THOSE WORDS BEGAN the thank you note RCAL received from Cindy and Colin Kouhout this spring.

The Kouhouts run a small Christian organization with a big heart, called *Isaiah61—Beauty for Ashes*. Their organization has been running short-term mission trips to the Dominican Republic for about five years. In March the Kouhouts approached Gilles Malkine, RCAL's Loan Closet Representative, asking about the possibility of receiving some donations of durable medical equipment for the community in Constanza, in the Dominican Republic, with whom they were working.

It can be feast or famine in the Loan closet at RCAL and we tend to have a huge surplus of certain items, while other items we often have a waiting list for. At the time RCAL was contacted by the Kouhouts there was a healthy supply of equipment on hand and members of RCAL staff made a decision to pay it forward, offering a significant and varied selection of equipment.

Getting the equipment to the Caribbean was the next hurdle. No FedEx or Postal Service delivers to the Kouhout’s medical clinic in Constanza. After much research, many phone calls, and a lot of legwork, the items were loaded into a 40-foot shipping container and transported to the Dominican Republic.

(continued on page 2)
calls and some intensive networking, a local shipping company was found that would make that unusual trip. Friends and supporters of the Kouhouts drove the items to the shipping company, and they arrived at the door of the clinic in early March.

Cindy’s enthusiastic thanks to RCAL included photos of the equipment having just landed, and some of the grateful recipients.

_isaiah61—Beauty for Ashes_ is funded through private donations. They partner with a local Pastor in the Dominican Republic who is their main contact for the work they do there. A typical mission trip for Cindy and Colin consists of building a home for a needy family, running a medical clinic, providing school supplies for children, etc. They also do outreach to two other communities that are only accessible via motorcycle and mule.

RCAL’s mission is to create accessibility and choice for persons with disabilities here in Ulster County and surrounding communities. The DR may be geographically distant, but RCAL was happy to extend its reach.

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When you or someone you love has been placed in, or is at risk of being placed in a nursing home... **RCAL CAN HELP!**

845-331-0541  **WWW.RCAL.ORG**
Spring in Ulster County is a perfect time to get outside and enjoy some of the most breathtaking views in the Hudson Valley. Comprised of over 7500 protected acres along the Shawangunk Ridge, the Mohonk Preserve straddles the towns of New Paltz, Gardiner, Marlleton and Rosendale. The Preserve is the largest non-profit nature preserve in the state. Whether you get out and hike regularly or are thinking about going for the first time, Mohonk has something for everyone.

The Preserve’s mission is to protect the Shawangunk Mountains by inspiring people to care for, enjoy, and explore the natural world. To accomplish its mission, the Preserve conducts programs in four key areas—environmental education, serving both school children and adults; land protection, saving high-priority land on the ridge; land stewardship, balancing the protection of land and wildlife with opportunities for recreation; and scientific research, creating a “living laboratory” on the land.

In addition to their commitment to protecting, preserving and promoting the beauty of the “gunks,” accessibility has been a major priority to the Preserve for some time. In the early nineties, RCAL began collaborating with Mohonk to establish accessible trails, both for the Mountain House and on the preserve lands. In 2006, RCAL recognized Kathy Ambrosini, for leadership in pioneering the Nature Access® program, and for the development of the Educational center—both projects for which RCAL was a key partner and consultant.

The Preserve has incorporated many principles of universal design to make as much of the land accessible to everyone as possible. The Visitor Center has many accessible highlights including a paved sensory trail one-eighth of a mile long, a small theater with short closed caption video, an elevator to offer access to both floors of The Center, and accessible bathrooms. At the Visitor Center one can learn about the preserve, the history, and the conservation efforts.

Mohonk has over 30 miles of carriage roads. The carriage roads are well maintained, clearly marked, wide gravel paths, with even footing, and are flat, or have gradual inclines/declines. These trails can accommodate a jogging stroller or an all-terrain wheelchair. Mohonk currently has two all-terrain wheelchairs with a 250 lb. weight limit that they loan out and can be reserved in advance by calling the Visitors Center. There is accessible parking available at all of the trail heads.

