

The FAMILY FORUM

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6

Table of contents

[1. Brighter Futures Awardees](#)

[2. Stay Observant](#)

[3. ParaTransit and Self-Determination](#)

[4. Did You Know?](#)

[5. Reader's Exchange](#)

[6. COMHAR and Special Olympics](#)

[7. Fialkowski Humanitarian Award](#)

[8. Calendar](#)

Spotlight on 2002- Brighter Futures Awardees

Brighter Futures Awardees are the people who choose to have control over their lives and who support people with disAbilities to realize their goals and be contributing members of the community. From all walks of life, they see abilities, and with respect, help people lead everyday lives. They deserve recognition and have, rightly so, been selected by the MRS Public Awareness Committee to receive the 2002 Brighter Futures Awards. In this issue, we briefly tell you about them. Look for more at www.MyCityMyPlace.com.

The winners of the Brighter Futures awards are: 1) [Roberta Barnes-Downing and Pedre Rivera](#); 2) [Stanley Graubard, D.D.S.](#); 3) [Bill Krebs](#); 4) [Octavia Green](#); 5) [Herb A. Grant](#); 6) [Sister Margaret Maura Kirby](#); 7) [Brendan Muszynski](#); 8) [Ilene Shane, Esq.](#); 9) [Kenneth Woodson](#); 10) [Pia Nicolini](#); 11) [Michael Basch](#); 12) [Caroline Williams](#); and 13) [Jackie McDowell](#).

They are all outstanding examples of how people develop their potential and make a real contribution to others when given opportunities and support. These Brighter Futures Awardees personify the spirit of the awards: making a Brighter Future for themselves through leading self-determined lives and contributing to the community by their example and advocacy. Separately and together, their grit and unshakeable spirit has made a positive difference in their lives and others.

Roberta Barnes-Downing and Pedro Rivera

Past Issues

[Sept/October 2002](#)

[May/June 2002](#)

[March/April 2002 - Photos of Success Stories](#)

[Sept/October 2001](#)

Most photographs of Awardees by Linda Falotico. Most interviews by Barbara Prince.

Roberta Barnes-Downing and Pedro Rivera were faced with the challenge of changing times and the need for innovation. Charged with the responsibility of supervising the "light line" of sheltered workshop consumers at COMHAR's day program and facing a dwindling amount of available contract work, Roberta and Pedro had to invent a new program for the light line workers and find meaningful ways for them to spend their days.



Physical exercise became their starting place. They organized an exercise group and each person took turns being the leader. For many of the group participants, this was their first opportunity to be a leader. They began group discussion to increase each person's knowledge base and expand their horizons, enabling them to make more informed choices. During group discussions, several individuals mentioned they were interested in exercising their right to vote. Roberta initiated voter education and arranged for a voting machine to be delivered to the day program. When participants talked about never receiving or writing a letter, Roberta and Pedro organized a Pen Pal program, recruiting community members to exchange correspondence with group members. Roberta and Pedro continue to explore each consumers' interests, always on the lookout for opportunities to expand activities offered.

As a result of Roberta's and Pedro's innovations, the group has flourished. One formerly very shy individual will now stand up in front of the group and lead them in exercises. Another person gained the confidence to take a job in the community. Group members have much greater control over the activities in which they participate than ever before and exercise their rights to choose how they spend their time as a direct result of Roberta's and Pedro's efforts.

Dr. Stanley Graubard, D.D.S.

Ryan Youngman was in dire need of emergency help several years ago. A



fall due to a seizure broke his front tooth, leaving him with a sharp spike and bleeding mouth. His own dentist was gone for the day, leading Ryan's mother, Lynn Youngman, on a search for help. It was her good fortune to find Dr. Graubard. "I looked around and breathed a sigh of relief. We were in the right spot," wrote Lynn Youngman of Ryan's first visit to Dr. Graubard's office. With patience and concern, Dr. Graubard not only repaired Ryan's injury, he continued to provide fine dental services for years to come.

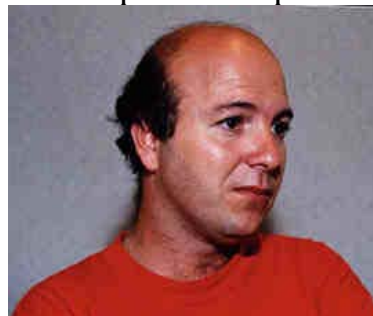
"Ryan is not an easy patient, but not once was it suggested that we go elsewhere," wrote Lynn Youngman. "We have never received special 'pity' treatment. He has always been forthright in what we have to do, has checked us on it and become our partner. Dr. Graubard, by example, educated and trained his staff to respect Ryan as an individual, not a disabled individual. I have watched [the staff] go from real nervousness to greeting Ryan at the door and kidding him about his hat, girlfriends, etc."

