

2024 – 2025

Annual Report

A Year of Strength and Stability

*Westchester
Independent Living Center*

*Satellite Office
Putnam
Independent Living Services*

MISSION STATEMENT

The Westchester Independent Living Center is a peer-driven, community-based organization that empowers people with disabilities to lead self-directed lives in the community through advocacy, training and referral to resources that promote Independent Living.

VISION STATEMENT

Promoting full community inclusion for people with disabilities by breaking down barriers.

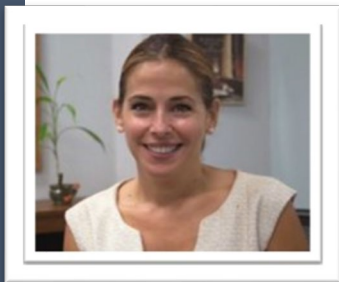
“There is nothing I have accomplished without reaching out to empower others.”

Justin Dart
Disability Rights Movement Icon
Father of the ADA

“Some people say that what I did changed the world, but really, I simply refused to accept what I was told about who I could be.”

Judy Heumann
Disability Rights Movement Icon
Mother of Disability Rights

Executive Director's Message



*Thinking back over this past year, it is clear to see that WILC experienced a **Year of Strength and Stability**. In a time of financial and funding uncertainty, the staff at WILC stayed true to our mission as a community-based organization that empowers people with disabilities to lead self-directed lives in the community through advocacy, training, and referral to resources that promote independent living. We continued to adapt to changes without losing sight of our vision, to promote full community inclusion for people with disabilities by breaking down barriers one at a time.*

WILC navigated the shifting needs of our community with perseverance and care, ensuring that essential programs remain accessible and impactful. From expanding outreach, enhancing support systems, and being flexible with time in order to continue to provide the services being requested and needed. WILC's Peer Advocacy Groups, under the Minority Outreach Program, collaborated with community agencies to expand services for transitional-age youth with disabilities. Our Parent Education team offered workshops and training on various days and times to accommodate parents' schedules. Staff from the Peer Services Project (PSP), Open Doors Program, NY Connects, Olmstead, and Rapid Transition Housing traveled throughout the Lower Hudson Valley Region, meeting and assisting participants in their communities, rather than requiring participants to come to us.

WILC took every available financial opportunity by applying for grants and foundation funding to support the start or enhancement of services for our community. We were awarded two five-year contracts under the NYSDOH Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver and Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) Waiver Programs, one (1) for the Lower Hudson Valley (LHV) Region and another for the New York City (NYC) Region. Under these two (2) contracts, WILC can continue to transition and divert people with disabilities from nursing homes and remain in their homes and communities with the services that are needed. We were also awarded startup funds through the Social Care Network (SCN) Program, which enabled WILC to hire a full-time staff member to begin screening and connecting individuals to services and resources, including housing, nutritional care, and mental health supports. Our Veteran-Directed Care (VDC) Program, under the Veterans Administration (VA), has spread region-wide, enabling us to help veterans stay in their communities and homes with their families and friends.

I would be remiss not to point out that none of this great work could be done without the backbone of WILC, our support team, the front-end administrators, IT, and Human Resources. They keep the office running smoothly and are available to handle each call as it comes in.

Truly impressive. Truly remarkable. Truly a Year of Strength and Stability.

Be well,

*Margaret Nunziato
Executive Director*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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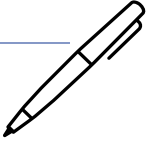
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Westchester Independent Living Center, Inc. (WILC) was incorporated in 1981 as a private, nonprofit (501c3) agency and is funded as a Center for Independent Living by both federal and state governments. WILC serves people with disabilities, their families, businesses, schools, and community agencies.

* Resigned September 2025

President's Message



*The fiscal year 2024-25 was truly a year of **Strength and Stability**, all due to the hard work and creativity of WILC's dedicated staff under the visionary and innovative leadership of our Executive Director, Margaret Nunziato.*

The consumer stories you will read in this report offer powerful testimony to the accomplishments achieved this past year. We have increased outreach in both our Core Services and our Specialized Services to more than 12,000 individuals, a new and impressive milestone, that included 3,500 who were transitioned out of, or were diverted from, institutional placements. We are proud of the other life-changing assistance WILC has provided to consumers of all ages with a wide range of disabilities through ongoing programs such as Educational Advocacy, Minority Outreach, Mental Health Advocacy, Housing Programs, our Veterans-Directed Care Program, Peer Projects and our new Social Care Network. All these achievements were accomplished during what was often a time of fiscal and financial challenge. And yet services and programs remained strong and stable.

