

Supporting people to live the lives they choose.

Proud to be Accredited by CQL | The Council On Quality and Leadership
Working toward a world of dignity, opportunity and community for all people

Citizens Options Unlimited COMPASS Semi-Annual Report

Celebrating Direct Support Professionals



At Citizens, DSPs are the heart of what we do. They're the epitome of the care and support we provide. You know them by a variety of titles: Direct Support Professional, Job Coach, Assistant Manager, Activities Specialist (and so many others) – but no matter what we call them, their work is the same: To support people to live full and happy lives; to empower them. From the moment a person wakes up, to the moment they close their eyes at night (and even while they sleep), DSPs are there.

DSPs are a critical and vital. Thus, it is with great enthusiasm we celebrate the amazing staff that work at Citizens and advocate tirelessly for these staff. The support and services we provide cannot be done without them.

We advocated tirelessly for many years for the BeFairtoDirectCare and now our advocacy movement for direct care has moved onto the Better Care, Better Jobs Act. This legislation will provide a historic investment in home and community-based services to strengthen and expand access to services and to support increased rates and competitive wages for direct care workers, among other significant proposals. Please visit Citizens Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts to join this advocacy effort!



Validation Visit and Personal Missions



"I want everyone to be treated with equity and equality. It's my new self-direction goal to reach more people with this message."
— Matt Hofele

Matt Hofele, who resides in a house supported by Citizens, has a goal. He wants to share his story of being misunderstood, silenced and ignored – to empower more people with developmental disabilities to voice their opinions and have confidence, especially to say no.

"People think they'll be punished. I want people with disabilities to be able to express themselves without fear," said Hofele, who in his young life experienced institutional abuse and neglect. "I want everyone to be treated with equity and equality. It's my new self-direction goal to reach more people with this message."

Hofele feels supported to achieve this goal through the person-centered support he receives from both AHRC Nassau and Citizens Options Unlimited. "Person-centered" means the person receiving agency services has a voice in decisions, policies and procedures, as well as overall quality management and improvement initiatives. AHRC Nassau and Citizens takes this one step further; people not only have a voice but have a seat at the table in steering and directing services and supports.

A meeting with agency staff, including the self-direction and communications departments, has already been scheduled to plan how Hofele can share his message with more people within and outside the disability community. His participation in this article is also a step toward this goal.

"Matt's story of empowerment is emblematic of how our agencies seek to partner with the people we support to not only lead the lives they choose, but feel supported to pursue their dreams," said Stanfort Perry, Executive Director of AHRC Nassau and Citizens Options Unlimited. "It's a profound honor to provide support services for self-advocates toward their creating more inclusion at all levels of society."

With missions firmly planted in person-centered supports, both AHRC Nassau and Citizens Options Unlimited recently passed the validation process from New York State's Office for People With Developmental Disabilities to renew their Compass designation. This distinction of excellence is held by only four agencies in New York State.

At both agencies, person-centered supports and services were not only maintained, but evolved in response to Covid-19.

"The impact of Covid-19 cannot be under-estimated in its disruption of our services and supports," shared Perry. "The pandemic required re-thinking operations at all levels. We came through this unprecedented period with an exceptional mix of virtual and in-person services – and ideas for how to better support our community."

The change is evident for Michelle Rudoff, a self-advocate and AHRC Quality Improvement Trainer, who has been with the agency for 18 years.

"More people are advocating for themselves," said Rudoff. "More folks are on Zoom and people are getting technology. It's helping people advocate for themselves about their life and what they want."

Staff Appreciation Day



Mission Statement

Mission Statement & Management Plan Annual Review

The Councils' annual review of the Mission Statement and Management Plan was completed in September. After the Councils' review, the COMPASS Committee will complete its review, followed by the Citizens Board of Directors in the New Year.

We would be thrilled to hear your suggestions. Please submit all recommendations to C. Tapia at ctapia@ahrc.org

Vision Statement
A world where all people
are valued.



Citizens' Strategic Planning Seeks to Achieve Better Agency Outcomes

Citizens Options Unlimited renewed its commitment to its mission, vision and values, following the start of the new Strategic Planning Process for 2020-2023. Citizens' Strategic Planning is a three-year process where stakeholders evaluate how to best meet the needs of our community in the short and long term. Below we've shared the vision we are working toward with our mission, as well as the values in forming the goals we are seeking to achieve.

Our Vision: A world where all people are valued.

Our Mission: Citizens supports people to live the lives they choose.

Our Values: At Citizens, we believe that:

- Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect
- Supports are best provided around people's needs, desires and choices
- A dedicated, compassionate and well-trained team provides exceptional supports
- Open and honest communication builds trust
- There is strength in diversity and inclusion
- Sound business practices, financial stability and innovation promote success
- Relationships with people and their families are vital to our success

Goals:

1. Strengthen brand awareness internally and externally and build consistent communication with key stakeholders of Citizens using social media and other platforms
2. Improve recruitment, training and engagement to maintain committed staff through innovative strategies.
3. Build organizational capacity to support quality and growth:
 - Technology
 - Research & Development
 - Services
 - Structure

Mission Statement in Action

"Forming relationships with the individuals we support and their families is very important to me", shares Alexandra Pinto, Direct Support Professional at Citizens Shoreham ICF. For Alexandra, Shoreham feels like home. After receiving her Master's Degree in Social Work, Alexandra returned to Shoreham, sharing how much she missed the people supported and her fellow team members. Alexandra has recently begun her position as Quality Assurance Manager. "I enjoy being able to ensure effective and efficient operations at Shoreham. Knowing that I have the opportunity to ensure the well-being, safety and quality care provided to the individuals, gives me joy."