Dr. Graubard and his family have been very involved with the Pegasus Riding Academy, an equestrian facility for people with disabilities, almost from its inception. His daughters served as rider volunteers/trainers until going on to college. A firm believer that people with disabilities belong in the community, he employed an individual with Downs Syndrome as a dental helper in his office.

Until recent problems with his health, Dr. Graubard taught student dentists at the University of Pennsylvania Dental School where he was a professor.

Bill Krebs

When Bill Krebs was young, he was labeled with developmental and learning disabilities and placed in special education classes. Bill was picked on by other children because he was different. "I didn't get much of an education," said Bill. "I didn't have a mind of my own." By high school, he was mainstreamed in gym class and lunch. Although he



participated on the school wrestling team, the teasing by nondisabled children got so bad that he wanted to quit school. Instead, he began taking evening classes at Girl's High School.

While at Girl's High, Bill met Debbie Robinson and Richard Young, Speaking For Ourselves members, who encouraged Bill to find his voice and advocate for himself. Although Bill was on the educational track for a high school equivalency certificate, he advocated for himself, studied and worked very hard, ultimately receiving a high school diploma and graduating with his class.

An eighteen year member of Speaking For Ourselves, Bill teaches people to advocate for themselves and reaches out to help others at every opportunity. "Bill is one of the few people who initiated a conversation with me," said Martin Rosenfeld. "The most important thing," said Bill "is to help people think for themselves. Show action. Don't be afraid." A treasury of resources, Bill picks up pamphlets wherever he goes. His pants pockets are stuffed with resource materials in addition to those materials kept at his home.

Bill is a lifelong resident of Northeast Philadelphia where he lives with his mother and thirteen year old niece. A former Vice President of the Town Watch and Committeeperson, Bill proves that a person with a disability can accomplish great things.

Octavia Green



Octavia Green embodies a life of choices and realizing her dreams. An active member of Speaking For Ourselves since 1989, Octavia grew up experiencing rejection by school mates and finding very limited opportunities available. Spurred by her mother's advice to keep striving and to "not let her life rot", Octavia has strived to not only overcome obstacles herself, but to help others as well. Helping people with disabilities take charge of their own lives became Octavia's life work.

According to Octavia, the work she is most proud of includes her term as President of the Board of Speaking For Ourselves. The position gave Octavia the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience the potential that people with disabilities possess. Through her work with the Ms. Foundation, she makes presentations to various groups to increase awareness of physical and sexual abuse suffered by many women with disabilities. She is also very proud of her role as editor of the Speaking For Ourselves newsletter. As a school girl, Octavia was denied the opportunity to take typing classes because of her disability. Octavia now gloats over her computer skills as she types articles and edits the newsletter. She also visits residents of the Woodhaven Center monthly to talk with them about their own potential.

Octavia achieved her dream job of working as a trainer and consultant through her work with the Person-to-Person Series at Networks for Training and Development. She currently serves as Secretary of the Board at Speaking For Ourselves, and also as a member of Philadelphia's Self-Determination Council. A deeply spiritual person, Octavia is a long time member of Crossroads Baptist Church and is studying to become a spiritual counselor.

Herb A. Grant

Herb A. Grant never worked with people with disabilities until he came, by chance, to Other Options in 1997. He had experienced tough times in his own life and overcame his own problem behaviors.

"A spark was put in me to help someone else the same way someone had helped me," said Herb. Herb met Aaron Richards, who had great difficulty controlling his anger and emotions, and saw that Aaron was much like himself.



The ability to recognize that fact gave Herb the empathy and respect for Aaron that formed the basis of their relationship. "Relationship is the key," said Herb, who helped Aaron process and understand the events of his day, relieving Aaron's frustration and building trust. "Over time, because of Herb's expertise at helping Aaron process his experiences and understand his feelings, Aaron has been able to take

control of his life," wrote Aaron's father, Karl Thaler.

