Summer 2023

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Heightened Independence & Progress (*hip*)

hipcil's Mission Statement

Heightened Independence and Progress-empowering people with disabilities to achieve independent living through outreach, education, and advocacy.

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From the Desk of the President:

In the Winter/Spring newsletter we talked about some of the changes that we anticipated for the new year and I'm happy to report that we have begun to operationalize them and expand our service delivery.

For the past two years the Independent Living Community has developed a new partnership with the NJ Department of Human Services' Division of Disability Services. This new funding relationship joins our federal grant from the Administration of Community Living, fee for service arrangements with the Division of Developmental Disabilities and NJ Transit Access-Link as well as contracts with the Bergen and Hudson County Departments of Human and Senior Services. Our fundraising efforts yield us unrestricted funds that can be used for creative projects to aid consumers.

With our enhanced resources we have been able to automate the front door of the Bergen office, purchase a Driving Simulator to evaluate a person's ability to drive, and upgrade the office furniture and equipment. In Hudson we were able to defray the cost of relocating by moving to the ninth floor in a larger and beautifully renovated space in the iconic building at 35 Journal Square.

Despite some staff turnover we can now boast of having 33 full and part-time employees, which signifies a significant growth in the agency and we plan to continue to expand.

Sincerely, **Brian**

Empowering Independence: The Accessible Door Button at Heightened **Independence and Progress**

By Blagica Jankuloska

At Heightened Independence and Progress, our longstanding commitment to fostering independence for individuals with disabilities is reflected in our actions both within the community and in the workplace. As an organization, we take immense pride in ensuring that people with disabilities can lead autonomous lives. Now, we have gone a step further by installing an accessible push button in our Bergen CIL - an initiative that embodies our dedication to empowering individuals and breaking down barriers.

This accessible door button serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to inclusivity. We recognize that accessibility is not limited to physical spaces, but extends to every aspect of life, including the workplace. By implementing this simple vet transformative device, we have eliminated a common obstacle that could hinder the mobility and independence of employees with disabilities. With the push of a button, individuals using mobility aids can effortlessly navigate through our office, reducing their reliance on others for assistance and promoting selfsufficiency for both our consumers and employees.



The *hipcil* Gala Event



hipcil staff member Trisha Ebel, Secaucus Mayor Michael Gonnelli, and hipcil President/CEO Brian Fitzgibbons

After a short two months of planning, *hipcil* ventured into some new territory and held a small Gala meant to raise funds to cover activities that have no other financial support. This was a departure because the annual dinner dances had been basically designed as social events for *hipcil* members. This time the concentration focused more on vendors and colleagues and borrowed from the Russ Berrie Foundation by creating the "*hipcil* Making a Difference Award".

The guest of honor and first award recipient of the evening was Secaucus Mayor Michael Gonnelli, who has been a longtime benefactor through his program to donate clothing from the town's outlets to benefit our consumers in Hudson County. He brought members of his staff and after a great introduction by Trisha Ebel he spoke about his commitment to the residents of his town.

The next three awards went to three longtime members of *hipcil*'s Board of Trustees, each of whom have served well over 25 years. They are:

- Anna Navatta Board chairperson who sits on multiple Boards and committees in her three-county jurisdiction.
- Rick Hodgman *hipcil*'s longest serving treasurer who has had a long



Award Honoree Rick Hodgman and Brian Fitzgibbons

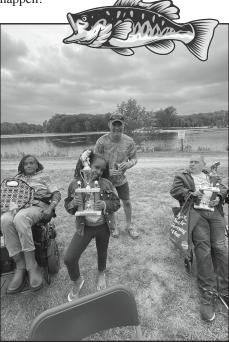
career as a CPA. He is actively involved in the Special Olympics and the Knights of Columbus.

• Betty Fetzer – Board Vice-Chair who enjoyed a long career as a Nurse and who has been involved as her town historian, a longtime supporter of the Girl Scouts and a world traveler.

The evening was quite festive with a lovely buffet, a lively DJ and the opportunity for *hipcil* to make new friends and forge new alliances. The silent auction included many interesting items that caused some excited bidding. All of us at *hipcil* hope to continue this success by planning our next even bigger and better gala for the fall of 2024.

hipcil had much to celebrate at this year's annual Bergen Bassmasters fishing outing, held Saturday, June 3rd at Darlington County Park in Mahwah, NJ. hipcil friends Chris Gagliardi, Kathy Moore, Rich Pietrzak, and Gian Pagliaro all took home prizes!

This wonderful event is something that *hipcil* looks forward to every year, and we thank all involved in the planning process and for continuing to make this happen!



Check out the updated hipcil website!

