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Editor's Letter

I would like to quickly introduce myself. My name is Margie Suarez and I am the editor of SILO's newsletter the New Beacon. I am very excited to be joining the SILO family! Before joining the team I received a bachelor's degree in communications from Dowling College. I also minored in English while studying there. I continued my secondary education at Hofstra University. I graduated with a Masters degree in English. When not working with SILO you can find me spending quality time with my loved ones or engrossed in a book. So many books, so little time.

With this newsletter we here at SILO wish to let the community know what programs, groups and services can be found here. We will also feature people and places that are important to the disabled community. With this newsletter we want to keep you informed and engaged.

We hope you enjoy the inaugural issue!

FEATURE PERSON: MARYANN SCIACCA

I recently had the opportunity to interview the president of SILO's board, MaryAnn Sciacca. We discussed her history with the independent living movement.

MaryAnn became disabled at the age of 11 after she contracted polio. This changed her personality in a major way. Before her illness she was a shy child. When she was moved to St. Charles Hospital for treatment she had to learn how to advocate for herself. MaryAnn said, "The nuns that ran the ward taught independent living before it was cool. Their motto was you can either sit in bed all day and cry or you can learn how to live." Through the experiences with the nuns and with the support of her mother, MaryAnn gained a deep love for the independent living movement.

These formative experienc-

es are what led her to get involved with the independent living movement. This led her to join SILO's board when it first opened in 1983. After some time away she returned 6 years ago

That is her favorite part of being a board member. She loves knowing that SILO has had a hand in helping other people with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to lead full lives. She wishes the board could help even more people but it is constrained by the budget provided by the state government.

I was curious about some misconceptions she thought the average person had about the disabled community. She said that the biggest misconception that she had encountered was not being treated as a person. "They see a wheelchair, a cane or a guide dog. We are

FEATURE PERSON: MARYANN SCIACCA (CONT.)

individuals who are just like everyone else.” One example she gave of this was when she had dental surgery. The technician asked her friend if she could understand the instructions after the surgery.

I also inquired if there was anything she wanted to share with others about the independent living movement. She wants people to know that disabled people deserve as much out of life as their able-bodied peers. When asked about the future of the independent living movement MaryAnn said, "I want SILO to continue to grow and reach more people."

It was a pleasure to speak with MaryAnn. It is because of pioneers such as herself that countless people with disabilities are able to lead full lives.

DAISY DIAZ'S OUTREACH



Daisy Diaz is the NY Connects Specialist for Hispanic Services at SILO. Daisy has been with SILO for two years. She ensures that people that come to SILO for assistance have language interpretation, translation and accessibility.

In November she began teaching citizenship classes at the Riverhead library. The classes consist of civic lessons. Daisy takes her students through the 100 questions that comprise the citizenship test. The class goes through the entire test and discusses the answer to each question.

Daisy was very proud to announce that the program had its first graduate on December 17. Her student Josseline Calixto is originally from Mexico. She had been studying using CDs that the Department of Immigration had provided her. After taking Daisy's course she was able to successfully complete her citizenship test. Daisy worked with Josseline one-on-one to help her achieve this goal. They went through the questions and reviewed Josseline's personal information. Daisy also made sure that during the interview portion of Josseline's test that she worked on her accent. It is important for people taking the citizenship test to pronounce English as close as possible to how a native speaker would. There has to be a basic understanding of written and spoken English.

Even though the entire test is 100 questions long, Josseline only had to answer 10 questions. Her swearing in ceremony will be January 3, 2019. Daisy is excited to attend in order to support her.

Since disability is something that can affect anyone from any country I was curious how a person with a disability would be accommodated to take the citizenship test. Daisy said that language translation services and a writer/reader could be provided upon request. She would provide those services herself or would make

DAISY DIAZ'S OUTREACH (CONT.)

sure that the person was provided them by the Department of immigration.

I believe that these classes are an important outreach on behalf of SILO. It is another facet of this organization's mission to ensure that everyone has access to as independent a life as possible, regardless of what country they are born in.

SESAME ENABLE



On October 9 Shai Eilat, the head of US Operations for Sesame Enable, gave a presentation to the staff at SILO about his company. Sesame Enable is a software company that was founded in Israel several years ago. It launched in the US last summer. The goal of the app is to allow people with limited to no mobility in their hands to control any Android smartphone or tablet using only the movement of their heads. The only requirement for the Android device is that it run Android 7 or better.

The co-founders crossed paths through happenstance. Oded Ben Dov was demonstrating a video game on TV that could be controlled by head movements alone. Giora Livne, a former Naval Commander who is quadriplegic, was watching the segment that day. He reached out to Ben Dov to see if he could invent a smartphone that he could use. The idea for Sesame Enable was born on that day.

Mr. Eilat gave us a demonstration of the Sesame Enable app. It can be opened by the voice command, “Open Sesame” or with a head switch for those who are nonverbal. It does not use facial recognition technology. It scans for the basic shape of a face. This means that once the app is installed on any Android device it can be used by anyone. It is not tied to one person.

