

# **Heightened Independence & Progress Center for Independent Living**



## **Annual Report October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020**

**Empowering People with Disabilities to Achieve Independent Living through  
Outreach, Advocacy and Education**

# *Heightened Independence & Progress 2019-2020 Annual Report*

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November 2020

Greetings,

I'm reminded of our celebrations of 2019 when we had a great Annual Meeting, a wonderful Holiday Party, and the planning committee was excited about our plans for **hip's** 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala. Suddenly everything changed when the COVID Crisis restricted our activities and made us aware of the dangers of the virus and the importance of following CDC guidelines.

As you will see in the pages of our Annual Report, **hip** was able to exercise our contingency plans and the staff quickly adapted to working remotely to serve our consumers without missing a day.

With the help provided by The CARES Act we were able to expand our programs and offer equipment to enable people to remain in their homes comfortably. We were also able to provide rental and utility assistance, expand people's access to communications and provide much-needed food assistance to a wide variety of consumers. Perhaps the most important service that we provided was to connect with people who were otherwise isolated through our frequent consumer wellness calls.

I have been impressed by the team spirit shown by the staff and their willingness to find creative solutions to assist people with disabilities to remain independent. I also want to express my appreciation to my fellow Board members whose commitment to the **hip** mission has made my role as Chair a worthwhile experience.

Sincerely,

*Anna P. Navatta*

Anna P. Navatta

*We are pleased to present the accomplishments of our Centers for Independent Living during FY 2020. Many of the initiatives have been administered by both the Bergen and Hudson CILs, while others are specific to one individual site. It has been our privilege to meet the independent living needs of the disability community for over four decades.*

*“I like the work you do. Everyone is nice and talks to me. You help me with a lot of my things and the other girls help too. I give the office 100 out of 10 stars. Thank you for everything.”  
Hudson Consumer*

*“Your agency provided me with a chair lift that enabled me to use my bedroom and bathroom. Maria was marvelous, kind and efficient – I couldn’t believe how fast she got everything done!  
Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”  
Bergen Consumer*

*“hip was there for us in our time of need. They helped my son and I with rental assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic and Alex consistently continues to check in on my son and I asking if we need anything else. We were truly blessed to have Alex assist us and thank you to hip for having such nice and caring workers.”  
Hudson Consumer*

## *Our Proudest Achievements...*

- The Bergen and Hudson CILs provided information and services to 919 consumers, family members, friends and professionals. Although the vast majority resided in Bergen and Hudson Counties, individuals from all areas of New Jersey benefited as well.
- With funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, **hip** launched the *COVID-19 Community Response Program* to address food insecurities, provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and emergency rental and utilities assistance, and purchase medical and non-medical devices and technology to assist consumers to access or reconnect with services and supports they needed to remain safely in their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds provided rental assistance to 8 families who had lost income due to COVID-19 job closings and utilities assistance for 9 families. Tablets and other technology devices were purchased which enabled 12 consumers to participate in virtual classes and Zoom activities and remain connected to the community. 52 consumers received funding for assistive devices and equipment including blood pressure monitors to enable them to practice telemedicine, air conditioners to make their living environments more comfortable as they spent so much time at home, microwave ovens to reheat weekly Meals on Wheels deliveries, and the construction of a ramp at the home of an individual who became an amputee as a result of COVID-19 complications. 56 individuals/families who were experiencing food insecurity received ShopRite gift cards or food deliveries. Consumers also received masks and gloves as well as hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies.

*“I thank you for your quick response and appreciate receiving the help I needed.”  
Bergen Consumer*

*“You have helped to increase my ability to function independently. Thank you for all your help and for caring!”  
Bergen Consumer*

*“I am so thankful for the **hip** staff and everything they have done for me. You are always checking if I have enough food during the lockdown and that I have my health insurance. When you saw that I was sleeping on a chair because my bed broke, you gave me an air mattress, sheets and pillows. I am grateful that you all are helping me get a real bed. If I need something, I know that I can call you. Thank you and God bless.” – Hudson Consumer*

*“Thank you for the assistance I received as well as the mask and gloves. Help could not have arrived at a better time. God bless all of you at **hip**.” – Bergen Consumer*

