The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act), was signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 22, 2014, and will go into effect on July 1, 2015. The changes in this act should strengthen and expand services for individuals with disabilities.

Significant changes that impact PCIL will include:

• The addition of a mandated fifth core service to go along with the original four core services (information/referral, advocacy, peer support & independent living skills instruction). The fifth core service is; Transition for students and for those who want out of nursing homes. This core service should help many individuals with these goals, and eventually PCIL when funding is increased.

• The change from our grantee/federal funder from US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to US Department of Health & Human Services.

• The process of what state agency (designated state entity) we will fall under moving forward, currently it
Remembering Pamela Vernon
by KB

On April 16, 2015, our dear friend and colleague, Pamela Rutkus Vernon, passed away after losing her battle with cancer. Pamela, born in Rochester, NY, graduated from Kent State University, OH with a dual bachelor’s degree in Education and Special Education.

In 2007, Pamela joined the Progressive Center for Independent Living, Inc. where she single-handedly ran the Hunterdon office in Flemington. Pam’s passion for teaching and love of helping others made her the perfect fit for this career. Her compassion for her students and how she touched their lives was indescribable.

A former student writes, “Pam was an extraordinary person whom I was very fond of. I genuinely looked forward to and thoroughly enjoyed each and every one of my interactions with her as well. Pam will truly be missed by me and I’m sure by everyone who was fortunate to know her.”

A student’s parent writes, “Pam was a dedicated person whose deep desire to help people succeed was evident from the first time we met her. It is because of her and her program, or I should say, the way she ran her program, that my son has found a new job with the potential of promotion far beyond his last job. We consider ourselves lucky to have known her. Our sincerest condolences to her family and to all who knew her.”

Pamela is survived by her companion of fifteen years, John Brambley, her mother, Jane Rutkus, sister, Kimberlee, brother, Todd, in-laws, 4 nieces and nephews, and many friends.

She was a lover of fine arts; writing, painting, music, dance and cooking were among her favorite pastimes. Pam’s favorite place on earth was Keuke Lake, NY. Most of all, she loved her family and friends who would describe her as a “giver,” one who always thought of others and was selfless in many ways.

“She will never be forgotten; we pledge today, a hallowed place within our hearts, is where she’ll always stay.”

Pam Vernon
Who’s Ready for the Beach?

By Jaime McGeady

Summer is just around the corner! For many people that means that the season of outdoor activities is well underway already. One activity that is not to be missed by most New Jersey residents is a trip to the beach. It is sort of a right of passage as a New Jersey resident to visit one of the beautiful beach towns and step one's toes into the sand.

This is an activity that should not be closed off to anyone, including individuals who use wheelchairs or walkers. Luckily, there are a number of New Jersey beach towns that not only offer the necessary accommodations, but also strive to make the experience of everyone coming to the shore a fantastic one.

Beach Wheels, although they may appear cumbersome and like a hassle to navigate, are just the opposite. Many towns offer a number of beach wheels at any given time and some of them even come with a complimentary umbrella! These wheelchairs are made out of lightweight PVC type plastic material for the frame and a strong and very durable vinyl mesh netting for the seat. Prior to getting into the beach wheels there are two important things to check for: 1- a seat belt and 2- make sure all of the tires are fully inflated. The beach wheels are a helpful tool when they are in good condition, however they can become a hassle if there is an under inflated tire.

Below is a list of beaches that have proven to be wheelchair friendly beaches, as experienced by some of the staff and consumers of PCIL. We, as an agency, are not endorsing these as the only ones out there, but they are the beaches that we have heard of successful beach outings occurring!

- Avon By the Sea – Monmouth County
- Bradley Beach – Monmouth County
- Spring Lake - Monmouth County
- Belmar – Monmouth County
- Point Pleasant Beach – Ocean County
- Sea Side Park – Ocean County
- Ocean City – Cape May County
After being at the Progressive Center for nearly 5 years, I am moving on. I have taken a position to become the new Recreation Manager at the ARC Mercer. It is with mixed emotions that I leave my PCIL family. Over the years I have been fortunate enough to work with a very creative, energetic, and enthusiastic staff. I will miss being a part of the team here at PCIL. Even though I will miss being involved in so many different activities and departments, I know that whoever takes my place will do a great job ensuring PCIL will still have wonderful recreation events.

