ANNUAL MEETING



Endependence Center, Inc.

Advocacy & 45 Years of Making an Impact

October 14, 2026
Norfolk, Virginia

ECI Staff

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Matt Ballard, Administrative Assistant
Maureen Chappell, Employment Coordinator
Felicia Brown, Facilitation Coordinator
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Event Sponsors

Blue Ridge Independent Living Center

HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

Access Independence, Inc.
promoting independent living



Kids, Kin 'N Caregivers, Inc.

Friend of the ECI Board of Directors

Support ECI

Scan the QR code above to make a tax-deductible donation to ECI via our website, or visit: https://endependence.org/donate.

Your contribution to the Endependence Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization (EIN 54-1250288), is tax deductible. (EIN 54-1250288).

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Norfolk, VA 23502
(757) 461-8007 | https://endependence.org

REVISED
PROPOSAL FOR
ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION
OF A
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
IN
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

UNDER GUIDELINES FOR TITLE VII, PART B
OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973,
AS AMENDED BY P. L. 95-602 (NOV. 6, 1978)

SUBMITTED FOR FY 80 FUNDING
TO THE
U.S. REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
MARCH 15, 1980

PREPARED BY THE
STATEWIDE PLANNING SECTION
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Pictured above:Scanned cover page of the federal "Revised Proposal for Establishment and Operation of a Center for Indepedent Living in Norfolk, Virginia", submitted on March 15, 1990.



Advocacy & 45 Years of Making an Impact

EVENT PROGRAM

Welcome

Nichole Davis, Executive Director

45 Years of ECI & the
Independent Living Movemment

Lisbet Dula, President - Board of Directors

Keynote Address

Kelly Buckland

Awards & Recognition

A Longtime Advocate's Perspective

Ed Turner

Closing: The Next 45 Years

ECI's Mission

Board of Directors
Lisbet Dula, President
Deanna Smith, Vice President
Cee-Cee Simmons, Treasurer
Deon Latham
Kaitlyn Hodges
Mark Snyder
Mary Mathena

The Endependence Center, Incorporated (ECI) is a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential, private, non-profit Center for Independent Living (CIL) operated by and for individuals with disabilities in South Hampton Roads, serving the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach, and Southampton and Isle of Wight counties.

The purposes of ECI are to prepare individuals and to prepare the community for full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society. These goals are accomplished by the following strategies: (1) the provision of direct services to individuals with significant disabilities that result in a greater level of independence and community integration/functioning, (2) the provision of services/advocacy in the community that result in a greater awareness of disability issues, physical and programmatic accessibility and systems change.

As a consumer-controlled organization, the majority of staff and Board Members are people with disabilities.All services, training and advocacy are provided supporting the philosophy that persons with disabilities should control the services they utilize that facilitate independence and community integration.

President's Welcome

As the President of the Board of Directors, and someone who previously worked for the Endependence Center for almost two decades, I know I join with you in great appreciation for what the Endependence Center has accomplished over the years...45 years of advocacy and impact!

When Ed Roberts and Judy Heumann started the Independent Living movement, they built it as a process to systematically remove barriers to full integration in the community. Their model was people with disabilities working to empower each other in personal goals and to create communities that are accessible and accommodating. The Endependence Center was the first Center for Independent Living in Virginia. There are now 17 CILs and three satellite centers in Virginia and 403 nationally, with CILS found in 20 countries worldwide.

The Endependence Center is a central hub where self-advocates, friends, and family come together to continue this journey to ensure that all members of the community have an equal level of participation. We look forward to many more years of advocacy and impact, working together with you. Thank you for celebrating with us the amazing contribution of the disability community to our society today and going forward.

With sincere appreciation,
Lisbet Dula
President, Board of Directors

ECI History

As the first Center for Independent Living (CIL) established in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Endependence Center, Inc. (ECI) has a long history of advocacy, community leadership, and service to people with disabilities.

For more than four decades, ECI has worked at the local, state, and federal levels to remove barriers, expand accessibility, and promote independent living and full community participation.

