiting interested individuals with diverse backgrounds in finance, fund development, nonprofit management and/or program development to serve on its Board of Directors.

For more information, please contact:

Anthony Mignone, Interim CEO
(845) 331-0541