

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1996.



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This publication is brought to you by staff of Progressive Center for Independent Living and Mercer County ADRC

UNLOCKING INDEPENDENCE ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

■ By Stephanie Wilmot, PCIL Drive-Ability Instructor

Are you 17 years of age or older and living with a disability? Do you have a goal related to obtaining or maintaining employment? Are you having difficulty passing the written state exam to obtain your driver's permit? If you answered YES to any of the three previous questions then our Drive-Ability program offered through the Progressive Center for Independent Living might be a good fit for you!

Drive-Ability is designed to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining their learner's permit and eventually a New Jersey driver's license. The program consists of multiple parts including an orientation, preassessment, written test preparation, driving simulator experiences, suggestions for behind-the-wheel instruction and more. Drive-Ability also focuses on building confidence and independence, ensuring safety, and promoting sustainable competitive employment opportunities for its participants. By implementing this comprehensive, structured and personalized driver's

PROGRESSIVE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

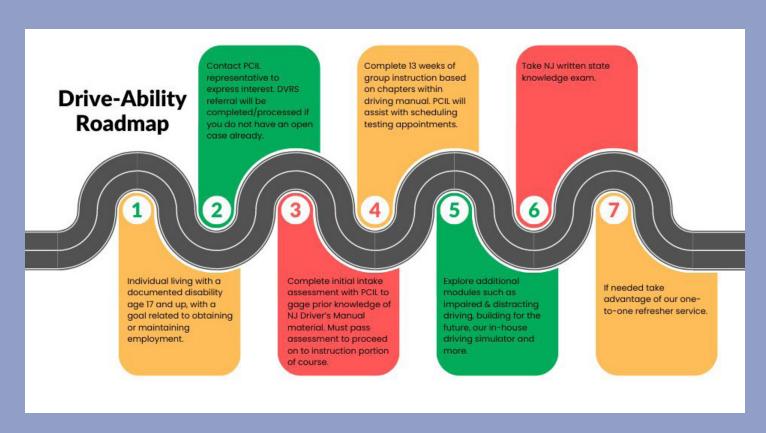
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education program, individuals with disabilities will have the necessary support to successfully achieve driving-related independence, obtain their learner's permit and driver's license, leading to improved quality of life and greater inclusion in society!

Our program, now funded by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, is being offered at our Mercer County office location and in upcoming months will also be offered within Hunterdon County. Please feel free to share this information with anyone you know who may benefit from this service, we are here to better serve our community. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org or 609-581-4500 ext. 129.



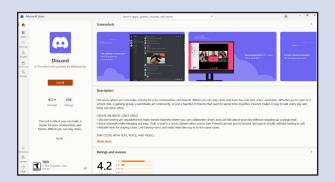






■ By PCIL Independent Living Department

Our Community Resource Specialists spend a large portion of their time learning about various resources in the community that can be helpful to the individuals we serve. In this edition, we will share two that have come across our desks.



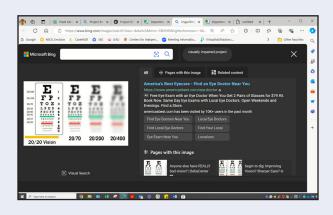
Discord

Through organized topic-based channels, this application allows users to connect with communities and friends on almost any topic. It's compatible with many devices and users can connect over text, voice, and video. Discord is a great platform if you are looking to make new friends and connect with others. To learn more, visit https://discord.com.

Project Best

The Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired is offering free eye screenings for residents in NJ through their Project BEST program to save sight and restore vision whenever it is medically possible.

Hunterdon residents can obtain this service at the Hunterdon County Dept. of Health on the 4th Thursday of each month between 5 and 8 pm by calling for an appointment at 908-806-4570.



Mercer residents can schedule an appointment at one of three locations. To make an appointment at Catholic Charities El Centro in Trenton, call 609-394-2056. For an appointment at YMCA-Penn Medicine Princeton Health in Hamilton or Penn Medicine Princeton Health in Princeton, call 888-897-8979.

For more information on Project Best please visit https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/cbvi/services/prevention/.

