

STRONGER TOGETHER

April 2023 | Advocates Incorporated



HELLO SPRING

As spring arrives in CNY, Advocates looks forward to hosting a variety of events for our families who access supports and services, plus our donors and friends.

We hope that you will get the chance to join us at our 5th Annual Stroll & Roll 5K and Auction, dance your way to the sounds of FLAME, a group of talented musicians from upstate New York who happen to have disabilities, or join your friends at the John Wolford Coffee House. For information on upcoming events, please look inside this edition. We look forward to seeing you!

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

Playing a vital role in providing supports and quality services to people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities epitomizes our Mentors' passion and commitment. Read about Mentor Melissa Crowe and her unwavering dedication to the individuals she supports in her professional and personal life.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Learn how Mikey Miranda positively impacts the lives of so many. The reciprocal relationships and the collaborative efforts of Mikey's Circle of Support and his family have helped pave the way for Mikey's success. He is a very special man with so many defining qualities. Read about Mikey's father, John, who continues to support our community by continually giving back.

STEPPING STONES FOR SUCCESS

Meet Derek Curtis and his sister, Mackenzie (part of his support team). Derek advocates for a greater understanding by the general public of people with disabilities of any age. From student to lecturer, see how Derek is changing the world.



ADVANCING INCLUSION | EMPOWERING FAMILIES | CREATING COMMUNITY

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In mid-February, many service providers including Advocates converged at the Capital Building in Albany to participate in the New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) Rally to advocate for an increase in funding to support people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and the Direct Support Professionals/Mentors who make a difference in their lives each day.

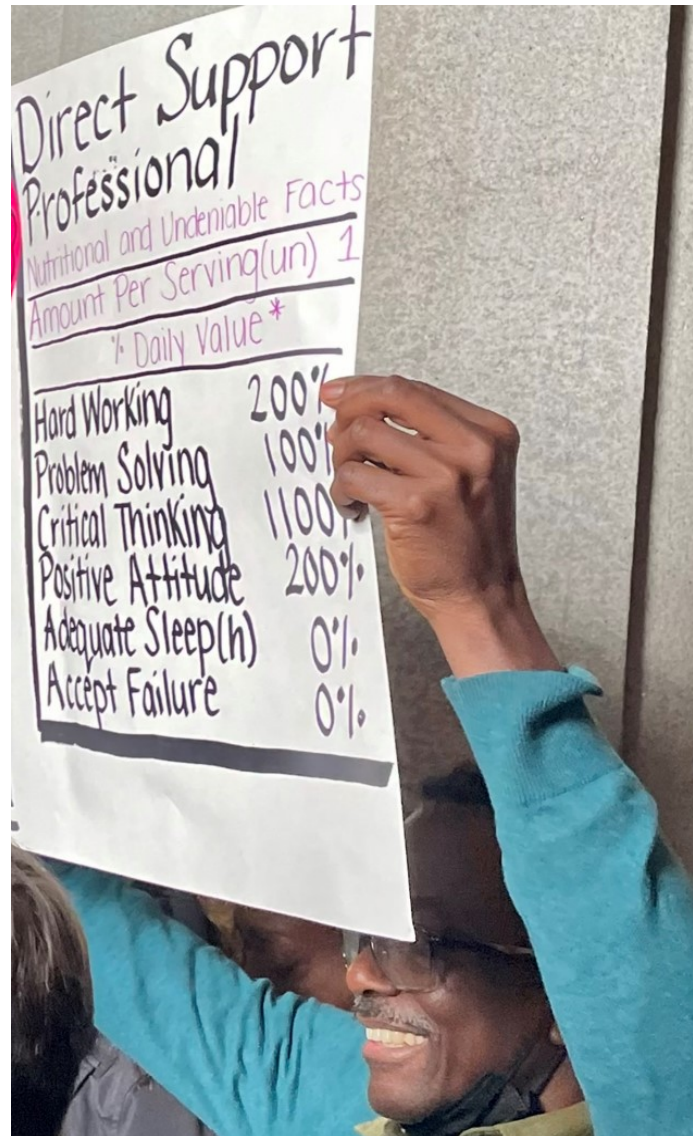
The rally brought attention to the need for equity for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in the NYS budget. We value our partnerships with a robust community of champions of our cause, including other provider agencies, legislators, self-advocates, families, and other dedicated supporters across the state. We truly are stronger together.

While we continue the work of advocating to advance service funding and social justice, Advocates remains dedicated to our work in the homes and communities of the people we support. Our organization's sole focus is on providing the supports and services needed to advance inclusion, empower families, and support people to live the lives of their choice.

