

Help in Healing

Voices of Hope Co-Founder, Sandra Nardoci, works with Amtrak to save lives



Sandy Nardoci, of Guilderland, New York, is not a medical professional. She's a real estate broker, but her impact on people with serious medical conditions in the greater Albany area is undeniable. Co-founder of Voices of Hope of the Capital Region, a non-profit organization whose mission is to "bring hope and services to children touched by life-altering conditions", Nardoci recently spoke with *New York By Rail* about this life-saving program:

NYBR: How long has Voices of Hope existed?

SN: Voices of Hope was originally formed in 2000 by several local, caring entrepreneurs and members of the non-profit community in the capital region, but we discontinued meeting after only a few years. In 2009, I was asked to help revive the consortium. This year is our 10th year!

NYBR: What is your role?

SN: I serve as our group's leader, point person, administrator and, since 2013, the liaison between Voices of Hope and Amtrak's Rails to Recovery program. Over the years, I've gotten to know the leaders of our partner-organizations. We work with over 30 nonprofit groups in the region, such as the Double H Ranch, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Make A-Wish North East New York, American

Cancer Society and American Heart Association, to get patients to the treatments they need.

NYBR: How did you connect with Amtrak?

SN: Bill Hollister, a senior manager in government affairs for Amtrak in the Northeast, is based in Rensselaer. He believed in the program from the start and developed the special fare for it. Patients get two-for-one tickets on Amtrak's Empire Service. It started with children, but now anyone with a serious illness can travel with a caregiver for what works out to half the adult rate. It's a life-saving program!

NYBR: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, Blake Realtors is a prominent Voices of Hope partner, but it's a normal business. How is it involved?

SN: In 2014, when Voice of Hope partnered with Amtrak and the New York State Department of Transportation, local broker/owner Jason Christiana of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, Blake Realtors, where I work, helped us create a platform and landing page from which passengers are able to register on-line for the program. Berkshire Hathaway supports and maintains the site, which is critical to the success of our partnership with Amtrak. It's how individuals