

Winter/Spring 2022

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Find us on

Heightened Independence & Progress (*hip*)

hip's Mission Statement

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

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Heightened Independence and Progress, Inc. is not in any way affiliated with the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, HIP of New Jersey, Inc. or their affiliates.

From the Desk of the President:

As I write this, I'm reluctant to be overly optimistic but it seems like some of the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted in time for Spring and I for one am ready to greet the world and open the *hip* offices to the public. While I have been on no less than 100 Zoom meetings, I am ready to see my colleagues in person even if the lighting is not as good as in my breakfast nook.

One of the things that I have heard in many circles is that the ability to attend a virtual meeting eliminated the problems with arranging transportation and made access much more friendly. The same thing can be said for the many accommodations we have made in the workplace; things became easier for people with disabilities to participate.

As things ease up it is my hope that the lessons learned from the use of technology will carry forward to make access to services and employment more suitable and equitable for people with differing abilities and the workforce can benefit from this talent pool.

And speaking of talent, I hope that you enjoy our featured articles that have been written by our consumers. We want every voice to be heard.

Sincerely, *Brian*

The Calendar Raffle is Back – and Better Than Ever!

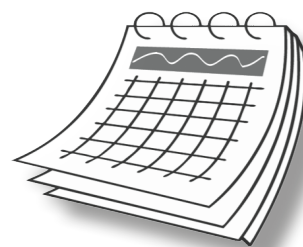
The Calendar Raffle is back for the summer at *hip*! It's time to take a chance to win money and support our agency at the same time. The "In It to Win It" Calendar Raffle is coming up and the fun will start before you know it – and all for \$25 a ticket!

During June, July and August, five winning tickets will be selected at random each week. You will have 66 different chances to win a cash prize – with just one \$25 ticket! Best of all, the more tickets you buy the more chances you have to win!

A specific cash prize is designated for each day marked on the calendar. And here's the best part: if you win, your ticket is re-entered into the raffle for more chances to win again! Several people can share a \$25 ticket as long as all their names are included on the reply form. After the winners receive their prizes, the remaining proceeds of the Calendar Raffle will support the Independent Living services and advocacy efforts *hip* provides to the community.

How to get into the game? You may have received a calendar raffle ticket in the mail. If not, or to obtain more, call or email Maria Valentin at 201-996-9100 ext. 18 or mvalentin@hipcil.org with the subject line Calendar Raffle. We will be very happy to send as many tickets as you'd like right out to you. The grand prize is \$250!

Don't wait – buy your ticket(s) now! The reply portion of your ticket must be received by *hip* by Tuesday, May 31st. Names of winning ticket holders will be posted every Thursday on our website, www.hipcil.org, by 10 a.m. Winners will also be notified by mail.



Sharing Life Experiences from Our *hip* Friends

We're excited to share the viewpoints of several of our friends in this issue of *hipNews*! It's so important to learn from each other's experiences and how we can work together to thrive in our community.

Read all 5 informative and enlightening essays on pages 2-4 of this issue of *hipNews*.

Learn New Skills - Gain A New View of the World

By Morgan Neumann

As someone who was born with Cerebral Palsy, I have been both the recipient of services and a friend, peer, supporter, and advocate to individuals with a wide range of physical and cognitive challenges. Each one of us has unique circumstances but face many mutual barriers of exclusion and lack of access in a variety of forms. Disability is part of the human condition and affects everyone differently. Sometimes, our disabilities hide our abilities, even to ourselves.

Personally, my Cerebral Palsy is often the first thing a stranger will notice when they meet me. Unfortunately, this prejudice is not something that is unique to my situation. Many others face judgements or are denied support because of invisible disabilities that are misunderstood. While equipping ourselves with education won't solve all our problems, it can help in many ways. For me, I hope to use my graduate degree to become a professional disability advocate and improve accessibility, equality, opportunity, and dignity of persons with disabilities. I know disabled people can enrich society with limitless contributions.

I am about to start my second semester in the MA Disability Studies program at CUNY. The rigor of the program has challenged me much more than I had expected. Remote learning is hard for many, but without technological support and academic support many get while in the K-12 system, it can be almost impossible for people with disabilities. On the other hand, I love online classes for the doors they open for me. Commuting to NYC for class everyday would never be possible logistically nor would my chronic pain and compromised immune system be able to handle it. Regardless of these struggles, I believe the best outcomes for those of us with disabilities come from an interdisciplinary support system constructed with effective communication interactions in barrier free environments.