She continues, "This job is something I truly enjoy and I love coming to work every day. Working with this population is my passion. If I can put a smile on someone's face and make them laugh, I know I am making an impact on their life." Thank you, Alexandra, for your hard work, dedication and commitment to the Citizens mission and the people we support.



The Sibling Group Stays Connected

In response to the pandemic, the Sibling Group has continued to meet virtually since March of 2021. The meetings have been held approximately every two to three months over the past year. Most recently, Dr. Hassan Abdulhaqq and Jim Stock from Human Resources attended to review staff recruitment and retention efforts. Chris O'Connor, Assoc. Executive Director, stated that "these meetings have been an invaluable way to come together, share information and support siblings." The group has discussed a wide range of topics. Chris O'Connor regularly attended meetings to provide an agency update in regard to the now "post pandemic" issues such as vaccinations.

At a Sibling Group meeting on April 1, 2021, Tom Schinkel from Care Design New York presented and discussed Able accounts and other financial matters.

Paul Giordano, AHRC Board President and founder of the group, thanked the siblings for their support and encouragement. We hope to join together in December 2021 at the Sibling Holiday Party, a tradition that was paused in 2020.

2021 SIBLING GROUP
Please join us for virtual meetings!

Sibling Group Virtual Meetings at 5:00pm.
Contact Colleen Tapia at ctapia@ahrc.org for details on how to connect.

For more information, please call 516-293-2016 extension 5492
or email ctapia@ahrc.org

Board Physical Plant Inspections by Colleen Tapia

The annual Board of Directors physical plant inspections meeting was held virtually on March 18, 2021.

It was agreed that the Board Inspectors would be in virtual contact with site managers to provide support and review any maintenance needs or concerns. As a result, a temporary process was developed and is underway. It appears very successful.

This temporary virtual modified approach for Board Physical Plant Inspections has been shared across applicable staff. This system will be modified as needed. A return to in person Board visits is pending.

Thank you to Sue Dowling who coordinates this process.



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

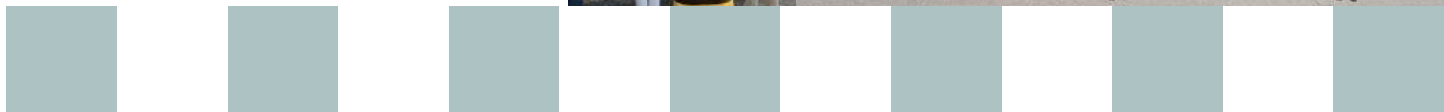
9/11 Commemoration Ceremonies

Ceremonies were held at the Brookville mansion, Freeport center and Plainview offices to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. Over 100 staff and people supported attended.

After the opening remarks, the pledge of allegiance was said and a moment of silence was observed at 9:03 a.m. for when the plane hit the South Tower.

The names of those lost on this day by staff and people supported were then read in memory and tribute.

Thank you to Stanford Perry, Chris O'Connor and Justin Dantzler for leading the ceremonies.



President of Citizens Options Unlimited Shares with the Compass Validation Team



Hallie Klein, President of Citizens Board of Directors was interviewed by the Compass Validation Team in May 2021 during the annual Compass Validation visit. As part of the Compass criteria, “the agency’s Board of Directors provides active oversight to ensure effectiveness of the agency in carrying out its mission, goals and commitment to quality improvement.”

Hallie provided specific examples on how the Board carries out these responsibilities. To quote the Compass validation report “Interview with Citizens Board President showed a deep commitment to the individuals served as well as staff and administrative officers. The BOD President showed true leadership over the past year, during the pandemic.”

Validation Visit 2021

The annual COMPASS recertification validation visit was held the week of May 18, 2021. COMPASS related activities were completed throughout the week and included interviews with Board members, advocates and staff in addition to standard COMPASS related activities, (house and family meetings, Council meetings, empowerment training etc.).

The validation visit was completed remotely and documentation (COMPASS minutes, Board minutes, Councils minutes, IRC/HRC minutes, survey results etc.) was provided and reviewed by DQI in advance.



The validation visit was a great success. A recommendation was made to enhance our communication regarding recruitment and retention of DSPs across stakeholders. An action plan for this recommendation was developed and implemented.

Citizens Options Unlimited was recertified as a COMPASS agency with no findings noted. Congratulations everyone!

Person Centered Excellence



CQL Third Visit Success!

The CQL third review required for on-going accreditation was completed on March 25, 2021. The following was provided, reviewed and accepted by CQL:

- Organizational Update
- Significant Changes in the Organizations
- Greatest Successes
- Basic Assurances Plan of Enhancement
- Factor 10 and the Basic Assurances® Monitoring Plan

The primary focus of the third visit centered on review and discussion of Personal Outcome Measures aggregate data. CQL also made some excellent suggestions which were reviewed at the next COMPASS meeting for implementation.



Robyn's Video

In July 2021, Robyn Lipshutz shared why she received the COVID-19 vaccine and why she hopes others will too, stating "It's very important to keep everybody safe and healthy." To view and learn more about Robyn's video visit:

<https://www.citizens-inc.org/covidinfo/>

Great advocacy Robyn! Thank you.



