The independent living movement has struck major victories over the past forty years including successful lobbying for legislation that insures civil rights, the creation of hundreds of Centers for Independent Living, and the change in culture and attitudes towards people living with disabilities. Unfortunately there are still areas in which people living with disabilities face uphill battles and finding stable housing can be chief among them.

Many people with significant disabilities are living on low, fixed incomes leaving their options for housing extremely

CONTINUED ON PG 2
WAITING FOR INDEPENDENCE
CONTINUED FROM FRONT

limited. This is also true for many older adults and veterans; two populations where there is often an overlap with disabilities. The average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Mercer County according to bestplaces.net is over $1,200.00 a month for rent alone. According to www.businessinsider.com, the average Social Security Retirement payment in New Jersey is just over $1,500.00 a month and it is one of the highest in the country. New Jersey Supplemental Security Insurance is even less, paying just about $800 a month. There is no way that any of those persons whose income is dependent on these programs can afford to rent an apartment.

“It this trend precludes any of the many options for living independently in the community for people with disabilities,” said Smith.

So what do you do? You wait, because there are only a few options for assistance. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is probably the best option to wait for because it can be used anywhere in the US, “but it has one big drawback,” according to Smith. “When the Section 8 voucher program does open up, consumers need to get on a waiting list. Even during the rare occasions that the wait list is open, only a few hundred people are accepted for a lottery to be placed on another wait list for a voucher,” said Smith.

The state-funded State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) has been closed, except for older adults and people with disabilities who are able get placed on a wait list, until the funding is replenished.

CONTINUED ON PG 3
There are a number of Project-Based Section 8 subsidized rental units in Mercer County, but the typical wait time for acceptance into the units is 2-3 years. These subsidized units are also available to those with low-income and not just people living with disabilities causing the volume of people who need assistance to far outweigh the availability of the programs.

In the recent past those with developmental disabilities in the NJ DDD programs have had access to the Supportive Housing Connection rental subsidy, and those with severe mental health challenges can ask for a subsidy from the NJ DMHAS. These programs are an improvement on the situation, but there are many people who do not qualify and as such are prevented from accessing these programs. Both are meant to be a “bridge” program and recipients are required to apply for other subsidies.

“People with strictly physical disabilities are not covered by these two programs,” said Smith. “They struggle to find appropriate housing because they fall through this subsidy gap.”

The housing situation for people with disabilities is truly alarming. As studies continue to link stable housing to positive physical and mental health outcomes, the struggle to find such situations can be extremely stressful. It can leave people living in unhappy, unhealthy, and even dangerous situations as they wait for an opportunity to find that stable base from which to build their lives.

If you are looking for affordable housing you should get on every waiting lists you can. There is no harm in turning down a housing option if you have found a solution and your name comes up on a list. Please start your search as early as possible.

This article has just touched on the financial issues associated with living in the community, when you include accessibility needs the field narrows even further. There are limited options under the best of circumstances and in a crisis there are even less.

The following are some online resources which can help identify housing options:

https://affordablehousingonline.com/

https://njhrc.gov/

https://www.welcomehomenj.org/

https://www.hud.gov/

https://www.nj211.org/housing

If you need help in understanding the available options, and learning how to apply, please feel free to contact The Progressive Center (609) 581-4500 - info@pcil.org
I hope the holidays found everyone happy and healthy. As we turn the page on 2018, and look forward to what the New Year will bring, the Community Connections Recreation Program has been busy with lots of fun and varied activities! We took a day-trip to Dragonfly Farms in October to enjoy the hayrides, pumpkin painting, and Halloween atmosphere at their Fall Festival. In November we were treated to a personalized presentation by famous realist painter Mel Leipzig. Leipzig, a world renown artist, went through a variety of his paintings explaining their inspiration, his techniques, and the progression of his paintings. He then afforded participants the opportunity to ask questions such as how he started his career, how he supported himself as an artist, and how others might follow in those footsteps. December was a busy month which started with a trip to The Trenton Circus Squad’s ‘Fall Spectacular” performance. A fabulous evening of juggling, acrobatics, comedy, and more put on by local youth participating in the Circus Squad’s programs throughout the year. If you don’t know who they are do yourself a favor and check them out! (www.trentoncircussquad.org) They are a great organization doing amazing things in our community. That outing was followed closely by the third of our series of three art-themed events, a workshop on how to organize your own art show. Here I’d like to give a special thanks to Byron Aubrey. Byron not only led this workshop, providing valuable insights and tangible resources about how to take your art from your home or studio to public display, he also coordinated all of the three workshops by choosing the topics, finding the presenters, locating the space, and helping ensure the events went smoothly. Finally an active year was capped by our annual Holiday Party. We had a huge turn out for dinner, crafts, karaoke, dancing, and of course the Ugly Holiday Sweater Contest! Congratulations to this year’s Ugly Sweater winners Tina P, Tyffany S, and Patrice J!

