

# FOCUS



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# FOCUS

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**Cover photo: Dog Sledding at winter Camp Abilities-CABVI on Raquette Lake.**

Focus is a publication of the CABVI Public Relations Department.

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**Rudy D'Amico**  
President and CEO

The spring issue of FOCUS is here! 2016 was a great year and we have more to come in 2017!

Our Rehab team recently held another successful Winter Camp Abilities-CABVI and Central Industries is booming with production.

Employment of the blind and visually impaired continues to increase at our locations in Utica and Syracuse and we are incredibly fortunate and grateful for all who have supported us in our growth and community efforts.



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# CABVI earns 2016 employment growth award from NIB and announces Employees of the Year [by: Brian Coupe]



**Eric Grippe**



**Nedeljko Kukic**



**Dennis Mahoney**

CABVI was honored by National Industries for the Blind (NIB), the nation's largest employment resource for people who are blind, with the 2016 Employment Growth Award. The award recognizes CABVI's efforts to increase employment retention, growth and upward mobility for people who are blind.

"We are proud to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind in Central New York," said Dennis Webster, Senior Vice President of Production and Operations. "Our employees are talented and dedicated professionals, and we are delighted that they are being recognized as an example of the capabilities of people who are blind."

"It is an honor for me to recognize CABVI with an Employment Growth Award for 2016," said Kevin Lynch, President and CEO of NIB. "CABVI continues to lead the way in creating employment and high-growth career opportunities for people who are blind."

The honor of the award comes with the announcement of CABVI's Employees of the Year. Each year an employee is recognized for their talents and dedicated professionalism in their respective fields.

The 2017 recipient of the Peter Salmon award is Nedeljko Kukic. He is recognized for his outstanding service to CABVI, positive attitude, and likable by fellow peers and staff.

The recipient of this year's Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award is Eric Grippe. Eric came to CABVI in February of 2012 and has shown great leadership and growth. "Eric showed dedication and potential for upward mobility in the agency from his earliest days here at CABVI. We are proud to have him," said Steven Niermeyer, Director of Production.

The New York State Preferred Source Program (NYSPSP) Employee of the year is Dennis Mahoney. Dennis is a long time employee of CABVI and he has been with the agency for over 57 years.

"Dennis is an incredible employee who goes above the call of duty every day here at CABVI. He loves his job, his team, and has a humble work ethic both within our facility and out in the community. His outreach to the public in sharing knowledge about the blind and visually impaired is beyond measure," said Rudy D'Amico, President and CEO at CABVI.

About NIB – Since 1938, NIB has focused on enhancing the opportunities for economic and personal independence of people who are blind, primarily through creating, sustaining and improving employment. NIB and its network of associated nonprofit agencies are the nation's largest employer of people who are blind through the manufacture and provision of SKILCRAFT® and other products and services of the AbilityOne® Program.

## Mohawk Valley Braille Transcribers [by: Lukas Sunderlin]

The Mohawk Valley Braille Transcribers (MVBT) are a nonprofit organization dedicated to formatting all types of ordinary texts into Braille. Although the organization's primary focus is the transcription of textbooks for all levels of education, their work has also included church bulletins, restaurant menus, and other various materials. The mission of MVBT is to provide the proper and necessary reading materials for blind and visually impaired individuals, enabling them to interact with all types of literature and their environment successfully and independently.

Originally organized by Harriet Kaler in 1973, and officially becoming incorporated in 1992 as Mohawk Valley Braille Transcribers, Inc., the organization has been training individuals in the methods of Braille transcription in order to greater amplify their impact. Just in recent years, statistics show MVBT has produced over 50,000 pages of Braille texts, credited to the service of 10,200 volunteer hours. Due to this incredible

volunteer contribution, MVBT has been able to make an impact in shipping their products to over 26 states.

