The Disability Pride Parade is an event PCIL anticipates every year. This year was no different. Although the parade date had moved from October 2 to October 9 due to Hurricane Joaquin, the 2015 parade still brought in a record breaking 700 parade goers. This parade is essential in boosting morale in the disability community since it brings everyone together for a celebration. It’s not often enough professionals, parents, friends, and individuals in the disability world are together commemorating the dignity that comes with having a disability. This parade gives everyone who plays a part a chance to attend and show disability pride.

The parade is also a great opportunity for the general public to see how much pride and respect the disability community has. The parade starts at the NJ State House and ends at East Lafayette Street. It was not uncommon to see state workers or local business employees dancing along with the entertainment on their lunch breaks. Even police officers working the parade couldn’t help but engage in the festivities.

The vibrant atmosphere was electrified by the entertainment which consisted...
The ABLE Act, which was signed into law by President Obama on Friday, December 19, 2014, amends Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create tax free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. The bill was created to allow people that rely on benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid to set aside and save money for essential expenses that include medical and dental care, education, community based supports, employment training, assistive technology, housing and transportation. The ABLE Act provides people with disabilities the same opportunities that all other Americans have to save through college savings accounts and individual retirement accounts. The legislation also contains fraud protection against Medicaid abuse and a Medicaid pay-back provision when the beneficiary passes away. It eliminates barriers to work by preventing money saved through ABLE accounts from counting against an individual’s eligibility for any federal benefits program. Proposed regulations were issued in June 2015. Although the final regulations have not been finalized, the Treasury Department and the IRS gave states a green light to establish ABLE programs prior to issuance of the federal regulations.

Although the ABLE Act has passed federally, states must pass their own ABLE bills to establish state ABLE programs for their residents. Here’s how it works:

1. ABLE accounts are tax advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families. Income earned by the accounts will not be taxed. Contributions to the account made by any person (the account beneficiary, family and friends) will not be tax deductible.

2. For the first time, eligible individuals and families will be allowed to establish ABLE savings accounts that will not affect their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and other public benefits. It will secure funding for disability related expenses on behalf of designated beneficiaries with disabilities that will supplement benefits provided
Board President’s Comment
By Norman Smith

Below is Norman Smith’s speech that was delivered at the 2015 Disability Pride Parade. Norman Smith is PCIL’s board president. He is also Associate Executive Director of Project Freedom.

My name is Norman Smith, and I’m proud to be with you today.

Why are we here today? What are we proud of? Nobody wants to be disabled, so why are we here celebrating? After all, society’s view of people with disabilities can be so negative, so weakening, so smothering of spirit, that it can be overwhelming and disempowering. As people with disabilities, we put up with so much crap imposed upon us by society, the government, and the system that it is a wonder that any of us have the energy and initiative to be independent, productive, or active. But we are independent, productive, and active no matter what is thrown in our way! We need to take pride in that fact, own it, and celebrate our pride in what we do every day! This applies to every person with a disability no matter what their situation. Our lives are precarious “high-wire acts” of low income, with under-funded supports that keep us more dependent than independent. One false step drops us into the abyss of institutional living to be trapped and robbed of personal initiative, independence, and dignity. Yet every day we get up to perform on the “high wire”, defying negative attitudes, preconceptions, prejudices, and fears. Some do it with drudgery. Some do it with gusto. Most people with disabilities live our lives somewhere in between. And we do it every single day! This is why we have pride. This is why we need to display our pride today. This is why we celebrate! Thank you, and continue the celebration!

PCIL Consumer Finds the Perfect Match
By Jaime McGeady

Most people are nervous about a job interview, but not Mike Toft! He says that he was excited and relaxed. Mike started his very first paying job at Friendly’s a few months ago.

When PCIL first met Mike it was to provide him support coordination services. As part of our role as the support coordination agency, we made sure that Mike was referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. DVR, a resource for individuals with disabilities, assists with different aspects of finding and maintaining a job. DVR secured Mike a job coach through the Center for Vocational Rehab. There he was matched up with a job coach,

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Think about the opportunities that working affords us. For most people it allows us to do something we enjoy, increase our feelings of autonomy and self-worth, and earn a living that allows us to live an independent lifestyle. Competitive employment can open the door to opportunities that allow people to reach goals in life that should be available to everyone. In addition, every person looking for work has to be paired with an employer looking for a qualified candidate to fill an opening. There are a few local businesses that stand out for their service to people with disabilities in the community, and one of them is McCaffrey’s Food Market.