"Herb is very skillful at what he does," wrote Karl Thaler. "He has used both the training he's received – and that he continues to pursue through school- as well as his own life experience in order to hone his abilities to understand and communicate." "It's the team," said Herb who praises each person on Aaron's team for their contributions to help Aaron gain more control of his life and expand his social relationships. "Herb has coached Aaron about making friends in the community – since inclusion means relationships- and he's worked to help Aaron see that relationship equals reciprocity," wrote Karl Thaler.

Herb, a single father, is studying for a degree in mental health/drug and alcohol counseling. He is now a House Manager at TAIG and continues to work with Aaron.

Sister Margaret "Peg" Maura Kirby

Sister Margaret Maura Kirby, affectionately known by all as "Sister Peg", advocated for youth and adults with developmental disabilities to have more choices in social and recreational activities. In the early nineties, few opportunities for social/ recreational activities existed outside of the school setting. In 1991, Sister Peg proposed a new program: Transforming Opportunities with Disabled Adults and Youth (TODAY). The Arch Diocese agreed to a one year trial period for the fledgling program.



Sister Peg recruited participants without disabilities from area high schools, colleges and parish elementary schools along with participants with disabilities. "We come together – and always together," said Sister Peg. The program does not allow activities exclusively *for* people with disabilities; activities must be done *with* people with disabilities. Sister Peg, who has implemented suggestions and requests for new activities that others did not dream possible, exclaimed "I never let 'no' be part of our vocabulary." Starting with approximately forty five participants, TODAY now serves over six hundred.

Offering more than twenty recreational programs, including Buddy Ball, Theatrical Troupe, parish held dances, Winterfest, trips to the shore and travel to Catholic Youth gatherings across the country, TODAY fills a crucial need for adults and youth with disabilities - as well as providing enriching opportunities for nondisabled participants. "We can all learn from each other," said Sister Peg.

A former special education teacher and school principal, Sister Peg emphasized her belief that with the proper supports and the right people to help, a space can be created for a person with a disability to do anything. "There's nothing [people with disabilities] can't do," said Sister Peg. "If we can dream it, we can do it."

Brendan Muszynski

Brendan Muszynski is the older sibling of Andrew, who is diagnosed with autism. Participating in the family goal to keep Andrew active in his community, Brendan has become Andrew's primary mentor. Although initially disappointed to learn that his brother was born with a disability, "Brendan quickly learned how to play with his brother, communicate with him and become his advocate. Andrew could not have a more caring brother and dedicated advocate," wrote the boys' father, Kevin Muszynski.



"When I first met Brendan I thought he was a volunteer or a friend for Andrew - not realizing he was his brother. His care for him was incredible. He treated him just like one of his buddies, but with extra kindness. He would try to get Andrew to do more than he could, but in a fun and loving way," wrote James Scanlon. "Children react in many different ways to a sibling with special needs. For Brendan, his brother was just Andrew who he helped to learn and grow - as he himself has," wrote Carol Ross.

Brendan has taught Andrew "the technique", which is a way of getting Andrew to repeat a word or phrase with prompting. This is an amazing feat considering that Andrew is nonverbal.

Giving up his free time to watch Andrew has been hard on Brendan, as is taking Andrew out in public when he acts out. However, Brendan points out that teaching Andrew new things is fun. "Andrew's a handful, but he's great to have around," said Brendan.

Currently enrolled in his senior year of high school at the Charter High School for Architecture and Design, Brendan plans to attend college next year.

Ilene Shane, Esquire

Ilene Shane, founder and Executive Director of the Disabilities Law Project, has advocated and litigated on behalf of persons with disabilities for the past twenty –seven years. In addition to litigation, Ms. Shane devotes her time to advocating for the rights and needs of people with disabilities with the Department of Public Welfare and Pennsylvania Legislature, providing community education, and works with advocacy organizations and coalitions of advocacy organizations.



Ms. Shane has been extremely successful advocating for community services for people with disabilities. Her work includes *Clark v. Cohen* in which the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit upheld that the Commonwealth's failure to implement the judgment of their professionals to provide community services to an institutionalized plaintiff with retardation violated the US Constitution; *Daniel B v. White*, a class action on behalf of persons with retardation at Woodhaven Center, resulting in seventy-seven individuals being placed in the community with necessary services, and allocating money to service persons with retardation who were on the "waiting list" for community services. These accomplishments represent only a piece of Ms. Shane's ongoing work to assist people with disabilities to return to the community and live productive lives.

