



As we make the turn into Spring, we've got a lot of fun things ahead of us at the LDA of WNY. We received approval to expand our Transition Services to people moving out of their family homes and out of certified sites. LDA will be working with the Center for Self Advocacy and Parent Network to provide peer supports and work with families making transitions. We're also in the second round for funding for curriculum development to prepare for students transitioning from high school.

The agency is hiring for a number of positions, and will be at area career fairs including the Downtown Library on April 6th, and the WNY Career Expo at Mt. Olive Baptist Church on April 26th. Stop by our tables or visit our website for more information. We'll be at other community events and fairs throughout the Spring and Summer, including Discover Kenmore on June 17th. Our website and Facebook page will have an updated list of events.

We would like to extend our congratulations to Melissa Heldwein, who was promoted from Assistant Director to Director of Medicaid Service Coordination, and Jessica Makowski, former Director of Medicaid Service Coordination, who was named Clinical Director, a new position that will be responsible for providing direct and indirect clinical support to the agency's program, along with clinical input related to program development, policies and procedures, staff training, service coordination, and ISP development.

We have a couple of fundraisers coming up: Paint Nite at Starlight Studio and Art Gallery on April 13th from 6-9 PM (tickets are \$30 and are available at www.eventbrite.com), as well as Happy Hours at Flying Bison Brewery on April 21st from 5-8 PM and Kaz's on May 20th from 5-8 PM, and a Trivia Night on May 8th at Shannon Pub at 8 PM. We hope to see you at any, or all of the events! More details can be found on our website or Facebook page. Stay tuned!

LDA Giving Campaign

The LDA of WNY is one month into its 2017 Campaign, which has put staff and board members on four teams: the White Cheddars, Blue Ribbons, Chum Cohos, and Yellow Team, with a goal of raising \$10,000 by May 31st. So far, we've raised more than \$1,700, with many fundraisers currently underway.

In addition to donations by several businesses, the White Cheddars and Chum Cohos are also collecting empty cans and bottles, the White Cheddars are having soup sales, there is a 50/50 raffle (tickets are \$1 a piece), with a winner to be chosen at the end of May, a Paint-Nite on April 13th at Starlight Studio and Art Gallery, Happy Hours with a Purpose on April 21st at Flying Bison Brewery and May 20th at Kaz's Bar, and a Trivia Night at Shannon Pub on May 8th!

The Happy Hour at Flying Bison is shaping up to be a great event. Frank's Gourmet Hot Dogs Chef's, and The Flaming Fish food truck will on-site for people to grab some dinner after work. We'll also have a basket raffle, wine ring-toss, 50/50 raffle, and Darth Vader and the characters from the North Ridge Buffalo Star Wars fan club will be available for pictures! They'll also have temporary tattoos, coloring pages, trading cards, and other goodies!

Events are open to everyone, so stay tuned for details, and make sure you tell your friends and family! If you would like to purchase 50/50 raffle tickets, come to one of our events for a chance at a smaller prize, or email us or stop by our Main Office in Kenmore for tickets to the big prize in May. The pot is over \$100 already.

Help us reach our \$10,000 goal! All proceeds benefit LDA of WNY's programs and services!

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Developmental Disabilities Day



Registration is now open for the 29th Annual Developmental Disabilities Day, to be held Thursday, May 18th at The Conference and Events Center in Niagara Falls.

Jamie Brewer, star of the FX hit television series, *American Horror Story*, and the 1st woman with Down Syndrome to walk in the New York Fashion week, will be a keynote speaker at the event. Brewer, alongside 20 other guest speakers, will present their expertise on a wide range of topics surrounding disabilities.

This year's conference theme, "My Hopes, My Dreams, My Future" encourages individuals to take a role in the course of their own lives and in being a force for change in their own communities.

The event brings together local and regional agencies, industry connected vendors and suppliers, direct support professionals, and the individuals that all of these groups support. This year's conference promises innovative workshops, agency and vendor fair, art gallery, live performances/interactive area, a parent center, award luncheon and reception.

LDA of WNY will present a morning workshop this year, Workshop Session #3 from 10:30 AM - 12 PM, titled *Special Education Rights and Responsibilities*. LDA of WNY's Phylcia Brown, Special Education Advocate of Urban School Districts, and Carol Pearce, Director of Family Support Services and Intake, will lead a panel discussion on the rights and responsibilities of families related to the Special Education process. The panel will include a special education advocate, psychologist, special education teacher, general education teacher, and possibly others.

Also stop by our booth at the vendor fair for information and goodies, as well as the art exhibition for original artwork from Starlight Studio artists.