In the pages to follow, you will read about individuals who were connected with employment, housing, educational opportunities, mental health services and other benefits that put them back in control of their own lives. I am confident that in the year to come, the Center will continue on this remarkable path, empowering thousands of people with disabilities with the strength and stability to lead their best self-directed lives in their communities.

Shelley Klein
President, Board of Directors

Consumer Stories

The consumer is a 58 year old female with multiple disabilities. She had received a letter from the Social Security Administration informing her of an SSDI overpayment and were requesting information about her work. When the consumer met with PILS IL Advocate, she was overwhelmed by the amount of information she needed to provide. She had 3 part-time jobs, some of which overlapped during the time frame in question. It took several months to gather the required information. PILS IL Advocate found a discrepancy in the SSA identified Trail Work Period which called the amount of overpayment into question. They were able to provide receipts for all reported income. The overpayment was found to be an error, and the consumer is not obligated to pay it back. She was very grateful for the assistance.

The consumer is a 51 year old African American female who is Deaf. The consumer was inquiring about getting a Sorenson Video Phone (assistive technology). She had been discussing the Video Phone with family members, and they were not sure what she needed. WILC's Deaf Specialist met with the consumer regarding the Video Phone and helped her fill out the application. She explained that she didn't need to pay for or rent the equipment. She only needed high speed internet and a television for this Phone to work. An appointment was made to have the Phone installed. Sorenson went to the consumer's home and installed the equipment. WILC's Deaf Specialist explained to the consumer how the Video Phone works and who to contact for assistance. The consumer was very thankful.

A Year of Strength and Stability

Core Services

- Benefits and Entitlements Advisement
- Information and Referral
- Community Outreach
- Peer Advisement
- Independent Living Skills
- Individual and Systems Advocacy
- Deaf Services
- Equal Access/ADA Consultation

Total Persons Served During Year

People with Disabilities	11,383
Family Members/Significant Others	741
Other Non-Disabled (Includes Agency/Business Personnel Business/Agencies)	798 124
Number of Institutional Transitions	486
Number of Institutional Diversions	3,079
Number of Full-Time Job Placements	34
Number of Part-Time Job Placements	18

Specialized Programs

- Minority Outreach (MOP)
- Mental Health Advocacy
- Educational Advocacy
- Nursing Home Transition and Diversion/ Traumatic Brain Injury RRDC for the Lower Hudson Valley Region
- Nursing Home Transition and Diversion/ Traumatic Brain Injury RRDC for the New York City Region
- Open Doors Transition
- NY Connects/No Wrong Door
- Parent Training and Information
- Peer Services Project (PSP)
- Olmstead Housing
- Rapid Transition Housing
- Post-Rehabilitation Transition Program at Burke Rehabilitation Center and Phelps Hospital
- Diabetes Prevention
- Veteran Directed Care
- Anger Management
- Domestic Violence Prevention
- Ready Set Work
- Re-Entry Programming
- Social Care Network Provider

PROGRAMS FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

Peer Advocacy

WILC's MOP 2-day Peer Advocacy Group program for transition age youth with disabilities includes topics such as goal setting, Independent Living Skills, self-advocacy, and empowerment. In March 2025, 8 transition age youth with disabilities attended the in-person Peer Advocacy Group at CHOICE of NY in New Rochelle, NY tailored for at-risk youth, which was developed by WILC's Director of Minority Outreach/Re-Entry Outreach Specialist. CHOICE of NY Pre-Trial Services – Youth Division is an innovative social services organization which specializes in criminal justice re-entry and rehabilitative services. At Westchester County's Pre-Trial Services, CHOICE's goal is to promote positive change through effective programs and services.

