

# THE AABR ADVANCE



WINTER | 2020

## AABR APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Assistant Executive Director Kathy Flood, Director, Board President Audrey Sachs, New Executive Director Libby Traynor, Past Executive Director Chris Weldon

Dear Friends and Supporters,

For the past three years, Chris Weldon graciously agreed to return to AABR to help guide us while the Board searched for an Executive Director to not only fill his shoes, but also share his passion for the agency, commitment to the staff, and dedication to the individuals we support and their families.

As with all strong leaders, Chris' concern for a smooth transition of leadership was paramount, and, after extensive due diligence, we believe that we have found an exceptional Executive Director to help lead AABR to the next level. We look forward to Chris' strong and active role in AABR future. We thank Chris for his forty years of selflessness, passion for excellence and commitment to our mission.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am happy to announce the appointment of Elizabeth Traynor, LCSW to the position of Executive Director. She officially commenced her tenure on January 21, 2020.

Elizabeth, also known as Libby, comes to us from Richmond University Medical Center where she served as Assistant Vice President and was responsible for the

overall administrative, operational and fiscal performance across 21 locations. Prior to this, Libby worked for over 20 years at Staten Island Mental Health Society (SIMHS). The agency is licensed by OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS. Libby led staff in Developmental Disability, Mental Health and Substance Abuse licensed programs that last year delivered 165,000 services to 5,000 children and adults. She also ran health home and early intervention services. All of which, will no doubt, contribute to her success at AABR.

Libby has extensive experience in grant development, budget planning, proposal writing and program implementation. She has worked extensively with legislative and government officials throughout the state of New York. She comes with a reputation of ensuring high quality services in compliance with all federal, state and city funding regulations and licensing requirements.

The Board and I are confident that Libby will reflect the best of AABR. We welcome Libby to the AABR family and look forward to continuing our momentum in 2020 and to empowering those we are privileged to serve.

-- Audrey J. Sachs, Board President

## HOW TO DONATE



Visit [aabr.org](http://aabr.org) and click the donate button on the upper right side of your screen.



Call 718.321.3800 and ask to speak to the Development Department.



Mail a check made out to  
AABR Foundation to  
ATTN: Development Department  
**AABR**  
1508 College Point Blvd.  
P.O. Box 560247  
College Point, NY 11356

## OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT



Visit our Treasure Box Thrift Store at 164-09 Hillside Ave, Jamaica, NY 11434 to shop or donate used clothing and household items. You can also call 718.558.0390 to arrange a pick up of large donation items.



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter  
[@aabrnyc](https://www.facebook.com/aabrnyc)



# THRIFT SHOP RE-OPENS IN COLLEGE POINT IN MEMORIAL OF RENATA GORDON



Thrift Shop Manager Jessica Reeger (right)

Ms. Reeger enthusiastically reports that AABR's Job Coach, Shalini Shivsankar enhances her role at the Thrift Shop as they communicate extensively about the needs and skills of the people they work with. She adds, "Staff also enjoy the Thrift Shop. They come in as a stress reliever and wander through the store making purchases or offering donations."

Ms. Reeger's own extensive experience in retail brought her to apply for her current role with AABR. "Even though I had experience in retail, this is beyond my expectations of what I thought it would be. It's taught me a lot about myself. I've learned to develop a greater patience." Ms. Reeger pauses reflectively and states, "This is fulfilling. This is meaningful, what we do here and I'm just glad to be a part of it."



Every day, Monday through Friday, people with abilities and disabilities clamor to work at AABR's Treasure Box Thrift Shop in College Point, Queens. There they work in a safe space learning to hone their skills and grow in areas that will enable them to work in retail while simultaneously increasing their level of independence in their home life. Sorting donations, folding clothing, laundering clothing, creating displays, organizing and color-coding, vacuuming, cleaning windows, tables and loading the dishwasher are some of a myriad of skills that each participant works on.

