

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Changes 10.23.23



It is now a year since Headway moved its office location to the Tri Main building in Buffalo. Time as Albert Einstein noted is a relative thing. Personally, it does not feel like a full year, but I need to trust the calendar. I wonder if change is also a relative phenomenon.

Autumn is a transitional time. Leaves are presenting new colors and the way we all deal with covid is being modified. The State Health Emergency due to Covid officially ends on Veteran's Day, November 11th. We all know Covid is not gone, but in general, it now presents in less lethal forms. Comorbid health issues are a huge factor in individuals fighting the virus and we all need to pay close attention to our physical and mental health which was always the case but became more present during the outbreak.

Headway is moving forward. We just did our first in person fund raiser of the year this October with our Chicken BBQ. It was a success and helped to raise funds for our navigation and support group efforts. We've added three new staff members to the Headway team to support the waiver programs, communication, and outreach. Agencies that provide services on the Waiver programs are increasing, providing more options for Waiver Participants.

Headway has had an increase of individuals and families looking for support and assistance who do not qualify for the waiver programs. We continue to provide navigational consults to help them connect to appropriate resources that serve their needs. Another service that Headway provides is Peer Support for people with TBI's and Other Cognitive Conditions, and our group membership has been consistently growing.

Headway has gone through a digital revolution, and we now have a new webpage along with a colorful and informative social media presence, both on Facebook and Instagram. Stay connected by following our Instagram and Facebook handle @headwayofwny.

I am delighted with the support that we continue to receive from People-Inc and the Western New York community. Please feel free to share ideas and concerns with us at support@headwayofwny.org.

Ronald Fernandez

NEW EMPLOYEE HIRES 2023



Heather Radzikowski is Headway's newest RRDS. She came from the role as the Western New York Regional Coordinator for New York State Kinship Navigator. In her role, Radzikowski educated local county professionals on kinship policy and law in New York, and she served as the team lead for any kinship questions. Heather was the primary virtual case manager for six counties in NYS. Before her appointment with NYS Kinship Navigator, she developed and ran her own kinship program independently for five years under a New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) contract. Heather has also worked in the Gateway-Longview Behavioral Health clinic as a critical time intervention case manager. Heather's experience includes working with adults having developmental disabilities. Heather loves to advocate for people who do not have a voice and has a passion for learning how to address system barriers. Heather loves animals, playing and listening to music, travelling and improv.



Emily Benkleman is Headway's newest Assistant Regional Resource Development Specialist. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Buffalo State University and was a part of the national sorority, Sigma Delta Tau. Outside of work, you can find Emily at the park with her two dogs or swinging on a hammock with her favorite book. She is eager and excited to be starting at Headway of WNY.



Amanda Zackem is Headway's new Community Relations Coordinator and Peer Support Leader. She holds a master's degree in Multimedia Film & Photography from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and is currently working on a second master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Prior to Headway, she was in the documentary film industry. She's currently working on an experimental film about the United States healthcare system.

TBI, DEMENTIA & AGING

Director Ron Fernandez presented as part of the Western New York Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association educational series on dementia. His talk explored the physical and cognitive challenges faced by individuals living with traumatic brain injury (TBI) as they age, including an increased risk for dementia. He discussed the need for collaborative group support for people who have both a TBI and Dementia as well the need for support services for people with TBI's that do not meet the waiver program criteria.



TBI STUDY : UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

We'd like to bring awareness the work of Dr. Vijaya Prakash, an Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. His research is focused on Auditory/vestibular neurodegeneration in occupational hazards and neurotrauma such as blast induced traumatic brain injury and cerebrovascular accidents. Dr. Prakash's current research study assesses the vestibular function in adults with traumatic brain injury. He is currently looking for individuals between the ages of 18-80 years old to participate.

The study is on-going and will consist of a single session, which will last approximately four hours each. The duration can be split into two sessions if the subject experiences fatigue. Dr. Prakash will be looking at the integrity of the vestibular system and balance in individuals with a history of head injury in the past ten years and in healthy adults. This study is on-going, and subjects will be compensated \$12 per hour for their time.

If you're interested in participating, you can reach out to :
Dr. Prakash at vijayapr@buffalo.edu at 716-829-6290.

CHICKEN BBQ FUNDRAISER *Follow-Up*



On October 19th Headway held their first annual Drive-Thru, Chicken BBQ Fundraiser at the People Inc., North Forest location.. Funds raised help continue our support groups and further our mission. The event was a success, as we sold out of dinners and met our fundraising goal. Many thanks to the fantastic group of volunteers who helped make the event run smoothly as well as to Deaf Access Services, People Inc. & People Inc. E.T.H.O.S. AmeriCorps, for their on-going support!



Headway supports people with brain injury, other disabilities and seniors.





SOCIAL MEDIA


Headway of WNY has a new Instagram account. Follow [@headwayofwny](https://www.instagram.com/headwayofwny) to learn more about our TBI and NHTD waiver programs and reminders for our TBI and other cognitive conditions peer support group. We offer tips on brain injury recovery such as different types of rehab services, foods that promote wellness and recovery, organization events and updates. We are also on Facebook and you can find us by our username, headwayofwny. As we grow our community network, we appreciate you sharing our social media posts and spreading the word. Your support means a lot to us!