

JULY 2025

## A Letter From the Director

### We Did it!

RCAL's Third Annual Disability Awareness Parade—held with our amazing community partner, Harambee—was a huge success on July 19th! Over 250 participants marched more than half a mile down Broadway to People's Place and Keegan Ales, proudly chanting WE ARE HERE.

Our record number of marchers included floats, vans, jugglers, dancers, bicyclists—even horses! The Hurley Heritage Society arrived in historical costume, and Wraparound Services of the Hudson Valley brought four full vans of marchers. We were honored to be joined by OPWDD Executive Deputy Commissioner John Barbuto, Director of State Operated Programs & Services Yvonne Lenzen, Taconic Deputy Director Barbara Stapholz, and many other dedicated staff and individuals showing their disability pride.

Community groups like My Kingston Kids, In Flight, Ulster County NY Connects, Early Intervention, S.O.A.R., Esopus Library, Esopus Community Foundation, and the Hudson Valley Icebergs came out in full force. Sunrays once again brought horses—and smiles.

Our float, created by RCAL staff led by John and Qiwan, was incredible. Ulster Federal Credit Union also impressed with a vibrant float. We were thrilled to see local leaders like Gina Hansut, Megan Sperry, Greg McCollough, Assemblywoman Sarahana Shrestha, and Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger join us.

My heart is full of thanks to Ulster County, the City of Kingston, the Mayor's Office, the Kingston Police Department, and all who made this event possible. Our sponsors are listed in this newsletter. I'm so proud of what we accomplished together. May this parade continue to grow—and remind the world: We are here. We deserve to be seen. We need a community without barriers. And we will continue to stand together.

With Love and Gratitude  
Anthony Mignone, CEO

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**YOUR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR MISSION**

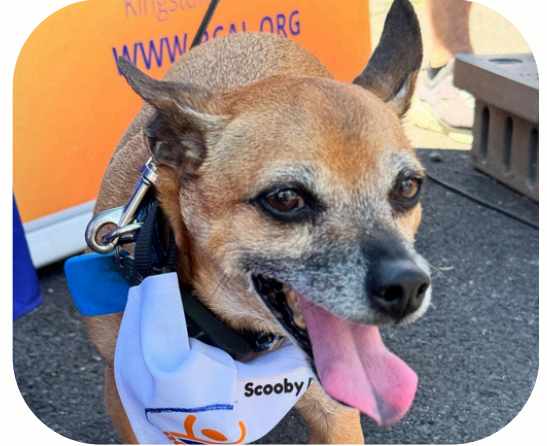






# DISABILITY AWARENESS PARADE

# 2025





JULY 2025

## RCAL Supports Sensory Safe Space at Ulster County Fair

RCAL continues to be a proud contributor to the Sensory Safe Space at the Ulster County Fair. Now in its third year, this welcoming area offers individuals of all ages with sensory sensitivities such as autism a calm retreat from the lights, noise, crowds, and summer heat.

The space features bubble tubes, soft mats, animal-themed sensory books, noise-canceling headphones, and a charging station for AAC devices. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., it's made possible through a partnership with the Ulster County Agricultural Society, Ulster BOCES, Rondout Valley CSD, Saugerties CSD, and RCAL

A special shout-out to RCAL's Special Education Advocate, Renee Falanga Brenner, whose leadership helped bring this much-needed resource to life. RCAL staff proudly volunteer their time each year to help keep this important space running smoothly for all who need it.



RCAL's Special Ed Advocate Renee Falanga-Brenner and her daughter Serena at the Sensory Safe Space in 2024.

### Sensory Safe Hours

**WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY**  
**10 AM – 11 AM**  
- No rides operating

**WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY**  
**11 AM – 12 NOON**  
- Rides with no lights or music

 Noise-canceling headphones available at the Sensory Safe Space

**ULSTER COUNTY FAIR**



The Sensory Safe Space is open the same hours that the fair is open. Come visit!

# Judy Heumann

## The Mother of Disability Rights

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The month of July is observed as Disability Pride Month. To close out this important month, the Disability and Health Program would like to focus attention on Judy Heumann, known as the “mother” of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



Judy played a crucial role in the development and implementation of disability rights and legislation.

Judy was raised by her German-Jewish immigrant parents, who migrated to the United States in the 1930's. As Judy and her parents were fortunate enough to start a new life in America, many of Heumann's family members were murdered during the Holocaust. Judy was born on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At 18 months old, Judy contracted polio in Brooklyn, New York, which resulted in permanent paralysis. Judy was denied the right to attend school because the school was not accessible, and she was seen as a “fire hazard” in case of emergency events.