The consumer is a 20 year old Asian male with Mental Health. He was looking for Mental Health services. He had graduated from High School, and he felt that there was an expectation of him attending college and pursuing a career, but he didn't want to go to college and was unsure what type of work he wanted to do. MOP staff referred him to WILC's MOP Ready Set Work! Career University – Advancing to the Next Level Program. Once the consumer successfully completed the Ready Set Work! Career University Program, he was referred to CHOICE of NY which assisted him with obtaining Mental Health services and additional case management. With the collaboration of MOP and CHOICE staffs, the consumer enrolled in a Vocational Program at the Westchester Educational Opportunity Center where he obtained his Commercial Driver's License free of charge.

Healthy Food Choices

Transition age youth with disabilities in CHOICE of NY's Pre-Trial Services – Youth Division received WILC's MOP developed 2-day in-person Healthy Food Choices training, which included topics such as snacking, diets, grocery shopping, interpreting food labels, food prep, fast food, etc. The training ran from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM both days.

Consumer Story

The consumer is a 21 year old male with a Learning Disability. He was referred to WILC's Peer Services Program (PSP) for assistance with securing benefits, i.e., health insurance. WILC's PSP Senior Peer Specialist learned that he needed a liver transplant. She also learned that he had a twin brother who was in the same situation. She called Medicaid at the county and state level explaining the circumstances and getting information. She then coordinated a call between the twin's mother and Medicaid. The process ended with a successful outcome. The family now has Medicaid health insurance.

Ready Set Work!

Ready Set Work! Career University – Advancing to the Next Level is a career readiness intervention for justice-involved youth ages 14-24. Participants in WILC's Ready Set Work! Career University – Advancing to the Next Level Program are youth with disabilities who are or have been involved with the juvenile/criminal justice system. It is a career readiness curriculum that is a collaborative effort of the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, NYS Department of Labor, County Probation Departments, and community-based organizations with frontline experience working with this youth population in New York State. The skill-based training/curriculum includes modules on Barriers & Resources, Work & Education, Career Assessments, Job Retention, and Job Search. Upon completion of the modules/workshops, MOP staff follows up with the participants for 90 days. Last year, WILC's MOP Director of Minority Outreach/Re-Entry Programming facilitated 3 cycles of the Ready Set Work! Program. We had 18 participants complete the Program. This year, we are proud to report that WILC's MOP Director of Minority Outreach facilitated 5 cycles of the Program, and we had 45 participants successfully complete the Program.

Consumer Stories

The consumer is a 78 year old Asian male with Parkinson's Disease. Due to his many falls, he became at risk of being placed in a nursing home as he required more support in the community to maintain his safety. The MLTC which provided him with 10 hours 7 days a week was not sufficient in preventing the many falls during the hours he was without services. On 4/1/25, the consumer was enrolled in the New York City Nursing Home Transition Diversion (NHTD) Waiver program with 24/7 HCSS services. Since being enrolled in the program, the consumer has been benefiting from being in his own home with the support of HCSS services. His family continues to visit him weekly which has improved his quality of life. Without this support, the consumer would have been at risk of being placed in a nursing home.

The consumer is a 53 year old female with physical disabilities. She has Medicaid health insurance but was looking for further assistance. PILS IL Mental Health Advocate helped her apply for SNAP benefits and provided information about local food pantries. He also suggested she check out a Mental Health Association Women's Group that meets weekly at her local library. The consumer reported back that she was granted the SNAP benefits, is using the food pantries and is attending the Women's Group for support. She thanked PILS IL Mental Health Advocate for the assistance.

Hudson Valley Care Coalition

Last year, as part of its Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration Waiver, NYS made an historic step to create a new model of care that will integrate health care and social care via networks with associated funding. 9 organizations statewide received awards to create a new Social Care Network (SCN) Program in New York State. The Hudson Valley Care Coalition was chosen for the Hudson Valley Region (Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess, and Ulster counties). Under this new contract, the Hudson Valley Care Coalition will be the lead agency and WILC will be an SCN Services Provider. The Social Care Network (SCN) was rolled out on January 2, 2025. In April 2025, the Center received \$89,700.00 in start-up funds.