If interested in contributing to the cause, MVBT offers training classes in Literary Braille Transcribing, where individuals are taught the methods, rules, and regulations of the practice.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, contact:

Nancy Hester, Production Center Coordinator

Tel: (315) 797-2233

Fax: (315) 223-4512

E-Mail: [mvbt@cabvi.org](mailto:mvbt@cabvi.org)

Mailing address:

MVBT, Inc. c/o CABVI

507 Kent St.

Utica, NY 13501

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## Youth development through CABVI's Pre-Voc Program

[by: Brian Coupe]

When a child becomes a young adult entering high school, a parent may often be worried about what direction they will take. Will he or she make the right choices to become successful? Will they receive the proper guidance and knowledge from teachers and staff? This can be a frustrating time for parents, and it can be of greater concern if a child is visually impaired.

CABVI has offered a youth development program for many years, and this past year it was rebranded as the Youth Prevocational Training Program (YPTP). The program is sponsored by the New York State Commission for the Blind and is for students ages 11-18. YPTP is managed by Laura Yakey, CVRT/COMS and Rehabilitation Employment Supervisor at CABVI. Katlyn Baughman assists Laura as the Rehab Outreach and Employment Specialist.

Adult mentors monitor and consult the students during the spring and fall sessions of the program. Other CABVI employees volunteer their time to educate and assist in advising the students of possible career paths.



CABVI's Prevocational program participants pictured at winter Camp Abilities-CABVI.

YPTP exists to ensure the students are college and work ready.

The program is open to all counties that CABVI serves in and can provide assistive technology if needed.

## CABVI Focus Group [by: Lukas Sunderlin]

Dan Phillips, social worker at CABVI, has started a focus group for the blind and visually impaired employees here at CABVI.

When asked about his motivation for this project, Dan expressed his respect and regard for the workers of CABVI. "I want this group to be a voice for the employees here. I think it's really important to hear the different thoughts, perspectives, and ideas of the people from every part of the agency."

CABVI Insight, the name given to this group, works like this: the group meets once every other month (usually the last Wednesday of the month). Any who wish to attend can come and have an hour to voice any opinion, thought, or idea concerning the agency. From there, Dan will take the information discussed at the meeting and present it to the Executive Team of the agency. Finally, the Executive Team can then take this information and use it to help CABVI "better serve its mission."

As you can see, this method does a great job of creating top-to-bottom synergy throughout the whole agency. Like Phillips would hope, it allows for the voices of every corner of the agency to meet at a point where they can all be heard. It is highly important and beneficial to have all ideas, concerns, or any other noteworthy sentiments be explained in an environment where they can be properly acknowledged, accounted for, and further acted upon.

Hearing from these workers also provides a very logical approach to assisting the blind and visually impaired community. "The employees that attend the meetings are the kind of people we strive to help. It's great to have first hand input on how we can better do that," said Dan.

Essentially, by listening carefully to the thoughts of the blind and visually impaired employees, the group allows CABVI to directly cater to the needs of their primary beneficiaries.

However, the positive effects of this group are not solely geared towards the internal growth of the agency. Dan explains, "While our upcoming topic is going to be discussing adaptive sports and recreation,

we are also working with a local software programmer who is designing a program to aid in accessibility for blind and visually impaired individuals. By working with outside groups, we can help more than just our agency."

It is very clear that CABVI Insight is focused on helping as many people as possible. Additionally, they are looking for a few more members in order to help increase its functionality and to obtain more input. If you are interested in contributing, please feel free to contact Dan Phillips by email at [danielp@cabvi.org](mailto:danielp@cabvi.org).

Through a thoroughly collective contribution, CABVI Insight is set to make CABVI even more functional and comprehensive as possible.



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## Introduction to Assistive Technology Class [by: Jeffrey Berman]

During the first weeks of 2017, Jeff Berman, Assistive Technology Instructor, visited the Mid York library with Betsy Harvey-Minutti, Manager of Rehabilitation Clinical Services. They met up with the Library Director, a few librarians, an IT administrator, and a few other staff members to learn more about the available space to conduct a class on assistive technology and equipment for those who are blind or visually impaired.

The library staff was excited about the classes! Jeff will be teaching a four session course entitled "Introduction to Assistive Technology" which caters to older adults who still have some usable vision. Classes will be taught from 10am to 12pm every Monday from March 6 to March 27.