"Ilene and I have been colleagues and office mates for several

decades," wrote Janet Lonsdale. "I know her personal and professional qualities well, and have the greatest respect and admiration for both." Co-author of the publication, "Estate Planning for Parents of Handicapped Children", Ms. Shane continues her outstanding work with the Disabilities Law Project.

Kenneth Woodson

Kenneth Woodson is a hard working, independent young man. He experienced years of frustration and difficulty due to his disabilities while in school.



Overcoming numerous obstacles as he grew into adulthood, Kenneth has made tremendously positive changes in his life. Kenneth has worked forty hours per week for Wawa, Inc. at two different South Philadelphia locations for five years. When faced with the decision to lower his hours worked per week to keep his Supplemental Security Income or to become totally self-supporting, he chose

to work full time.

A dedicated employee, Kenneth shows up on time for work every day that he is scheduled. He is so dedicated to his job that during the 1998 SEPTA strike, Kenneth rode his bicycle from his home in West Philadelphia to work in South Philadelphia. Kenneth lives with his 91 year old grandmother, whom he helps to look after. A loving grandson, Kenneth grocery shops for the household and prepares meals for himself and his grandmother. He serves his community by volunteering at the House of Umoja, helping to collect and distribute food to the needy during food drives. Kenneth is also a faithful member of Vine Memorial Church. Each year, Kenneth runs track and bowls in the Special Olympics. Continuing to expand his interests, Kenneth has branched into computers. He enjoyed working with computers so much that he purchased a computer for himself and has learned to access the Internet and communicate with family and friends via email.

Kenneth is "very independent in his living," stated Charmian

Ramey, Kenneth's support coordinator. "With the continued support of his mother and extended family, I know that Kenneth will continue to excel and obtain any goal that he sets for himself."

Pia Nicolini

Pia Nicolini is the proud mother of five children. Two of her children, daughters Ignacia and Carlotta, were born with developmental disabilities. Thrust into the role of dealing with adversity, Pia saw that it helped her grow in ways she never thought of before. "I actually owe a lot to my children who have been my teachers – my wings," said Pia.

"My mother taught me how to be a good person inside. She said to me, disability isn't everything, being a good person is what counts," said daughter Ignacia Robinson, who nominated Pia for the award. "My daughters are so brave dealing with daily life," said Pia. "Dealing with how you're going to go about your dreams... What's the future going to be...I always told the kids you can do what you want! If you don't live up to your potential, you're cheating yourself."



While Pia prepared her daughters well for adult life, Ignacia surprised her by announcing that she wanted to marry. Ignacia's determination gave Pia the courage to say, "Let's try to figure it out." Now married for six years, Ignacia noted, "When I wanted to get married, she believed in us when everyone else wouldn't give us a chance."

"If you don't get involved in your adult child's life who is living with supports as an advocate and a support, a lot will be missing from your child's life," advised Pia. "I don't think what I have done to help my children become happy independent adults, as much as possible, is more than what any other parent has done." Ignacia summed it up by saying, "She taught me how to love myself, so I can love other people. I love this person. She's my mom."

Michael Basch, Esquire

Michael Basch, Esquire of Fine, Kaplin and Black, R.P.C., is a legal lifeline for parents and their children who receive



special education in Southeastern Pennsylvania. A native of Melrose Park, Michael Basch began doing pro bono work for the Volunteers for the Indigent Program in the early 1990's. Special education became his area of interest, and he has since represented

hundreds of families in full time practice. "Families who cannot afford a high priced attorney often just accept the school placement and services their child gets, even if it is not appropriate. Thanks to Mr. Basch, these children receive legal assistance, when necessary, to get the special education they need," wrote Ruth Fell.

Handling cases ranging from children who were never identified as needing special education (Delayed Child Find), noncompliance with the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), to children with years of special education who don't progress, Mr. Basch is kind and helpful to families who have limited understanding of the special education process.

"From the first day a parent encounters the school district with a special needs child, make sure to keep accurate records and files and keep things in writing," advised Attorney Basch. The most important things for parents to remember are: Know your procedural rights; request evaluations for your child in writing and keep a copy for yourself; learn the IEP rules and requirements. Legal protection exists for the parents if they disagree with anything in the IEP.

Denise Weil, whose daughter received the approved private school placement she so much needed due to the efforts of Mr. Basch, wrote, "To those of us who are lucky to have been blessed with his service, he is a true hero."

