

The Family Forum

Parents Advocates Religious Leaders Teachers Neighbors Everyone Resources Services Helping Individuals Professionals

Partnership

Quality is Everyone's Business

I want a quality life. You want quality for yourself and your family members.

*By Cathy Silvasi, Joan Hecht,
and Freda Egnal, MRS*

Philadelphia Mental Retardation Services is committed to making sure that individuals receive quality services and supports. But what does that really mean? One way to look at quality is to develop a definition by thinking about what you want out of life. Let's call these things measures, or standards, or outcomes. For example, having friends, a satisfying job, your own space, some control over your life. Once we identify what makes up a quality life, then we need to figure out how to measure it – what questions to ask and what to look for – so we can find out if a person has a quality life. Then we are able to say that the services and supports you (or your family member) receive from the Mental Retardation System are quality services and supports – or if they need improving.

The mission statement of Philadelphia MRS is "to create, promote, and enhance the supports and services available to individuals with mental retardation so that they will have choices in their everyday lives; meaningful personal relationships with friends, family, and neighbors; presence and participation in their communities; and dignity and respect as valued citizens of Philadelphia."

Ten years ago, in 1995, when the Quality Assurance Plan Initiative started, MRS decided to use The Council's Personal Outcome Measures to find out if services are helping people get the kind of life they want. The Council talked to many individuals with mental retardation, family members, and professionals in the field to come up with what is truly important to a person. The Standards that were developed reflect what people with disabilities said they want and expect in their lives.

The Council came up with seven (7) categories of outcomes. They are:

- ❑ how people express their basic **identity**, for example if they choose where and with whom they live, where they work, or if they have intimate relationships
- ❑ **autonomy**, which includes having some control over a daily routine and having privacy
- ❑ **affiliation**, meaning being part of a community, having friends, and being respected
- ❑ **attainment**, or realizing goals
- ❑ being **safe**
- ❑ exercising **rights**
- ❑ experiencing **health and wellness**.

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CELEBRATE MENTAL RETARDATION AWARENESS MONTH

Look at the Calendar for Special Events during March
Be sure to send Family Forum photos of your events

Participate in Points of Transformation on March 18



Visit www.MyCityMyPlace.com
Join the e-Announcements Listserv
Call for New Registrations & Customer Service
215-685-4MRS (4677)

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Let's hear from you!

Please submit articles to: Editor, Family Forum,
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MRS Internet Resource Directory

www.MyCityMyPlace.com

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SPOTLIGHT

on Increasing Inclusion

Pennsylvania Agrees to Changes in Special Education To Increase Inclusion of Students with Disabilities In Regular Education Classes

By Donna Szamatowicz

Ten years ago, the Gaskin family of Carlisle and other families and advocacy organizations filed a lawsuit on behalf of “all school-age students with disabilities in Pennsylvania who have been denied a free appropriate education in regular education classrooms who did not have the supportive services, individualized instruction and accommodations they needed to succeed in the regular classroom.”

In December 2004, an agreement was reached in federal court designed to increase the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classes with non-disabled students and established a new advisory group to the Department of Education to address those issues. A court-appointed mediator supervised the settlement discussions part of the time over a period of several months.

Key areas included in the provisional settlement agreement are:

- ❑ A compliance monitoring form to ensure that districts are complying with federal and state laws protecting the rights of students with disabilities.
- ❑ On-site training and other forms of technical assistance enabling school districts to build local capacity in inclusive educational practices.
- ❑ Modification of the state’s complaint investigation and resolution processes.

The United States Department of Education reported that Pennsylvania was the 7th lowest state in 2002 for including students with disabilities in

regular education classrooms. Using the PENNDATA information on individual student inclusion/exclusion, the plaintiffs calculated averages for each of Pennsylvania’s 501 school districts. Philadelphia, on this index, ranked 7th from the bottom. According to Dr. Jim Conroy, one of the investigators for the plaintiffs, “There is no shortage of work to be done toward the goals of IDEA.”

Judith Gran, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs from the Public Interest Law Center, hailed the agreement. “The Rendell Administration recognized that in too many parts of the state not enough has been done to provide students with disabilities a meaningful education in the least restrictive environment. Too many students and their parents have been frustrated by school districts’ failure to fulfill the promise of federal law. We are delighted that this administration is willing to make the significant efforts necessary to make Pennsylvania a leader in teaching students with disabilities,” she said.

The lead plaintiff, Lydia Gaskin, is an example of successful inclusion. Born with Down Syndrome, Ms. Gaskin is finishing her last year in the Carlisle Area School District after being included in courses with college-bound students. “Lydia and her classmates have all benefitted from the challenges she faced. She is a full and participating member of her school community, and she is a stronger, more independent person than she would have been if segregated in classes only with persons with disabilities,” said her father Joseph Gaskin.

The complete settlement agreement is available at <www.pilcop.org>. For further information contact Judith Gran, Esq. 215-627-7100 ext 225. Partial source: Public Interest Law Center Press Release.

Opening Home & Heart

Experiencing a Life Sharing Program

By Amanda Freese DeFazio

Renea Williams is not your typical working mother. She balances a full-time job at JEVS with the responsibilities of raising an 8-year-old son on her own. She also recently started sharing her home with Tammy Hayes, a 37-year-old woman with a developmental disability who has become a part of the family.

