



# PreVAIL

Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc.

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

## 11th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip

### In this issue

VAIL Arctic Dip; Picnic with Delegate Runion	1-2
IL Day at General Assembly; Tax Relief Opportunities	3
Adaptive Rec Programs; RAMP	4-5
Great Community Give; Rotary Trivia Night	6
Assistive Technology Funding	7
Home Modifications	8
EnergyShare; Transportation Forum; Work & Benefits Webinar	9
Spotlight; VAIL is on X	10



Thank you for making the VAIL Arctic Dip a Success! We are incredibly grateful to everyone who participated in, donated to, and supported the 11th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip! Your enthusiasm, generosity, and willingness to take the plunge (literally!) help make a real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Thanks to your support, we can continue providing essential resources, advocacy, and services that empower individuals to live independently. Whether you braved the icy waters, cheered from the sidelines, or contributed in other ways, we appreciate you being part of this amazing community. We couldn't do this without you—thank you for making this year's Arctic Dip unforgettable! Stay warm, and we'll see you next year for another exhilarating splash!

## VAIL Arctic DIP Continued

**\$41,380 raised!**

There were 105 individuals registered to participate in this year's annual arctic dip and a surprisingly large audience - considering the cold rainy weather. The air was 37 degrees and the water temperature was 42 degrees. VAIL raised \$41,380, exceeding the fundraiser's \$40,000 goal. The funds raised are critical for VAIL's ability to provide services such as independent living skills training, advocacy, service coordination, information & referral, and so much more! We are humbled and so appreciative of everyone who participated and donated!



## WE CAN, TOGETHER! Join Delegate Chris Runion

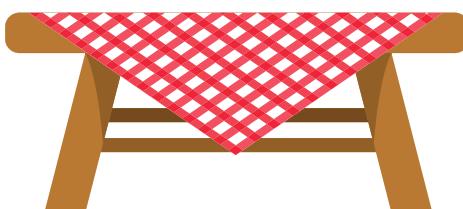
and area disability service providers and educators as we work together to share ideas, promote independence, and ensure that people with disabilities have full access to community life.

*Honored guests for the evening will include individuals with disabilities along with their families, service providers, and educators.*

### Picnic Event

Camp LIGHT / Creative Works Farm  
107 Creative Works Lane, Waynesboro VA

Thursday, May 22, 2025  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Paid for and authorized by Chris Runion for Delegate.

# INDEPENDENT LIVING DAY AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY



## ADVOCATES

On February 4th, VAIL staff members had an early morning start to their day, as they headed down to Richmond for Independent Living Day at the General Assembly.

## REPRESENTATIVES

The VAIL team met with area representatives and legislative assistants and discussed issues of importance to the disability community, which included the legislative priorities set by the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL). VAIL shared examples of the impact that community-based services on individuals with disabilities in our local area.



Pictured Delegate Wilt



## ALL TOGETHER!

At lunch, each of the 17 centers within Virginia had a chance to share a highlight within the past year. Many shared youth transition stories and working with other agencies such as Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

## TAX RELIEF OPPORTUNITIES

Many localities offer property owners who are aged 65 or older or have a permanent disability relief from real estate taxes. Please contact your local Commissioner of the Revenue to find out if you qualify and how to apply.



# VAIL Harrisonburg

## Cardinals



This year has been a tremendous year for growth for the wheelchair basketball team! We are very grateful to Sentara Cares and The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation for grants that they have awarded to VAIL to promote wheelchair basketball, recruit new players, and provide funding for much needed equipment. If you've ever been to a game, you smell the burnt rubber as the players race up and down the floor and replacing tubes and tires is paramount. We also have new players this year who have needed to borrow a chair in order to play this year. The team has provided an incredible peer support and an opportunity for competitive playing for new players, players that haven't played for several years, and our veteran players. The team has been life-changing for the players as they make these connections both locally and nationally with others who live with permanent lower limb disabilities.



Three women on the VAIL team also play on an all women's team that is headed to nationals, and we are excited to support them as well.

We are also celebrating our senior this year, Brian Rehm, by hosting an exhibition game at his high school Madison County on April 16 from 6 to 8 PM playing against their high school basketball boys and girls team and faculty members.

April 16, also marks the great community give where all funds raised will be used to support our wheelchair basketball team.

Although the team will not be competing at the National Wheelchair Basketball Association's National Championship Tournament in Richmond, two players from the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals have joined up with two players from the Charlottesville Cardinals to compete in the first annual 3 on 3 tournament to be held on April 10th from 6 to 9 PM at the Henrico Sports and Events Center. The NWBA National Championship will follow from April 11th-13th at the same location.

We are always looking for new players and have acquired two brand new sports chairs for individuals new to the sport to try out! If you are interested joining the team or in coming to play at a practice, please reach out to [tim@govail.org](mailto:tim@govail.org) for more information and to ensure we have an extra chair ready for you to participate. We look forward to a successful off season and go Cardinals!