WILC Receives Funding To Expand Program

In March 2025, the Center submitted proposals to the New York State Department of Health to again be the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion/Traumatic Brain Injury Regional Resource Development Centers (NHTD/TBI RRDCs) for both the Lower Hudson Valley (LHV) and the New York City (NYC) Regions. We were successful in this attempt. The new contracts will be for 5 years. The LHV contract is for \$1,700,000.00/year for the 5 years. The NYC contract is for \$3,000,000.00/year for the 5 years. The funds will be utilized to hire additional staff.

WILC's Executive Director Receives Award

WILC's Executive Director, Margaret Nunziato, was named one of City & State NY's Above & Beyond Social Services Award honorees. Margaret received this award for her dedication to disability rights, Independent Living and building more inclusive communities throughout our region. The Board of Directors and Staff Members are very proud of Margaret's achievements.

Consumer Stories

The consumer is a 6 year old female with Morning Glory Syndrome, which is a rare malformation of the optic nerve. PILS Director of Educational Advocacy began working with the consumer and her family in October 2022. At that time, the consumer was in preschool receiving special education services in a general education preschool setting. PILS Director of Educational Advocacy and the family advocated for significant supports including SEIT, Orientation & Mobility supports, OT, PT, Speech, and a 1:1 Aide for safety. Assigning a 1:1 Aide in a general education preschool had never been approved before in Putnam County. In the Spring of 2023, they advocated for the consumer to transition from CPSE to CSE for Kindergarten with appropriate supports. She was classified as a student with an Other Health Impairment (OHI) and placed in an integrated co-taught class with OT, PT, and Speech. The consumer had a great Kindergarten year. This Fall (2024), the consumer was due for her triennial re-evaluation. She was evaluated in all areas of suspected disability. New evaluations showed average to above average scores in all areas. A CSE re-evaluation review meeting was held. The consumer has made wonderful progress. She is utilizing all strategies taught in class and in her related services (OT & PT) and is doing very well academically, socially, and emotionally. She can safely navigate the school and playground. The parents see great progress at home as well. She is a typical 1st Grader in the classroom and at home. The consumer was declassified from special education! It was a long road from CPSE to CSE to declassification, but it proves the importance of early intervention.

The consumer is a 70 year old Hispanic female with several physical disabilities. WILC's Peer IL/Mental Health Advocate initially met the consumer while providing outreach at a housing expo. The consumer was living in the home of her daughter and son-in-law, and she was anxiously trying to find her own apartment. The consumer later met with WILC's Peer IL/Mental Health Advocate. The consumer explained that she had a Yonkers Section 8 housing voucher but was having difficulty finding housing. WILC's Peer IL/Mental Health Advocate assisted the consumer in searching for housing. In their search, the consumer successfully found a first floor 1-bedroom unit in a senior housing community. Plus, the unit is just 5 minutes away from her daughter's house. She signed the lease for the apartment and moved in 2 weeks later.

The consumer is a 39 year old African American male with Mental Health. He was referred to WILC's MOP Ready Set Work Program by his Probation Officer. He had recently been released from federal prison and was homeless – living in a storage unit. He shared his poor living conditions and his need to work with MOP staff while in the Ready Set Work Program. MOP staff worked with Re-Entry Task Force staff to get the consumer a NYS ID, which allowed him to get a Social Security card. Upon successfully completing the Ready Set Work Program, he was able to obtain employment at a local hospital and found a room to rent.

The consumer is a 39 year old female with osteoarthritis. She was in a nursing and rehabilitation facility since February 2023 after a hip surgery and a cyst on her lung. She lost her apartment while at the facility as the landlord sold the property and the lease was not renewed. Her goal was to leave the facility and return back into the community with minimal support from family. WILC's Open Door Transition Specialist and WILC's Olmstead Housing Subsidy Specialist worked with the consumer to find suitable housing. She did agree to temporary assistance from home care for the first few months and was able to move out into her new apartment on August 25, 2025.

Consumer Stories

The consumer is a 65 year old African American male who had a Stroke. Following the stroke, the consumer spent many years in a Nursing Home. The consumer was referred to WILC's Lower Hudson Valley NHTD Waiver Program to assist in getting him relocated back into the community. Once he was enrolled onto the NHTD Waiver, WILC's Lower Hudson Valley NHTD Waiver staff and the consumer's Service Coordinator worked to locate and secure stable housing, and he was provided Independent Living Skills training. He was able to move out of the Nursing Home and back into the community. Through the Waiver, he received social transportation which has helped him integrate into his community. Without the help of the NHTD Waiver Program, not only would the consumer not have been able to move safely and successfully back into the community, but without the continued assistance from Waiver services, he would be in jeopardy of returning to a nursing home.