There will be a limit of 10 students.

This course will focus on the use of various screen magnifiers that can help people communicate, be

better organized, and get information using a Windows, Mac, Android, or iOS based device. All students will need to own at least one of these devices to participate.

There will also be a four session course entitled "Introduction to Assistive Technology" which caters to older adults who are blind. These four classes will be taught from 10am-12pm every Monday from May 1 to May 22. Like the previous course, there can only be a total of 10 students.

This course will focus on the use of various screen readers that can help people communicate, be better organized, and get information using a Windows, Mac, Android, or iOS based device. Again, all students will need to own at least one of these devices to participate.

If these courses prove to be successful, the goal is that they can be taught during the summer and fall as well.

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## New products soon to be available [by: Cindy Bloom]



### Winter Wash – Neutral Floor Cleaner, IMUS "Greening The Cleaning"®

Greening The Cleaning® Winter Wash Neutral Floor Cleaner concentrate is a neutral floor cleaner formulated to revitalize your floor finish by demineralizing salt deposits on VCT, marble and stone floors. Winter Wash Neutral Floor Cleaner also works well as a carpet extraction cleaner to remove white salt deposits in your carpeted areas. This product is formulated using naturally derived ingredients that help minimize the hazards normally associated with traditional cleaners.



### Chilly Grip® Insulated Palm Coated Gloves

The Chilly Grip Insulated Palm Coated Glove is a durable and long lasting navy blue knit wrist glove with a textured blue rubberized coating that delivers a superior grip. These insulated gloves feature an improved dense seamless napped acrylic liner designed for heat retention in cold environments. Palm coated gloves are ideal for landscaping, commercial freezer work, and industrial applications.



### Emergency Blanket

Our 100% polyester fleece blanket features a whip-stitched border and is machine brushed on both sides for softness. This blue blanket is individually vacuum packed in a poly bag to protect against moisture making it perfect for emergency use. This large 54" x 72" blanket is affordable and flame retardant in accordance with ASTM Method.

# CABVI's Volunteer Program [by: Paula Flisnik]

From the moment CABVI opened its doors in 1929, our volunteers were there every step of the way to ensure support for those who were blind and visually impaired.

The same is true today.

In 2016, 473 CABVI volunteers served 23,346 hours to assist those who are blind and visually impaired.

As the number of volunteers has grown so have the tasks. There are a vast number of opportunities and ever-changing assignments. Here are some examples of how you can help:

- Transportation. A quick drive to the grocery store or a medical appointment outside the local area.
- Clerical, Mailings, Rehabilitation Library assistance
- Preschool Vision Screener
- Adaptive Sports and Recreation Assistant
- Consumer Support: read mail, grocery shop, be a friend!
- Brailist through the Mohawk Valley Braille Transcribers
- Audio Taping
- Fund Raising and Events assistance
- Career Internships – college requirement. (CABVI has worked with the University of New England, Utica College, MVCC, Fordham University, and University of Buffalo.)
- High and Middle schools' curriculum requirements with volunteer assignments, training is provided.

CABVI is an agency that follows its mission, to assist people who are blind and visually impaired to reach their highest levels of independence.

"CABVI considers its volunteers as an integral component of the agency's organizational chart," said



Gina Klepadlo, long time CABVI volunteer works to complete a mailing campaign.

Paula Flisnik, Director of Community Relations.  
"We need your help."

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact Paula Flisnik, Director of Community Relations, at (315) 797-2233 or email [paulaf@cabvi.org](mailto:paulaf@cabvi.org)

You can also complete a volunteer application on CABVI's website [www.cabvi.org](http://www.cabvi.org)

Please consider lending your service! You can make an impact and touch the lives people in your community.

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# COVER STORY

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## 2017 Winter Camp Abilities-CABVI

[by: Brian Coupe] [Photography by: Lukas Sunderlin and Savannah Beaver]

More activities. More campers. More adventure!