Pictured Bridgewater Men's Basketball Team



## 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. VAIL's Outdoor Adaptive Recreation Group kicked off the new year with the first OAR Picture Party on January 18th. OAR participants brought their family and friends to the Lexington YMCA to share some food while going through pictures and videos from OAR's 2024 activities!



Since then, the group has enjoyed a hot tub party at the Staunton YMCA, skiing at Wintergreen Resort, a meet-up at Jordan's Point Park in Lexington for participants to share their adaptive equipment with the rest of the group! Upcoming events include a visit to Crabtree Falls on April 11th, the Lexington Road and River Relay on May 3rd, and a trip to the Lake of the Woods Adaptive Watersports annual Wounded Veteran's Watersports event on June 14th. Many of the activities for the year are being funded through the Sentara Cares and Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation grants as well as a grant awarded to VAIL by Augusta Health.



If interested in participating in any event or gathering more information about the group, please reach out to Teri Bsullak at [tbsullak@yahoo.com](mailto:tbsullak@yahoo.com)!



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 six dedicated youths enrolled this 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 next year. Are you interested in helping to shape the future leaders?

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

# Support VAIL during the 8th Annual Great Community Give



**Mark your calendars for April 16, 2025**, and help VAIL continue empowering individuals with disabilities in our community! Since 2018, the Great Community Give has raised over \$9.2 million for nonprofits in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. From 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., your donation will directly support VAIL's Harrisonburg Cardinals Wheelchair Basketball team. Funds raised will be used to fund equipment, travel, and repair costs for the team.

We send a very special thank you to The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham for hosting this event this year! Please look on VAIL's social media platforms for highlights throughout the day. Join us in making a difference—**every gift counts!**



Harrisonburg-Massanutton Rotary's

## TRIVIA NIGHT

**Friday, April 25th**  
**6-9 PM**

Hosted by  
**THE TERRACE AT ROCKTOWN**  
2061F Evelyn Byrd Ave  
Harrisonburg

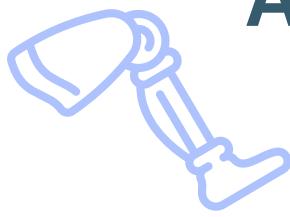
**Table  
Sponsorship  
Opportunities:**  
\$400 - Table for up  
to 8 guests

**Prize winner awarded at the  
end of each round**

**Smart phone needed to read a  
QR code to activate the game**

**All proceeds benefit  
the VAIL Harrisonburg  
Cardinals wheelchair  
basketball team**

# Assistive Technology Funding



## Friends of Man®

Friends of Man is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance to individuals facing hardship. Their support covers essential needs such as medical equipment, mobility aids, prosthetics, hearing aids, and other necessary expenses that insurance may not cover. They also assist with home modifications for accessibility, specialized equipment for children, and even transportation-related needs like car repairs in specific situations.

Unlike many assistance programs, Friends of Man operates through referrals from professionals such as social workers, case managers, and healthcare providers. Applicants cannot apply directly but must be recommended by a referring professional who can verify the need. Once approved, payments are made directly to vendors or service providers to ensure proper use of funds.

To qualify, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Have a referring professional submit a Friends of Man application on their behalf
- ✓ Have a household income of 300% or less of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- ✓ Have been in a stable living environment for at least three months (not homeless or in institutional care)
- ✓ Provide a U.S. government-issued ID (Social Security number, ITIN, protected status, or other official documentation). If unavailable, documented proof of stable residency or employment for one year may be considered.



If you or someone you know is in need of support, visit [FriendsOfMan.org](http://FriendsOfMan.org) to learn more about eligibility, application guidelines, and how professionals can submit referrals. Please contact Tessa Atkins at [tessa@govail.org](mailto:tessa@govail.org)!



## Affordable Loans for Assistive Technology

The Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority (ATLFA) program provides low-interest loans to help individuals with disabilities in Virginia acquire assistive technology and mobility-related equipment. These loans can be used for items such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, accessible vehicles, home modifications, and other essential tools that improve independence and quality of life. ATLFA offers flexible loan terms and works to ensure that financial barriers don't prevent individuals from accessing the assistive technology they need. To learn more about eligibility and how to apply, visit [ATLFA.org](http://ATLFA.org) or call 540-433-6513.



# Virginia Housing Modification Programs

Virginia Housing offers grants up to \$8,000 to foster independence and provide assistance to those in need of barrier-free housing.

Typical modifications include, but are not limited to:

- Installing ramps & chairlifts
- Modifying bathrooms and kitchens
- Widening of doorways and sidewalks
- Installing remote entry devices

All funds are available on a first-come-first-served basis.



## Owner-Occupied Modification

Virginia Housing's Owner-Occupied Modification Grant makes funding available to assist with modifications to homes to make them accessible. 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.

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.