The consumer is a 24 year old Hispanic male with Mental Health and Substance Abuse. He was living in a shelter and was referred to WILC's MOP Anger Management Program by the Re-Entry Task Force. He was not able to live with family unless/until he completed the Anger Management Program. While in the Program, the consumer expressed his need to gain and maintain employment. WILC's MOP staff encouraged him to attend the local Job Fair. MOP staff worked with him to prepare him, including conducting mock interviews. Upon completion of the Anger Management Program, the consumer was able to move back home with his family. He obtained employment through a temp agency he connected with at the Job Fair. The consumer is currently working at UPS as a package handler.

The consumer is a 58 year old male with CVA Hemiplegia and TBI, Diabetes, Hypertension, and Chronic Migraines. In May 2023, the consumer had a stroke and was in the ICU of the North Shore Hospital for over 2 weeks. He was transferred to acute rehab at Mercy Hospital, then subacute rehab at Forest Hill Nursing Home, and finally discharged home. The consumer's son lives out of the country but assisted his father with his transition home. After his son's return to his own home, the consumer was unable to care for himself, and he was admitted to a rehab and nursing center where he remained until he was enrolled in the TBI Waiver Program in of March 2025. Once enrolled onto the TBI Waiver, WILC's New York City TBI Waiver staff began the process of transitioning the consumer out of the nursing home and back into the community. Due to physical and cognitive deficits, he required care 24/7 including oversight and supervision as he is a fall risk. The consumer received community transitional services which allowed him to move into a fully furnished apartment. The TBI Waiver Program has given this consumer the services needed to live safely and independently in the community even when his family does not live in the area.

The consumer is a 59 year old African American male with Substance Abuse and Learning Disability. He was referred to WILC's MOP Ready Set Work Program by the Westchester Re-Entry Task Force. He had done a lengthy amount time in prison and was looking to make a new start. When the Program was set to begin, MOP staff realized that he was unable to read. To help him complete the Program, MOP staff read all the assignments out loud to the group and gave examples for each exercise, not only to minimize the consumer's embarrassment, but so he would be able to complete the Program, as well. Upon successfully completing the Ready Set Work Program, MOP staff connected the consumer with Westchester Community College. He was put in remedial classes where they would help him with basic reading and writing skills while preparing him to take his GED.

WILC Experiences a Loss

In February of 2025, WILC's Part-Time Peer Independent Living Advocate Assistant, Ellen Cooley, passed away suddenly. This was a major loss for the Center as Ms. Cooley worked at WILC for over 5 years. She was a valued member of WILC, and she will be greatly missed.

Rollin' KNICKS

This year, the New York Rollin' KNICKS, a National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) Division 1 Team, which is co-sponsored by the New York KNICKS and WILC, was seeded 9th in the country. The NWBA Championship games were held on April 11 – 13, 2025 in Richmond, Virginia. During the second round, the Rollin' KNICKS were beaten by the Dallas Mavericks who went on to win the Championship.

