

Citizens Options Unlimited Validated as a Compass Agency Once Again

The annual Compass Validation was conducted the week of May 8, 2024, by the NYS Division of Quality Improvement (DQI) and Bureau of Program Certification. This is an annual review to ensure Citizens Options Unlimited continues to meet all the state Compass criteria as well as the standards set forth in its Compass Management Plan and regulatory standards. The three-day review yielded exceptional results, and Citizens Options Unlimited was recertified.

The auditors engaged in a wide range of activities throughout their visit. They interviewed advocates and board members, attended empowerment events such as the POMs Rally and Voice for Choice initiative, and participated in house and family meetings, council meetings, and other community events. A strong emphasis was placed on person-centered initiatives, which were evident in every aspect of the agency's operations.

The auditors were impressed with the quality of supports and services offered at all levels of the organization. They commended the variety of activities and staff efforts that consistently promote person-centered outcomes. It was also noted that people supported by Citizens Options Unlimited play an active role in the agency's operations, making their voices heard and influencing key decisions.

Citizens recognizes Direct Support Professionals, whose work every day ensures the people support through our services lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. Their dedication is truly unmatched.

During the Validation Visit, the auditors also visited various sites and conducted joint surveys with AHRC Nassau's Regulatory Affairs Department. OPWDD recommended adding a formal tracking procedure to the complaint process and uploading the incident reporting 149. Both have been initiated and will be adopted into policy.

Congratulations and thank you to the Councils, DSP's, Management, Executive team, Board of Director, the Compass Committee and all stakeholders!



Mission Statement & Management Plan Annual Review

Each year, Citizens Options Unlimited reviews its Mission Statement and Compass Management Plan. This process begins in the fall with reviews by the Council and Compass Committee, followed by recommended changes being forwarded to the Board of Directors for their review.

Our Mission is clear and thriving!

The mission statement of **Citizens Options Unlimited** defines our purpose, core functions, and goals. In other words, it tells everyone who we are, what we do, why we do it — all in just a few words.

Citizens Options Unlimited
Supports people to live the life they choose.

Vision Statement
A world where all people
are valued.



COMPASS MANAGEMENT PLAN and MISSION STATEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW— Council Review Up First!

Council Recommendations: Due October 2024

COMPASS Committee Recommendations: Due December 2024

Board of Director's: Due January 2025

“We look forward to this annual review” says Advocate, Coleen Mackin. “We must always evolve, always enhance. As a Compass agency we must expand and grow a positive culture, thus the commitment to this annual review. Where were we last year? Where are we today? We will find out shortly.”

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week may have come to an end, but we will always celebrate this amazing team!

“I would like to recognize all the DSPs that show up every day for our loved ones with compassion and dedication. We have many people that have come in and out of my sister's lives and there are those that stand out as exceptional in their compassion, empathy and selfless nature.”

-Sibling



Mission Statement A Strong Advocate and Gracious Lady

“Seeing Roz can brighten anyone’s day because she is such a positive person. It inspires positivity in yourself,” said Eileen Stewart-Rooney, who supports Roz on setting the direction of her life.

Though Roz Adler’s life looks a little different than it once did, she continues to live life to the fullest at her new home at the Helen Kaplan ICF.

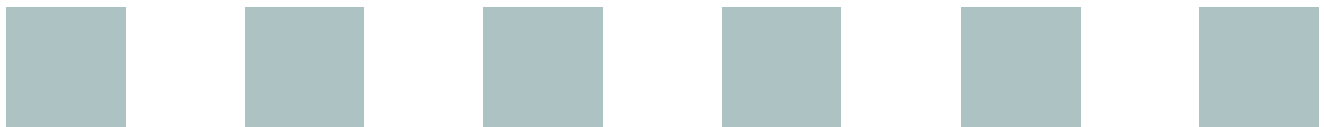
Approximately 20 years ago, Roz, who once lived in an apartment in Wantagh, served on the AHRC Nassau Board of Directors, where she, in her words, “spoke up for people who couldn’t talk for themselves.”

Among Roz’s accomplishments on the board were her advocacy for the use of vans instead of buses for transporting people supported. Buses, particularly school buses, were not only uncomfortable, but signaled that the passengers were disabled. Roz, among other self-advocates, felt that the buses were not age-appropriate for adults. Roz had the opportunity to help pick out the vans and its features, including large windows, comfortable seats, and arm rests. The use of these different vehicles remains standard to this day, enhancing the dignity and everyday experiences of all.