The Thrift Shop closed over five years ago and has now reopened under new management and with a new plan in place for its continued presence. Thrift Shop Manager, Jessica Reeger states that the return of the thrift shop is beneficial all around. "People tell me all the time, 'I'm so happy the thrift shop is back!' The local community loves the thrift shop. It's like the small shops back home. They like what we do here. They know that their donations are being utilized this way."



It's been a year since the bright light that was Renata Gordon was taken from us too soon at 38 years old. She was served by AABR in a myriad of ways for over 20 years, at Wellington Hall, through Family Services and Drop-In Center.

To know her was to love her as she was the perfect example of someone who opened her heart to everyone. She was also upfront and direct often telling shoppers in the Stop and Shop where she worked that they shouldn't have devil dogs and soda in their cart since they needed to lose weight! And people listened! Every payday she was known to head straight over to Five Below or Marshall's to buy a new pocketbook.

*"She was wonderful. She brightened everyone's day and always had you laughing. She'd call me just to talk and always asked about my family. I miss her vibrance and her hugs."*

- Human Resources Director, Eileen Keegan

*"She was a good person. She's been a loving person. She came here to be with us at Wellington Hall and Drop-In Center. She will still be remembered. She was always advising me. 'Don't let people get you upset.' It's sad not to see her here with us. Her death affected us all when she was gone."*

- Fellow Participant, Ivone Caez

*"Renata was very outspoken. I was like 'OK Nata.' I thought of her as my little sister. She was very sweet. She was fun. I was just thinking of her yesterday. We were always talking on the phone. Before she came to the Self Advocacy Group, she came to me. We talked about stuff and she listened to what I had to say. I miss talking to her and giving love and hugs."*

- Fellow participant, Charlene Ward

*"Renata tried to say nice things and it was a friendship because she only smiled. I remember her working so good. She worked in the kitchen and on Worksite plus in Home Ec and in Computers. I miss her. She was a good person. I pray for her every time on Sunday."*

-Fellow participant, Raul Rivera

*"She was a joy. So personable. You just had to love everything about her. So full of personality and so giving. There was just something about her."*

- Kathryn Flood, Assistant Executive Director

## DROP-IN CENTER GOES PUMPKIN PICKING

The East End of Long Island is known for its fresh air, road side stands, farms, large areas of open land and tranquil atmosphere. And for many of the people we serve, it's a change of scenery from the city, a time to relax and a change of pace.

Recently, AABR's Drop-In Center traveled together to Sound Avenue in Mattituck for the weekend with Pumpkin Picking in mind. What began as a simple side-of-the-road stop turned into a full day of Fall fun.

One of AABR's Directors on the trip, Tania Moreta reported that everyone had such a good time. They painted and decorated pumpkins in themes, named their pumpkins, began making fun of their own works and laughed a lot together. They got to pet the goats in the farm section, went out for lunch and really simply enjoyed each other's company. One Individual sighed, "I just love it out here." A great time was had by all.



## NYCLI OPENS A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

This school year is an exciting one at the New York Child Learning Institute! The Institute recently received approval to add a preschool classroom, and now serves children from the age of 2 years, 7 months to 21.

Dr. Susan Vener, Co-Founder of NYCLI in 1994, and a pioneer in the field of autism intervention is passionate about the learners, NYCLI's clinical team and both family empowerment and involvement. "We thrive on improvement in child performance. We identify a behavior in need of change and systematically create that change. We focus on skill-building and replacing maladaptive with adaptive behavior. We create an environment that is positive and conducive to learning. We meet the child where he/she is at, and gradually increase performance." For instance, a child who displayed difficulty sitting with peers, first participated in a group activity for 1 minute, then 3 minutes, then 5 minutes, and is now participating in a 40-minute group activity. The progress is dramatic and ever-increasing. Dr. Vener states, "We've made extraordinary progress with all our pre-schoolers. Language is emerging and our learners are exhibiting tremendous capability. We achieve steady progress from the children we work with and they never disappoint!"



# SAVE THE DATE



HONORING  
**TROOPER FOODS**  
&  
**RAYMOND KITSON**  
IBEW LOCAL #3

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

1508 College Point Blvd.  
P.O. Box 560247  
College Point, NY 11356

