



With 2018 upon us, it's a great time to look back at this past year. We're immensely proud of the work our staff has done to assist the individuals we support and the important difference they make in their lives.

It's been a year that has seen the start of two amazing new programs. In the spring, we started the Learning to Achieve Self Reliance (LASR) program. The program, based on Community Habilitation funding, aims to assist individuals in making the transition to living on their own in the community.

In the fall, we launched the Learning, Education, and Academic Development (LEAD716) program, which is designed to provide early intervention services to young children who have been exposed to lead. Lead exposure is a leading cause of both learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. Each of these endeavors opens new opportunities for LDA, and their impact will continue to be felt far into the future.

We're also working to make an impact on some of the most important issues facing our field. Through participation in the statewide bFair2DirectCare (Be Fair to Direct Care) campaign, we were able to secure funding for much needed pay increments for our Direct Care Staff.

With all of this growth, the agency is hiring for a number of direct-care positions in our Habilitation, Residential, and Vocational Departments, as well as Literacy Volunteer Tutors for LEAD716. Please check out our website at www.ldaofwny.org for job descriptions, and contact us if you would like more information on any or all of the listings!

Tis the Season!

Everyone is getting in the Holiday Spirit! LDA of WNY staff took part in a holiday potluck on December 15th with lots of great food and desserts, a Yankee ornament swap, and door decorating contest. We even broke out some holiday music and the yule log. It was a great chance to get everyone together before the holidays!

Staff members (including Adrienne Kosis, below left, as Santa) and program participants voted on their favorite doors. They had more than 20 to choose from, featuring lights, candy canes, ornaments, wreaths, wrapping paper, bows, and lots of creativity (and tape). Some staff even put their own spin on the holidays in the human service field.

The Business Office won first place for its impressive wall length display featuring scenes from the classic, *Charlie Brown Christmas*. Below right, Annette, Business Office Manager, stands in front of her door featuring Charlie Brown and Snoopy. Melissa Jenkins, Director of Residential Services, was a close second, with her light up snoopy doghouse (center).



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Save the Date:
Heather Swenson, Ricky Hogan, David Feickert

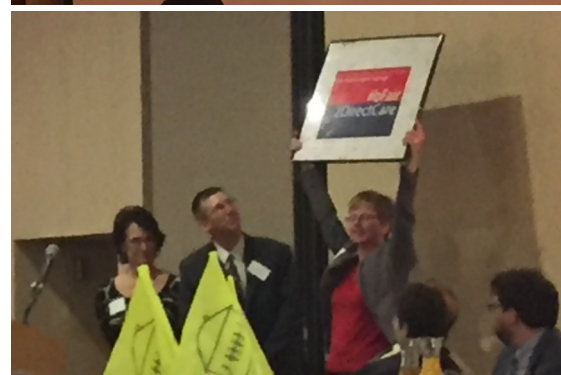
DDAWNY Holds Legislative Luncheon

The Developmental Disability Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY) held its annual Legislative Breakfast on December 1st. Attended by self-advocates, service recipients, family members, service provider representatives, legislators and staff, and members of the media, the event was an opportunity to share comments and concerns about issues facing the field.

This year, talking points included lack of housing, public transportation, and jobs for individuals in the community. According to DDAWNY, 11,000 New Yorkers are on waiting lists for groups homes/independent living. Speakers also discussed the planned relocation of the Children's Psychiatric Center from West Seneca to the grounds of Buffalo Psychiatric Center, the lack of easily-accessible, centrally-located regional office, and the rate of pay for direct support professionals (DSPs).

In 2017, DDAWNY started a state-wide #bFair2DirectCare Campaign in an effort to secure a living wage for the caregivers who are taking care of individuals with disabilities (see #bfair2directcare rally write-up on page 3). The current vacancy rate is over 30% in WNY and across the state. Average salary wages for DSPs are well below the federal poverty level.

At right, a power point slide shows some of individuals awaiting housing; DDAWNY Family Committee Chair Barbara DeLong presents a representative of Governor Cuomo's office with a framed #bfair2directcare poster signed by individuals, family members, staff and other members of DDAWNY.