The common thread in this newsletter issue's Spotlight Stories is that each person has people in their life who believed in them, helped them dream and set goals, and helped them move toward achieving their goals one step at a time. Nelson Mandela said "a winner is a dreamer who never gives up". May we continue to help each other to win by supporting each other's dreams as we move toward achieving our individual and collective goals one day at a time.

Amy Dugliss

Executive Director



A winner is a dreamer
who never gives up.

NELSON MANDELA

@junebug.beauty

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON



You'd be hard-pressed to bump into Michael Miranda in the community and not find him with a smile on his face. With his kindhearted nature and a genuine compassion for others, "Mikey," 31, is proof that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Mikey's father, John, is one of the most influential figures in Advocates' storied history.

John held a variety of roles with Advocates, and though he has since retired, his lasting impact is still felt not only in his son's daily life, but also by the thousands of people receiving services from Advocates, along with the 1,200+ people Advocates now employs.

"It feels very rewarding, seeing Advocates expand to the point it has," John reflected, noting that he was just the agency's 17th employee at one time. John either created or had a major role in developing many of the events, activities, and groups that Advocates provides today, including its kickball league, the Le Moyne swimming club, the John Wolford Coffee House, and large annual events such as the Family Picnic, the Talent & Art Show, and the Winter Party & Information Fair.

"We are fortunate that John has been a part of the Advocates family from the beginning, and it is a blessing to have him still helping to guide the way as a member of our Board of Directors," said Amy Dugliss, Executive Director of Advocates. Other longtime associates and friends of John also shared their admiration of him and all he has meant to the organization.

"As a parent, as an employee, and as a board member, he puts everything he has into serving everyone involved with Advocates," said former Executive Director of Advocates and current CEO of LIFEPlan, Nick Cappoletti. "This wasn't just for Mikey's benefit, but rather he leveraged his own experiences to help others receiving services from Advocates, and that's made a difference for countless people."

Mikey has followed in his father's footsteps in fostering relationships and making a difference. One example of this is his creation of a social group to keep people at Advocates connected, engaged, and entertained. Mikey, his friends, and their Mentors routinely arrange day trips, get-togethers, and other fun activities that everyone will enjoy. What started as a mechanism to remain close during the pandemic, the group's activities have expanded virtually to include things like bingo, scrapbooking, board games, and even simple Zoom calls to keep in touch with one another. "I like seeing my friends' happy faces," Mikey said, donning a happy face of his own. "Knowing his friends were doing well during the pandemic really helped him," John added. "Staying connected was vital, but we also focused on self-care and household skills such as hand washing, creating a daily schedule, and working on cooking skills."

"I saw a big but positive change in Michael during the pandemic," said his Mentor, Grace Pinkowski. "He took such an initiative in helping to form these groups because of the social aspect, but it was really more to help his friends." John couldn't help but agree. "He's always been very caring; that's just who he is," he said. Compassion for others is another unmistakably shared trait between the two Miranda men.

"John and Mikey are both known for ensuring that everyone is doing okay," said Advocates Family Liaison, Stephany Keans. "Every time I see Mikey, he'll ask how my kids are doing or how my day is going. He truly cares about others, and he gets this from his father." Mikey demonstrates his compassion for others in different ways. "He'll do things like approach the new person in the room and make them feel comfortable," Grace said. "Or,

if someone is going through something serious, he'll tell them he's thinking about and praying for them. It's in his nature to be very kind and empathetic towards others."

Several Mentors who have supported Mikey over the years, including Grace, have stated how he's positively impacted their lives. "This is easily the best job I've ever had," Grace beamed. "Mikey makes it so entertaining and fun, and he lifts me up if I'm having a rough day." Just as Mikey uplifts his Mentors, they're there in turn support him and his family – whether it's with day-to-day activities or long-term goals. This reciprocal relationship and the collaborative efforts of his Circle of Support have helped pave the way for Mikey's success. "It all stems from my wife, Alice," John said humbly. "I credit her for not treating him any differently from day one, and our entire team has kept that vision all along."



"The success of an individual is highly dependent on the involvement of the whole group, and the Mirandas are a great example of this," Stephany commented. "John treats their Mentors with unbelievable respect, and he treats them like family, rather than employees."