- The Bergen and Hudson CILs partnered with the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities to provide Support Coordination services. Support Coordinators worked with 133 consumers to assist them in accessing community-based supports and services to enhance their independent living. Efforts were directed in such areas as identifying appropriate programs and providers, facilitating socialization skills and building life experiences with the ultimate goal of securing employment.
- Rehabilitation Technology funding enabled 124 individuals to receive disability-related equipment. Home modifications that increased safety and access in home environments were funded for 23 individuals.
- The Adjustment to Vision Loss Project Peer Support Groups gained many new members this year. In-person groups met monthly in Fort Lee, North Arlington, Washington Township, Jersey City and Secaucus, and then met remotely several times each month after COVID-19 hit. Consumers met to talk with one another to gain emotional support, exchange helpful information, and learn practical solutions to many new challenges, including social distancing. Many consumers have taken the opportunity to learn more about technology in this new virtual era. Consumers also had the opportunity to partake in informative presentations made by professionals in the field offering more knowledge to assist with learning how to live in our “new normal.” Two telephone support groups, with participants from all regions of the state, continued to meet and expand on a biweekly basis. One group is for young adults under 30 and the other is for individuals over the age of 30.
- Care Management programs in both CILs provided assessments and linkages to financial benefits and community-based services such as Food Stamps, prescription assistance, Meals on Wheels, Medicaid and many other resources which enabled 153 individuals to live independently in the community.
- **hip** also provided case management services through the statewide Traumatic Brain Injury Fund. This Fund, which receives its revenue from a \$.50 surcharge on motor vehicle registrations, purchases services and supports to enable individuals who have been impacted by a traumatic brain injury to live independently in the community.

*“My friends at **hip** are missed and oh how I treasure you all. Thank you for inquiring as to my health and my heart.*

*I miss not having meetings, a gathering of friends and sharing with each other their problems as well as their successes. The **hip** staff is always going above and beyond and making sure we’re safe. Thank you for that.”*  
Bergen Consumer

*“It would take me a lifetime to repay all that **hip** has done for us. We lost our daughter five years ago to cancer. Jennyfer is always keeping tabs on my husband and I and really cares, just like my late daughter would have. She has gone out of her way to assist us. All I can say is she is a true blessing in our lives.”*  
Hudson Consumer

*“I was so grateful for **hip** during the pandemic. They checked in on me and made sure I had groceries and was safe. Everyone at **hip** made me feel like I wasn’t alone – they are truly my guardian angels.” – Bergen Consumer*

- The Youth Transition Case Management Program in Hudson County provided individuals age 16 through 24 both short-term and long-term services in order to remain in the community, increase their independence and successfully access adult services. This year 42 individuals and their families received services. The program provided information, resources, advocacy and support to enable young adults with disabilities to optimize control over their lives and increase their knowledge and skills.
- The Hudson CIL staff conducted 2 parent workshops and participated in 2 transition fairs for high school students and parents in Hudson County. Youth transition workshops were provided to approximately 40 students and parents in English and Spanish. Although the pandemic impacted service delivery, **hip** staff continued to outreach to all high schools in an effort to provide information and link students and parents to available supports and post-secondary educational services.
- The Hispanic Outreach Project provided all independent living skills to the Spanish-speaking community through the efforts of bilingual staff. Linking consumers to financial benefits such as medical/prescription coverage and providing assistance in preparing for re-certification for housing and/or Food Stamps were frequently requested services.
- The Creating Livable Accessible Spaces and Solutions (CLASS) Project, funded by the Bergen County Division of Community Development, collaborated with the 5 Age Friendly Bergen County towns to offer independent living skills assessments to facilitate the ability of seniors to remain in their homes.
- A grant program funded by the Polio Network of New Jersey continued to be available to assist individuals throughout the state who have been affected by post-polio syndrome. Financial assistance can be provided for home modifications that enhance accessibility as well as the purchase of mobility aids.

*“If **hip** hadn’t helped me with a new air conditioner this summer, I wouldn’t have been able to function independently and maintain my quality of life. Thanks again for all your help!”*  
*Bergen Consumer*

*“I would like to say thank you for all the years of assistance with my parents. Since 1998, when my mom was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, **hip** staff was extremely helpful, assisting both my parents adjust to new life limitations and **hip** became a resource and support for them. As a daughter living across the country, it was heaven sent to have such wonderful, dedicated people assisting them. They were both grateful for everything. In addition to the love and compassion that the entire staff showed my father after the passing of my mother, the support and dedication was life changing until the end. My family and I wish you all the best!”* – Hudson Consumer