What I will miss for sure are all the consumers and their family members I have met through the Progressive Center over the last 5 years. I have enjoyed working with so many individuals and seeing you achieve your goals. Also, it has been very rewarding to watch everyone enjoy our variety of recreation events. Some event highlights for sure was the nearly 60 people how show up for the Holiday parties and the Picnic and Pontoon boat rides at Mercer Park. Bringing nearly 100 people to the PCIL/Miracle League Softball Game a couple years ago is certainly something I will never forget. The Writers Block and the Art shows we put together were so memorable, and it exposed me to so many terrific artists.

While I will remember many things at the PCIL, many of you who attend recreation events will still see me from time to time. I do not plan to discontinue my relationship with PCIL, and hope to bring my family to many events moving forward. I would like to thank Scott Elliott, Karen Brokaw, and the rest of the PCIL for being supportive of me over the years, and teaching me so many things about advocacy and disability services. I look forward to seeing you all sometime in the future. Thanks for everything!

Are You a PCIL Member?

A PCIL membership has many benefits that can be enjoyed throughout the year. Join now and enjoy your benefits until the end of 2015. Members receive reduced rates on recreational events and are invited to a Members Only Dinner.

Individual --- $15.00
Couple --- $25.00
Family (Up to 5 living at same address) --- $40.00
Organization --- $100.00
CATS: A College Play Does Broadway Proud!

By Jennifer Freund

Through our Community Connections Recreation Program, PCIL recently made available tickets to see Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Classical Musical “CATS” at Kelsey Theatre. Jennifer Freund, one of our PCIL members shares her experience with us:

On March 28, Kelsey Theatre was showing the play CATS done by Playful Theatre Productions on stage. I went to see this play for the first time in my life, since I kept hearing about it and my mom had gotten tickets from PCIL for her, me and my aunt, to go see it. At first I was a little skeptical on going to see it, since I didn’t think I would like it. How very wrong I was.

I’ve personally never seen the Broadway version, but there was no doubt in my mind that this play did it proud. The costumes were amazing! The actors were so great that it was almost like they were real cats! Even if one made a mistake, you wouldn’t be able to tell because it would seem like the character did it on purpose as the character. The choreography of the play itself was amazing and so well in sync it showed throughout the whole play! The singing was beautiful and during one of the songs, one of the actor’s brought one of the audience on stage and they danced together for a bit while the actor’s were singing. I don’t know if that was planned or not, but I thought it was amazing either way.

The play itself may not seem to have a story in it the way it plays out, but if you pay real close attention you just might see it. The story it tells. I would recommend this play to all ages and especially animal lovers! If you can’t afford to see it in Broadway, this is just as great, but not as much money.

Returning Staff

By Renee Pfaff

Progressive Center is very excited to welcome back Suzanne Peins to our Mercer office staff. Suzanne will resume her past responsibilities as an Independent Living Specialist along with other duties. Suzanne has a wealth of knowledge within the disability field and has always been eager to share it with others to ensure a better quality of life and independence. You can reach Suzanne at 609-581-4500 ext. 112.

We would also like to welcome our new Support Staff, Virginia McNulty, to our Mercer office. Virginia was a past participant of our Career Gateway program and continued her connection with us through our Career Club. Virginia will assist her co-workers by directing calls to appropriate staff along with providing office support.
Once again, Progressive Center has teamed up with Ewing High School to conduct a workshop presentation at the annual Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference, which is organized through the Department of Education, Office of Special Education. For several years now Ewing High students that typically attend the PCIL transition program, along with PCIL’s Transition Specialist, develop a workshop which focuses on advocacy issues. In the past, we had a panel of students share their success stories on advocating techniques, developed an acrostic poem about advocacy, role playing and what would you do if scenarios. This year we again wanted interaction from the audience so we went with a Jeopardy game. Our Ewing students lead the game reading questions focused on advocating in life; where the categories tested their knowledge and understanding in the art of self-advocacy. The student presenters also obtained assistance from their peers who attend a Life Skills class by assisting with the scoring.

