This November many citizens will have the opportunity to let their voices be heard by voting to elect the leader of the country. We here at the Progressive Center for Independent Living would like to take a non-partisan look at one of the lesser debated issues, the candidates’ views on disability matters. A review of the two parties’ convention platforms along with the individual candidates’ websites finds several concerns are discussed.

Under the Democratic platform, they emphasize the need for programs that promote long-term care and independence in the home as well as the need to expand health insurance programs for seniors and people with disabilities on a national level.

Republicans on the other end of the spectrum believe “The state governments know their people best and can manage the administration of Medicaid far
better without federal overhead. States will have the incentives to seek out and eliminate fraud, waste and abuse to preserve our precious resources.”

One source that is extremely beneficial to members within the disabled community is called “The RespectAbility Report” prepared by RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization that works “to empower people with disabilities to achieve the American dream.” This report contains the responses to a questionnaire that was provided to 16 presidential candidates and is intended as a tool to give voters a more in-depth perspective on the candidates’ views.

Of the two remaining major party candidates, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton answered all questions put forth to her and had several significant ideas including but not limited to “demonstration grants that can spur new approaches to early intervention to improve the employment picture for people with disabilities” as well as people and families who are affected by autism, and including a comprehensive agenda on mental health. At the time of this article, Republican nominee Donald Trump still had not submitted his answers to “The RespectAbility Report” even after the reported urging of many advocates both on a community and national scale. The full report is available at http://therespectabilityreport.org/2016/01/30/hillary-clinton-completes-pwdsvote-2016-campaign-scorecard/.

It’s good whenever the needs of the disabled community are addressed in party platforms and in candidate position statements. However, the reality is that many lawmakers view us a group to lump in with others and our issues to just tack on to the end of a bill because we are not considered an important mainstream population in legislative eyes.

In order to end this cycle we must continue to grow and expand in participation and civic engagement on both a local and national level. This is one of the only ways that we will gain the attention we rightfully deserve. Make sure you vote November 8th to support your candidate. Then we will need to continue to work to ensure that disability concerns are not an afterthought once all the campaigning is over.
MEET DANIELLE
By Danielle Lewis

My name is Danielle Lewis. I am the newest face at PCIL and very excited to be here. I am originally from NYC but have been living in NJ for a little over 10 years now. It is in NJ that I gained most of my Human Services experience. The majority of my work experience comes from DDD and BHS where I have learned quite a bit over the years. I began working at PCIL on August 15, 2016 under Renee Pfaff assisting with Career Gateway, A La Carte and WIOA. I am eager to learn all that I can at PCIL while simultaneously finishing my Bachelor’s degree in Human Services at Thomas Edison State University. Thank you to everyone for making me feel extremely welcome and I look forward to being with PCIL for many years to come.

ADRC JUST GOT STRONGER!
By Eileen Doremus

Mercer County’s Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) just got stronger! This edition of “Forward” has a new partner to complement the work of the Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL). This cooperative partnership with the County Office on Aging/ADRC offers the reader additional information about issues that appeal to older adults, those living with disabilities and their caregivers.

The ADRC helps connect people with the services they need to continue living independently in the community for as long as possible. The ADRC is your doorway to information and services whereby federal, state and local governments and local service providers coordinate services for older adults and those living with disabilities.

Topics that will be explored and highlighted will include home and community-based services; Medicare, Medicaid and other insurance options; planning for your care needs now and in the future; housing and transportation needs; caregiver assistance and supports; health promotion and disease prevention services; and work and volunteer opportunities.

You will note that contributions to “Forward” will be designated by the ADRC logo as seen below.

Should you want to know more about what ADRC can offer you, call 609-989-6661. You can also learn more by going to www.adrcnj.gov.
As summer comes to an end, PCIL is busy planning more recreational events for fall and winter. On August 29th crafters gathered at the PCIL Mercer County office to work on handmade items to sell. Items included crocheted blankets, key chains, and decorated t-shirts. Items were sold at a craft fair on September 22nd in the Ibis Plaza parking lot. In October we will be going back to Terhune Orchards in Princeton to pick apples and stroll around the farm. I hear that the “Activity Barn” will have a new display this year. We are always open to hearing new recreational activity ideas from you.

