



Inclusion Matters

MARCH 2026

Lives of Distinction

Anthony Canastrare

The Piano Man



Music has a way of brightening our mood, shaping how we feel, and deepening our connection to the world around us. For Anthony Canestrare, music is just one of his many gifts and interests. But it is this focal point that has opened doors and allowed him to express himself in ways few other things have.

“I’ve been playing the piano since I was five,” Anthony told us. Remarkably, it wasn’t until years down the road that he began taking lessons. “He is completely self-taught,” said his mother, Rosanne. “Lessons refined his skills when he was older, but that was well

down the road.” What began as an interest as a child has blossomed into something of great significance today. For Anthony, music is more than just a creative outlet – it’s a coping mechanism that helps to minimize challenges presented by his disability.

“Music helps relieve stress, makes me calm, and makes me happy,” he said. When sitting at a keyboard, Anthony’s anxiety diminishes, and his creativity and excitement come to life. He will capitalize on any opportunity he finds to share his talent with others. Whether it is through playing the organ at his church, participating in talent shows, or playing for residents in area nursing homes, Anthony takes great pride in his ability.

“It’s very exciting,” he told us, alluding to the feeling he gets when performing for others. Though he has learned to harness the power of music to his benefit, he hopes to ultimately use it as a means of helping others. “I want to be a music teacher and inspire kids through music,” he said. It’s this sentiment – using his talents to benefit others – that really stands out to those who know him.

“He is such a people-person and is very caring,” said his Mentor of four years through Advocates, Theresa Pannia (pictured right). “Anthony is all about other people, and that’s evident through his volunteer work.” Whether it’s through volunteering, working two additional jobs, or pursuing different activities in his community, Anthony enjoys being on-the-go and engaged with everyone he meets.

“When I first started working with him, he was friendly but not super social,” said his Support Broker, Suzanne Converse-Clink. “He’s opened up so much over time, and this has led to growth in other areas.” Rosanne agrees.

“Thanks to his mentors, Anthony stays active in the community,” she said. “It’s great knowing that he has a set schedule, and that helps him be productive.”

Though Anthony has come a long way with his independent living skills, he benefits from support in areas such as maintaining focus on his work, money management, and exercising safety skills. Regardless of circumstance, his mentors are there for him, and it’s through the team’s collective efforts that Anthony has seen so much growth.

“All of Anthony’s mentors are dedicated and do a great job with him,” Suzanne said.





Anthony and his supporters alike have much to be proud of. In addition to his musical prowess, Anthony has taken an interest in art. In his short time working with glass, he has already had one of his creations displayed by the Corning Museum of Glass. Aside from his recreational activities, Anthony expressed the satisfaction he feels in working two jobs. He recently celebrated his 10-year anniversary working for Kinney Drugs, and has worked for Launch CNY for a little more than one year. Though Rosanne is proud of all of her son's accomplishments, Anthony's pursuit of higher

education may just top her list.

"We worked very hard to get every opportunity for him to get involved," she said, noting that Anthony was one of the first pilot students at Syracuse University's InclusiveU program. "His receiving the required certification was quite a moment for us. It was wonderful to see what he was able to accomplish there, and it's been so rewarding to see where he's come in spite of all his challenges." For Anthony, the support he receives at home is something he never takes for granted. "My family is so supportive of me," he said, noting that he lives with his parents and younger sister. "They're in touch with me all the time and always make sure I'm safe."



Rosanne concurred. "Advocates has made a world of difference for Anthony and for our family," she said. "We wouldn't have made it this far without the program, and Anthony wouldn't be where he is today without all of his mentors." Anthony wholeheartedly agreed. "Advocates is so much fun; I love it," he said. "This is my life, and it's my program forever."

When Anthony isn't hard at work or playing the piano, he also enjoys bowling, swimming, going to the movies and out to eat, visiting area parks and beaches, and spending time with his family, friends, and mentors.

[Click here to check out Anthony's impressive piano skills!](#)

Do you have a friend or family member who would make a great Mentor?

If so, please encourage them to [apply on our website](#). We look forward to meeting them!

