

## Summer 2021

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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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NEWSLETTER DESIGN BY  
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PRINTED BY  
The Print Group, S. Hackensack, NJ

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## From the Desk of the President:

During these past 16 months of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic we have become very conscious of milestones and anniversaries. The country is currently inching toward the 70% mark for vaccinations by making them available at many convenient locations. The *hip* staff continues to help consumers make informed decisions about the vaccine and collaborating with our state and county partners.

July 13 marked the first anniversary of our partial return to the office. We worked remotely from the beginning of the shutdown but as restrictions began to be lifted, we had the office deep cleaned, sanitized and outfitted with plexiglass shields to maintain appropriate social distancing. All of us are well equipped with PPE and various cleaning supplies for our individual use. We have developed a schedule where we split the staff into two shifts working two days in the office and two days remotely with Friday as a clean-up and meeting day. We are still not seeing people in the office or making home visits, but we are doing our best to stay in contact with all of the consumers. We have established dedicated hotlines in both offices. Our current plan is to continue with our split sessions until the end of August and gradually increase office time through September with a full opening October 1.

I cannot discuss dates without commemorating the 31st Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26. We have come a long way by promoting universal design, enhancing equity in public education and continuing our advocacy for equality in all areas of the American experience.

For the future we need to remain aware of the importance of this legislation and to be sure that its intent remains prominent in the conversations on inclusion, equal rights and diversity.

Please enjoy this edition of *hip* News and let us know what you think.

Sincerely,

*Brian*



## Summer Calendar Raffle

Thank you to everyone who purchased raffle tickets to support *hip*'s programs! 312 tickets were sold to *hip* friends near and far – the farthest located in China! We're looking forward to picking winners every week until the end of September. Good luck to all!

A special thanks goes out to *hip* consumer Richard Pietrzak and accounting firm Malesardi, Quackenbush, Swift & Company LLC for selling so many tickets to support *hip*!

# On The Road with *hip*

By Brian Fitzgibbons



Not only are we thankful that *hip* received funds from the CARES Act, but we are proud of the opportunity to have helped so many people during this extraordinary time. As we distributed ShopRite gift cards or set someone up with an i-Pad we would always question, "How can we reach more people?"

We found a way with the help of several Meals on Wheels distribution centers, the Bergen Volunteers' CHORE service and our friends at St. Peter the Apostle Church. Based on the concept of "go bags" used in an emergency we thought about what people would need who are unable to leave their homes without assistance, and we created "Bags of Essentials".

Each bag included a pack of 48 blank note cards, a pen, a book of USPS forever stamps, liquid soap, hand sanitizer, a toothbrush and toothpaste, tissues and a pack of light bulbs. In the second phase of the project, we replaced the lightbulbs with an assortment of batteries and a small flashlight. Each bag also included the latest information on the vaccine and the many services that *hip* has to offer.

By partnering with our colleagues, we were able to get the bags to 200



individuals in Bergen and we anticipate getting another 65 to recipients of the Hudson County Meals on Wheels program.

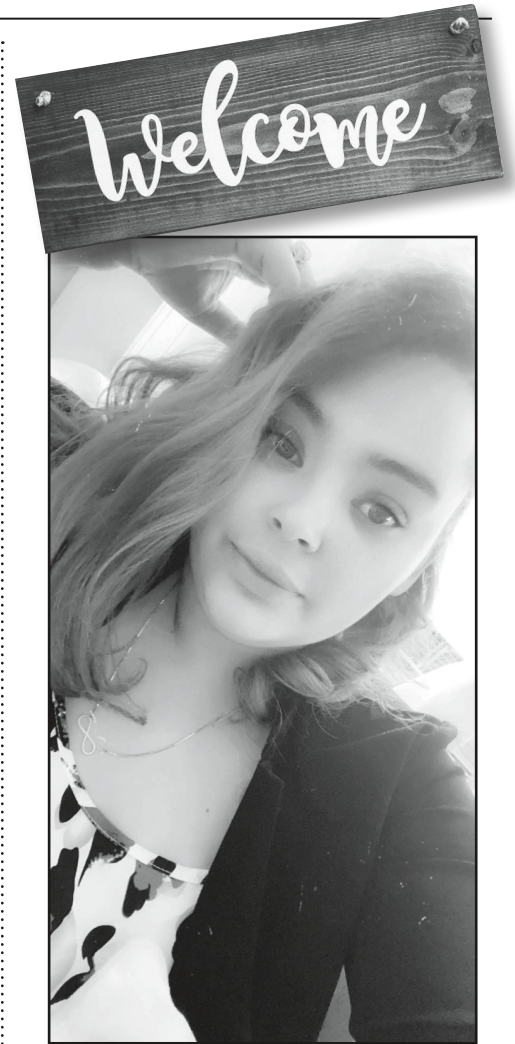
I would like to thank the *hip* staff members who ordered the items, printed materials and packed the bags. A special thanks goes to Girl Scout Troop #95493 for coming into the office after hours to assist with the packing.