Personal Outcome Measures Recognition Award By Michelle Rudoff

When you look up the word POM (personal outcome measures) in the dictionary you will most likely see Jerri Walker's name next to the word because she is a woman that goes above and beyond for AHRC and Citizens, along with the people supported, by doing whatever she can to make sure they have smiles on their faces and they are happy.

Jerri does everything and anything that has been asked of her while trying to make a better life for herself by going back to school and running a volunteer Zoom program all at the same time. Sometimes she would have to cancel the evening session because she had some school stuff to do. The Virtual Camp Connections wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for Jerri Walker.

We love you Jerri; thanks for your love and support. Your hard work and dedication is well known and doesn't go unnoticed. Thanks.



Personal Outcome Measures Rally By Helene Ramer

WHEN YOUR DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT

The POMS Department had a very successful 2 hour virtual rally during the validation visit. We had a DJ from Caffeine Academy, a welcome introduction from Executive Director Stanford Perry, SANYS New York and SANYS Long Island, and CQL Council on Quality and Leadership. Presentations were also made by our very own self advocates: Michele Rudoff spoke about her Supportive Decision Making; Nefertiti Dolce spoke about getting US citizenship; Richard Infante spoke about his artwork and was the winner of the recent POM logo contest. The POM Department - Bridget Cariello, Susan Gill, Kate Zimmerman and I - explained what POMs are, why they are important and what matters most.



The theme of the rally - when your dreams take flight—was drawn by Richard. What are the steps to make your dreams come true? What do you need to do, and who will support you to achieve those dreams?

Richard won the prize for our logo contest. Lisa Moosemueller, East Meadow Art Site Manager, interviewed Richard. I was so impressed with Richard's emphasis about communicating your dreams for them to come true. Their interview is below.

I was fortunate enough to have interviewed Richard for his POM, where he said that he would like to sell his art work. Robert White, Senior Director of Human Resources, saw Richard's logo on my cubicle. He commented that he loved the picture. I told Robert that Richard was a terrific artist and asked if he would be interested in purchasing a picture. We then emailed Robert pictures of Richard's artwork and he chose a piece illustrating teamwork that hangs in his office. This was the beginning of Richard's Dream Taking Flight.

Thank you to everyone that attended and to all my teammates who made the event a success. Kate Zimmerman said that the rally united service providers, recipients, and community partners in a mission to promote independence and self-advocacy through the use of personal outcome measures, advocate stories, and sharing tools to put people in control of their lives. Susan Gill said that the ability to direct one's own life is the ultimate goal of the personal outcome process. It is a life changer. We look forward to learning people's dreams and supporting them to come true.



Self-Directed Success!

Bernie Medrano has a job he enjoys and a home he is proud of. His everyday life exceeds what he and his family thought were possible.

After Bernie graduated with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma from high school, he took a job at Home Depot. He felt limited and like he could do more.

Bernie’s family knew he had great potential, but even with the supports provided, Bernie’s stepmother worried about a lack of steady supports as he continued to grow into adulthood.

“We were slow to realize that Bernie is an overachiever with a powerful work ethic,” said Bernie’s stepfather, Doug.

Bernie’s consistent dedication to his work enabled him to move up from his position at Home Depot into an opportunity at American Maintenance, a company that subcontracts cleaning and maintenance jobs.

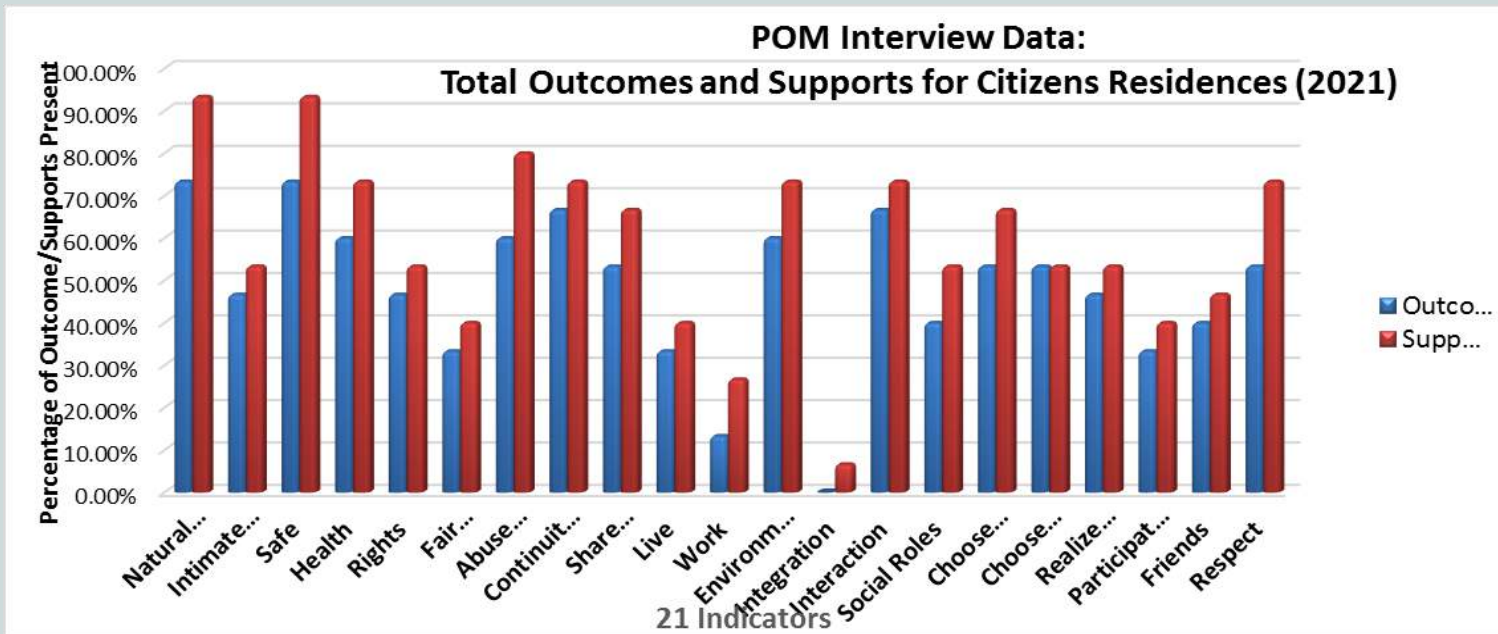
The relief that came from Bernie’s success at work was quickly met with concern as his increased earnings reduced his Supplemental Security Income (SSI) considerably. This development put his dreams of living independently at risk, as his earnings alone would not allow him to afford the cost of living.