If you, a loved one, or a friend wants to get involved as a participant or volunteer for Community Connections, please contact us. The more we work together, the more successful we will all be, and the more we’ll get to know the communities we share. As the New Year progresses we’ll have lots of great events to look forward to so keep your eyes peeled for those yellow flyers!

Ugly sweater winners left to right: Tina P., Tyffany S., and Patrice J.
RECREATION CORNER

PCIL consumers enjoy several activities throughout October, November, and December!
As a disabled person who volunteered at PCIL, one of my favorite moments was seeing the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Every time I came into the office and admired the poster, I would always say “Thank you President George H.W. Bush” or “Thank you President Bush 41” because President Bush 41 was the president who signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law. I also remember the joy I felt when I came into the PCIL office in Hamilton and we were celebrating the fact that George H.W. Bush was the first U.S. President to celebrate his 94th birthday on June 12th 2018. Even though we were sad that George H. W. Bush passed away on November 30th 2018 while his wife Barbara Bush died on April 17th 2018, we were happy that they both lived long and fulfilling lives. I admire Barbara Bush for her donations to literary causes and hospitals in Kennebunkport Maine. And I admire George H.W. Bush for his military service in World War II and his public service as Ronald Reagan’s Vice President and as the 41st President of the United States. I feel the greatest presidential accomplishments of George H. W. Bush were the Americans with Disabilities Act, Operation Desert Storm, and winning the Cold War.

The greatest presidential accomplishment of George H.W. Bush was the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This law provided equal opportunities and equal rights to disabled Americans in schools, colleges, the workplace, and other place in the real world. This law also prohibited discrimination against disabled Americans. The ADA helped me succeed in college so far because it helped me get the necessary academic accommodations to help me succeed in Mercer County Community College and now Rider University as a Global Studies Major. Thanks to the ADA, I finished my associate’s degree at Mercer with high honors and as a member of Phi Theta Kappa. The ADA also helped me make the dean’s list twice at Rider University. Last but not least, the ADA also got me interested in volunteering at PCIL’s Hamilton office as well as attending the final two meetings of Rider University’s disability club during the Fall 2018 semester. And for my personal successes thus far, I am grateful that George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law.

Former President George H. W. Bush lived an extraordinary and long life. He was an American hero and patriot. And he and his wife Barbara Bush will be missed by many Americans.
The Campership Award, sponsored by The Mercer County ADRC, is a financial stipend for young people with disabilities to attend summer activities. These activities can be traditional summer camps (as the name implies) but it is not limited to that by any means. The program has helped people take part in college courses, driving lessons, video game development classes, cooking lessons, and a host of other enriching activities that can broaden horizons, prepare for the future, and build relationships and social skills.

The following is a correspondence from a family who took advantage of the program last year:

“My son was lucky enough to receive the campership award last summer through your program. I would just like to say, THANK YOU!!! Now he is in the band and not only playing the clarinet, he has the courage to start learning to play the piano. If it had not have been for the extra private lessons awarded by you and the Progressive Living organization, he would just be a sad little boy stuck in room. Again, thank you for your support.”

If you have a loved one or a friend who could benefit from this program now is the time to sign up and receive an application this spring. Awards are given on a first come-first-serve basis, so if you’re interested don’t wait. Please reach out to Reed Thomas at The Progressive Center for Independent Living by phone (609-581-4500) or email (reed.thomas@pcil.org) for details and to receive an application when they are mailed out this spring. Summer will be here before you know it so please contact us as soon as possible to take advantage of this program.