People First Care Coordination to Integrate OPWDD Supports and Healthcare Services

A new initiative, People First Care Coordination, will integrate the I/DD supports individuals receive with services provided by interdisciplinary teams of nurses, nutritionists, physicians, behavioral health professionals, and other health and wellness providers. These individualized, holistic Life Plans comprised of supports and services, will be based on the federal Health Home program and coordinated and delivered by regional networks of providers called Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs).

All individuals currently receiving service coordination from a Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC) in New York State will be eligible for People First Care Coordination. Enrollment for individuals is expected to begin in July 2018.

OPWDD is holding several informational webinars on the conversion through June 2018. Powerpoints and recordings of past sessions, along with opportunities to register for future webinars are posted on the OPWDD website at https://opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/care_coordination_organizations.

Objectives of this transition include comprehensive care management, care coordination and health promotion, comprehensive transitional care, individual and family support, referral to community and social support services, and use of health information technology to link services.

Some helpful resources include:

CCO/HH Frequently Asked Questions FAQ

https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/medicaid_health_homes/idd/cco-hh_faqs.htm

Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) 1115 Waiver Transition Plan

https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/medicaid_health_homes/idd/docs/1115_draft_transition_plan_12_5_2017.pdf

Care Coordination Organization/Health Home Application to Serve Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/medicaid_health_homes/idd/docs/hhidd_application_part_1.pdf

LEAD716, Starlight Studio Receive Grants

The LDA of WNY's LEAD716 program received \$2,573 from the Kelly for Kids Foundation to provide healthy snacks and books to children (and families) during its mentoring sessions.

LEAD716 is a free program aimed to provide critically-needed early academic intervention, via in-home mentoring, to pre-school children in WNY diagnosed with elevated lead levels in their blood. Mentoring focuses on early literacy skill development and helps ensure the children are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Children exposed to lead are at greater risk of lower IQ and learning disabilities, speech and hearing difficulties, attention problems, and behavior issues. The program focuses on helping kids before they enter school — before they encounter learning problems — at an age when they are more resilient.

Starlight Studio and Art Gallery received four grants: \$1,200 from FANA of WNY to work with youth in the agency's transition program, \$1,500 from Erie County for a Chapbooks project through its writing group, \$2,000 from Young Audiences of WNY/Art Partners in Learning to conduct a third installment of *Widening the Focus: Finding Dignity and Acceptance in Difference*, in which artists work with students at Buffalo's Waterfront School, and a \$5,000 Decentralization (DEC) Community Arts/Arts Education grant from Arts Services Initiatives of WNY, for its *Show Time* project, which will pair Starlight Artist Dana Graap with playwright Beth Geyer, to write a script. Geyer's theatre company will produce the play and stage it at Alleyway Theatre in November 2018.

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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
- Residential Coordinator
- Employment Specialist
- Early Literacy Volunteer Tutors

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.

LDA of WNY is a diverse, multi-service agency. Staff should be mature, dependable, flexible, and have a clean driving record.

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

Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you to who recently donated to the LDA of WNY's Year End Appeals benefiting LEAD716 and Starlight Studio and Art Gallery. To date, we've raised more than \$4,500 for the two programs.

Thank you to the many individuals and businesses who supported the agency throughout 2017 through monetary and product donations, by sponsoring and coming to our events, and housing our donation boxes!

Every dollar truly makes a difference in the lives of those we work with, and we greatly appreciate the support of the community!

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#bFair2DirectCare Rally

BFair2DirectCare Rallies are taking place across New York State to bring attention to the amazing work that's being done, and to get direct service professionals (DSPs) the living wage they deserve.

On December 19th, individuals with developmental disabilities, their parents and caregivers, elected officials, and civic and community leaders joined #bFair2DirectCare at the Buffalo Museum of Science.



At left, members of the WNY Delegation, including Assemblywomen Chrystal Peoples-Stokes and Monica Wallace, and Senators Chris Jacobs, Robert Ortt, and Tim Kennedy attend the Buffalo rally.

The goal of the #bFair2DirectCare campaign is to remind state leaders that DSPs are "agents of the state who need a fair rate of pay," given the significance of the job they're performing, according to Executive Director of Interagency Council for Developmental Disabilities Agencies (ICDDA), Tom McAlvanah. At December 4th's Brooklyn rally, he said, "On any given day, 24/7, DSPs are there to provide guidance and support needed to assist people with developmental disabilities and their families. It is that valiant and skilled work force who we champion today."

