



Promoting self-direction among people with disabilities and removing barriers to independence in the community.



# PreVAIL

Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc.

## 2024 VAIL COMMUNITY LEADERS' LUNCHEON

At the recent VAIL Community Leaders Luncheon, community members, supporters, and advocates came together to celebrate our shared commitment to independent living and accessibility. This special event took place on Thursday, September 19, 2024, in Harrisonburg, VA. The event featured inspiring stories from individuals whose lives have been positively impacted by VAIL's services, featuring the importance of community support in fostering independence for people with disabilities. Attendees enjoyed a delicious meal catered by Moe's while networking and discussing ways to further advance our mission. The luncheon was a meaningful opportunity to strengthen connections and empowering individuals with disabilities to live full, independent lives. Thank you to everyone who attended!

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VAIL also helped me work with the Housing Authority to secure a housing voucher and, although it has been extremely difficult finding an affordable place to rent, I am about to move into my own place in the next week or two!

-Cheyanne

# Independent Living

by Emysja Caul

Self-advocacy and independent living skills are critical progressions to the development of the brain. As a nineteen-year-old, I was diagnosed with inattentive ADD. During the time of my diagnoses, I was faced with the challenge of having to re-apply for Medicaid and I was assisted through the process of applying to receive care. The time in between applying for health insurance was met with challenges as I had to delay my appointment times to receive care, but after receiving coverage I was able to address those needs. As a young girl I did not know how to articulate my silent experience, but my learned efforts of self-advocacy have allowed myself to grow. An influential partnership with Tessa has allowed me to focus on establishing a stable future for myself. Together we began to work on schedule planning, budgeting time, and job readiness in creating an understanding of how to utilize my resources and time while in school. The continuous support from Valley Associates for Independent Living has allowed me to develop the practice of working on setting achievable goals through reminders and planning of my time. My testimony has also enlightened how I have been able to receive support through the connections of places that accommodate my experience. I remember the day that I walked into the office of the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS). I was met with so much patience and understanding of my experience. The staff allowed me to explain my experience and offered me resources that would help continue to guide me while in college. I'm a first-generation college student and my first year of college was challenging and I had to learn the importance of utilizing the resources around me. After a year of setting up partnerships and working towards independent living, I have felt supported, understood, and seen in my experience. I am thankful for the partnerships that I have been able to develop with both advocacy offices and I hope that I can continue to strengthen my partnerships with these services. The support and partnership of VAIL and DARS has allowed me to see growth in my experience.

“ I am very glad that she helps me with my IEP meetings and I get to lead the meetings.  
-Taylin Sellers ”



“ Do not let an impairment stop you from doing anything from what you want to do. Basically a wheelchair stops you from walking. That's about it. -Teri Joa ”



“ There is a level of customer service that can be provided for the frontline staff and businesses downtown. We can't find that training anywhere. You can find tons on ADA. But there is nothing that says, if someone comes in and is using a wheelchair, don't touch the wheelchair and don't start moving them around. - Andrea Dono, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance ”



# VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals

The VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals played against local community leaders at Horizon's Edge Sports Campus in their annual Exhibition game to kick off the season on 9/26/24. With a gym packed full of spectators, the team was able to show off just how incredibly talented they are! The team jumped out to a 37-20 halftime lead over the community leaders, but as is customary in the Exhibition game, the scores were swapped, and the Cardinals began the second half down 17. They turned up the intensity at the beginning of the third quarter and ended up finishing the game with a 67-49 win, outscoring the community members 47-12 in the second half! VAIL and the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals are so grateful for our incredible athletes willing to show off their skills, for our awesome community members willing to step out of their comfort zone by getting in a chair and playing against a nationally ranked wheelchair basketball team, and for every spectator who showed up to Horizon's Edge to cheer on our team as they begin the 2024-25 season! The Cardinals' first official games of the season were on October 19th & 20th, as we traveled down to Richmond to compete in the 2024 River City Classic. We are now preparing for our own tournament, the 2024 VAIL Invitational, which will be hosted at Horizon's Edge Sports



Campus on November 23rd & 24th! There will be no admission charge for spectators and we'll be looking to pack the gym yet again! Check the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals Facebook page for more updates on the 2024 VAIL Invitational.