Upcoming Events

Advocates' Winter Party & Information Fair

Winter Party and Information Fair

Friday, March 13, 2026
Time: 6PM-8:30PM

Le Moyne College - Henninger Athletic Center
500 Springfield Rd., Syracuse NY 13214

In addition to dozens of vendors, we will have a bounce house, live music from a DJ, and refreshments!

We invite you to join us to learn about different community supports and services for people with disabilities and their families.

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Le Moyne College - Henninger Athletic Center
500 Springfield Rd., Syracuse NY 13214

We hope you and your family can join us for this great event!

Although this event is free to attend, all eligible individuals must be enrolled in our FSS Training and/or Recreation program in order to register.

[Click here to register for this event!](#)

Dine for Dollar\$ - March Madness Edition



Looking for an ideal spot to watch the men's NCAA tournament games? Join us for our next Dine for Dollar\$ fundraiser anytime between 11am-11pm on **Thursday, March 19th** at Trapper's in East Syracuse (5950 Butternut Drive). Visit one of the area's favorite hangout spots — where the pizza is legendary, the wings are exceptional, and the

atmosphere is always inviting. Whether you're watching the game, enjoying a drink with friends, or dining with the whole group, Trapper's delivers a memorable experience every time.

Families, friends, and employees of Advocates are invited to join us for fun and delicious food!

Trapper's will generously donate 15% of all pre-tax sales to Advocates. Show the coupon below to your server or cashier to make sure your meal counts toward the fundraiser. Enjoy a delicious meal while making a meaningful impact for a great cause!

We look forward to seeing you there,
and we appreciate your support!



Trapper's is helping the *Advocates Incorporated*, on March 19th, 2026, from 11a-11p by hosting a **DINING FOR DOLLARS** event. By bringing this ticket, Trapper's will donate 15% of pre-tax food sales.

Trapper's Pizza Pub, 5950 Butternut Drive East Syracuse, NY 13057 (315)-438-4444

[Click here to see their menu!](#)

Advocates-Sponsored
Syracuse Crunch Game



Feel the Energy, Join the Fun!

Join us for Advocates Night at The Syracuse Crunch on **Saturday, Mar. 21st** at 7pm as the Crunch take on the Cleveland Monsters at Upstate Medical Arena at the On Center War Memorial. Discount tickets are available to people/families receiving services from Advocates along with employees.

Discount tickets (starting at \$20) can be purchased by contacting Nancy Loh: (315) 473-4444 ext. 119 or online at: www.syracusecrunch.com/advocates using promotional code: ADVOCATES

Advocates' Annual Stroll & Roll 5K



You're invited to Advocates' 8th Annual Stroll & Roll 5K on Saturday, May 16th!

Check-in: 9:30 am | Race start: 10:00 am

Onondaga Lake Park
Willow Bay Park (Saw Mill Pavilion)
3858 Long Branch Road Liverpool, NY 13090

This accessible 5K invites people of all ages and abilities to run, walk, stroll, or roll through the Onondaga Lake's beautiful course. All participants receive a commemorative race medal, along with a picnic lunch immediately following the race (hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, cookies, and beverages).

Bring your family, friends, and coworkers — form a team or join as an individual. **Register before April 1st for early bird pricing of \$30. April 1st, the price increases to \$35.** All proceeds support children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To include our friends across New York State (and beyond!), we've added a virtual participation option this year. You can also click on "Stroll & Roll 5K Teams" to register as a group or team!

[Click here to register for this event!](#)

Agency Updates

Advocates' Annual Bingo Event



On Monday, February 16th, Advocates hosted its annual Bingo event for people receiving services! Dozens of people and their Mentors/family members joined us for an afternoon of friendship, snacks, prizes, and of course, lots of Bingo action!

We thank everyone who attended, our staff who helped facilitate the event, and St. Ann's Church for hosting us!

[Click here for more photos from this event!](#)

ADVANCING INCLUSION | EMPOWERING FAMILIES | CREATING COMMUNITY

Advocates Incorporated | 300 South Manlius Street | Fayetteville, NY 13066 US

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