Winter Camp Abilities-CABVI had a whole lot more for everyone to experience. New for this year was the arrival of dog sledding. Campers were able to sit down in the sleigh and take a brisk ride through the trails near camp! Our friends at Call of the Wild dog sledding generously wanted to share this experience with our campers and we are certainly thankful for it.

Camp Abilities-CABVI takes quite a bit of planning to ensure successful programs for winter and summer camp. Representatives from various departments at CABVI attend numerous meetings months in advance of each session. Meal ideas, interviewing and hiring counselors, adaptive sports and recreation events, hiking, sleeping arrangements, talent shows, social media posts, and so much more. "Our staff is very dedicated to the mission and want the very best for our campers," said Kathy Beaver, VP of Rehabilitation at CABVI and Camp Abilities-CABVI Administrator.

Day one is more often than not, the most hectic of days. Campers arrive from local Central New York towns and cities but also from hundreds and a hundreds of miles away. "We can assist in the travel needs of a camper from out of town or out of state," said Betsy Harvey-Minutti, Manager of Rehabilitation Clinical Services at CABVI.

The campers and counselors register and, if they're new, meet for the first time at CABVI headquarters. Returning campers are all smiles to see their friends from past camps and reminisce on highlights from previous outings during the bus ride up north for our first activities: Downhill skiing and snowshoeing at McCauley Mountain.

Day two this year featured what was sure to be a highlight and favorite: Dog Sled Rides. There was also

snowmobiling for those who wanted to hear the roar of an engine in contrast to enthusiastic barks.

We thank our volunteer snowmobilers made up of many CABVI council and foundation board members who wanted to share their love of winter sports and recreation with our campers. There was a little more relaxation later in the afternoon with some arts and crafts, snowman building, and team photos to take home to family and friends.

A nutritious breakfast was needed for the morning hike to Silver Beach on day three. Campers who participated in this hike were given a stylish commemorative and collectible button. A broomball tournament and talent show rounded out the activities.

The final day of camp involved packing up the multiple, retail store filling, amount of boxes and hardware into the travel vans and loading up for the trip back to Utica. Campers met the Utica College Pioneers Hockey team and their head coach, Gary Heenan, at the Utica Aud for some ice skating tips, hanging out, and shooting some goals.

We here at CABVI would like to thank all the parents, counselors, staff, and volunteers who make each camper feel even more special in our summer and winter camps. Summer Camp Abilities-CABVI 2017 will be here before we know it! For more information visit our website!

[www.cabvi.org](http://www.cabvi.org)









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## Paris and Normandy River Cruise with Ed Welsh

[by: Pamela Mustee]

August 2017, AAA Exclusive Vacations is offering a seven night, roundtrip Paris and Normandy river cruise on the SS Joie De Vivre. Scenic views of the Seine River, onboard dining, and offshore excursions are all part of this amazing adventure! The cruise is hosted by Ed Welsh, Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) board chair and WIBX AM 950's Auto talk host. Ed has been a longtime friend and advocate of CABVI.

The itinerary is full of numerous visits and exciting possibilities. Walking tours through seaside towns, refreshments and delicacies, or viewing the royal apartments of Versailles are only a sampling of what is possible each day. All meals and unlimited beverages are included onboard the ship along with Welcome and Farewell Gala dinners.

"I think one of the most attractive aspects of this trip is the safety and security it offers to our guests," explained Ed. "While on the cruise we have access to your AAA host as well as a team of concierges who will

ensure that you get the most value from your vacation experience. They will be able to provide assistance to all of our attendees and also let them know the ins and outs of Paris life.

You want to dine at a small bistro or visit an intimate coffee lounge on the river? We have you covered... we got a guy!" Ed continued.

For each cabin booking on the ship, CABVI will receive \$100. The cruise can be easily booked by calling 844-205-6226 or visiting [MyExclusiveVacations.com](http://MyExclusiveVacations.com).

"We are thrilled to be a partner of AAA Exclusive Vacations on this river cruise," said Rudy D'Amico, CABVI President and CEO. "Not only do guests get to enjoy a high-end luxury cruise along the river connecting Paris and Normandy, but you're giving back at the same time. It's really a great opportunity."