Caroline Williams

Caroline Williams is the owner of Paradise Island Day Care Center. A multifaceted facility, Paradise



Island serves more than sixty children daily ranging in ages from infant to five years. Ms. William's personal philosophy to serve the entire community drove her to seek out employees and students with disabilities. Paradise Island and PDDC's Employment Partners proved to be a great match, providing opportunities for both vocational training in the community and job placements.

Since December 2000, Ms. Williams has hired people with disabilities in positions in food service, child care and janitorial services. At present she employs two Employment Partners graduates and is providing training for a student intern. "It's been a very positive experience. I enjoy having them here. They are an asset to my business," stated Ms. Williams. Described as an employer who is fair minded, patient and supportive towards her employees, Ms. Williams said, "Your expectations can't be as great for employees with disabilities. What they can do, they do very well. Don't make the ceiling so high that they can't achieve." Ms. Williams makes it a point to concentrate on abilities not disabilities. "She has made a great difference in the lives of the graduates she has hired and the students that she has trained, offering them the opportunity to experience the world of work in an enriching and encouraging environment," wrote Laura Princiotta, Director of Employment Partners.

"I wish every business could take five minutes to test and try to employ these young people. [Businesses] are losing out if they don't," Ms. Williams stated emphatically. "Give them a chance to work. They deserve it. They're qualified."

Jackie McDowell

Jackie McDowell has worked with Steven Frank for approximately eleven years. "I thought I could help him and see him progress," said Jackie. Over the years, Steven has become involved not only in Jackie's life, but that of her daughter, parents and sister as well. "He's like family to me," said Jackie. A formerly shy man with a severe reputation, Steven now enjoys meeting people, will talk more with people, express how he feels and is even



dating.

"Jackie speaks to Steven just like she would to anybody else. When she is with him, she offers him choices," wrote Ruth Frank, Steven's mother. "Jackie becomes friendly with neighborhood people and opens the way for Steven to make new friends." Jackie began taking Steven to the Friends of Pennypack Park meetings a few years ago. While there, Steven met a lady who introduced him to another person, and later began meeting their families. "It's so easy," said Jackie. "People say it's hard because a lot of people are afraid to meet mentally challenged people. With Steve, it's never been hard." As a result of Jackie's work, Steven is well known in his neighborhood and is greeted by name at the local grocery store, Perkins restaurant and nail salon - where he gets his nails manicured regularly. He works part time at the Dollar General on Krewstown Road, and is supported by Jackie on the job.

Jackie credits her friendship with Steven as the key to their working relationship. "Steven has changed from someone with a bad reputation to a very nice young man," wrote Ruth Frank. Jackie continues to work with Steven, who receives services through Kenccid.

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

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Stay Observant!

Edited from a press release by Sheila Stasko, PA Waiting List Campaign

Yogi Berra said, You can observe a lot just by watching. We made too many wrong mistakes."

Waiting List Initiative

The Waiting List Initiative this past year received a one-third reduction in funding. The Campaign is positive that had it not been for your legislative contact and calls the amount would have been even less. Thank you for your hard work. What the Campaign fears most is that in January, with a newly elected Governor and legislators on board, we will be facing an even more aggressive battle in the (2003-2004) fiscal year.

In reviewing the candidates web pages, it should come as no surprise that disabilities are not even mentioned as issues. As people whose lives are touched by disabilities we urge you to visit the web pages and make a disability agenda an issue. Contact Mike Fisher at www.mikefisher.com and Ed Rendell at www.rendellforgovernor.com. They both have email contact areas available. You might want to ask them what their Disability Agendas or proposals for Mental Retardation services are, explain to them what waiting lists are and ask what they will do to end waiting lists? Education and direct contact are the key. Use this as an opportunity to make and establish ongoing contact with your legislator.

The PA Waiting List Campaign also invites you to use us. We are ready and willing to travel to your group and talk about Waiting Lists and issues surrounding the Transformation Project, both of which will have an impact on you or someone you know. Don't have a group? All you need to do is contact people you know, invite them over and clear your kitchen table. Small groups of people provide the energy and muscle needed to change the system. We need each other! We are a community! You can call us at 610-767-2437 or toll free at 877-372-WAIT. Our email address is [sstasko@ptd.net](mailto:ssasko@ptd.net).

The Transformation Project: Another Wrong Mistake?