In addition to hosting a workshop, Ewing stepped it up a notch and enlisted their own Quenten Coach to speak as a keynote at the conference. Quenten isn’t new to Dare to Dream and has co-hosted Ewing’s workshops with his peers for the last two years. Taking on the role as a keynote was a natural fit for Quenten as he enjoys entertaining and interacting with others. Quenten shared with the audience his struggles as a young student academically as well as socially until he discovered his passion…tap dancing. The freedom and self-confidence with his new talent gave him the voice to begin speaking up for other issues in his life, specifically school. He advocated his wishes to returning to a public school and after receiving proper accommodations is back on track with his grades and relishes “being different”. After his speech, Quenten entertained the audience with a live sampling of his tap dancing. And to top it off, Quenten improved some tap to coincide with the conference’s MC, LeDerick Horne, as LeDerick recited one of his own poems!

To see video of Quenten’s tap dance demonstrations from the conference, please visit our website at www.pcil.org or Facebook page at Progressive Center for Independent Living NJ.
Regulation Changes Improve Lives

Continued from Front Page

is NJ Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. A major alternative candidate is NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services, both are being considered.

Changes for individuals will place a significant emphasis on the provision of services to youth with disabilities and include the following;

• Emphasizes the need for youth with disabilities to have more opportunities to practice and improve their workplace skills, to consider their career interests, and to get real world work experience.

• Requires State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to make “pre-employment transition services” available to all students with disabilities and to set aside at least 15 percent of their Federal VR program funds to provide pre-employment transition services to assist students with disabilities make the transition from secondary school to postsecondary education programs and competitive integrated employment.

• Dedicates half of the Federal Supported Employment program funds to provide youth with the most significant disabilities with the supports they need to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Additional changes through WIOA include supporting employer engagement and ensuring that the workforce is job-driven, matching employers with skilled individuals and include;

• Increased opportunities under the VR program to assist employers in providing work-based learning experiences for individuals.

• How VR State agencies will describe in their State plans how they will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals.

The major emphasis of WIOA is to strive for competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities. PCIL’s “It’s All About Work” and “Career Gateway” Programs have been ahead of the curve related to these WIOA changes. Moving forward PCIL will continue to be responsible for assisting youth with disabilities in transitioning from school to work that fits nicely with New Jersey being an Employment First state encouraging competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred post-education pursuit for everyone.
My Daring Adventure

By Daniel Nehmad - Consumer of PCIL

Dan...you’d been struck by a car as a pedestrian, in Moscow (Russia)... back on April 13 (of 2002)... you were there working as a journalist.” It was then September of 2002.

The news was a quite blow to me, on many levels: shock at surviving the typically fatal trauma I’d supposedly sustained, utter disbelief at how far from home I’d been (I initially had no memory of Moscow, whatsoever!), an amazed gratefulness that I was still alive and in one piece after such a dramatic trauma, and a distant curiosity about just how the heck I’d really be able to build a life that could possibly, hopefully, satisfy me (given all the drama plus rounds of therapies back then, I was too busy to ponder too distantly into the future; for I saw that all we ever have is this present moment. It had taken me roughly five months to fully emerge from a coma doctors termed a “two-month coma.” Amazingly, I had both arms and both legs, though I had torn a ligament in one knee; my pelvis had been broken, but, gratefully, repaired successfully. My most destabilizing injury--I was then told, in the midst of an insidiously biting short-term memory loss--was a severe traumatic brain injury.