McCaffrey’s Food Market has been a positive example to the community in providing both service and inclusion to people with disabilities in Mercer County. This local store provides a welcoming environment to all its customers and staff, including those with disabilities. The staff also provides assistance to customers with disabilities, as well as older adults who need help. The store management is open to employing people with disabilities, and has provided the necessary supports to help these individuals advance and achieve the feeling of self-worth that comes from holding a job. This employer takes its responsibility to provide courteous service and support its local residents seriously, and should be used as an example to other businesses interested in doing the same.

Congratulations to McCaffrey’s Food Market for receiving the 2015 Employer of the Year Award!

It’s That Time of the Year!
Renew your PCIL Membership for 2016

PCIL membership has many benefits that can be enjoyed throughout the year. Members receive reduced rates on recreational events and are invited to the Members Only Dinner. Join now and start the 2016 year off with all the benefits.

Individual---$15.00
Couple---$25.00
Family (Up to 5 living at same address)---$40.00
Organization---$100.00

Call our Mercer office for more information, 609-581-4500
CUCUMBER PICKLES

This recipe appears in: Serious Entertaining: A Real Deal Barbecue Feast, In a Pickle: How to Make Garlic Dill Pickles

These garlic dills will forever change the way you approach pickles. If you’ve never canned before, you can make it easier on yourself and make them as refrigerator pickles. However, for those of us who love stashing away a little bit of summer for later in the year, canning instructions are also included.

Special equipment:
4 pint jars or 2 quart jars

Ingredients
2 quart kirby cucumbers (approx. 3 lbs)
1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
1 1/2 cups filtered water
2 tablespoons pickling salt
8 garlic cloves, peeled
4 teaspoons dill seed
2 teaspoons black peppercorns
1 teaspoon red chili flakes

Directions
1. Wash jars thoroughly in warm, soapy water. If you plan on making shelf stable pickles, prepare a boiling water bath canner. Put fresh canning jar lids into a small saucepan with 3 inches of water and set to the barest simmer.
2. Wash and dry kirby cucumbers. Remove blossom end. Cut into chips, spears or leave whole, depending on your preference.
3. Combine vinegar, water and salt in sauce pan and bring to a boil.
4. Equally divide garlic cloves, dill seed, black peppercorns and red chili flakes between jars. Pack prepared cucumbers into jars as tightly as you can without crushing them.
5. Pour the brine into the jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace (that’s the amount of space between the surface of the brine and the rim of the jar).
6. Remove any air bubbles from jars by gently tapping them. You can also use a wooden chopstick or plastic utensil to help remove stubborn bubbles.
7. Wipe rims and apply lids and bands (don’t screw them on too tightly).
8. If processing jars for shelf stability, lower jars into your processing pot. When water returns to a boil, set a timer for 10 minutes.
9. When time is up, remove jars from canning pot and allow them to cool. When jars are cool enough to handle, check seals.
10. If you choose not to process your jars, let them cool before putting them into the refrigerator. Do note that your jars may seal during the cooling process. However, without the boiling water bath process, that doesn’t mean they’re shelf stable. Still refrigerate.
11. Let pickles rest for at least one week before eating.
FUN WITH PCIL!

**SOFTBALL**

Everyone had a blast this summer at the Annual PCIL Softball Game at YMCA/Sawmill
SOCIAL CLUB

Friends of PCIL had a great time together eating dinner at China Buffet.

COME JOIN!

Stay up to date on all our events by liking us on facebook or visiting our website.
Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act

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3. There are limits for eligibility for an ABLE account. The age of onset of an individual with a significant disability must be before the age of 26. If a person is already receiving SSI/SSDI, they would automatically qualify. If a person is not receiving benefits but meets SSI/SSDI criteria regarding significant limitations and the onset of disability occurs before the age of 26, they would also qualify for an ABLE account.

4. The total limit of annual contributions by all participating individuals, including family and friends is $14,000. This would meet the gift tax exclusion. The total limit over time that could be made to an ABLE account will be subject to an individual state and their limit for an education related savings plan. Some states have set this limit for more than $300,000 per plan. For individuals receiving SSI benefits, the first $100,000 in ABLE accounts will be exempted from the SSI $2,000 individual resource limit.

5. Expenses allowed by ABLE accounts are education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology, personal support services, health care expenses, financial management, administrative services and other expenses which will be further described in the federal ABLE regulations once they are finalized.

6. Each state is responsible for establishing and operating an ABLE program. If a state should choose not to establish its own program, the state may choose to contract with another state.

Furthermore, an ABLE account will provide more choice and control for the beneficiary and family. The cost of establishing an account will be considerably less than a Special Needs Trust. ABLE account owners will have the ability to control their funds and if circumstances change, still have other options available to them.