With his team's vision, involvement, and dedication, Mikey has amounted to a successful and beloved figure in our community, just like his father. He takes pride in directing his life to achieve his goals, which begins with his innate ability to uplift others and is coupled with the important life skills he's developed and refined with the help of his Mentors. Mikey enjoys volunteering his time at Meals on Wheels and Le Moyne College, creating personalized birthday cards for friends and family, and acts as one of the main facilitators and planners for the Miranda family's annual summer vacation at Camp Tierney on Seneca Lake. Mikey is a proud uncle to his three nieces, all of whom gravitate towards him because of his amiable nature. When he's not spending time with his family, he enjoys pursuing his interests, which include arts and crafts, music and dancing, acting classes, attending high school musicals, and exploring his community for new activities and places that he and his friends might enjoy. Additionally, Mikey enjoys participating in the very things that his father instituted many years ago, as so many others in the Advocates community do.

"We have a very high level of comfort knowing he's in good hands now and in the future with Advocates," John said. "His successes now and down the road will be because of Advocates and his support team, as opposed to anything I've done for him." Nick Cappoletti offered a different vantage point. Because their friendship has spanned decades, Nick knows firsthand how hard John has worked, as well as how modest he is.



"He's such a humble guy, so I think it's difficult for him to take any credit," Nick said. "But when you touch that many lives, you're impacting the community. And, remarkably, he's impacted more than just a community...he's ultimately impacted the entire system."

The Advocates family and the community at large are better because of the Miranda family. "John makes the world better, and because of that, it's an honor to know him and call him a friend," Nick concluded. And so, the next time you attend an Advocates event, witness people enjoying the activities and social groups Advocates has to offer, or see Mikey Miranda uplifting those around him, we hope you'll pause and share the same appreciation that we do for John and all of his many contributions.

SPECIAL EVENTS

ADVOCATES 18TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



Registration is now open for Advocates 18th Annual Charity Golf Tournament!

Join us on Wednesday, September 20th, as Advocates hosts its classic golf tournament at Timber Banks Golf Club in Baldwinsville. Timber Banks is Central New York's best kept secret and the perfect social setting for our golfers. Featuring a Jack Nicklaus Design course, Timber Banks offers immaculate grounds and breathtaking views.

Golfers will be treated to 18 holes of golf, cart, electronic scoring, a variety of contests, lunch, beverages on the course, cocktail reception, hostess gift, swag, live auction that includes several safaris, raffle prizes, and a sit-down gourmet dinner overlooking the course.

For more information or to register, please go to bit.ly/3IG6mlz or use the QR code to the right from your phone.

A variety of sponsorship packages are still available! This is a great way to support our cause as well as brand your organization through print marketing, social media platforms, and networking opportunities. For more information, please contact the Development office at development@advocatesincorporated.org or call Cheri Haskins at (315) 469-9931.



April 8
Syracuse Crunch Game

April 17 - 21
Virtual Art & Talent Show Submissions Due

May 7
5th Annual Stroll & Roll
Online Auction

May 26
John Wolford Coffee House

June 7—August 23
Outdoor Kickball League

June 2
Dreamnight at the Zoo

July 21
FLAME Concert

June 22
Advocates Blood Drive

September 20
Advocates Golf Tournament



Congratulations to Dom Cambareri!

We would like to congratulate Dom Cambareri for being this year's recipient of the CNY BizEvent Impact Award, sponsored by the Business Journal, for his outstanding contributions to Syracuse Challenger Baseball. The Impact Award recognizes a member of the community that has created a program that has benefitted the lives of others in a meaningful way and has had a direct impact on the community.

Dom is one of the co-founders of Syracuse Challenger Baseball, which is the oldest and largest baseball league for people with disabilities in the world. Dom, along with Dee Perkins and Jennifer Savastino, worked tirelessly to create a model for other communities to replicate and because of their commitment and vision, people with disabilities benefit socially and physically from the program. We are so proud of you Dom and thank you for making a significant impact on the community through Challenger Baseball and Advocates!



Dee Perkins, Dom Cambareri, Jennifer Savastino

RECREATION

John Wolford Coffee House



Advocates will be hosting its first John Wolford Coffee House on May 26th from 6:30pm - 8:30pm. The event will be held at Christ the King which is located at 21 Cherry Tree Circle in Liverpool. We will announce the event date and time in future editions of our Inclusion Matters electronic newsletter.

As a reminder, guests are encouraged to bring their favorite snack to pass. Space is limited to allow for the first 120 adults receiving services from Advocates.

Advocates Art Gallery

We're looking for individuals receiving services from Advocates who are interested in participating in our Art Gallery in 2023.

Paintings, drawings, or photos will be displayed for our Advocates' friends and the general public to enjoy at our main office in Liverpool. Each piece will be displayed for six months and will accompany a brief biography on each artist.