## All Things *hip*

For information on all things *hip*, please follow us on Facebook and check our website for updates!  
[www.hipcil.org](http://www.hipcil.org)

In our effort to supply critical information to consumers as quickly as possible, *hip* is developing a database of email addresses. Regular mail is moving more slowly now, so it is important for us to have other means of communicating with you. Please send an email to [contactme@hipcil.org](mailto:contactme@hipcil.org) with your personal email address or text the word *hip* to 22828 (message and data rates may apply) and we will add you to the database. Make sure you check your junk mail folder in case our emails end up in there!



## Welcome to *hip*, Mariana!

Mariana Martinez joined the Hudson *hip* CIL in July as an Independent Living Specialist. She is a Hudson County resident and former recreational therapist assistant with experience in rehabilitation and community reintegration. As an individual with a disability, she understands the needs and obstacles faced daily by many individuals.

Mariana is eager to begin working with disability community partners to best assist consumers in reaching independent living goals. She looks forward to assisting consumers and their families with information, linkage, and community resources. Mariana is passionate about advocacy and working with individuals with disabilities. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, reading books, and traveling.



## AVL Update!



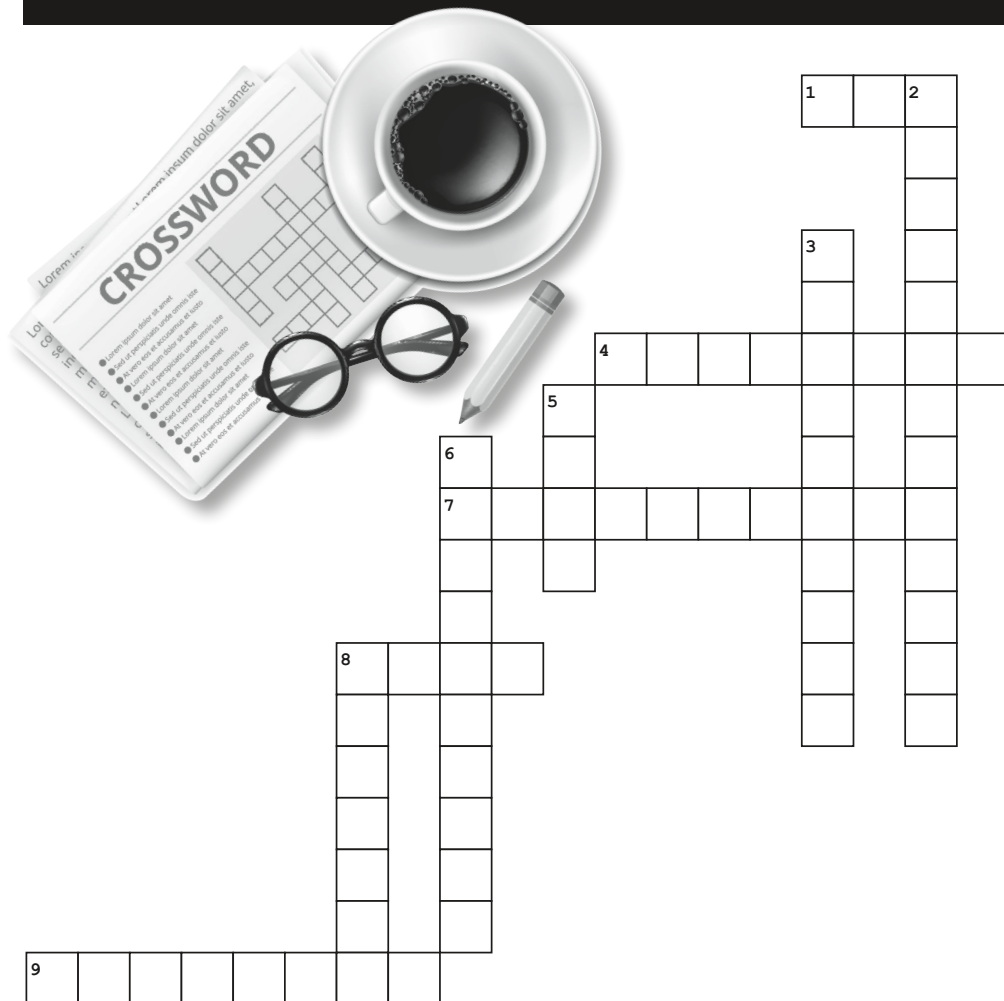
The Adjustment to Vision Loss Project has been thriving with new members joining each week. Not only does **hip** have 7 monthly group meetings reaching close to 100 consumers each month, we have a new addition to the AVL Program – yoga!