In 1980, Handicaps Unlimited of Virginia (HUVA) received a federal grant to establish a Center for Independent Living. The Tidewater Independent Living Center opened in 1981, with John Chappell serving as Executive Director and William Patrick White as the first Board President. In 1983, the organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit under the name Endependence Center, Incorporated (ECI). Governor Charles Robb presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the opening of the Center.

***Pictured right**: Governor Charles Robb, former Executive Director John Chappell, and former Board President Jane Majer tour ECI offices at the ECI ribbon cutting event.*

1980s

The 1980s brought significant progress in disability rights and accessibility. ECI was instrumental in establishing HB 817, the Virginians with Disabilities Act, which expanded equal access to employment and public accommodations and preceded the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by five years. Other major legislative milestones included the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984, which addressed voting accessibility; the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986, which prohibited discrimination in air travel; and the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, which added people with disabilities as a protected class.

Locally, ECI staff served on the Virginia Beach Resort Area Advisory Commission, helping begin the effort to create a fully accessible resort area at the Oceanfront Boardwalk. Through ECI's advocacy, the Tidewater Transportation District Commission adopted a policy requiring wheelchair lifts on all newly purchased buses. ECI also helped secure a grant through the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities to develop a consumer-directed personal assistance services model that would be piloted in 1990.





***Pictured above**: William Patrick White, ECI's first Board President, and John Chappell, ECI's first Executive Director, are interviewed on the TV program "Morning Connection"*

1990s

The decade began with the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by President George H. W. Bush on July 26, 1990. ECI organized grassroots participation in a march and rally supporting the ADA and attended the historic signing ceremony in Washington, D.C. That same year, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), strengthening educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 further expanded accessibility by requiring telecommunications equipment manufacturers to incorporate accessible features.



***Pictured above**: ECI organized grassroots participation at a march and rally supporting the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).*

1990s continued

Throughout the decade, ECI played a key role in expanding accessibility across Hampton Roads. Staff served on a Virginia Housing Development Authority committee to help implement new statewide building codes. Working with the Tidewater Association of Hearing-Impaired Children, ECI helped bring closed-captioning to WAVY-TV news broadcasts, the first in the region. ECI educated families and educators on IDEA reauthorization and partnered with the Virginia Beach Mayor's Committee to expand accessible parking at the Oceanfront. The organization also helped design and implement the Parking Enforcement Specialist Team Project to improve enforcement of accessible parking laws.

Through a contract with the Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, ECI provided outreach and training on adaptive equipment and services. ECI was involved in resolving ADA compliance issues at the Virginia Beach Amphitheater and worked closely with the City of Norfolk on the development of Harbor Park baseball stadium, nationally recognized for its accessible universal design.

***Pictured below**: President George H. W. Bush signs the historic Americans with Disabilities Act in a ceremony at the White House on July 26, 1990.*



ECI became an official voter registration site and helped establish PIER (Protecting Individuals' Education Rights), an advocacy and training coalition focused on disability education rights. In 1997, ECI assisted the PIER coalition in filing complaints with the Office for Civil Rights regarding school transportation. In 1998, ECI helped file more than 30 complaints addressing ADA violations in paratransit services.

The organization also coordinated a regional FEMA emergency preparedness conference in 1995, participated in statewide efforts to develop a Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Services Medicaid Waiver program, and established its Youth Transition Group in 1997. Additional funding in 1998 expanded services supporting youth as they transitioned from school to adulthood.

The decade concluded with the landmark 1999 Olmstead decision, which affirmed the right of people with disabilities to receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.



***Pictured above**: ECI continued the work started in 1986 when serving on the Virginia Beach Resort Area Advisory Commission, advocating for beach access and accessible parking.*

2000s

The 2000s saw continued growth in ECI's advocacy and service initiatives. The Center provided technical assistance to improve accessibility at the Battleship Wisconsin exhibit and helped make the Spirit of Norfolk ticketing area more accessible. ECI coordinated a rally at the U.S. Capitol supporting implementation of the Olmstead decision and helped establish a Youth Leadership Training Program through the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities. During this period, ECI began a long-standing partnership with the Social Security Administration to provide benefits counseling and outreach services.

