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## Elle Patrick Helps ACLD Make History

**I**n a move believed to be among the first of its kind in New York State, ACLD has hired Elizabeth (Elle) Patrick – a woman on the autism spectrum – as a member of its Regulatory Affairs team.

Patrick brings a critical perspective to the task of ensuring the agency is complying with all rules, laws and regulations regarding the provision of services to people with developmental disabilities.

"I think I'm an asset because I'm making my department's job easier," Patrick said. "I bring insight to the job that not everyone has."

"Living with autism is a unique experience," said Joel Santana, Director of Regulatory Affairs and the Corporate Compliance Officer for ACLD, "and with Elle as part of our team we have an insider's perspective. She understands the point of view and concerns of the people who turn to us for support, thus adding value to our department as we support her career goals."

Patrick said working gives her greater independence and provides a chance to



have new experiences and learn new skills, but perhaps most important "it gives me something to keep my mind occupied." She has clerical experience and had been looking for a

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## Advocacy Efforts Take Individuals to Albany

**Several individuals supported by ACLD journeyed to Albany in March to be part of "Inclusive Democracy in Action," an effort initiated by ALIA, CP of NYS, DDAWNY, IAC, NYSARC and SANYS.**

The initiative was designed to be an exercise of the rights of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities – as well as their families and staff – to visit and lobby their state legislators on the New York State budget issue. The critical issues the group spoke about were the need for the state to provide

agencies that support those with disabilities the necessary funding to cover any increase in the minimum wage, along with the need for additional funding for residential development.

The group from ACLD visited the offices of Assemblyman Philip Ramos (D-Brentwood) and Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (R-C-IP-Smithtown) to make its collective voice heard, with Ronni Meyers getting the opportunity to tell her personal story to Senator Flanagan. It was a great day for all involved, as ACLD continued to provide avenues for the individuals it supports to advocate on their own behalf. ✕



## Delivering Much More than a Meal

**What started as a typical volunteer project to do some shopping for a community member in need turned into much more for a group of men and women from ACLD and the staff who support them.**

The group arrived at a Deer Park home only to find the community member they were there to shop for wasn't answering his door, despite his car being in the driveway.

Repeated attempts to reach the man were unsuccessful until a neighbor called in through the man's door; the man called out to say he was all right and did not need any shopping that day. However, ACLD's Megan Czurda and Alyson Diaz still felt

uncomfortable and ultimately convinced the man to let them know where there was a spare key to the house. When Diaz went inside, she discovered the man had fallen early that morning and was unable to get up – and his elderly mother was still in her bed.

Diaz called 911, and the police came to the house and provided assistance. For trusting their instincts and taking the time and steps needed to ensure the man they had come to assist got the help he truly needed, Czurda and Diaz were given an ACLD Team Service Award. It's an honor that stands as evidence ACLD is not just working in the community, but is truly fostering relationships within it. ✘

## Expo Seeks to Connect People with Job Opportunities

**The unemployment rate among those living with disabilities is more than double the general unemployment rate, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. One way to change that is by connecting eager job candidates who have disabilities with good job opportunities. With that in mind, ACLD co-hosted a Job Expo on January 29 at Farmingdale State College.**

The event, co-hosted with Family Residences and Essential Enterprises (FREE), Life's WORC and YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities, included a forum with community leaders, a workshop on tax credits for businesses and the chance for hundreds of potential job candidates to meet with would-be employers.

ACLD team members were on hand to support candidates as they navigated the Expo and to share information about the services ACLD offers. ACLD operates one of Long Island's largest Supported Employment programs, working with highly motivated and qualified job seekers and employees and matching them with an appropriate job opportunity at one of more than 100 companies throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

ACLD's Vocational Services program provides job assessment, job development, travel training, on-site job coaching, school consultation and situation assessment services to more than 300 people. For more information about ACLD's Vocational Services, including the Supported Employment program, contact Jeanie Shelton-Clyne at (516) 336-5909, extension 286, or visit [www.aclcd.org](http://www.aclcd.org). ✘



## Elle Patrick

*Continued from page 1*

new position in that area when she came to ACLD's attention, and while her new position does involve clerical work, it also gives her the opportunity to do much more.

