



# PreVAIL

Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc.

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



## SEPTEMBER VAIL LUNCHEON HIGHLIGHTS & MEMORIES

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 11, 2025, in Harrisonburg, VA, and featured inspiring stories from individuals whose lives have been positively impacted by VAIL's services, highlighting the importance of community support in fostering independence for people with disabilities.

Attendees enjoyed a delicious meal, catered by Moe's, while networking, sharing ideas, and discussing ways to further advance VAIL's mission. The luncheon provided a meaningful opportunity to strengthen connections, celebrate achievements, and empower individuals with disabilities to live full, independent lives.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Community Leaders' Luncheon	1-3
Wheelchair Basketball Exhibition Game and Tournament	4
OAR; Wishlist	5
Home Modifications	6
Schedule; 12 <sup>th</sup> Annual Arctic Dip	7

We extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended, contributed, and supported this event—your involvement makes a real difference in our community. Here's a look at some of the highlights from our event.

“

I've heard it said that only 2% of people addicted to meth ever stay clean. Two percent.

Today, I stand before you as part of that 2%. Not because it was easy. Not because the road was straight. But because of the support of the agencies represented in this room, because of VAIL's unending belief in me, and because I refused to give up.

”



"Instead, I didn't get to know about VAIL until I reached out to the adaptive recreation coordinator, though I thought he was just a basketball player. I first attended wheelchair basketball practice with the Harrisonburg Cardinals in my junior year. It was then that I realized how crucial VAIL was to the team. VAIL enabled the team to play in tournaments in Richmond and near Baltimore. They even held their own VAIL Invitational and worked with Horizon's Edge to secure a reserved place to practice every week. I am in my senior year of school now, and I still have a lot to learn. But it's because of VAIL that I'm able to engage with the sport that I love again. It takes me 11 minutes to drive to practice every Thursday. It starts at 6, but I make sure to get there extra early so I have more time to practice, and see my teammates. It's because of VAIL that I have a community of people in a similar situation to me, a group of people who I can relate to after pushing between classes full of people who will never get the hardest parts of my life."



"I also want to say to employers for whom transportation is part of the job requirement, that it is a challenge that is able to be overcome, but it takes a commitment to providing those accommodations. When I am unable to utilize Harrisonburg Transit, either due to scheduling or due to needing to go out into the county, VAIL provides a driver for me to ensure that I can continue to perform my job. I am grateful for an employer that embraces hiring individuals with disabilities, thinking creatively, and working to find solutions."

"Andrea from VAIL by my side, I was able to do all the other things needed to build a life. She advocated for me and helped me secure a housing voucher through the Housing Authority and today, I live in my own townhouse with my son. For the past year, I have maintained that home independently. A generous donor provided me with furniture, and VAIL gathered items to help me rebuild what I had lost. Andrea helped me negotiate with my landlord, set up my utilities, get settled in my home, and even connected me with Way to Go so I could get a reliable car. I worked my way up to shift lead, and now I am an assistant manager. I am proud to say that I am no longer on food stamps. I also completed the Peer Recovery Certification program through VCU. Once I finish my 500 hours and pass my state boards, I will be a certified Peer Recovery Specialist—helping others find the hope and healing that I have found."





"Eighteen years ago, my life changed forever. My daughter was just 27 years old when she suffered a heart attack and has been in a semi-comatose condition ever since. At that time, the only nursing home able to take her was three hours away, one way. Every weekend I drove those long hours, taking her young sons with me, so they could spend time with their mom.

After about a year, she was moved closer, to a facility 40 minutes away. But what I found there was heartbreaking—my daughter left unkept, often soaked in urine, not receiving the care she deserved. During that time, I was raising her boys, visiting her daily, and doing what the nursing home should have been doing.

That's when I met Cathy from Valley Associates for Independent Living, or VAIL. She told me there was another way—that through Medicaid community-based services, my daughter could come home. And with VAIL's help, that's exactly what we did. They guided me through home modifications, taught me the consumer-directed model of care, and stood with me as I took on the challenges of finding caregivers willing to come to rural Rockingham County for just nine dollars an hour at the time.

The work hasn't been easy. My daughter requires repositioning every 15 to 30 minutes to prevent pressure sores. She needs suctioning because she cannot blow her nose. She must be changed, spoken to, and treated with dignity—because she is still here, still present, still my daughter.

But at home, she has been able to watch her sons grow up. I'll never forget an article in the paper where one of them said he tells her about his ball games and plays for her. She has been part of her community for 17 years now—and during that time, she has had no hospitalizations. That was never true when she was in a nursing home.

What I want to share with you today is this: I am tired. Not tired of loving her or arranging care, but tired of fighting. Fighting managed care companies that cut her hours—hours she clearly needs. Right now, they've cut her to 45 and a half hours a week, when it is undeniable she requires 24-hour care. Adult daycare was even suggested once—but they are not equipped to handle her needs. That told me the managed care company has no idea what her reality is.

This is where VAIL has stepped in. When I was too exhausted to fight, they fought with me and for me. They helped me win back the hours once before. And now, as I face another appeal—this time at the state level—they are right beside me again.

Here's something to think about: Medicaid pays about \$98,000 a year for a nursing home. But if all my daughter's hours were fully restored at today's rate of \$13.88 an hour, the cost would be about \$50,000 a year—approximately half of a nursing home placement. And yet, community-based care remains an uphill battle.

I am deeply grateful to VAIL—for their knowledge, their compassion, and their determination to see my daughter as the person she is. They bring light and laughter even on the hardest days. I don't know how this current appeal will end, but I know VAIL will not stop fighting for us.

So to those of you in positions to make decisions about community-based care, I ask you to remember my daughter's story. Community life should be a real and viable option for everyone.