If you are interested in displaying your artwork, please email Shannon Eckler at seckler@advocatesincorporated.org



Advocates Winter Party and Information Fair



On March 10th, Advocates hosted its Winter Party and Information Fair at LeMoyne College. Our Winter Party and Information Fair was a great opportunity for individuals and families receiving services from Advocates to learn about a variety of supports that are available in our community. Thank you to all of the local agencies, organizations, and other connections within the community that enrich the lives of people with developmental disabilities and

their families who participated. Fair vendors included Aaron's Farm Inc., Access-VR, AccessCNY, Advocates Inc., ARC, ARISE Respite, ARISE AAD, Bounce PT, Casey's Place, Challenger Baseball, CNY Mental Health, EFR, Epilepsy Alliance America, Food Bank of CNY, Help Me Grow, ICI, InclusiveU /Taishoff Center, Jowonio, LIFEPlan, Meals on Wheels, Person to Person Advocacy, Prime Care, Purpose Farm, Radiant Abilities, SA FACE, Special Olympics CNY, Wladis Law Firm, and YMCA of CNY.

We would like to thank the vendors who participated in the event, our FSS team and Recreation Department for organizing the event, and to the employees who volunteered their time to assist in its success.



Megan Buckley is the winner of a gift basket filled with Advocates apparel.

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT - MELISSA CROWE

"There's no one I'd rather trust with my son, Daniel, than Melissa." This is a complimentary statement from any parent towards their child's Mentor. However, because of Beth Henderson's unique perspective of being a parent of someone with a disability and her years of experience in the field, this sentiment carries even more weight.

Melissa Crowe and the mentorship she provides have been nothing short of a gift to the Henderson family and everyone else she's supported in her ten



years with Advocates. Her passion and exuberance for being a Mentor, in addition to the exceptional job she does, demonstrate just how valuable she is to those she works with and to Advocates as a whole. "I see her dedication and person-centered approach on all fronts," Beth said. "She has a unique touch, but also a deep respect for everyone she supports." The respect Melissa has for people with disabilities traces back to the close

relationship she had with her late aunt, Carmella, who had a disability herself. The outward consideration shown by her family members towards people with disabilities served as model behavior for Melissa all her life. "My family never treated my aunt...or anyone with disabilities for that matter...any differently than anyone else," she said.

Because of her personal experience and a previous work experience in the YMCA's Inclusion Department for children with disabilities, Melissa felt she was destined to work in the human services field. At the YMCA, she worked at its summer camp, taught swim lessons, supervised recreation time, and played a role in various other aspects of the program – all of which deepened her interest in and passion for the field. This is evidenced by her pursuit of psychology, which she chose to study while at SUNY Potsdam. "When I was in school for psych, I gravitated towards person-first language and the nature of self-direction," Melissa said. "Advocates was a trendsetter in this area, and I've always really appreciated that." She also appreciates the one-to-one service model Advocates has used since its inception, because it necessitates Mentors devote their undivided attention to one person at a time.

It's no wonder then, that Daniel Henderson has developed as much as he has under Melissa's caring tutelage, which has now spanned almost a decade. "He's grown up so much," Melissa said, smiling at the thought of it. "He's so much more vocal and engaging now compared to when I first started working with him." Beth agreed that this has been one of Daniel's greatest progressions. "There's been a lot of skill-building and working towards goals over time, but she's been absolutely huge with helping with socialization and building his confidence," she said.

Melissa's impact has reached more than just the Henderson family, and she's been equally impacted by the other families she's supported over time. "People like the Galvagnos and Mirandas certainly shaped my early days at Advocates," she said. "Walking into their homes every week felt like walking into my own. They're just awesome families."

Whether it's with day-to-day tasks or life-altering events, Melissa has offered her unwavering support to people like Daniel every step

of the way. "We simply couldn't have gotten through COVID without her; there's just no way," Beth said, thinking back on how turbulent and uncharted a period it was. "Daniel began exhibiting some really challenging behaviors because of the loss of his routine, seeing his friends, and doing things he wanted to do in the community."

Though virtual mentoring sessions with Melissa early in the pandemic helped to some degree, Daniel's mental health still suffered because of the drastic changes in his life. One thing that Daniel had an especially hard time accepting was the obligation of wearing a mask. When he and Melissa were able to resume in-person services again, Daniel's outlook on masks changed the moment he saw Melissa for the first time in what had seemed like eons. Leading by example, Melissa arrived at the Henderson home already wearing her mask, and then encouraged Daniel to put one on himself. "Daniel was so happy to see her that he didn't even flinch at her recommendation," Beth recalled. "His acceptance of wearing a mask was a life-changing moment because we knew he would be able to venture into the community safely."