# Find us on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/CabviUtica](http://www.facebook.com/CabviUtica)

# Vehicles for Vision Invitational Car Show [by: Pamela Mustee]

The Vehicles for Vision Invitational Car Show will take place at the Yahnundasis Golf Club in New Hartford, NY Sunday, June 11, 2017.

Guests and car enthusiasts will begin the afternoon with an invitational show and cash bar cocktail hour. They will then have the opportunity to move inside where our guests will enjoy a live auction, dinner, and a short program.

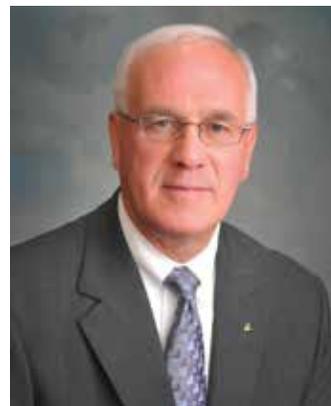
Chairing the event is local car show guru Barton Rasmus, who is also a long-time member of the C.A.B. Foundation and Board of Directors at CABVI.

The 2016 event was generously promoted by Apex Automotive Magazine, aerial drone shots by Upstate

Aerials, and photography by Jordan Polizzi.

Sponsors and donors will have prime brand advertising through support of this unique event.

For questions, please contact Mary Fletcher, Development and Public Relations Coordinator at (315) 797-2233 or email [maryf@cabvi.org](mailto:maryf@cabvi.org).



**Barton Rasmus**  
Event Chair

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## CABVI Couture Designer Draw [by: Pamela Mustee]



The Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) Designer Draw will be held on Thursday, May 4th from 5:30 to 7:30pm at the new 171 on Genesee Street in downtown Utica. The previous change in format, from a formal fashion show to a raffle, created a better environment for attendees to participate in food, fun, and activities during the two-hour time slot.

So, how does it work?

Participants may purchase raffle tickets at CABVI (cash only). "Just come down and see our staff and they can help you. One ticket is \$20 or you can buy three for \$50," explained Designer Draw chairperson, Anne D'Amico. "There really is something for everyone and your supporting a great cause."

2017 Designer Draw prizes: Louis Vuitton Neverfull GM, \$1,000 Visa Gift Card, and Chanel Pilot Sunglasses.

The event will include a purse pull again this year with numerous on display each with a surprise gift inside! The format worked incredibly well and the time passed almost in an instant. Last year's event raised \$15,990 to help support women's and children's programs at CABVI!

"Women's and children's programming is so important and the extra programs, like Camp Abilities-CABVI and Balance and Strength to name just two, are underfunded or not funded," said Kathy Beaver, VP of Rehabilitation Services. "We need fun and engaging events like the Designer Draw to bring awareness to these types of programs, while providing a comfortable atmosphere for everyone, men and women alike, to network and win some great items."

CABVI would like to thank all of the 2017 Designer Draw sponsors, committee members, and everyone who makes this event possible.

2017 Sponsors: Bank of Utica, Arlott Office Equipment, Nunn's Home Medical Equipment, UFCW Local 1, Caruso McLean Investment Advisors, Confidata, and RJ Dewar Services.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available. For more information please contact Mary Fletcher, Development and Public Relations Coordinator, at (315) 797-2233 or visit [www.cabvi.org](http://www.cabvi.org).



Anne D'Amico, Event Chair

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Mary Fletcher, Public Relations & Development Coordinator  
Pamela Mustee, Director of Public Relations and Events

## Holiday Appeal Does It Again [by: Steve Gannon]

Hundreds of generous donors made CABVI's 2016 Holiday Appeal one of the most successful public fundraising efforts in the agency's history. Contributions amounted to \$133,482 to support services for people who are blind or visually impaired in Central New York.

Former CABVI Board Chair Charles A. Gaetano signed on as Honorary Chairman last year. "This agency continues to hold a special place in my heart."

"We owe Charlie a great deal of thanks," said CABVI President and CEO Rudy D'Amico.

