



In This Issue:

Back to the Basics	1
Housing Happenings.....	2
Self-Advocacy: Step-by-Step	3
Did You Know?.....	3
Youthquake! Recap	4
Helpful Interview Tips	5
Dining Discount Cards	5
Livin' Simple	6
FAN Group.....	6
Adult Autism Waiver	7



Back to the Basics

By: Debbie Rozear

LVCIL is growing each and every day. Many new programs have been added, and along with all these programs, came new staff members. The additional staff and new programs have created a shortage of space and we're all stuck rearranging our schedules to make everything fit. With all the innovative ideas, grants, and creativity flowing around LVCIL these days, we have to be sure not to lose sight of what it means to be a Center for Independent Living. Allow me to pull in the reins and get back to the basics.

Each Center for Independent Living is based upon the same four core services: Information & Referral, Independent Living Skills, Advocacy, and Peer Support. Let me explain these services a little bit for you:

Information & Referral: Are you in need of a phone number or do you need help with something that another agency offers? We can be your resource to provide the number or refer you to an agency that will supply your specific needs at that particular time.

Independent Living Skills: Are you on your own for the first time and don't have all the skills that you need to be successful? Whether you are in need of skills training for everyday living or something that is only occasional, we can help. Did you just move to the area and you need to learn the bus route? Did you open a bank account and aren't sure of how to write a check? Do you need to learn how to cook so you don't have to order out every night? LVCIL's Community Support Coordinators (CSC) are here to help, and we can work with you based on your individual needs.

Advocacy: Do you need to learn how to... CONTINUED ON PG. 2

advocate for yourself? Better yet...what is advocacy? Someone can help you understand how to stand up for yourself and make your day-to-day living a little bit easier. CSCs are available to help educate you on your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and fair housing laws.

Peer Support: Do you feel like you are the only one in the world who is living with a disability? Feel like you have no one to talk to. We are here to help. As a Center for Independent Living, at least 51% of our staff and board members are people who are living with a disability. We understand your situation and truly understand what you are talking about. You can schedule an appointment to come in and talk with someone who cares.

Why do I have to struggle so much to have my needs met? This question could be asked about each one of the four core services we provide. Just know that we are here for you. If you are in need of any services, feel free to call us and schedule an appointment. We'll sit with you, help you fill out an intake form, and talk a bit about our core services along with many of our other specialized programs.

In order to get started call a Community Support Coordinator at 610-770-9781. For Lehigh County residents contact either Debbie at ext. 124 or Bob at ext. 111. For Northampton County residents, contact either Julie at ext. 133 or Eli at ext. 118.

We're here to help you stay independent!



The Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL) is dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities and promoting the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

LVCIL provides services for its consumers such as information and referral, peer support, independent living skills, and individual and systems advocacy. The organization also provides housing search and support, services for landlords, a 24-hour sign language interpreter referral service, youth transition services, vocational services, and community outreach through specialized programs and groups.

Housing Happenings

By: Julie Zelena



Here at LVCIL, we maintain a list of affordable, accessible housing units in the Lehigh Valley. We work with local housing authorities, landlords, and county offices to assist in finding appropriate housing for persons with disabilities. Our Community Support Coordinators (CSCs) work hard to broaden their knowledge of housing opportunities and related resources for consumers throughout the Lehigh Valley.

Housing Services Offered in Easton:

Northampton County consumers can now obtain services by appointment on Mondays and Thursdays at the Neston Heights Neighborhood Networks Center for their convenience. We thank Neston Heights Neighborhood Networks Center for the opportunity to better serve Northampton County consumers!

Landlords for All: In November, workshops were held in both Allentown and Easton for landlords and renters. We would like to thank our professional volunteers at Debbie Beach State Farm Insurance, located in North Catasauqua, for sharing their expertise on Renter's Insurance. Keep your eye out for Landlords for All and Tenants 101 workshops coming up in February 2012!