On September 27th PCIL was at Mercer County Connections on Route 33 in the Acme Shopping Center conducting a “Get Out The Vote” campaign. If you haven’t registered to vote, PCIL will help you fill out a voter registration form so that you can vote in the upcoming Presidential election. “According to U.S. Census Bureau, there are more than 56 million people with disabilities in America. People with disabilities have more rights and opportunities than they had even a generation ago. But they still face discrimination and higher rates of domestic abuse and unemployment than people without disabilities.” (Source: Washington Examiner, Daniel Allott, 1/25/16) Take advantage of this opportunity to register to vote!

PCIL is now a site for Access Link assessment interviews. If you are interested in becoming a NJ Transit, Access Link rider, call 1 (800) 955-2321. Access Link is for anyone that is unable to use the fixed bus route due to their disability. They will send you a packet of information and schedule an interview appointment. To qualify for Access Link services, it is best to bring as much documentation of your disability to the interview as possible.

As always, PCIL is dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities to remain part of the whole community and as independent as possible. Stay in touch with us to let us know how you are doing and how we can make PCIL better.
I t has been a while since you have heard from me, so I thought it would be an easy, informative read to share some comments about the upcoming election, a renewed partnership and about our programs moving forward.

The presidential election, oh my! I do not remember a time when our citizens have been so upset at the poor quality of our candidates. What is this country coming to? It is very scary that many people you talk to don’t know who they are going to vote for. Then, when you hear about how much money (billions) is spent on campaigns it makes my skin crawl. Independent Living (IL) programs nationwide have suffered cuts over the past several years. A mere fraction of those campaign funds would easily double the IL funding level and benefit so many more people with disabilities. Nobody is really talking about cutting waste and redirecting some of those funds to programs that can help people in many ways.

A growing, stronger, and renewed partnership is underway with Mercer County. PCIL will be working with Mercer County Human Services and other departments to assure ADA expectations are met or exceeded. More importantly, our partnership with the County will include a more unified role that has us working even closer together on many issues surrounding people with disabilities in the County. This refreshed plan will assure the provision of deeper and broader support to individuals and their families. This partnership also has PCIL playing a greater role under the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), assuring the “D” in ADRC has meaning and is emphasized. We have always worked well together with County staff but our plans have us doing even more to make sure people with disabilities are always well represented. I look forward to this renewed partnership and working with Mercer County and their staff moving forward!

Regarding program updates, I am very excited about a few areas moving into the new program year. PCIL’s Support Coordination program has hit 60 cases and we are proud that most came to us as referral recommendations. We have hired new staff to make sure this growth and quality of services continues! Our Student Transition program is ready to take a significant step up with the addition of a Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) grant that will serve our 2 counties and also the entire state through a partnership with all of the NJ CIL’s. We will be working with schools in Mercer and Hunterdon Counties and many more students with disabilities in high school. Highlights from other programs include our growing number of Access Link assessments, continued strength and diversity of the Community Connections and Campership programs. Of course the IL program continues to be our foundation even though we have experienced funding cuts; we still continue to serve many people.
TRANSITION PROGRAM UPDATES

CAREER GATEWAY UNDERWAY, NEW PROGRAM ADDED

The PCIL Transition program is busy as ever this year with some new and exciting pilot programs currently running in our local schools.

Career Gateway is up and running again with a slightly different twist. This year, under a grant through the Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, we are conducting sessions within Ewing High School with a focus on high school seniors. This program offers sessions on independent living, budgeting, transportation and employment skills. In addition to the classroom sessions, each student will have the opportunity to job sample (3) sites based on their interest levels. The goal of this career exploration is for each student to leave with a sense of knowing what employment path to take upon graduation.

Incentives to Employment is our newest adventure. This program is funded through the Mercer County One-Stop and follows the guidelines of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA). We have partnered with high school seniors at Steinert and Nottingham High Schools and provide sessions on leadership, banking/budgeting, study skills, employment skills and student transition. The exciting initiative of this program is that PCIL will assist these students in obtaining summer employment or paid internships. PCIL will then provide ongoing assistance to these individuals a year past their high school graduation to support them with current employment and/or assist these students as many take on the challenging roles within post-secondary education. As the program name implies, incentives are provided to the students as they accomplish several milestones within the program.