Thien Vu began teaching yoga to our AVL consumers in November, volunteering her time on a weekly basis to instruct our **hip** consumers on how to feel well and practice good health.

Ms. Vu has practiced Body and Brain yoga for three years and has been a volunteer yoga instructor for almost a year. Body and Brain yoga practice combines elements from a variety of Eastern practices to enhance one's physical, mental and energetic health. Each class not only trains the body's flexibility, strength and balance but helps center awareness inside oneself. Through breathing postures, participants will accumulate energy and strengthen the core, leaving them feeling recharged, relaxed, and refreshed. The practice has locations all over the United States and offers both in-person and online classes. Thien has been teaching classes for people who are blind and visually impaired as part of the Body and Brain yoga outreach program.

*(continued on page 4)*

## ADA Crossword Puzzle



### Across

1. Abbreviation for Americans with Disabilities Act
4. Recent Netflix doc about the disability independence movement
7. State where the first Center for Independent Living was founded
8. President who signed the ADA into law
9. University Ed Roberts attended

### Down

2. An adjustment to make a program, facility, or resource accessible to a person with a disability
3. City where the Bergen hip CIL is located
5. Month of the ADA anniversary
6. NJ form of paratransit transportation
8. Form of written language for people who are blind represented by raised dots

\* See page 8, back cover for answers

# AVL Update!

(continued from page 3)



Thien teaches classes on Zoom and over the phone. She is passionate about sharing this practice with others through her classes because this yoga practice helps her with her physical health as well as her emotional and spiritual growth. She has developed a stronger connection with herself and feels more at peace. She wants to share the practice so that others may experience similar positive changes so she created a yoga YouTube video for the blind that can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQidLT3xHaM>

Thien has been legally blind since birth. She came to the United States from Vietnam when she was 19 years old. She started high school and graduated third in her class. She attended Stony Brook University on a full scholarship where she graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Thien has been working for the U.S Department of Labor since 2000 as a Human Resources Specialist. In her free time, she crochets and knits blankets for the Project Linus charity organization and various other outreach projects. During the pandemic, she hand-sewed hundreds of masks for the homeless shelters in New York City.

Please email [tebel@hipcil.org](mailto:tebel@hipcil.org) if you have any questions on this wonderful addition to the AVL program.

## hip Humpday Home Happenings

Every Wednesday evening since early March, a group of approximately 15 participants have been Zooming in to **hip** Humpday Home Happenings, a virtual recreation program developed by Trish Carney to help to alleviate some of the isolation consumers have been experiencing as they spend so much time at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program's activities have included playing Bingo, learning magic tricks, and an indoor scavenger hunt as well as several sing-a-longs with **hip**'s long-time friend, the multi-talented Bill Jones who demonstrated his skills on the guitar, mandolin, ukulele, fiddle and harmonica.

All participants were mailed a box containing a variety of arts and crafts supplies for the program's weekly activities which included painting suncatchers and wooden ornaments, decorating cookies, and making a decoupage bird. The activity box also included a sombrero which participants donned for a virtual Cinco de Mayo party, where they made chicken tacos and garnished them with salsa, queso and guacamole from Fiesta Kits that were no-contact delivered to their homes.



## COVID-19 Community Response Program Update

The COVID-19 Community Response Program continues to help those families and individuals who have been affected by COVID-19 with food cards, utilities and rental assistance, which has been a great help to those who have been falling behind on their payments. **hip** staff has also assisted 116 consumers and their families to make COVID-19 vaccine appointments and have also provided transportation for them!

**hip** recently worked with a family of 4 that had been struggling to buy monthly food supplies. **hip** was able to help them several times by supplying emergency food gift cards while they obtained jobs to be financially stable. They are now finally able to continue their lives without assistance. This is one of the many stories of families we have come across at **hip** who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are happy to have made a difference during their most difficult times.

This program has been extended until September 2022 or until funds are exhausted. Please visit our website at [www.hipcil.org/funding-assistance/](http://www.hipcil.org/funding-assistance/) for more information and to download an application.



Shoutout to Starbucks - their gift cards include Braille to identify them! Let us know if you notice any other places where Braille is used for everyday items. Hint: Check the average pill caddy.



*We Welcome  
The Following New  
and Renewing  
Members of hip  
For 2021!*

Genevieve Farrell  
Marilyn Gonzalez  
Catherine Haralynn Wighard  
Diane Love  
Mr. & Mrs. Brendan McMahon  
Gloria Ortiz  
Richard Pietrzak  
JoAnn Struzinski  
Cindy Zirklin

*You can become a member  
of hip! For a membership form  
visit the website at [www.hipcil.org](http://www.hipcil.org)  
or call one of our offices!*



**CHOCOLATE  
CREATIONS**



Mario and Jorge Oliveres with their chocolate creations during a Zoom chocolate-making party in June!