Online learning also allows talented professors who are literally anywhere to share their knowledge with us. Last semester my favorite professor was in

Tennessee and this semester I have an amazing professor who lives in Northern California. They are experts in the disability field and have experiences that so many of us beyond their geographic reach are benefiting from. Even more surprising to me are my fellow students. I am just 24 and just recently graduated, but many of my classmates are professional teachers, therapists, social workers, and administrators. Many of them also have disabilities or have children with disabilities. This provides perspective and inspiration for me. I realize so much more now that if I can better understand those with different disabilities, those without disabilities and especially those who dedicate their lives to people with disabilities, I can improve my interactions with all people.

As an undergraduate Communications major, I learned written words often interfere with communication just as the label of disabled fails to describe capabilities or potential of a person. The strength of my new academic adventure gives me hope. Knowing that the program keeps growing because the demand to study disabilities is strong, makes me confident our society will benefit. Inclusive environments supplemented by virtual communication technology and assistive technology tools are empowering



Disability Etiquette

By Hanneh J. Kalyoussef, MA

For over 30 years, I have been legally blind. I learned to “survive” as a disabled person through high school, college work and even through obtaining a Masters degree. A reoccurring observation that I have “seen” in my 30 years as a disabled person is the lack of education on disability. More specifically a lack of communications in educating everyone about disabilities.

We are a society of, out of sight, out of mind thinking. Why should I know about disabilities how to help those who

have them if I, or a family member, is not directly affected? I have had people call my cane a stick. I have had people pull me across the street in an effort to help me cross. I have had cars cross the street in front of me within a foot of the tip of my cane because they didn't want to miss the light. I have had workplaces who fired me when finding out I am visually impaired.

These experiences were very frustrating and unfortunately will continue to happen because people are not educated in simple disability etiquette. For example, not speaking loudly to a visually impaired person. These things may be more common sense for those who are, work and support the disabled community but what about the rest? How can educate others on how to communicate respectfully? How do we even get them to care?

At the age of 13, I left the world I knew, the world of reading, the world of seeing everything clearly, the world of being “normal.” I have faced many prejudices and hardships primarily because the people I dealt with did not understand what being visually impaired meant. No, I was doing the job just fine - they assumed with the new knowledge I could not do the job I have been doing. Sounds stupid, right?

We need to teach people that it is not just sighted or not sighted: the visual spectrum is so large! My high school guidance counselor was shocked when I asked him about colleges. That's an example of not being educated. I used to call it ignorance, but when you've never been taught how to communicate with a person who is different, it's not ignorance, it's just a lack of education.

This goes for all disabilities, but I can only speak about my personal experiences. I believe that if the others are made aware, people will behave differently, think differently. I suggest companies have a disability education training. More effectively, we must start educating children in schools. We need to begin with younger children who may encounter in their years of schooling disabled classmates. A simple lesson can go a long way.

I realize it is easier said than done. I know we can make a difference if everyone makes a small effort. I am always willing to speak in order to spread the awareness. A little effort can go a long way.



What is it Like Living with Autism?

By Christopher C. Gagliardi

What is it like to be born with Autism or even LIVING with it?

To me that's a very hard question to answer. I had been trying for weeks and weeks to answer it. I guess when you think about it, there are many things that come to my mind that I can feel about living with Autism. For starters, being born with it is like having no sense of time and also trying to understand what was going on in the world around me. As a person with it, you seem like you do not know people and you cannot tell who is a person, an animal or even a piece of furniture. When you want to say something, it is hard to find the exact words or feelings to describe, even when you are sad or angry or hurt. You have no sense of feeling pain of any kind. That is what I felt like, having the frustration of not being able to express myself, connecting with anything or anyone.

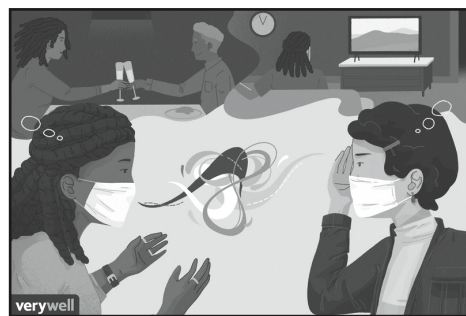
The mere fact that there were people in my life who knew that I had the potential of anything let alone a future that helped me connect with stuff, people and things WAS and still is in fact a living testament to their courage and determination to see me thrive. The tears, sweat, and toil by teachers who refuse to hear the word "surrender" and my mother who wouldn't let them anyway. The community that I grew up in, once I started to connect with the outside real world, embraced me like their son or grandson, etc. My fortune is that by them doing that, I haven't given up on myself yet. So that what it is living and being Autistic.