Through the Individual Supports and Services (ISS) Housing Subsidy program under Citizens’ Self-Direction program, Bernie was supported toward making his dreams of greater independence possible. The ISS Housing Subsidy program provides financial support to people with developmental disabilities for home and apartment housing costs in the community. Way to go Bernie!

Personal Outcome Measures Update

Within our family of organizations quality enhancement efforts continue to focus on personal outcome measures (POM). Since January 2021, there was an 8% decrease in outcomes for people feeling safe in the subsection called continuity/security, however, the supports remain stable within this area. There were overall very high scores with an increase for people having exposure to and gaining a better understanding of their rights (outcomes 2.73% and supports 7.29%), as well as people choosing their personal goals (outcomes 11% and supports 2.5%) and realizing their personal goals (outcomes 5.6% and supports 8.9%). There are decreases seen in the POM data which are likely related to the pandemic and are consistent with an overarching societal reduction in community, group, individual and collective social opportunities due to mandatory social distancing. It appears that people have experienced a decrease in feeling safe impacting continuity and security during the pandemic and heightened anxieties regarding their health and the possibilities of becoming ill.

There is a welcome increase in rights and choosing and realizing personal goals is likely due to work completed in Factor 9, and the continued efforts of Compass and Executive Council in reaching out to the people to ensure they understand their rights and opportunities especially during such challenging times. The Day Services Department also worked diligently to implement new interest based activities to expand services. It is of importance to note that considerable efforts have been made to boost the available activities for people. One most notable effort was the recent implementation of a cross program interest survey utilized to capture people's interests, desires, and talents regarding how they wish to spend their time and direct their activities throughout the day. Data captured through this survey was compiled and categorized for popular interest groups (2020). In 2021, we have continued these efforts and captured data to



Loops by Linz! by Jerri Walker



Lindsay DeVito, a member of Respite Connections and Camp Loyaltown, is well known for helping others. During the pandemic she heard about the many people in crisis and decided to take action. With the support of her mom she began to create beautifully beaded mask holders and eye glass holders and boom! Loops by Linz was created. Lindsay plans on donating a percentage of her profits to No Kids Hungry so that she does her part to fight food insecurity at the end of 2021.

Hamptons Classic: The Mane Event! by Jerri Walker

April Kloepfer, a member of Virtual Connections has been riding horses since she was 3 years old. April began weekly lessons at ten years old and this is where she met her trainer Lisa. April is dedicated to her trainer and has followed Lisa to various farms. She began competing in horse shows such as the Hampton Classic since 2007. At this year's event April competed in three different events and won 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place.

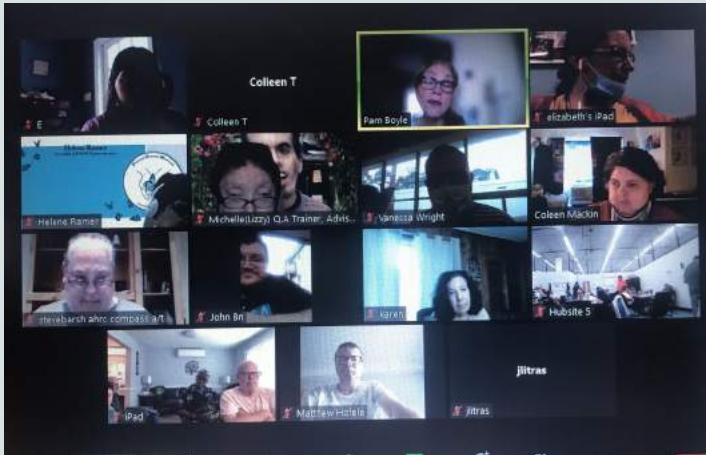


Congratulations to April Kloepfer who has won 2nd, 3rd and 4th place ribbons at this year's Hamptons Classic! Way to go April!

April shared how good it felt after the event because she had been training with Lisa all year for this event. April would recommend HorseAbility to anyone who wants to start horseback riding and shares the key is to find the right trainer for you which can be a process. April is pictured on her horse Elly!

