

# DISABILITY RIGHTS IN ACTION

*A Newsletter of the Center for Disability Rights, Inc. / Winter 2022*

## Sign Language Connection Joins CDR Family

The Center for Disability Rights, Inc. is excited to announce we expanded our Deaf Services with the purchase of Sign Language Connection (SLC) as of November 8, 2021.

CDR had a long affiliation with SLC, who provided interpreting services for decades to us. We admired SLC's previous owners - Nancy, Ray, and Ken - for their commitments to high quality interpreting services, and to improve communications access for Deaf individuals. SLC was not just a business; it had a mission. SLC's mission was to ensure that communication happens the first time, to honor the needs of those who request our services, and to encourage the advancement of interpreters to better meet those needs. We are honored to carry on their important legacy.

As part of that, we will be consolidating all our interpreting services under the SLC brand. We spent a year planning for this day, and want to thank Nancy, Ray, and Ken for all they have done for our community and placing their trust in us to carry the work forward. Nancy and Ray have both been in the interpreting world as teachers, advocates of access, and interpreters for over 40 years. We wish them the very best in their retirement.

Because we are a non-profit organization, CDR will be re-investing the surplus from our interpreting services into the Deaf Community. We will start by using those funds to expand the availability of our Deaf Blind Support Services.

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*Our new sign has been installed! We are thrilled for Sign Language Connection to join our team.*

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**Bruce E. Darling**  
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**Visit us on the web:**  
[www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org)

**Albany**  
**(518) 320-7100**

**Corning**  
**(607) 654-0030**

**Geneva**  
**(315) 789-1800**

**Rochester**  
**(585) 546-7510**

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## Dear Friends,

We recently expanded our commitment to providing high quality services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in Rochester, through the purchase of Sign Language Connection (SLC). CDR is excited to add SLC's community legacy to our family.

Many other things have been going on here at CDR. I invite you to catch up on our advocacy, and read about our featured staff member.

Please contact us to learn more about CDR and how you can get involved. Stay tuned for additional information and updates on our work.

*Center for Disability Rights works to ensure the full integration, independence and civil rights of people with disabilities and seniors in the community.*

*Bruce E. Darling*

## CDR's First Director of IT, Roger Strickland, has Retired

On January 13<sup>th</sup>, our long-time Director of Information Technology, Roger Strickland, retired. Roger was one of the longest serving employees at the Center for Disability Rights, having started working for us in April 2002. Roger would go on to lay the foundation for our technological infrastructure over the next two decades. Initially hired as a programmer, he spent most of his tenure as the Director.

Roger made a mid-career change to computer programming because of an acquired disability – specifically, a back injury. He completed a 40-week Technical Training program offered by VESID (now ACCES-VR), graduated at the top of his class, and then interned at DeCarollis Inc. In addition, he built upon this education by teaching himself additional programming skills from the internet.



*Roger Strickland as the Joker.*

As the Center for Disability Rights is both an Independent Living Center and a Fiscal Intermediary for the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance program, our technological infrastructure requires more than computers and email. Roger's specialty has been to create software programs that are tailored to our operational needs – products that would not be found on the shelves at Best Buy or Staples.

On a completely different wavelength, Roger is known around the office as our biggest fan of Halloween. He brought two Star Wars groups to our Accessible Trunk or Treat last fall, and stole the show dressed up as the Joker. We thank him for everything he has done for the Center for Disability Rights and for the disability community. We all wish him the very best in retirement!

## Support the Center for Disability Rights! Give the Gift of Freedom.

Your tax deductible donation ensures that our programs and services continue to be available to those we serve, every day.

You can fill out the Annual Giving card below and return by mail to the Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
497 State Street, Rochester, NY 14608.

Or go to our website at [www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org).

Payment options include links to Paypal and Network for Good.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Stay tuned for upcoming events. They will be announced on our webpage and on social media.



*This year, give a gift  
that lives on year-round.*

### Annual Giving

- ☐ YES! I want to support the independence of people with disabilities with my donation of:
- ☐ \$500   ☐ \$250   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$50   ☐ \$25
- ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I am enclosing a check payable to CDR.
- ☐ Pay by credit card
- ☐ Master Card   ☐ Visa   ☐ Amex   ☐ Discover
- Card Number \_\_\_\_\_
- Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_
- Signature \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Donate online at [www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org)

Center for Disability Rights is a  
registered not for profit Corporation.  
Donations are tax deductible.