When we asked Melissa to share something about herself that people may not know, she responded, "I want people to know more about Daniel than about me. I wish people knew him like I do, and that there's so much more to Daniel than meets the eye. He's hilarious and very smart!" Though Melissa's responses help shed more light on who Daniel is, she inadvertently shed more light on who she is as well. If you're fortunate to spend even a few minutes chatting with Melissa, you'll see that she is caring, humble, and selfless, almost to a fault. And so, with these admirable characteristics and more, it's easy to see why she epitomizes the ideal Mentor. "Having Melissa means peace of mind...knowing that Daniel is out and about and in good hands," Beth said.

When Melissa isn't providing critical supports and top-notch mentorship to people at Advocates, you may catch her spending time outdoors, often near water. By her own admission, Melissa doesn't have much free time these days. She is pursuing a secondary degree in nursing from SUNY Morrisville, all while acting as a volunteer EMT in what spare time she does have.

"Melissa told me that wherever life takes her, she wants to be a part of Daniel's life," Beth said. "As a parent, what more can you ask for? We really feel like she's a part of our family, and we couldn't do what we do without her."

The same can be said for all of Advocates – we couldn't do what we do without our Mentors and their constant dedication. On behalf of all of us at Advocates, we are indebted to Melissa and all our devoted Mentors, and truly appreciate the heart and soul they put into their work!



SPECIAL EVENTS

Celebration Fundraisers

Celebrate your birthday, anniversary, July 4th, or YOU by organizing a Facebook (Meta) fundraiser. This is a great way to give back to Advocates as well as help us advance our mission!

Facebook makes it incredibly easy to rally your friends to support your celebratory fundraiser. To create a Facebook birthday fundraiser, you must have an active Facebook account. Two weeks before your birthday, you'll receive a notification directly from Facebook inviting you to host a campaign for the nonprofit of your choice. If you need assistance, please contact Development at development@advocatesincorporated.org

Come Join the Fun!

Sponsored by KeyBank, Advocates 5th Annual Stroll & Roll 5K brings people together to raise awareness for children and adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Racers and walkers meet at Onondaga Lake (Willow Bay) for a morning full of fun, comradery, food, games, and live entertainment. The race begins at 10:00am and is immediately followed by a complimentary lunch. We will be offering grilled hamburgers and hotdogs, a bag of chips, and water with each entry. There will also be face painting, live entertainment, and games for the entire family! All racers receive a gift for participating! Our MC is news anchor Abbey Buttacavoli. Special guests include Spiderman and Deadpool.

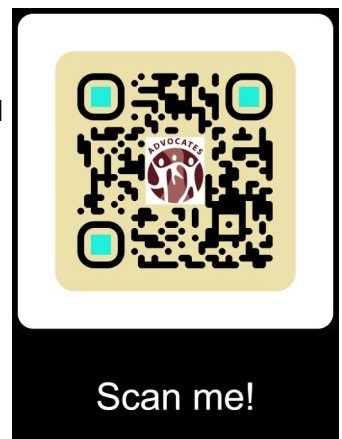
Cost to participate is \$30 per person and support staff are free if accompanying a person served by Advocates. Special pricing for children and teams are available. To register, please go to <https://rb.gy/3zvfk7> or scan the QR Code to the right.

Participants will be given a link to Advocates online auction as we near the race date. Be sure to check out the great packages donated by local and national retail establishments. There's something for everyone - restaurant gift cards, gift certificates, attire, sports packages, and so much more!

Packets will be available for pick up at the Advocates Liverpool location on May 3, 2023 from 8:30am - noon and at the Advocates' Fayetteville location on May 4, 2023 from 9:00am - noon. If you are unable to pick up your race packet before the race, they will be available the day of the event.

Please help spread the word by posting a message on your Meta (Facebook) account or by sharing the race information to people you know. The general public and remote racers are welcome!

Please note, a staff photographer will be on hand to capture the excitement of the event. Your attendance/admission serves as permission for use of these images by Advocates. However, if you wish to not be photographed, please let the photographer know.



RECREATION

Syracuse Crunch vs Laval Rocket

Join us for the last discounted Syracuse Crunch game as they take on the Laval Rocket team on April 8th at 7:00pm at the War Memorial. Cost for your ticket is \$20 per person. Syracuse Crunch are a professional ice hockey team in the American Hockey League (AHL). With each game, players provide thrills and excitement with their swift moves and quick thinking as they set up their goals.