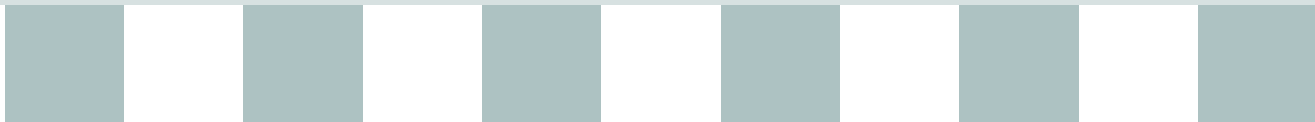
Executive Council

- A weekly Executive Council Zoom meeting continues to be held every Wednesday at 10:00a.m. Dr. Mary Mulqueen attended the Council meeting on March 3, 2021 to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine and answer questions.



- A "Book of Inspirations" collected throughout the pandemic is complete and planned for end of summer distribution.
- Dr. Hassan Abdulhaqq attended the Council meeting to discuss staff recruitment and retention.
- Leigh Fanuzzi provided CPR and First Aid overview training to the Council in May.
- Anne Miller, Director of QA attended the Council meeting in May to review agency incident trends and obtain Council feedback.
- A Staff COVID Vaccine Action Plan was initiated by the Council and developed in collaboration with the COMPASS Committee and is underway.

- Karen Harris of Community Resources attended the Council meeting in June to discuss the Agency Walk Your Way and Walk-a-Thon set to be held October 17th, 2021 in Eisenhower park. Everyone is looking forward to joining this year in person. There will be an advocacy table as well, hosted by members of the Council.
- Laura Franzen of Training and Development and Angela DiFazio of HR attended the Council meeting in July to discuss staff vaccinations.



Meet Citizens Candidates for the SANYS Elections!



Matt Hofele, a member of the Citizens and Executive Council, is running for a second term as the Suffolk County representative for the SANYS Board of Directors. Matt has led his fellow advocates and is running for a final term. Matt is active in Independent Us advocacy group and enjoys volunteering for many non profit groups.



Steven Barsh, a member of the Citizens and Executive Council, is running for a first term as the Nassau County representative for the

Board of Directors. Steven is very active in issues that face people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as people with psychiatric challenges.

The elections will take place in November. **Come out and support Matt and Steven!**

Event 1: October 12th at 6:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88295063654?pwd=ZjRDbHVVaR1ZUWXP3M3dSdUxiSFQvQT09>

Meeting ID: 882 9506 3654

Passcode: 925896

Event 2: October 14th at 6:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87687568734?pwd=REJRc0tUc1pkSzlJK1p2WkRXSE1sZz09>

Meeting ID: 876 8756 8734

Passcode: 803349

Citizens Council

- Rights Training is reviewed at every meeting and further explains what rights mean and consequences when we exercise our rights.
- Steven B, a Council member, reviews the COMPASS agenda at every meeting and provides an update on upcoming events.
- The election and voting of a new Council board are being reviewed for election in January.
- Demonstrating staff appreciation was discussed and how best to show appreciation.
- The morale of the people, how they are handling COVID-19, and all the restrictions continue to be the main topic of discussion at Council meetings, along with the mask mandates and staff vaccination.
- The Council discussed what they would like to see happening in the next few months in regards to not having face to face meetings.
- Fundraiser ideas for the future were discussed by members.
- Helping each other out on projects was discussed and offered by members.
- The Council will schedule executive staff to attend a Council meeting to get more information on what is being done about the staffing crisis and on COVID-19. Specifically, how to improve interactions with their fellow members in person and how they can assist the agency to prosper.



TONS OF FUN AT RESPITE CONNECTIONS!

CONNECT, CREATE AND ACHIEVE!

TUESDAY – THURSDAY FROM 4:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. FRIDAY 5:30-8:30PM

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

The pandemic has meant being home a lot more for many people but starting in May 2021 Respite Connections brought the opportunity for fun and re-connecting !

After being home for over a year, Katie Keenan is so happy to be spending time with her friends. Katie enjoys choosing songs for Karaoke , creating bingo games and playing sports. Katie said “ I love to go for walks with my friends”.



Join us for some Zumba every weekend!
Sorry this photo is a little blurry; we couldn't stop dancing!



Katie shown above center



We hope you can join us during the day, evening, and on weekends at our Wheatley location on the AHRC Brookville campus for a day of fun and exploration! Enjoy:

- Art - Enjoy different mediums of art including drawing, painting, ceramics and more.
- Game Nights - Meet friends for some fun and games like BINGO and more!
- On Stage - It's your time to shine! Join in the fun and improve your theater skills with some exercises in improv and music.
- Health and Fitness - Kickstart your health and fitness journey with us! Join in for dancing, stretching, meditation and more!
- Music & Dance - Put on your dancing shoes and join Friday night dances!



For more information, contact the Coordinator at (516) 293-2016 ext. 5142, or via email at respite@citizens-inc.org Hope to see you soon!

Learning about the world By Michelle Rudoff

Over the past year I have been attending Virtual Camp Connections and I have been learning about different countries from around the world. I have taken virtual tours of Mexico, Jamaica, Ireland, Japan and China to name a few countries we have visited. The tours have been really interesting and fun and I have been learning a lot. I learned that Halloween originated from Ireland. Last summer over Zoom I got to celebrate Jamaican day with 2 counselors that were on camp from Jamaica. That was fun since I never did that before. I also learned a form of sign language called Makaton. I am learning more about the counselor than I would if I actually was at camp itself.