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EXCITEMENT IS BUILDING AT UNICORN THERAPEUTIC RIDING, IN PENNINGTON, NJ

By Terry Miller, Unicorn Student

The non-profit recently became a United States Equestrian Foundation (USEF) Para Dressage Center of Excellence (COE). Director Erin Hurley, a licensed Occupational Therapist and USDF L Graduate with Distinction, aims to take para equestrian riders and horses to the highest levels of international competition: the Paralympics and World Equestrian Games. "Para" refers to parallel, not paraplegic; riders with disabilities and their horses are as adept and graceful as their non-disabled counterparts. Riders' mobility, strength, and coordination are assessed to assign a competition grade from I (most impaired) to V (least impaired). Within each grade, riders start at the novice level, and progress to intermediate and Grand Prix dressage tests. Para dressage riders enjoy freedom and movement on horseback, things they might not experience elsewhere.

Unicorn student Terry Miller admits the path to the Paralympics felt daunting at first. Chronic health conditions affect her mobility, strength, and endurance, and she uses an Alinker walking bike and a power wheelchair as mobility aids. But when

Terry is astride therapy horse Daisy, her perspective shifts, and she feels like "She-Ra: Princess of Power." For her, "Horses harmonize my physical, emotional, and mental well-being. When I am riding, I feel capable, joyful, and free."

Unicorn will be hosting a Para Dressage Clinic with international Grand Prix Dressage rider Shannon Dueck on December 7 at its farm in Pennington, NJ. The clinic will be free to all Para riders thanks to the sponsorship of the USEF. To become a para-dressage rider, or to learn more about services offered, contact Erin Hurley at erin@unicornriding.com or 609 354-2014, or visit www.unicornriding.com.







WHAT SUCCESS MEANS TO ME

■ By David Murray, PCIL Consumer

My name is David Murray. I moved into my new apartment on June 15, 2024 located in Lawrenceville, NJ with the help from my Support Coordinator Kiara Boyd, Stephen Mosner through Pennington Adult Living Services (PALS), and Chrissy Geddins, through Kaleidoscope Family Solutions (KFS). I feel safer inside of my new apartment. I am able to keep it clean and decorated the way I like. I am happy that my neighbors are nice to me. When I am in my apartment I enjoy cooking with my supports. My favorite foods to cook are cheeseburgers with fries, hot dogs on my mini grill, and chicken breast. Moving into my new apartment has changed my life in many ways. I can still visit my father Dean Murray. I am happy that I live closer to my job (Checkers) and the PCIL office. I am looking forward to my family visiting my home so I can cook for them.

UPCOMING PEER GROUP EVENTS

AUG 13	AUG 27	SEPT 10	SEPT 24
BINGO NIGHT	SALT & PEPPER TEAM BUILDING	SUICIDE AWARENESS	IMPACT OF COVID-19
A fun night of B-I-N-G-O	Practice team building skills in a fun game called "Salt & Pepper".	Discussing suicide awareness and resources in honor of Suicide Awareness Month.	Discuss together the impact of Covid-19 in everyday life.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONSRECREATION PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

By Ruth Roberson, PCIL

As we welcomed in the warm summer months, the Progressive Center for Independent Living and the Community Connections Program continued to bring a variety of different fun and accessible recreational events for you to enjoy!

On April 25th, PCIL had their Karaoke Night hosted at the United Presbyterian Church of Yardville. This recreation event was highly requested last year so we decided to bring it back and yet again it was a great turn out! We had a TV screen set up, speakers, and microphones to allow everyone to get the chance to sing their hearts out while enjoying some delicious pizza. We heard a wide range of songs from different types of pop music, R&B, rock, country, and we even had someone sing a song fully in French.

On May 18th PCIL got on a bus and set off to Lyndhurst, New Jersey for the Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament! On the bus ride there, the air was filled with conversation and even a little karaoke. Once we arrived, everyone went into





Participants enjoyed some summertime fun at a Trenton Thunder Baseball game.

the castle to get our crowns and were then led to sit down to enjoy the show. It was a captivating experience that transported us back to centuries ago. We got the full experience of being in a castle, seeing knights battle for victory on their horses, and last but certainly not least, getting a full course meal with no utensils to really have the authentic experience. We received so much positive feedback from this event and hope to do more like this in the future.