It was Judy's mother who spent nearly half a decade fighting for her daughters' rights to be able to attend school. With her efforts, Judy was able to finally attend school in the fourth grade, but under a program called Health Conservation 21. Located in the basement of the school, the program provided minimal education for individuals between the ages of 9 and 21 who had a disability. Judy and her fellow peers were segregated from other students. It was clear that the students who were not disabled were given better academic resources at a much faster pace compared to her and her classmates.



CONT'D



# Contribution via Stacy Kraft and the Ulster County Disability & Health Program

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In 1969 Judy applied for her teaching license and passed her written and oral exams but was failed on her medical exam because she could not walk. So, years after her battle to attend school; Judy would confront the same Board of Education (BOE) for denying her of her teaching license. She sued the New York State BOE, and support came from Judge Constance Baker Motley, who was the first Black female federal judge. Justice Motley suggested the BOE reconsider and allow Judy to receive her teaching license. Ultimately, she was granted her teaching license making her the first wheelchair-user to become a teacher in the state of New York. In 1975 Judy received a master's in public health (MPH) from UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

Judy's early experiences fostered an interest in learning about the disability community and developing connections within her environment. As Judy began to advocate for disability rights, she credited her parents for the strong influence and encouragement they gave to fight for equality and justice. Judy has been recognized for her many outstanding achievements including her appointment as the Special Advisory on International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State by President Barack Obama, serving as a founding member the Berkeley Center for Independent Living (the grassroots program that helped to launch the Independent Living Movement both nationally and globally), and becoming the first Director for the Department on Disability Services in Washington D.C., where she oversaw the Developmental Disability Administration and Rehabilitation Services Administration.

CONT'D



# Contribution via Stacy Kraft and the Ulster County Disability & Health Program

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As Judy became an advocate for disability rights, she became recognized as the “mother” of disability rights movement. One of Judy’s most empowering experiences was her time during the 504 Sit-In in San Francisco, California. The 26-day protest was the longest sit-in at a federal building with over 100 protestors that participated. The goal of the sit-in was to have the Rehabilitation Act signed into law which would allow individuals with a disability to not be excluded from participation, denied benefits or face discrimination under any activity or program in the United States. Judy gave a speech outside of the HEW building. Her words not only made an impact for the people in the United States but throughout the whole world. She encouraged individuals to advocate for change and to speak up against injustices, just like her parents did.

“We have believed that if we played by the rules and did what we were told, we would be included in the American Dream. We have waited too long, made too many compromises, and been too patient. We will no longer be patient. There will be no more compromise. We will accept no more discrimination.” – Judy Heumann

