



VISIONS of Brooklyn Honors NYSILC Council Member at 23rd Annual Awards Ceremony
By Patty Black

VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a Brooklyn based social service organization whose purpose is to develop and implement programs that assist people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired to lead independent and active lives in their homes and communities. They also work to educate the public to understand the capabilities and needs of people who are blind or visually impaired so they can be integrated into various aspects of community life. **VISIONS** serves over 6,000 individuals per year, and their programs focus on people in the Greater New York City Area who are blind or visually impaired and include seniors, people with multiple disabilities, limited-English speakers and culturally diverse individuals.



Visions Borough Advisory Boards are a vital part of their services. Through the outstanding work of their board, they continue to provide services their vital services throughout New York City. Once A year, VISIONS holds a Luncheon and Awards Ceremony honoring these board members and this June, while celebrating 87 years of service, they also honored one of our very own council members, Carla Lewis-Irizarry!

Carla has been a NYSILC council member since January 2012, and is a member of both the Public Policy and Needs Assessment Committees. Currently, she is an Adjunct Professor with the Department of Children & Youth Studies at Brooklyn College City University of New York (CUNY).

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Although Carla is legally blind with Congenital Glaucoma and copes with medical conditions like Lupus, she is a very active and dedicated advocate for people with disabilities. She is involved with various organizations including the Butterfly Walkers Alliance of Hope for Lupus, where she recently had the honor of becoming president.

She is also co-founder of Grandma's Hands, a nonprofit group that provides support and resources to the elderly as well as being active with the Society for Disability Studies, the American Society for Public Administration, Society for Human Resources Management, Society for Non-Profit organization, and CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities. To round out this busy schedule, she is an Advisory Board Member in Brooklyn with **VISIONS** where she was one of the proud honorees at their June 14 Annual Luncheon and Awards Ceremony!

Starting in the fall of 2013, Carla will begin a new journey in a PhD program in education with an emphasis on disability studies and policy at Chapman University in California. We at NYSILC are very happy for her and want to wish her the best in her new endeavors as she explores another avenue!

Mental Health Issues in the Media

By Susan Gray

*(Re-printed from the * NYSILC July 2013 20% Blog)*

NYSILC council member Maura Kelley opened a discussion at the May full council meeting on mental health perceptions, and the need for more dialogue. In the wake of the mass shootings in our nation, many media outlets have put their spin on this topic. They have turned their lenses to a minority of perpetrators of these crimes,

and painted with a broad brush the entire mentally ill population as being violent individuals.

This perception does not help an already faltering system that relies on its general hospitals and prisons to provide care for our populations that are labeled with a psychiatric disability. With the advent of deinstitutionalization, there was little done to ensure that programs and systems were in place to provide the needed support to people living with a mental illness. Even the laws currently on the books allow for outdated and archaic treatment of people labeled with psychiatric disabilities. Parents with mental illness can still have their children taken away from them. Also, children with mental illness are often no better off, as parents and care-givers can restrain and medicate them without their consent.

Treatments for our peers vary in effectiveness. Also, many people do not want the stigma of taking medications for their issues, and also do not want to experience the significant side effects that the medications may cause. Consequently, they live in fear of being locked up and forced to take these medications. If some do happen to present with a psychotic event, most care-givers or first responders do not know how to help them and they end up in jails or in prison. Many people with mental disorders will self-medicate with drugs and/or alcohol to relieve symptoms. This can often lead to a dual diagnosis of addiction, which then often leads to the inevitable path of homelessness.

Dual diagnosis for people with mental illness and addiction can mean difficulty locating a counselor or agency that is equipped to work with them. Most agencies do not have properly trained staff to work effectively with such a unique set of needs.

As a society we have let this population down and not protected their rights and basic needs as equal members of our community, country, and world. Instead, we highlight the minority of violent offenders among this population, and then look to gun control to solve these infrequent cases of violence. What is required is an understanding of the real issues, and a revolution in the health care systems in order to provide care for people with psychological/emotional disabilities.

The systems must be re-built with the vital input and assistance of people with psychiatric disabilities, because no one knows better what is needed for effective change than our peers.

Systems change is one of the things that NYSILC looks to in advancing the Independent Living philosophy for all people with disabilities. Keeping the conversation going, and demanding a voice to tell the real story is key to our success.

Please HELP fight Mental Health Stigma

– check out the following link from the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS) “Mental Health – Fact or Fiction:”

http://www.mhanys.org/MH_Fact_Fiction.php

* **Editor’s Note:** To follow the 20% Blog, click the link below:

<http://nysilc.wordpress.com>

* NYSILC would like to remind young adults with disabilities in New York that the Patricio “Pat” Figueroa sponsorships can help defer costs to attend leadership trainings such as the NYAPRS Annual Conference. For more information about the sponsorships, visit the NYSILC home page at www.nysilc.org and look for the article about the sponsorships in the middle of the page for details.

*** NYAPRS 31st Annual Conference Program and Registration Details Keeping the Focus on Recovery and Rights September 10-12, 2013**

Some of the programs and offerings at this years New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services include great featured speakers including:

Pat Deegan, PhD

Larry Fricks, Deputy Director, SAMHSA-HRSA

Larry Davidson, PHD Director SAMHSA Recovery to Practice

Vivian Jackson, PhD Senior Policy Associate, National Center for Cultural Competence

Sally Zinman, California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations.....and more!

There will be programs offered on Health, Healing and Recovery which feature exciting workshops such as:

- How Breath can Change your Life!
- Rhythms for Wellness, Recovery & Connection
- Healing Stigma through Trauma-Informed Approaches
- Emotional CPR
- The Power of Yoga

There will also be many, many other wonderful offerings for Empowerment and Advocacy, Peer Services and Supports, Health Homes and Managed Care, Exemplary or Emerging Practices, Administration and Management, Integrated Behavioral and Physical Healthcare, Community Integration and Cultural Competence. Featured Entertainers include David Granirer: *Stand Up for Mental Health* and **The Rhett Tyler Band**.

To register, go to this link below:

<https://registration.nyaprs.org/?page=CiviCRM&q=civicrm/event/info&id=8&reset=1>

NYSILC Intern Puts New Media Spin on Website

By Patty Black

NYSILC recently had the opportunity to work with a young intern, David Degnan, from the Center for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) through the NABA (Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany) work experience training program. David worked alongside our webmaster, Kathy, to identify ways to enhance the website, including a new sequence for the menu buttons, a new zoom tutorial page that can be activated at the top left hand corner of the home page, and helping to get updated pictures on the rotating slide show. David has also set up a YouTube channel for our media page, which will link our viewers to relevant videos such as our HAVA documentary. Time permitting, David and Kathy are looking into adding an interactive calendar to the meetings webpage. Stop by and check out these polished new features at www.nysilc.org!