

Meeting for Westchester County Advisory Council for People with Disabilities

September 25, 2024

In Attendance

Carin Horowitz-Chair

Advocates

Kenny Burr

Melissa Carney

Terry Degatano

Debbie Friedman

Michael Gilberg

Francesca Hagadus

Marni Marron

Lucille Rossi

Westchester County Staff

Shari Ascher

Tara Conte

Dennis Delborgo

Evan Latainer

Anna Masopust

Jeff Zitofsky

Welcome-Motion to Open Meeting

- Chair Opened the meeting at 4:05 pm.
- Chair welcomed everyone.

Approval of Minutes

- Chair asked for someone to motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve was done by Francesca. It was motioned and then seconded, and then approved by Lucille.

Recreational Parks Access

- Evan and Jeff attended a WRAPS meeting. A lot of interest occurred from the meeting. An additional meeting happened afterwards initiated from the Town of Yorktown Superintendent. There was a discussion about the office and Paratransit.
- Jim Morabito asked for a presentation for their seniors about Office for People with Disabilities and ParaTransit.
- Jeff had a meeting with county parks about working with people with disabilities. The goal is to share with their staff different strategies to work with people with disabilities. This would include; vendors who employ people that work with concession stands. A variety of trainings would be offered to better assist people with disabilities. These trainings would include people with disabilities.
- A meeting will be taking place with the Westchester County Parks Foundation regarding accessibility. This is the same foundation that is providing the accessible trail chairs for hiking.

Employment

- Shari continues to promote the Diverse Abilities Job Fair on Oct. 9 at the Westchester County Center. Interviews will be held from 9 am-10 am with the prospective applicants. Open house will be from 10 am-12:30 pm.
- Over 50 employers and resource providers will be present. We would still like to have a cushion and have additional employers. It would be great to have a photographer come to the event so the applicants would be able to set up a LinkedIn account.
- Multiple Westchester County School Districts will be attending, ie: Bedford and Ossining.
- 120 people have registered. 20 employers have agreed to do 1:1 interviews. The staff and volunteers should arrive at 8 am. Volunteers do not need to stay the entire time.

- The Westchester Putnam Career center will be there to help with resumes and interview skills.
- 2 virtual workshops were done.
 - 1 for attendees.
 - 1 was done by Michelle Green of Access-VR, it was phenomenal. Michelle discussed all of the things that Access-VR does to assist constituents.
- Shari is encouraging everyone to follow her and also to follow Westchester Catalyst and to share the videos.
- Evan shared that the NDEAM Awards Breakfast is on Oct. 1 at the Sleepy Hollow Conference Center in Tarrytown. Jeff is the keynote speaker. The event starts at 9:10 am and finishes at 10:30 am.

Newsletter

- The September Out & About Newsletter will come out Friday.
- Jeff has really taken off with the newsletter in a positive way.
- The newsletter consists of 8 articles that benefit our constituents and it impacts many peoples' lives.
- Shari recently received a phone call from a Brooklyn resident hoping there was something similar to this in her community.
- Most recently the newsletter has received a lot of traction and calls from other counties if there was something similar in nature.

Inclusive Initiative

- Bedford continually does wonderful things and sends out lengthy helpful emails.
- It was promoted to go to the Inclusive Initiative website as it has very great info.
- Bedford had a community event over the past weekend. At the event there was a sensory tent, with a couch to decompress and other things to help the attendees to feel comfortable and a newsletter to subscribe to.
- Miracle League of Westchester is hosting an annual event for kids on October 26 from 11 am-3 pm at Ridge Rd. Park in Hartsdale.
 - Over 2,200 attendees came last year and it is estimated that there may be more.

- There will be a pumpkin patch, scary haunted house, hayride, DJ and more.
- It is encouraged if someone is interested in having a table to register on the Miracle League of Westchester website.
- This is a rain or shine event.

Airport Update

- Good maps app. to use for mapping of the airport.
- Good maps has a soft launch coming up.
- If a traveler is on site at the airport they will be able to have access with full functionality.
- A traveler would still have some usage at home to learn the layout of the airport before arrival.
- The hard launch date is to be determined.
- It is available for use now. If you are able to test it, please send Carin feedback so she can collect it to submit from the group.

Updates, Questions and Concerns

- There was a discussion about social opportunities for young adults with disabilities. Francesca discussed how her son has successfully gone on 4 dates with a person he met through speed dating. Brendan Klein set up the event.
- Participants need to be vetted and be able to attend independently without a comm hab worker.
- Is this something that could be held at the Westchester County Center with a target group for young adults? Can this be discussed and something drafted to the County Executive and Deputy County Executive?
- SPARC located in Yorktown may be a good organization to contact about and other social opportunities as well.
- There was also a discussion on Proposition 1 which was formerly known as the New York Equal Rights Amendment. Proposition 1 will be on the ballot for the upcoming election in November. This proposition will protect women's rights and reproductive freedoms including the right to abortion. This will keep New Yorkers not politicians in charge of their personal decisions.

Next Meeting: Oct. 23

Chair closed the meeting at 5:09 pm.