The staff includes State Certified Inclusivity Assessors with combined expertise in special education and outdoor education. Accessibility consultations are available for individuals, families, and self-guided group visits. Mohonk can arrange for seating accommodations or ASL interprets for many events and programs. Mohonk’s commitment to bring nature to everyone goes beyond just the individual visit to the preserve. Their Nature Access Program offers accessibility trainings to outdoor professionals and their trained accessibility consultants can help you plan your visit.

www.mohonkpreserve.org

by Hillary Nichols, Supervisor of Employment Services, RCAL
MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 9AM – 3PM

A LITTLE HISTORY: 30 years ago RCAL began offering medical equipment on loan to individuals who were unable to afford to buy their own or whose insurance did not cover the cost! We called it our loan closet. AN APPEAL: Now RCAL is asking for $30 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!

HELP US KEEP THIS RESOURCE GOING AND GROWING

30|30

SEND A TAX-DEDUCTABLE GIFT OF $3, $30, $300, $3,000, $30,000...

To make your donation to the Loan Closet 30/30 please visit our website at www.rcal.org, click donate and make your gift online. Or send a check made out to RCAL to 727 Ulster Avenue, Kingston, NY 12401.
Advocates continue work in Albany after early wins this winter.

by Alex Thompson, Systems Advocate

RCAL STAFF TRAVELED to Albany on May 1st for the New York Association on Independent Living’s Legislative Advocacy Day. The meeting agenda was shorter than in past years. Earlier this year we celebrated passage into law of two of our advocacy goals. We secured state law protecting against discrimination of people trying to rent an apartment with housing vouchers. Early voting was also passed into law.

The agenda for our meetings included discussions around eliminating subminimum wage for people with disabilities, waiving the state’s immunity from the ADA and Section 504, reactivating the advocacy office for people with disabilities, and establishing requirements for accessible taxis and ridesharing, and requirements to expand paratransit services.

• Although many businesses and organizations have stopped paying people subminimum wage, the practice still continues. Advocates are fighting to totally eliminate subminimum wages. Earning less than the minimum wage for a full day’s work is not right. People with disabilities that are not hired by employers at a minimum wage can still find life enrichment, community participation, and skills development through other programs, including those offered by RCAL. Skills development offered through specialized one on one programs may lead to integrated employment opportunities at a fair wage and ultimately prove more fulfilling for an individual. We don’t want to place people into settings which may lead to unfulfilled potential. You can watch the free film “Bottom Dollars” on subminimum wage at rootedinrights.org/video/bottom-dollars/

• In 2001, a divided Supreme Court Ruling referred to as University of Alabama v. Garrett, gave states immunity from federal lawsuits by individuals seeking money damages for violations of the ADA’s employment discrimination provisions. As a result, state workers who have been discriminated against cannot sue their employer in Federal court for money damages, including lost wages. NYAIL is strongly supporting a bill (S.5208/A.1092) to restore the same protections to state workers that all other workers have.

For more information about fair pay for people with disabilities watch the free film Bottom Dollars on subminimum wage at rootedinrights.org/video/bottom-dollars/

(continued on page 6)
• The State Office for the Advocate for People with Disabilities was shutdown several years ago, justified by claims of consolidating services. What we have found and experienced is that there is no advocacy office for people with disabilities. Our concerns and issues relating to people with disabilities are being handled through a vast maze of government organizations which don’t always understand our individuals. There is representation for people that fall into categories of developmental disability, mental health, aging, blindness or visual impairment, and substance abuse. But we still need a central advocacy office which is inclusive of all people with disabilities and provides a unified advocacy voice into the many parts of government in Albany.