After letter-writing campaigns, lobbying, and state-wide rallies, Governor Cuomo included funding for DSP pay increases in the 2017-2018 budget: \$55 million to be released January 1st, and another \$55 million in April, meaning a 3.25% pay increase for DSPs effective January 1st, and another April 1st, a 6.5% total pay increase in 2018. Cuomo set out additional future increases over the next six years.

Service Learning

The LDA of WNY had the opportunity to work with several undergraduate and graduate-level students at Canisius College, Buffalo State College, and University at Buffalo (UB) this past semester. Coursework included business writing, fundraising, and public relations writing, focused on a variety of community agencies, including the LDA of WNY.

Groups from Professor Miller's Communications Literacy in Business class at UB developed projects related to a new LDA of WNY volunteer handbook, along with revamped forms and policies.

According to Miller, the experience provided students with insight into the importance of communication in the workplace, and experience collaboratively solving actual communication problems, and the role that effective communication plays in facilitating that work. It was a great opportunity to work with students and get fresh insight into the organization!



Starlight Studio Kicks off 2018 Exhibitions



Structure, Scope, Utensil is the first of Starlight Studio and Art Gallery's Side by Each Exhibition Series, featuring original work by artist Heather Swenson, and Starlight Artists Ricky Hogan and David Feickert. The opening reception is Friday, January 12, from 6-9 PM at Starlight Studio, 340 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14202. The exhibit will be on view through February.

Within a multidisciplinary practice of making screenprints (*Undertow*, featured at left), sculptures, and installations, Swenson creates work that is both derived from experience and invention. According to Swenson, "regarding everyday visual experiences as research, I am extremely captivated by the simple act of looking. I combine these observations with imagined structures and shapes, referencing real spaces I encounter...Through observing, sorting, and making, I hope to navigate the influx of imagery and experiences in my life and create a space for observation and imagination to collaborate."

Feickert's work brings to mind scientific and medical imagery like the electroencephalogram and the electrocardiogram. He enjoys exploring various materials, particularly a combination of drawing and painting on different surfaces.

According to Hogan, his inspiration for creating art came from when he was young and he, "would look through a telescope at the stars and make up stories about life in other galaxies." Drawing spaceships and aliens, creating leather billfolds and wallets, or dressing as a clown while working at a carnival, Hogan has let his imagination guide his creative impulse. Using a rolled paper art called quilling, he's created intricate designs, interesting images, and even jewelry! As a published poet, Hogan uses his poems to express his feelings about his environment and the humans and others who populate it.

LEAD716 Seeking Tutors

The LDA of WNY is looking for Early Literacy Volunteer Tutors for its LEAD716 program, which provides critical early academic intervention to preschool children in WNY diagnosed with elevated levels of lead in their blood. Literacy Tutors will be trained in a curriculum developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, as well as, other activities to address the specific needs of enrolled children, including: focusing on early literacy, social, and emotional development, encouraging family involvement, providing instruction to children individually or in very small group sessions in the child's daycare, preschool, or home, and modeling appropriate behavior to children as well as nurture positive relationships, self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning.

Applicants should have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in a related field, however, in lieu of a college degree, work and life experience will be considered. Contact employment@ldaofwny.org to apply or for more information.

In the Community

The Chautauqua I-LEARN group was out and about enjoying the beautiful fall weather, going for lots of walks to get exercise, dressing up for Halloween, and getting in the spirit of the holidays at Christmas In The Village.

In October, the Kenmore I-LEARN group ventured to Honey Harvest Festival in East Aurora. The group got to check out some demonstrations, taste honey, meet local bee-keepers (and life-sized bees, with Sheila and Jennifer, at right), and get some cool handmade products like soap and candles.

The recent cold weather didn't stop the group from enjoying everything the holiday season has to offer. The group took part in the Jamestown Renaissance Festival and Parade, LDA's Annual Grinchmas party, and enjoyed some great holiday scenes at the Festival of Lights, among other things!

For more photos of our Winter adventures, be sure to check out LDA of WNY's Facebook page!

Below, Janet and Sheila pose with Anna, Olaf, and Elsa at the Jamestown Renaissance Parade; Tom and Jonathan take their turn in a Santa and Mrs. Claus cutout, and Sheila, Debbie, Maggie, Donald, and Jonathan stop for a photo-op at the Festival of Lights.



