Preparing Makes Sense for People with Disabilities

By Drew Zimmerman

PCIL received a grant from Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF) to promote emergency preparedness and to provide greater outreach in the community for people with disabilities. Yes, being prepared makes sense.

Scott Ellis, Coordinator of PCIL’s Emergency Preparedness Initiative, is pleased to announce the grant is well underway. Under this grant, PCIL will reactivate its unique Community Liaison Program. Under this program, Liaisons will provide classes to individuals with disabilities on planning and preparation of emergencies and disasters. They will learn to make an emergency plan, create a personal support network, complete an assessment, and assemble a go-bag kit. We will show you how to get up-to-date information on an incident and how to evaluate your own personal needs to create an effective and realistic emergency plan to share with your family, friends and caregivers in your network. The goal of the Liaisons program will be to educate people with disabilities throughout the region on personal emergency preparedness; they are active participants in their own safety and well-being.

Continued on Page 11
Social Security Changes

By Suzanne Peins

Several important changes to Social Security services and Cost of Living (COLA) adjustments are being implemented this year. These changes are outlined below.

- Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will receive a 1.5 percent COLA for 2014.

- As of February 2014, the Social Security Administration will no longer offer Social Security card printouts or benefit verification information at their field offices. Beneficiaries and recipients needing a benefit verification letter can obtain one immediately by registering for a “my Social Security” account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount or within 5-7 days through the mail by calling the national toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213. Replacement Social Security cards can be obtained by completing an online application (form SS-5) which you can find online at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber. You also will need to provide documents proving identity, age, and citizenship or lawful immigration status. In most cases, you can take or mail your completed application and original documents to any Social Security office. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov/locator to find the Social Security office or Social Security Card Center that serves your area.

- The Social Security Administration will continue to accept applications online for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The website address is www.socialsecurity.gov.

For more information about online service options such as, How To Create An Online Account (Publication No. 05-10540), Your Social Security Number And Card (Publication No. 05-10002) and What You Can Do Online (Publication No. 05-10121) visit the website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call the toll free number, 1-800-772-1213, TTY- 1-800-325-0778.
Technology Corner: Tongue Piercings Allow People To Control Their Wheelchairs

by Suzanne Peins

For people with quadriplegia and other extreme mobility challenges, researchers have developed a wireless device that operates specially rigged chairs by means of a tiny titanium barbell pierced through the tongue. By moving their tongues left or right across their mouths similar to a joystick, people with limited mobility have been able to move their motorized chairs, as well as computer cursors. Tapping tongue against their cheek, quickly or slowly, controls the chair’s speed.

Engineer Maysam Ghovanloo of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta thought he could do better than the “sip-and-puff” devices that are based on inhaling or exhaling into a tube which is slow and cumbersome, offering only four commands of forward, back, left and right. About five years ago he and his colleagues began developing the tongue based system. An earlier version used magnets glued to the tongue, but they fell off. Dr. Anne Laumann of the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University, a co-author of the revised paper, had an idea to use a piercing to anchor the magnets in place.

The device they came up with is a small magnetic barbell, which creates a magnetic field in the mouth. When users flick their tongues it alters the field. The change is picked up by four small sensors on a headset with twin extensions curving around the cheeks. It is then relayed wirelessly to a smartphone, computer or iPod. The software translates the signals and sends them to a powered wheelchair or computer.

The tongue system’s ability to operate numerous devices offers more promises. This is going to allow people to use one system to connect to home devices, work lights, curtains, TV and heat. Ghovanloo’s startup company, Bionic Sciences, is working with Georgia Tech to commercialize the barbell device. Georgia Tech is setting up a website and planning to use social media to raise money to test the system in the streets to navigate in the community. The hope is to be able to work, take the bus, and do other things that people with limited mobility haven’t been able to do.
Recreation Update
by Drew Zimmerman

The Community Connections Recreation Department had a great end to 2013. Our events at the Project Freedom residences were a big hit! At the Robbinsville location over twenty people enjoyed a pleasant evening. The food was catered by Vito’s in Hamilton. The trivia contest was a lot of fun too. At the Project Freedom Lawrence location the Progressive Center put on the Annual Holiday Party. Even though we had to change the venue last minute, over 40 people loved the festive atmosphere of the evening. Santa and Mrs. Claus even made an appearance. Two days before Christmas, they spent over an hour getting last minute ideas from those wanting something special under their tree. While Santa was taking last minute wishes from kids of all sizes, Mrs. Claus was kind enough to help out with the trivia contest. She asked some holiday related trivia questions, including my personal favorite —Where does Santa keep his money? Answer…..A SNOW BANK.