## Governor Signs Bill After CDR-Led Campaign

Governor Hochul signed our bill! The Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities, now known as the Office of the Chief Disability Officer, will be responsible for the critical functions of ensuring that Disabled New Yorkers have access in state government, advising state policy makers - including the Governor - about our issues, and working to ensure that Disabled New Yorkers are not locked away in institutions.

Over the last ten months, CDR led the campaign to call out the ableist and exclusionary policies that left our community locked out of and disenfranchised from State Government.

In the process, we:

- Stayed on message in the midst of the Attorney General's important investigation and Governor Cuomo's resignation;
- Developed messaging specifically targeting then Lieutenant Governor Hochul and her inner circle during the transition period;
- Ensured that we were heard by the Executive Chamber despite competition from better-funded groups competing for access to the new Governor;
- Competed against well-resourced groups for media coverage in every market across the state;
- Created enough pressure that our bill was one of four bills that survived beyond December 31st - of those bills, ours was the only one that was signed.
- Adapted our tactics to circumvent barriers created by the pandemic;
- Grew our power by developing innovative partnerships outside of the Independent Living network;
- Leveraged our community's connections to various Democratic Committees and Hochul's campaign team;
- Got proclamations and resolutions introduced and passed at City Councils and County Legislatures;
- Wrote letters to the editor;
- Waged a social media campaign; and,
- Made sure four senior staffers in the Hochul administration each received over 400 emails letting them know the Governor needed to sign our bill.

For ten months we shaped the coverage about the Office of the Advocate. In the process, we cultivated significant media capital that we can reinvest to shape the narrative around future campaigns.

The campaign to reinstate the Office of the Advocate demonstrated when we seek out and embrace non-traditional partners and allies, focus on the commonalities that unite and leverage our personal and professional resources, we can build intersectional power that moves people and communities to action. This is a replicable blueprint for future victories.

This year's legislative cycle has only just begun. We still have important work to do at the state level. On the Federal level, we are continuing the fight to FREE OUR PEOPLE and address racial and other disparities in the provision of community based Long Term Services and Supports by working to pass the Latonya Reeves Freedom Act.



*Zach Garafalo, Manager of Government Affairs.*

### Contact Advocacy



**(585) 546-7510**

Ask for Advocacy!



**[advocacy@cdrnys.org](mailto:advocacy@cdrnys.org)**

Email Our Team!

**Get Involved  
With Us Today!**



## Sign Language Connection

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Currently, those critically needed services have no dedicated funding stream. We know we cannot meet every DeafBlind person's needs on our own. Our advocacy team – including Ayisha Salifu, the Deaf Systems Advocate – is implementing an advocacy plan to establish a permanent statewide funding stream for these services. In choosing to utilize SLC as part of CDR, people will not just receive high quality interpreting services, they will be helping support Deaf-Blind people living independently in the community.

It has been about three months since we acquired SLC. We welcomed several more freelance interpreters to our roster, as well as some new businesses. CDR is looking forward to watching the interpreting services agency grow in the years to come.



*Nancy Berlove and Ray Kenney. They, and Ken Baker, retired after many years of owning the Sign Language Connection.*



## Are you interested in getting involved with us?

**You can help by:**

- **Donating**
- **Volunteering at Events**

**You can join our:**

- **Advocacy Efforts**
- **Committees**

**Don't forget to like, follow, and share us on social media!**  
**Ask us how you can get involved!**

**We are not-for profit organizations working to keep people with disabilities living independently in the community, with help from services and support they may need.**

### Newsletter Accessibility:

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter in an alternate format, including:

- Braille
- Large print

**Contact Linda Taylor:**  
**[Ltaylor@cdrnys.org](mailto:Ltaylor@cdrnys.org)**

### Upcoming Board Meeting

February 17, 2022  
1:00pm  
497 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14608

**All board meetings will be conducted on Zoom, until further notice.**

497 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14608  
(585) 546-7510



/rochestercdr



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## ***PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM!***

CDR works for the full integration, independence, and civil rights of people with disabilities.

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### **Become a Member of CDR today!**

**Membership year 9/1 - 8/31. Minimum contribution \$5 per year.**

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Make your check payable to Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
Mail check, along with this completed membership form, to:

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
497 State Street  
Rochester, New York 14608



***\*All Donations are tax deductible.***