All Night Game Night



The agency held its All Night Game Night on November 25th and 26th, with attendees sticking it out until about 4:30 AM. Collector's Inn generously sponsored and hosted the overnight event, which introduced attendees to new friends and new games, including *Chaostle*, (featured at left).

Attendees took home lots of great prizes, including games of all types and sizes, cards, paint kits, escape room passes, and lots of baskets!

Paula's Donuts generously donated donut holes, and coffee, pizza, and lots of other snacks were provided to keep everyone well-energized.

Approximately \$750 was raised for the agency's LEAD716 program, which aims to provide early academic intervention to 3 and 4 year old children diagnosed with elevated lead levels, through early literacy skill development to help ensure the children are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Thank you to everyone who attended, donated to, or helped us promote the event. We hope to hold another installment of the event in 2018, so stay tuned for more! More pictures can be found on the agency's Facebook page!

Upcoming Events

January

- 12** Heather Swenson, Ricky Hogan, David Feickert, Starlight Studio 6—9 PM
- 16** Outreach Table, Buffalo & Erie County Library 12—1:30 PM
- 27** CASH In Saturday, Northwest Buffalo Community Center 9 AM—12 PM

February

- 16** Outreach Table, Buffalo & Erie County Library 12 —1:30 PM

March

- 9** Marc Tomko and Alison Mantione, Starlight Studio 6—9 PM
- 20** Outreach Table, Buffalo & Erie County Library 12—1:30 PM

TBA

Co-Artifact Event, Starlight Studio
 Quiz for a Cause
 Happy Hour with a Purpose, Flying Bison

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

Starlight Studio and Art Gallery 2018 Calendar

- January 12** Heather Swenson, Ricky Hogan, and David Feickert
- March 9** Marc Tomko and Alison Mantione
- April 20** Falk School Exhibit
- April 27** Sussan Giallombardo
- May 11** Jim Paulson and Dana Graap
- July 13** Starlight Studio Summer Open House
- September 14** Mario and Sherri, Emily Churco, and John Budney
- October 19** Mary Louise Wyrick and Michele Miller
- December 1** Starlight Studio Holiday Open House

All Shows are Free and Open to the Public.

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!

For more information, or to purchase artwork or merchandise, email starlight@ldaofwny.org, call 842-1525, or stop by 340 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14202, Monday-Friday, 9 AM—4 PM.

For more information, go to www.starlightstudio.org

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.

LDA's outreach table is at the Downtown Buffalo and Erie County Public Library the third Tuesday of each month, from 12-1:30 PM, across from the Launch Pad. We will also be at fairs, events, conferences, and community centers throughout WNY, including CASH IN Saturday, a free tax preparation opportunity presented by the United Way.

Remember to check out our website or Facebook page for an updated list, and 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!



The 11th Annual
CASH IN Saturday
 The Opening of the Free Tax Preparation Season

January 27, 2018
 9:00am-12:00pm
 Northwest Buffalo Community Center
 155 Lawn Ave. Buffalo NY, 14207

Free Tax Preparation • Claim the Earned Income Tax Credit • FAFSA Assistance • Financial Resources
 Raffle Drawings every hour!
 Call Andy at 887-2775 for additional information.
 Tax Preparation Limited to First Come, First Served.

CASH 

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!

Lead poisoning affects thousands of children in WNY. It can have permanent and devastating effects on their lives, families, and communities. **TOGETHER, WE CAN HELP.**

Dear Friend of LDA of WNY,

Every year in Erie County, thousands of children under the age of six are diagnosed with elevated blood lead levels. Thousands more are exposed to lead hazards in their homes.

Children exposed to lead are at greater risk of:

- Lower IQ and learning disabilities
- Speech and hearing difficulties
- Attention problems and behavior issues

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “Children with developmental delays or at high risk for developmental delays benefit most from interventions that start at an early age....No safe blood lead level in children has been identified.”