A little over a year ago, after trying several unsuccessful living arrangements, Tammy moved into Renea's home. Through JEVS Life Sharing program, adults with a primary diagnosis of mental retardation live with a family, as opposed to a group home. In such a supportive environment, individuals with disabilities learn the power of choice and individuality as they become an integral part of a family and community.

Renea, program manager for JEVS In-Home Supports, had been a direct care worker supporting Tammy years ago. "She did not adjust well to her last family living provider and had a history of running away from her residential group homes, so I made an offer to become her family living provider," says Renea. "Tammy had the choice of me, or another provider, and she chose me."

Renea had always wanted to add to her family and had considered adoption in the past. As someone familiar with people with disabilities, she began to consider becoming a family living provider. "I love what I do, so I thought I would give it a

shot," says Renea. "It's rewarding just to know that I am helping somebody else to grow."

Life Sharing gives consumers various options for living. Karen Foster, director of Life Sharing and In-Home Supports, says this type of arrangement "has been successful because [the consumer] is in a natural environment and can build loyal bonds," says Karen. "In a CLA, there can be high staff turnover. It's important for them to get continual support from the same people."

For someone who was once reserved and indecisive, Tammy shows confidence and enthusiasm when talking about her new home. She participates in all family activities, including trips to North Carolina to visit Renea's relatives, which is her favorite thing to do. She says that she really likes living with Renea and her son, Brandon, taking care of the house, and doing

laundry. "Tammy can travel anywhere she wants, use public transportation, and handle her own money," says Renea. "She knows the neighbors and has keys to the house. She feels better knowing she's not locked into a group activity."

Family living providers are supported through ongoing training and the services of a family living specialist. The program also provides financial support for housing and medical costs, in addition to other

amenities. Karen says she gets calls on a regular basis from people who want to join the program. "We have family living providers who say they would still do this even if their stipend to cover costs was taken away," says Karen. "So you can see it's a reciprocal type of relationship."



Renea (right) has opened her home and heart to Tammy, who has become a member of her family through JEVS Life Sharing program.

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Quality is Everyone's Business

Con't. from Page 1

Once the Council (formerly known as The Council on Quality and Leadership in Supports for People with Disabilities, a national organization for accreditation, training and technical assistance) arrived at the outcomes, then they had to figure out how you know if a person has these outcomes in his or her life – what do you look for, and exactly what questions do you ask to learn if these results, or outcomes, are present. Not an easy task, but they did it, and then went around the country training people to use Personal Outcome Measures as one way to measure quality in the service delivery system.

A core of people in Philadelphia are trained in this Council approach and offer training to family members, individuals, and staff in the Philadelphia system. People interested in becoming a Personal Outcome Measures interviewer take a four-day training session, which includes two interviews following the rigorous Council guidelines to determine if Outcomes are present, and continue to conduct a minimum number of interviews each year.

If you want to learn more about Outcomes, you can sign up for a two-day training where you will conduct an interview and explore what is taking place in a person's life and whether it reflects the outcomes they desire. These sessions are for professionals, individuals, family members, and everyone interested in learning about these standards of quality. All new Support Coordinators in Philadelphia will attend a special two day course.

There is also a one-day introductory training in Personal Outcome Measures conducted by Philadelphia MRS. This can be tailored to different groups and provides an overview of the process. For more information, or to register for a training, contact Cathy Silvasi at 215-685-5986.

The quality initiative evolved over the years into the current Quality



Management (QM) plan of which Personal Outcome Measures is an integral part. All agencies that provide services and supports to individuals in Philadelphia are required to submit a QM Plan to MRS spelling out how Personal Outcome Measures are used in evaluating the agency's services. Agencies use trained Outcomes interviewers to gather information directly from people to whom they provide services. This information provides the foundation for the agency's QM plan and is used in annual planning for people.

Quality is everyone's business! The Personal Outcome Measures are –

Identity

- ❑ People choose personal goals.
- ❑ People choose where and with whom they live.
- ❑ People choose where they work.
- ❑ People have intimate relationships.
- ❑ People are satisfied with services.
- ❑ People are satisfied with their personal life situations.

Autonomy

- ❑ People choose their daily routine.
- ❑ People have time, space, and opportunity for privacy.
- ❑ People decide when to share personal information.
- ❑ People use their environments.

Affiliation

- ❑ People live in integrated environments.
- ❑ People participate in the life of the community.
- ❑ People interact with other members of the community.
- ❑ People perform different social roles.
- ❑ People have friends.
- ❑ People are respected.

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Personal Outcome Measures

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Attainment

- ❑ People choose services.
- ❑ People realize personal goals.
- ❑ Safeguards
- ❑ People are connected to natural support networks.
- ❑ People are safe.

Rights

- ❑ People exercise rights.
- ❑ People are treated fairly.
- ❑ Health and Wellness
- ❑ People have the best possible health.
- ❑ People are free from abuse and neglect.
- ❑ People experience continuity and security.

These are the measures that make up quality in our lives. This is what Personal Outcomes Measures' Trainers look for when they interview people receiving services about quality in their lives. These are the things you can look for in your family member's life.