Photo: Syracuse Crunch

To purchase tickets, please contact Emily Kissinger: (315) 473-4444 ext.126 or online at: www.syracusecrunch.com using promotional code: **ADVOCATES**

Virtual Art & Talent Show

Advocates is pleased to announce the return of its Virtual Art and Talent Show. Watch individuals, who receive services from Advocates, showcase their art and talents. Entries will be accepted from April 17 through April 21st and Talent will be on display on Advocates' Facebook page during the last week of April. Consider sharing your singing, playing your favorite instrument, storytelling, dancing, magic tricks, visual art, etc. One entry per person. Please limit videos to no more than three minutes. By entering the show, participants give Advocates permission to showcase their talent on our Facebook page.

Sign Up for Advocates Outdoor Kickball League



Our Outdoor Kickball League is schedule to kick off on June 7th at Carrier Park. This 12-week session is open to all individuals who receive services from Advocates. The league will play from 5:00pm - 6:00pm and the cost per person if \$45. Please make your check out to Advocates and mail to 290 Elwood Davis Road, Suite 101, Liverpool, NY 13088.

Dreamnight at Rosamond Gifford Zoo

Mark your calendars for Dreamnight at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. On June 2, from 5:00pm - 8:30pm, an inclusive, educational cost-free evening awaits you. This magical evening will surely put a smile on your face!

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is the only zoo in New York to participate in this global celebration for children and adults with special needs. Look for more information in our upcoming monthly electronic newsletter.



FROM SIBLING RIVALRY TO AN UNRIVALED RELATIONSHIP



Derek Curtis, 31, and his younger sister, Mackenzie, have a unique connection, to say the least. In addition to the typical differences and disagreements that face most siblings, Derek's disability historically challenged their relationship further. However, with much effort, the passing of time, a good balance of

patience and understanding, and a new wrinkle to their relationship, Derek and Mackenzie are now closer than they've ever been.

"Even without a disability, it can be hard for siblings to get along," Derek commented astutely. "But my disability leaves me without a filter and a tendency to want to argue." Communication has certainly been a challenge – not only for Derek, but also for those with whom he interacts, according to his sister. "The way he says some things can come across as rude or insensitive, but it's never intended that way," Mackenzie said. "The people he's close to have all had to practice patience when receiving his anticipated message."

Derek is very independent, so much so that he moved into his own apartment a few years ago. Despite his level of independence, Derek's disability impacts him in other ways, such as nagging dietary and sleep-related issues that affect his everyday life. The thing that perhaps makes things hardest on him, however, is something that isn't apparent to the untrained eye. "My disability isn't physically evident, so most people don't realize I have a disability," he said. Because of this, people have been less understanding of him, and he can recall numerous instances in which he wasn't shown nearly enough patience. "I don't go out of my way to tell people I have a disability," Derek continued. "But it would be nice if people knew, because I think they'd be able to understand and work with me better."

Insert Mackenzie, who has worked as a Mentor with Advocates for ten years. With the experience she's garnered in that time, perhaps as good an understanding of Derek as anyone, and a yearning to see her brother lead a successful life, Mackenzie offered to mentor him on a part-time basis. The prospect of working with her brother also meant an opportunity to improve what had always been a strained relationship.

"The first few times we worked together were difficult because I wanted him to do the things I knew he could do," Mackenzie said, acknowledging she may have set her expectations a bit too high early on. "But that was only because I know what he's capable of and want to see him be the best he can be." Both she and other experienced Mentors recognize the need to exercise patience – not only with Derek, but with everyone they support.

"Each of us figure out our own ways to bring out the very best in Derek," said his Senior Mentor, Erika Kiteveles. "We work on things that he and his sister aren't able to focus on as much, and I absolutely love helping him achieve his goals." Because Derek wants children to have a better educational experience than he did, one of his life goals is to become a teacher's assistant. Derek was resentful towards school in general as a youth, primarily because he felt he wasn't given enough attention or patience. "Inclusivity has come so far compared to when I was in school, so today's kids have it much better than I did," he said. "My goal is to connect with kids and show them that people do care."

To help achieve this objective, Derek studied early childhood education at Onondaga Community College. Further, he now visits

local institutions such as SUNY Oswego and Syracuse University, where he lectures education students. "As someone with a disability, I want them to know how important it is to really listen to their students," he said. "Feeling that my voice was being heard as a kid would've made a huge difference, and I try to convey that to people who will soon be teachers." Derek went on to say that a greater understanding by the general public of people with disabilities of any age – not just children – would make people's lives much easier.

