



# PreVAIL

Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc.

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



Americans with Disabilities Act

## Celebrating 35 Years of the ADA: VAIL's Impact

As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we're proud to reflect on the incredible progress made—and the meaningful role that VAIL (Valley Associates for Independent Living) has played in advancing access and inclusion in our region.

### Technical Assistance & Expertise

For years, VAIL has been a trusted partner and expert resource in our community. We've provided technical assistance to building officials, inspectors, and architects—helping them resolve complex accessibility challenges and ensure that both new and existing structures meet ADA standards. Our work has helped make physical environments more accessible and welcoming for all.

### Transportation Advocacy

Through persistent advocacy and educational outreach, VAIL has contributed to the expansion of bus routes in our region. These improvements have strengthened public transportation systems, making them more accessible and responsive to individuals with disabilities.

### Downtown Accessibility & Business Partnerships

VAIL continues to play an integral role in downtown streetscape planning, working closely with city planners and stakeholders to prioritize universal design. We partnered with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance to conduct ADA-focused training, increasing awareness and access for customers with disabilities across the board.

### Regional Leadership

Serving a 10-locality area, VAIL is recognized as a critical resource for resolving ADA concerns. Whether it's removing physical barriers, navigating compliance issues, or educating community members, we are committed to helping create equitable and accessible solutions.

### Looking Ahead

While the ADA has laid the foundation for access and civil rights, the work is far from over. VAIL remains committed to building a more accessible future—through advocacy, education, and direct support that empowers individuals and communities alike. *Here's to the next 35 years of progress, partnership, and inclusion!*

In this issue	
35th ADA Anniversary	1
Transportation Forums; OAR	2
VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals; Wish List	3
Luncheon; Welcome	4
GCG Update; Parent Youth Empowerment Summit	5
Home Modifications	6
PEATC Workshops	7

# Transportation Forums



This year, VAIL hosted Transportation Accessibility Forums focused on improving mobility options for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and others facing transportation barriers in our region. These forums provide a space for community members to share personal experiences, ask questions, and collaborate with local transportation providers and decision-makers. Topics have included:

- Accessibility on public transit
- Challenges in rural transportation
- Scheduling and availability of paratransit services
- Ideas for improving transportation with public works

We're proud to be part of these vital conversations and look forward to turning your input into actionable solutions. We invite interested individuals to email [tessa@govail.org](mailto:tessa@govail.org).

## Outdoor Adaptive Recreation (OAR)

VAIL's Outdoor Adaptive Recreation program for people with mobility impairments has been finding all kinds of ways to beat the heat this summer! We had a team of people with disabilities in the Lexington Road and River Relay Race in May. The race includes a 3.5 mile run (our racer did it in his manual wheelchair!), a 9-mile very hilly bicycle route (our racer did it with his handcycle!), a 2-mile kayak section down the Maury River, and a final 1-mile trail run (our runner did it in a power wheelchair)! We had a blast AND came in first in our category! Later in May, a group went to the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. We listened to drumming from Africa, watched a blacksmith from Ireland, saw an English home from the 1700s, went into a German barn, and tons more! In June, OAR went waterskiing, tubing, kayaking, and went for a pontoon boat ride at the Lake of the Woods Adaptive Watersports event near Fredericksburg. One of the group got to waterski 10 times! Also in June, the OAR group had a picnic at Glen Maury Park in Buena Vista. We had wheelchair races, played wheelchair tennis, and danced in our wheelchairs! Also on the schedule is whitewater rafting in Richmond, surfing and more in Virginia Beach, attending the Rockbridge Community Festival in Lexington, and listening to a live band at Boxerwood's Music in the Garden in Lexington.

To learn more, please contact Terri Bsullak at [tbsullak@yahoo.com](mailto:tbsullak@yahoo.com) or 540-460-3473.



VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals are gearing up for a new season with a new logo! Thank you to our own player, Ana Jermstad, for her design of the new VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals logo! Does the cardinal look familiar? Hint...it's modeled (literally) after one of our players...can you identify the player? We are excited about this new logo.



The season will kick off with a bang in October. The Cardinals will be hosting an exhibition tournament against community leaders from the community on the 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8 PM at Horizons Edge! This event is a great way to get introduced to the sport and cheer on our players and see your community leaders in action. Coach Anthony Streiff will take the mic and engage with the crowd and it's a great time for all.

November 8-9, 2025 the Cardinals will host the VAIL Invitational. This annual tournament, includes three other wheelchair basketball teams from around the state and pits them against one another over two days of highly competitive games.

Like us on [Facebook](#) to keep up with us and learn about games we may have that are close by. Our focus continues to be “on player development and getting better” says Ian Balutis who is entering his second year with the team. It is clear that the Cardinals are looking forward to an exciting season both on the court and in the community.



## wishlist

A quick and easy way to support VAIL is by donating needed items. Some of these items you may already have in your home. Others you can purchase at a discount at places like the Green Valley Bookfair or Ollie's.