• Transportation continues to be a problem for our region and advocates statewide. We continue to ask for accessible transportation (Uber, Lyft, taxis) mandates so that people with disabilities aren’t stuck at home. Medicaid transportation providers take people to doctor’s appointments, but to privately hire those same vehicles for a trip is an astronomical expense. We need more options in the private market. Hopefully the government will be able to assist businesses in making investments in expanding accessible on-demand transportation services. There is still the concern that not everyone can afford private taxi services. We continue to advocate in support of Ulster County Area Transit in providing improved paratransit services.
Our advocates met with Assemblyman Cahill and staff representing Senator Amedore. Both meetings went well. We’re always appreciative that our representatives in Albany take the time to listen to our concerns. Both offices were very supportive of our transportation concerns. Assemblyman Cahill fought to create a commission which produced recommendations for accessible Uber and Lyft. We hope that report will help to improve access in Ulster County. Senator Amedore’s staff expressed interest in also joining on our transportation bills.

We’re looking forward to a productive end of the legislative session in June where we hope more of our bills will become law.

Read more about the issues at ilny.us/advocacy/advocacy-priorities
Join RCAL’s Advocacy Alerts mailing list: eepurl.com/crqKX9

Contact Gloria Toporowski at 845-331-0541 x14 or gtoporowski@rcal.org to find out more about our Special Education Information and Advocacy and workshops
Support Groups at RCAL

RCAL Support Groups are a welcoming, accessible, safe place to learn and share feelings, fears, hopes, ideas, and experiences. You can learn information about specific concerns, develop new coping mechanisms, grow, receive encouragement and emotional support, support others, become empowered, and share with other people who may be experiencing similar issues.

Support Group Schedule

**AMPUTEE SUPPORT**
Last Monday of the month, 6pm

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**
2nd Monday of the month, 3:30pm

**HANDS ON COMMUNICATION** (Sign Language)
2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 6:30 - 9pm

**AUTISM SOCIAL SKILLS**
Saturdays, 10:30-11:30 am

**ALZHEIMER’S CAREGIVERS**
2nd Thursday of the month, 5:30-7pm

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PART TIME OPPORTUNITY

Community Habilitation and Respite Providers Needed

QUALIFICATIONS

- Clean Driver’s License
- A Good Heart
- Compassion

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

—A VALID NYS DRIVER’S LICENSE IS REQUIRED—

Contact Supervisor Brenda DeBaun, Bdebaun@rcal.org or send fax to 845.331.2076

FOR MORE INFO OR TO INQUIRE ABOUT STARTING YOUR OWN SUPPORT GROUP, PLEASE CALL: 845-331-0541
What is a Representative Payee?
A representative payee is a person or organization that is appointed by the Social Security Administration to receive SSI or SSD benefits on an beneficiary’s behalf.

What is a Beneficiary?
A beneficiary is a person who receives Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. Social Security and SSI are two different programs. The Social Security Administration administers both.

Who Qualifies for RCAL’s Representative Payee Services?
RCAL can provide Representative Payee Services for any Social Security Beneficiary who is having difficulty managing their finances. RCAL can also provide this service for an individual who already has a representative payee and would like to switch to RCAL.

Why does an independent living center provide a financial service?
In 2015, RCAL added the Representative Payee program to the services that we provide. A natural addition to our services, the program supports our vision to “empower individuals with disabilities to live independently and participate in all aspects of community life.”

We started with a handful of individuals but soon expanded to 100+ individuals when another local agency that provided Representative Payee services discontinued offering the service. We now serve almost 200 individuals with this program. We use their Social Security funds to pay their rent, utilities and provide them with a weekly stipend for their miscellaneous needs.

What happens if I have debt?
RCAL’s Rep Payee administrator will verify the details of the debt, examining the expenses and the available funds, before making a recommendation to the beneficiary. A payee is not required to repay the beneficiary’s past debt unless it involves a debt to the federal government. RCAL will never sacrifice a beneficiary’s needs to pay other expenses, a past debt, or to accumulate conserved funds.

RCAL will never sacrifice a beneficiary’s needs to pay other expenses, a past debt, or to accumulate conserved funds.