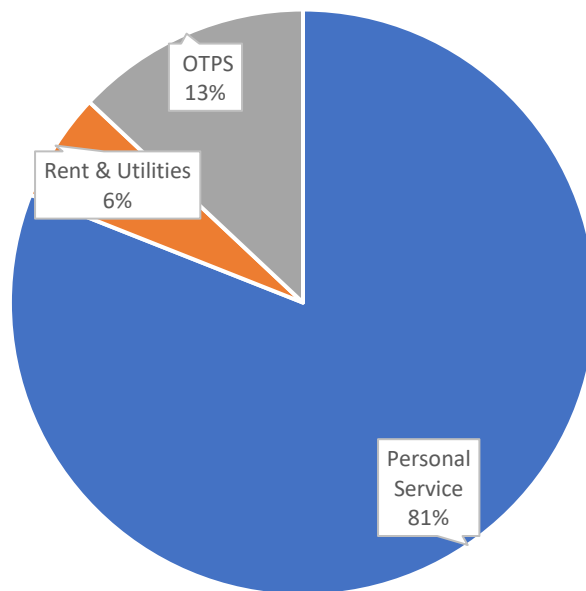
Community Involvement

WILC and PILS staff serve on community boards/committees and task forces, such as: Westchester County Long Term Care Council, Westchester Employment Network (WEN), Rockland Employment Network (REN), White Plains Mayor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, Westchester County Youth Board, Lower Hudson Regional Special Education Task Force, Collaborative Challenge, Mental Health Association (MHA) of Putnam County, Putnam County Community Resource Group (CRG), Putnam County Coordinated Children's Services Initiative (CCSI) and Putnam County Transition Consortium.

Resource and Transition Fair

In November of 2024, PILS Educational Advocacy staff co-hosted with the Putnam County Transition Consortium and Brewster CSD Pupil Personnel Department an in-person Resource and Transition Fair at Brewster High School. The Resource and Transition Fair helped students with disabilities and their families find appropriate supports and services both during their school years and while transitioning to life after school. Over 120 parents, youth and professionals attended. Vendors included: ACCES-VR, Arc Mid-Hudson, Bridge Program at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, Care Design NY, CAREERS, College Steps, NY Commission for the Blind, Community Based Services, Green Chimneys Community Based Services, CoveCare Center, Hudson Valley Clinical Services, LifePlan CCO, Moms Navigating Autism, OPWDD, Open Doors, Pathways at St. Thomas Aquinas College, PNW BOCES Tech Center, PC Department of Mental Health, Ramapo for Children, Search for Change, Smart Staffing Group, Center for Career Freedom and Prevention Council of Putnam. The event was so successful that PILS Educational Advocacy staff have already scheduled to co-host the event in November of 2025.

Expenditures During the Year



OTPS is Other Than Personal Service. That 13% includes Telephone, Supplies, Equipment, Repairs/Maintenance, Travel, Insurance, Postage, Marketing/Public Relations, and Contracted Services, such as Computer Services, Fiscal Management, Payroll Services, Audit, etc.

Grant Income

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Community Living

Independent Living Funding	\$	249,343
Minority Outreach		211,729
Putnam County Satellite Office		252,660

New York State Department of Education

ACCES-VR Independent Living	\$	394,448
ACCES-VR Putnam County Satellite Office		352,344
ACCES-VR Peer Services Project		216,280

New York State Department of Health

NHTD/TBI RRDC for the Lower Hudson Valley Region	\$	1,444,271
NHTD/TBI RRDC for the New York City Region		2,153,977

New York State Office for Aging

NY Connects/No Wrong Door	\$	788,634
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Westchester County

Dept of Community Mental Health – MH Advocacy	\$	143,713.27
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New York Association for Independent Living

Olmstead Housing	\$	213,478
Open Doors Transition		444,779
Diabetes Prevention		
Rapid Transition Housing		139,487

Starbridge

Parent Training and Information	\$	57,611
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Phelps Foundation

Phelps Hospital Post-Rehabilitation Transition	\$	23,487
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Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

Support and Revenues:

Government Grants	\$	7,006,445
Foundation Grants		133,352
Fees for Service		277,188
Other Income		1,260
		<u>1,260</u>

Total Support and Revenues \$ **7,418,245**

Expenses:

Program Services	\$	6,528,075
Administrative Expenses		883,104
Fundraising		7,854
Total Expenses	\$	7,419,033

Decrease in Net Assets \$ **(788)**
Net Assets at Beginning of Year \$ **694,000**
Net Assets at End of Year \$ **693,212**

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Main Office:

Westchester Independent Living Center
10 County Center Road, 2nd Floor
White Plains, New York 10607

914-682-3926 (Voice)

914-259-8036 (VP)

914-682-8518 (Fax)

www.wilc.org

www.facebook.com/WILCNews

www.instagram.com/WILC_news/

Satellite Office:

Putnam Independent Living Center
1441 Route 22, Suite 204
Brewster, New York 10509

845-228-7457 (Voice)

914-259-8036 (VP)

845-228-7460 (Fax)

www.PutnamILS.org

www.facebook.com/PILSNews

www.instagram.com/PILS_news/

Outreach Office:

VIVE School – Pathways to Success
75 Riverdale Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10701