- Magazines
- Laminator
- Adult Coloring Books
- Word Searches
- Crossword Puzzles
- Thin tipped marker sets
- Self-adhesive Velcro dots

# Join Us

VAIL invites you to join us at the annual luncheon with community leaders. Individuals with disabilities from around Planning District Six will share their experiences, successes, and challenges and will focus on topics that pertain to making our vibrant community accessible to all.

Please come to connect and meet with your leaders.

September 11, 2025

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church  
17 Court Square,  
Harrisonburg.



# Welcome



My name is Liz Nixon; I am the new Community Living Specialist at VAIL. I went to college for social work and then puttered around in the school systems working in special education and spent some time working in hospice. I started working here because I love what VAIL stands for - that everyone can live an independent life and choose their own path without letting society hold them back. I, myself, have an invisible disability that I always tried to ignore because it appeared to interfere with my ability to succeed. Now, I feel like I can fully embrace it and use it as an asset in my every day life. (Ahem, excuse the soap box.) When I'm not working hard at VAIL I enjoy spending time with my two cats, my roommate, and my family. I am also a big reader and love playing D&D with my friends. I am so excited to now be a part of the VAIL family.

VAIL has enjoyed having Ian Balutis join us for the summer as the Adaptive Sports Coordinator. His focus has been on recruitment and support for this program, primarily concentrating on the wheelchair basketball team. Ian was a first year player with the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals team last year and is looking forward to another great season and his senior year at James Madison University, where he is majoring in communications.





## The Great Community Give

VAIL was thrilled to take part in the 2025 Great Community Give, a one-day charitable giving event hosted by The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Thanks to your incredible generosity, nearly \$3,400 was raised for the VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to The Community Foundation for organizing this impactful event, which raised an outstanding \$2.2 million for 147 local nonprofits. And to everyone who donated and cheered us on—thank you for helping us continue our mission and support our community!

## Did You Know?

Have you heard the saying "One man's junk is another man's treasure"? Well, that's actually true! Did you know you can donate your used toner and ink cartridges to VAIL and we can use those in trade for supplies from Staples? If you would like to donate your old ink or toner cartridges, contact [inger@govail.org](mailto:inger@govail.org).

# PYE 2025

Saturday, September 6th

GREAT WOLF LODGE

Williamsburg, VA



FIRST-TIME REGISTRATION  
NOW OPEN!



## 2025 Parent Youth Empowerment Summit

PEATC is pleased to announce the 2025 Parent Youth Empowerment Summit, taking place on Saturday, September 6, 2025, at Great Wolf Lodge. This year's theme is "A World of Opportunities."

Registration is now open for first-time attendees! Returning participants may register starting July 22, if space is still available. This free event is for high school students with IEPs and their parents or caregivers. To learn more and register, visit: [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org)

# 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!

## Schedule of Events

Sept. 11th	Community Leaders Luncheon
Sept. 29th	Board of Directors meeting
Oct. 13th	VAIL Closed
Oct. 16th	Cardinals Exhibition Game
Nov. 4th	VAIL Closed
Nov. 8-9th	VAIL Invitational
Nov. 11th	VAIL Closed
Nov. 26-28th	VAIL Closed
Nov. 25th	Board of Directors meeting

Special Education Workshop Series

# FALL INTO KNOWLEDGE

Turn over a new leaf in understanding special education.

**August 20** - From Referral to Eligibility

**September 3** - Anatomy of an IEP

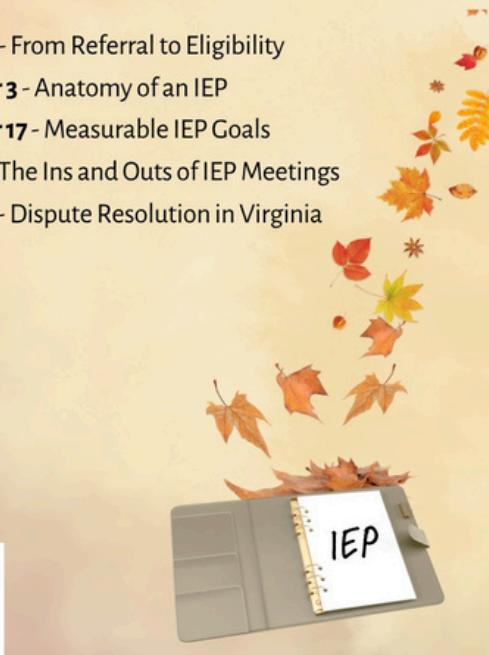
**September 17** - Measurable IEP Goals

**October 1** - The Ins and Outs of IEP Meetings

**October 15** - Dispute Resolution in Virginia

**VIA ZOOM**

Wednesdays  
6:30 pm  
1 to 1.5 hours



**REGISTER:** [tinyurl.com/y2b6zaxv](https://tinyurl.com/y2b6zaxv)



## 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
vail@govail.org	Email
www.govail.org	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/>



## VAIL Invitational

Wheelchair basketball tournament

**Nov. 8-9**

Sat. 10 AM - 4 PM

Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM

\*end times subject to change

Horizon's Edge Sports Campus

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

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