I’d clearly suffered a remarkable blow, if you will...not just physically, but a staggering strike, psychologically! As my class valedictorian in high school and an honors graduate of a top college, it has been quite a challenge for me to identify and then not engage self-defeating mindsets. But as I remember hearing some time into my recovery, one’s quality of life is really all about perspective. In the years since my accident, I have come to acknowledge a critical threat my trauma has posed to the passion for and strong ability I’d always possessed in school and learning. While I do still enjoy reading, I now can’t read quite as quickly as I could; though let me say that part of my challenge with reading now stems from a continuing uncertainty about just what professional path I want to pursue (that same uncertainty marked my state at the time of my accident!).

A few days after first returning to my parents’ home from the rehab center, I happened to come across a book about Helen Keller then randomly lying around their home. Unable to read too quickly, I fortuitously came across an emboldened quote that has served as a personal motto for me ever since, in the now 13 years of my TBI recovery: “life’s either a daring adventure,” she’d held, “or nothing.” Indeed, I paralleled my case with Keller’s basic biography--a successful and helpful person who faced exceedingly limiting conditions--of deafness and blindness in her case--together. Certainly, her life had been a daring adventure--a brave, nervy

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and fundamentally uncertain journey into the unknown—one for which faith in herself, very supportive people, a strong & dedicated work ethic and a desire to learn and to help others led her to success. While money through recovery from any injury like mine is certainly of vital importance, that worry has thankfully been covered—I had received insurance money from the Peace Corps (I had volunteered with them in Uzbekistan, where I’d first learned Russian), I now continue to receive disability moneys from the US government, and, very fortunately, my parents have been able to help me along the way, financially.

Vacant of a clearly driving focus—that is, with no way to feel my life was like a ‘daring adventure,’ in Keller’s words—I certainly understood how and why she’d opt to term life as “nothing.” I had always worked very hard in school, I loved learning and I loved helping other people, as those have long been my primary passions. And so perhaps I can—or in effect, should—now look at the challenge of my TBI as an opportunity. I’m now slowly trying to edge out just what that opportunity is and can be.

I also now have to face two other cognitive changes: my cognitive processing speed is now noticeably slower than it had been, (and so though I do still enjoy reading, I have not been able to enjoy books/reading as the easy and seemingly mindless activity it had once been); then, my ability to stay organized and too on-top-of-things now also is much weaker than it had been. I currently volunteer as an ESL tutor, work part-time in a law office, do a bit of writing and am sure to make frequent visits to the gym (that has truly been a most thrilling therapeutic aid!). While I continue trying to find a career for myself, I have hope that by trying different activities I will stumble upon work that feels more grounding to me.

Upon confronting sometimes despairing conditions, I have fortunately come across some very helpful commentary in the field of Buddhist literature—writings therein have helped me to distance myself from the belittling and unnerving effects of my ego (my own understanding of / expectations for who and what I should be). As well known Buddhist proponent Chogyam Trungpa had commented, “there is a basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world’s problems.” And that separation from my ego and a disappointed self-image has begun with a regular meditation practice (good instructions for meditation can be found here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDWpuA08ues
We are approaching hurricane season, which runs June 1st through November 30th. What do experts say about hurricane season 2015? Experts are predicting a hurricane season that’s slightly less active than the average, with nine named storms, five hurricanes and one major hurricane this year. But don’t get a false sense of security by that, now is the time to think about basic and individualized needs you, your family, pets and service animals will need in advance of Hurricane season. Let’s think for a moment; how will you communicate with one another? What supplies do you need to keep in your home, car or office? The more you know about what to do in an emergency, the more confident and secure you will feel in your abilities to manage through a disaster.

The Five Excuses for not preparing:

1. That could never happen here.

2. Even if it does happen here, it won’t happen to me.

3. Even if it does happen to me, it won’t be that bad.

4. Even if it is that bad, then I can get emergency supplies anytime.

5. Even if I can’t get emergency supplies, then the government will save me.

Have you ever heard yourself making these same excuses? It’s important for you to know how they can make you less safe. You can start by taking these simple steps:

1. Be informed. Know the hazards and risks in your area. And learn what you need to do to get ready for them.

2. Make a family emergency plan, so you know how you would communicate with and find your loved ones if a disaster hits. For example, think about how you would reach your kids at school, your spouse at work. If you had to evacuate, where would you go. Thinking this through in advance will make a big difference.