"I went to my first group home for a physical plant inspection," Patrick said, "and it was interesting because I'd never been inside a group home before. I used a checklist and looked inside all the rooms for things like broken furniture, expired food and spills. I also used a thermometer to check the temperature of the water because if it's too hot the individuals who live there can get hurt."

"Our goal is for Elle to expand in her role," Santana said. "As she becomes more familiar with ACLD's survey process and continues to develop her skills, she will assist in conducting fire safety system inspections and satisfaction surveys with our service recipients. As an agency, that's important to us from both a regulatory and a quality perspective."

A resident of Lindenhurst, Patrick appeared on "Nightline" in a 2008 episode focusing on diagnosing autism in girls, and she was a teen panel speaker at an educational conference on autism.

"When I found out about this job, I figured I could do this because I'm open to learning how to do new things," Patrick said. "So far I love it, and I'm willing to learn how to do...well, everything!"

"Elle isn't an employee with autism," Santana said. "She's an ACLD employee and a full member of the team."



# Trust Chair Says Trusts Were Created to Protect Loved Ones

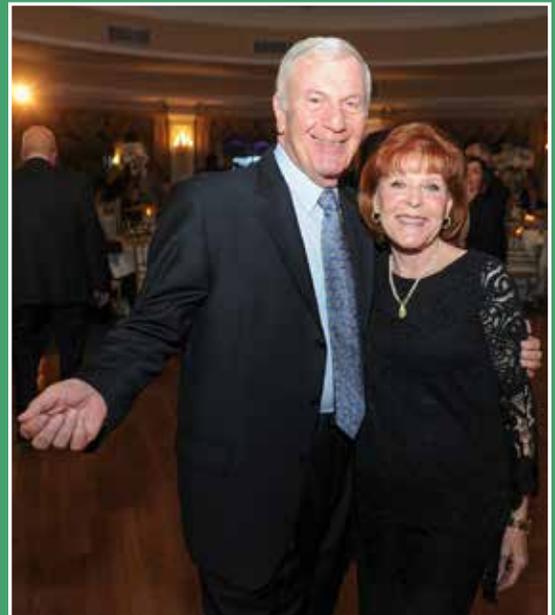
As Chair of the ACLD Community Trust Board of Trustees, Gail Mitzner knows one of her responsibilities is to be forward-thinking. As evidence that she has that skill, consider she was leading the charge for the ACLD Community Trust before it even existed.

"I was involved in this before the word 'go,'" Mitzner said.

Mitzner and her husband, Don – a member of the ACLD Board of Trustees – have a son, Alan, who receives support from ACLD. In the mid-1990s, they started looking for ways to ensure there would be money set aside to help take care of Alan in years to come, and they met with an attorney who told them about the option of trusts.

"We opened one," Mitzner said, "and then we kept our ears open. A few years later, we went to a meeting of the UJA Federation about special needs trusts, then took what we had learned and started talking with ACLD about the idea."

It took about two years to work out all the details, but the ACLD Community Trust was formed in 1997. It allows parents, siblings and others to protect assets for the future care of a loved one without compromising the person's eligibility for any benefits he or she might be entitled to. ACLD Community Trust B – created in 2004 – allows men and women to protect money that's already in their name without compromising their eligibility for benefits. It also gives individuals a way to protect assets that come their way unexpectedly, such as through a lawsuit or via a loved one's will.



"For us, the whole reason to have a trust account is it allowed us to say 'we are going to take care of our son,'" Mitzner said. "When we created the ACLD Community Trust, our goal was to be able to give families a way to leave loved ones some funds to take care of things ACLD couldn't provide for them.

"Also, since the Trust works closely with ACLD, when someone needs to access funds from the Trust to purchase something, someone who knows them is going to be able to help get them what they need," Mitzner said. "ACLD is going to be around, so having an ACLD Community Trust account is a smart way for parents to protect their children when they're gone."

