From the desk of the President:

As you read this edition of the Newsletter, we will have completed the first month of the new decade and we are excited to begin the 2020 celebrations of hip’s 40th anniversary.

Looking back to 1980 retrofitting buildings to be barrier free was only happening on government properties, post offices, some new construction and corporations with Federal contracts. It would be ten years until the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted into law. So hip was often the lone voice advocating for making places like restaurants, banks and retail establishments accessible. Like David versus Goliath hip singlehandedly challenged several condominium projects for ignoring the new construction codes requiring equal access. hip won a big judgment in a landmark case that made the entire construction industry take notice.

Those of you who have been with us since our humble beginnings at Englewood Community House have seen us expand into two offices in the County seats of Bergen and Hudson Counties. We have grown based on the Independent Living philosophy of “nothing about us without us” and the extraordinary vision of our founder, Eileen Goff.

The world is beginning to embrace the diversity that disability brings to the life experience, but we still have a long way to go to ensure equality and the ability to move freely about the community with the assurance that we will not need special arrangements. We are ready to tackle the new challenges of the 21st Century and correct some of the inequities left over from the past so please join us as we make plans for the next 40 years.

But, 2020 has given us several challenges to start the new decade: the 2020 census and the Presidential and Congressional elections. The census means a great deal to New Jersey when it comes to the funding of essential programs and we will continue to look to Washington to promote inclusive policies for people with disabilities. Let’s all work together to make positive changes happen.

Brian

Eric LeGrand at hip’s 40th Anniversary Gala – bELieve!

All of us at hip are excited about our upcoming gala event to celebrate 40 years of serving the Bergen and Hudson communities. The gala will take place on Friday, May 1 at 6:30 pm at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Fort Lee. Tickets are $100 per person.

A highlight of the night will be the keynote speaker: Eric LeGrand, former Rutgers defensive tackle and advocate for people with disabilities. After an accident on the football field in October 2010 caused a spinal cord injury, Eric has been a positive role model not only in NJ but worldwide, inspiring those living with and impacted by paralysis to bELieve. Team LeGrand, his fundraising arm of the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, has raised over 1 million dollars for the foundation to date. From becoming an author, sports analyst for ESPN, Sirius, the Big Ten Network and Rutgers radio, to a much sought after motivational speaker, Eric has given a voice to the paralysis community to mobilize support for critical initiatives, policies and cutting-edge research over the past seven years.

The evening’s events will also include dinner, dancing to the DJ stylings of the always fantastic Gary Morton, and highlights of hip’s 40 years of service.

Call Jayne Jacobs at 201-996-9100 ext. 26 with any questions. All proceeds from the gala go towards hip’s diverse programs. We look forward to seeing everyone there to enjoy the celebration!
**Wedding Bells Were Ringing!**

*By Trisha Ebel, Independent Living Assistant*

I would like to congratulate Genevieve Farrell and Robbie Fisk on their wedding, which took place October 5th! Genevieve is the daughter of Barbara Farrell, who is my volunteer with the Adjustment to Vision Loss Project. In lieu of giving out favors to their wedding guests, they made an amazing donation of a day at the Meadowlands Environment Center to AVL instead! I would like to thank them with all my heart and soul for their generosity.

The place card table at the reception provided an overview of hip, the Adjustment to Vision Loss project, and what the donated activity day would include. Then, on the back of every place card, there was a brief summary of hip, as well as hip’s website. Read further to find out all about our wonderful day!

**Fun at the Meadowlands with the Bride**

*By Trisha Ebel, Independent Living Assistant*

On October 21, 2019, 42 of hip’s Adjustment to Vision Loss consumers gathered at the Meadowlands Environment Center located in Lyndhurst for an entire day of educational and recreational fun! The day began at 8 am with coffee, donuts and croissants from Dunkin Donuts. Once all arrived, everyone was divided into 3 groups, each group rotated through 3 different experiences which included exploring all different herbs and spices as all created their own tea bags to take home. Another experience was horticulture: our hip consumers put together a plant in a bottle which all took home to continue to take care of it and watch it grow. Each person was able to pick whatever type of seed they wanted, some of the choices included thyme, sage, basil, parsley or cilantro. The third experience was getting into the FoodMobile, which was a big old school bus that was reconstructed with benches along each side, a counter and a table. Everyone took turns chopping, cutting and tasting fruits and vegetables for a beautiful and delicious birds nest salad.

Around noon we all gathered back in the classroom and had a wonderful lunch that was donated by the bride’s uncle Paul and Natoli’s Deli in Secaucus.