3. Build an emergency supply kit – both at home and in the car – that includes water, food and first aid supplies to help you survive if you lose power or get stranded in your car. This is especially important for dealing with icy roads and snowstorms this winter.

4. Get Involved - Be an advocate and educator for safety and emergency preparedness within your community. Contact your local Citizen Corps.

5. Using modern-day technology can help individuals and families

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Powerhouse Gym of Hamilton recently stepped up to partner with the Progressive Center to provide a work site experience for one of our consumers. Romeo Tendencia Jr., Managing Partner at Powerhouse Gym, was our point person who was gracious enough to start the day with a complete tour of the facility. Afterwards, the consumer was given a list of assignments to complete as her job coordinator assessed her work ability skills. This site location provided ample tasks to keep our consumer engaged and Romeo made himself available throughout our visit. PCIL would like to thank Romeo for this wonderful opportunity and support towards our pre-employment program.

Powerhouse Gym is located at
127 Rt. 206 S., Hamilton, NJ
609-585-4967

Progressive Center and Support Coordination
A Great Fit!

Please contact our Mercer or Hunterdon Offices for more information or to schedule a visit.

Mercer
3525 Quakerbridge Rd., Suite 904
Hamilton, NJ
609-581-4500

Hunterdon
4 Walter E. Foran Blvd., Suite 410
Flemington, NJ
908-782-1055
As my older sister Hope sat excited on the couch waiting to tell her big news, I wondered what it could possibly be. She was excited yet nervous as she spoke the words “I’m seeing someone”, I thought that was great and replied “OMG tell me everything”. As we sat on our mom’s couch, she beamed with joy and lit up as she started telling me Matt Scott’s story.

“Well, he is kind of a big deal in the medical community”, Hope did her best humble burg. My mind quickly went to thinking my sister is in a relationship with a world-renowned doctor, or maybe an innovative surgeon traveling abroad helping the helpless. As my thoughts ran away with imagining what she meant by “big deal in the medical community”, she interrupted my daydreaming with “Matt was the first person in the world to have human hand transplant.” As my sister said this, she gleaned with pride and admiration for her boyfriend. “Hope, what does that even mean?” I responded, confused and intrigued by the story that was about to unfold….

Matt lost his dominant hand when he was 24 in a blast from an M80 firecracker; he had a prosthetic hand for 14 years. To say the prosthetic hand never felt like a natural fit would be quite obvious, but at the time that was his only option. Matt was limited in what he was able to do with his prosthetic, he was unable to clap for his children when they accomplished something great, he could not hold both of his boy’s hands at the same time when crossing the street, and he was incapable hugging his children with both of his hands. Scott’s whole life changed when he was ‘hand-picked’ by a medical team in Kentucky to be a recipient of the first ever donor hand transplant in 1998.

This surgery was literally unknown, since he would be the first amputee in the nation to receive a donor hand. This was a highly controversial surgery in the medical field since there was such a high probability that Matt’s body could reject the hand; in as little as 6 months Matt could be dead from the medication he would need to go on to fight off potential infections. Matt however, believed that “someone needed to be first”. His brave decision worked out and he is now revered in the medical community. The success of Matt’s hand transplant has influenced the transplantation and reconstructive surgery community around the world. To date 52 patients have now received 70 hands, and these individuals were able to get back the sense of self that was lost with their hands.

Less than a year after Scott’s surgery, he threw out the first ceremonial pitch for the Philadelphia Phillies. He is currently the director for the school of

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**Matt’s Story**

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paramedic science at Camden County College. That is where my sister and Matt initially met. By meeting Matt, my idea of medical fame has changed. I realize that Matt had the strongest role in paving the way for medical advancement. A woman recently thanked Matt for being brave enough to go through with his hand surgery because it enabled her to be the recipient of a face transplant (she is a victim of domestic violence resulting in serious facial deformity). Matt is a great example of how living with a disability can bring enormous progress to not only our country but to our world.