On June 19th PCIL went to the Trenton Thunder game at the Arm & Hammer Park. PCIL makes it a tradition to try to go to at least one Trenton Thunder game every year as we know many of you enjoy it! This year Trenton Thunder versed Frederick Keys during Trenton Thunder's Autism Awareness Night. With an unforgettable time of baseball, balancing acts, food, and games, it turned out to be a great night with Trenton Thunder taking the win at their home stadium!

Continuing our tradition of fun summer activities, please mark your calendars for some more upcoming Community Connection events.







Above: Fun times had a Medieval Times!



Participants sing their hearts out at Karaoke Night!



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A quarterly publication written by the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Connection to help support older adults, those living with disabilities, and their caregivers





Hurricane Season is Here Once Again – Make Sure You Are Prepared

By Reed Thomas, ADRC

We hope this summer finds you happy and healthy, enjoying the warmth, the extended daylight, and all of the many things to love about the season in New Jersey. Of course, along with summer fun comes the chance of summer storms, with the hurricanes that make their way from the tropics to our corner of the northeast being most concerning. It is important that we all acknowledge this part of summer – and all of hurricane season, which runs from June 1 through November 30 – in our communities and that we prepare so we can be safe and secure, even during times of emergency.

The previous statement is true of every member of our communities, but can pose extra challenges to those with special needs. Whether a mobility impairment; hearing, vision, or communication difficulties; memory or cognition issues; or other access and functional needs, being prepared for disaster is not only crucial, but also is an

individualized experience. Thankfully, there are plenty of resources and organizations to help you make your plan. This article looks at some of the key points from www.ready. gov, and I hope inspires you to look at all the guidance provided there to ensure you've got the right plan for you and the ones you love.

Disability intersects every demographic group There are people living with disabilities of all ages, races, genders, or national origin, and disabilities can impact a person in a variety of ways—both visible and invisible. It is important to consider individual circumstances and needs to effectively prepare for emergencies and disasters.

Get Informed

- Know what disasters could affect your area, which ones could call for an evacuation, and when to shelter in place.
- Monitor the situation on TV and radio.

Follow mobile alerts and warnings about severe weather in your area.

 Download the FEMA app and get weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations anywhere in the United States.

Make a Plan

In the event of a disaster, could you make it on your own for several days? After a disaster, you may not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore. It's crucial to plan for your daily needs and know what to do if they become limited or unavailable. Additional planning steps include:

- Creating a support network of people who can help you in a disaster and keeping a contact list in a watertight container in your emergency kit or on your electronic devices.
- Informing your support network where you keep your emergency supplies.
 You also may want to consider giving a trusted member a key to your house or apartment.
- Planning ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting around during or after a disaster.
- Checking with local transit providers as well as with your emergency management agency to identify appropriate accessible options. Many city and county emergency

management agencies maintain voluntary registries for people living with disabilities to self-identify to receive targeted assistance during emergencies and disasters. Contact your local emergency management office to find out more.

- Knowing the location and availability of more than one facility that can help you if you are on dialysis or other life-sustaining medical treatment.
- Talking to your doctor or health care provider about what you may be able to do to keep any medical equipment that requires electricity running during a power outage. You can also ask your power provider to put you on a list for priority power restoration.
- Organizing and protecting your prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, and vitamins to prepare for an emergency.
 About half of all Americans take a prescription medicine every day. An emergency can make it difficult for them to refill their prescription or to find an open pharmacy.
- Wearing medical alert tags or bracelets and adding pertinent medical information to your electronic devices.
- Carrying printed cards or storing information on your devices if you have a communication disability so you can inform first responders and others how to communicate with you.

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- Planning for children and adults who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.
- Considering your service or support animal or pets and plan for food, water, and supplies. If you need to evacuate, you'll need to know whether your shelter allows pets because some shelters only allow service or support animals.

Get Your Benefits Electronically

A disaster can disrupt mail service for days or weeks. If you depend on Social Security or other regular benefits, switching to electronic payments is an easy way to protect yourself financially before disaster strikes. It also eliminates the risk of stolen checks. The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:

- Use direct deposit to a checking or savings account. If you get federal benefits, you can sign up by visiting https://godirect.gov/gpw/ or calling 800-333-1795.
- Get the Direct Express® prepaid debit card, which is designed as a safe and easy alternative to paper checks. Sign up online at https://godirect.gov/gpw/or call toll-free at 877-212-9991.