Free Medications From Manufacturers



The Pennsylvania Patient Assistance Program (PA PAP) helps individuals apply for free prescription drugs from the companies that make them. Many pharmaceutical companies provide certain prescription medications free to people who meet specific income qualifications and do not otherwise have access to necessary medications.

The income guidelines for getting assistance from the companies are: a single individual with an income of \$20,000 or less; a married person with income less than \$25,000. These income guidelines are based on the ones set by the manufacturers, and

Opening Home and Heart

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Karen describes the ideal family living provider as someone who is patient, caring, and wants to build a strong relationship by opening their home to someone with a developmental disability. Renea knows firsthand that patience is crucial: "When someone else comes into your home, you have to adjust to their habits, needs, and wants. I thought my son tested my patience, but you have to develop patience in every area of your life and with everyone in the household. It's been a learning experience, and I think I've grown as a person."

"Renea has a passion for helping people and expanding existing opportunities in their world," says Karen. "Not only is Renea an excellent manager for JEVs, she's an excellent family living provider," says Karen. "I tell Renea all the time 'thank you because you've really made a difference in Tammy's life.'"

For more information about JEVs Life Sharing program, call 215-842-0900, or visit <www.jevs.org>.



As part of Mental Retardation Awareness Month, JEVs will hold a Life Sharing Symposium the morning of March 30 in the Annenberg Auditorium at Lankenau Hospital that will be free and open to the public. For more information, or to reserve your place, call 215-854-1788.

PA PAP notes that, while PA PAP will help people apply for assistance, they cannot make any guarantees of getting the medications. Call the Pennsylvania Patient Assistance Program at 800-955-0989. This information was submitted by David Gates from the Health Law Project.





By Vanessa Williams
MRS Program Analyst

If You Have Needs, You Better Get a PUNS

What is a PUNS?

A PUNS is an acronym for Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services. The form is used to identify people who need services and supports. Once a PUNS is completed with you and your family, this identifies which category of need you are in – emergency, critical, or planning.

Why do I need to complete a PUNS?

If you do not have a PUNS, your needs may not be known to the County Office and the Commonwealth. Every year Philadelphia MRS submits an annual plan to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth uses this plan, in part, to decide Philadelphia's allocation for services and supports. The Commonwealth reviews the PUNS information submitted by each County to determine how many people need services in each of the categories. The PUNS information will help Philadelphia justify the need to get additional money for services. If you are on the waiting list, or if you need more intensive services, a PUNS helps the possibility of funding.

When is a PUNS form filled out?

The PUNS should be completed by your Supports Coordinator with you as you talk about your needs for the future, or when your service needs change. For example, if you are in need of residential services, or you are graduating from

school within the next two to three years, a PUNS should be completed. The PUNS is one of the forms required when you are applying for waiver services.

When would I need to update my PUNS?

Every year in preparation for your annual plan, your Supports Coordinator should ask if your needs have changed. If your needs did change, you should have your PUNS updated. Note that you do not have to wait until your annual plan if your needs change during the year.

Is the PUNS going to get me services?

The PUNS alone will not get you the services you need. If you are eligible for the waiver and money is not available, you may be placed on a waiting list. Your Supports Coordinator needs to advocate for you when you are waiting for services. It is important to keep in touch with your Supports Coordinator so that she or he understands what supports and services you need, so that community resources can be located.



MRS Director, Kathy Sykes, presented the City of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell to Freda Egnal during the Brighter Futures Awards of My City My Place in November 2004. Ms. Egnal received the accolade for her coordination of all the My City My Place and the Points of Transformation events.

Help for Parent Support Groups

Philadelphia Mental Retardation Services is interested in helping to keep the family support groups active that met at their Base Service Units prior to the development of the new support coordination agencies. MRS asked Vision for Equality to assist the support groups with this process.

Vision For Equality can be of assistance to the parent support groups in the following ways:

- ❑ Help finding a location. Tell us the month, day, and time at least three weeks in advance.
- ❑ We can assist you with developing your agenda.
- ❑ We can assist you in getting a speaker.
- ❑ We can provide training for your group on Understanding the MR System and Waiver.
- ❑ We can help write the agenda and print it.
- ❑ We can type handwritten minutes for your group. We can mail the meeting notices, agendas and minutes out for you each month.
- ❑ We can help with printing and mailing hand-outs.
- ❑ We can explain the reimbursement process developed by VFE to your group.
- ❑ We can help provide a one-page flyer with monthly news for your group.
- ❑ We can call all interested people who would like to be added to your group.
- ❑ We can add the individual and group names (with permission) to VFE's mailing list to provide information about current MR activities.

Also, if you are looking to connect to a Parent Support Group, call Vision for Equality. We can help you make that connection. Call Sharon Harper Young (ext 132) or Barbara Nattile (ext 114) at 215-923-3349.



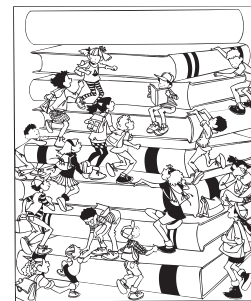
Vision Seeks Staff: Vision for Equality is seeking staff for a part-time monitor and for persons with disabilities or family members to become part of their Consumer/Family Satisfaction team. For application information, call 215-923-3349.