Are you aware that the PA Transformation Process is being

modeled after a project in Wyoming? The PA Waiting List Campaign considers this a real problem. It points out that only Alaska of all U.S. state is more sparsely populated and that the entire state of Wyoming serves only 1,112 people in their MRS system. Pennsylvania is serving over 70,000 people. The Campaign asks, Is this the right model to use for Pennsylvania? Consumers, families and advocates have persistently pointed out sticking points that could cause harm to people using the mental retardation system and have asked for them to be reworked. Nothing has changed, another wrong mistake. Still, the Transformation Process continues down the path of developing programs for people without them. The budget process, Individual Estimated Resources (IER), continues to raise concerns. If the IER is given to people before planning takes place then people will continue to want existing programs and not createnew community programs . You will be asked an assigned set of questions based on the old medical model and how you answer those questions will determine your budget. We will all look very much alike. How does self-determination and creativity fit into this process?

How many people receiving services understand the impact Transformation will have on their lives? We implore every reader to take the time to contact your Legislators and the Gubernatorial Candidates and send them a clear message that we are here, we are waiting and we need their help. We need further investigation into the Transformation process and the proposed Individual Estimated Resource (IER) plan that must include meaningful consumer/family input before people with disabilities are put at possible risk. If you are unsure who your legislator is call the League of Women Voters at 1-800-692-7281.

Stand Up! Add your voice to the Campaign so that the many who are struggling to get off of waiting lists will be heard. You can help end the Wait for thousands of people across Pennsylvania!

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

ParaTransit Update and Self-Determination

ParaTransit Update

This from Liberty Resources Customized Community Transportation (CCT) has clarified two long-standing policies:

To cancel a ride without penalty, you must call the Control center at least two-hours in advance of the time you agreed upon (your confirmed request time) when you made your reservation. If you dont call in advance of the two-hour limit, five or more cancellations within the two-hour late period will result in suspension and loss of a standing order.

The Zone 2 Trailpass can be used on any mode of transportation within the SEPTA system and within Zone 2. However, the Trailpass covers only the \$3.50 base fare. You must pay any additional amount needed to get to your destination. If the reservationist tells you the fare will be \$5.50, you are responsible for the additional \$2. If youve got questions, call Liberty Resources at 215-634-2000.

Self-Determination

Project-Leadership National Coalition on Self-Determination fills vacancy for parent/family member

Donna Szamatowicz, one of our parents from Philadelphia and graduate of the third Project Leadership Class, and Michael Bailey, a parent from Oregon, were selected to fill two open seats on the Board of Directors as parent representatives of the National Coalition on Self-Determination. Source: Bill Coffelt, Co-President (Parent Representative), National Coalition on Self-Determination, www.oaksgroup.org/nconsd.

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

Did You Know?

Barrier-Free Travel - AAA has issued a series of books entitled AAA Barrier-Free Travel that are specifically aimed at travelers with disabilities. The books address facility specifications for lodging, restaurants and tourist attractions in New York, Washington D.C., California, Hawaii, Las Vegas, and Central Florida. Details include the heights of bed frames, sinks, desks, coin slots on public phones, distances between a bed and the wall, and the availability of Braille menus and TDD phone kits. Facilities are also rated on the accessibility. Books can be purchased at bookstores for \$12.95, AAA offices, or online at www.aaa.com

Air Travel Problems Hotline - The Department of Transportation's aviation department has a consumer toll-free hotline 866-266-1368 (voice) and 866-754-4368 (TTY) to obtain assistance if you experience disability-related service problems while traveling by air.

Autism Telephone Support Group - A telephone support group is available for senior parents of adult children with autism who are dealing with the issues of finding group homes, wills and special needs trusts, and other issues that senior parents face. Contact June Francis at 215-659-8166 or balfran@aol.com. Source: Autism Society of Greater Phila newsletter. Dads E-Group for Children with Autism An on-line group to offer ideas, support and information to Dads. To subscribe, send an email to AutDads-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To post a message, AutDads@yahoogroups.com Source: Autism Society of Greater Phila newsletter.

Lead Poisoning - Un-leaded Only: Toward A Safer City For Children is a report on childhood lead paint poisoning in Philadelphia. This report details the problems that families with children face in dealing with lead hazards in the home and possible solutions to the health problems that it causes. Call Steven Fynes, PCCY, 215-563-5848 x11, or go to www.pccy.org, under publications. Source: Childwatch, Spring 2002

Donated Dental Services - With the assistance of the Pennsylvania Dental Association, the National foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped recently expanded the Pennsylvania Donated Dental

Services (DDS) program into Eastern Pennsylvania. Approximately 163 area dentists and 58 laboratories donate free, comprehensive dental treatment to eligible applicants. To qualify, a person must be disabled, elderly, or medically compromised and have no other way of paying for dental treatment. A person must also have extensive dental problems; the program does not cover routine dental care, such as checkups and cleanings. This is a one-time service, so use it wisely. To apply, call Jennifer Gillette, at 800-716-8721. Source: PCHC Health Care Alert, July 2002.