Participation in the ACLD Community Trust is not limited to families and people who receive support from ACLD, and the Trustees welcome inquiries from the greater community and other service providers. For more information, visit [www.acl.org](http://www.acl.org) or call ACLD's Office of Development and Community Relations at (516) 822-0028, extension 161. ❌



## New Officers for Residential Advocacy Council

The Residential Advocacy Council, one of a series of Councils designed to give those ACLD supports clear avenues to speak with one voice in pursuit of the outcomes they collectively desire, has a new slate of officers for 2016.

In an election held in late January, the Residential Advocacy Council elected Doretta Waterman as its President for 2016, with Graham Green to serve as Vice President and Elizabeth Loyola to serve as Secretary.

Members of ACLD's Advocacy Councils share successes, discuss challenges and offer suggestions in service of their desire to self-direct their lives and achieve the goals they seek. The people who serve as Council leaders are responsible for making connections and opening and maintaining lines of communication with all ACLD stakeholders, with a focus on enhancing ACLD's person-centered philosophy at every level of the organization. ✕

## ACLD Hosts Pair of Advocacy Days

Dozens of people got a chance to strengthen their self-advocacy skills at a pair of Advocacy Days hosted by ACLD.

The two events – one in Hauppauge and one in Hicksville – featured a number of workshops focusing on things such as the power of teamwork in accomplishing goals, the importance of respectful relationships, effective communication and strategies for success in employment.

A number of men and women took part in the Effective Lobbying workshop to learn the basics of reaching out to elected officials in order to effect change. For some, those skills were put to quick use during a trip to the capital of New York in March to take part in Inclusive Democracy in Action (see Advocacy Efforts Take Individuals to Albany).

Additional workshops featured discussions about the question, "What would you change about yourself?" and about the challenges of moving into one's own apartment – and how those challenges can be addressed.

The two events were part of ACLD's continuing commitment to a person-centered approach when working with those who turn to the agency for support. ✕



# ACLD's Got Talent!

A full house packed Levittown Hall in Hicksville recently for the 6th Annual ACLD BRIDGES and Program Without Walls Talent Show.

The show featured men and women from ACLD's BRIDGES programs in Farmingdale, Glen Cove, Levittown and Westbury, along with participants from the agency's Program Without Walls, all singing, dancing and even performing celebrity impressions for a delighted crowd of nearly 200 invited family and friends.

The show, which was months in the making, served as a powerful reminder that having the chance to show what you can do is a big part of pursuing an enviable life. 🌟



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## ACLD Helps Mark Earth Day 2016



Kelvin Bremont, Steven Rogers and Robert Horton, all of whom receive support from ACLD's Program Without Walls, helped the organization Changing Hands mark Earth Day 2016 by planting a tree in Huntington's Manor Field Park on April 22. ACLD staff members and representatives from The Master Shift and Starflower Experiences also took part in the event. 🌟

## Men and Women from ACLD Help NYS Senator's Food Drive



Participants in ACLD's CHOICES program in Hauppauge got to rub shoulders with New York State Senator Philip Boyle when they did their part to help members of the community in need. The CHOICES program hosted a food drive during the holiday season, collecting from ACLD families, staff members and individuals. The CHOICES group also took funds it raised from an ongoing project to recycle cans and bottles to purchase additional non-perishable items for the drive. Once everything was collected, the program delivered the donated items to the Bay Shore office of Senator Boyle. What the group didn't expect was to see the Senator himself when they walked in to deliver the food they had collected - a nice bonus to cap off an effort that helped people supported by ACLD do their part to make their community a better place. ☒

## Mayda Ortiz's Art Featured on ACLD's New Year's Card

The 2016 ACLD New Year's card, which wished everyone an enviable year to come, featured artwork created by Mayda Ortiz. The winter scene that graced the cover of the card was chosen from the range of entries in an agency-wide contest. Ortiz, a woman who receives support from ACLD's Hauppauge Day Habilitation Program, is an artist who loves to draw, paint and collage pictures. She has a large collection of Precious Moments figurines and she loved the film "Minions." ☒



## The Tree that Kept on Giving

**With apologies to fans of Shel Silverstein, if you want a great story about a "Giving Tree," look no further than ACLD.**

The idea was simple enough: since there was a tree in the lobby of ACLD's Bethpage offices for the 2015 holiday season, small tags containing gift wishes for children at ACLD's Kramer Learning Center were placed on the tree. ACLD employees were given the opportunity to choose a tag, buy a small gift and help brighten the holiday season for a child with special needs.