Tip of the Season: Do you know who is responsible for the snow removal where you live? If you're not sure, look at your lease, or call your landlord. If the tenant is responsible, plan ahead and ask someone for help so the chore gets accomplished, especially during a big snowfall. Listen to your body, take breaks, and don't overdo it out there shoveling in that cold.

Contact LVCIL at 610-770-9781 and ask to speak with a Community Support Coordinator if you or someone you know is interested in learning more about our housing services!

Self-Advocacy: A Step-by-Step Guide

By: Greg Bott

The true definition of self-advocacy is “the ability to effectively communicate and assert your beliefs, values, interests, goals, and rights, and the ability to take responsibility for those decisions.” That’s the long version. The real, true, and simple definition of self-advocacy is standing up for yourself and your beliefs.

At LVCIL, we always strive to inform and empower our consumers to stand up for their beliefs, but the process isn’t always clear. So, let me give you a step-by-step guide on how to become an effective self-advocate.

1. Believe in yourself: You have the power! Don’t ever let anyone tell you different. Your beliefs and rights are the same as everyone else, so, before you move on, tell yourself you can do it!

2. Define the problem: What’s the issue or problem? Is there more than one problem? How is it affecting you? What system, government or otherwise, is in charge of this problem? These are all important questions you must ask yourself as you move forward in advocating for a specific issue.

3. Realize your rights: Before you move on, it’s important to understand your rights. The Americans with Disabilities Act, and similar laws, guarantee equality and access in all areas for people with disabilities. In understanding your rights you will have a better handle on brainstorming solutions to the problem. If you are unsure of your rights do an internet search, call your local representative, or give us a call at LVCIL.

4. Develop an action plan: Think about how you can change the system and what the outcomes will and should be. Also, gather any paperwork, research, and supporters for your cause because, after all, there’s strength in numbers!

5. Ask for help: If you’re having trouble finding information to support your efforts, be sure to ask the experts. Contact a local advocate, organization, or county office and ask for their assistance in getting more information or support in building your case.

6. Present your case: Whether it’s going to a city council meeting or talking to representatives from

an organization or company, take your case to the “higher ups.” These decision makers will help make real change or at least get the ball rolling.

7. Follow-up: Be sure to always follow-up with the decision makers. Be assertive and persistent. Make phone calls, write emails, and take notes on conversations. Show them you mean business!

8. Evaluate your results: As you continue to advocate, check your notes and think about your efforts. Did you effect change? What happened as a result of your efforts? Go back to the beginning and see how you’ve helped to make things better. If you haven’t noticed any real results, think about your strategy and, maybe go back and develop another action plan.

9. Never give up: It may seem frustrating, but real change won’t happen overnight. So, keep that in mind when you’re out there advocating. Continue to rally support and, no matter what you do, never give up!

10. Celebrate: Congrats! You did it! Go out and celebrate for all your hard work.

Self-advocating may seem like a lot of work, but, in the end, it all pays off. You’ll feel better knowing that your efforts have made real change for yourself and the community as a whole.

I’ll close with the words of my friend and colleague Robbie Graves, the best advocate is a well-informed consumer!

Did You Know?

Thomas Edison was born with several developmental disabilities and dyslexia. He was declared “mentally ill” by doctors and “unteachable” by his school. After failed attempts by his mother to homeschool him, she decided that he would have to learn things on his own. Edison is regarded as one of the most recognized inventors of all time. He went on to invent the phonograph (1877), the electric light bulb (1879), and the motion picture (1896). He patented over one thousand inventions.

The signals for “out,” “safe,” and “strike” in baseball were implemented at the request of Cincinnati Reds outfielder William Hoy who was deaf. He requested the umpires use hand signals because he could not hear their verbal calls.

“Empowering persons with all types o

YOUTHQUAKE! Recap

By: Seth Hoderewski

Did you feel the ground shaking in November? If you did, it's because of the youthquake we had on November 18th and 19th here in the Lehigh Valley. It measured a 10.3 on the advocacy scale and was off the charts on the empowerment index! Fortunately, no one was harmed during the youthquake; instead, everyone felt supported and empowered!