Loans for Assistive Technology - The PA Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) has 4.25% interest rate loans for individuals with disabilities to purchase assistive technology. Assistive technology devices include items such as visual aids, hearing aids, wheelchairs, scooters, entry ramps, computers with adaptive peripherals, adapted vehicles, and home modifications. Also, training on how to use the equipment or devices is considered a valid service. Call PATF at 888-744-1938 for information, or PIAT at 800-204-7428. Source: Advocate for Consumer Transportation newsletter, Spring 2002.

Recreation & Leisure - The PA Recreation & Leisure Services for Persons with Disabilities, 877-986-4550, can help with finding events and activities that are accessible for people of all ages. Information includes wheelchair accessibility, hearing and vision accommodations, and speech and behavioral considerations in activities such as theatres, camps, sports, clubs, museums, and more. Source: PPCRN newsletter.

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

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

READER'S EXCHANGE

Learn How to Buy a Sheriff Sale Home

The HOPE program (Home Ownership through Participation and Education) provides information about purchasing real estate through Sheriffs sales and avoiding the pitfalls. Created by Sheriff John Green in 1988, the seminars provide a slide presentation and mock auction. Participants learn how to read Sheriffs Sale listings, bid on properties, identify their financial range, and successfully close on a property.

Winter seminar schedule dates are November 9 at the Ogontz Branch Free Library, 6017 Ogontz Avenue in Oaklane; November 16 at the Bushrod Branch, 6304 Castor Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia, and December 14 at the Widener Branch, 2531 W. Lehigh in North Philadelphia. Call the Sheriffs Office, 215-686-3530 for more dates or go to www.phillysheriff.com.

Unique T-Shirts - Check out the catalog of The Nth Degree www.thenthdegree.com which has lots of t-shirts on advocacy, diversity, empowerment, humor, inclusion, peace and community, and even a series of TASH shirts that have the TASH logo on the sleeve. These shirts are made by a nationwide graphic design/speaking company that specializes in products, designs and stories for interdependent living, inclusion, diversity and disability rights movement. From Bill Coffelt, co-president of National Coalition on Self-Determination.

PA Parents & Caregivers Resource Network Offers Mini-Grants

PPCRN invites local, grassroots parent and caregiver support, advocacy, and informational groups to apply for up to \$300/year mini-grants to help groups grow and to cover basic operating needs. Deadline is November 20. Contact Sue Scott Dolan, 888-572-7368.

People Wanted for Focus Groups

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, extended family members, foster parents, and others to participate in a discussion group sponsored by the PA Developmental Disabilities Council. Focus group discussions will aid in the development of a vision document called Everyday Kids, Everyday Lives to be used by families, service providers and policy makers concerned with outcomes for children. Free childcare provided at meetings. Call Laura Detwiler, Institute on Disabilities, 800-204-7428, laura420@temple.edu for future meeting dates.

SALE: Two year-old Versa Seat Jazzy Power Chair Model # 1170 Wheelchair, \$4,000. Maximum speed 6.5 mph, range up to 25 miles. On-board battery charger, Intearal Controller harness connector caster, drive and anti-tip wheels, joy stick, battery saver, sleep mode, thermal roll back, detachable footrest, footboard compatible. Contact Connie Hatten, 215-472-5823.

Free Shopping Service

A new service can provide items you need from the drug store, supermarket, hardware store, dry cleaner, etc. Guilant Super Shoppers is a service for anyone within Philadelphia city limits. With 24-hours notice, owner Tom McMahon will do your shopping (with the exception of alcohol, tobacco, and clothing) and will deliver your order directly to you. You pay only the cost of your purchases! Call them at 800-350-3146. Source: Liberty Resources newsletter, October 2002.

November 12 Starts LIHEAP & CRISIS Applications

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and CRISIS Program will both start on November 12 and will continue, barring the unforeseen, until March 27, 2003. LIHEAP provides payments directly to the provider of a heating fuel. The amount is determined by household size, countable household income, and main heating type. You do not have to be behind in utility bills. It is for homeowners, some renters, some subsidized housing tenants and some roomers. Apply at Neighborhood Energy Centers, Utility Companies, Fuel Dealers, etc., or call the hotline, 215-560-2970/fuel directory.