To this day, Roz’s smile lights up her home. Nowadays, when Roz has downtime, she stays connected with family and friends through her iPad, and she enjoys doing word searches, drawing on her tablet, reading and enjoying art projects.

Roz is proud of her self-advocacy work, and her constant positivity, even in the face of the challenges that come her way, continues to inspire.



Annual Council Board Presentation



Robyn Lipschultz presented to the Citizens Board of Directors. A strong advocate for herself and others, the following is her presentation:

Good afternoon. My name is Robyn, and I am a strong advocate for myself and others. I would like to thank the Board of Directors for all their support—CEO Stanford Perry, Hallie Klein, Board President, and our Executive team—for the opportunity to share with you our full journey to inclusion and Social Roles. Strong advocacy continued this past year. Advocacy locally, statewide, and nationally continued to address the workforce crisis and support our DSPs.

We remain committed to Person-Centered Planning.

Inclusion: Citizens supports complete community involvement. To fully be a part of our communities,

people must first be included. Community engagement is an important right and is the opportunity for people with disabilities to live in and enjoy their community to the same extent as people without disabilities, while being valued and treated with dignity and respect. It is belonging to a community built on true connection to others. This leads to building social roles.

Voter Registration Drive: We are actively creating opportunities for people to register to vote and exercise their right as citizens to vote if a person chooses to do so. Thank you.



Robyn then directed the board to watch a video created by the Council. Thank you, Robyn!

Board Physical Plant Inspections by Colleen Tapia and Susan Dowling

This Compass initiative whether conducted in-person or virtually, showcases a commitment to maintaining high standards across sites, emphasizing the importance of a safe, welcoming environment for all. Great job to everyone contributing to these successes.

A special thanks to the Board Inspectors, who are committed to this process. It is vital in maintaining the Board's connections to people's home.

The annual committee meeting was held on March 14, 2024. During the meeting, it was noted that the total number of completed inspections in 2023 saw a significant increase compared to 2022. This uptick is attributed to 2023 being the first year the agency was able to achieve 100% completion of self-surveys with board follow-up, after the inspection suspensions during the COVID pandemic.

The maintenance department was commended for its prompt response in addressing all issues identified by the board inspectors, particularly any prominent or potential hazards. It was determined that the 2023 inspection results will serve as the baseline for future year-to-year comparisons. The committee also agreed to maintain the hybrid approach of virtual and on-site inspections, recognizing the effectiveness and benefits of both methods. Furthermore, it was recommended that a single form be used going forward, allowing board inspectors to indicate whether an inspection was conducted virtually or in person.

Sue Dowling has been instrumental in coordinating this initiative since its inception. Our sincere thanks to Sue for her professionalism, talent, and expertise.



Members of the Board of Directors and Citizens management staff at a prior annual Physical Plant Inspection meeting.



**SIBLING GROUP
SUMMER IS OVER, HERE COME THE HOLIDAYS!**

Join Us!

November 7, 2024: Virtual Meeting 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

ID: 851 7829 9695 Passcode: 202713
One tap mobile
+16469313860,,85178299695#,,,,*202713# US
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/ksMJECHzL>



**December 10, 2024: Holiday Party -Brookville
Mansion 6 – 8 p.m.**

Please contact Colleen Tapia at ctapia@ahrc.org for more information.



From the Desk of the Citizens Options Unlimited, CEO ,Stanford Perry

Dear Families and Friends,

This past month has been a time of reflection, as we look back on all that our agency has accomplished and how it continues to open new doors for the future.

This summer, Camp Loyaltown campers made a lifetime of memories. Although the last bus of happy campers left on September 8, the spirit of Camp Loyaltown lives on in our community of dedicated staff, supporters, and families.

On August 29, camp families came together for an evening dedicated to honoring the donors and supporters of Camp Loyaltown’s Brick Campaign while also launching a \$50,000 match campaign to install a new well at camp. With your support and the leadership of the Gamell family, we’re confident we can reach our goal, ensuring future generations can enjoy summers filled with fun at Camp Loyaltown.



From September 8–14, we had the pleasure of celebrating the many contributions of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) as part of DSP Recognition Week. It’s important that we recognize the critical role DSPs play, not only during this special week but year-round. I encourage you to join me in advocating for federal recognition of the DSP role.

Thanks to DSPs and committed support staff, we are able to ensure the health, safety, independence, and inclusion of people with disabilities. These dedicated teams also create unforgettable experiences, like the beach-themed party at the Helen Kaplan Center and the pirate-themed celebration in the Sensory Garden of the Shoreham Intermediate Care Facility.

Thank you to our incredible community of families, friends, staff, and supporters. Your dedication and generosity continue to bring our mission to life.

Best regards,

Citizens Council by Tessa Guillaume-Lewis

It is amazing what a small group can accomplish. The Citizens Options Unlimited Council has been working diligently this year to increase their member participation, their civic duties, and their ability to assist others. The council members continue to explore ideas for fundraising and assisting Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) while also reviewing their rights monthly and understanding the responsibilities and consequences of exercising those rights.

To increase our member participation, the Citizens Council board discussed many ways to best to accomplish this goal. Currently, Matt Hofele and Steven Barsh are headlining the “Come Back to Council” campaign. They actively reach out to various program locations when the meeting is drawing near to remind and encourage members to participate. They continue to work with peers sharing the importance of their voice on the Council and their community.

Matt is currently working with staff to reach out to elected officials to advocate for the DSPs and ensure that they receive a cost of living raise to support staff retention which will in turn help keep him and his peers safe. Steven is currently creating flyers that will remind those of the option to participate.

The Citizens Council members take voting rights very seriously. The belief that the right to vote among everyone is fundamental is shared by all. The Council has collaborated diligently with people supported to ensure that they know their voice is loud and will be heard at the polls in November. At every Council meeting, one of the main discussions is registering to vote, how to know where you can vote, and how to gather information on the candidates running for reelection.

In September, the Council also enjoyed their first outdoor BBQ meeting held in the backyard of North Cedar Street. Everyone had a great time singing, dancing, and enjoying the good food served while looking back at the summer which included bowling events, waterparks, county fairs, ball games and so much more. The Council focused on promoting more community inclusion with its members and sharing their experiences at the meeting. Members are now directing their attention to the annual walkathon and fundraising along with the upcoming events hosted by Lynne Brewer, Community Relations Liaison.

Lake Grove Bike2the Beach



Backyard BBQ

Thank you, Council members for your advocacy and all you do and a special thank you to the DSPs who support the people who make this happen. We appreciate all of you.



Splish Splash



Bowling and Dave and Busters



Executive Council

March 2024:

- Elise Olsen did Zumba with the Council.
- We started taking ideas for activities for the Compass Validation visit that highlight our Compass efforts.
- Amy Urich came to talk about her role at camp and what to expect at camp this summer.
- Willard T. Derr, Chief Financial Officer, spoke to the Council about the agency budget, including revenue and where the money goes.
- Doug Golub, former president of Medisked, LLC, came to the Council and spoke about leadership and the qualities of a good leader.

April 2024:

- Sr. Talent Acquisition Specialist Giovanni Dainotto spoke to the Council about the hiring process and what goes into hiring new staff. He mentioned that if anyone is interested, they can help with the open houses.
- We continued to campaign for the 3.2% COLA increase and encouraged Governor Kathy Hochul to include the funding in her budget for staff.
- Anne Miller, RN, Director of Quality Assurance, came to the Council to discuss incident trends, the reporting process, and the time frame involved.
- We continued to gather activity and speaker ideas for the upcoming Compass Validation visit.

May 2024:

- We had the honor and pleasure of having AHRC Nassau Vice President of Operations Shaun Weathers as our guest speaker at our Council meeting for the Compass Validation visit. He answered questions about staffing and agency issues and provided insight into the annual day hab picnic, mentioning that due to conflicts with the park, the picnic would be held in September.
- Candice Comer from the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) attended the Council meeting, which was held in Brookville during our Validation visit.
- Don Bynum, Director Facilities & Maintenance Operations spoke to the Council about how the maintenance request system works and the overall process.
- Michelle Rudoff, Quality Assurance Trainer, was a panelist for the final webinar in The Arc New York Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee's series "Advancing Cultural & Linguistic Competence, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion" presented by Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC).
- Colleen Tapia, Compass and QI Administrator reviewed the Sexuality and Consent Policy.

June 2024:

- Elise Olsen did a presentation on PRIDE.
- Michelle Rudoff was nominated and won the True Link's 2023 Grant for Best Practices in Person-Centered Excellence. The Council came up with ideas for the grant money, including:
 - A Person-Centered Excellence conference.
 - A Person-Centered Excellence guidebook.
 - Making Dreams Come True.
 - Person-Centered training or rally for those coming out of high school.
- All the Councils are participating in a voter registration initiative, aiming to get more people registered to vote.
- Colleen Tapia and Michelle Rudoff visited an AHRC Nassau hubsite in East Meadow to start the voter registration initiative.
- Vice President of Operations Sallyanne Burgess joined the Council meeting and spoke about her role and took questions from the Council.

Be Sure to Vote!



Personal Outcomes Measures Update By Bridget Cariello

In 2024, approximately 290 Personal Outcome Measures (POM) interviews were conducted to date (9/23/24). As often as possible, POMs are typically conducted every three years or as needed upon request with priority given to people who have not had a formal interview.

POM staff continue to participate in Council and Compass meetings. Personal Outcome personnel also provide support to people at their Life Planning meetings as requested. We have been encouraging people to share their story through the “Show Us Your POMs,” initiative that celebrates personal journeys.

In addition, the POM department has developed presentations that address choices (Voice For Choice), high school transitions (Discovering You Workshops) and focus groups (Day Option initiatives). Empowerment training also continues to be offered to people virtually on various topics. In addition, training on POMs continues to be provided at New Hire Orientation.

Based on the 2024 data to date, the highest number of outcomes met is found in the indicators of Health (86.27%) Safety (88.73%) and Fair Treatment (91.20%). The highest number of supports met are Safety (98.24%), Fair Treatment (94.01%) and Health (94.72%). The lowest scores remain in Integration and Socials Roles.

The POM Department and varied support teams continue to increase training and conversation regarding the differences between community inclusion and community integration. The majority of the other indicator areas remained stable between quarters 2 and 3.

Citizens Options Unlimited operates within a family-oriented culture with an emphasis on building and maintaining strong connections with families, people supported and their staff. The data is reflective of our organizational commitment to meet and exceed Basic Assurances. Additionally, our Compass and CQL practices emphasize Basic Assurances which are a notable contributing factor to high data percentages within these domains. The Basic Assurances provide the foundation to ensure that a person builds a life of experience, opportunity, and a meaningful quality of life.

**Community integration is about people being a recognized, valued member of their community. At Citizens Options Unlimited we continue to support people to live the life they choose through integration, choice, and opportunity.*

Just a Touch of Kindness Can Start a Beautiful Friendship

By Michelle Rudoff

Anyone who knows me knows that I am the kind of person that likes to make sure that everyone feels loved and included. Well, while I was working as a Dining Hall assistant (D.A) up at Camp Loyaltown during Session 3, I would always stop and talk to a young man who is non-verbal but can make sounds and do signs to show what he wanted.

I sometimes would give him a hug and a little kiss on the head. Well, every time he saw me in the dining hall or around camp, he would smile and make a happy sound and clap. One evening while waiting in the Rec Hall for the evening activity or the camp store to open, I was talking to him, and he then opened his arms and hugged me on his own. His counselor and I were shocked.

A touch of kindness and compassion can make a difference in someone’s life.

Mr. Met By Michelle Rudoff

On Thursday September 6th around 6 p.m., my brother Paul and I walked across the street to the town of Valley Stream’s band shell where they were having an event honoring The New York Mets broadcaster Keith Raad, who is a Valley Stream native.

There were a lot of activities for the kids, like practicing pitching and basketball, and they also had a snow cone and taco trucks. Everyone enjoyed give-a-ways too. I got a Mets tumbler and bag.

After Keith Raad spoke, Mr. Met came out and took pictures with everyone. I not only got my picture taken, but I also got my Mr. Met Build-A-Bear signed by Mr. Met. I had a really nice time and had lots of fun. I want to thank my good friend Anthony Rossi for sharing with me the flyer for this event.



POM Rally 2024 – Imagine the POMabilities!

By Samantha Rodonis

This May, we had our annual POM Rally during our annual COMPASS validation visit. Our theme this year was “Imagine the POMabilities!”, but what exactly is a POMability? Well, a POMability is our ability to use our Personal Outcome Measures to create the life we want. By using our voices and our ability to speak up for ourselves and others we are using our greatest superpower.

This theme ran through all our presentations that day starting with CQL’s new director of Personal Outcome Measures, Rebecca Kasey, who spoke about how we can use our POMabilities in our community and through our social relationships we develop within the community. Rebecca led interactive activities that our Brookville audience, as well as our virtual audience, were able to be a part of. Our keynote speaker for our event was Joshua Mirsky, a truly inspiring gentleman who created the first ever Neurodiversity Flag, which was adopted by the state of New York. Not only did Josh design the flag, but he worked with senators and legislators to bring the flag to Albany where it is now legally recognized. Josh’s speech showed that anything is possible when you work hard, and his vision for the future is to have the flag recognized on a national level.

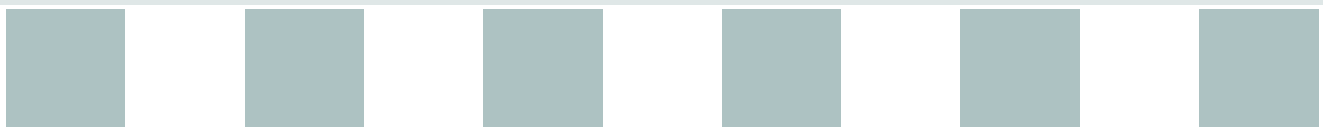
Advocacy is our greatest superpower, and that shown with our keynote speaker and our guest presenters. Three of our presenters spoke about how their advocacy led to amazing things in their lives. Matt Hofele and Leigh Fanuzzi spoke about their journey together to become the second co-certified POM team in the state of NY. Matt shared how he dreamt of becoming a POM Interviewer and with the help of the POM Department and his partner Leigh, he was able to achieve that with their co-certification in 2023.

Robert Abrams and John Klimaszewski shared their story about how they met and how John became a one-on-one volunteer through the agency to work with Robert. The two of them have developed a friendship that came from shared interests in music and nature that has grown tremendously. Through the volunteer program, they have attended music performances at Juilliard, spent time fishing and exploring nature as well as volunteering together at John’s temple and with the elderly. Through this relationship, Robert has been able to develop new skills such as learning how to use the LIRR as well as leading to more opportunities for the two of them to volunteer together.

John Carman shared a story about how he turned something from his POM Interview into his superpower. John always admired the local fire department in his hometown, Island Park. He always dreamt of becoming a lifesaver like they are, and he wanted to do that through learning CPR. Using this information from his POM, POM Interviewer and Trainer Susan Gill-Orange was able to assist John in registering for a CPR class here at the agency. John independently completed the class and earned his certification alongside other staff members of the agency. John is so proud of his accomplishment and now carries his CPR Certification card on him.

One of the highlights of this year’s rally was the inclusion of some of our directors who not only sat for POM interviews with the department but allowed us to share their personal stories and family photos to show the power of the POM and how it helps us to discover our own superpowers. Participating with us were Sallyanne Burgess, VP of Operations at Citizens Options Unlimited, Christopher Williams, Director of Day Habilitation, and Jim Stock Assistant Director of Talent Acquisition, Development and Engagement. All three shared personal stories about their lives, dreams and goals. Through their participation in the POM process, we gained deeper insights into who they are, while also giving them a better understanding of the process we use to support people.

Through all these amazing stories, the 2024 POM Rally was able to demonstrate the power of the POM and how each one of us has the power to make our goals and dreams a reality. Our ability to advocate for ourselves truly is our greatest superpower!



Esther Shea, an Inspirational Mentor

By Susan Gill-Orange

Sometimes you get to know people in your organization who go above and beyond what is expected of them to do. You can usually find them sharing a cup of tea with people who receive services and helping to make life more meaningful for others. One of those people is Esther Shea.

Esther is a Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional (QIDP) for the Shoreham Intermediate Care Facility (ICF). She has been working in this field for over 35 years.

"I worked at Shoreham prior to Citizens taking over. Left for a few years and have been back since Citizens took over," Esther said. "I have never organized a Seder before. A family member who has a brother at Shoreham asked if we were doing anything for Passover. I told her I would ensure we had something for her brother. Then I decided why not open it up to the whole campus. My thought is to do this every year. Hopefully it goes over well, and the people want to do it every year. I enjoy watching the people having a good time and experiencing life. I feel they should be able to do and participate in all aspects of life."