- Braille by Multimedia Transcription Service continued to convert elementary, high school and college-level textbooks and exams into braille format, giving countless students across the country the ability to be on the same “page” as their sighted peers. While this year was certainly unique as many students were learning remotely rather than physically in the classroom, Braille by MTS worked hard from home and later in the year back in the office to provide the braille books requested by schools. Everyone at MTS is looking forward to working on projects for the community once again as soon as community activities such as theatre performances and museum visits can safely resume.
- **hip** conducted 357 Access Link eligibility interviews during this fiscal year. This NJ Transit program was established to provide public transportation to people with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route bus services.
- The *Eileen Goff Legacy Fund* as well as *Our New Journey* are programs funded exclusively through private donations. The *Eileen Goff Legacy Fund* provides financial assistance to individuals and families with compelling needs when one-time support can make a difference in their lives and no other funding is available. This year, the *Eileen Goff Legacy Fund* provided funding for assistance towards food, repair of a wheelchair-accessible van, and the purchase of a prosthetic leg. *Our New Journey* offered assistance and encouragement to families faced with the onset of illness or disability by providing caregiver peer-to-peer support, individual guidance directed toward the understanding of personal needs and limited financial support for direct care assistance.
- Empowering Women, a peer support group for women with disabilities, played an important role for many women who benefited by sharing successes and challenges. This group, which has grown over the past year, met monthly to exchange helpful information and socialize until the COVID-19 pandemic began. Group activities included Arts and Crafts such as pottery painting and chocolate making. The women enjoyed a healthy luncheon and learned a few new recipes. The group took advantage of talks about financial planning, healthy lifestyles and alternatives to domestic violence.

*“Thanks for all the support and help that I’ve gotten on my journey to improve my health. I was diagnosed with Stage 5 kidney failure and was in desperate need of health insurance. Jennifer made it possible for me to focus on my health rather than the medical bills that were going to pile up. This invaluable assistance helped me tremendously and for that I could not thank her enough. I wanted you to know also how special you and your organization are. Thanks for not giving up on me through all that all of us have been through this year. Seniors and older people especially need to know that there are others, other than their family, that care. Jennifer Preciado never forgets to call and see how I am doing. She is a very special person.”*  
Hudson Consumer

*“Thank you for being there for all of us.”*  
Bergen Consumer

- Continuing this year until the COVID-19 pandemic began was a partnership that **hip** formed with the bergenPAC in Englewood. Through their Arts Access Program, **hip** members received approximately 145 free tickets to many diverse performances, including American Pop, The Nutcracker and Deepak Chopra. We look forward to re-starting this program once restrictions are lifted and bergenPAC can welcome audiences again.
- The 2019 holiday season was brightened for many consumers due to **hip’s** affiliation with the generous parishioners of St. Peter the Apostle Church in River Edge and the individuals in the community who participated in the Volunteer Center of Bergen County’s “All Wrapped Up” holiday gift-giving program. These wonderful people enabled **hip** to distribute hundreds of gifts and thousands of dollars in gift cards to individuals and families who otherwise would not have had a holiday celebration.
- The Holiday Party was enjoyed by both Bergen and Hudson consumers, families and friends. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all other in-person leisure activities, including the Summer Picnic, were cancelled in this reporting year.
- **hip** continued to be a host site for the Easter Seals Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in which two participants worked in the Bergen office. In addition, **hip** supervised a student intern from Ramapo College.
- Community Outreach – During the year all staff were called upon to represent the CIL in both counties at fairs, events and exhibits concerning senior services, care management and student transition. The President/CEO sits on The Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Executive and Abilities Committees), The Bergen County Human Services Advisory Council (Adult Services Committee), The Bergen County Division of Disabilities Advisory Committee, The Bergen County Elder Abuse Community Coordinated Response Team, and the Hackensack Area Chamber of Commerce. The Executive Director of Hudson **hip** sits on the Hudson County Human Services Advisory Council, the Project Search Committee and the Hudson County Office of Disability Services Advisory Committee.