Technology for All at Libraries

Generations on Line - A simplified Internet access program that enables people over 65 to gain access to the exciting opportunities of the World Wide Web at their own speed. Generations on Line can be accessed from any Free Library computer. Ask a librarian near you and enter the technology age on your own terms.

Access Technology - Access Technology workstations at eight library locations enable people with visual impairments and other special needs to access Library print collections, online resources, and the Internet, using print magnifiers, screen reading software, large screen monitors, scanners and scanning software, and Braille displays and printers. The Access Technology workstations are located at the Central Library, NE Regional, J. E. Coleman NW Regional, Lucien Blackwell West Phila Regional, Library for the Blind, Independence, Andorra, and South Phila branches. Free Library Branches are handicapped accessible in varying degrees; call the individual branch for information concerning accessibility.

NEW! PC Reservation is Here - Now you can reserve an hour-long time slot at a Free Library computer in advance, using our new self-service sign-up system. It's an easy way to manage your allotted time. Stop by a Library to try it out.



Renew Your Books Online - Simply visit <www.library.phila.gov>. Then go to the Library Services section and click on My Account.

Books to Go! - We're making room for new books, so at 54 branches books will be sold for 25 cents. At the end of each month, all unsold books will be offered FREE. For information, call 215-686-5400.



DID YOU

▶ A weekend retreat – for persons with all types of disabilities, as well as for individuals who may be experiencing economic challenges, is being planned at the Malvern Retreat House in Fall of 2005. If you or someone you know would enjoy a weekend retreat that includes having your faith in God initiated, refreshed and strengthened, contact Lorie Brew for information at the Dept. For Pastoral Care for Persons with Disabilities, 215-587-3530, or pcpddeaf@adphila.org.

▶ Retiro de fin de semana para personas con todo tipo de impedimentos, como tambien para individuos que esten experimentando retos econ6micos, esta siendo planeado en "Malvern Retreat House" para el otono del ano 2005. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce le gust aria unirse al retiro de fin de semana que incluye teniendo su fe en Dios iniciada, reafirmada y fortalecida. Favor de llamar a Lorie Brew al Departamento de Cuidado Pastoral para Personas con Impedimentos, 215-587-3530, o pcpddeaf@adphila.org.

▶ Talking ATM locations – are being provided by Sovereign Bank at branches throughout Philadelphia and the suburbs. To find one near you, go to www.sovereignbank.com/personal/atm_locator/default.asp, or call your local branch.

▶ Localizaciones de las ATM con voz son provistas por Sovereign Bank en sucursales a traves de Filadelfia y sus alrededores. Para encontrar una cerca de usted vaya a www.sovereignbank.com/personal/atm_locator/default.asp, o llame a una sucursal local.

▶ Sled skating returns – the Blue Cross RiverRink, located at Festival Pier at Penn's Landing (Spring Garden Street) is again offering sled skating for people with disabilities. In partnership with the Variety Club, these special skating sessions are available on Sunday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Staff has been trained to assist guests with their needs. Cost is \$5, which includes price of admission and sled



KNOW?

rentals. Reservations required by calling 215-925-RINK. Source: Liberty Resources newsletter

▶ Regresa "Sled skating" "the Blue Cross RiverRink" localizado en el muelle Festival en Penn's Landing (Spring Garden Street) esta ofreciendo otra vez patinaje en trineo para personas con impedimentos. En asociaci6n

con Variety Club, estas sesiones de patinaje especial estan disponibles los domingos en la manana de 10:30 a.m. A 12 del mediodia. El personal ha sido entrenado para asistir a los invitados con sus necesidades. El costo es de 5 d6lares, el cual incluye el precio de admisi6n y el alquiler del trineo. Se requiere reservaci6n llamando al 215-925-RINK. Tornado del boletin informativo de Liberty Resources.

▶ The Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004 – was signed on October 30 by President Bush. The Act eliminates certain special allowances to Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) lenders and authorizes an increase from \$5,000 to \$17,500 in the maximum amount of student loan debt the government may forgive for certain math, science and special education teachers who agree to teach for five years in high poverty schools. Source: Capitol Insider newsletter.

▶ El acta de proteccion del Contribuyente-Maestro del ano 2004 fue firmada en Octubre 30 por el Presidente Bush. El acta elimina ciertos subsidios especiales para el Programa Federal de Prestamos de Educacion Familiar (Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP)). Los prestamistas estan autorizados a aumentar de \$5,000 a \$17,500 la cantidad maxima del prestamo estudiantil que el gobierno puede condonar para ciertos maestros de matematicas, ciencias y educacion especial que esten de acuerdo en enseñar por cinco anos en escuelas con altos niveles de pobreza. Tornado del boletin informativo "Capitol Insider."

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Any websites noted in The Family Forum are provided for your information and are not rated or reviewed. We welcome your input about useful sites you have visited. Email familyforum@phila.gov.

Did You Know?