"The outside world can be so unaccepting of people with disabilities," he said. "And that's part of the reason I love Advocates... because it's the exact opposite. No one judges me here." The friendships he's made through Advocates over the years mean more to him than anyone realizes. "I don't know anyone who does more for their friends than Derek," Mackenzie said. "He'll do things like spend his last few dollars on a gift for someone, and it's those things that show how much he cares about others."

Whether it's through gifts or simple gestures like saying something kind to someone, Derek gets a thrill out of making people smile. "A compliment may be the one nice thing a person hears all day, or maybe they have limited interactions with people. You never know how someone is feeling, but I try to cheer them up regardless."

When he's not spending time with his friends, you can find Derek immersing himself in any one of his many hobbies or interests. His passions coupled with his incredible creativity come to life when making things like music "mashups" and scrapbooks from magazine pictures. He also enjoys playing video games, going to the mall, traveling, and adding to any of his various collections. Derek is always open to trying new things, as is evidenced by his newfound interest in tennis. Whatever he's pursuing, he knows he does it with the full support of everyone in his corner. Though Mackenzie is one of the newer "official" members to Derek's support team, her impact has been among the most profound, and her work is valued and admired by everyone they come in contact with.

"There's nothing greater from a parent's perspective than seeing the strides in their relationship, and I'm extremely proud of both of them," said the siblings' mother, Lisa, who admitted she gets emotional when considering the impact this has made on the Curtis family. Lisa attributes some of Derek's progression with communication and other life skills directly to Mackenzie and her conscientious work. "I feel so lucky to have Mackenzie, his other Mentors, and Advocates as a whole as steppingstones for Derek's continued growth."

Though Derek was clear in saying all of his Mentors have been great over time, he acknowledged that the guidance he receives from his sister may mean a little more. "I would say we're better friends now than ever before, and that's helped things in general," Derek said. "Our relationship has definitely grown as brother and sister through the mentoring," Mackenzie added. "Growing up, I always wanted to look up to him, and I do that in some ways now because of how far he's come."

Author Wes Adamson said it best when he said, "Sisters and brothers just happen...we don't get to choose them, but they become one of our most cherished relationships." Though the Curtis' relationship can still exhibit the typical challenges that all siblings face, they appreciate each other more than they ever have. According to Mackenzie, being able to call each other friend is as meaningful to her as the strides Derek has taken as an individual. "He's already surpassed a lot of the things we were unsure he'd ever do, and I can't wait to see what else he can do because he has so much potential. I'm just really proud of him."

Advocates is proud of Derek's achievements and aspirations, and is equally proud to have Mackenzie as a valued employee of our organization!

Blood Drive Hosted by Advocates

Advocates is partnering with the American Red Cross and hosting a blood drive on June 22nd from 1:00pm - 6:00pm in the Board Room, located at 290 Elwood Davis Road in Liverpool.



Please make your appointment today by using the QR code to the left. Your blood can save a life!

Questions can be directed to customer-care@redcross.org



Photo: American Red Cross

FI Reimbursement Training Opportunities

The FI Team (Fiscal Intermediary Services) is offering regularly scheduled reimbursement training opportunities for individuals who self-direct their services and their families. Trainings will be virtual and will cover payment standards and service documentation requirements to support reimbursement claims for FI Services. Trainings will also include tutorials on submitting reimbursements into the MyeVeroPortal and the My-CarePortal app. If you are interested in attending one of the virtual sessions in April, May, and/or June, please click the corresponding link(s) below to register through EventBrite. Please email fi@advocatesincorporated.org if you have questions about registration or need assistance.



April 13th @ 10am

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565734576347>

April 13th @ 5:30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565736913337>

May 22nd @ 10am

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565738207207>

May 22nd @ 5:30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565739290447>

June 13th @ 10am

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565740453927>

June 13th @ 5:30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/advocates-fi-reimbursement-training-tickets-565741577287>

COMING THIS SUMMER | DINE AND DONATE

Advocates will be partnering with local restaurants to raise awareness of the services and supports provided by the agency. Panera, Tully's, Stingers, King David's, Olive Garden are just a few of the restaurants that will be participating. Families order on a designated night and a certain percentage of their proceeds are donated back to Advocates.

More details coming in our monthly electronic newsletter.

FAMILY TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the year, Advocates presents online and in-person monthly trainings for those we support and their families. Trainings are presented by experts in their fields on a variety of topics so that families will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the unique needs of those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Please check below for the spring schedule. Detailed information will be presented in the electronic newsletter.