To purchase your tickets, or to learn more about the 29th Annual Developmental Disabilities Conference, visit the website online at www.ddday.org, or visit its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ddday2017>



Save The Date!
Thursday, May 18, 2017

2017
Developmental
Disability
Awareness Day!

The Conference &
Event Center of Niagara Falls
www.ddday.org
Featuring 50+ Vendors,
25 Workshops and Much More

Learning and Celebrating
Peoples ABILITIES

DDAWNY
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ALLIANCE OF WNY
Linking Agencies, Supporting People Throughout WNY
www.ddawny.org

Buffalo Disability Writing and Art Collaborative

Looking for Buffalo area writers and artists with disabilities to contribute to a collection of poetry, short prose and visual art!



This opportunity is open to people who have physical, developmental, learning, and sensory disabilities; those who consider themselves to be on the autism spectrum; those who are living with a mental health disability or identify as a consumer, survivor, or ex-inmate; and those who are living with any number of chronic conditions, including pain.

Deadline for submissions is MAY 15!

Multiple submissions welcome (each limited to no more than 500-1000 words).

To submit a contribution: email your submission(s) as a .doc or .docx and your visual art as a high resolution .jpeg file to mrembis@gmail.com. Or deliver your submission in person to a member of the editorial board listed below.

Submissions may appear in the book, which will be published in late 2017. Submission does not guarantee publication.

Looking to Make a Difference? Join Our Team!

LDA of WNY has Full and Part-time Openings in our Erie and Chautauqua County Offices:

- Habilitation Specialist, Community Habilitation and I-LEARN Programs
- Bilingual Medicaid Service Coordinator (English/Spanish)
- Medicaid Service Coordinator
- Employment Specialist

Great Employee Benefit Package, Including:

- Flexible Paid Time Off
- Health, Vision, Dental, HRA, and Life Insurance

To apply, email employment@ldaofwny.org, with the job position as the subject title. Please include your resume and cover letter.

For more information, visit our website at www.ldaofwny.org, or email employment@ldaofwny.org

LDA Supports Student Lead Testing

The LDA of WNY signed a Memorandum of Support for two legislative bills: Assembly bill A03899 and Senate bill S03941, to give all schools in New York State access to students' blood lead tests, which is necessary to help schools identify children with a history of lead poisoning and carefully monitor their educational progress as recommended by the CDC. Specifically, the proposed legislation will "Grant schools access to a student's blood lead information in the statewide immunization information system in order to provide appropriate educational services."

The Executive Summary and Decision Chart for Children Affected by Lead from Educational Interventions for Children Affected by Lead, an expert panel report published by the CDC in 2015, can be found on our website at www.ldaofwny.org.

To read the full Memorandum of Support, visit our website at www.ldaofwny.org.

Please ask your representatives in the Assembly and State Senate to support Assembly Bill A03899 and Senate Bill S03941.

Details about the bills, including justification, can be found at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2017/S3941>.

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Supreme Court Unanimous in Decision to Provide More Educational Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of higher educational standards for children with a disability in one of the most important education cases in decades.

The case, *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, argued just how much educational benefit public schools must provide. While some lower courts had ruled the need for a "meaningful" educational benefit, others required only a bit more than *de minimis* – the bare minimum.

During the hearing, the Supreme Court discussed nine different levels of standards of education. They ruled unanimously (8-0) that schools must do more than provide "merely more than *de minimis*" education for students with a disability and instead provide them with the opportunity to make "appropriately ambitious" progress.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the opinion, stating that a school must offer an individualized education program that is "reasonably calculated" for each child's circumstance in order to meet its obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A link to the full article can be found on our Facebook page.

Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you to Transweb Marketing, Custom Recycling, Paramount Lodge #73 F & AM, Kevin Stamp, and Amy Prentiss, who recently donated to the LDA of WNY.

Thank you to Don and Lucia Sleight, who recently donated to Starlight Studio and Art Gallery.

Thank you to Collector's Inn, GEICO, Basil of Depew and Niagara Falls, Stagecoach West, Just Pets, and Smith's True Value, for supporting the agency with cash donation boxes at their business locations.

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#bFair2DirectCare Update



NYS Legislature, Governor Agree To Make Initial Investment in Disability Provider Workforce

During an rally by the bFair2DirectCare Coalition at the State Capitol on March 28th, Governor Cuomo and the leaders of both Houses, along with the mental hygiene committee chairs, promised a group of bFair2DirectCare demonstrators that they all support the addition of funds to increase direct care salaries. The Governor said he would not sign a budget that didn't include \$55 million for direct care providers.