After all activities were finished, all then gathered to take a hike along one of the MEC’s paved trails. There we all learned about the nature around us as well as the different species that were in the Hackensack River. We walked on a boardwalk that stretched out over the river as we listened to the information.

In my opinion it was fascinating to see just how many of our consumers joined in and enjoyed the entire day. Our hip AVL consumers are so happy, dedicated and thankful! Just to see how our AVL program has helped our consumers gain independence, feel comfortable to get out of their comfort zones and live a full life again - this fills my heart with so much joy!

**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, Bergen County Community Development, NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the US Dept of Health and Human Services – Administration for Community Living.

*hip*News is available on audio tape.

**Welcome to hip, Jennifer!**

Jennifer Preciado joined the Hudson hip staff in November as the Comprehensive Independent Living Support (CILS) Case Manager.

Jennifer earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Management from New Jersey City University and is currently pursuing her MBA in Marketing. Jennifer volunteers with developmentally delayed adults for Camp New Day, which provides a positive and supportive environment for individuals with developmental disabilities. This is where she began her understanding of disabilities and the need for services in our community. Jennifer will be marking her tenth year at New Day in the summer of 2020 and has developed great skills which she now brings to hip.

In her spare time, Jennifer enjoys quality time with her family, traveling, and making new memories.

**hip Thanks...**

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

Heather Broad
Michael and Marie Cook
Lottie Esteban and Family
First Presbyterian Church of Hackensack River Edge Lions Club

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful parishioners of St. Peter the Apostle Church in River Edge and the generous participants in the Bergen Volunteer Center’s All Wrapped Up Holiday Gift Giving Program who provided an assortment of gifts including warm clothes, household items, toys, and gift cards which brightened the holiday season for a number of individuals and families associated with hip.

“Our achievements are the results of the combined efforts of every individual.”

–VINCE LOMBARDI
Why the Census Bureau Asks Questions About Disability*

The Census Bureau asks questions about a person’s difficulty with specific daily tasks to create statistics about disability. Local, state, tribal, and federal agencies use disability data to plan and fund programs for people with disabilities. Disability data are also used to evaluate other government programs and policies to ensure that they fairly and equitably serve the needs of all groups, as well as enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination. Disability questions originated with the 1830 Census. The current questions were added in 2008.

The Census Bureau uses your confidential survey answers to create statistics like those below. The Census Bureau is legally bound to strict confidentiality requirements. Individual records are not shared with anyone, including federal agencies and law enforcement entities. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share respondents’ answers with anyone—not the IRS, not the FBI, not the CIA, and not with any other government agency.

There are three Yes/No questions about disability in order to identify limitations in basic areas of functioning and independent living.

#18. a. Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?
   b. Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

#19. a. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
   b. Does this person have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
   c. Does this person have difficulty dressing or bathing?

#20. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?

The Census Bureau compiles the results from these questions to provide communities with important statistics to help in their disability services planning.

For example:

- United States Percent with a Disability: 12.6%
- Median Earnings of Persons with a Disability: $23,090
- New Jersey Percent with a Disability: 10.4%
- Median Earning of Persons with a Disability: $27,805

The Census Bureau has identified people with disabilities as a hard-to-count population, which means they are at a greater risk of being undercounted. The 2020 Census will begin in March 2020. Most households will receive a letter explaining how to respond online. There is also an option for responding by phone or by mail. Braille and large print guides will be available to respondents to assist with self-response. Census data help direct more than $800 billion a year in federal funding, including programs that support people with disabilities. So it is extremely important to be counted!

*Information from https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/disability/
Annual Meeting at a New Location!

*hip*’s annual meeting was held the evening of November 14th at a new location, the Westy Storage Center at 65 Commerce Way in Hackensack. A group of almost 100 *hip* consumers, members, staff and board members convened to discuss the highlights and accomplishments of *hip* over the past fiscal year.

To start, the finance report was presented by Treasurer Rick Hodgman, who explained that *hip* is in good financial order. This was followed by board member elections. The keynote speaker was Michael Fondacaro, a wheelchair user who has featured his travels throughout the country and his participation in many sports in an entertaining video titled, “Beyond the Chair.” Michael responded to questions using a communications board. He was a fantastic addition to our meeting this year.

President and CEO Brian Fitzgibbons reviewed *hip*’s accolades of the year and introduced the staff members of both the Bergen and Hudson offices. Betty Fetzer, Board Vice-Chair, then introduced the members of the Board of Trustees. The meeting ended by inviting the guests to offer their advice for future programs.

Westy contributed to half of the cost of food from Firehouse Subs and the entire rental of the space, tables and chairs—even the tablecloths, plates and napkins with all the utensils were included. Westy also distributed complimentary bags with various favors for our guests. They went out of their way to make sure all accommodations were made and in a timely manner. Thank you to everyone at Westy for providing such a wonderful environment for our meeting.