—Sherry Crescini, Chief Fiscal Officer, RCAL
Chief Fiscal Officer, Sherry Crescini has this to say about the Representative Payee Program:

“It provides a much needed service, but it was unlike any program that we had ever run. Money is an anxiety-producing, stressful topic for many people. And for a person to be told that they are not allowed to control how, or where, their money is spent, can often cause tension. Our response to this tension is to work with each individual to create their own budget, helping them to balance their expenses with their goals. As we learn and grow with the program, as we create relationships with our individuals through the budgeting process and our consistent support, much of this stress is alleviated. We have streamlined and continue to refine our processes, and trust has developed. Individuals who participate in the program can now live in the community, secure in the knowledge that their rent and utilities will be paid.

We assist them with saving money for specific goals. Many of our participants are able to have their own space for the first time in their lives. Knowing that this program makes a difference in someone’s ability to live independently in the community makes the hard work and stress of the program worthwhile.”

Did you know...

RCAL’s Representative Payee program has a new phone number. The number is 845-331-7039.

REP PAYEE HOURS:

Weekly Check Distribution: Tuesday, 1:45-3:45pm

Telephone Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 12 - 2pm

Walk-In Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, 2:30 - 3:45pm

Visit our website at rcal.org/services/representative-payee/ for more information or to download the materials for an application.
It would be all so easy if you had a map to the Maze. If the same old routines worked. If they’d just stop moving The Cheese. But things keep changing. —Spencer Johnson

As Sniff, Scurry, Hem and Haw experience in the New York Times Bestseller Who Moved the Cheese, change is inevitable, and our response to it is ultimately what defines us. A healthy organization responds to that inevitability by maintaining a posture of growth and development. RCAL has been on the forefront of the independent living movement since it’s inception as the 2nd Independent Living Center in New York State. In 2018, we celebrated 35 years of service, and our founder, Joan Gunderson. This year, we decided it was time to create a new Strategic Plan to examine how we are identifying the best ways to understand and achieve our goals.

As the first step in the process, RCAL is working with New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON) who provided a training about Strategic Planning. They told us what to expect during the process and what reasonable goals and expectations should be.

We learned that a strategic planning process identifies strategies what will best enable a nonprofit to advance its mission. As staff and board members engage in the process, they jointly commit to measurable goals, approve priorities for implementation, and also commit to revisiting the organization’s strategies on an ongoing basis as the organization’s internal and external environments change.

Throughout April, in consultation with Susan Weinrich from NYCON, RCAL began the process by developing a survey to be distributed to all of RCAL’s stakeholders, including staff, board, donors, and friends. The survey was intended to identify RCAL’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, in what is called a “S.W.O.T.” analysis. We learned that looking at external as well as internal factors (such as our own nonprofit’s staff capacity to accomplish its goals) is important.

On Saturday, May 11th, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Anthony Mignone, Chief Operating Officer Kathy Hochman, NYCON consultant Susan Weinrich and the RCAL board members met for an all day retreat at Mohonk Preserve. The day was spent reviewing the results of the survey, examining the “S.W.O.T.” analysis and planning next steps.

We are very excited about the work so far and will keep our newsletter readers updated as we move through the strategic planning process.

RCAL is grateful to everyone who responded to the survey—your feedback is crucial to our future.

JOIN OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

For more information, please contact:
ANTHONY MIGNONE, Interim CEO
845.331.0541 | amignone@rcal.org

RCAL is recruiting interested individuals with backgrounds in finance, fund development, nonprofit management and/or program development to serve on its Board of Directors. HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
## Executive
- **Anthony Mignone** - Chief Executive Officer
- **Kathy Hochman** - Chief Operating Officer
- **Sherry Crescini** - Chief Fiscal Officer
- **Carol Ray-Hudson** - Office Administrator

## Administrative Support
- **Zoe Gold** - Clerical/Office Assistant
- **Marge Knox** - Assistant Office Administrator
- **Jan Melchior** - HR Onboarding & Marketing
- **Christine Ranges** - Receptionist

