

Spring 2018

# ISS Newsletter

*An Independent Support Services Publication*

*Self-Direction: Make Your Own Path*



**Hi everyone! Welcome to the Spring ISS Newsletter. Your quarterly insight into up-to-date news, helpful hints and tips, and a place to share success stories as it relates to Self-Direction.**

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# I AM SELF-DIRECTED

## Coryn Villanti and Libby

### **Editor's Note:**

*The ISS newsletter will be featuring a regular segment called "I am Self-Direction," highlighting an individual who has accomplished personal success in Self-Direction. In this edition we highlight Coryn Villanti.*

Today, Coryn Villanti is a very happy and successful Self-Direction participant with a Bachelor of Science in General Education, and a Master of Science in Reading. She has a lot to be happy about since she started her self-direction approximately two years ago,

but it wasn't always so gratifying and rewarding. Prior to joining the Self-Direction program, Coryn lived with her parents and wasn't receiving any services. Driven by a lack of self-confidence, it's not easy to mute the voices of self-doubt especially when you question every little thing, right down to what you're having for breakfast. The independence Coryn longed for, at that time, was only a dream. But dreams do come true

### **What Self-Direction means to me and a key event in my life**

Without hesitation, the most recent amazing changes in my life originated from my decision to live independently, in my own apartment. Having spent the majority of my life in my parents' home, I never realized how much I could accomplish on my own. It was not always perfect in the beginning, as life does have its ups and downs for everyone, but the feeling of complete control over my own life has greatly helped me improve my self-confidence, recognize my need for privacy, advocate for myself and become an overall healthier, happier person. I manage all of my own finances and correspondences. As an ideal role model for others, I can't stress enough how important it is for participants to be involved in the management of their self-direction. I am very happy with my current support staff, but I can say finding the right staff can be challenging and stressful.

### **My favorite recreation**

I enjoy going to the movies with my friends and reading a good book. My philosophy is "you do not need a lot of friends, just a few really good ones". I

find enrichment in the quality of friends, not so much in the quantity.

## **Advice I would give someone who is thinking about or starting in Self-Direction**

Do not be afraid to advocate for yourself. It concerns me when some of my friends do not know how to advocate for themselves and are sometimes taken advantage of or treated poorly. I feel that there should be advocate training available to assist some of our participants with this skill. I feel strongly that support staff should always be included in circle meetings, and that it is a good idea for circle members to “drop in” for unexpected visits to check on how support staff are treating the participants who live on their own. I also feel that sometimes the mentality changes when a participant moves out of the parents’ home. There may need to be some additional communication and/or over site regarding the expectations of support staff roles in the newer environment.

## **My latest accomplishment**

Lady Liberty Lu (Libby) – My service dog, Libby, was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. She is definitely my latest accomplishment. Unfortunately, I couldn’t get a service dog through the normal Foundation channels so my brother gave her to me as a gift. Libby came to live with me on Sept 22, 2017. I stay informed about therapy dog laws and like to mention that a new Law passed in the United States which allows the service dog owner to train the dog themselves, as long as they have guidance from a professional canine therapy training professional. Libby is being trained to assist me mostly with hearing, such as phone calls, sirens, alarm clocks, safety alarms and other vital communication needs. Recently Libby, true to her service training, has kept me safe by alerting me to smoke in my apartment. This is one of the amazing reasons why dogs can be critical companions and work partners to individuals with disabilities.

## **Where do I see myself in the future?**

Currently, I’m working in advocacy training for younger school age children. I have been invited to make a presentation this May in Las Vegas at the International Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children. One of my future goals is to expand my work to include advocacy for adults who cannot speak for themselves.



Happy Spring everyone!

We have been very busy with some new projects at **Independent Support Services**, and I hope everyone will take advantage of the opportunities that have been shared through constant contact emails and regular mailings.

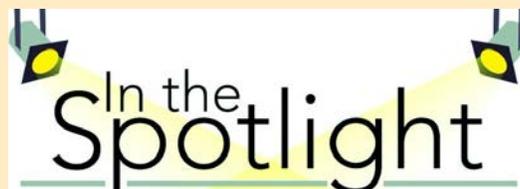
Our very first **Outstanding DSP** award campaign has proven to be a great success, with numerous entries from all over New York State. The deadline for entries was March 1. We will be reviewing all of the nominations and will make an announcement in the June ISS newsletter. Ten recipients of \$500 each will be honored for their outstanding service to our participants.

Also, we are still collecting information for our first **Self-Directed Achievement Event** that will be part of the **2018 ISS Picnic** on June 10<sup>th</sup> (picnic invitations coming soon). We hope that participants will showcase their outstanding successes and achievements they have experienced as a result of their Self-Direction. Share your works, talents or accomplishments with us.... **Let us celebrate you! Send your information to [family@issny.org](mailto:family@issny.org) by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline!**

Lastly, we are forming the first **ISS Parent Council**. The goal is to collaborate with parents and focus on improving our Fiscal Intermediary Services for you. Successful Self-Direction is our primary purpose. *ISS will be sending out a survey in the next few months based on the parent council input. Please be sure to complete this survey when it is sent.* Your email addresses are also greatly appreciated, as we strive to become more efficient in our communications. **Help us help you!**

**Enjoy your independence!**

Feel free to reach out to me at [631-864-2536 x 454](tel:631-864-2536) or [Family@issny.org](mailto:Family@issny.org)



**Terrell Pierre**

*Everyone deserves the right to choose their own path in life, to follow their dreams and desires unique to their interests and goals, and to be independent thinkers and doers. This is one of many Self-Direction stories that demonstrates the success of providing individuals with the opportunity to pursue*

## **Tell us a little bit about yourself**

I've been living independently since October 2017. Prior to this, I lived with my mother and twin sister. I graduated from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) in May 2017 and ended up moving into my own apartment in October. This is all possible due to Self-Direction.