April 19, 2023 | 6:00pm

Dating skills needed to stay safe and happy, including internet safety

Presented by: Kathy O'Connell | Radiant Abilities, LLC

April 26, 2023, | 6:00pm

Maximizing Benefits and Services

Presented by: James Traylor | Rivent Partners (previously Upstate Special Needs Planning/Consulting)

May 24, 2023, | 6:00pm

Finances 101: Money Concepts, Needs vs Wants, Budgeting and Identify Theft

Presented by: Ashley Whitt | SFCU

FLAME CONCERT—YOU ARE INVITED!



On July 21st, Advocates will be hosting an outdoor concert and dance featuring FLAME at 5:30pm.

FLAME is a musical group comprised of nine individuals with disabilities. Spreading hope and inspiration through their music, this is one event you won't want to miss!

FLAME tours globally performing classics through today's hits, including some originals. "Formed in 2003, they gained popularity from their appearances on Good Morning America and in People Magazine. They have also been featured in Tokyo, Japan's Daily Mainichi News, News-2-You, News Channel 10 and other news outlets around the world." Their mission is to change the world through their music and performance. "They inspire people with disabilities and give hope to them and their families – hope that they can do great things and live a fun and fulfilling life. FLAME's performances help change how the public perceives people with disabilities and increase the awareness and acceptance of all people, regardless of their differences."

It will be an inclusive evening with music, dancing, and food for the whole family. Look for more details in upcoming editions of the electronic newsletter and Constant Contact messages.

WE'RE HIRING

Make a difference while making a living!

- Competitive compensation
- Full time and part-time positions available
- Medical, dental, and vision benefits for full time employees
- Flexible schedules
- Largest service provider for individualized supports and services in Central New York
- Amazing opportunities for career progression



Our employees are the core of everything we do! If you want to make a difference while making a living, please visit www.advocatesincorporated.org/join-our-team or simply scan the QR code to the left.

“Great things are brought about and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands anxiously engaged in a good cause.” Elder M. Russell Ballard

Advocates: (315) 469.9931 or www.advocatesincorporated.org

New York Connects:

<https://ongov.net/nyconnects/>

211 CNY:

Dial 211 or <https://211cny.com/>

Lifeline 24/7 Mental Health

Support Line: 1.800.273.8255

988: Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Dial 988 or 988lifeline.org/chat



Advocates Community Space

Creating opportunities for people with disabilities is at the forefront of our mission. Our community center is a place where people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can meet to socialize in an inclusive environment. We encourage you to stop by and check out the center. Below are guidelines. To view the space or if you have any questions, please contact Brittany Jewell at bjewell@advocatesincorporated.org



COMMUNITY SPACE GUIDELINES

- ◆ Reservations must be in place prior to using the community space.
- ◆ The community space can be reserved for up to 16 people maximum at a time (8 people receiving services and 8 Mentors).
- ◆ Space can be reserved once per month during office hours per group.
- ◆ One group leader will reserve the space and be responsible for ensuring all steps are followed for reserving and using the space.
- ◆ Group leader must complete a checklist indicating that the area used was cleaned and disinfected and drop completed checklist off to reception at the end of reserved time.
- ◆ Food and other items cannot be stored at the office.

Advocates Presidents' Day Bingo



In February, Advocates hosted an afternoon of fun by offering Presidents' Day Bingo!

More than 50 people receiving services from Advocates and their Mentors/family members joined us for an afternoon of friends, snacks, prizes, and of course, lots of Bingo action! And, everyone went home with a prize!

We thank everyone for coming, and we'll see you next year at our Presidents' Day Bingo.

To celebrate Valentine's Day this year, a group of Advocates friends beautifully crafted handmade, decorative greeting cards for local seniors in our community.

Valentine's Day is all about spreading joy and making memories, and we have no doubt that the cards brought joy and happiness to so many seniors.

SPECIAL DELIVERY





Event Information
Date: Sunday, May 7th
10:00am - 1:00pm
Onondaga Lake Park,
Willow Bay

Race Includes
Race bib, medal, trophies
for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place,
door prizes, grilled
hamburgers and hotdogs,
bag of chips, beverage,
face painting, live
entertainment, and games
for the entire family!

Price
\$30 per person,
support staff free
when accompanying
individual,
children <3 free

ADVOCATES
6TH ANNUAL
**STROLL
& ROLL**
5K

To register, please use the QR
code or visit
<https://rb.gy/3zvfk7>



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