Now that 2014 is upon us, Career Gateway is off and running with a whole new year of Community Connection Events. Disney on Ice at the Sun Bank Arena will entertain PCIL consumers and their families in a skating spectacular. The Social Club is back at Red Robin as well. We will be also offering Princeton Basketball tickets in March. Those events are just the start to what will be a busy, diverse and exciting year.

To maximize your savings on recreation, and to be able to take advantage of everything PCIL has to offer, remember to become a Member for 2014. Membership can now be obtained online through our website at www.pcil.org. There are several different types of memberships to choose from. All memberships are good for the calendar year. The earlier you join, the more events you can go to and enjoy special savings. If you have any questions regarding memberships, please call 609-581-4500 ext.121. Be on the lookout in your mailbox for bright yellow sheets of paper that announce our events. Don’t forget, we encourage everyone to bring their families, friends, or even children to PCIL events. We look forward to seeing you all throughout the year.

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PCIL Profile: Steve Gruzlovic

By Suzanne Peins

Steve was born in Trenton, New Jersey, and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when he was two years old. He attended Regional Day School in Hamilton Township from the age of three until he went to kindergarten at age six, and was then mainstreamed into the Hamilton Township School District. Steve attended University Heights Elementary School and was the only student in his class with a disability. “The other students in the class were curious about my disability and interested in it. My classmates liked to help me, and I wasn’t bullied,” said Steve. While excelling at Steinert High School Steve took some advanced placement classes. He then went away to college at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania, one of the few colleges offering personal care services and rehabilitation services to students with disabilities. He graduated from college with a degree in Political Science.

As with many young people with and without disabilities, once Steve was finished with school he faced bigger challenges. Steve was living with his parents in a house that wasn’t accessible, and he wanted to work. His Dad drove him to his volunteer and part time jobs. His Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor suggested he call The Progressive Center for Independent Living, Inc. Steve contacted Drew Zimmerman at PCIL to discuss his long-term independent living goals which included employment and an accessible place to live. Having lived in a college dormitory, where his meals were prepared and his transportation needs were met, living on his own was an idea that was uncomfortable. Scott Ellis of PCIL mentored Steve, giving him the details of his own daily routine. This included how to interview a personal attendant, how to make a kitchen easier to work in, and what supplies he would need to live on his own. Scott and Drew helped Steve get into an apartment at Project Freedom, acquire transportation, and navigate the Social Security system.

I asked Steve how PCIL has made a difference in his life, he said, “The Progressive Center has made a big impact on my life. I am living better on my own now and PCIL has given me the confidence to accomplish anything. I now know that everything will be okay. PCIL has given me the motivation to push forward in my life in the right direction.” When asked about his hopes for the future, he said that he dreams of helping other people with disabilities the way he was helped. “PCIL is a great resource for people and without them it would have been difficult to achieve everything that I’ve accomplished. Scott Ellis is a great person that is always there to help. I consider him a true friend and mentor.”
Career Gateway was launched anew in March of 2013 through a grant provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NJDVRS). This program, designed for individuals 17 to 25 years of age and NJDVRS eligible, is an educational and hands-on experience that provides the following:

- Increased job readiness talents
- Recognition of personal management needs
- In-demand career choices
- Interview preparation
- Resume development
- Financial understanding
- Transportation options
- Job sampling at 3 different locations
- Long term peer and support relations

Mercer and Hunterdon Counties are well into their 3rd and final round of Career Gateway for this grant period. To date we have had 22 participants complete Career Gateway, with the year-end total expected to reach 34. We have established job sampling at 68 business sites within our community. A “Career Club”, which meets quarterly and is open to all of our participant, has been formed as a part of this grant.

As a direct result of the Career Gateway experience, four participants have found full time employment and another ten individuals, some of whom are still in High School, have found part-time employment. Fourteen Career Gateway participants are enrolled in either post-secondary education or vocational education programs. We are very proud of all of the participants’ accomplishments and the growth in the number of support sites we now have participating in job sampling. We are also proud of the way that PCIL staff has grown with the challenges involved in this program. We are so fortunate to be able to witness the growth of self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-confidence in each and every participant of Career Gateway.
The services for “It’s All About Work” provided by the New Jersey Centers for Independent Living (NJACIL) in collaboration with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) have begun! This fee for service pilot project is designed to assist individuals with diverse abilities in identifying career preferences and preparing them for permanent, integrated and competitive employment.