## **How long have you been Self-Directing?**

I have been Self-Directing for about six to seven years now. ISS has really seen me through a lot of my life as I've achieved major milestones. I started Self-Direction while I was in high school and I was still living with my Mom. After graduating High School, I went to NYIT to living on my own.



## **What is your favorite thing about Self-Direction?**

My Broker, my staff and the freedom to do whatever I want!!! My Uncle and I were talking about the American dream and all the things we can do. This is the closest thing to the American dream I could ever imagine. Self-Direction has helped me meet people, it has helped me achieve things that I love and am proud of. Staff have assisted me with bringing me back and forth to school. They help me complete my work assignments. I'm so blessed beyond words. When I wake up every day, and I look around, I say to myself this is mine and no one can take this from me. Self-Direction gives me this freedom. I have been blessed with amazing staff and a support system that never gives up on me. They always push me to keep going and to be the best ME I can be. The staff that work with me help me keep my apartment clean and myself as well. They help with my emotional support when I'm having a bad day. They listen and understand.

## **Is there anything you don't like about it?**

If anything, I would prefer more staff and that can work more hours with me. I currently only have two staff because of my budget limits. If I had unlimited hours and staff, there is nothing I couldn't accomplish!

## **What advice would you give others who are considering Self-Direction?**

Speak up and advocate for yourself. You have to take care of you before you can take care of anybody else. Never give up. Even slow progress is still progress. Keep moving forward.



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## Department News

### Updates from Accounts Payable

At the end of January, as a part of an Accounts Payable department upgrade, AP completed extensive testing to an updated processing system. In an effort to serve you better, this upgrade is anticipated to decrease the processing time required for each expense, mileage or contractor invoice which in turn will shorten your wait time for reimbursement checks. The pilot testing of Expense Entry 2.0 was very successful and is now live though still undergoing revisions.

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### Resources

Need more information? Click on a link below:

[OPWDD Self Direction](#)

[Social Security](#)

[SANYS](#)

[NYS Self-Determination Coalition](#)

[NYS Parent to Parent](#)



- We have transitioned our application process fully over to our Electronic Application process. There are two parts to the process. When a conditional hire form is received an email goes

out to the conditional hire and stakeholders with the link to the electronic application and the background paperwork including I-9 documentation. Once the application is completed and the background checks are passed the conditional hire is sent an email along with the stakeholders stating the person is cleared to work and that in order to be paid they must complete the Onboarding process. They are sent another link to electronically complete their I-9, withholding documents, pay rate and other necessary paperwork. This new process has substantially decreased the amount of time it takes to clear a person.

- We have been in discussions with the Department of Labor and have had to re-classify certain contracted positions to employee positions. The positions are the Paid Neighbor and the Self-Hired Staffing Support position under IDGS. All staff that are currently in these positions have been notified of the change and have been explained what will happen as of 3/1/18 to be paid for the work they do.
- The Paid Neighbors will not have to do anything, their stipend will be issued through payroll as an employee and will be taxed according to law. Self-Hired Support Staff that are existing employees in other roles can submit their invoices per the payroll schedule and will be paid through payroll per the pay dates for Support Staff. Self-Hired Support Staff that were not existing employees need to fill out limited paperwork to become employees and then submit their invoices per the payroll schedule and will be paid on the pay dates for Support Staff. The *good news* is that in both these positions the staff can be paid by direct deposit which a lot of staff have opted to do.
- Please remember there are annual training requirements per OPWDD for all Support Staff. Support Staff that remain active in our system must complete the training. The training is done on the internet through a software platform called Mindflash. The training link is sent to Support Staff through the email address we have on file and is sent based off their hire date or the date of completion of the course the previous year.

**Important:** Remember to let Human Resources know when staff are no longer working. You can obtain an employee exiting form from our website or send us an email letting us know. If you do send us an email, please give us details as to why the employee is no longer working.

As always, please email or call us with any questions to [hr@issny.org](mailto:hr@issny.org)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Q: Why do you need my email address?**

**A:** Having an up to date email address allows us to provide you with timely, important policy changes, real time news and other pertinent information.

## **Q: I received a contact verification form in the mail, do I need to send this back if you already have my information?**

**A:** Yes. Often mailing, phone numbers and email addresses change, which can cause a major delay in responses, reimbursements, or other matters. Having accurate contact information is also the best way for us to keep you informed.

## Announcements

### **Attention:**

For Support Broker Services contact Charles Jackson, Director of Broker Services, 631.864.2536 x402 or email [cjackson@issny.org](mailto:cjackson@issny.org)

### **Contact Verification Information:**

You should have received a one page contact verification form requesting updates on contact and email information, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (designated for this purpose). If you haven't you may email your information to [communications@issny.org](mailto:communications@issny.org)

## Upcoming Events

### **Annual Picnic - 2018**

**Date:** June 10th

**\*Please note: This picnic is for participants and their families and is by invitation and RSVP only.** Invitations will be mailed in advance of this event, providing you with plenty of time to respond.

**We have a new logo!**



In the coming months, look for our new, user friendly and intuitive website!

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**Coming Soon!**  
*All New and Improved Website*

**Newsletter comments or suggestions welcome: [Email](#)**

*Independent Support Services provides self-directed, person-centered, individualized supports to people with developmental disabilities, to assist them in making choices that will lead them to realizing their dreams and improving their lives.*

[Visit our website](#)