## Advocates
- **Debbie Denise** - Benefits Advisor
- **Alex Thompson** - Systems Advocate
- **Mary Ayers** - Peer Advocate
- **Zachary Hilty** - Peer Advocate
- **Richard Roman** - Peer Advocate

## Care Management
- **Diann Keyser** - SUPERVISOR
- **Deborah Adams** - Care Manager
- **Jennifer Davis** - Care Manager
- **Karoline Ford** - Care Manager
- **Courtney Frantz** - Care Manager
- **Bridget Haug** - Care Manager
- **Nicole Hubbard** - Care Manager
- **Melissa Rappleyea** - Care Manager
- **Christina Rea** - Care Manager
- **Lorene Rosario** - Care Manager
- **Eric Sazer** - Care Manager
- **Thea Smalley** - Care Manager

## Community Habilitation / Respite
- **Brenda DeBaun** - SUPERVISOR
- **Paul Stokes** - Community Habilitation/Clerical Office Assistant

## Community Transitions
- **Chris** - Transition Specialist
- **Tom Caplan** - Olmstead Housing Subsidy Specialist/Employment Specialist

## Education
- **Gloria Toporowski** - Special Education Advocate
- **Patrina Torres** - Transition Assistance Project Specialist/Employment Specialist

## Health Home & NHTD
- **Katie Clayton** - NHTD Service Coordinator/Health Home Care Manager
- **Juliet Greenwood** - NHTD Service Coordinator/Health Home Care Manager

## Fiscal Office
- **Rachel Fischetti** - Fiscal Assistant
- **Qiwanna Hylton** - Fiscal Assistant
- **Miriam Oreglio** - Representative Payee Assistant

## Loan Closet / Accessibility
- **Gilles Malkine** - Architectural Modification & Loan Closet Representative/Accessibility Consultant

## Supported Employment
- **Hillary Nichols** - SUPERVISOR
- **Christine Castellana** - Employment Specialist
- **Amanda Henderson** - Employment Specialist
- **Jennifer Mehlich** - Employment Specialist
- **Kim Parrett** - Employment Specialist
- **Ellen Wren** - Business Liaison for Employment Services
**VISION STATEMENT**

Our vision is to create a fully accessible, integrated community without barriers for people with disabilities, to assist, empower individuals with disabilities to live independently and participate in all aspects of community life.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

RCAL’s mission is to create accessibility and choice for persons with disabilities in Ulster County and surrounding communities through advocacy, self-determination and services promoting inclusion, empowerment and participation in all aspects of life.

**RESOURCES CENTER FOR**

727 Ulster Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
(p) 845.331.0541 (f) 845.331.2076 (tty) 845.331.2076
www.rcal.org

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**MEET THE STAFF**

**AMANDA HENDERSON** joined RCAL as an Employment Specialist in February. She has a bachelors degree in psychology from the University of Rhode Island and recently received a masters degree in forensic mental health from the Sage Graduate schools in Albany. She has worked as an employment specialist for 2 PROS (personalized recovery oriented services) programs as well as for a supported housing program. Originally from Middletown, in her free time she likes to spend time with her husband, her cats, to read a good book or watch a good show.

**JARELL FLEMINGS** joined RCAL in March as our new custodial staff. He fits us into a busy schedule as he also works for United Health Care in Kingston. A native of Poughkeepsie, Jarell now lives in Kingston. Jarell has a twin sister and 2 older siblings. He plays and follows basketball and is an enthusiastic boxing fan.

**ERIC SAZER**, joined RCAL in March as both as a Comm Hab worker and as a Care Manager. Now full time as a Care Manager, Eric has a background in film and video production, creative writing and improvisational acting in addition to his work with individuals with traumatic brain injuries and developmental disabilities. Hailing from Long Island, Eric has been living in the Hudson Valley on and off since 2000. He is currently working on his first novel, a comedic look at obsession.