## OUTDOOR ADAPTIVE RECREATION (OAR)

Outdoor Adaptive Recreation (OAR) is a VAIL program that focuses on getting individuals with mobility impairments outside and enjoying nature, exercising, and socializing with other individuals with shared lived experiences. While OAR is primarily focused on individuals residing in Rockbridge County, it is open to all individuals within our service area. Recently, OAR held a pool party at the Lexington Municipal Pool, went kayaking at the Dutch Gap Conservation Area, traveled to Virginia Beach for the annual LifeRollsOn Adaptive Surfing event and, with the help of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, a group of 6 individuals were able to go skydiving with Skydive Orange! If interested in any future events or getting more information about the program, please reach out to the program coordinator, Terri Bsullak at [tbsullak@yahoo.com](mailto:tbsullak@yahoo.com).



Terri Bsullak skydiving with the OAR group!

## Dive into the VAIL Arctic Dip!

We're excited to announce the upcoming 11th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip, our winter fundraiser that challenges the bravest among us to take a plunge into icy waters—all for a great cause!

 Date: February 15th, 2025

-  Location: Sun Retreats Shenandoah Valley @ 348 Lake Rd, Stuarts Draft
-  Time: Heats begin at 11:00 am

This chilly event brings together our community for a day of frosty fun and fundraising, with all proceeds going towards supporting VAIL's mission to empower individuals with disabilities to live independently. Whether you're plunging into the cold water or cheering on the participants, your involvement makes a difference!

### How to Participate:

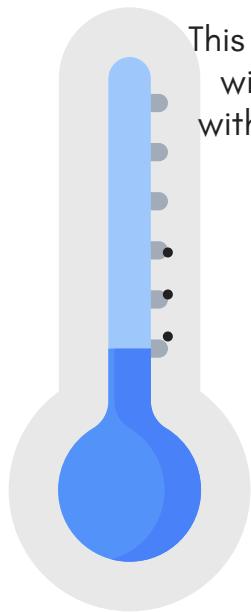
Register: Sign up to #DoTheDip and gather pledges from friends and family.  
Spectate: Bundle up and come support the dippers with your warm cheers!

Or do BOTH!

We can't wait to see you there, bundled up or ready to brave the cold, helping us make waves for a wonderful cause!

For more information and to register, visit <https://govail.org/dip/>.

Registration begins November 25th



Thank you to  
our sponsors!

**LD & B**

The Wednesday Afternoon  
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EQUIPMENT

**Virginia**  
**Housing**

**a-Able Plumbing**  
Inc.

# Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program

Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL) is thrilled to partner with the Department of Aging & Rehabilitation Services (DARS) once again for the Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP)! This career-focused program empowers youth by providing practical skills and career development opportunities, including mock interviews, resume-building, visiting career sites, and cooking skills. Participants also engage in community service projects, such as this previous year students created animal enrichment items for Camp LIGHT, which teaches teamwork and compassion.

With fourteen dedicated youths enrolled this past year, we're inspired by their drive and commitment to success. We're looking for mentors of all ages who can make a one-year commitment to support these amazing youth. Interested in helping to shape future leaders?

Please contact Tessa Atkins at [tessa@govail.org](mailto:tessa@govail.org) for more information.



## EnergyShare

Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc. (VAIL) has an EnergyShare program in collaboration with Dominion Energy. This program provides for a \$500 credit to be applied to your energy bill (gas, electric, or propane) for individuals who meet the criteria. If you are interested in applying, please contact the VAIL staff person that you work with regularly or Andrea King at [andrea@govail.org](mailto:andrea@govail.org). You must reside in Harrisonburg, Lexington, Buena Vista, Waynesboro or Staunton City or the counties of Rockingham, Augusta, or Rockbridge.