2023 Bergen Bassmasters Fishing



Heightened Independence and Progress

hipcil is partially funded through grants from foundations, as well as the Bergen County Department of Human Services, Division of Senior Services Hudson County Department of Health & Human Services, NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities, NJ Dept of Human Services Division of Disability Services and the US Dept of Health and Human Services – Administration for Community Living.

hipNews is available as a digital audio file.

Welcome to hipcil!



Joanna Olmedo joined the Bergen *hipcil* staff in March 2023. She brings a wealth of knowledge and a strong passion for making a positive impact in the lives of others. Currently pursuing her master's degree in clinical Mental Health, Joanna holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, which serves as a solid foundation for her work.

At *hipcil*, Joanna serves as a dedicated team member for case management. Her goal is to provide comprehensive support and resources to individuals with disabilities, ensuring they receive the assistance they need to thrive.

As a single mom of three boys, Joanna understands the value of empathy and compassion. Her personal experiences have deepened her commitment to helping people with disabilities. She firmly believes in the potential of every individual and strives to empower them to live fulfilling lives.

Outside of work, Joanna finds solace and rejuvenation in nature. She enjoys going on hikes, breathing in the fresh air, and taking in the beauty of her surroundings. Joanna is deeply connected to her community and actively participates in various community initiatives. Her strong ties to her faith provide her with a sense of purpose and guide her in making a difference in the lives of others.



The 2023
Membership of hipcil Continues to Grow! We
Welcome the Following New and Renewing Members!

Peter E. Ambrose Deborah Azzarone Larry Bauer Bergen New Bridge Medical Ctr., LTC+ Alice Bogoshian Karen Browne Jeanne Carney Nancy DeSiervo-Ability Beyond Sight+ Alan & Lynn Gold Alice Hamburg Michelle Keller & Family Nagui Khouzam George Kidney Patricia Martin-Barksdale Joan Masella Joseph Masella Danielle Pettineo Danny Vaca Cindy Zirkin

Corporate +

You can still become a member of *hipcil* for 2023! For a membership form visit our website at www.hipcil.org/membership or call one of our offices!



hipcil Thanks...

hipcil receives many contributions from individuals and the community throughout the year. We thank the following for their recent exceptional generosity:

First Presbyterian Church of Hackensack

William Fellinger Adele D. Cannie Evie Levinson Joseph Masella Hon. Lisa Firko

Hudson Picnic





The Hudson picnic took place on May 19th in the picnic area of Liberty State Park. Spending a sunny day outdoors together was exactly what everyone needed after years of COVID regulations. The day was full of laughs, delicious food (including lunch, snacks and dessert), and fun games. There was a kiosk offering shade that allowed everyone to relax while enjoying the warm breeze.

During the picnic, the *hipcil* consumers had a great time participating in the different activities. Some consumers enjoyed playing basketball, baseball, skeeball, and board games while others listened to music and danced. The day was a joyful success with so many wonderful moments.



Blagica Jankuloska, Joanna Olmedo and Jesse Schwartzman represented *hipcil* at the Transition Fair in Paramus on May 11th.



SUMMER









PIKNHKHZWMRGPXS

C M L O X Z M O S B U K A S W

SHLWCLKTAPNDZI

.UJENMRNHOAWCTN IIUMEOHCOCWTPAF

PTLRWJILEVARTDK

C Y Y E V B U T S A M V M J D

GIZATYWAECGFCQI

F B U W Y L M Z C N A I O Y N

K R P P Q V O J B H C V Y O X



AUGUST BEACH CAMP FIREWORKS HOT JULY JUNE PICNIC POOL RELAX SWIM
SWIMSUIT
TRAVEL
VACATION
WATERMELON

Answers on Back Page

The 2023 Calendar Raffle is Underway

The Bergen CIL staff has been having a great time picking calendar raffle winners and mailing out prizes, including a big win of \$100 on July 4th! Looking forward to a fun summer of winners!

Thank you to all who donated auction items and sponsorships for our Gala! Your donations were a huge highlight of the evening.

Comcast

Let's Roam!