![Matt's Picture]

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**Emergency Preparedness & Hurricane Season**

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prepare, adapt and recover from disruptions brought on by emergencies or disasters. FEMA reminds all Americans to implement the following in advance of an emergency.

6. Learn how to send updates via text and internet from your mobile phone to your contacts and social channels in case voice communications are not available.

7. Store your important documents such as personal and financial records in the cloud or in a secure and remote area or flash or jump drive that you can keep readily available so they can be accessed from anywhere.


History has shown us that the government can’t do it alone when it comes to preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. FEMA is only part of our nation’s emergency management team – along with our other federal partners, state and local governments, non-profit and voluntary organizations, the private sector and most importantly: the public.
Who Needs A Laugh!?
Texting Abbreviations by The Elderly
From cartalk.com

FWIW: Forgot Where I Was
BTW: Bring The Wheelchair
ROFL... CGU: Rolling On The Floor Laughing... And Can’t Get Up
DWI: Driving While Incontinent
LOL: Living On Lipitor
OMG: Oy, My Grandchildren!
OMG: Ouch, My Groin!
IMHO: Is My Hearing-Aid On?
WTF: What’s Today’s Fish?
WTF: Wet The Furniture
IMHMO: In My HMO...
RULKM: Are You Leaving Kids Money?
BYOT: Bring Your Own Teeth

GTG: Gotta Groan
TGIF: Thank Goodness It’s Four (Four O’Clock - Early Bird Special)
FWB: Friend With Betablockers
FYI: For Your Indigestion...
JK: Just Kvetching
TTYL: Talk To You Louder
MILF: Meal I’d Like To Forget
LMDO: Laughing My Dentures Out
LWO: Lawrence Welk’s On
MGAD: My Grandson’s A Doctor
SUS: Speak Up, Sonny
WIWYA: When I Was Your Age
GOML: Get Off My Lawn
Internships Available
By Renee Pfaff

PCIL is offering opportunities for college students pursuing careers in Human Services, Special Education, Social Services or Psychology that may want to intern at our Mercer and possibly Hunterdon office. Prospective interns will gain valuable knowledge by interacting with staff and consumers and learn the unique needs and services required by a person with a disability. They will have the chance to acquire hands on experience working with individuals having various abilities and disabilities within a wide range of ages.

The Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL) is a non-profit, NON-residential organization that has been empowering the lives of people living with disabilities since 1996. We offer core services within; information and referral, independent living skills preparation, peer support and advocacy. Additional services we provide include case management through DDD, student transition and pre-employment services for individuals within the community and disability awareness training. PCIL offers a fully accessible arrangement of recreational activities within our recreational program and volunteer opportunities for those looking for community experience.

Responsibilities

- Coordinate invites for PCIL events
- Coordinate promotional materials
- Taking initiative to build relationships with potential consumers
- Respecting confidentiality of PCIL and its consumers
- Providing administrative support to PCIL staff

Ideal Qualities of Potential Intern

- Awareness of the issues and cultural barriers that affect individuals with disabilities
- A commitment and desire to help individuals with disabilities
- Ability to create and maintain a flexible schedule
- A leader who has the ability to be self-directed, detailed, organized and enterprising
- Excellent social / people skills

Anyone interested in this opportunity should please contact Renee Pfaff at 609-581-4500 or renee.pfaff@pcil.org
Advertise With Us!

Place your business ad in our newsletter. We have a mailing list of over 1,100 households within Mercer and Hunterdon counties.

Call us for more details and rates. 609-581-4500

PCIL is Going to The Phillies!

Be on the look out for upcoming dates for a Phillies Game!

Coming this summer!

SAVE THE DATE

Mercer County Annual Picnic will be held on July 27th

We will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA!

Progressive Center for Independent Living
3525 Quakerbridge Road
Suite 904
Hamilton, NJ 08619

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