



# CLIFTON PARK

JANUARY 2025

# Neighbors



*Andy Gilpin:*

Leaning Into Life Through Service,  
Strength, and Compassion

POWERED BY



BEST VERSION MEDIA

PHOTO BY SAMANTHA BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY





## *Andy Gilpin:*

### Leaning Into Life Through Service, Strength, and Compassion

By Meg Wert | Photos by Samantha Bailey Photography & Andy Gilpin

As Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” These simple words hold immense weight when looking at one person, one group, or what one community can do when they set their sights on a greater purpose. Andy Gilpin demonstrates this every day. As a resident of the Capital Region area for decades, Andy has been an avid outdoor enthusiast and a passionate advocate for helping others.

In 2010, Andy was introduced to a local organization called CAPTAIN Community Human Services (CHS). A friend of his

needed some help with the annual Gala: An Unbridled Affair. Here, he helped support the planning and organizing of this event, which each year honors members of the community who have made a difference and raises funds for all of the ongoing work. Feeling a real resonance with the people, the work, and the community CAPTAIN CHS supported, Andy then took a full-time position at the Runaway and Homeless Youth Emergency Shelter for CAPTAIN CHS. Since then, his commitment and journey with this organization have included adding responsibilities and changing roles, as he now holds the position





points. A service point includes a food pantry order, a bed night for a homeless teen, a case management session, utility assistance, a ride for a senior citizen, and other service interactions from our 30+ programs.” The work that this organization does each day makes a difference. Each person, each group, and each community that chooses to step up can affect true change. “We are poised to leverage our experience and expertise for increased impact and further our mission to define the next 50 years of the agency. CAPTAIN CHS will be launching an exciting and impactful capital campaign in early 2025 called Building Brighter



of Executive Director. “I fell in love with the mission, purpose, and the people who were a part of this great organization and have been here for 14 years.”

CAPTAIN CHS, which runs out of Saratoga County, NY, provides support for over 30 programs and services that make a difference in the lives of residents today. The main areas of focus are homelessness, hunger, economic crisis, and community support. Their website, <https://captaincares.org/>, provides extensive information on supporting needs and volunteering opportunities. As shared on the website, “CAPTAIN CHS seeks to uphold the dignity of each person by serving the basic needs of those struggling in the community that surrounds us...and empower all of our community members to build a brighter future for themselves and their neighbors.” Funding comes from federal, state, and local grants, as well as contracts, private foundations, events, fundraising, and private donors.

When exploring the role of this organization and the changing needs of the community, it was quite apparent that income inequality is becoming greater, there is more food insecurity, and housing instability has been increasing. As Andy so aptly put it, “In 2023, CAPTAIN CHS served approximately 7,000 people from kids to seniors and provided almost 65,000 unique service





Futures Campaign. More exciting information about this will be forthcoming."

In 2015, while giving a presentation on behalf of CAPTAIN CHS at the Family Counseling Center (which is another human services agency), Andy met his partner, Danette Capron. "We started dating 6 months later and never stopped loving each other since then." As he was recalling memories, this one stood out. "We did our first winter hike up Buck Mountain near Lake George. I was an avid outdoor enthusiast, especially in winter, and she was an avid hiker. I introduced her to winter hiking, and we had a magical time on a beautiful winter day with a light coating of snow on everything. It was a great day all around, and I remember saying that I could see myself spending the rest of my life with Danette. She is the love of my life, my rock, the center of my universe, and I'm the luckiest guy around"



Today, Andy, his partner Danette, and stepkids, Degan (age 14), and Kylie (age 12) share their home with their two dogs, Max and Bo. "Max is a Jack Russel Terrier and Bo is a German shorthair pointer, Australian Sheppard, and Greyhound." Degan, the older of the two kids, has been doing sports since he was 7 years old and currently plays modified baseball, basketball, and football for Niskayuna. Kylie, as well as Danette, are artists and incredibly creative. They all live in Alplaus, "but (as Andy clarifies) actually live right on the County line between Saratoga and Schenectady and part of my property is in Clifton Park."

Here, they keep involved in the Alplaus Residents Association, the Alplaus Runaround 5K, and Alplaus Fire Company. "I enjoy volunteer work. I volunteer for the Alplaus Residents Association, serve as a Fire Commissioner for the Alplaus Fire Department, and serve as a Board member for the Coalition for Homeless Youth." They also went on to share that they really love the community. "Alplaus is an awesome little hamlet with a small-town feel and charm. There are great neighbors and fun community activities, and everyone looks out for each other. "

Andy thrives in the community. He also thrives while being in service, bringing strength, and compassion to every part of his path. Having grown up in PA and getting his bachelor's degree in political science from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, he has always been an avid outdoor enthusiast. He loved rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, flyfishing, mountain biking, kayaking, skiing, hiking, and golfing. He was also a runner and found himself coming up to the Capital Region several times a year to enjoy the area and all that the Adirondacks had to offer. With his parents still in Hanover PA, he also has a brother who lives in Boston with two daughters. It was when Andy turned 30 that he chose to move up to the Capital Region and settle down to be near the Adirondacks, meet his partner, and devote his life to living in service.





It was in 2022, that Andy Gilpin was thrown a curveball. He started noticing issues with his speech and in October he was diagnosed with the onset of Bulbar Guset ALS. “It has taken me a while to acknowledge the diagnosis as I’ve had conflicting opinions for some time, but I can’t deny the way it is affecting me, my voice, and other physical aspects of my body and movement. “

As he continued to share, ‘Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the nervous system and nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. ALS causes loss of muscle control. The disease gets worse over time and is typically fatal. The cause of ALS is unknown and currently, there is no cure.’

When asked about treatment and what he has learned, he continued on. “I have been going to the St. Peter’s Regional ALS Center for a few months and learning more about the disease, its progression, and how to manage it. I’m hopeful with what they are telling me and there are a variety of forms of the disease. They have several patients who have been with them for over 10

years and are still doing well with daily activities, so I’m hopeful. ALS affects the physical aspects of an individual, but not their mental faculties. I’m grateful for this and feel that I’m still as mentally engaged as I’ve always been.”

“ALS has helped me grow in a lot of new ways; teaching me patience, grace, humility, and being open and willing to ask for help. The outpouring of love and support for me and my family has been incredible. The team at CAPTAIN CHS has been amazing, and my friends have rallied around me to help around the house, support the family, host events and fundraisers, provide meals, and wrap me in love. I’m forever grateful to them and Danette.” As Andy continues getting up, being part of a family, volunteering in the community, and going to work each day, fulfilling his role as Executive Director of CAPTAIN CHS, he is choosing to show up to life with resilience, strength, service, and compassion.

One of the final questions I asked was, What would you like people to understand? “I think that I would want people to understand that I may experience some additional changes as time goes on, but one thing will never change: my passion and commitment to leading CAPTAIN CHS forward to serve the community and our clients. I won’t let ALS define me or what I’m capable of, I’m here, present, committed to continuing to serve the community, and will continue to be a loving partner to Danette and father figure to Degan and Kylie.”



**CONTACT:**

Barb Schrader

bschrader@bestversionmedia.com

518-926-0727

Visit [www.bestversionmedia.com](http://www.bestversionmedia.com) to learn more about our advertising solutions.