PCIL continues to look for additional opportunities to grow our transition program. Along with our programs directed to high school students, we can assist recent graduates with work readiness services within our A la Carte Menu that is available on our website under It’s All About Work.

Left: Barbara Hass teaching about Caricature
Right: WIOA Participant Brenier at Trenton Soup Kitchen (TASK).
On June 23rd a group of ladies got together at the PCIL office to try out the nail spray that has been advertised as “easy to apply, no skill needed”. We sampled a few colors and enjoyed each other’s company. Here is what one participant had to say about the experience:

“We actually tried China Glaze Nail Spray and it really worked as advertised. The China Glaze is like magic, it comes off with soap and water, and if you have some on your skin, it will come off as well. We first put on Base Coat to make sure that our nail polishes stay on. Then, we had a choice of three colors; magenta, violet, or platinum. After letting it all dry, we put on the Top coat to finish it all. After everything was done, we washed our hands, and we were amazed by the incredible results. Even the staff loved this product. You can buy it online at Amazon.com. There are more than three colors of this product. For anyone who needs help getting their nail polish on, this is the perfect product. Everyone who likes nail polish deserves some fun once in a while, right?”

- Kelly Sasor

PCIL would like to thank the following agencies/businesses who shared their time and valuable experience to our Career Gateway students over the summer.

Hamilton YMCA  
Trenton Fire Department  
Family Support Organization of Mercer County  
Advancing Opportunities  
GameU Enterprises  
Halo Branded Solutions  
Barbara Thornton Haas  
Alba Designs  
MID Jersey Chambers of Commerce  
Printworx

Career Gateway is funded through a grant by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
We are proud to support the Progressive Center’s A Taste for Success.

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INCENTIVE TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

INCENTIVE TO EMPLOYMENT

By Renee Pfaff

PCIL ran an exciting program this year which provided us the opportunity to work with two groups of students from Steinert and Nottingham High School. During the course of the school year, PCIL conducted sessions with these two groups covering topics that provided valuable information on such topics as preparing for employment, learning post-secondary options after high school, knowing your wants and needs and developing leadership skills. This program, which follows WIOA (Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act) regulations, is funded through the Mercer County One-Stop, and provided PCIL the opportunity to support the students beyond high school graduation. This summer, PCIL is working closely with our participants by providing internship opportunities along with assisting those looking for employment. In addition to employment, staff is supporting those who seek academic accommodations at college and also guiding them to begin the process of receiving services with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. We named this program Incentives to Employment, because of the many incentives offered for achieving goals. Participant had the ability to achieve goals that included; completing assignments, obtaining a job on their own, retaining employment for 120 days, and many will also be eligible for $100 gift card for completing their first semester of college in good standing. In all, a participant has the capability of earning $350 worth of gift cards for participating in the Incentives Program.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the following businesses for providing internship opportunities for this program: Advancing Opportunities of Ewing, Dr. Express Center of Hamilton, and Trenton Area Soup Kitchen.

A WORD FROM PCIL’S INTERN

By Sergio Xicay

I would describe my experience working at PCIL as interesting and fun. I enjoyed getting to know new people like Suzanne, Karen, Scott, Virginia, Jaime and Steven. I learned many different things working at PCIL. Some of the tasks I was responsible for were filing documents, faxing, answering phones, shredding and sending out mailings. I was also taught how to use the MiCil system.

The incentives program offered by PCIL was very helpful to me. I was able to receive a Best-Buy gift card which I used towards the purchase of a laptop computer. My future plans include attending Mercer County Community College this Fall Semester. My focus in College will be Law Enforcement which I am very interested in. I am excited to see what my experience at Mercer County College will be like. I would like to thank everyone at PCIL for my 6 week experience. I learned a lot and if I had the opportunity again I would enjoy coming back to work here.
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2017 Calendar Raffles now on sale!

Last year’s calendar raffle was a huge success so we’ve decided to do it again! Plus, who doesn’t love a chance to win money? Contact PCIL today for details and to secure your winning numbers! These calendars WILL SELL OUT!