Recognizing the faith practices of many of the people we support is not only kind but is respectful of the constitutional right to practice one's religion. The Seder is the ritual meal eaten at the beginning of the festival of Passover. It is a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the story of which is found in the Old Testament book Exodus: "You shall tell your child on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" (Exodus 13:8).



At the Seder special blessings are recounted and the story of the Exodus is read. It is an important holiday for Jewish people everywhere.

Esther Shea has worked long and hard to incorporate the people she has supported for decades into the world around them. Often this means she volunteers her time to do this and is very humble and gracious about these wonderful doors she has opened.

In the past, she has held art shows, and regularly involves another congregant house in Centereach to participate in meals and church events all on her own time. This type of service to others is nothing less than inspirational for all who work diligently to support people who are grateful for the helping hand of mentors like Esther.

Thank you, Esther!



Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week

At Citizens Options Unlimited, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) empower people to live the lives they choose every day. From September 8-14, 2024, we celebrated national Direct Support Professionals Week by hearing many unique stories from DSPs throughout the agency. These stories varied in how DSPs came to the agency, how long they've been with us, and what experience they brought into the role.

What unites all the DSPs we spoke to is not just the dedication they have for the people they support, but also the significant personal growth they've experienced during their time here. We are continually and deeply thankful for each DSP, and we hope they enjoyed the many activities and events the week brought in their honor!



A Staff Appreciation Day to Remember by Jim Stock



Rainbows, cotton candy, and laughter filled the air on August 15th, 2024, as the Brookville Mansion was transformed to celebrate "The Greatest Staff on Earth!" Our annual Staff Appreciation Day was a whirlwind of fun, games, and unforgettable memories.

Mother Nature may have rained on our parade for our original date, but her plans were quickly foiled as we utilized our rain date. The sun emerged on August 15th, just in time for our extravaganza. The day started with a vibrant atmosphere, colorful decorations, festive music, and a DJ spinning tunes to keep the energy high.

No appreciation day would be complete without classic games, and we had plenty to offer. From ring toss and skee-ball to volleyball, there was something for everyone to enjoy. Prizes were plentiful, and the competitive spirit was fierce as colleagues cheered each other on.

For those seeking a more relaxed experience, our "Zen Den" was a haven of tranquility. Professional massage therapists were on hand to soothe away the stresses of daily life, leaving our staff feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. Feeling relaxed from their massages, the staff lined up for beautiful henna creations.

But the fun didn't stop there! The Double Dutch jump roping exhibition from The Dutchess of Ropes brought out the inner child in many, while the juggler amazed the crowd with his incredible skills. Karaoke enthusiasts belted out their favorite tunes, showcasing hidden talents and unleashing their inner rock stars.

Of course, no celebration would be complete without delicious food. Our carnival-themed menu featured an array of tasty treats, from cotton candy and popcorn to hot dogs and burgers, pizza, vegan and gluten-free delights, and ice cream treats. There was something to satisfy every craving.

The day was a resounding success, filled with laughter, camaraderie, and appreciation for "The Greatest Staff on Earth". Thank you to everyone who helped make our Staff Appreciation Day an unforgettable experience!



A Day of Belonging An Afternoon of Remembrance, Respect and Renewal

On June 18, a Day of Belonging was held at the Shoreham Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) with over 60 people in attendance under sunny skies.

This event was months in the making, embodying the themes of remembrance, respect, and renewal.

The event began with a gathering in the sensory garden, where attendees decorated rocks with messages of kindness and hope. There, they listened to inspiring words of inclusion, acceptance, and reflection from staff, administrators, and community members.

The Day of Belonging honored the legacy of Shayna Staton, a dedicated Residential Manager, and Brian Mason, who resided at the Shoreham ICF, in addition to mentioning those lost over the past two years. All have left a lasting impact on the ICF community with their lessons of gentleness, acceptance, loyalty, and love.

The ceremony included heartfelt singing and the release of bright red and orange butterflies, symbolizing renewal and remembrance as well as marking the Juneteenth holiday, celebrating freedom for all. Both Shayna and Brian had a bench dedicated in their honor, serving as a tangible reminder of the time with us.

Jerry Powers, Director of Residential Services, reflected, “The most crucial ingredient to building a sense of belonging is effort; we cannot belong if we don't choose to make the effort to engage with others.” He further shared, “Belonging requires us not only to be curious but also to be vulnerable. Therefore, belonging is an act of courage. Hopefully, today we all begin a journey of courage - let's be brave!”