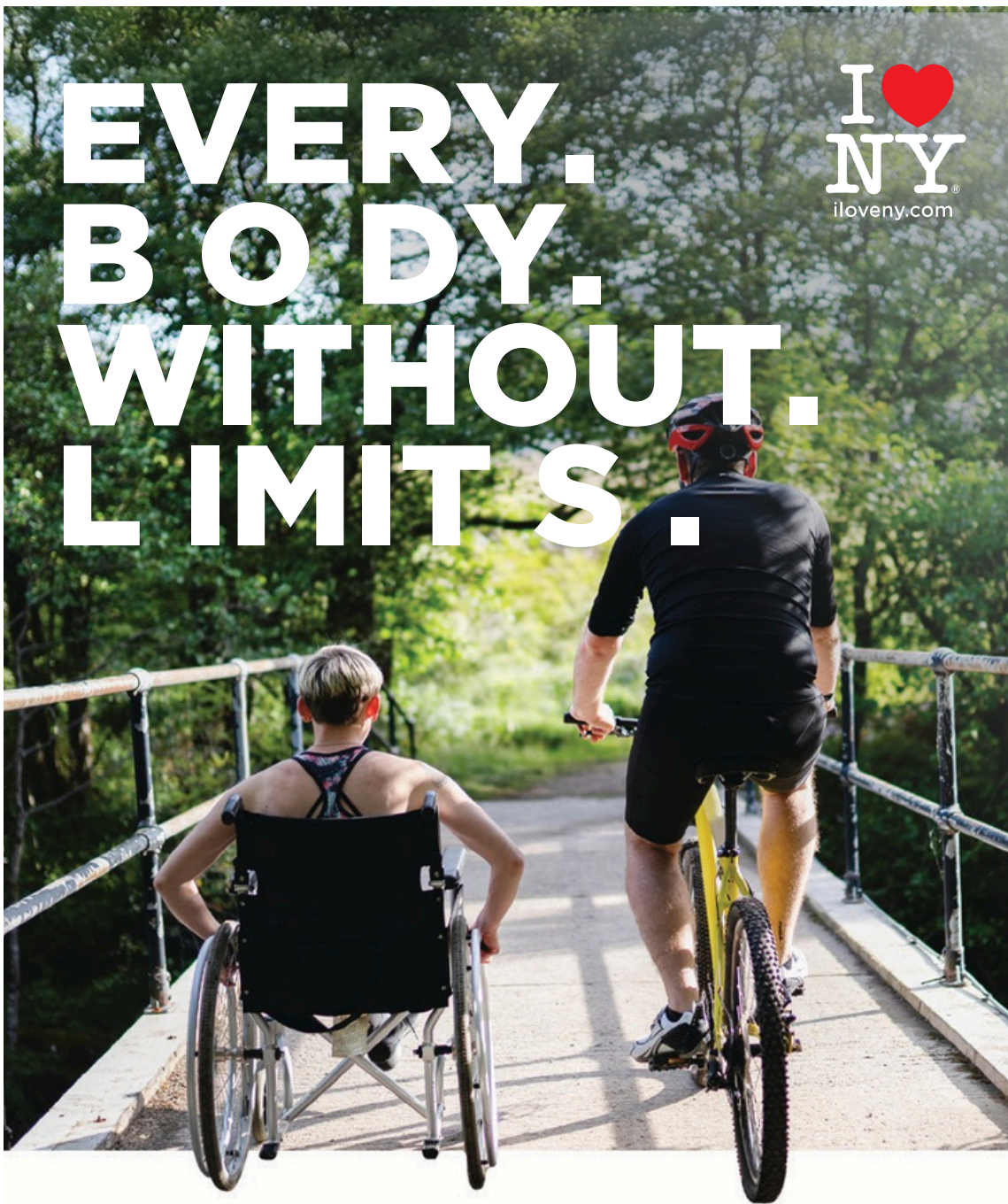
Judy served on multiple non-profit boards, such as Association of People with Disabilities, Disability Rights Education, and Human Rights Watch, among others. Her dedication and resilience inspired many others. She cofounded the World Institute on Disability (WID) with Ed Roberts and Joan Leon. She brought visibility to the disability rights movement through her authorship of books “Being Heumann” and the “Rolling Warrior,” both novels that focused on Judy’s experiences and fighting for disability rights.

Judy passed away at the age of 75 on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, in Washington D.C. The “mother” of disability rights movement will be remembered and honored for her resilience, relentless and fierce advocacy, and unbreakable spirit. She empowered not only the disability community but inspired all who want to make a difference and fight for change.





# EVERY. BODY. WITHOUT. LIMITS.



## **Bodies in motion tend to stay in motion.**

Mobility and accessibility exist on a grander scale here. Expand your horizons and exercise your right to explore the wilderness of Ulster County.

**ULSTER  
COUNTY**

NEW YORK

® I LOVE NEW YORK logo is a registered trademark/service mark of the NYS Dept. of Economic Development, used with permission.





RCAL'S COMMUNITY CALENDAR

# UPCOMING EVENTS For AUGUST



**AUG  
9**

## BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL



Catch us down in Ellenville for the annual blueberry bash! We'll be there with an info table and we're entering the muffin contest! Yum!

**AUG  
16**

## CARIBBEAN FEST!



RCAL is excited to join the fun and celebrate with Caribbean vibes, community spirit, and island energy! We'll be at Kingston Point Beach all day!

**AUG  
17**


## SOAPBOX DERBY



One of our favorite annual events, RCAL will once again be entering in the Kingston Soap Box Derby!

**AUG  
21**

## OFFICE FOR THE AGING BBQ!



If you're a senior, come down to Robert Post Park to get some free BBQ and say hi to RCAL as we dispense information and resources!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 845-331-0541.



# JOIN OUR TEAM

RCAL is seeking talented individuals for the following job openings:

**Pre-Vocational Counselor (FT):** This role is responsible for preparing individuals with disabilities, special needs, or other employment barriers for successful entry into the workforce. This position involves assessing client needs, developing individualized pre-employment plans, teaching job-readiness skills, and coordinating with support services to ensure comprehensive client development and success. Associates degree and 1–2 years of experience in vocational counseling, special education, workforce development, or related human services roles. Hourly wage range: \$19.00-\$21.00

Benefits: Holiday pay, Health insurance, Dental and Eye insurance, life Insurance, PTO, Sick time and professional development, etc. To Apply, email Leah Gherardi at [Lgherardi@rcal.org](mailto:Lgherardi@rcal.org).