## 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.



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 are available to renters or home owners and can be used to make a home wheelchair accessible, to install grab bars in a bathroom, or to make other modifications recommended by the VA that help eligible recipients become independent.

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

Contact Shawn Abercrombie at [shawn@govail.org](mailto:shawn@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 served 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 to your staff member with questions.



## Transportation Forum

Are you interested in the future of transportation in planning district six? Join us for an engaging Transportation Forum where we'll discuss key issues, challenges, and opportunities for improving mobility in our community.

Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2025

Time: 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: Harrisonburg Library, Main Room



This is your chance to share your thoughts, hear from local leaders, and be part of the conversation on how we can enhance transportation options in our area. Whether you're a commuter, cyclist, transit rider, or simply passionate about the topic, we welcome your input!

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Tessa Atkins at 540-534-2757 or [tessa@govail.org](mailto:tessa@govail.org). We look forward to seeing you there!



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES



## Free Webinar on Work & Benefits

Do you have a child with a disability?  
Learn how they can work and still keep their Social Security  
and Medicaid benefits!

Real Work for Real Pay – A Webinar for Parents

Choose ONE session to attend:

April 16, 2025 | 6:00 – 7:30 PM → [tinyurl.com/2kyesw9x](https://tinyurl.com/2kyesw9x)

May 1, 2025 | 6:00 – 7:30 PM → [tinyurl.com/s5n5d7pf](https://tinyurl.com/s5n5d7pf)



# Spotlight

We're excited to highlight Doug Galica, the President of VAIL's Board of Directors and team member of the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals, who is using his social media platform to raise awareness and share insights about life with a wheelchair.

Doug received a T11/12 complete spinal cord injury at the age of 13. Through his Facebook page, Doug offers a unique perspective on accessibility, mobility, and daily challenges, while celebrating the joys and overcoming obstacles. His posts inspire and connect with a wider community, making a difference one story at a time.

Be sure to check it out and join the conversation!

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



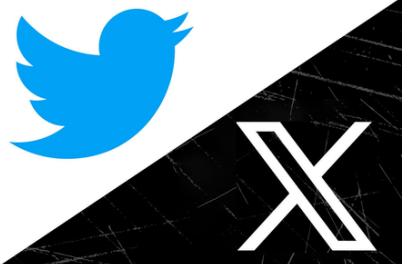
## VAIL Launches New X Account

We are thrilled to announce that VAIL has officially launched a new X account, formerly known as twitter! As we continue to innovate and grow, this new social media platform will provide us with an exciting opportunity to engage with our community, share updates, and connect with individuals who share our passion. By following our new X account, you'll get access to the latest VAIL news, event updates, behind-the-scenes content, and much more. Our team is committed to keeping you informed with fresh, engaging content that brings the best of VAIL right to your fingertips.

### Why Follow Our X Account?

1. Stay up-to-date with the latest news and events happening in VAIL.
2. Get exclusive access to behind-the-scenes moments from our team.
3. Engage directly with us and the VAIL community.
4. Share your experiences and connect with other enthusiasts.

Join us on X and be part of the conversation as we continue to grow, innovate, and inspire. Follow us today at @CILVAIL and let's make this journey together!



# GET HELP FILING YOUR TAXES

**MyFreeTaxes** helps people who earn \$84,000 or less file their federal and state taxes for free while getting the assistance they need. File your own taxes in 1-2 hours using this online self-preparation software. Go to [MyFreeTaxes.com](http://MyFreeTaxes.com)

**Augusta Co. Government Center**  
Call 540-416-1399

**Bridgewater Retirement Community**  
Call 540-908-9294

**James Madison University VITA**  
Call 540-568-7776 or [vita@jmu.edu](mailto:vita@jmu.edu)

**Rockingham Co. Government Administration Building**  
Call 540-212-9835

At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can.  
– Frida Kahlo

## Schedule of Events

April 25th	Rotary Trivia Night
May 1st	Transportation Form
May 9th	VAIL Yard Sale
May 23rd	Rain Date for VAIL Yard Sale
May 26th	VAIL Closed for Memorial Day
May 27th	Board Meeting
June 19th	VAIL Closed for Juneteenth
July 4th	VAIL Closed for Independence Day

## Ways to Support VAIL

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



PAYPAL



venmo

### Contact VAIL at:

3210 Peoples Drive Suite 220  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

(540) 433-6513	Voice
1-888-242-VAIL	Toll-free
711	VA Relay
(540) 433-6313	Fax
<a href="mailto:vail@govail.org">vail@govail.org</a>	Email
<a href="http://www.govail.org">www.govail.org</a>	Website

Find us on 

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

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



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



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



Follow Us on  
X/Twitter

<https://x.com/CILVAILt>

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Harrisburg, VA  
Permit No. 88

Valley Associates for  
Independent Living, Inc.  
3210 Peoples Drive Suite 220  
Harrisburg, VA 22801