**hip STAFF**

Brian Fitzgibbons MPA, CRC – President/CEO  
Trish Carney – Vice President/CFO

**BERGEN CENTRAL OFFICE**

Thanasis Aspras – Social Work Intern  
Joanna Benthall – AVL Peer Support  
Group Coordinator  
Nicole Clark – Care Manager  
Tamara Clark-Gill – Care Manager  
Trisha Ebel – Vision Loss Specialist  
Barbara Farrell – Office Assistant  
Linda Horvath – Office Assistant  
Jayne Jacobs – MTS Project  
Coordinator  
John Lampert-Hopkins – Multimedia  
Transcription Service  
Pedro Martin - Webmaster  
Kathy Moore – Office Assistant

Mary Mulvaney – Care Management  
Supervisor  
Diomayra Ramos – Social Media Intern  
Victoria Robbins – Care Manager  
Kathy Rohr – Multimedia Transcription  
Service  
Ryan Roy – Office Intern  
Marie Sawyer – AVL Peer Support Group  
Coordinator  
Barbara Schmitt – Office Assistant  
Shoshana Stubin – Care Manager  
Stephanie Thomas – Office Assistant  
Maria Valentin – Rehabilitation Technology

**HUDSON COUNTY SATELLITE OFFICE**

Marily Gonzalez – Executive Director

Natalie Alave – Case Manager  
Angela Arboleda – Case Management Supervisor  
Celia Chavez – Case Manager  
Van Dautruche – Support Coordination Supervisor  
Jennyfer Paniagua – Youth Services Case Manager  
Alejandro Paredes – Case Manager  
Jennifer Preciado - Case Manager  
Maria Smith – Independent Living Services Assistant

### **hip CONSULTANTS**

Gillian Addison - Multimedia Transcription Service  
Debbie Baker – Multimedia Transcription Service  
Barbara Conklin – Graphic Design and Production  
Regina Jones – Multimedia Transcription Service  
Adam Krass – Assistive Technology  
Frank Lampert-Hopkins – Multimedia Transcription Service  
James Fee Langendoen – Technology Consultant  
Francesca Lewis – Multimedia Transcription Service  
Ginger Mabey – Multimedia Transcription Service  
Thelma Smith – Multimedia Transcription Service

### **LIFE MEMBERS**

Anonymous	J. Robert Duffy	Marianne Pigoncelli
Paul Aronsohn	Patricia & Dave Ebel	Beverly & Dick Ryan
Annie Been	Lottie Esteban	Donn Slonim
Darrell Bethea	Betty Fetzer	Michael Smith
Trish Carney	Richard M. Hodgman	Jeffrey St. Germain
Kay Chase	Joan F. Klug	John Stanik
Lillian Ciufu	John Koch	Carol Viceconte
Barbara B. Comerford, Esq.	Chili Li	Anne Burton Walsh
Marie & Mike Cook	Gloria Lieberstein	Philip & Linda Webster Cennerazzo
Jim & Jean Csaposs	Roy Lippin	Janice Willett
Carol Dass	Joyce & Leonard Malech	Richard S. Wolfman
Barbara Dublin	Ann Melone	Anthony & Mary Yorio
	Dr. Frances Meyer	

## BENEFACTORS

Bergenfield Lions Club  
Michael & Marie Cook  
Lottie Esteban & Family  
Ms. Genevieve Farrell & Mr. Robbie Fisk  
First Presbyterian Church of Hackensack  
Kaplen Foundation  
River Edge Lions Club  
Beverly Ryan  
Lillian P. Schenck Fund  
Donn Slonim  
St. Peter the Apostle Church, River Edge

## FUNDING SOURCES

Bergen County Community Development  
Bergen County Department of Human Services  
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020  
Hudson County Department of Health and Human Services  
New Jersey Department of Human Services Traumatic Brain Injury Fund  
New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities  
New Jersey Transit ACCESS LINK Project  
Polio Network of New Jersey – Alan and Peggy Ruprecht Memorial Fund  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Community Living

In addition to the funding sources noted above, *hip* also has contracts with many school districts across the country for the production of braille textbooks.

### 2019-2020 INCOME

Government Contracts	\$ 725,068
Membership	\$ 4,170
Contributions	\$ 15,390
Foundations	\$ 6,000
Program Fees	\$ 5,269
MTS Program Fees	\$ 79,640
Fundraising	\$ 688
Special Agency Projects	\$ 411,279
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 828
Client Assistance	\$ 127,642
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,375,974</b>

### 2019-2020 EXPENSES

Personnel	\$ 922,069
Consultants	\$ 57,485
Supplies	\$ 54,557
Program Costs	\$ 9,225
Transportation	\$ 9,096
Occupancy	\$ 161,475
Training	\$ 2,711
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 11,063
Client Assistance	\$ 138,452
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,366,133</b>

*hip* also has a Diversified Portfolio of Invested Assets