**Community Habilitation Support (PT):** RCAL is seeking compassionate and dedicated individuals to join our team as PT Community Habilitation Support Staff. In this role, you will provide direct assistance and support to individuals with developmental disabilities to help them achieve their goals, enhance their independence, and participate more fully in their communities. The ComHab Staff work closely with clients, families, and other members of the support team to implement individualized plans and promote meaningful engagement and skill development. Salary range is \$16.50- \$18.50/hour.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

**CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!  
WE NEED YOUR HELP!**



RCAL is looking for dedicated individuals to join us in our mission to make a positive impact in our community. We are seeking someone to help answer phones and emails, as well as assist members of the public in our Medical Loan Closet.

If you are interested, please email [rmiraldi@rcal.org](mailto:rmiraldi@rcal.org) or call 845-331-0541 x12

**MHV PROUDLY  
SUPPORTS  
OUR COMMUNITY  
PARTNER:  
RCAL!**

**GUIDING  
YOUR FINANCIAL  
JOURNEY  
*across* THE  
HUDSON VALLEY.**



Federally Insured by NCUA

JULY 2025

The Ulster County Department of Health is asking residents to take our brief Community Health Assessment. Everyone's experiences, concerns, and insights are invaluable in shaping the future of health services and programs in our region.

Whether it's about access to doctors, housing, food, or just getting by day to day, we want to know what programs and services are needed most. Help shape the future of health programs and services in our area by taking this survey! Please share this opportunity to be heard with friends and family.



El Departamento de Salud del Condado de Ulster está pidiendo a la comunidad que tome nuestra breve Encuesta Comunitaria. Las experiencias, preocupaciones y sabiduría de todos son invaluable para dar forma al futuro

de los servicios y programas de salud en nuestra región. Ya sea que se trate del acceso a médicos, vivienda, alimentos o simplemente de pasar el día a día, queremos saber qué programas y servicios son más necesarios. ¡Ayude a formar el futuro de los programas y servicios de salud en nuestra comunidad respondiendo a esta encuesta! Por favor, comparta esta oportunidad de ser escuchado con amigos y familiares.





# INDEPENDENT

JULY 2025

## Become an RCAL Board Member

Do you have 5-8 hours a month? Do you have a commitment to living independently in the community regardless of disability?

Please consider becoming a part of our Oversight board. Call Robert at 845-331-0541 ext. 12 and he will arrange for you to come down and have a tour and meet and greet with our CEO Anthony. He will explain all of our programs and about our agency.

Without an oversight board, a non-for-profit cannot function. Don't worry, this is not a management board. You do not have to direct staff or manage programs on a day-to-day basis. Our meetings are hybrid so if you can't drive in the evening or if getting around is an issue, you can still participate. Give us a call for more information!

**BE OUR  
SPONSOR  
AND MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE**

**RCAL IS ALWAYS SEEKING NEW BUSINESS SPONSORS.  
CONTACT US TODAY TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP!  
845-331-0541 EXT. 12**



# INDEPENDENT

JULY 2025

## R C A L   A n g e l   S p o n s o r



## C o m m u n i t y   C o n t r i b u t o r s



Ulster



Savings



Ulster Federal  
CREDIT UNION





# INDEPENDENT

JULY 2025

## Disability Advocates



**Alex Stier**  
Real Estate Associate Broker  
518.281.8700 (C)  
845.765.3900 (O)  
astier@kw.com

kw HUDSON VALLEY NORTH  
KELLERWILLIAMS REALTY

15 Taylor Street, Kingston, NY 12401  
Each office is independently owned and operated



*Anthony Mignone & Matthew Coumbes*

*RCAL Board Members Kathy McMahon & Jack Ruddick*

*RCAL Board Members Sheila Kilpatrick and Jeffrey Galinson*

*Joanna & Peter Mignone*



# INDEPENDENT

JULY 2025

## Disability Advocates Continued

**KINGSTON**  
*Fine Jewelry*



## Friends of RCAL

**FRANCIS PLYNN**  
certified public accountant



**KINGSTON**  
*Fine Jewelry*



**WILLIAMS**  
Lumber & Home Centers



*RCAL Board Member  
Sheila Kilpatrick*

## Find Support and Understanding



We believe in the power of peer support—and we're always open to expanding our offerings. If you have the experience and passion to facilitate a support group and are looking for a welcoming, accessible space to host it, RCAL can help.

Have an idea for a support group? Call RCAL today at 845-331-0541 ext. 12.