The organization participated in a student exchange program with students from Salzburg, met with advisors to the President of Costa Rica regarding disability rights, and shared information about the independent living movement with representatives from Glasgow, Scotland.



***Pictured above**: ECI met with advisors to the President of Costa Rica to discuss independent living and disability rights.*

***Pictured right**: ECI participants advocated for and worked to make the Spirit of Norfolk ship ticketing booth accessible.*

ECI also participated in the DRS OBRA program serving individuals in nursing homes and began coordinating Medicaid Developmental Disabilities Waiver services. The organization helped design accessibility features at Old Dominion University's Ted Constant Convocation Center and provided disability awareness training for transit employees through a local public transportation partnership. In 2003, ECI implemented a HUD-funded initiative that trained more than 1,000 individuals statewide on Fair Housing rights and accessibility requirements. The organization secured funding through the Department of Transportation to acquire a fully accessible bus and relocated to its current office building in Norfolk. Funding from the Norfolk Foundation and a Community Development Block Grant supported ADA renovations to the new building.

Additional accomplishments included coordinating the local Assistive Technology Loan Fund Program, establishing the Youth Endependence Advocacy Team, providing technical assistance on Virginia Beach's Visitor Center, supporting Old Dominion University's adaptive equipment recycling program, training advocates statewide on IDEA regulatory changes, and launching a literacy tutoring initiative. In 2008, ECI hosted a statewide hospitality conference focused on ADA requirements for the hotel and motel industry.



2010s

The 2010s began with ECI's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the ADA. Building on decades of advocacy, the organization continued expanding programs that promoted community living, employment, housing accessibility, and self-determination.

ECI established peer support and independent living groups for individuals residing in nursing facilities and continued its partnership with the Virginia Housing Development Authority to support home modification programs. Through contracts with the Social Security Administration, ECI expanded employment services, providing pre-employment training, job placement assistance, and ongoing support to individuals pursuing competitive employment.

With support from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, ECI trained 20 Medicaid Waiver Mentors to help individuals and families navigate complex waiver systems and access services. ECI also served on multiple Hampton Roads Planning District Commission committees, helping localities strengthen emergency preparedness and inclusive response planning.

Nationally, the movement toward community-based services continued to grow, supported by policies implementing the principles established through the Olmstead decision. The advances in communication accessibility, including Speech-to-Speech Relay services, expanded options for individuals with speech disabilities, while Virginia continued to be recognized as a leader in acknowledging and addressing the legacy of eugenics through formal state action.



***Pictured above**: Former Board President Michael Wang and former Executive Director Stephen Johnson are joined by the Mayor of Virginia Beach, Will Sessoms, at an event to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA signing.*

2020s

The decade began with the global COVID-19 pandemic, presenting unprecedented challenges for service providers and the disability community. ECI quickly adapted by transitioning many services to virtual platforms while continuing to provide critical support to participants throughout the region.

In 2021, ECI partnered with the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services and local health providers to host two accessible COVID-19 vaccination clinics at the Center. During April and May, 207 individuals received vaccinations in a familiar, disability-friendly environment.

As communities reopened, ECI remained focused on meeting participants' evolving needs and addressing the unique health and independence challenges faced by many individuals with disabilities. In 2023, ECI received funding from the City of Norfolk to expand Nursing Home Transition services, helping individuals move from institutional settings back into the community and achieve greater independence and quality of life.

ECI's youth programming also expanded significantly. Through partnerships with local school divisions, including Suffolk Public Schools, staff delivered Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students preparing for adulthood. ECI also joined Centers for Independent Living across Virginia in collaborative initiatives designed to strengthen workforce development and transition services for youth with disabilities.

The organization continued to provide community education on changes affecting Medicaid, SNAP, Social Security benefits, and other public benefit programs. New independent living skills initiatives, including the participant driven "What's Bugging You?" podcast series, created additional opportunities for education, peer support, and community engagement.

Today, ECI continues to advance its mission through advocacy, peer mentoring, independent living skills training, information and referral services, youth transition programs, nursing home transition services, benefits counseling, and systems advocacy.