## Remembering Sam Ballard

Many of you remember Sam Ballard, who was a driver for **hip** clients for many years through Community Transportation. Sam passed away in May having had a severe stroke the month before.

He was an excellent driver having won the Bergen County Community Transportation Roadeo several times and represented the county in the State Roadeo. Having placed 1st and 2nd in the State competition he went to the national Roadeo and placed within the top 5 a few times.

Sam was not only a good driver but he treated his customers as if they were members of his own family.

*Submitted by Margaret Cook Levy  
(former Director of Bergen County  
Community Transportation and former hip  
Board Member now living in Savannah,  
GA)*

## 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 and the US Dept of Health and Human Services – Administration for Community Living.

**hip**News is available digitally.



Did you know that there is a service provided in conjunction with NJ Transit that will make it easier to take the bus or train? It's called NJTIPS and it can be found on the website <https://vtc.rutgers.edu/njt看p/>. They offer a virtual travel training session. Check it out!

## Murder Mystery Events

**By Trisha Ebel**



The Adjustment to Vision Loss consumers enjoyed spending time together via Zoom as they all joined together to solve a murder mystery with The Murder Mystery Company, an event funded by a grant from the Fund for the New Jersey Blind. We had 2 events combined of 25 consumers and one professional actor from the company.



Our theme for both events was "This One Last Time." A group of 8 people were being blackmailed by a mysterious person named RIP in this modern-day twist on the movie CLUE. You arrived at a grand mansion, invited by your blackmailer, and soon after a murder occurs! But who in this room knows your deepest secret? Find the true killer in this classic WhoDunnit mystery!

I had the opportunity to cast the characters and everyone played their part well. Many participants even dressed up for their part and some even used accents! It was a really fun comedic two-hour murder mystery.

The company accommodated the groups and made the event very accessible. Everyone enjoyed themselves and it was such a great time!



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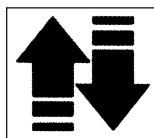
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# We Mourn . . .

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

The **hip** family is very sad to report the passing of longtime Board member and Board Secretary, Joe Tomasko. Joe worked for the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired where he held many titles finally working as The Program Development Specialist for CBVI's vocational rehabilitation program.

In addition to his work for **hip**, Joe was involved in numerous community organizations including the North Arlington Volunteer Emergency Squad, Bergen Medical Transport, Covenant House and his home parish, Queen of Peace in North Arlington.

Joe never refused an opportunity to help and was a devoted caregiver to family members as well as good friends. The **hip** Board has made a contribution in his name to The Seeing Eye.

Juner Williams, **hip** friend and disability equipment expert. Juner was loved by all who met him. His fun-loving personality and vast technical knowledge will be greatly missed.

We also mourn all those lost to COVID-19.

## hip Thanks...

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

Estate of Heather Broad  
Genevieve Farrell  
Fund for the New Jersey Blind  
Hackensack Lions Club  
Kaplen Foundation

We also thank all those who supported our No Attend Fundraiser The Hunkerdown Hoedown and our Summer Calendar Raffle.

## Calendar of Events

### BERGEN

#### Virtual Book Club Conference Call

August 27      September 24      October 29

### VIRTUAL AVL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

#### Secaucus – 10am Via Zoom

September 2      October 7

#### North Arlington – 2pm Via Zoom

September 7      October 12

#### Washington Township/Fort Lee – 10am

Every Wednesday Via Conference Call

### Telephone Support Group

#### Young Adult Peer Group Conference Call

Ages 18 – 30      7:30 pm

September 7      October 5

#### Older Adult Peer Group Conference Call

Ages 31 – 50      7:30 pm

September 16      October 21

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 41 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)*

**Polio Network of New Jersey – The Ruprecht Fund.** **hip** administers this fund for PNNJ to help polio survivors in New Jersey finance necessary products and services. 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: *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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\*Deceased

hip



At **hip** we are always on the lookout for new ways to best serve you. Drop us a line and let us know what we can develop to enhance your independent living experience.

*Perhaps we can consider:*

- A discussion group around a current short story;
- The creation of a job exploration group;
- A job club; or,
- Legislative advocacy.



## We're eager to hear from you.

### Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

#### ACROSS:

1. ADA
4. Crip Camp
7. California
8. Bush
9. Berkeley

#### DOWN:

2. Accommodation
3. Hackensack
5. July
6. Access Link
8. Braille

(puzzle from page 3)

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

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