We currently service several high schools in Mercer and Hunterdon Counties, working with students ages 14 and up. Students work on identifying future goals, learn how to reach those goals, and discover who they need to connect with while planning for life after school. The high school programs are divided into two tiers based on age and readiness. Tier 1 helps students identify their strengths, abilities, likes, and personal qualities. We then direct them to post-secondary options and jobs associated with their interests and talents. We work on communication and social skills and how to apply them in their transition process and beyond. Tier 2 combines interest assessments with career exploration and includes a hands-on approach to work experience. This tier focuses on decision making, goal planning, living independently, and just what it takes to do all that. In both Tiers students will complete a strength based student profile. Tiers 1 and 2 also offer a 2-hour parent training session on transition planning.

The CILs will also be working with adults post high school through DVRS referrals, on the following topics:

- Pre-employment instructional support
- Keys to obtaining and retaining jobs
- Working well with a disability
- Understanding employee benefits, fiscal compensation and financial management
- How to maintain employment
- Time management and organization in the workplace
- Conflict resolution
- Title 1 of the ADA
- Employment
- Job Club
- Community based work experience
- Assistive technology
- Employment readiness instructional support
- Steps in vocational planning

We expect to greet 2014 with full schedules and the power to help change the number of people living with disabilities who are unemployed in the state of New Jersey.
The Career Gateway program has continued to provide useful insight to young adults with disabilities looking to explore a career field that sparks their interests. Each student in the program has three opportunities to work for a day at different sites to learn more about their potential career paths. These job samplings coincide with the interests of the participants in the program and provide the most meaningful experience possible. This summary provides examples of the experiences and acknowledgement to the businesses that participated.

Some experiences involved working different positions at local restaurants. Positions filled by the students included server, hostess, waiter/waitress, food preparation, and table busser. Restaurants that participated in the program included: Tortugas, Country Griddle, Prestige Diner, Café Galleria, Lambertville Station, and Off-Broadstreet Theater.

Another type of experience involved observing professionals at work in different career fields. These career fields included plumber, auto mechanic, television production, fashion design, locksmith, and bondsman. Participating businesses included: Whitetail Locks, Chance Bail Bonds, Dibenedetto’s Auto, Riverview Studios, Fantasy Weddings, and Mercer Drain Cleaning.

A popular interest area of our students was caring for rescued and orphaned animals. Thank you to the animal sanctuaries and animal care facilities that hosted our students. These included: Tabby’s Place, Nassau Animal Hospital, Popcorn Zoo, Antler Ridge, and Puppy Paradise.

Some of the participants wanted to experience working in an office environment. Organizations that allowed our students to experience this for a day included: Hunterdon County Library, Twin Rivers Library, Allentown Presbyterian Church, and Mercer County Office for the Disabled.

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**WIB Award Ceremony**

Joann Livingston received the Business Partner Award on behalf of Stop and Shop, Livingston is the Customer Service Manager at Stop and Shop in Pennington, NJ.
THANK YOU TO PARTICIPATING SAMPLING SITES

The Progressive Center would like to recognize the following Mercer and Hunterdon County businesses as recent participants in our Career Gateway Program. We would like to distinguish these businesses as being friendly for people with disabilities in our community:

• Sign It
• Flemington Mayor’s Office
• Jacks Garden Center
• Spirit Wind Music Studios
• JB Kline and Sons
• Blue Sky Consignment
• Mobile Auto Repair
• Puppy Paradise
• DragonFly Farms
• Straube Center
• Mercer County Office of the Disabled
• Rierview Studios
• Popcorn Zoo
• Nassau Animal Hospital
• Tony’s Auto Repair
• Fantasy Weddings
• Chance Bail Bonds
• Twin Rivers Library
• Hunterdon County Library System
• Independence Manor
• Lambertville Station Restaurant
• Kelsey Theater
• Vito’s Restaurant
• Trenton Blacksmith
• Rise
• Mercer Drain Cleaning
• Antler Ridge
• Tabby’s Place
• Dibenedeto’s Auto Repair
• Allentown Presbyterian Church
• Aspen Ice
• Nu2U
• Whitetail Locksmith
• Hunterdon County Sheriff Department
• Lowes
• Grounds For Sculpture
• Red Mill Museum
• Wee Kids Consignment
• Purple Kangaroo
• Tortuga’s
• We Kids Consignment
• Domalena’s Hair Salon
• The Inn of the Hawke

MEET THE NEW PCIL STAFF MEMBERS!