CRISIS is an emergency program. A maximum of \$300 per program year can be made to for heating emergency (shut off, includes water if used in the heating system), heater repairs and broken windows. Apply at Neighborhood Centers, CRISIS Centers or call the hotline at 215-686-2590.

Any household who was eligible last year for the Cash Component will automatically receive a LIHEAP application in the mail. For more general information, call the DPW information line, 800-692-7462, weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

COMHAR's Block Party

Special Olympics

Congratulations to COMHAR's 5th Block Party

Patriotism was in the air as thousands from the Greater Kensington Community came out to celebrate COMHAR, Inc.'s fifth annual Get to Know us block party on Saturday, September 7, 2002 at the agency's Lehigh Avenue location. Timothy Kelly sang God Bless America and The Star Spangled Banner as a color guard from the U.S. Marine Corps Third Battalion marched in. The emotionally charged ceremony was the opening act to a day filled with fun, food and family. COMHAR'S event commemorated September 11 and honored the service professionals who go above and beyond the call of duty on a daily basis to protect and serve residents.



Timmy Kelly is no stranger to live performances. At the age of three, Timmy's talent for singing became obvious to his parents, Timothy and Eileen Kelly. On June 17, he sang the theme song for ABC's *Good Morning America*, live on the program. Indeed his bright smile and golden voice reflect his joy for performing, which he acknowledges in his career objective to sing professionally and share my gift with others to make them smile. This gifted Bustleton youth attended preschool at Overbrook School for the Blind and is now a third grade student at Anne Frank Elementary School in Philadelphia.

News from Special Olympics Philadelphia - By Gary Discount, Executive Director

The staff of Special Olympics Philadelphia is hard at work planning competitions, and events for 2003. Our most important goal is to double the amount of special athletes in the program. We are visiting schools and agencies. If a family member with mental retardation is not involved in Special Olympics, I urge you to call us and get the necessary information. Special Olympics can change the life of an individual with mental retardation. It has for thousands and thousands of Philadelphians.

In order to accommodate more athletes, however, we must increase our volunteer base. Volunteers are needed in a variety of areas including coaches, event planners, fund-raisers, day of event volunteers, doctors and other medical professionals. Families of Special Olympics athletes are still our greatest resource. Please get involved. The athletes deserve the best we can provide for them.

Our Health Athletes Mass Medical Screening is Tuesday, November 26, at the First Union Spectrum, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. And put our Annual Awards Banquet on your schedule, too, on November 15. Tickets are \$30; table of ten is \$275. See the calendar in this issue for more information and sporting dates. Please get involved and contact us at 215-842-4690.

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes initiative was awarded the American Association on Mental Retardation 2002 Special Award in May 2002 for responding to the neglected health needs of persons with mental retardation. Special Olympics Healthy Athletes clinics operate in more than 70 Special Olympics programs around the world.

[Next Family Forum Story](#)

Return to www.MyCityMyPlace.com

2002 Recipients of the Marion & Leona Fialkowski Humanitarian Award

Patt and John Armstrong

Patt and John Armstrong seek no accolades, but, in spite of great odds, personal challenges and loss, they have steadfastly dedicated themselves to make a difference in the lives of others. This is a couple whose first son, Gary, passed away at age 16 in 1986, from the degenerative San Filippo Syndrome, but the Armstrongs remained "...dedicated soldiers, never leaving another child or person behind, caring about all people every day. They never falter in their belief that every person, no matter what the disability, deserves a life of support and value in their community," wrote Maureen and Tom Devaney, who nominated the couple, along with Audrey Coccia.



Many children in public school benefit from the battles fought by the Armstrongs for their son, and, by extension, all others. They were the plaintiffs in the lawsuit brought by the Education Law Center in the late 1970's, for the Extended School Year (ESY), as it is now called, for children with a "regression/recoupment" diagnosis. They spearheaded the change in educational services for people with severe disabilities in a federal lawsuit to begin the first Life Skills classrooms. They were among the original organizers of the Philadelphia Police and Fire Association for Handicapped Children. The list goes on.

"The Armstrongs were friends of the Fialkowskis. They all saw that the world was not only about them. Looking out for their brothers and sisters was their mission; for them it is a way of life," concluded Maureen and Tom Devaney.

- The End -

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