The Governor noted that this funding would come on top of the increase provided to bring workers up to the minimum wage, with a 3.25% wage hike for direct care workers starting in January 2018, and an additional 3.25% wage hike for direct care staff starting in April 2018, for a total of 6.5%.

The announcement comes as a result of the more than year-long, statewide bFair2DirectCare advocacy campaign. Staff, self-advocates, board members, families and volunteers from across the state have worked hard to make their representatives in Albany understand the desperate need for this funding.

Thank you to all who participated by making phone calls, sending emails and/or personal letters and postcards, sharing social media posts, making office visits, or otherwise contributed to the success of this campaign. A new state budget is scheduled to take effect on April 1.

The #bFair2DirectCare Coalition is comprised of seven associations (CP, NYSARC, NYSACRA, NYSRA, IAC, DDAWNY, and ALIA) throughout the state that represent more than 100,000 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

Program Spotlight: Transition

Transition can mean many things. For some, it's the time after graduating from high school and moving on to college. For others, it's moving out of your parents' home for the first time, or from a certified setting, into a home of your own.

The LDA of WNY, along with the Center for Self Advocacy (CSA) and Parent Network of WNY, provides innovative person-centered, community-based programming via a skill-based training and social support network to give people with disabilities the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to live as independently as possible, and fully participate in their community.

Many individuals with disabilities could live independently in the community, but lack the skills, knowledge, and supports to do so. Our network of professionals and advocates will help bridge the gap between the family home or residential setting and independence, with a variety of services and supports to provide individuals and their families with help obtaining housing, skill development and community integration, and peer and family support. Individuals will cultivate competency in areas critical to independent living, including: transportation, navigating home and community safely, transitioning youth to adult services and supports, independent living skills, and self advocacy.

An individual must qualify for the Medicaid Waiver through the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) in order to be eligible for this program.

If you are unsure whether or not you qualify, contact us and we can assist you. For more information about Transition programming, contact Colleen Rozanski at crozanski@ldaofwny.org or (716) 874-7200, ext. 142



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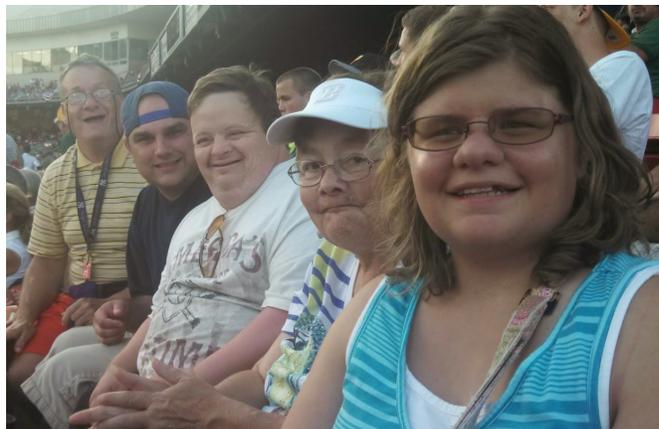
Kaylin from our Community Habilitation program went on her first trip overseas, to Barcelona for 3 weeks (at left), to study abroad for her social work degree. Since then, Kaylin has landed a full time job at People Inc. through Americorps, and a position on a board of directors for a community group. Great job Kaylin!

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Leo Wisniewski is part of Chautauqua's I-LEARN Group. He loves to write, and wrote up an article for the LDA newsletter. Included is the article that he hand wrote and submitted to LDA's Associate Program Director, Elise!

This is my new life and I like to do things with the LDA and I've been in it for 4 years in 2016. I like to read books and I love watching movies on my new DVD & Blu-Ray player! And I like to play my video games on my Xbox 360. And my dream is to get an Xbox One for myself and I like to go to advocacy groups for meetings and we talk about disabilities with Beth. And I like to make posters with my art work. And I would like to take a tour of the Observer and I would like to put an ad in the newspaper or article in the paper and I would like to become a journalist and this is my hopes and dreams written. By Leo Wisniewski

This is my new life and I like to do things with the LDA and I've been in it for 4 years in 2016. I like to read books and I love watching movies on my new DVD & Blu-Ray player! And I like to play my video games on my Xbox 360. And my dream is to get an Xbox One for myself and I like to go to advocacy groups for meetings and we talk about disabilities with Beth. And I like to make posters with my art work. And I would like to take a tour of the Observer and I would like to put an ad in the newspaper or article in the paper and I would like to become a journalist and this is my hopes and dreams written. By Leo Wisniewski



Article Contributor Leo (middle) with (from left to right) Harold, Nicholas, Linda, and Richelle, members of LDA's Chautauqua I-LEARN group, at a Buffalo Bison's game

LDA Spreads the Word

Members of the agency's I-LEARN group attended Spread the Word to End the Word at Buffalo State College on March 2nd. Starlight Studio was also invited to speak at the event, as well as show part of its documentary, *Of One Mind*, featuring Chace Lobley and Kenneth Payne, an instructor at the college. Starlight Studio artists Andy Calderon and Debbie Bowers also read poetry, and talked about their own experiences with the R-word.