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▶ For Youth with Disabilities – Navigating the Road to Work is the electronic newsletter of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth – <www.ncwd-youth.info>. The newsletter and the NCWD/Youth website offer information to improve services to youth and especially youth with disabilities. One topic on the website is information about how assessments can be used effectively to help youth in their transition to adulthood. Good assessments focus on individuals and their abilities, not their perceived deficits. The information on the website is personalized for various audiences, including youth and family, administrators and policymakers, youth practitioners, and employers. Their toll-free number is 1-877-871-0744. To sign up for the publication, email intersection@ncwd-youth.info.

▶ Para jóvenes con impedimentos. Navegando por el Camino al Trabajo es el boletín informativo electrónico de “National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth <www.ncwd-youth.info> el boletín informativo y la página en la Internet de NCWD Youth ofrece información para mejorar los servicios a los jóvenes y especialmente a los jóvenes con impedimentos. Un tema en la página de Internet es información acerca de cómo las evaluaciones pueden ser usadas efectivamente para ayudar a los jóvenes en su transición a la adultez. Buenas evaluaciones enfocadas en las personas y sus habilidades, no en las deficiencias percibidas. La información en la red es personalizada para varias audiencias, incluyendo jóvenes y su familia, administradores y legisladores, médicos jóvenes, y empleadores. Para llamar libre de cargos 1-877-871-0744. Para suscribirse a la publicación, intersection@ncwd-youth.info.

▶ For Better or Worse – The comic strip has been running a series of installments about how school students are reacting to a student with a developmental disability joining their class. You can view the entire story line, beginning on October 25 at <<http://www.comics.com/comics/forbetter/archive/forbetter-20041025.html>>, which contains an archive of the comic strip. The messaging of the story line so far has been excellent. Source: The Arc-US. (Freda Egnal, at MRS, has the strip on her bulletin board.)

*Thanks to Emilio Pacheco for
the Spanish translation.*

▶ En las buenas o en las malas. La tira cómica ha estado publicando una serie de números acerca de cómo los estudiantes en la escuela están reaccionando cuando los estudiantes con impedimentos del desarrollo se unen a sus clases. Usted puede ver la historia completa comenzando en Octubre 25 en: <<http://www.comics.com/comics/forbetter/archive/forbetter-20041025.html>>, el cual contiene un archivo de la tira cómica. El mensaje de la línea de historia ha sido excelente hasta el momento. Fuente: The Arc-US. (Freda Egnal, at MRS, tiene la tira cómica en su pizarra informativa.)

▶ SSA Disability Starter Kits – The Disability Starter Kits are available for both adult beneficiaries, as well as for children under age 18. The starter kits provide information about the specific documents and the information that SSA requests from its beneficiaries. The kits also provide general information about the disability programs and the SSA decision-making process that can help take some of the mystery out of applying for disability benefits. Each Disability Starter Kit contains a fact sheet that answers questions most people ask about applying for disability benefits; a checklist of documents and information SSA requests; and a worksheet to help gather and organize the information. For both English and Spanish formats, go to <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits.htm>.

▶ “SSA Disability” Información para comenzar el proceso de obtener Seguro Social por incapacidad está disponible para los beneficiarios adultos como también para niños menores de 18 años. Provee información acerca de documentos específicos y de la información que SSA requiere de sus beneficiarios. También provee información general acerca de los programas de personas con impedimentos y del proceso de toma de decisiones de SSA.



Hold the Date! April 22, 2005
The Philadelphia Alliance Presents
The 3rd Annual Conference for
Direct Service Professionals

**Visit www.MyCityMyPlace.com
for resources**

Rosemary Kennedy, 86, the oldest sister of President John F. Kennedy, died in January. A statement released by the family said Ms. Kennedy was “a lifelong jewel to every member of our family,” adding, “her mental retardation was a continuing inspiration to each of us, and a powerful source of our family’s commitment to do all we can to help all persons with disabilities live full and productive lives.” Her sister Eunice Shriver is the founder of Special Olympics. Source: The Arc-US’ Capitol Insider

Welcome new Speaking for Ourselves 2005-2006 Officers: Carolyn Morgan, President; Bill Krebs, Vice-President; Rick Giovannucci, Secretary; Wanda Davis, Treasurer. Email addresses are [firstname]@speaking.org.



COMING UP!
Developmental
Disabilities Conference
on May 6

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BEFORE

Santa is Really a Special Person at KenCCID.

Greg Mahoney is supported by KenCCID, a residential agency. He volunteered to be Santa at the agency’s holiday party and was a great hit.



AFTER

Gov. Rendell’s Newsletter Contains Good News

Governor Rendell has rolled out a short quickly-read weekly e-newsletter. In the first issue, he wrote, “... in the coming months, we will be implementing an assessment on ... ICF/MRs. This will generate \$17 million in new federal funds on an annual basis that will be used to reduce the waiting list for community-based services for those with developmental disabilities.”

To sign up for the Governor’s e-newsletter, go to <www.virtualtours.state.pa.us/newsletter>.

Save the Date: April 17

A Celebration of the Eucharist for Persons with Disabilities, Families, Friends and Care Providers will be held on Sunday, April 17, at 2:30 p.m. in the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul, at 18th and Ben Franklin Parkway. Cardinal Justin Rigali will be the Principal Celebrant and Homilist. There is a reception with light refreshments following the Mass. All are welcome. Contact the Dept. For Pastoral Care for Persons with Disabilities at (v) 215-587-3530/ (tty) 215-587-0510 for more information, or to receive an invitation. Email pcpddeaf@adphila.org. Thanks to Lori Brew for this information.