Without the organization of Heightened Independence and Progress (*hip*) and the adventures that they have blessed me with, I would never have known the most adventurous part of the

word from fishing, to singing, to going to a baseball game, karate, etc. and the wonderful people who always shared their love with me.

What are my dreams for the future? Well, that is the next chapter. Someone once asked a famous explorer this question: "Why do you climb the mountain?" His answer was: "Because it's there!" The greatest mountain that has yet to be conquered for people with special needs...is space! I would like to, if only briefly, "slip the surely bonds of earth and touch the sky on laughter's silver wings" by going in the Blue Origin rocket and being able to say that I have conquered the greatest mountain of them all...being the first person with special needs, especially with Autism...to go into space! That is something that I would like to do and set the stage for others to be inspired!

Image from: www.additudemag.com/autism-aspergers-adhd-symptoms-in-children/



Masks & Communication

By Austin Epstein

Anyone who knows me knows I am a coffee drinker, both hot and iced coffee. There is a Dunkin Donuts within walking distance of my apartment building. I frequent it often and I like the menu and the staff, as they are typically young adults trying to work and make some money.

Dunkin Donuts is known for self-service. There are a few tables you can sit and eat, or like many people, take your order with you. I have speech difficulty at times which makes it hard to understand. I use a motorized wheelchair and use my left hand to drive it. I need some assistance getting my order to the table or opening the door when I take my order to go.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic began, everything changed, and the everyone had to wear masks to protect themselves and others. Now I had to figure out how to communicate with a mask on, as my speech difficulties are not going away.

My solution was to use Google. One of Google's add on's is Google Keep, which is a note-taking app where I can store my coffee order, letting the staff know anything I'll need assistance with, etc. The notes I create are easy to find on my cell with the needed information for that transaction.

I use Google Keep for two places, Dunkin Donuts and Walgreens. I plan in advance and write everything down in the app – for example, I use a straw to drink and make sure to include that in my order. I usually think of it at the last minute before walking out so now I don't have to worry that I'll forget.

Sometimes you just have to think outside of the box and make adjustments that work for you.

hip Thanks...

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

River Edge Lions
Bergenfield Lions
Mike and Marie Cook
The Kaplan Foundation
Lottie Esteban
First Presbyterian Church of Hackensack

Special Thanks to the parishioners of St. Peter the Apostle Church in River Edge and participants of the Bergen Volunteers All Wrapped Up program for their amazing gift-giving generosity to many of our consumers this past holiday season.

Do you need a COVID-19 vaccine or booster? We're happy to help you schedule an appointment and arrange transportation if needed. Please call the Bergen or Hudson office for more information.

LOSS OF IDENTITY

By Marianne Valls

As my aide, Rosa, fed me lunch, I made a startling discovery about myself. The realization hit me that I am out of control. Throughout my life, gaining control was always something I worked hard to attain. However, because of my cerebral palsy, my body did not cooperate in achieving this goal. Despite my limitations, I reached the point in my life where I gained control. I was finally free!

Then unfortunately, I contracted COVID-19. Combined with my cerebral palsy, my limitations have increased. I can no longer walk, my speech is labored and, at times, quite unintelligible. My hard-earned freedom appeared to be lost!

The system of “hurt and peck” of typing that I used all my life, has become more difficult and frustrating. Typing is a necessary to a writer. I wondered if this end of my short-lived career. I feel I have lost all control. Will I even get it back?

In the late eighties, my life was a mess. According to my beloved counselor, I was a late bloomer. Unfortunately, she died before I came into my own.

As the eighties ended, my life appeared to be on the uptake. I wanted out of an unhappy marriage. But I had no money and no work experience. All I had was a college degree. Unfortunately, the degree combined with my disability didn't help to get me anywhere.

I decided to volunteer in an effort to gain some work experience. My first job was at my local cerebral palsy center. It worked! I became volunteer coordinator. I'll admit I wasn't very good at my job.

But it was a new decade, and the American with Disabilities Act had yet to be passed. So my work had gradually turned into advocacy. Here, I was truly in my element. As a writer, I like to express my opinion. I wrote to Congress promoting the civil law that would give people with disabilities a barrier-free society.

My next job was for an organization called **hip**. **hip** is an Independent Living Center for people with disabilities. It was my final search for independence. Eventually at **hip**, I had a chance to develop my writing skills. I was surrounded by people with disabilities. I thought I had reached the point of accepting my disability.



George H. W. Bush, on signing the ADA measure on July 26, 1990, Wikipedia

Now, after COVID-19, I wonder if I am back to square one. Will I ever walk again? I don't know why that upsets me. I have friends who have use wheelchairs. Indeed, the love of my life used a scooter. However, he died a long time ago, and to tell the truth I feel sorry for myself.