These are some of the key points for people with additional needs to consider while preparing for emergencies, but they are by no means the only considerations. Please visit www.ready.gov/disability for more tips, insights, and videos about how you can make the plan that is right for you. You may also contact us here at the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) at 609-989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty. org. We're happy to give you steps you can take to prepare as well as to connect you to additional resources.

Please understand, the purpose of articles such as this one is not to scare you, but quite the opposite. I hope reading this motivates you to evaluate your planning to ensure you are ready when you need to be so you can feel secure in knowing that you can handle whatever the season may send your way.





Are You Ready?

By Reed Thomas, ADRC

For all members of our community, preparedness for emergency situations is crucial. We must all do our part to ensure we have a plan, have any necessary supplies, and have practiced the ways we'll stay safe during an emergency. For people living with disabilities or those with access and functional needs, this preparedness often involves local resources, such as accessible transportation, interpreting and communication assistance, specialty medical equipment, and accommodations in sheltering situations.

This means that not only must you be ready to respond to emergencies, but the supports in your community must be ready to assist you. In New Jersey, Register Ready, a free, secure, voluntary database, was developed to help these come to fruition.

"Register Ready - New Jersey's Special

Needs Registry for Disasters" allows NJ residents living with disabilities or access and functional needs and their families, friends, caregivers, and associates an opportunity to provide information to emergency response agencies so emergency responders can better plan to serve them in a disaster or other emergency. The information collected is confidential and will not be available to the public. The information will be held securely and only used for emergency response and planning.

Who should register?

Any permanent or seasonal residents of New Jersey who have disabilities and/or access and functional needs who may need help evacuating, sheltering in-place or at a public shelter, or requiring emergency assistance or extra supports during a disaster should register. People experiencing temporary

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disabilities or other needs, such as highrisk pregnancies, long-term recovery from medical procedures, or other serious medical conditions, also should register.



Why should I register?

Register Ready is not just a tool for responders to better understand the populations they assist, but also is a crucial tool for planning and funding. By registering, you help organizations from your town officials up through planners at the county, state, and federal levels know how many people with additional needs must be served and in what ways. This information helps ensure that there is adequate staffing and resources to support community members living with disabilities or access and functional needs in the case of an emergency.

How can I register?

There are a few ways to register:

- Go to www.registerready.nj.gov.
- Call 2-1-1 (within NJ) or 877-652-1148 toll free (TTY/TDD and translation services available)
- Contact me, the Mercer County Access and Functional Needs Coordinator, at 609-989-6459 or rthomas@ mercercounty.org.
- Contact your local Center for Independent Living at 609-581-4500.



Does registering automatically mean responders will know my specific needs? Registering does not ensure that responders know your specific needs, as not all municipalities use the registry in that way. It is your municipality that will provide response services during an emergency. This

includes institutions like police, fire fighters, emergency medical care, and more. Although some may use Register Ready to inform responders about specific community members, others may choose to maintain their registries or other methods of knowing when a specific household has specialty care needs. It is important that you connect with your town's services to make sure you know who will be coming to assist you, and they know of any additional needs you may have during an emergency.





STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP)

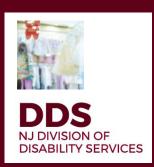


GRANT SERVICES YOU NEED

PASP provides routine, non-medical personal care assistance to adults with permanent physical disabilities 18 years of age or older and are employed, preparing for employment, attending school, or involved in community volunteer work and who are able to self-direct their services. The goal of this program is to support individuals with physical disabilities so that they may remain active participants in their community. The PASP offers participants choice, flexibility, control, and the opportunity to manage their personal care assistance services. Eligibility is not income based, but there is a cost share based on income.

CONTACT US NOW!

Mercer County ADRC
Reed Thomas 609-989-6459
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P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068



YOUR DOORWAY | SUMMER 2024 | VOL 86



A Call For Volunteers

By Kimberly Sentek, ADRC

The Mercer County Nutrition Program for Older Adults provides meals, socialization, and nutrition education and counseling to adults age 60 or older at 11 congregate settings, such as senior centers, throughout Mercer County. Good nutrition is critical to supporting independent and healthy aging, and many barriers, including lack of financial resources, poor transportation options, limited mobility, declining physical and/or mental health, and social isolation, can keep older adults from maintaining good food habits.

Volunteers are invaluable to the Mercer County Nutrition Program for Older Adults. Trained volunteers can help serve meals or wipe the tables/serving areas at the meal sites. Volunteering for the program is an excellent way to serve older adults in your community, and you will receive lunch every day from the program that you volunteer.

Anyone 18 or older can volunteer. Each of the sites are open 8:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Monday through Friday, except for any County weekday closings. The Nutrition Program needs volunteers at 10 of its locations: three sites in Trenton, two in Hamilton, and one site each in East Windsor, Ewing, Lawrenceville, Pennington, and Princeton.

To learn more about volunteering for the Mercer County Nutrition Program for Older Adults, please contact Chip Meara at emeara@mercercounty.org or 609-989-6550. To learn about how to become a program participant, please call 609-989-6650.





YOU CAN HELP IN THE MOMENT OF CRISIS

The Mercer County Traumatic Loss Coalition's Trauma Response Team is composed of highly trained and dedicated members who meet with youth, caregivers, and others affected by critical incidents with community-wide impact. Help us grow our team so we may continue to serve our Mercer County community.

BECOME A TRAUMA RESPONSE TEAM MEMBER

Please apply if you are:

- Willing to provide psychological first aid in community and school settings
- Willing to commit to ongoing training and join follow-up team meetings
- Willing to complete the basic 40-hour training and any ongoing training
- At least 18 years old

INSPIRE HOPE. IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY.

For more information, to ask questions, or to request an application, please contact Michele Madiou of the Mercer County Division of Mental Health at mmadiou@mercercounty.org or 609-989-6529.

Join The Medical Reserve Corps

By ADRC

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a network of community-based, locally organized units composed of volunteers who help ensure their communities are healthy, prepared, and resilient. Volunteers are pre-identified, pre-registered, trained, and exercised. In addition to promoting healthy living throughout the year, MRC volunteers are especially vital during emergencies and disasters when paid public health and emergency response assets are overwhelmed.

In New Jersey, there are 24 MRC Units housed within local health departments. Each county in New Jersey has at least one Medical Reserve Corps Unit. MRC health professional volunteers include nurses, pharmacists, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), doctors, counselors, social workers, and veterinarians. MRC community

health volunteers provide services such as language translation/interpretation, education and outreach, hospitality, food services, reception, logistics, security, and assistance to individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs

The Mercer Medical Reserve Corps is looking to grow! Please consider joining now; the Mercer MRC especially needs bilingual and multilingual volunteers. Training will be provided.

To apply, create a New Jersey Learning Management Network (NJLMN) account and submit your MRC application at https://njlmn.njlincs.net/. If you have questions or need more information or assistance, please contact Mercer's MRC coordinator, John Arulmohan, at ja2@njlincs.net or 609-989-6887.



STATEWIDE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM

Services To Provide Short-Term, Intermittent Relief to New Jersey's Caregivers

Caring for anyone is a huge job. The Statewide Respite Care Program offers services to the person who needs care so that you, the caregiver, has respite - that much needed break.

To learn more or start the application process, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at (609) 989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty.org.



NJ DEPARTAMENTO DE SERVICIOS HUMANOS

Programa De Servicos De Asistencia Personal (PASP, por sus siglas en ingles)

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Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving is a program that provides in-home services to seniors at risk of placement in a nursing home. JACC includes an array of services designed to supplement the assistance given by the individual's caregiver network. Qualified individuals may have the opportunity to hire their own eligible family, friends, or neighbors to provide the care they need.

To learn more or start the application process, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at (609) 989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty.org.





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PCIL SUMMER CAMPERSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

The Summer Campership Program acts as a special opportunity for families with remarkable children aged 4 to 25, granting them access to exciting activities from Memorial Day to Labor Day. This program is funded by a grant from Mercer County, offering scholarships ranging from \$85 to \$400 on a first-come, first-served basis. Don't wait, apply now as these scholarships are in high demand like a scorching summer day!

Find appliaction and details at www.pcil.org/campership

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A PCIL & ADRC NJ Collaboration

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FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED

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