Camp Connections

Camp Virtual Connections schedule was packed with fun and engaging opportunities for online learning, socializing, and virtual travel! Take a peek at some of the amazing events! There was a ton of fun. From making kites of all different colors to discussing favorite summer activities!



There was a midsummer concert on July 21, 2021 where campers performed some of their favorite songs under the musical direction of Nyle Mohan. The Camp crew also dressed in their best red, white and blue attire to celebrate July 4th and had a virtual karaoke and dance party!



We explored the world and added more stamps to our passports day by day! We've recently toured Munich, visited the Louvre, partied to the rhythm of reggae with friends in Jamaica and more! April shared "Virtual is good for me because it keeps me out of my head. It keeps me connected : and Danielle said "I love this program!"



Camp Loyaltown- Always Connected

End of summer concert

By Michelle Rudoff

The Camp Virtual Connections program held their end of summer concert in August. The concert was under the musical direction of Nyle Mohan and the support of the Camp team Paloma Contreras, Maria Tejada, and Joseph Codlin. Loyaltown counselor alumni Cameron Hunter volunteered his time all the way from Scotland to also help with the concert.

Former counselors and staff from all over the world logged on to see the campers perform. During the concert there were also two videos; one showing the highlights of the 2020-2021 virtual camp seasons and also a video showing what our expectations are for 2022. Counselors, staff and campers all said they hope to see each other in person back in Hunter next summer.

Everyone who attended and performed enjoyed the end of summer concert and is looking forward to what summer 2022 holds for all of us.

Camp Virtual Connections

Thanks for this past week, it was amazing and everyone had fun. For this week, we'll keep adventuring into new countries! And for the weekend, prepare to do your own Broadway Show and don't forget your sunscreen, because we are going to the zoo!!!

"Traveling - it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." -Ibn Battuta

	Tuesday- Spain	Wednesday- Jamaica	Thursday- France	Friday- (USA) Hawaii
4:00 to 5:30	Dance to the rhythm of flamings with Nyle	Party to the rhythm of reggae with Nyle	Become a master of French words by learning a song with Nyle	Enjoy Hawaiian music at the beach with Nyle
5:30 to 7:30	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER
7:30 to 9:00	Become your own Spanish chef and visit a unique park	Make your own bamboo raft and take a tour of beautiful Jamaica	Visit the Mona Lisa at the Louvre. Prepare your own French baguette	Go on a zipline adventure through Hawaii

	Saturday- Broadway	Sunday- Zoo day at Loyaltown
9:00-10:00	Morning coffee with the staff	Morning coffee with the staff
10:00-10:30	REST TIME	REST TIME
10:30 to 12:00	Be part of Loyaltown's play	Get energized for a trip with some animal yoga poses
12:00 to 4:00	LUNCH AND REST	LUNCH AND REST
4:00 to 5:30	Try your dancing and singing skills	Let's visit the San Diego Zoo!
5:30 to 7:30	DINNER	DINNER
7:30 to 9:00	Prepare for the performance	Take your binoculars and let's find animals!

Family Seminar

The 2021 schedule for Family Seminars remains ongoing and developed based on needs. Most recently, on August 5, 2021 a virtual Family Seminar was held on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for family members. The seminar shared with family members, as stakeholders, our mission and activities related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Michelle Rudoff, QI Trainer, provided the definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Bridget Cariello, Day Hab Administrator, provided family members with the activities and initiatives the DEI committee has accomplished over the past year. Pam Boyle shared with the committee the work she has facilitated with many advocates throughout the agency and the impact those advocates have had. Paloma Contreras recited the poem, "I am Diversity. It was a very informative seminar and the content has been adapted for monthly Rights training so it is now offered on a regular basis.

University of Personal Growth by Helene Ramer

Hi Everyone. Hope you all had a great summer. I just wanted you to mark your calendars because the University started its Fall semester on Tuesday September 14, 2021 at the same time, 10 :30– 11:30. To start, there was a great speaker that talked about HAPPINESS. Be sure to join in on the fun!

There also many other wonderful classes planned like Game Show Bingo, Tour and History of Fire Island , entertainers, and the crowd favorite Poetry with Patrick! Take a look at the full schedule shown on the right and always feel free to contact me directly at hramer@ahrc.org

I look forward to providing you all with weekly, educational, and enjoyable classes all year!

UNIVERSITY OF PERSONAL GROWTH

2021 Spring Schedule

All classes are every Tuesday from 10:30-11:30

For more information contact hramer@ahrc.org

- October 5- Singer Les Degen
- October 12- All About Fire Island
- October 19- Understanding Alzheimer’s and Dementia
- October 26- Meditation for a Healthier and More Peaceful Life
- November 2- Poetry with Patrick
- November 9- Poison Control- How to be Safe at Home
- November 16- All About the Beatles
- November 23- Tentative Belly Dancing
- November 30- Eco Photo Explorers
- December 7- Indian Dancing
- December 14- Nutrition



Congratulations!



Congratulations to Amanda Avdoulos!

Amanda has won the Future Star Award for her internship at Citizens Options Unlimited. Her outstanding and innovative programming and her dedication to the people we support helped her stand out above others. She has also been hired by Citizens' Family Support Services as Respite Supervisor.

Congrats, Amanda!