Disability Community Should Be Asking Critical Questions: Social Security Debate and Persons with Disabilities

*From Steve Gold's
Information Bulletin #77, 1-05*

As the Administration begins to push to privatize (and weaken) Social Security, persons with disabilities have been virtually absent from the public discourse. The disability community should be asking their elected federal representatives some critical questions regarding the program. What is going to happen to SSI and SSDI? What about Medicare and Medicaid? How will these programs be funded?

Here is some background and some possible questions –

Social Security is a publicly federally administered Insurance Program, not a private individual Retirement program. The money taken out of our wages is (supposed to be) put in a Reserve Fund to fund future payments based on risk of death and disability, as well as retirement. The push for Private Accounts does NOT take into account the Insurance aspect of the program.

About 47 million persons receive monthly payments from three components of what the general public refer to as “Social Security.” These three are Social Security Disability Insurance, Social Security Retirement Insurance, and Social Security Survivors Insurance. Gold believes that the payments from the Reserve Fund are not earmarked to any one of the three programs but are intermingled.

What will happen to SS Disability Insurance and SS Survivors Insurance when the SS Retirement Insurance funds decrease as persons pull their payments out of the Reserve Fund and put their money into private accounts? For nearly 7 million people, these payments are their entire monthly

income. Nearly half of these 7 million would be below the poverty line if they did not receive their monthly payments.

How will SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), SSI (Social Security Insurance for persons who have not worked and don't qualify for SSDI), and Social Security Survivors Insurance Benefits be funded as the SS Reserve Fund decreases when people put their money into private accounts? What about Medicare and Medicaid? How will these programs be funded under a privatized system? Under privatization, what would happen to payments if the market takes a dip?

People with disabilities should be asking their Congressional representatives about these issues. The Arc of the United States and CCD have requested Congress make a “Beneficiary Impact Statement.” What an idea ... no change without analysis. Ask your federal Congress people to support this Beneficiary Impact Statement. How about knowing the facts before changes are made?

For this full article and back issues of Steve Gold's “The Disability Odyssey Continues” go to www.stevegoldada.com. To contact him by email, write to stevegoldada@cs.com.





**Points of Transformation
March 18, 2005**

**Join the crowd to applaud
the 2005 Points of Transformation
awardees.**

**Come for Brunch at 9 a.m. and Welcome
at 9:30. Hear the Keynote Speaker,
Sharon Mahar Potter at 10 a.m. She will
speak about “Everybody Needs Friends:
Getting and Keeping Them.” The Awards
Ceremony will begin at 11 a.m.**

**For more information, call
215-685-5913.**

REPEATABLES

These activities are marked on the calendar with an asterisk. Although the items have been checked, it is best to call before going.

Mondays

☆ 1st Mon 6:30-9p Speaking for Ourselves, Vision for Equality, 6N 718 Arch, Bill Krebs, 267-257-0109

☆ 2nd Mon 1:30p Mayor's Commission on People w/ Disabilities, Municipal Services Bldg, 1401 JFK Blvd., 16th fl, 215-686-2798

Tuesdays

☆ 2nd Tues 10a-12p That All May Worship (TAMW), Vision for Equality, 718 Arch St, 6N, 215-923-3349 x137

Wednesdays

☆ Every Wed. free legal advice and representation on general legal problems, Liberty Resources. Call for appt. 215-204-1800

Thursdays

☆ 2nd Thurs 1:30p SEPTA Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation, 1234 Market St, 11th fl, 215-580-7145

☆ 2nd Thurs School District Parent & Community Roundtable at 2121 Winter St, 1st fl boardroom, 215-299-3634

Fridays

☆ Every Fri. 1-3p, Skills Training on Accessing Public Transportation, Liberty Resources, for appt. call 215-204-1800, Debbie at x255

☆ 1st & 3rd Fri 7-9p Easter Seals Teen Social Club, 3975 Conshohocken Ave, Kendra Brooks 610-565-2353 x 231

☆ 3rd Fri 1-3p Consumer Connection, Liberty Resources, 1341 N. Delaware Ave, 215-634-2000 x320

Saturdays

☆ 2nd Sat 1-4p Disabled In Action, American Friends Ctr., 1501 Cherry, 215-627-7255



**For Expanded Dates
More Resources
The Family Forum
On-Line**

**Visit [www.
MyCityMyPlace .Com](http://www.MyCityMyPlace.Com)**



Workers with Low-Income Get Tax Break

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal income tax credit for low-income workers. The credit reduces the amount of tax on individual owes and may be returned in the form of a refund.

To claim the EITC, individuals must meet the following rules:

- ❑ have earned income
- ❑ have a valid Social Security number
- ❑ not have investment income that exceeds \$2,650
- ❑ cannot have "married filing separately" status
- ❑ be a U.S. citizen or resident alien all year
- ❑ cannot be a qualifying child of another person



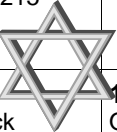




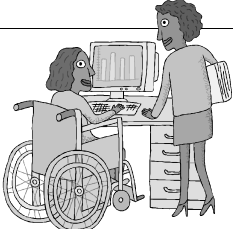
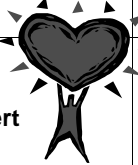





A single person, with no children, earning less than \$11,490 could receive a maximum credit of \$390. A family can earn up to \$35,500 and qualify.