I'm wondering, did I always feel self-pity or is a new phenomenon? There's no doubt about it, I am lost. However, I sure I am not alone. We are a lost nation. COVID-19 has done this to us. We are like children, unsure of the changes that lie ahead. Many of us are stripped of our identity and wonder if we'll ever get ourselves back. One thing that I do know is that things will be different, but we will find new ways to communicate.



Unscramble the Spring themed words below.

1. UARBMELL _____
2. UESFBTRTEIL _____
3. RLSOFWE _____
4. UNSYN _____
5. IPLSTU _____
6. EISNSNUH _____
7. OLOSSBM _____
8. OIAWNRB _____
9. CICNIP _____
10. NGEARD _____

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(puzzle answers on page 8)

Heightened Independence and Progress

hip is partially funded through grants from foundations, as well as the Bergen County Department of Human 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.



hip recently welcomed a new staff member! Read further to get to know Jesse and how he is helping make **hip** an even greater asset for our consumers.

Jesse Schwartzman joined the Bergen **hip** staff in January as a Community Advocate. He is a Bergen County resident, former legal assistant and former community organizer. He earned a BA in Political Science with Double Minors in Psychology & Public Administration from Montclair State University.

Jesse is looking forward to making connections with elected officials and individuals with disabilities. He has a goal to serve as a peer mentor for college students in Bergen and Hudson counties who are transitioning from school into the “real world.” Jesse will be putting his organizing skills to good use by working with advocates in the disability community so all can live their best lives independently. Jesse works three jobs so in his somewhat free time he likes to catch up on his favorite Netflix shows, read books about disability advocates and see friends and family.

We Welcome the Following New and Renewing Members of hip for 2022!

Karen Acker
Natalie Alave
Cecelia Aluotto
Peter Ambrose
Deborah Baumann-Dasilva
Annie Been*
Joanna Benthall
Darrell & Tamiko Bethea*
Christine Black
Paula Bloom
Jerry Bojko
Gail Braun
Kerry Brennan
Mario Brusco
George & Mildred Bullerdick
Jonathan Burack
Peter Cafone
Brenda, Jerry & Daniel Calabrese
Mary Carney
Tom & Susan Carney
Trish Carney*
Kay Chase*
Celia Chave
Cicccone Family
Lillian Ciufo**
Barbara B. Comerford*
Elizabeth Cohen
Michael & Marie Cook*
Sonia Cordova-Chumpitaz
Jim & Jean Csaposs*
Mary Culver
Howard Cutler
Joan D'Angelo
Carol Dass*
Jarrett Dean
J. Robert Duffy*
Michael Delgado
Martha DeYoung
Anthony Dinaro
James F. Dougherty
Barbara Dublin*
Dennis Dusevic
Patricia & Dave Ebel*
Austin Epstein
Lottie Esteban*
Oria Estrada
Barbara Farrell
Francesca Farrell
William & Stella Fellingner*
Karen-Mae Ferolino
Betty Fetzner*
Brian Fitzgibbons*
Michael Fondacaro
Gerry Galvin
Laurie C. Galvin
Dorothy Genoni
Andy & Linda Goff
Alan Gold
Marilyn Gonzalez
Patricia Guy



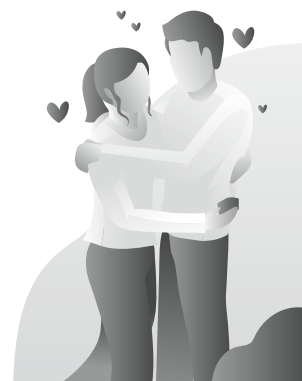
Mary Jo Hackett
Alice Hamburg
Harries Family
Alfred Harvey
Elizabeth (Bojane) Heap
Eusebia E. Heckel
Rhea Hess
Henry Hof, III
Rick Hodgman*
Linda Horvath
Kennel Hyppolite
Timothy Kerr
Joan F. Klug*
John Koch*
Lorena & Ana Kos
Zoraida Krell
Diana LaForge*
Jean Laraia
Virginia L. Laughlin
Louise Lee
Susan Lee
Marion Levine
Chili Li*
Gloria Lieberstein*
Judith Liebman
Roy Lippin*
Lisa & Jorge Loza
Margaret Lusch
Joyce & Leonard Malech*
Mariana Martinez
Joan Martorella
Gracie & Sophie McCain
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Dr. Frances Meyer*
Joseph Molee
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Bob & Martha Mulligan
Madeline Murray
Morgan Neumann
Yin Ni
Hyacinthe Nkurunziza
Mario & Jorge Olivares
Gloria Ortiz
Jennyfer Paniagua
Chris Paraskevacos
Alejandro Paredes
Richard Pietrzak
Marianne Pigocelli*
David Popiel
Jennifer Preciado
Mayra Preciado
Anne Marie Predergast
Noel Prussack
Joe Revello
Cruz Rodriguez
Richard Rosencrans
Ryan Roy
Richard & Beverly Ryan*
Mary Sanfilippo
Marie Sawyer
Jesse Schwartzman
Stefanie Seid
Doug Simon