Thank you, and thank you to VAIL for your passion, your advocacy, and your heart."

It is with a heavy heart that we report the passing of this individual.



# Outdoor Adaptive Recreation (OAR)

## Outdoor Adaptive Recreation Spreads Joy

VAIL's Outdoor Adaptive Recreation program is for people with mobility impairments to get outside for fun, exercise, and socialization. In August, six of us who use wheelchairs joined hundreds of other people with disabilities in Virginia Beach for the Determined2Heal Adventurous Weekend. Thanks to a program called Swim Angelfish, some of us learned to swim for the first time. We also went bowling and waterskiing.

The OAR group also went to the Rockbridge Community Festival in Lexington and the VAIL Community Leaders Luncheon in Harrisonburg. We partnered with the Rockbridge Bird Club for a Bird Sit (instead of a Bird Walk) at Boxerwood Nature Center & Woodland Garden. The cold, rain & wind prevented us from going to Crabtree Falls in October, but we had a rousing game of cornhole instead! We're heading to Roanoke in November to go to an Open Gym for people with disabilities sponsored by Wheel Love.

Upcoming adventures include: downhill skiing with Wintergreen Adaptive Sports, the Adaptive Sports Festival sponsored by Sportable in Richmond, and horseback riding with Ride With Pride.

No matter what we do or where we go, there is always laughter, inspiration, excitement, and joy.

For more information contact Terri Bsullak, [tbsullak@yahoo.com](mailto:tbsullak@yahoo.com) or 540-460-3473.



## 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



# VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals

The VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals welcomed a number of local community leaders to our annual Exhibition Game. This event was sponsored by the Harrisonburg Massanutten Rotary Club, and we had a highly competitive night of wheelchair basketball. The VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals fought valiantly against up to 8 different opponents on the court at one time. The Cardinals leading at the half-switched scores with our community team, which led to an insurmountable self-imposed deficit for the Cardinals. Nonetheless it was a wonderful night of sharing wheelchair basketball with our local community and thank you to everyone who came out for such a wonderful turnout! Thank you to the Rockingham County Sheriff's Department, Harrisonburg Police Department, Harrisonburg Fire Department, Compass Behavioral Group, Burke & Herbert Bank, Harrisonburg Rotary Club, Rockingham Rotary Club, James River Equipment, Bridgewater College's Men's Basketball Team, Houff Corporation, North River Dentistry, Graves Light and Lenhardt, Harman Construction, Eddie Edwards Signs, Partners Excavating, Larson Wealth Management, RE/MAX Performance Realty, Nest Realty, and all the sponsors, spectators, and supporters behind the scenes. Thank you for your continued support year after year!



# 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.

Owner Occupancy is now closed and will reopen for new submissions on July 1st.

## 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.

Reopens January 5<sup>th</sup> to new applicants.



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.

Granting Freedom reopens January 5<sup>th</sup> to new applicants.

Applications for all of these programs must be submitted by a Virginia Housing-accepted agent.

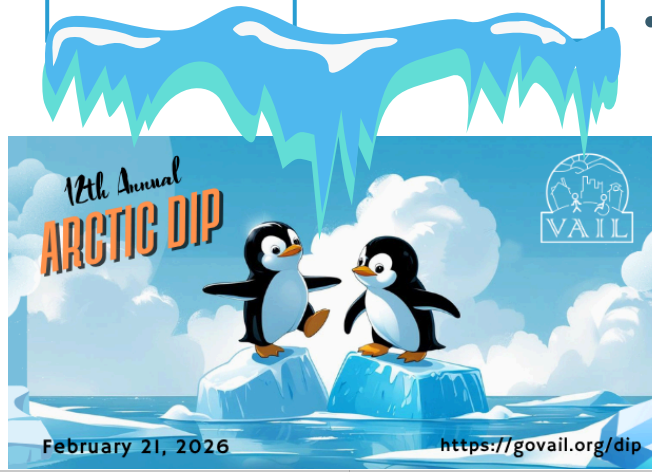
VAIL is a registered agent in Planning District 6.

Contact Shawn Abercrombie at [shawn@govail.org](mailto:shawn@govail.org) for more information!



## Schedule of Events

December 24th-26th	VAIL Closed
January 1st	Closed
January 19th	Closed
February 21st	12 <sup>th</sup> Annual VAIL Arctic Dip
February 16th	Closed



## Get Ready for the 12th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip!

We're thrilled to announce this year's 12th Annual VAIL Arctic Dip, our winter fundraiser that challenges the bravest among us to take a plunge into icy waters—all for an amazing cause!

Date: February 21st, 2026

Location: Sun Retreats Shenandoah Valley, 348 Lake Rd, Stuarts Draft, VA

💧 Time: Heats begin at 11:00 AM

This frosty event brings our community together for a day of chilly fun and fundraising, with all proceeds supporting VAIL's mission to empower individuals with disabilities to live independently. Whether you're taking the plunge or cheering from the sidelines, your participation makes a difference!

How to Join the Fun:

- Register: Sign up to #DoTheDip and gather pledges from friends and family.
- Spectate: Bundle up and cheer on the dippers with your warm support!
- Do Both: Take the plunge and enjoy the festivities!

We can't wait to see you there—ready to brave the cold or cheering on the bold—helping us make waves for a wonderful cause!

➡ Registration begins November 25th

For more information and to register, visit:

<https://govail.org/dip/>



## Ways to Support VAIL

Scan the QR Codes below to donate via PayPal or Venmo!



PayPal



venmo

### Contact VAIL at:

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Find us on 

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



[https://www.instagram.com/](https://www.instagram.com/valleyassociatesil/)

[valleyassociatesil/](https://www.instagram.com/valleyassociatesil/)

*Did You Know?*

Have you heard the saying “One man’s junk is another man’s treasurer”? 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).

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