Meet Peter Heredia

My name is Peter Heredia and as a member of the United States Air Force, I proudly served as a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) as a Master Sergeant, E-7. In February 2012, I received my Honorable Discharge from the United States Air Force Reserves after serving 27 years as a Combat Veteran.

My wife, Johanna and I have been married for eight years. We have two children. Joamsey is 15 years old and our son, Peter, is 6 years old.

As a member of the Progressive Center, I will be involved with the Disaster Preparedness team. I will be looking forward to the challenges ahead and to becoming a vital member of the team that informs and serves the community. I can be reached by email; peter.heredia@pcil.org or call me at (609) 581-4500 ext 117.
MEET THE NEW PCIL STAFF MEMBERS!

Meet Chelsea Martin

I am happy to have the opportunity to introduce myself. I earned a B.S. in Psychology from Rider University in May 2013, and I’ve always had a strong desire to build equality for individuals with disabilities. I began volunteering my time with PCIL by assisting with Career Gateway in July of 2013. I quickly fell in love with the students along with the mission of advocating for individuals with disabilities, and officially joined the team in November 2013. Since then I have taken a stronger role in Career Gateway along with helping promote our mission on Facebook. Since November I have been absorbing a vast amount of knowledge on the different services that PCIL provides. I believe the values I hold regarding fairness, justice, and integrity are well matched for the PCIL team. I look forward to each opportunity, as I am eager to utilize my education, experience, and skills with PCIL.

Meet Jaime McGeady

In case we haven’t met, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, I’m Jaime McGeady. I am one of the latest additions to the PCIL staff. I have lived in NJ my entire life and love the many things that New Jersey has to offer. As the sibling of a person with a significant disability, I especially love that NJ has so much to offer people with disabilities, including agencies such as the Progressive Center.

I am currently in my senior semester at Kean University. I am in the process of applying for graduate school, where I would like to work toward a Master’s in Social Work. I plan to spend my career working with and for people with disabilities. I hope to one day make a direct impact on peoples’ lives, possibly on a policy making level. I have found that I often enjoy the work that I do so much that I don’t even feel like I am at work. As they say, “If you do something you love you will never work a day in your life!”
US Airways Fined $1.2m Over Wheelchair Assistance

The Transportation Department fined US Airways $1.2 million in November for its poor wheelchair assistance to passengers in Philadelphia and Charlotte. Transportation officials investigated 300 complaints from passengers at the two airports during 2011 and 2012, with some passengers missing connections and being left unattended for long periods. US Airways will pay the government $7,000,000 according to a seven-page agreement with the government.

Please see USA Today.com for more on this story.

Preparing Makes Sense for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities. Most people get their information from helplines, and pamphlet; there are no other programs that offer this type of training, and it is done in person.”

This PACF grant will serve as a tremendous asset to the community. “The Liaisons program will provide another dimension to our diverse Emergency Preparedness Program”, says Ells. “The program has been spreading nicely throughout our region. The PACF grant has allowed us to increase our outreach; moreover, it trains people with disabilities with a new skill that they may one day parlay into viable employment in emergency preparedness or public speaking. It’s a win for everyone.”

PCIL is looking for bright, energetic volunteers interested in becoming a Liaison in the community. You will receive the necessary materials and instruction to be able to go into your community as an educator. After which you will work alongside PCIL emergency preparedness team to provide classes to other individuals about the importance and urgency to be prepared in the event of an emergency.

For more information, please contact Scott Ellis at 609-581-4500 or scott.ellis@pcil.org.
ART CONTEST

PCIL is having an art contest!

Please see the special insert in this quarter’s newsletter or contact us for more details.

VOLUME 45

COMING VISIT US!

1280 RT. 33 Hamilton, NJ
609.890.SUBS (7827)

Business Hours:
Monday - Saturday
9AM to 9PM
Sunday
9AM to 7PM

Progressive Center for Independent Living
1262 Whitehorse Hamilton Sq. Rd.
Madison Corporate Center
Building A, Suite 102
Hamilton, NJ 08690

Phone: 609-581-4500
Fax: 609-581-4554
E-mail: info@pcil.org
Site: www.pcil.org

Companion Care
You Deserve A Break Today!

It takes a special person to care for the needs of a loved one. Let me brighten your day by taking some of the weight from your shoulders. I am a retired Home Health Aide who has provided excellent care for more than 13 years. Call me to discuss your particular needs. I am available for service in Flemington, Lambertville, Stockton, & Ringoes.

Please call me, Bill Pidgeon, at 609-397-1728 (Home) or 908-391-6748 (Cell).

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED