

Headway is a support and advocacy agency for persons with brain injury, other disabilities and seniors.



HEADWAY SUPPORT GROUPS NOW OFFERED VIRTUALLY

To continue to provide support through the COVID-19 pandemic, Headway of WNY is pleased to offer virtual support groups. Combined Peer and Caregiver Support Groups meet twice a month on the **first and third Tuesday**.

These groups are primarily for those experiencing matters related to a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other cognitive disorder, as well as for their caregivers, families and friends who may be seeking support.

Upcoming 2021 Dates (unless updated via website and Facebook)

All of the following support meetings are from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

First Tuesday	Third Tuesday
January 5	January 19
February 2	February 16
March 2	March 16
April 6	April 20

For those who are interested, follow these instructions for access:

1. Send your name, phone number, email address and meeting date(s) you would like to attend to support@headwayofwny.org
2. Once we receive your email and request to join a meeting, further instructions will be emailed back to you for your virtual connection. By doing so, you will be entering a virtual room where you will be called in to a virtual meeting with a Headway staff member.
3. If you have questions, call 716.408.3120

Note: Participants will need Chrome Browser with Microsoft software or Safari with Apple software. If you are using an Apple Device (IPAD, Smart Phone or Apple Computer), you will need to use Safari 11 or greater. If you have Android or a Microsoft computer, your default browser must be Chrome or Firefox in order to make the connection. If your default browser is not set up as one of these, you will need to paste

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Headway is a donor designated agency of the United Way

501C3 Non-Profit Organization



FROM THE DIRECTOR

What a year 2020 has been. We have all had to adapt in many ways to get through the year and Headway of WNY has as well. Our Waiver Programs are fully functional with the change of doing intakes and most meetings through video conferencing. We now have two “rooms” that can be accessed by our website. These rooms are HIPAA compliant and are also being used in order to continue to offer our support groups and if needed one-on-one discussion. We have streamlined our phone system so now Headway has one number to access all of its services, which is 716.408.3120.

All of this is of course not ideal. People with cognitive issues have often increased communication challenges and the introduction of a personal separation has made interaction more difficult. On the other hand, we have found a way to move forward and are looking for more innovative ways to provide support.

It is our hope that 2021 has some answers to the current problems. We hope that everyone continues to stay safe, do not tire of the need to be cognizant of what we are facing, but to also know that we continue to be here for you to contact and work together to find options, as well as solutions to the unique issues of brain injury, cognitive problems and independence.

Ronald Fernández, RRDS, CRC, LMHC
Director

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the link <https://doxy.me/supportheadway> in an acceptable browser (as noted above).

There is no cost to attend and we look forward to connecting with you soon! Currently, the following two groups are combined; however, in 2021 they may once again, become separate meetings. Notice will be provided if and when this occurs.

Peer Support Group is for people who have sustained a mild to moderate brain injury and are having difficulty accepting the losses accompanying such a life-changing event. This group provides a place to find mutual support and encouragement. By sharing similar experiences, group members may overcome isolation, as well as exchange information and resources. The group provides an environment to release the many different emotions brought on as a result of a brain injury. These meetings are confidential, supportive and nonjudgmental. The group will promote acceptance and healing, as well as help participants cope with changes in their life.

Caregivers Support Group is for people and families who provide support and caregiving to someone who has a brain injury. Members will participate and the demands of caregiving and exchange information on practical resources. This group will provide healthy problem-solving techniques, ideas for living with the challenges of caregiving and find strengths. The many emotions and feelings that arise from such giving will be explored within the group.



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The mission of **Headway of WNY, Inc.** is to ensure that individuals in WNY with brain injuries, other disabilities and seniors have access to advocacy, resources and support systems to enable them to live as independently as possible. We seek to educate the broader community about the causes, consequences and means of prevention of brain injury.

RECAP OF HEADWAY OF WNY VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

On Wednesday, December 16, Headway of WNY held its first online Annual/Advisory Council Meeting via Microsoft Teams. Here's an overview:

Meeting Attendance: Twenty-one people joined the meeting through a virtual invitation sent out prior to the date. It was good to have so many come together for this meeting. Current advisory council members, as well as select People Inc. and Headway staff members and public members were in attendance.

Welcome: Ron Fernandez, Headway director, greeted all. An overview of the Advisory Council role was provided. The role of the Advisory Council is to provide consumer and professional guidance to Headway of WNY and to advocate for Headway and its stakeholders to have increased access to resources and support systems in WNY. An invitation was extended to all meeting attendees, who are not current members of the Council, to consider joining. Those interested in joining are asked to contact Headway.

Headway During Pandemic: The past year and changes made due to pandemic, including new Doxy.me platform utilized to continue Waiver and support services, were discussed.

- TBI and NHTD Waivers, changes and status.
- Agency started out with one Doxy.me login site for all Waiver related assessments, as well as online support groups. Currently, an additional Doxy site added to allow for increased online meeting space. These sites are accessible via instructions and links on our website, headwayofwny.org. Additionally, Microsoft Teams is used throughout the agency for most other meetings.

Support Groups: Combined Peer and Caregiver Support Group meetings offered online the first and third Tuesday of each month. Please see Support Group article in this newsletter issue.

Veterans: Ron Fernandez provided an overview of Veterans initiatives, including four WNY in Support of Veterans symposiums offered to date:

2019: Bridging the Gaps II – A Discussion between Veterans and Community Providers

2018: Alternative Therapeutic Approaches for Successful Reintegration

2017: Signature Injury of Iraq and Afghanistan wars – Blast-induced TBI Assessment

2016: Bridging the Gaps – A Discussion between Veterans and Community Providers

Plans for a 2020 symposium were underway when the pandemic hit and meetings have not yet resumed. Discussions and strong areas of concern: homelessness, mental health and suicide prevention, employment and transportation. Symposium planning committee has expressed a desire to work with Community Veteran's Engagement Board on the next symposium. Headway is also interested in identifying a new AmeriCorps ETHOS program participant to help with veteran's initiatives in 2021.

Membership, Gifts and Development: Christine Melchiorre, Funding and Outreach specialist, gave an overview of Headway's current membership program, including numbers, levels and new brochure design. New online giving has been established, in conjunction with People Inc., and is currently available. With this new online feature, members and donors will have the ability to process their annual membership dues and gifts online, without the lag time and expense of postal mail and paper.

Plans are also underway for an online special fundraising event (auction/drawing) to occur early part of 2021. Some sponsors from our spring gala 2020 (canceled due to pandemic) have agreed to sponsor of this new online venture. Stay tuned for more information!

Advisory Council Meetings 2021: The next quarterly meeting will be held in the spring of 2021, date TBA.

Current and future Advisory Council members are asked to send most up-to-date email addresses to support@headwayofwny.org.

Massachusetts General Hospital researchers examined six patients using a specialized magnetic resonance technique and found that COVID-19 patients with neurological symptoms show some of the same metabolic disturbances in the brain as patients who have suffered oxygen deprivation from other causes.

The following article is from **The Harvard Gazette, Harvard University**: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/11/small-study-reveals-details-of-brain-damage-in-covid-19-patients/>

EARLY DETAILS OF BRAIN DAMAGE IN COVID-19 PATIENTS

Specialized scanning furthers understanding of the virus' potential effects on the brain

While it is primarily a respiratory disease, COVID-19 infection affects other organs, including the brain.

One of the first spectroscopic imaging-based studies of neurological injury in COVID-19 patients has been reported by researchers at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in the American Journal of Neuroradiology. Looking at six patients using a specialized magnetic resonance (MR) technique, they found that COVID-19 patients with neurological symptoms show some of the same metabolic disturbances in the brain as patients who have suffered oxygen deprivation (hypoxia) from other causes, but there are also notable differences.

It is thought that the disease's primary effect on the brain is through hypoxia, but few studies have documented the specific types of damage that distinguish COVID-19-related brain injury. Several thousand patients with COVID-19 have been seen at the MGH since the outbreak began early this year, and this study included findings from three of those patients.

The severity of neurological symptoms varies, ranging from one of the most well-known – a temporary loss of smell – to more severe symptoms such as dizziness, confusion, seizures, and stroke.

“We were interested in characterizing the biological underpinnings of some of these symptoms,” says Eva-Maria Ratai, an investigator in the Department of Radiology and senior author of the study. “Moving forward, we are also interested in understanding long-term lingering effects of COVID-19, including headaches, fatigue, and cognitive impairment. So-called ‘brain fog’ and other impairments that have been found to persist long after the acute phase,” adds Ratai, also an associate professor of radiology at Harvard Medical School. The researchers used 3 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS), a specialized type of scanning that is sometimes called a virtual biopsy. MRS can identify neurochemical abnormalities even when structural imaging findings are normal. COVID-19 patients' brains showed N-acetyl-aspartate (NAA) reduction, choline elevation, and myo-inositol elevation, similar to what is seen

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with these metabolites in other patients with white matter abnormalities (leukoencephalopathy) after hypoxia without COVID. One of the patients with COVID-19 who showed the most severe white matter damage (necrosis and cavitation) had particularly pronounced lactate elevation on MRS, which is another sign of brain damage from oxygen deprivation.

Two of the three COVID-19 patients were intubated in the intensive care unit at the time of imaging, which was conducted as part of their care. One had COVID-19-associated necrotizing leukoencephalopathy. Another had experienced a recent cardiac arrest and showed subtle white matter changes on structural MR. The third had no clear encephalopathy or recent cardiac arrest. The non-COVID control cases included one patient with white matter damage due to hypoxia from other causes (post-hypoxic leukoencephalopathy), one with sepsis-related white matter damage, and a normal, age-matched, healthy volunteer.

“A key question is whether it is just the decrease in oxygen to the brain that is causing these white matter changes or whether the virus is itself attacking the white matter,” says MGH neuroradiologist Otto Rapalino, who shares first authorship with Harvard-MGH postdoctoral research fellow Akila Weerasekera.

Compared to conventional structural MR imaging, “MRS can better characterize pathological processes, such as neuronal injury, inflammation, demyelination, and hypoxia,” adds Weerasekera. “Based on these findings, we believe it could be used as a disease and therapy monitoring tool.”

The research was supported by the James S. McDonnell Foundation, National Institutes of Health and National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

WELCOME HEADWAY OF WNY STAFF



Joyce O'Riley, RN, new nurse evaluator, brings many experiences to our team. Throughout her career, Joyce has carried many roles and titles, including: floor nursing, travel nursing, trauma ER, ICU units' experiences, case management, nursing coordinator, director of nursing, executive director, case management and nursing coordinator. She is a graduate of University of Buffalo with a RN BSN degree and is a certified case manager and a medical cannabis consultant. Joyce is a proud mother, grandmother and caretaker for her mom.



Jennifer Rydzynski, RN, new nurse evaluator, brings her nursing skills to our team, as a registered nurse for over 11 years. Jennifer graduated in 2009 from Niagara Community College with an associate's degree in Nursing. In 2006, she received LPN certification from Trocaire College. The majority of her nursing experience has been in hospice and palliative care, including acute inpatient care, home care case management and admissions.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE
MOVE FORWARD WITH HEADWAY

**Become a Member of
Headway of WNY
and get involved!
We need you to help
sustain our mission.**



The Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic at Buffalo State offers individually tailored assessment and treatment for persons with brain injuries due to trauma or stroke, weekly aphasia support group meetings, and an intensive aphasia therapy summer program.

Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic

1300 Elmwood Avenue • Caudell Hall 149
Buffalo, NY 14222 • (716) 878-3530

speech.buffalostate.edu/speech-language-hearing-clinic



NOW ACCEPTING RECIPIENTS FOR SENIOR COMPANION “PHONE CONNECTION”

The People Inc. Senior Companion Program is providing a “Phone Connection” for recipients who qualify and would benefit from making regular connections. This initiative serves as an alternative to providing in-home visits, which are limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is now enrolling recipients who are 55 or older and living in Erie County. They will receive the benefit of socialization with a friendly voice. Senior Companion volunteers will call recipients once a week and share any concerns with program staff, who then make referrals to family members or other resources. Registering for the program is free and easy. To enroll or to recommend an older adult whom you assist, **contact Alissa Yax at ayax@people-inc.org or 716.768.2381.**



PEOPLE INC. SENIOR LIVING APARTMENTS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Are you a veteran or know an older adult who would be eligible for an affordable senior apartment? People Inc. Senior Living manages 19 apartment locations throughout Western New York, helping older adults stay close to the community they love and to family members. Apartments are for independent seniors age 62 and over who are income-eligible. Two benefits of People Inc. Senior Living are affordable rent based on income and numerous safety features. As an added cost-savings, some utilities are included. Tenants are welcome to have one small pet. For an apartment application or for information about specific locations, including Amherst, Angola, Blasdell, Clarence, Grand Island, Lackawanna, Lockport (border of Amherst), South Buffalo, Springville and Wheatfield (border of North Tonawanda), **call 716.817.9090.**



NOW available: One-bedroom Tax Credit apartment unit at Academy Place Senior Apartments in Gowanda, managed by People Inc. The apartment building, ideal for older adults in the Southern Tier, is located at 1 School Street in Gowanda, NY. The HUD Section 202 Affordable Housing and NYS Tax Credit apartments provide housing for independent, older adults age 62 and up who meet income guidelines. Vouchers are accepted for Tax Credit units. **For more information, call 716.817.9090.**

AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS IN NORTH TONAWANDA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

As part of its Affordable Apartments, rental applications are being accepted for the new People Inc. Grant Street Apartments, offering one- and two-bedroom units. Located at 25 Grant Street in North Tonawanda, NY, the apartments are for people who are head of household and 18 years or older, who meet income eligibility. Amenities include: Kitchen with refrigerator, stove and dishwasher; utilities for water and garbage removal; on-site laundry facilities; safety features; air-conditioning and on-site management. Tenants may have one small pet. Rent subsidies and/or rental vouchers accepted. Some apartments are designed for people who have mobility and vision challenges or who are Deaf or hard of hearing. **For more information, email housing@people-inc.org or call 716.693.4249.**