I contacted Assemblyman, Dan Benson representing the 14th District. He is a prime co-sponsor of the ABLE Act. He said in his letter to me that he is hopeful the bill will be voted on when the Assembly returns from its recess in November. He stated that he will continue to speak with his colleagues about the bill and advocate for its passage. He stated that it may be helpful if consumers of PCIL contact both Senate and Assembly leadership to request they support the bill (A-3956) and urge passage in both houses. Contact information for legislators can be found on the NJ Office of Legislative Services website at: http://www.njleg.state.nj.us.
Disability Pride Parade
Continued from Front Page

of many talented artists. A crowd favorite was singer Kaleigh Brendle. When she sang it was hard to not stop what you were doing and listen.

The Progressive Center for Independent Living’s Executive Director, Scott Elliott and Board President, Norman Smith delivered inspiring and compelling speeches to the crowd about living with a disability. A line that stood out in Scott Elliott’s speech reads, “I am proud of being a person first, and I have many friends and colleagues who see me not my disability. It is so important to be positive no matter what the circumstances are because if you are not, the circumstances will only worsen for everyone.” Both Elliott and Smith received standing ovations from the crowd.

For the past 5 years the Alliance Center for Independent Living (ACI) has worked hard to insure this event happens. The Disability Pride Parade is put on and coordinated by ACE that serves Middlesex, Somerset, and Union Counties. ACI works tirelessly to make sure parade goers leave feeling uplifted. If you are interested in donating money or time to the 2016 Parade, please contact ACI’s Deputy Director Luke Koppisch at 732-738-4388.

Both PCIL’s Executive Director, Scott Elliott (above), and PCIL’s Board President, Norman Smith (below), spoke at the parade this year.

Trenton Police enjoying the festivities.
Katie Bashlor. Katie worked with Mike for a few months, helping him apply to local businesses, including a supermarket and Mike’s church where he currently volunteers.

When Katie approached Friendly’s, Lee, the manager was excited about the idea of hiring Mike. Lee states that he was a little hesitant at first, but only because Mike had no job history. However, Lee knew he had a task that would be perfect for Mike and a very important part of providing customers with consistently good food and service. Mike’s job, two afternoons a week, is to measure out portions of food products, such as French fries and broccoli. This job is a great match for Mike! Mike has a huge interest in all things culinary. He loves to cook and bake at home with his mother, so food services was a natural fit for him. Also, Friendly’s is within walking distance of Mike’s home, so he is able to walk to work every day.

According to Lee, “Mike is always on time and a good worker.” Mike says, “I love my job, its fun and I like the people!”

PCIL Welcomes New Interns

By Renee Pfaff

PCIL has taken on two new interns to help us out at the Mercer Office. Jonathan Buckley is a senior at the Health Science Academy High School program sponsored by Mercer County Community College. He is fulfilling a 180 hour internship for graduation requirements. You may be receiving a phone call from Jonathan as he assists us by updating consumer contact information.

Jessica Lindenberger recently began volunteering for us and will be answering the phones and completing various tasks around the office. She has been involved with Progressive Center for many years and benefitted from our Career Gateway program in the past, and we now get to benefit from her services.

Jonathan (Left) and Jessica (Right) join PCIL’s intern staff.
Disability Awareness Sensitivity Training
By Renee Pfaff

Attention Schools! Looking for a new and exciting way to teach Diversity and Disability Awareness?

PCIL is now offering Disability Awareness Sensitivity Training (DAST) workshops to schools. This workshop provides students a direct look into the disability world through the eyes of someone with a disability. They will hear from a person living with a disability and ask the questions they always wanted to ask. Students will also participate in hands-on demonstrations of what it’s like to have various disabilities and to try out assistive devices and mobility aides useful to People with Disabilities.

Students learn that disabilities don’t make the person, rather everyone is different and that makes the world so much more interesting. Please call the Mercer office for more details.

Students get hands-on experience learning what it might be like to have a disability through PCIL’s DAST Program.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY EVENT!

Start preparing now!

This winter PCIL will host its first “Ugly Sweater” Holiday Party.

All attendees will be encouraged to come dressed with their best “Ugly Sweater”.

Prizes will be given out for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, and of course, there will be music, games, and holiday fun!

Date and location will be announced soon!
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

KEEP UP WITH PCIL!

Keep up on all the upcoming events in your local area by visiting www.pcil.org and check out our Calendar of Events.

We are also hoping to send out email blasts to alert you of special events. Please feel free to call us and share your email.

Remember to like us on Facebook. Search Progressive Center for Independent Living NJ

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

Phone: 609-581-4500
Fax: 609-581-4555
E-mail: info@pcil.org
Site: www.pcil.org