Enjoying the Community



The men living the Ontario Avenue residence in Plainview had a blast attending *Seussical* at Argyle Theatre in Babylon.

They enjoyed a fun-filled outing that included heartfelt stories featuring lively, beloved characters like the *Cat in the Hat* and *Horton the Elephant*.

The show brought smiles to everyone's faces, and they even got to meet some of the cast members!



Inform Me—Integrated Seminars Series

“Empowering You” airs virtually at 11 a.m. every Friday. A DEI topic is presented on the first Friday of each month. Join for information and ideas to assist you to live the life you want!

September

What is an Elected Official? Who are our elected Officials?

October

Advocacy and Elections

How to exercise your right to vote.

DEI - Ableism

November

Elections!

Voting, Results and What Comes Next

DEI – Gender Bias and Sexism

December

Building Relationships with Elected Officials

DEI – Sexual Orientation & LGBTQIA+ Community

For information or registration:

Call Kate Zimmerman at 516-293-2016, ext. 5104

Join us for future webinars via Zoom right from your own home!

Open to members of the community, family members and advocates.

October 9, 2024, 6:30—7 p.m.

Advocacy in Action:

Election 2024 & Beyond

Presented by Nicole Zerillo, JD, *AHRC Nassau Director, Strategic Communications & Marketing*

Join us to gain a working knowledge of systems advocacy.

We'll discuss some of the ways you can make positive changes in attitudes, policies, systems and laws that impact people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For information or registration, please visit our website at AHRC.org, email lfanuzzi@ahrc.org or call 516-293-2016, ext. 5369.

More Happenings at Shoreham

The people at Shoreham ICF actively support their community in many ways. Recently, they cheered on the Shoreham-Wading River High School JV Baseball team. The Shoreham community was warm and welcoming, with everyone in the crowd rallying behind the local team. One of the team dads even offered to help the group navigate the field's tougher terrain, and passing lacrosse players stopped by to say hello, adding to the friendly atmosphere.

“That was the first time we attended a game,” said Program Coordinator Maura Boden. “It was amazing.”

In addition to showing their community spirit, the Shoreham group has sold flowers and handmade buttons at local lacrosse games. Staff members also collected donations for Operation Gratitude, which proudly delivers care packages to deployed troops, military children, new recruits, veterans, and first responders. These donations were dropped off at the local post office to support this important cause.



The Compass Committee & The Quality Enhancement Process

The Compass Committee continues to meet monthly to oversee, coordinate, and facilitate the Compass Management Plan, introduce new quality enhancement initiatives, and pursue personal outcomes for the people supported by Citizens Options Unlimited.

Quality improvement is measured through a Quality Enhancement Plan, which summarizes the agency's quality improvement goals for the year. Quarterly meetings are held to assess the agency's progress on these goals, with results reviewed at a Compass Committee meeting. This plan is updated annually, and as needed, to ensure ongoing progress and the implementation of necessary initiatives. It merges Compass and CQL standards to monitor and revise our quality improvement efforts throughout Citizens Options Unlimited. The Quality Improvement Initiative for the CQL Basic Assurances, also known as Factor 10, serves as a comprehensive monitoring and quality enhancement process for all CQL Basic Assurances.



Regulatory Affairs by Eric Rosen

During the timeframe between April 1st 2024 and September 30th 2024; nine site-based surveys were completed (all small IRAs). A version of OPWDD's site-based protocol continued to be utilized for these site-based surveys. In addition, person-centered reviews were completed for a sample of people receiving services from Citizens Options Unlimited, Inc.

Good practices noted during these reviews included people being encouraged to participate in the routine of their home, respectful & supportive interactions were observed, homes/bedrooms decorated according to personal preferences and the continued overall satisfaction with supports and services provided.



15

Voter Demonstration and Registration Drive Empowers People To Exercise Their Right to Vote



On August 20, the Executive Council hosted a voter demonstration and registration drive in the Brookville Mansion. The two-hour event was supported by two officials from the Nassau County Board of Elections (BOE) and a representative from The East Nassau League of Women Voters. “We have two machines, one for helping you read if you’re blind, and the other one to slip inside, when you filled out the ballot,” said Compass Quality Assurance Advisor and Trainer, and Citizens Council member, Steven Barsh.