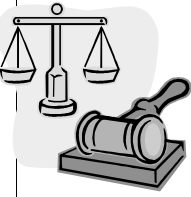

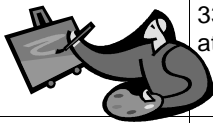







If you can access the Internet, an EITC Assistant is available at <www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=130102,00.html>. The EITC Assistant is a convenient way for you to find out if you are likely to qualify for the EITC tax credit by answering questions online.

Avoid expensive tax preparers, hidden fees, and high-cost loans. IRS-certified volunteers are ready now to electronically file your tax return FREE. You get to keep all your money and get it quickly. Call 215-686-2599 or go to <www.gpuac.org> to find a free tax preparation site near you. The Campaign for Working Families provided some of this information.



Uame al 215-686-2599 o' visite al <www.gpuac.org> para localizar el centro comunitario ma's cercano a usted que le proveera' ayuda gratis para radicar sus planillas de impuestos.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Celebrate Mental Retardation Awareness Month !!!</p>	<p>Women's History Month</p> <p>It's all about community!</p> <p><small>Learning from people with mental retardation</small></p>	<p>1 Outcomes Training, CIS 1080 N. Delaware Ave., 4th Fl. 215-685-5980 - Abuse Awareness Training, 10a with Nancy Nowell open only to families & consumers 215-487-1982</p>	<p>2 *Legal Advocacy at Liberty Resources</p> 	<p>3 -JEVS Craft Fair 10am, Orleans Tech. Institute, 215-854-1894</p> 	<p>4 * Skills Training on Accessing Public Transportation - Ensemble Atzilut: Aran & Jewish musicians perform music of the two traditions. Art Museum, 5:30p 215-684-7867</p> 	<p>5"Sharing experiences: Strategies for Success" Autism Society of America Spring Conference 8am, 215-362-0998</p>
<p>6 Phila. Flower Show—America the Beautiful \$12-25, at Convention Center 215-988-8899</p> 	<p>7 *SFO -Transition to the Future Working Together, Ken-Crest Centennial Conf. & Resource Fair 8:30 am, St Joseph's University, 215-641-1200</p>	<p>8 *TAMW Outcomes Training, Step—By—Step, 215-685-5980</p> 	<p>9 *Networks: Employment Workshop for Job Coaches, 1p-4p Developing Marketing Plans for Providers</p> <p>-3/10 WES Employment Symposium, 6pm, 215-227-8952</p>	<p>10 Transhealth Conference Provider Day, DHS 215-563-0663 x 509 -Northeast Community Services Parent Education: How to Access Resources 215-742-7820</p>	<p>11 Health Risk Profile Feedback Session at Norcom Comm. Center, 10980 Norcom Rd. 215-613-1070</p> 	<p>12 PDDC Seniors Open House 10a-3p 215-229-4550 x 178</p> 
<p>13 "Being Neighborly" Have a cup of tea with your neighbors at 800 Cottman Ave & NECC 215-744-2792, begins at 2pm</p>	<p>14 *Mayor's Commission on People w/ Disabilities -*Networks: 5:30p Person to Person Job seekers workshop</p>	<p>15 3/14&15 Abuse of Children w/ Disabilities Conf. In Riverside, CA, info 1888-818-6298 - NECC-TLC Open House for inclusive pre-school 1pm-3pm, Colleen 215-831-3050</p>	<p>16 .Northeast Comm. Services Open House, 1pm-3pm, 215-831-3050 -Northeast Community Services Parent Education: How to Access Resources 215-742-7820</p>	<p>17 St. Patrick's Day -9:30a-3:00p Don Guanella Boy Scout Troop #346 St. Patrick's Day Parade, Front & Washington Ave to the Art Museum - 3/18 WES Fashion Show 215-227-8931</p>	<p>18 Points of Transformation Awards 9am-12pm Wyndham Plaza, 215-685-5915 *Networks: The Basics of Supervision: Motivation and Performance 9a-3:30pm</p>	<p>19 2005 Signal Processing Society Conf. On Acoustics, Speech & Signal Processing, PA Convention Center/ Marriott Hotel 979-846-6800</p>
<p>20</p> 	<p>21 WES CIE Life Skills Career Week, 11am, 1463 Lycoming St., FREE 215-227-8952</p>	<p>22 -American Diabetes Alert Day</p> <p>-NECC "LSP Grooving" a musical presented by the Life Skills Program, Veronica 215-831-2950</p> 	<p>23 Autism and Asperger Syndrome Conference, Temple Kiva Auditorium. Info Stephanie Marcello 215-204-2933</p> 	<p>24 Quality Progressions Advisory Committee Meeting, 6pm at SPIN 267-765-2012 -ARC's Art Exhibition & Competition at Cheltenham Sq. Mall, 215-229-4550 x 125</p>	<p>25 Good Friday</p>  <p>WES Outreach 5:30p-8:30p at 1315 Windrim St., 215-227-8546</p>	<p>26</p> 
<p>27</p> 	<p>28 —Public Schools Closed Spring Recess</p> <p>-Collective Advocacy Workshops at PA Train & Tech Assistance Network 1800-441-3215</p>	<p>29 *Networks: Underatnding Developmental Disabilities II, 9:30am - 3/30 An Informational on Phila. MR Services 9am-11:30am, Contact, Joe Scullin 251-248-7607</p>	<p>30 Partnerships for Community Supports Open House 11am-7:30pm, 267-350-4513</p> <p>- JEVS Life Sharing Symposium, 8:30am at Lankenau Hosp. Info 610-645-2000</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>PDDC Open House & Comm. Resources 3-7pm, info 215-229-4550 x 126</p>	<p>March</p> <p>2005</p>	