*hip’s Annual Holiday Party

This year’s Holiday Season got off to a great start with our Annual Holiday Party. The partygoers arrived and quickly began to renew old acquaintances and were escorted to their seats by the attentive *hip* staff to sit down to a four-course dinner skillfully prepared by the chefs of the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Fort Lee. The festive decorations were enhanced by displays of door prizes and colorful cookie tins while each table was set with beautiful poinsettias donated by Herman Hofman. As the first course was being served, DJ Greig Atkinson started the music and the group almost never stopped dancing. If they did take a break from the dance floor many of them dressed up for the close-up at the photo booth run by Irina from Back to Back Music (see the gallery page at www.hipcilt.org).

The party was in full swing when *hip* volunteers started to circulate selling 50-50 tickets and we took a break for cake and calling out the door prizes. Anthony Yorio did a great job calling out the numbers. As an extra added bonus, we distributed over 125 beautiful calendars from a variety of charities. Finally, after all the numbers had been picked, in what has become a *hip* tradition, Chris Gagliardi offered up a very special rendition of “White Christmas.”

As the crowd dispersed many people were heard to say that this was a great party with good food, treasured friends and lots of fun.

African Drumming Circle

*By Trisha Ebel
Independent Living Assistant*

On November 12, 2019, *hip*’s Adjustment to Vision Loss consumers met at the North Arlington Senior Center and explored a new and exciting experience – an African Drumming Circle!

Alfred Fredel is a Health and Wellness coach as well as a Trained Health Rhythm Facilitator. Alfred instructed a 2-hour session to 12 of our *hip* consumers. The goal of the session was to bring unity and community through drumming and song!

This session was an introduction to group drumming. Everyone learns basic techniques on different percussion instruments normally found in a drumming circle. This was a great way to try something new.

Alfred made sure that he included each person in the activity. He kept going around the circle letting all of us demonstrate our new skills as he instructed. I also must mention that Alfred has a powerful and beautiful voice, so he also had all of us singing, too! A great time was had by all and we are so thankful to Alfred for taking the time to facilitate a new experience for our support group meeting.

Empowering Women

The Empowering Women group had their January monthly meeting at Matisse Chocolatier at 260 Grand Avenue in Englewood, NJ. The ladies had a wonderful time making chocolate pizzas and bowls and dipping pretzels, cashews, chips, raisins, and marshmallows. We would like to thank Lucille for providing the ladies with a fantastic experience at Matisse.
We Welcome The Following New and Renewing Members of Hip For 2020!

Jeanne Aimone
Natalie Alave
Roselyn Altman
Kevin Angelini
Anonymous*
Angela Arboleda
James Arkills
Carl & Janice Arnold
Paul Aronsohn*
Chandan Bagchi
Barbara Banta
Barbara Baron
Bernice Baron
Deborah Baumann-Dasilva
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**Transition Conference & Resource Fair**

*hip* collaborated with the Hudson County Office of Disability Services and Jersey City Public Schools to facilitate the 2019 Transition Conference & Resource Fair. The conference was held on November 2nd at County Prep High School in Jersey City.

Addressed were several disability topics, including post-secondary education, financial entitlement programs, legal guardianship, community resources and adult services. The conference was a great success with over 100 participants.

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**Calendar of Events**

**BERGEN**

**Empowering Women Support Group**
- March 19: 11am – 1pm, Bergen *hip* Office
- April 16

**Book Club**
- March 6: 11am – 1pm, Bergen *hip* Office
- April 3

**AVL PEER SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS**

**Fort Lee**
- March 10: April 14

**North Arlington**
- March 10: April 7

**Washington Township** (location to be announced)
- March 18: April 15

**Jersey City**
- March 26: April 23

**Secaucus**
- March 5: April 2

**TelephoneNumber Support Group**

**Young Adult Peer Conference Call**
- Ages 18 – 30: 7:30 pm
- March 5
- April 2

**Older Adult Peer Conference Call**
- Ages 31 – 50: 7:30 pm
- March 10
- April 7

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

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*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 39 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)

**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: Angela Arboleda (Hudson)

**Division of Developmental Disabilities Support Coordination Program** assists individuals from Bergen and Hudson Counties to discover their full potential. Contact: Angela Arboleda (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 Angela Arboleda (Hudson)

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

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

**Multimedia Transcription Service (MTS)** transcribes textbooks and other materials into Braille. Contact: Jayne Jacobs (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 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: Brian Fitzgibbons (Bergen) or Marily Gonzalez (Hudson)
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