More than forty years after its founding, ECI remains committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have the opportunity, support, and freedom to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of community life.



***Pictured above**: The artwork for the "What's Bugging You" participant driven podcast, designed and created by ECI participants.*

Event Speakers



Edmond Turner

Edmond “Eddie” Turner is a lifelong advocate for the rights, independence, and employment of people with disabilities. His career spans more than four decades of leadership, public service, training, and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels.

Beginning as a volunteer teacher's aide for students with special needs, he went on to serve as a peer counselor at the Endependence Center, where he supported dozens of individuals in achieving greater independence and helped build the foundation for his lifelong career in disability advocacy.

Throughout his career, Eddie held leadership roles with the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, Virginia Commonwealth University’s Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. As Special Advisor on Disability Employment Issues to Governor Tim Kaine, he worked to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities in state government. He later served as a lobbyist for the Virginia Association of People Supporting Employment First (VaAPSE), advocating for policies that promote meaningful employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Eddie has volunteered on numerous committees dedicated to advancing the rights and inclusion of Virginians with disabilities. His life's work reflects a steadfast commitment to empowerment, equal opportunity, and community leadership.

Kelly Buckland

2026 Keynote Speaker



Kelly Buckland has dedicated more than four decades to advancing the civil rights, independence, and full participation of people with disabilities. As a person with a disability, Kelly has been actively involved in disability advocacy and the Independent Living Movement since 1979, building a career grounded in the belief that people with disabilities must have the right, opportunity, and support to direct their own lives and participate fully in their communities.

Kelly began his career with Idaho's Protection and Advocacy system and served for more than 20 years as Executive Director of the Living Independence Network Corporation (LINC), a Center for Independent Living in Boise, and as Executive Director of the Idaho State Independent Living Council.

Kelly's leadership eventually brought him to the national stage. He served on the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Governing Board and as NCIL Vice President from 2001 to 2005, President from 2005 to 2009, and Executive Director from 2009 to 2021. In these roles, he helped lead one of the nation's foremost cross-disability organizations, representing Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils, people with disabilities, and disability advocates across the country.

Throughout his career, Kelly has testified before Congress on disability-related issues, including health care, fair housing, the Americans with Disabilities Act, funding for Centers for Independent Living, and the right of people with disabilities to live in their communities. Most recently, he served as a Disability Advisor in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation, bringing the perspective and experience of the disability community to federal transportation policy.

For more than 45 years, Kelly Buckland has been part of the movement to break down barriers, advance disability rights, strengthen Centers for Independent Living, and ensure that people with disabilities have a voice in the policies and decisions that affect their lives. His career embodies the heart of Independent Living—consumer control, choice, advocacy, equality, and the right of people with disabilities to live and participate fully in their communities.

The Endependence Center is honored to welcome Kelly Buckland as our 2026 Keynote Speaker.

Awards & Recognition

William Patrick White Award for Advocacy

DELEGATE PHIL HERNANDEZ



The Endependence Center recognizes Delegate Phil Hernandez for his leadership and advocacy to expand accessibility and inclusion for Virginians with disabilities, particularly his work to advance open captioning in movie theaters.

For many Deaf and hard-of-hearing moviegoers, going to the movies has historically not provided the same experience available to other members of the community. While theaters have offered individual closed-captioning devices, advocates have reported that these devices can be unavailable, improperly charged, malfunctioning, difficult to position, or otherwise ineffective. When the technology does not work, a person may miss dialogue and important information throughout the film after already purchasing a ticket and making plans to participate in an activity that should be equally accessible to everyone.

Open captioning provides a different option. Captions displaying dialogue, speaker information, music, and important sound effects appear directly on the movie screen for everyone to see, eliminating the need for an individual patron to rely upon a separate captioning device. The effort to address this accessibility barrier also has a personal connection for Delegate Hernandez, whose sister is Deaf.

After being approached by an accessibility advocate in 2025 about expanding open-captioned movie screenings in Virginia, Delegate Hernandez brought the issue to the Virginia Disability Commission and worked with disability advocates and organizations to advance the proposal.

