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NEW YORK STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL, INC.

NYSILC

empowering new yorkers with disabilities

NYSILC News, June 2025

We Are Deeply Saddened to Share News of Denise M. DiNoto's Passing

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of Denise DiNoto, who dedicated a year of her beautiful life to serving as Executive Director of the New York State Independent Living Council, advancing our mission and inspiring countless lives.

Prior to NYSILC she served as Program Manager for the Department of Health's Disability & Health program and worked for 10 years at Consumer Directed Choices as an outreach specialist. In 2017, Denise received the Beacon Leadership Award from the Independent Living Center of Hudson Valley for lifetime efforts advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.

Denise found joy in life - she savored the company of her friends and family, traveled, and found delight in service to others. She was a stalwart advocate, telling her personal story with openness and intention to teach others about the injustices disabled people face and advance disability rights.

She described herself as, "Advocate, Rotarian, Writer & Speaker who happens to be a chick in a chair." She was known for reminding the world that she was "too sexy for a nursing home."

The Council had the privilege of knowing her. Denise will be missed and we extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and the community she cherished.

Profile in Excellence

NYSILC Council Member

Mariah Sepúlveda

Champion Changemaker, Community

Advocate, and NYSILC Development Committee Chair

At just 26, Mariah Sepúlveda exemplifies resilience, excellence, and leadership.

A survivor of stage 3 neuroblastoma of the spine, she was cancer-free by her first birthday and in remission by age five. Mariah has proudly used a wheelchair since age five and began early intervention at age three.

She attended the Henry Viscardi School, where she embraced her identity as a person with a disability and learned to focus on what she can do, not what she can't. Her academic excellence earned her Salutatorian honors, recognized by the New York State Senate.

At Marist College (now Marist University), Mariah served as 2018 Vice President of Student Life and was featured in Marist For the Record for her commitment to student advocacy. She holds a B.S. in Professional Studies and is pursuing a Master of Public Administration in Ethical Leadership. Currently, Mariah is the NYC Transition Specialist Liaison for the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL), helping individuals with disabilities transition from institutions to community living.

She also serves as Chair of the NYSILC Development Committee, leading initiatives around ethical recognition, donor development, and advocacy for scholarships and disability rights. Mariah sits on several boards and committees, including those for MISCC under the Chief Disability Officer of NY, The Viscardi Center, and Marist's School of Management.

She began board service at 18 and continues to support organizations making lasting change. Beyond policy work, Mariah is a national model and actress, using the runway and media to celebrate disability representation.

Whether on stage or in boardrooms, she uplifts marginalized voices and believes in a future where children with disabilities lead empowered, proud lives, just as she has.

New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL)

2025 Conference - Leading the Way

"Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders Today"

SAVE THE DATE - September 16-17, 2025 at Albany Capital Center

The "Leading the Way" theme embodies the principles of achieving diversity, equity, intersectionality, and accessibility that drive the Independent Living community forward. Leading the Way emphasizes the value of focusing on leadership, advocacy, and innovation in the disability rights movement.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to connect with fellow advocates and leaders, learn from the best in the field, and help shape the future of

Independent Living in New York. **STAY IN TOUCH** by joining the NYAIL Newsletter for the most up to date information on our upcoming conference!

and the

NYSILC NYS Disability Rights Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Dinner

Congratulations to the 5 inductees in this year's Hall of Fame!

Diane Coleman (posthumous)
Christina Curry
Doug Hovey
Bryan O'Malley
Sharon Shapiro (Lacks)

This year, NYSILC is partnering with the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) to host the Hall of Fame induction ceremony and dinner on September 16th, 2025 as a part of NYAIL's Statewide Conference.

For more information about tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please visit https://ilny.us/events/2025-conference-home.

Work Is Everyone's Right!

ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council is seeking new members to help guide and strengthen vocational rehabilitation services across the state.

Join Our Team and Turn Your Passion Into Action!

We are looking for:
- People who identify as having a disability.
- People receiving or who have received vocational rehabilitation services.
- Parents of people with disabilities.
- Representatives of business, industry, and/or labor.

For more information contact:
Caitlin Ohlson (518) 402-3955 or ACCESSRC@nysed.gov.

NYSILC Council Members

Executive Committee

Chair: Yaw Appiadu

Vice Chair: Lindsay Miller

Secretary: Beata Karpinska-Prehn

Treasurer: Stephanie Woodward

Member at Large: John Zick

STAFF

Program Coordinator:
Amy Wink

NAMI NYS - A Proud Path to Mental Health: Stories of Strength and Solidarity

For many LGBTQ+ individuals, the journey toward mental wellness is fraught with challenges—social stigma, family rejection, and systemic barriers often stand in the way of accessing the care they need. These obstacles can lead to feelings of isolation and hopelessness.

In the video *A Proud Path to Mental Health*, members of the LGBTQ+ community share their personal experiences with mental health struggles and the transformative power of finding support.

awink@nysilc.org

Community Building and Media Specialist:
Emily Bianchine-Cummings
emilyb@nysilc.org

They highlight how connecting with organizations like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has provided them with hope, friendship, and a renewed sense of self-worth.

NAMI offers a range of resources tailored to the LGBTQ+ community, including support groups and educational materials. These programs aim to create safe spaces where individuals can share their experiences, learn coping strategies, and build supportive networks.

This Pride Month, we celebrate the resilience of the LGBTQ+ community and reaffirm our commitment to promoting mental health equity. By sharing stories and fostering inclusive support systems, we can help ensure that no one has to face their mental health journey alone.

You are not alone.
Together, we can forge a proud path to mental health!

Interested in a Pat Figueroa Scholarship for youth/young adults with disabilities in New York?

The scholarship provides funding for young adults with disabilities to attend and participate in independent living related conferences and/or national disability and leadership trainings.

Learn more or apply here!

Upcoming NYSILC events/activities:

- Next NYSILC Full Council Meeting - **Friday, September 26, 2025** from 9:30 am to 1 pm at the Wolf Road Marriott in Albany and remotely via Zoom.

Please visit https://nysilc.org/council/meetings-calendar for details.

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