The event was hosted by Best Buddies, who along with Special Olympics, and more than 200 organizations around the world, support the Spread the Word initiative. Started in 2009, the goal of this initiative is to raise awareness about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word "retard(ed)" and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word. The campaign is intended to get schools, communities, and organizations to rally and pledge their support to help create communities of inclusion and acceptance for all people. Since its inception, communities around the world are not only taking the pledge, but challenging others to talk, think and write with respect.



Up and Rising Falk School Student Exhibit

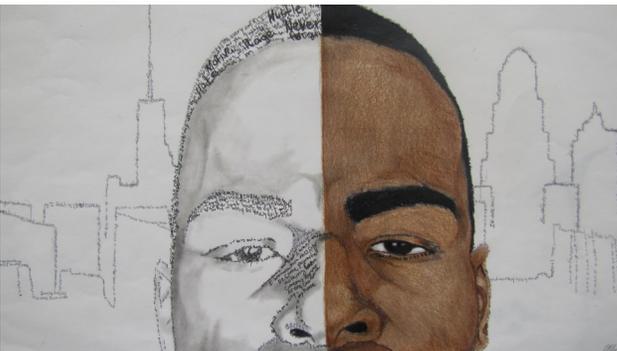


Starlight Studio and Art Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition from aspiring artists of the Stanley G. Falk School, *Up and Rising*. The opening reception is April 6th, from 6-8 PM. The event and exhibit is free and open to the public.

The show features original artwork from six high school artists: Alanzo Colvin, Sarah Michalak, Tahje Sayes, Shad Stachera, Lamar Watson, and Adam Becker. The works are diverse and exhibit a range of disciplines including sculpture, photography, mixed media, plaster relief, and animation. Many of the works are exploration of the young artists developing style and process.

For this show, color, or lack of color, are used in literal translation showing versatility, skill and overall interesting work. For example, Alanzo Colvin illustrates a stark cityscape illustrated with literal text. Half of a self-portrait in black and white stark and direct, half showing his true colors, no longer living in the stark reality of black and white. The Falk School inspires students to discover their purpose so they will make meaningful contributions to society.

Up and Rising will run through April 26th.



T-Shirts for Sale

Baseball-style T-shirts, featuring artwork by Chace Lobley (left), Kimber Rodgers (center), and Shamika Long (right) are now available at Starlight Studio in Youth - XXXL sizes. Youth - XL are \$20-plus tax, and XXL and XXXL are \$23-plus tax.

T-shirts featuring designs by Carrienne Hendrickson (bottom) are \$10-plus tax.

For more information or availability, contact the studio at starlight@ldaofwny.org, 716) 842-1525, or stop by 340 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14202, Monday-Friday, 9 AM—4 PM.



Upcoming Events

April

12	Family Health and Wellness Fair, Buffalo & Erie County Library	10 AM—2 PM
13	Paint Nite with a Purpose, Starlight Studio	6—9 PM
21	Happy Hour with a Purpose, Flying Bison Brewery	5—8 PM
26	Money Smart Fair, Buffalo & Erie County Library	10 AM —1 PM
	WNY Career Expo, Mt. Olive Church	11 AM—2 PM
29	Giveback Day, ReedsJenss, 4004 Maple Rd	10 AM—5 PM

May

8	Trivia Night, Shannon Pub	8 PM
18	DD Day, Niagara Falls Conference and Events Center	9 AM—4 PM
20	Happy Hour with a Purpose, Kaz's	5—8 PM

TBA Special Education Conferences

*Events are subject to change. Check our website or Facebook page for updated events and information.

Starlight Studio and Art Gallery 2017 Calendar

April 6	<i>Up and Rising: Falk School Student Exhibit Reception</i>
May 5	Ann Moody with Kelly Evans and Shamika Long
June 23	Andy Calderon with Autism Services
July 28	Summer Open House
September 8	Bob Budin with John Price
October 13	Billy Huggins with Janet Harrison
December 2	Holiday Open House

All Shows are Free and Open to the Public.