5 Wits

Total Wine & More

Elite Island Resorts

New York Giants

Hand & Stone Massage and Facial

Spa

Kendra Scott Jewelry

Urban Air

Betty Fetzer (Silver Level

Sponsorship)

Mary Mulvaney (Silver Level

Sponsorship)

Judith Liebman (Silver Level

Sponsorship)

Wegmans

Friendship House (Platinum Level

Sponsorship)

Adventure Aquarium

Applebee's Neighborhood Bar &

Grill

Philadelphia Flyers

SoJo Spa Club

Matisse

Kyle's Pottery Place

Brian Fitzgibbons (Platinum Level

Sponsorship)

Marily Gonzalez (Platinum Level

Sponsorship)

Morey's Pier

Charity Works

Ralph Terminiello (Silver Level

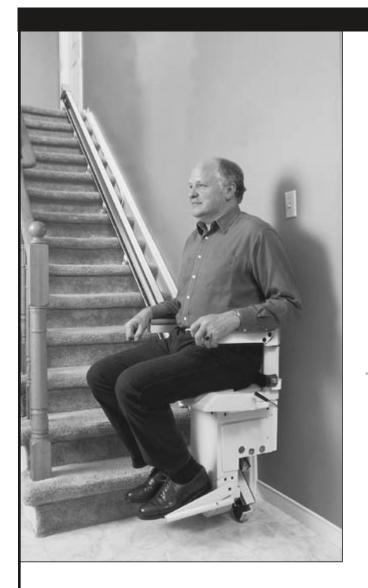
Sponsorship)



We have missed having our summer picnic the last few years. We're looking forward to an event full of food, fun and fall celebration!

Saue the Date: Saturday, October 7th

Hackensack Recreation
Center
More info to follow!



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Our *hipcil* family lost the following people in recent months:

Bernice Baron Marcia Goulding

Calendar of Events *** SUMMER SCHEDULE ***

AVL Support Group Meetings

Secaucus and Jersey City groups combined September 14 from 10am-2pm (live audio-descriptive tour of Liberty State Park Historical Center with lunch provided)

Washington Township/Fort Lee 11am Every Wednesday via Conference Call

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

September 28

TELEPHONE SUPPORT GROUPS

Young Adult Peer Group Conference Call 2pm Dates TBD (Ages 18-30)

Older Adult Peer Group Conference Call 7pm Dates TBD (Ages 31-50)

Virtual Book Club Conference Call

The August date has not been chosen yet, but the book will be Close Your Eyes Hold Hands

The September date has not been chosen yet, but we'd like to invite everybody to join the book club! Come and have some fun, read some good books, and meet some new people. It's very easy, just pick up the phone dial 945-218-0051 Access 426-6427# and you are part of the group!

Please call the *hipcil* Office to confirm that the meetings will take place.

hipcil Offers Innovative Programs to Meet the Independent Living Needs of People with Disabilities in Bergen and Hudson Counties and Beyond

Founded in 1980, Heightened Independence & Progress (hipcil) is observing 43 years of service. hip not only continues to provide vital assistance through information, referral, advocacy, and peer support, but also offers a wide variety of programs to people with all types of disabilities in Bergen and Hudson Counties. Some programs have statewide, even national impact. The following is a summary of hipcil programs.

Adjustment to Vision Loss coordinates peer support groups. Contact: *Trisha Ebel (Bergen)*

Braille by Multimedia Transcription Service (MTS) transcribes textbooks and other materials into Braille. Contact: Jayne Jacobs (Bergen)

Community Advocacy and Outreach Program seeks to promote full inclusion through advocacy, education and legislation. Contact: *Hudson Staff or Bergen Staff*

Comprehensive Independent Living Support (CILS) provides care management assistance to residents of Hudson County to remain in the community. Contact: *Hudson Staff*

Division of Developmental Disabilities Support Coordination Program assists individuals from Bergen and Hudson Counties to discover their full potential. Contact: *Brian Fitzgibbons (Bergen), Natalie Alave (Hudson)*

Women's Support Group. Contact: Joanna Olmedo (Bergen)

Hispanic Outreach Program directs Independent Living services to individuals of Hispanic origin, in English and Spanish. Contact: *Maria Valentin (Bergen) or Hudson Staff (Hudson)*

Youth Transition Case Management assists high school students to plan for their future and for employment. Contact: *Jenny Paniagua (Hudson)*

Modification Access Project (MAP) assists with funding for barrier-free home renovation projects from concept to completion. Contact: *Maria Valentin (Bergen)*

Senior and Caregiver Assistance Program provides care management to individuals over the age of 60 and/or adult family caregivers. Contact: Care Management Staff (Bergen)

Special Assistance for Independent Living (SAIL) provides funding to Hudson County residents for assistive devices or barrier-free home renovation projects. Contact: *Natalie Alave (Hudson)*

Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAP) provides funding and facilitates acquisition of services and adaptive devices such as wheelchairs, bathroom safety equipment, hearing aids and more. Contact: *Maria Valentin (Bergen)*

Support for Independent Living (SIL) provides ongoing care management services through assessment, linkage, and coordination for people with disabilities (18-59). Contact: *Joanna Olmedo (Bergen)*



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hipNews is the Newsletter of Heightened Independence and Progress. hipcil administers Centers for Independent Living in Bergen and Hudson Counties and offers services throughout New Jersey and beyond.

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