Eligible applicants are those who are between the ages of 4 to 25, reside in Mercer County, and are living with a disability.
Proud Station Sponsor of the 2018 A Taste for Success Sip & Sample Event

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CHRISTINE

Hello, my name is Christine Hanneken. I am a newly hired Support Coordinator with PCIL. I received my Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Rutgers University in 2008. I have worked in various roles of community support for several years, and have loved every aspect of my work! It is my personal belief that each of us have potentials we have not yet discovered, and helping others to identify and pursue theirs is my passion. Support Coordination is the next step in my career path and I am extremely thankful and excited to fulfill this passion at PCIL. In my spare time I enjoy music, crafts and cooking.

MARY

Hello! My name is Mary Davis. I am a new transitional specialist with PCIL. I received my Bachelor’s degree in Psychology at Ramapo College of New Jersey. I enjoy reading, shopping and baking. From a young age, I loved to help people. I am so excited to continue my passion of helping and supporting people, at PCIL. I am looking forward to working with the PCIL team and meeting all of you!
As a person with a documented disability, I’ve always asked myself, how can you be a creative and artistic thinker without having to face criticism or be judged because of how a disability defines you. I believe this question had been finally answered a few years ago during a family conversation. I felt persuaded to see if there were any artists in the greater Trenton region which had documented disabilities, discover what mediums they work with, and find out what kinds of challenges they faced when creating their art then use my findings to put together an art exhibit featuring those artists. I planned on titling the show “Unique and Talented”. My initial reaction to this concept was varied. I was excited at the idea, but also thought it sounded crazy. I felt it was going to be impossible to put together because it would take an endless amount of research to find people who would possibly be interested in being part of such an exhibit. I was again approached on the topic by early spring of 2017 and felt it was time to take action so I embarked on opportunities to network with people who may have answers in helping me make this possible.

One night at a documentary screening at Trenton Social, I ran into Donald Ehman who recently retired from the New Jersey State Council for the arts. I talked to him about my idea for the project. We shared contact information and we started communicating soon afterwards. He sent me information from a variety of sources in the area about groups which dealt with younger artists who were between the age of 18 and 30 in the area who had documented disabilities. Thanks to the information Mr. Ehman provided with me, I started communicating with several people who I thought would be a great fit for the exhibit.

One of the people who corresponded with me was Megan Di Franco, the ARC director at Artworks Trenton. I scheduled a meeting one afternoon at her office at Artworks and we went over my plans for the exhibit and why I was putting together this type of show. Through our discussions she assured me that there were individuals associated with ARC Mercer who were active artists and who fit the demographic I planned to focus on. She believed they would be interested in participating and she looked forward to keeping in touch with me throughout the project.

Things seemed promising with ARC after I met with Miss Di Franco, but a little over a month later; she emailed me and said that she was leaving ARC Mercer for a position elsewhere. She was apologetic about her departure from ARC and wished me best of luck with the show. At this point, it was back to the drawing board, but I still remained confident about what I had originally planned so I worked on a press release which could be published in the local news papers to call on artists who had documented disabilities and were part of the age range I was focusing on. The press release published in the summer of 2017 and by September, I had received a
few responses; but it wasn’t enough to fill my quota. By that point, I felt it was time to change the focus of the show.

In November 2017, while attending a reception at Artworks, I met a painter named Kenny Alexander. Mr. Alexander is visually impaired and felt he had lost confidence in doing artwork because of his disability. I talked to him about what I was doing and he became enthusiastic about participating in the exhibit. We exchanged contact information and I promised him that I would visit his studio to pick out his work to exhibit. After my conversation with Kenny, I became more open minded about the range of ages of the artists that would participate in the show since Kenny is over 40. I then wanted to demonstrate that age has no limitations in creating art and felt it would be better to have artists of all ages. I began by focusing on people I personally knew who were categorized as disabled which included; Mark Wilkie, who has neurological classifications, Pricilla Algalva, a mentor of mine who has been battling with cancer over the past couple of years and has been undergoing an extensive amount of chemotherapy, and Mel Leipzig, a professor I had while studying art history courses at Mercer County Community College who is 84 years old and spends a lot of his time devoted to painting. When this project started, Mel Leipzig was working on a painting of a student at Lawrence High School, Michael Austen, who has autism spectrum disorder. Mel submitted the painting of Michael Austen and worked with the school to get Michael Austen’s drawing into the show which a lot people have told me helped Michael become more active in creating art. I also included another individual named Rio Smith, who was paralyzed from the waist down and uses a wheelchair, and another individual, Justin Jedrzejczyk, who is a talented painter diagnosed with a condition which affected his eyesight. I then decided to renamed the show “Persistence” because of how these artists are able to cope with their disabilities and not let it affect their artistic abilities.