During the 2026 General Assembly Session, Delegate Hernandez served as chief patron of House Bill 602, which established requirements for open-captioned movie screenings in Virginia. The legislation requires covered movie theater companies to provide designated open-captioned screenings, advertise when those screenings are available, and provide a process for members of the public to request open-captioned screenings later in a film's run.

The legislation was approved and became Virginia law in 2026, expanding opportunities for Deaf and hard-of-hearing Virginians—and others who benefit from captions to

Continued on next page.

participate more fully in an everyday community experience alongside family, friends, and neighbors.

Delegate Hernandez's advocacy reflects an important principle of Independent Living: people with disabilities should have meaningful access, choice, and the opportunity to participate fully in community life. His work helped move an accessibility concern identified by the disability community into meaningful statewide action.

Through this work, Delegate Hernandez demonstrated the impact that can occur when policymakers listen to people with disabilities and advocates and translate identified accessibility barriers into legislative action.

The Endependence Center proudly presents Delegate Phil Hernandez with the 2026 William Patrick White Award for Advocacy in recognition of his work to advance accessibility and full participation for people with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth.

About William Patrick White



The William Patrick White Award for Advocacy is presented in memory of Pat White, the first President of the Endependence Center Board of Directors. Pat was a veteran with a disability whose advocacy was instrumental in bringing Centers for Independent Living to Virginia, including the establishment of the Endependence Center. This award recognizes an individual whose leadership and advocacy have advanced independence, inclusion, accessibility, and the rights of people with disabilities in Virginia.

Outstanding Agency Award

HOPE HOUSE FOUNDATION

The Outstanding Agency Award is presented to an organization that has worked in partnership with the Endependence Center to expand opportunities, promote inclusion, increase awareness, and improve the lives of people with disabilities.

For decades, Hope House Foundation has challenged traditional ideas about where and how people with developmental disabilities should live. Hope House supports adults with developmental disabilities living in their own homes and apartments. Its approach emphasizes individual choice, control over daily life, meaningful relationships, and opportunities for people with disabilities to be full participants in their communities.

In 2026, Hope House strengthened this partnership through its advocacy and outreach efforts. With the work of Advocacy and Outreach Liaison Grey Persons, Hope House collaborated with the Endependence Center to arrange two meetings with Representative Jen Kiggans and her office—one with congressional staff and a subsequent meeting directly with Representative Kiggans.

These meetings created an important opportunity for ECI, Hope House, and disability advocates to discuss Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services and the critical role that personal care attendants and direct support professionals play in the lives of people with disabilities. Most importantly, these conversations allowed people with disabilities and advocates to explain what Medicaid-funded community services mean beyond numbers, programs, and budgets.

Hope House's commitment to advocacy extends beyond this partnership. The organization incorporates advocacy, education about rights, participation in public hearings, and engagement in local and national advocacy into its work. This reflects an understanding that providing quality services is important, but lasting change also requires addressing the systems and policies that create barriers for people with disabilities.

The Endependence Center values Hope House Foundation as a community partner that shares a belief in the dignity, value, and potential of people with disabilities. Our organizations may approach our work from different roles, but we share a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities are not merely present in their communities, but have the support, opportunity, choice, and voice necessary to fully belong and thrive.

The Endependence Center is pleased to present Hope House Foundation with the 2026 Outstanding Agency Award in recognition of its longstanding commitment to people with disabilities, community living, and advocacy, as well as its continued partnership with the Endependence Center.



Jane L. Majer Award for Independence

ERIN EVELEIGH

After learning about ECI at Tidewater Community College, Erin Eveleigh connected with the organization and quickly distinguished herself through her determination, vision, and unwavering commitment to personal growth. An active participant in monthly Youth Groups and ECI activities, she successfully secured Paratransit services while pursuing ambitious educational goals. Erin graduated from Tidewater Community College and is now attending Old Dominion University, where she is working toward her bachelor's degree. She also serves as a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee, using her voice and experiences to help shape opportunities for others.