Once the app is launched the user navigates the screen by using color coded icons that are tied to certain actions. Purple is swipe, green is tap, orange is zoom in, blue is more actions and red is cancel. If tracking is ever lost while using the app the connection can easily be reestablished by the camera searching for the user’s face.

The Sesame Enable app does not interfere with any other apps on the device. This means it can be used in conjunction with any other apps that are on the device. This is particularly important for those that use communication apps. They can now use Sesame Enable to control vital apps that allow them to let their voice be

SESAME ENABLE (CONT.)

heard.

This app is intended for users at all levels of physical and cognitive disability. This is why there is also a simplified version of the app. The training video that comes with the download also has a simplified version. Hospitals and schools can buy a one-time license that will give them unlimited access to the app without having to pay a monthly subscription fee.

Sesame Enable is working with the VA, Department of Education and Access VR to get this technology out to more users. Customers can receive funding from these agencies to purchase the app and the associated Android device. Students at the Henry Viscardi School are also using the technology in their classrooms and providing feedback to better refine it. The company also has plans to be included in all Google Chromebooks and to be integrated into the Windows platform.

Privacy is also paramount to Sesame Enable. The only data they collect from users is the amount of time the app was open and whether the user tapped or swiped. The company does not collect data about what websites the user visits while using the app or what other apps are used in conjunction with the

SESAME ENABLE (CONT.)

technology.

Sesame Enable provides a vital piece of technology for people with disabilities. It allows people who do not have the use of their hands to interact with a smartphone or tablet. Given how important smartphones have become in modern society, it left certain people at a disadvantage. Sesame Enable has done its part to level the playing field.

PROJECT WARMTH

On December 10, 2018 Trish Rivers from United Way Long Island to discussed Project Warmth. This program aims to provide heating assistance to people on Long Island and the Far Rockaway area of Queens that is within the PSEG service area. The program began for this year on December 3, 2018 and runs until the funding runs out for the year.

Other eligibility requirements include:

Being able to show a heating and/or fuel related bill in the applicant's name and address that is in termination, pending disconnect or severely overdue or be financially unable to secure heating oil/propane/kerosene when the tank is empty/nearly empty.

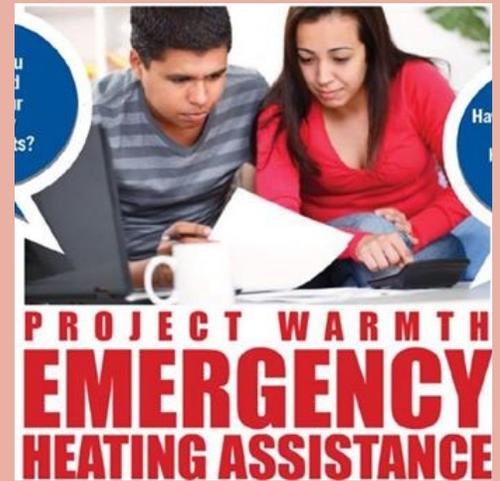
Demonstrate financial hardship and provide a reason for the hardship

Applicant may only receive one fuel and/or fuel related electric assistance once within the program year.

HEAP eligible clients must apply to Emergency HEAP before Project Warmth

People are ineligible if they have received assistance from Project Warmth in the past two years. Project Warmth is meant for emergencies only and not continual support. The bill must be connected to an active residential account. The bill must be for a fuel source and have a past due amount.

Ms. Rivers provided this statement explaining the Project Warmth program: "Right now, some 30 % of Long Islanders don't earn enough to make ends meet or heat their homes during the cold winter months. United Way of Long Island operates the Project Warmth Emergency Fuel Fund, Long Island's only non-government island-wide emergency fuel fund. Project Warmth is a safety net for struggling families and individuals in our region who are unable to pay a heating bill. The program provides one-time grants to provide payments to oil and utility companies on behalf of eligible residents facing heating emergencies. Hundreds of families, who may be choosing between heating their home and buying food or a medication, are assisted each year with an oil delivery or a utility arrears.





PROJECT WARMTH (CONT.)

Project Warmth opens in December and operates in partnership with a team of 15 community based organization that screen for eligibility and accept applications for assistance. To locate a Project Warmth intake site, contact United Way's 2-1-1 Long Island Information and Referral Call Center by dialing 2-1-1 (or 1-88-774-7633) 7 days a week from 9am-5pm. To support Project Warmth, visit <https://www.unitedwayli.org/project-warmth.asp> to donate.”

Project Warmth is an important safety net for Long Islanders struggling to heat their homes. This program

PROJECT WARMTH (CONT.)

shows that the people of Long Island are always willing to help out their fellow citizen. Please contact SILO's NY Connect Program at 631-730-3737 to receive assistance applying for this program.

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