EMPOWERMENT TRAININGS

For information or registration:

Call: 516-293-2016, ext. 5362

Join us for “Empowering You” !

A weekly virtual day services opportunity.

Watch for additional empowerment trainings that are schedule upon request.

For information, registration or to request a topic:

Please visit our website at Citizens.org or email ctapia@ahrc.org. or call 516 293-2016 ext. 5492

FAMILY SEMINAR SERIES

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

Open to members of the community, family members and advocates

For information or registration, please visit our website at AHRC.org or email ctapia@ahrc.org or Call:516-293-2016, ext. 5492

Virtual Connections

Welcome to Virtual Connections! This is our Fall Kick off!
 Meet your New Host, Farah.
 Let’s look forward to fall fest fun activities. Every week we will be working on something special while we explore new items each day.
For more information contact Farah at 516.293.2016 ext. 5141

Time	Friday	Saturday
2:00pm – 3:00pm	No Virtual	Let’s make a fall Snack! Join me in making the following: No Bake Chocolate Mousse, Pumpkin Pie and Cranberry Butter Crunch Bark
3:00pm - 3:30pm		Break
3:30pm – 4:00pm		Name that tune! Warm up for Music time!
4:00pm – 5:30pm	Welcome to virtual connections! We will be introducing ourselves and your new host. We will sing some tunes with your Favorite musician Nyle.	Who doesn’t love Karaoke! Let’s Join our Favorite Music Man Nyle as we do a little Karaoke!
5:30pm – 6:30pm	Dinner	Dinner
6:30pm – 7:30pm	Let’s reveal the Image! (Answer several questions that reveal the image). Fall word Anagram (Fill in the blank to complete the puzzle)	Sudoku! Let’s work on completing the puzzle!
7:30pm – 8:00pm	Break	Break
8:00pm – 8:30 pm	Bingo Game Farewell and sign off.	Dance Bingo!!!! Let’s finish the night with some dance moves.

Empowering You! By Bridget Cariello

The Personal Outcomes Measures (POM) Department has developed and launched virtual “Empowering You,” Training Modules (about 22 training modules) to educate people and their staff on the 21 personal outcome measures and how to support people to live their own best lives. The sessions have been running two times a week virtually on Wednesday and Friday since April 2021. The Department will begin recording the modules for Relias (the agency’s training platform), archived for the agency’s’ new Remote Learning and Resource Center, and for Training purposes to be used at Citizens .

For more information on how to join, please contact Susan Gill Orange at sgill@ahrc.org



Citizens 2021 Employee Engagement Survey

You may recall last year's Employee Engagement Survey was cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and a smaller pulse survey was conducted instead. Your feedback is important to us and our more typical Employee Engagement Survey is back in 2021!

The annual employee engagement survey provides an opportunity to check-in with all employees to learn what is going well and where we need to improve and your participation is critical - especially during these unprecedented times.

Employees who participated in previous surveys have helped to make Citizens a better place to work and to remain a top service provider in our industry.

From 2015-2019, the Employee Survey has made a noticeable difference:

- Overall satisfaction with job +10 from 71%-81%
- Flexible with personal needs +10 from 82%-92%
- Well structured benefits package +10 from 69%-79%
- Recommend employment at Citizens +17 from 71%-88%
- Trainings to succeed in position +23 from 69%-92%

In 2021, 26% or 194 employees responded, which reflects a 10% increase in response rate from our last survey.

Positive trends are indicative of an 80% or greater satisfaction level. There are **3** positive trends this year:

“I have a positive working relationship with my supervisor.”

“I feel that Citizens embraces and fosters a diverse workforce.”

“I have been provided with enough information regarding Covid-19 and how it impacts Citizens.”

A number of initiatives have been or will be implemented in the near future to address these areas, specifically:

Area of Concern	% Strongly Agree-Agree	Action Steps
I feel Citizens is flexible with regard to my personal needs.	Citizens (73%)	Continued enhanced recruitment and retention efforts. Additional education on NYS Sick Leave and benefits.
I feel my total compensation is competitive and fair for my position in a not-for-profit human services	Citizens (47%)	DSP Career lattice development, Potential DSP Peer Mentor position, Total Reward Statements, Education on comparable pay scales across our region, increased communications regarding advocacy efforts. The agency is collaborating with other organizations and insti-
I am provided with a well-structured benefit package inclusive of health care coverage if eligible.	Citizens (75%)	Review of possibility for enhancements inclusive of review of benefits for part time employees. Highlight a benefit each month in the Employee Newsletter.
Any trainings I require to succeed in my position have been provided to me by Citizens.	Citizens (72%)	Review the possibility of expanding new hire orientation as pandemic restrictions loosen. Reinstatement of management/Frontline supervisor training. Highlight a Relias training opportunity each month in the employee newsletter.
I feel my contributions are recognized and valued.	Citizens (56%)	Employee Appreciation Event, reinstatement of Employee of the Quarter and Length of Service awards, HR/EMT house visit schedule to be developed, development of a toolkit for managers providing ideas on recognizing employees.
I feel there is good communication from my immediate supervisor.	Citizens (74%)	HR will be engaging program leadership to review change management communications, review the potential for increased visits from ADs and directors.
I feel there is good communication offered from upper management through forums, monthly employee newsletters, memos, emails, etc.	Citizens (58%)	Increased use text messaging/robo calls, DSP Focus Groups were held, Semi-annual open forums, enhanced email communication (Constant Contact), HR/EMT program site visits to be scheduled. Resumption of monthly employee newsletter.
I feel there are ample opportunities, resources and supports to pursue professional advancement at Citizens, if I choose.	Citizens (62%)	Leadership training continues to be offered, provide education on current employment opportunities and procedures for accessing and applying, review of performance evaluation practices to include formal career development goals/succession planning, development of DSP Career Lattices. Recruitment to highlight internal opportunities each month in the
I feel a sense of belonging and inclusion at my work location.	Citizens (65%)	HR/EMT commitment to engage employees at their work locations. DEI Committee to enhance education and resources at each job location.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is one of Citizen's stated values and priority areas.	Citizens (78%)	DEI Committee working to enhance opportunities for Lunch and Learns and DEI activities.
I feel that I am provided with a generally safe physical work environment.	Citizens (75%)	The agency recently reinstated the Safety committee with enhanced efforts and representation across all departments, recent workplace safety policy enhancements, annual workplace safety training has now been implemented.
Citizens is supporting me, and considering my wellbeing, during this period in particular.	Citizens (62%)	Offering continued educational opportunities for health and safety initiatives, opportunities for onsite covid vaccinations and testing.
I trust that Citizens is treating my health and safety as a priority.	Citizens (68%)	The agency recently reinstated the Safety committee with enhanced efforts and representation across all departments, recent workplace safety policy enhancements, annual workplace safety training has now been implemented.
I would recommend employment at Citizens.	Citizens (63%)	All of the above
I feel overall satisfaction with my job.	Citizens (62%)	All of the above