The Endependence Center proudly presents Erin with the 2026 Jane L. Majer Award for Independence in recognition of her extraordinary dedication to higher education, self-advocacy, and the pursuit of an independent future. Through her perseverance, leadership, and commitment to achieving her goals, Erin exemplifies the spirit of independence and purpose that this award honors.

About Jane L. Majer



Serving as President of the Endependence Center, Inc. Board of Directors from 1983 to 1986, Jane was an exemplary role model, allowing no obstacles to stand in the way of achieving her independent living goals. This award recognizes the Endependence Center participant who made significant strides toward independence through involvement, commitment and dedication to purpose—the qualities exemplified by Jane L. Majer.

Outstanding Service Award

SENATOR ANGELIA WILLIAMS GRAVES

The Outstanding Service Award is presented to an individual whose service and commitment have expanded opportunities, access, inclusion, and independence for people with disabilities.

Senator Williams Graves has demonstrated a willingness to listen directly to people with disabilities and the organizations that represent them. In 2023, while serving in the Virginia House of Delegates, she met with Endependence Center participants and staff during Independent Living Day at the Virginia General Assembly. ECI advocates had the opportunity to share their personal experiences, discuss the importance of Centers for Independent Living, and raise priorities affecting people with disabilities.

Her legislative service has also included attention to issues affecting access to community-based supports. In 2024, Senator Williams Graves joined as a patron of legislation addressing Medicaid financial eligibility for individuals receiving services through Virginia's Developmental Disability Waivers. The legislation changed how certain Social Security Disability Insurance income was considered when determining financial eligibility for the Family and Individual Supports, Community Living, and Building Independence Waivers. Access to these home- and community-based services can be critical to an individual's ability to live, work, and participate in the community rather than relying on more restrictive settings.

During the 2026 General Assembly Session, Senator Williams Graves continued this record of service by serving as the Senate patron for Senate Bill 722, which establishes requirements for open-captioned movie screenings in Virginia.

The resulting law expands opportunities for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, as well as others who benefit from captions, to participate more fully in an everyday community experience alongside family, friends, and neighbors. It represents the kind of practical accessibility change that can make a meaningful difference in a person's ability to participate in community life.

From meeting directly with Endependence Center advocates, to supporting access to home- and community-based



services, to advancing communication access through open-captioned movies, Senator Williams Graves has demonstrated an ongoing willingness to engage with issues that affect the independence and participation of people with disabilities.

The Endependence Center proudly presents Senator Angelia Williams Graves with the 2026 Outstanding Service Award in recognition of her continued service, her responsiveness to the disability community, and her work to expand accessibility, inclusion, and opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth.

Lucy Salzberg Outstanding Student Award

MADISON BOYD

A participant in the 2026 ECI Summer Pre-Employment Transition program, Madison Boyd exemplifies determination, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous growth. She is a dedicated student-athlete with multiple Special Olympics gold medals in swimming and an aspiring young professional. Through her participation in the 2026 ECI summer program, she strengthened her skills in career readiness, self-advocacy, goal setting, and independent living. As she prepares for her senior year, Madison remains focused on academic excellence, achieving new milestones in the pool, and pursuing future employment opportunities.

She continues to develop her voice as a self-advocate, demonstrating confidence in speaking up for herself while encouraging and supporting others to do the same.

The Endependence Center proudly bestows the 2026 Lucy Salzberg Outstanding Student Award in recognition of her commitment to academic and athletic excellence and future success.

About Lucy Salzberg

Lucy Salzberg was a member of the ECI Board of Directors and a volunteer tutor who instilled confidence and commitment in her students. Lucy demonstrated strong personal commitment to individuals with disabilities, helping them to accomplish their education goals. The Lucy Salzberg Outstanding Student Award honors a student with a disability who has demonstrated commitment to education, self-advocacy, and future independence.

Outstanding City Award

CITY OF NORFOLK

The Outstanding City Award is presented to a local city that has demonstrated support for the disability community and the mission of the Endependence Center. The city receiving this award has shown leadership in expanding opportunities for people with disabilities and a willingness to include the disability community in the development of its services, programs, and policies.