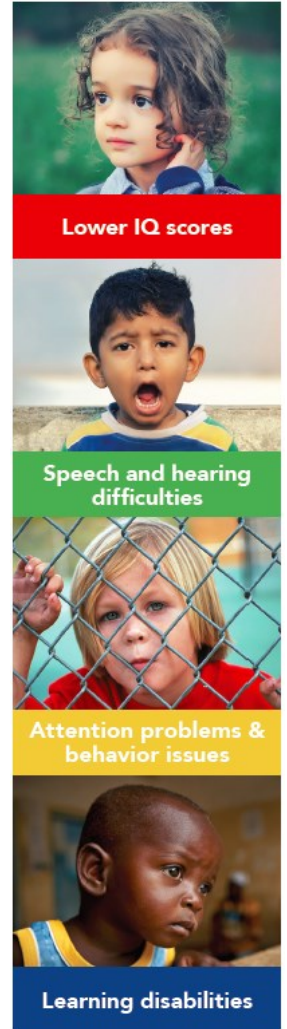
LDA of WNY’s new program, LEAD716, is working to minimize these negative effects on a child’s cognitive ability, during a critical time in brain development:

- LEAD716 is a free program aimed to provide critically-needed early academic intervention to preschool children in Western New York diagnosed with elevated lead levels in their blood.
- LEAD716 mentoring focuses on early literacy skill development and helps ensure the children are prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond.
- LEAD716 focuses on helping kids before they enter school — before they encounter learning problems — at an age when they are more resilient.

It is our hope that, through LEAD716, children in Erie County who have been affected by lead will lead healthier, more successful lives.

At 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 the the journey isn’t over. As long as children are in need, we won’t stop advocating for them.

You can help give children opportunities to succeed by donating to LEAD716 — please use the form below or donate online at www.ldaofwny.org.



Yes! I want to support LEAD716, by making a donation in the amount of:

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

- I wish to remain anonymous. Please do not publish my name as a donor.
- Please contact me about becoming an ongoing sponsor of your program.

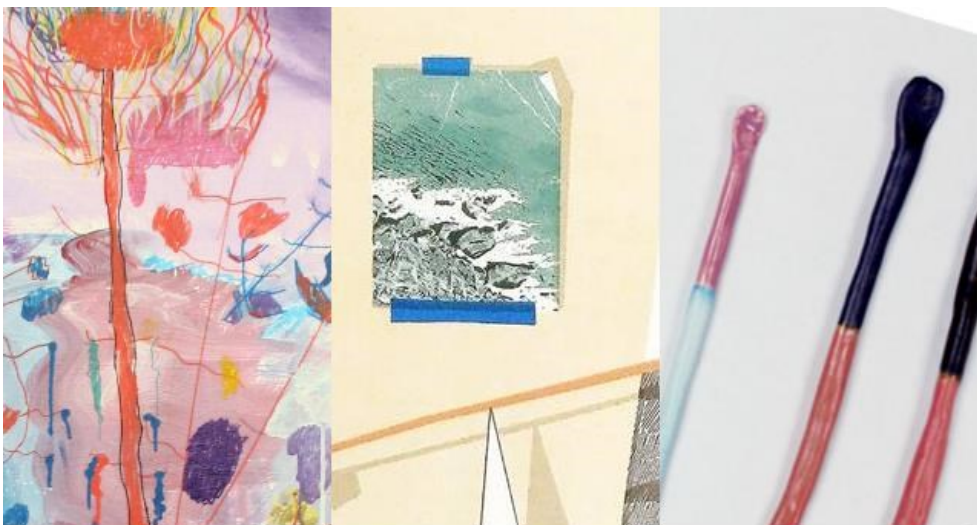
**Please make checks payable to LDA of WNY LEAD716. All gifts are tax-deductible. Secure online donations can be made at www.ldaofwny.org*

Thank you for your support!

- \$5** buys a child a book
- \$10** buys a child a healthy snack (nutrition helps fight lead poisoning) and a book
- \$25** buys a child a tutoring lesson and a snack
- \$50** buys 2 tutoring sessions, a book, and a healthy snack
- \$75** buys 3 tutoring sessions, a book, a healthy snack, and an educational toy
- \$100** buys 5 tutoring sessions
- Other Amount \$ _____



LDA of WNY
2555 Elmwood Avenue
Kenmore, NY 14217



SIDE BY EACH EXHIBITION SERIES
STRUCTURE, SCAPE, UTENSIL

Opening Reception, Friday, January 12th, 2018, 6-9 PM
Starlight Studio & Art Gallery
340 Delaware Road, Buffalo, NY 14202

On-view through February 2018
Gallery Hours Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

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