For more information, or to purchase artwork go to www.starlightstudio.org

Starlight Studio is a part of the Allentown First Fridays Gallery Tour. Stop by every First Friday evening of the month to see our current exhibitions.

Want to get our news directly in your inbox? Go to www.ldaofwny.org and subscribe to our website!

Trainings, Workshops, and Conferences

There are a number of upcoming trainings, workshops, and conferences for individuals, parents, and professionals, on topics ranging from parent and peer support to an introduction to OPWDD and special education. Costs vary based on the event. For more information, visit Parent Network's website at www.parentnetwork.org/workshops-and-events/event-calendar.

Our outreach table is at the Downtown Buffalo and Erie County Public Library the third Tuesday of each month, across from the Launch Pad. We will also be at fairs, events, conferences, and community centers throughout WNY (see page 2 for more information).

In addition, the LDA of WNY is planning Special Education Conferences in 2017, day-long mini conferences to parents of children with disabilities in the WNY region. The goal is to provide parents with information regarding rights and responsibilities in the special education process, information about psychological evaluations, and the process through which families can receive support from the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), among other things. More information to come.

Remember to check out our website or Facebook page to see if we're attending an event near you. Be sure to stop by our table if you have any questions, or to say hello!

At the LDA of WNY, our mission is to provide high-quality individualized, comprehensive, and innovative services, which support, educate, and empower all individuals with learning and/or developmental disabilities.

By supporting LDA of WNY's programs and services, you support the dreams and needs of the individuals we serve.

Thank you for your Support!

Dear Friend of the LDA of WNY,

Did you know that **20,000 students in Western New York receive Special Education services?** That's **1 out of every 5 students.**

Most students receive the services and supports they need to be successful throughout their educational careers. However, there are times when students don't receive all of the help they need, causing **parents to have to fight for their child's right to a free and appropriate public education.**

I'd like to introduce you to Kaitlynn. Kaitlynn is a 15-year-old girl who has been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder and depression.



Kaitlynn loves theater and attended a public school where she was able to grow her love for the fine arts, while receiving special education services. **However, as Kaitlynn's needs grew, the services and accommodations that the school could provide did not.**

Phylicia met with Kaitlynn and her mother, Jennifer, to ensure that she would receive the services and accommodations she needed to be successful throughout her high school years. Phylcia attended Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, accompanied the family on tours of alternative placement settings, and answered all of Jennifer's questions.

"Phylicia is awesome. She understands and is willing to go the extra mile. She's been amazing helping me work with the school system, to make it work the way it's supposed to."

All Kaitlynn wants is the public education she deserves. With Phylcia's help, she was moved to a day treatment setting that is better able to meet her needs. Kaitlynn is thriving, and hopes to finish school and move on to post-secondary education. **The help of an educational advocate will make this possible.**

At the LDA of WNY, we believe that every individual, even those with disabilities, can be successful at school, at work, in relationships, and in the community. Our goal is to ensure such opportunities exist.

We have made progress, but our journey isn't over. As long as students like Kaitlynn are in school, we won't stop advocating for them. **Please help us give children opportunities to succeed by donating to our Education Fund today.**

Thank you for your generosity.



Yes! I want to support the LDA of WNY's Education Fund , by making a donation in the amount of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I wish to remain anonymous. Please do not publish my name as a donor.

**Please make checks payable to LDA of WNY Education Fund. All gifts are tax-deductible. Secure online donations can be made at www.ldaofwny.org*

Thank you for your support!



LDA of WNY
 2555 Elmwood Avenue
 Kenmore, NY 14217

The Learning Disabilities Association of Western New York invites you to

Happy Hour with a Purpose

Friday, April 21st
 5—8 PM

Flying Bison Brewery
 840 Seneca Street
 Buffalo, NY 14210



Beer Tickets: \$5 at the Door

Frank's Gourmet Hot Dogs and other Food Trucks will be on-site!

All proceeds Benefit



For more information,
 contact Jen at (716) 842-1525
 or Katie at (716) 874-7200

*Providing opportunities for individuals to succeed in school,
 at work, in relationships, and in the community*

Win Prizes! Wine Toss!
 50/50 Raffle! Basket raffle!

**HAVE YOUR PICTURE
 TAKEN WITH DARTH VADER
 AND FRIENDS!!**



Contact Us

For more information about
 our programs, services, and
 upcoming events

LDA of WNY
 2555 Elmwood Avenue
 Kenmore, NY 14217

(716) 874-7200
information@ldaofwny.org

Visit us on the web at
www.ldaofwny.org