The Endependence Center is pleased to present the City of Norfolk with the 2026 Outstanding City Award in recognition of its continued partnership with ECI and its commitment to improving accessibility, inclusion, and opportunities for people with disabilities.

ECI and the City of Norfolk have maintained a longstanding working relationship built on a shared commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can participate fully in community life. Throughout the past year, that relationship has included collaboration on Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility, housing, emergency preparedness, community services, public planning, and opportunities for people with disabilities to have their voices heard in decisions affecting their lives.

One of the most significant areas of collaboration has been the City's work to update its ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Under the leadership of the City's ADA Coordinator and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Norfolk has invited people with disabilities, advocates, and community organizations to identify barriers affecting access to City facilities, programs, services, and activities. Endependence Center staff have participated in this process and provided input on issues including physical accessibility, accessible paths of travel, transportation and bus stop accessibility, effective communication, employee training, and the importance of including people with disabilities throughout the City's planning and decision-making process.

The City has also provided meaningful opportunities for ECI to participate in housing planning and advocacy. ECI has continued to work with the Department of Housing and Community Development and other City partners during the development of Norfolk's Five-Year Consolidated Plan and fair housing planning efforts. Through these opportunities, ECI has been able to raise issues involving the availability of affordable and accessible housing, redevelopment, replacement of assisted housing, accessibility for people transitioning from institutions, and barriers that can prevent people with disabilities from securing and maintaining housing in the community. ***Continued on next page.***

The partnership extends to the Norfolk Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities, where ECI has continued to share information about Independent Living services and raise issues affecting Norfolk residents with disabilities. ECI has advocated for accessible participation in Commission meetings and has worked to strengthen opportunities for people with disabilities to engage directly with City leadership and community decision-makers.

Norfolk has also included ECI in emergency preparedness activities through participation in the Local Emergency Planning Committee. This collaboration provides another opportunity to help ensure that the needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs are considered in emergency planning, public information, sheltering, and community response.

What makes this partnership particularly meaningful is the City's willingness to include disability organizations and people with disabilities in conversations before decisions are complete. Accessibility is strongest when people who experience barriers have an opportunity to identify those barriers, recommend solutions, and participate in shaping the communities in which they live.

The Endependence Center proudly presents the City of Norfolk with the 2026 Outstanding City Award in recognition of its continued partnership with ECI and its commitment to listening to the disability community, addressing accessibility barriers, and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in the Norfolk community.

About Jerry O'Bryan



This award is in honor of Jerry O'Bryan, President of the ECI Board of Directors from 1997 until 1998 and is given to either to a participant who has made great strides in increasing their quality of life and independence or to an advocate or service provider that has made a significant effort in improving the service delivery system for those individuals residing in institutions or at risk of institutionalization.

Jerry O'Bryan Freedom Award

CHARLES BRYANT

Referred to ECI through a social worker at the nursing home where he resided, Charles remained steadfast in his determination to build a life beyond its walls. With persistence, resilience, and an open mind, he pursued housing opportunities, worked closely with ECI staff, and developed the skills and confidence to advocate effectively for himself throughout the transition process. Today, Charles is successfully living in the community and continues to build a strong foundation for the future. Focused on maintaining stable housing while strengthening his budgeting and financial management skills, he exemplifies the independence, determination, and self-advocacy this award celebrates.

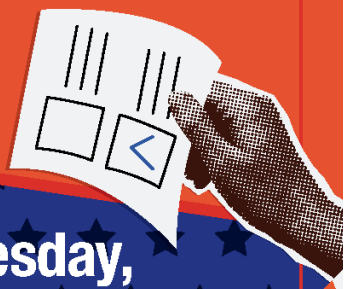
Charles's accomplishments reflect the transformative impact of perseverance and a commitment to creating a life of greater freedom and opportunity.

The Endependence Center is proud to present the 2026 Jerry O'Bryan Freedom Award to Charles Bryant in recognition of his journey from institutional care to independent community living.

RIDE FREE *on* ELECTION DAY

November 3, 2026





Free Fare for Election Day, Tuesday, November 3rd on all bus, light rail, ferry, paratransit & OnDemand Rideshare services.

HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

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