With the presidential election season in full swing, our Compass team led an initiative to assist over 100 people supported and staff throughout the

agency to register to vote. People with disabilities face significant disadvantages when it comes to exercising their right to vote. Among the many issues facing voters with disabilities are accessibility, transportation and access to credible information. The Compass team’s voter registration drive aims to tackle just that.

“It’s about empowering people to exercise their rights as citizens and use their voice to advocate. Empowerment and advocacy are a huge part our Compass Management Plan,” said Compass and QI Administrator Colleen Tapia.

To accomplish this task, the Compass team engaged leaders representing several of Citizens Options Unlimited councils. They assigned tasks to the Executive Council, which is made up of advocates from both Citizens Options Unlimited and AHRC Nassau. The final group included the Day Hab Council, led by advocates in day services and the Work Force Council & Employment Services, which includes people benefitting from Prevocational and Supported Employment supports. Additionally, the Residential Councils, made up of members living in Citizens Options Unlimited and AHRC Nassau residences, also participated.

The initiative began mid-June, when Council members were tasked to visit houses and day site locations. There they discussed the importance of exercising one’s right to vote, provided voter training, shared resources, and assisted people to register. Day sites were asked to sign up for the voting demonstration ahead of time, ensuring everyone had the space to learn. Attendees sat with their support staff if needed and were able to register or simply watch the presentation from the BOE. After a brief overview of the parts of the ballot, the BOE officials passed around ballots for pizza, where voters had their choice of pizza toppings.

Then, people lined up as they would on Election Day, to cast their ballot. After casting, voters were even gifted an “I voted” sticker they proudly displayed. The event gathered a mix of new and seasoned voters, as everyone was free to mingle and ask questions, people happily shared tips and pointers about the voting process.

The experience was also enlightening for direct support staff, who learned what supports must be made available to all voters, along with how they can provide supports as well. These can include accommodation if a voter needs to sit or having a companion at the voting booth.

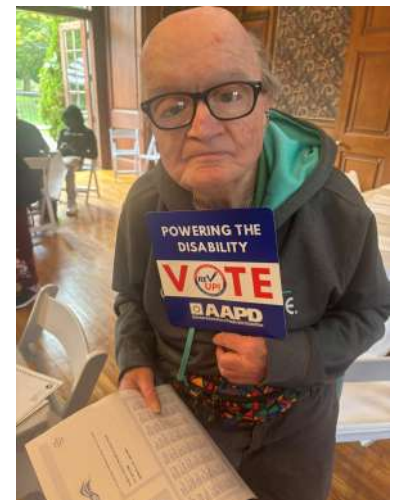
The overarching message of the initiative was to make people aware that whether a person has a disability, their right to vote is protected by law. Furthermore, if a person has a disability, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures people the right to vote and requires that all parts of voting—from registration to casting a ballot—is accessible and that people with disabilities have full and equal access to vote in all elections.

“We encourage everybody to get out and vote. We also work with other disability groups including the State Advocates of New York (SANYS), and we support everybody to be assisted in voting,” said Dana of The East Nassau League of Women Voters.

“We are supporters of diversity equity and inclusion and that includes populations who may need special assistance in terms of both registration and getting to the polls. I’m very pleased to be here today and see the terrific job that they’re doing making sure everybody gets the assistance they need to register to vote.”

Having clear and favorable laws in place is beneficial but enforcing them to work as intended is an entirely different task. Which is where our compass team came in to fill the gap.

For those looking for information for voting and registration, representatives from The East Nassau League of Women Voters suggest visiting www.vote411.org.

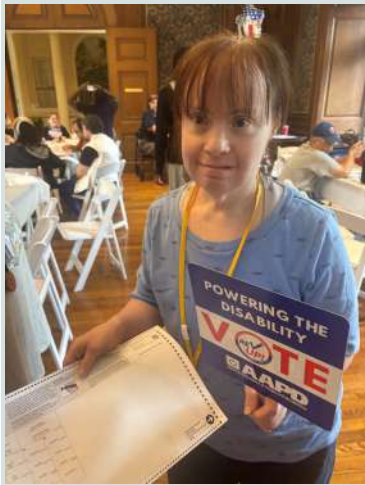


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Deadline to Register to Vote: Oct. 26
Early Voting: Oct. 26 – Nov. 3.
Election Day: Nov. 5



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