"He's given generously to CABVI through the years. He volunteered to chair the Holiday Appeal last year and, by any definition, it was a great success."

All CABVI fundraising efforts combined broke records last year reaching \$1.27 million. The total includes revenue from Dark Dining, CABVI Couture, a number of grant sources and Legacy Gifts from the estates of Frances L. Allen, Hilda Eck, Joseph Bovalino and the Arlotto Family Fund.

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## Proper labeling can be a lifesaver [by: Jackie Waters, guest writer]

Vision loss is closely associated with aging, and aging is associated with an increase in medications. The chance that a person with visual impairment is going to require multiple medications is also increased. But medicine can be confusing, even to those with full sight.

Technology exists to help this very problem, as Tammy Worth of Pharmacy Today explains.

"One possibility is offering Braille or large-print labels on medication containers. Electronic equipment is also available. Digital recorders attached to a container provide a voice recording of the label information when a patient presses a button. Radio frequency identification (RFID) tags on containers announce the information on the container when the device is placed above it. Computers or other electronic devices can be used if a pharmacist encodes the drug container label for the patient," she writes.

But often times this technology is not readily accessible. There are some easy and inexpensive ways to help someone with a visual impairment keep track of their meds. Tactile labeling can help. If a patient knows that a certain medication has two raised bumps, or two bands around the bottle, it makes it easier. For those with less severe visual impairment, color coding with high-contrast tape can help. Worth also suggests placing medicines in alphabetical order and always returning them to the proper spot on the shelf or drawer. Pill organizers can also be of assistance, as long as they have larger lettering and/or are color coordinated.

Medications are the only chemicals that a person with vision loss may come into contact with. If they are doing any cleaning, they may have to use any number of products from bleach to ammonia.

Cleaning supplies tend to come in containers that all look and feel the same. The chances of a mix-up are more than fair. In order to prevent this, it is suggested that dangerous chemicals be placed in their own, more distinct containers. Following the rules for proper labeling in general, we know that visually impaired people respond well to brighter colors and contrast – a bright green container with large, contrasting lettering for bleach and a bright red container for another chemical and so on. Simply repackage and/or relabel potentially harmful materials and ALWAYS store them separately.

Another solid tip for dealing with cleaning chemicals is to always spray the rag/cloth first, and if possible even buy supplies that are pre-soaked in cleaner. It can be hard to tell which way that spray nozzle is facing – especially when your vision is lacking.

In order to minimize potential hazards from chemicals and medication, organization and proper labeling is key. If your vision loss is severe, audio technology may be necessary to help you differentiate between medicines. However, for many with a visual impairment, some color and textural contrast can work wonders.

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# Ralph Imundo

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## CNY Vision Foundation Board member profile [by: Brian Coupe]

Ralph Imundo is a current member of the CNY Vision Foundation Board and has been serving for the last 10 years. He was asked by another member, Debbie Kessler to join after having served on the advisory committee. "I jumped at the chance," said Ralph.

Ralph is from the Utica area and has been here all of his life. He studied management at Mohawk Valley Community College and then continued his education at Utica College studying human resources and advanced management studies. This program was offered in conjunction with the American Management Association.

He has served in the National Guard Military Police, as a past president of Leadership Mohawk Valley, and retired from Mohawk LTD after 47 years of employment.

Ralph's volunteering and affiliations list is both extensive and impressive. It's a wonder how he finds the time to participate in so many ways!



Ralph Imundo

Ralph also enjoys ballroom dancing, downhill and cross country skiing, and boating.

He would like Camp Abilities-CABVI to expand the footprint as a whole in the future to reach more people who need CABVI's help.

"What Camp does for our youth who are Blind and Visually Impaired is astounding," explained Ralph. "I would like to see that continue to grow and expand to our outer service areas."

Ralph and his wife Maryann enjoy spending time with Ralph's children, three grandchildren, Mary Anne's son and daughter, and her grandson.

When asked what he likes most about living in the Utica area, Ralph responded: "I love the Mohawk Valley and its people! It's a great place to live and there is always something amazing to get involved with."