- Must include a recent bill from your energy provider and complete an application
- Must not have received energy share assistance in the past 12 months
- Must have an open goal with VAIL that you are working on with VAIL staff
- Cannot have your payment set up for automatic payments
- Cannot reside in subsidized housing or receive a housing voucher

This is a first come, first serve program. We make no guarantee that payment will be made until after the whole process is complete. It is imperative that you continue making payments on your account. Please reach out with questions.



# Virginia Housing Modification Programs

## OWNER-OCCUPIED MODIFICATION VIRGINIA

Virginia Housing's Owner-Occupied Modification Grant makes funding available to assist with modifications to homes to make them accessible to elderly individuals or owners with disabilities. The modification must directly address barriers created by the disability. These funds are available to persons earning 80% or less of the area median income, based on HUD guidelines. These income limits are available here:

<https://www.virginiahousing.com/.../rental..../income-limits>.

This program is targeted at homeowners aged 65 and older. Applicants under 65 must provide written documentation of the need for the accessibility improvement, such as a doctor's letter, insurance documentation, or social security documentation showing the nature of the disability. Applicants must provide documentation of their ownership of the property.

Please contact Taylor Hinkle at [taylor@govail.org!](mailto:taylor@govail.org)



Granting Freedom is a grant program for home modifications for disabled veterans and service members who sustained a line-of-duty injury resulting in a service-connected disability.

Funds of up to \$8,000 can be used to make a home wheelchair accessible, to install grab bars in a bathroom, or to make other modifications that help eligible recipients become independent. Funding to pay for modifications to houses and apartments is available on a first come-first served basis.



## RENTAL UNIT ACCESSIBILITY MODIFICATION GRANT

Landlords are required by fair housing laws to allow modifications to an apartment or rental house to make it barrier-free to the tenant. However, tenants usually bear the cost of these modifications, which can be substantial. Fortunately, help is available through grants offered by Virginia Housing.

Individuals with a disability who rent a home and who earn 80% or less of the area median income may be eligible for grant assistance up to \$8,000.

Applications for all of these programs must be submitted by a Virginia Housing-accepted agent. VAIL is a registered agent in Planning District 6.

# IFSP-Funding Program

October 15, 2024

## The IFSP-Funding Portal is open!

You can create, modify, and submit an application until **Wednesday, November 13th** at 11:59 p.m.

***Please take your time to apply!***



P.S. Need help? Start by reviewing resources on our **My Life, My Community IFSP-Funding page!** Scan this QR code, or visit this link:

<https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-funding>

DBHDS ➤



“

I can never thank VAIL and Strength In Peers enough for helping me get where I am today and I can't wait to see where I will go!

-Cheyanne

”

## Ways to Support VAIL

SCAN THE QR CODES BELOW TO DONATE  
VIA  
PAYPAL OR VENMO!



PAYPAL



venmo

## Schedule of Events

Nov. 5th	VAIL Closed - Election Day
Nov. 11th	VAIL Closed - Veteran's Day
Nov. 26th 6:30 PM	VAIL Board of Directors meeting
Nov. 27 1:00 PM-29	VAIL Closed- Thanksgiving
Dec. 24-25	VAIL Closed- Christmas
Feb 15th	11th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip

### Contact VAIL at:

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Find us on 

<https://www.facebook.com/ValleyAssociatesforIndependentLiving/>

<https://www.facebook.com/HburgCardinals>



<https://www.youtube.com/user/govail>



<https://www.instagram.com/valleyassociatesil/>



WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL  
**TOURNAMENT**

**Nov. 23-24**

Sat. 10 AM - 4 PM

Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM

\*end times subject to change

Horizon's Edge Sports Campus

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