Seemingly overnight, the first round of tags were claimed and gifts were purchased, leaving those involved in the Giving Tree effort thinking "we can do more." So, a second round of tags went up on the tree - and they were claimed almost as soon as they appeared. Only after three full rounds of tags were claimed and gifts were purchased did the effort come to a close.

The success of ACLD's Giving Tree made a tremendous difference for many children and their families - and reminded many ACLD employees of the incredible joy that comes with giving back. ☒



## Grant from Italian Welfare League used to “Maximus” Effect

How much of a difference can having a good partner in the community make? The story of 6-year-old Maximus Corsetti makes the answer to that question clear.

Thanks to a \$12,000 grant from the Italian Welfare League (IWL), ACLD already had been assisting the Corsetti family with the costs of feeding therapy and a socialization skills program – and when Max’s tablet broke, the IWL grant was able to help replace it.

According to Max’s mom, the tablet is a huge asset for Max.

“For a child with such limited communication this allows him another outlet to communicate his needs and express his likes,” Sandy Corsetti said. “He is also learning to write using certain space-themed apps...giving us hope he will one day share all his beautiful ideas with us.”

Clearly, Max – who picked up his new tablet and a protective case at ACLD along with his mom and his therapy dog – is making great strides thanks to the help of the partnership between ACLD and the IWL, a partnership his mother said is helping “on his journey of becoming the best Maximus he could be.”

ACLD is grateful to the IWL and all the community partners who are helping us support all the Maxes we can. You truly are helping individuals to pursue enviable lives. ☺



## ACLD’s Shari Cuff Earns NADSP Certification

Shari Cuff, a Community Habilitation Direct Support Professional (DSP) with ACLD, has earned recognition from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) as a Direct Support Professional, Certified Initial Level I.

The NADSP, a non-profit membership association dedicated to the advancement of Direct Support as a valued profession, offers its voluntary DSP Credentialing program to encourage professionalism in the human services workforce. According to the NADSP, Cuff’s certification is evidence she has demonstrated skills that typical entry level DSPs would not have acquired.

In order to earn her certification, Cuff needed to complete 100 hours of course content and submit four work samples detailing how the certification process helped improve the way she provided support and helped her become a more professional and caring DSP. Only after those samples were approved by the NADSP did Cuff earn her certification.

Cuff’s achievement is part of a pilot project involving ACLD designed to encourage New York State to use an NADSP-like credentialing approach for its DSPs. ☺





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Founded in 1957, ACLD is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit agency whose mission is to provide opportunities for children and adults with autism, learning and developmental disabilities to pursue enviable lives, increase independence and foster supportive relationships within the community. ACLD employs more than 1,100 people and operates 77 different program sites including group homes and apartment programs across Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Services include early childhood services, day habilitation, residential alternatives, vocational training and job placement, recreation programs, respite, family support services, Medicaid service coordination, and medical and behavioral health services, and are provided to more than 3,000 people each year.

807 South Oyster Bay Road Bethpage, New York 11714 Phone: (516) 822-0028 Fax: (516) 822-0940 www.acld.org

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Honoring Working Relationships that Last

Three people who receive support from ACLD recently were honored for reaching the 20-year milestone with their employers. Alan Alexander works as a clerk for ACLD's Human Resources, Health Services and Accounting Departments; Karen Hoffman is employed by The Home Depot (which gave her a \$1,000 bonus check to mark the big anniversary); and Elizabeth Appel can be found on the job at ACLD's Kramer Learning Center. Congratulations to a terrific trio of steady workers! ✨

Won't You Be Our Friend?



Being a friend of ACLD on Facebook or Twitter is a great way to keep up with all the ways our organization is helping individuals pursue enviable lives. If you're not a social media friend of ours yet, join the conversation today by friending ACLD on Facebook at @ACLD1 and following us on Twitter at @acld1.