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<h1>April 2005</h1>				1 April Fools Day *Easter Seals - Fools for Art! Join the Academy of Fine Arts for music, tours and dance, 215-972-7600 -PA budget briefings in Mont. County Services Bldg. 215-665-2585	2 Parents Involved Network Advocacy Conference, Doubletree Hotel, 215-751-1800 -YMCA Healthy Kids Day 
3 -National Public Health Week -Workshop: Israel, study, make & take. Stomp grapes, make pita or create an oil lamp form clay! 2p Mandell Education Campus, 215-635-8940	4 *Speaking for Ourselves 	5 Outcomes Training, Salvation Army 215-685-5980 - School District Home & School Council Meeting, 215-229-3624 for more info.	6 *Free Legal Advice 	7 Gossip Columnist Liz Smith dishes the dirt at The Free Library 1801 Vine Street, 7:30p, 215-567-4341 - Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema begins today, times and location 215-733-0608	8 Civil War and Liberty Museum, home to uniforms, weapons, art & 12,000 Civil War books. 18th & Pine 215-735-8196 	9 * Disabled in Action -Philadelphia Theater Co. presents an open-captioned tribute to William Finn, known for clever uplifting lyrics. Phila. Premier 2p, 100 S. Broad Street, 215-627-9271
10 Stop by and see the finest in contemporary at the Mid Atlantic Bank Gallery at Center Square, 1500 Market St 215-545-1118 	11 *Mayor's Commission on People w/ Disabilities -4/9-4/12 The 44th Philadelphia Antiques Show at the 33rd & Market, begins at 11am each day	12 *TAMW Outcomes Training, AHEDD, 100 Old York Rd., Suite 1-128 215-685-5980	13 -Tour the Old City Hall building, home to the United States Supreme Court at one time. Learn the history of the courts and early Philadelphia. 5th & Chestnut, 215-597-8974	14 *SEPTA -School District Parents Roundtable 10am 2120 Winter Street, 215-229-3624. Parents and Community Leaders welcome	 15 *Skills Training *Easter Seals *Consumer Connection -Friday Night at Fels Planetarium, A Beautiful more intimate viewing experience of the night sky. 215-448-1208	16 PA Convention Center hosts Furniture & Furnishings Show, 11am, \$12, see one of a kind home furnishings from contemporary to classical. 215-440-0718
17 National Volunteer Week - Conversation with Holocaust Survivor at Jewish Services Bldg. Opportunity for students and teachers to have an informal convo. with survivor. 215-832-0655	18 -Public School Report Cards Issued -Workshop on Composing and Arranging Music using the Finale Program, 2 sessions \$60, 6-7:30p Kimmel Center 215-790-5896 	19 Outcomes Training, Interac, 4120 Tower St. 215-685-5980 -JEVS Wellness Expo 9am-1pm, begins & ends at 1 Boathouse Row , 215-854-1897	20 	21 Thursdays thru Saturdays 1p-4p beginning in April the Plantation home of William Penn's Secretary James Logan open for historical tours. 215-329-7312	22 3rd Annual Conference for Direct Support Professionals, 8am, Hilton at City Line Ave. 	23 Celebrate Shakespeare's Birthday (and day of death) at the Shakespeare Memorial 20th & Vine St., depicting Hamlet & Touchstone
24 Passover Autism Awareness Day at The Phila. Zoo, \$8, FREE for Individuals with Autism, Carol 215-362-0998 	25 Equality Forum, a National Celebration of 40years marks start of Gay/Lesbian civil rights	26 	27 Eamon Ore-Giron, Artist, presents visions of the American west at the PA Academy of Fine Arts 118 N. Broad St., 215-972-7600	28 Penn Relays Carnival Weekend Begins today thru 4/30. The USA vs The World, Franklin Field 	29 A Day in Brandywine Valley, spend a day in Brandywine Valley a region known for its fine gardens and museums, meet at Raddison Plaza Hotel 8:30am, \$155, 1800-714-3287	30 Mural Arts Tours are beginning again! Self-guided and Group tours are available. 215-685-0750 for reservations

PDDC
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Will You Be Standing Here This Year? 2004 Points of Transformation Participants

Points of Transformation Awards
March 18, 2005
9 a.m. to 12 noon
Wyndham Philadelphia
17th and Race Streets

See more information on Page 12