The COMPASS Committee & The Quality Enhancement Process

The COMPASS Committee continues to meet virtually each month. A quality enhancement review of a CQL Factor is completed at each meeting as well as a review of COMPASS management plan items.

The committee also continues to pause and think about the path forward for quality, including how and what to prioritize in our “new normal”. Through a series of conversations with various stakeholders, the committee continues to adapt each day, week and month to address new desires and challenges.

The committee is very aware that many of us are still reeling from our experiences through COVID and that there is a need to balance learning and improvement with kindness, acceptance and well-being.

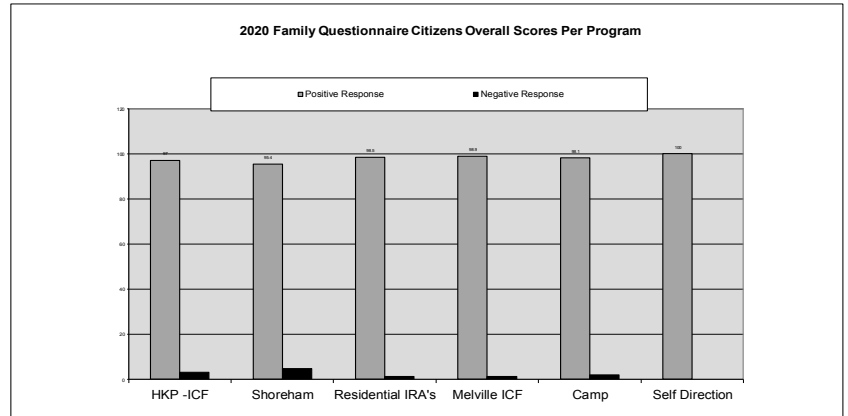
As always, at our core, quality remains defined by the people supported by the agency. It is the driving principle and goal for the COMPASS Committee, which transforms but never really changes.

We invite all interested to join in this endeavor. If you would like to participate at a COMPASS meeting, please email us at ctapia@ahrc.org.

Family Questionnaire Results 2020

The family questionnaire is a vital component of Citizens Options Unlimited COMPASS Management Plan. The overall response rate for this year is 31.7% compared with 22% in 2019. Surveys are mailed in 2021 for the 2020 year.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain family feedback, assess level of satisfaction and improve services. A trend is defined as a score of 89% or below. There are no agency wide trends. There is one program “trend” within the Melville ICF, “Are you satisfied that your family members nutritional needs are met and are consistent with what they desire?” The response rate at the Melville ICF was 5%, thus this trend may be the result of one person answering no. Two trends were identified within the Residential IRA program; “Are you satisfied with the agency response to COVID-19?” and “Are you satisfied that your family members nutritional needs are met and are consistent with what they desire?” One trend was noted within the Shoreham ICF, “Is your family member able to connect virtually to services and activities they like?” A Quality Improvement Plan is under development to address the Agency and individual program trends indicated above as a “best practice.”



Corrective action will be completed and maintained by the program with a copy provided to the COMPASS Department. Follow-up will be shared in the March 2022 annual report/newsletter. A site by site analysis of the residential program is also completed to assess for trends in a particular home. No trends were noted. In addition, program personnel have also addressed individual concerns/ requests noted on comment sheets provided with the questionnaires. A corrective action form will be completed for each concern noted and maintained on site with a copy provided for the COMPASS Department.

These results are also provided to the Board of Directors for review and agency planning purposes.

Regulatory Affairs by Eric Rosen

During the timeframe between March 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021 ten (10) site-based surveys were completed, consisting of nine (9) small IRAs and one (1) large IRA. A version of OPWDD’s Site-Based Protocol continued to be utilized for these site-based survey. 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 overall satisfaction with their home, services and supports, the promotion of independence and choice and observed respectful / supportive interactions.



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