The show was hung at the Trenton Public Library on February 17, 2018 and the opening reception happened on February 22nd. The opening attracted larger number of people then what I was anticipating. An artist talk took place a few weeks later which also had a great turnout. The artists went deep into talking about their disabilities and the challenges they face because of them but vowed to continue creating art despite their challenges. Since this show was a huge hit, I am grateful to say that I arranged a follow up exhibit of “Persistence” which was displayed at the Plainsboro Library in January of 2019. Having done a project like this, I’ve realized that you do not have to be perfect in creating art. Matter of fact, some of the world’s most famous artists weren’t perfect either. In the end, it’s the art that matters most and not the ability and that staying “Persistent” is the key creating great art.
PERSISTENCE ART SHOW
The show was hung at the Trenton Public Library on February 17, 2018
Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads our nation’s observance of Older Americans Month. We are pleased to announce the 2019 theme, “Connect, Create, Contribute,” which encourages older adults and their communities to:

• Connect with friends, family & services that support participation.
• Create by engaging in activities that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment.
• Contribute time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

Perhaps you are interested in contributing time, talent, and your experience as an older adult in Mercer County. If so, we have a place
Mercer County Advisory Councils

Continued from PG 13

for you - read ahead to learn more about our Advisory Councils.

County Advisory Councils
Mercer County enjoys diverse communities both in location and situation. Representatives from each municipality throughout the county - that includes older adults, those living with disabilities and their caregivers - gather to promote ways to improve their lives and enhance opportunities to stay healthy and productive in their community. The Advisory Councils in Mercer County are either mandated due to funding or established to stay current with issues and concerns. Four Advisory Councils that routinely meet and share similar concerns are:

- Advisory Council on Aging (CoA)
- Disability Advisory Council (DAC)
- Nutrition Advisory Council
- Transportation Advisory Council (TRADE)

Each Advisory Council has established by-laws with specific items that are to be addressed. Most Council members are appointed by the County Executive. Commitment to meeting attendance and participation in Council activities will be expected and determined by membership and activities that coincide with the Council’s mission. Time and frequency of meetings, membership requirements and activity commitments will also vary.

Still interested and want to learn more? Email your interest to ADRC@mercercounty.org or call 609-989-6661 and someone will speak with you to assess your interest and help you learn more about what we do.

Older Americans Month

Connect, Create, Contribute May 2019
The ADRC is distributing several items to help support older adults, those living with disabilities, and their caregivers feel safe and secure in the community of their choice.

**Deterra Drug Deactivation Bags**

Many individuals have gathered multiple amounts of medications over the course of time, most of which may have expired or have been pushed to the back of the cabinet, drawers or closets. These medications could potentially be temptations to those addicted to pain medication, and can present a hazard to the well-being of children, grandchildren or company that may happen to find it. The staff at ADRC, in cooperation with the Mercer County Office on Addiction Services and the Prevention Coalition of Mercer County, have a supply Deterra Deactivation Bags to assist in your safe destruction of this unwanted medication. This biodegradable disposal option of your unused medication is especially useful to those who cannot get to their local police station that serve as local collection and disposal sites. See flyer on page 16 for more information.

**Wheelchair/Motorized Wheelchair Flags**

An unfortunate and unnecessary accident involving a man in a motorized wheelchair years ago in downtown Trenton prompted the County Office for the Disabled to retain a supply of wheelchair flags. The brightly colored flags are mounted to the wheelchairs allowing increased visibility of the chair and increasing the ability to see movement of the wheelchair. Mercer County’s ADRC will be supplying the flags to senior housing complexes in Trenton and to several other disability providers for distribution. See the end of this article to learn how you can secure a flag.

**File of Life**

Important information that could be life-saving in cases of accidents and emergencies is sometimes inaccessible to those needing immediate access, such as emergency responders. Available through Mercer County’s ADRC, the Files of Life are nationally recognized refrigerator magnets that serve to centralize insurance and medical information. With the use of these magnets on one’s refrigerator, those needing medical and emergency contact information have the chance for quick retrieval for the best results in getting that information in a timely, sometimes life-saving manner. One can fill out their own information on the card or have a family member or care partner do it for them. Once the information is filled out, placing it on the refrigerator and (or as has been suggested, in one’s car glove compartment), allows increased access to your important information.

To learn more about any of the aforementioned resources, contact the Aging and Disability Resource Connection via email at adrc@mercercounty.org or call 609-989-6661.
DETERRA DRUG DEACTIVATION

In collaboration with the Mercer County Offices on Aging and Addiction Services, the Prevention Coalition of Mercer County is distributing innovative drug deactivation pouches for in home Rx disposal, keeping medications off the streets and out of our waterways. It's as simple as “Just add water.” Get your kit today!*

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For more information about Deterra Products, or to request a supply contact:
adrc@mercercounty.org
(609) 989-6661
The general purpose of the Mercer County Coalition for Coordinated Transportation (Coalition) is to work together to enhance transportation options for residents of Mercer County who are elderly, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. The Coalition is a stakeholder group, active since 2007; Mercer County TRADE Transportation provides leadership and support to the Coalition. We welcome the involvement of representatives from community agencies and customers as we work to make improvements to the transportation network in Mercer County.

The Coalition has developed a Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan that involves multiple strategies and action steps to be accomplished over the short and long-term. The Coalition is now in the process of finalizing a Plan Update and below are two charts that summarize the current recommendations of the Coalition.

### High Priority Project Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Project Recommendation</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Funding Required</th>
<th>Status 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Modify Route 130 Connection to Better Serve Eastern Mercer County, Improve Signage, Continue developing marketing plan, Complete Survey Report</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Extend NJ Transit Fixed-Route service along the Route 130 Corridor</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enhance transportation access for workers at Exit 7A Business Park District</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extend NJ Transit Bus Service to Exit 7A Business Park District</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Continue Mobility Training for People with Seniors, People with Disabilities, People with Low Incomes</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Implement Public Transportation Service along Route 571 Corridor</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Establish Overall Marketing Strategy, Logo/Name, Customer Information</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Implement Pilot Project to Coordinate, Reduce Duplication (e.g., service or deviated route)</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sustain Existing Services</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Explore Utilization/Partnerships with Transportation Networking Companies (Uber/Lyft), Develop Pilot Project for Mobility on Demand</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extend NJ Transit Route 608 to Mercer County Airport, HomeFront and Capital Health Hopewell</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on PG 18
**High Priority Guidance Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Funding Required</th>
<th>Status 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustain Existing Service</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Implement projects to address service gaps, extend service hrs &amp; areas</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Increase Evening &amp; Weekend Services</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Transportation to employment centers for people w/ disabilities</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sustain organizational involvement in the coalition</td>
<td>Short/Long</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Educate case managers, mobility managers</td>
<td>Short/Long</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Increase funding flexibility</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conduct outreach with the community &amp; local officials, &amp; increase hospital/ health providers participation in coordination</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Assure vehicle &amp; site accessibility, advocate for accessible/ equitable bike sharing</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Advocate for extension of NJ Transit service to underserved areas, evaluate NJ Transit transfers to local providers</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Coalition intends to prioritize outreach to customers during 2019. A series of community meetings are being scheduled at community locations frequented by seniors, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. We would like to present information about what transportation services are available in local areas and we want to hear first-hand what needs people have related to transportation.

Any community groups or individuals that would like to participate in this effort throughout Mercer County are encouraged to contact Martin DeNero, Director of TRADE Transportation at 609-530-1970 or via email at mdenero@mercercounty.org.
UPCOMING PCIL REC EVENTS

A planetarium show and tour of the NJ State Museum
An evening of live music with The FunkTASKtics
Trenton Thunder VS. Reading Phillies
Annual softball game
Annual picnic at Mercer County Park

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