



PLAN|NJ

Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of New Jersey

annual appeal 2020

Lifetime Advocacy for People with Differing Abilities



Dear friends of **PLAN|NJ**,

As we emerge from the tumult of 2020, I am especially concerned for people with disabilities and their families. The multiple public health upheavals are taking their toll. We know too well that in a crisis, individuals with disabilities are disproportionately affected.

This year, please help me further extend our reach to people with the greatest need who are typically overlooked for services. The fragile safety net for people with mental health challenges and other significant disabilities is becoming more frayed by current disruptions. At **PLAN|NJ**, we go where our clients live, extend wellness checks, ensure they are happy and safe, and their goals and preferences are honored. We must continue to do all we can and more, providing greater protection and advocacy during this challenging time. Consider one family's story:

My cousin Jane, who is in her mid-fifties, has been a part of the PLAN|NJ family for five years. She graduated from a northern NJ high school and lives in her own apartment in a densely populated area of the state. As her trustee, I am responsible for her happiness and well-being, but as a medical professional living out of state, and now a first responder, I'm not able to provide her the daily advocacy, home visit monitoring, and care coordination she needs. I had to accept that fact and sought PLAN|NJ's help.

PLAN|NJ is, and will be, my eyes and ears, protecting and guiding Jane before, during and after the pandemic. Under the best of circumstances, she struggles with multiple mental health challenges, including high anxiety.

Jane has a lot of friends and many interests, but her activities have been curtailed by pandemic restrictions. In the past, she enjoyed attending music concerts by her favorite bands from the 1970s, big groups like Chicago and



Foreigner. While observing COVID related restrictions, she makes do with watching music videos on YouTube. She does get out into the community and enjoys riding the bus to get around. Like the rest of us, she must wear a mask and practice social-distancing if she goes out. This is challenging for Jane. The staff at PLAN|NJ help her to realize that we are in this together, and she views them as friends.

On a daily basis, members at PLAN|NJ respond to her multiple phone calls seeking support, reassure her about the worry she may have, follow up with any issue she may raise and help her resolve it. They manage her public benefits so she can live with less stress, which tends to exacerbate her mental health issues. The staff at PLAN|NJ are her friends, her family, and her advocates. She hopes to find a new job soon, and they are her liaison with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. I want her to remain protected and have the time to pursue more of what she loves, which keeps her calmer, healthier and happier.

PLAN|NJ had been providing virtual wellness checks earlier in the year, but now can visit her at home, practicing all safety measures. They help her remember how and why to choose nutritional meals, wear a mask when going out for necessities, and keep herself safe in her community. They remind her that she matters to me, even when I can't be there in person, and that she matters to her friends and everyone at PLAN|NJ. I consider them essential workers, the first people Jane calls with an emergency or to meet a special need. I have 100% confidence in PLAN|NJ's commitment and ability to protect and support Jane, and help her thrive.

— Neil V., cousin

PLAN|NJ's unwavering support to Jane provides her cousin Neil with greater peace of mind, especially now. We provide many people with significant disabilities with vital services at no cost, because they are in need. We support those with mental health challenges as well as those who live with intellectual, developmental and/or physical disabilities. We help families answer the question, **"Who will care for my loved one when I am gone?"** This year, more than 700 people in New Jersey benefitted from our compassionate, high-quality fiduciary and care coordination services.

Before the year is over, I hope you will make an online donation to PLAN|NJ at www.plannj.org/donate. You may also make your donation by check: simply complete the donation form included with this letter, and return it in its envelope, along with your check made payable to PLAN|NJ. Please help us increase access to the critical life planning, legal, fiduciary, and care coordination services that people with disabilities and their families need and deserve.

I have never been prouder to be a member of the disability rights community of New Jersey. Thank you in advance for considering a contribution this year. Should you have any questions, please call, email or visit our website today.

Sincerely,



Ellen Ball Nalven, M. Ed.
Executive Director