Lynn Smith
Michael Smith*
Donn Slonim**
Dana Solomon
Jeffrey St. Germain & Family*
John Stanik*
Debra Tester
Mary Thornton
Janet Tolliver
Thomas Tuzzio
Angela Tzakis
Danny Vaca
Angelissa Vazquez
Carol Viceconte*
Ron Vida
Ann Burton Walsh*
Webster-Cennarazzo, Philip & Linda*
Jean & Richard Wechsler
Willet, Janice*
Virginia Flynn-Williams
Warren Williams
Sharon Womack
Allen & Barbara Young
Anthony & Mary Yorio*
Alan Zimmerman
Maureen Zurlo

*Life Member

** Deceased

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



Thank You All

for your phone calls, emails, and cards filled with heartwarming messages, notes of appreciation and good luck wishes as well as your gifts and contributions to **hip** in my honor as I retired. I have enjoyed my association with you over the years and will always remember you fondly as I reflect on my career at **hip**. I wish all the best to all of you!

Trish Carney



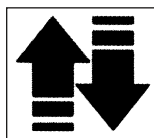
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We Mourn . . .

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

Don Perlman, longtime *hip* member, friend and volunteer. Don was a familiar, friendly face in the Bergen *hip* office as he helped out with everyone's computers and worked to keep the braille embosser in good working order. A good friend of Eileen Goff's, Don was part of *hip* longer than most of us can remember.

Lillian Ciufu, longtime *hip* Board member and friend.

Lillian was a dedicated member of the *hip* Board of Trustees for more than a quarter of a century, from 1991 to 2017. As our Fundraiser Extraordinaire, Lillian aligned *hip* with numerous new and unique sources of income which enabled our Center for Independent Living to become a vibrant organization for people with all disabilities. Following the untimely death of her only daughter in 2000, she directed that all memorial contributions be sent to *hip*, which resulted in the establishment of Laura's Legacy. This fund, which is administered by *hip*, provides financial assistance to individuals and families when one-time support can make a difference in their lives and no other funding is available.

Both Don and Lillian will be very missed.

Calendar of Events

BOOK CLUB

Virtual Book Club Conference Call - April 22, May 20, June 17

AVL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Secaucus – 10am -12pm

April 14, 21, 28 (self-defense classes and peer meetings)
May 5, June 2

North Arlington – 12 - 2pm

May 10 (self-defense class), June 14

Jersey City

April 28 12-1pm via Zoom, May 26 12pm - TBA, June 23 12pm - TBA

Washington Township/Fort Lee – 10am

Every Wednesday Via Conference Call

TELEPHONE SUPPORT GROUPS

Young Adult Peer Group Conference Call - 2pm

Ages 18 – 30

April 15 via Zoom, May 20, June 17

Older Adult Peer Group Conference Call - 7pm Via Zoom

Ages 31 – 50

April 14, May 18, June 16

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

hip 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 (*hip*) is observing 42 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 *hip* 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)*

Empowering Women Support Group. Contact: *Nicole Clark (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)*

Our New Journey provides financial and practical help to families newly impacted by the onset of illness or disability. Contact: *Anne Ciavaglia McMahon (201-288-2867)*

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: *Tamara Clark (Bergen)*

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a state-funded case management program for New Jersey residents who have survived an acquired brain injury, for services and supports they need to live in the community. Contact: *Shoshana Stubin (Bergen)*



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INDEPENDENCE & PROGRESS**

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Centers for Independent Living
in Bergen and Hudson Counties
and offers services throughout
New Jersey and beyond.

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Thank you!

Thank you so much to all the
generous donors for the cases of
formula and diapers! Alex Paredes and
Jaime Rodriguez loaded up everything
from the Bergen CIL to give out to our
consumers with little ones.

Spring Word Scramble
Answers:
5. TULIPS
6. SUNSHINE
7. BLOSSOM
8. RAINBOW
9. PICNIC
10. GARDEN
1. UMBRELLA
2. BUTTERFLIES
3. FLOWERS
4. SUNNY