Of course, the youthquake we're talking about came in the form of the "Have you thought about... LIFE?" Transition Conference hosted by LVCIL at the Holiday Inn Conference Center. The idea for the conference sprang from the need for more transition services and information sharing in the Lehigh Valley, as well as the fact that there's a large transition conference each year in State College. We figured, why not here! We're the third most populous region in the state... Why not give it our own Lehigh Valley spin! After much deliberation, and securing funding for the conference, we got the green light.

In October 2010, agency and organization representatives, administrators, teachers, and parents started to meet regularly to plan the conference. These individuals helped to develop the program, decide on presenters, and lead the conference in the right direction. A lot of time, effort, blood, sweat, tears, and countless hours went into making sure everything was ready for the two-day event. And, with the support of these individuals, those two days were incredible! Thank you to everyone who did even the tiniest bit of work. We would not have been able to do it without you!

But, let's be clear on one thing... The conference was all about the young adults. It started from the moment you walked in the door. Conference goers were greeted by young adults. Young adults were going around and speaking to attendees and presenters, making sure everything was going all right. Young adults had sessions specifically for them. Young adults were presenters in numerous sessions. On Friday alone, I counted close to 70 young adults in

one of the sessions! You could feel the young adults becoming empowered, soaking in the information, support, and positivity of the event. I even heard stories about a particular young adult who was truly motivated and changed by the events of the two-day conference. Oh yeah, parents and professionals were there too. They were able to talk to each other, support each other, and learn from one another. Talk about empowerment!

The sessions were great, too. The vendors were able to get their information out to those who needed it, and connections made all over the place. There were a few glitches here and there, luckily nothing major, but at the end of the conference we counted over 250 in attendance on Friday and over 180 on Saturday. We were really happy with the turnout! Reports from most people were that the event was a success, and I've gotten many questions about a date for next year. We were truly ecstatic with how things turned out, especially since we're not conference planners!

Each quake has an aftershock, and we started to wonder, "How can we keep this positive energy going? How can we influence change to truly help people?" And, while the conference was great, we wanted it to be the beginning of something greater. On February 4, 2012, from 10:00-Noon, we will be holding the first meeting for young adults, parents, professionals, teachers, or anyone interested in discussing the current state of transition services in the Lehigh Valley. At this meeting we hope to identify the issues and provide a clear path toward making a difference in the lives of young adults with disabilities transitioning to adult life. The meeting will be tentatively held at LVCIL, 435 Allentown Drive, Allentown, PA 18109. If you are interested in joining us, please RSVP at 610-770-9781 ext. 119 or email sethoderewski@lvcil.org.

It was a quake alright... A **YOUTHQUAKE!**

f disabilities to choose independence.”

Helpful Interview Tips



One of the main aspects of the S2L: Career Path program is preparing for job interviews. During Skills Training, participants practice responses to common interview questions and they learn tips for having a successful interview. Below is a list of the top ten tips, as

determined by the Pathfinders, for preparing for a job interview:

1. Be on time: Being on time actually means arriving 10-15 minutes before your scheduled interview time
2. Dress appropriately: When in doubt, over dress. Do not wear jeans or a t-shirt. Make sure your clothes are clean and free of holes
3. Have a copy of your resume and any other documents: This includes a completed application, background checks, and certificates
4. Don't eat, drink, or chew gum during the interview.
5. Show your positive attitude: Make sure that all your answers are positive and remember to smile. :o)
6. Practice, practice, practice common interview questions: The more you practice, the easier it will be to answer these common questions.
7. Research the company and ask questions: Asking questions shows that you are interested in the job. Never ask about money.
8. Be aware of inappropriate/illegal interview questions: Interviewers are not allowed to ask you if you have a disability. If they do, you will have to decide how to best respond. Simply answering, "I am positive that I would be able to perform the essential tasks of this job with or without accommodations," might be an option.
9. Make sure your personal hygiene is excellent: Shower before your interview. Make sure your nails are short and clean. Put on deodorant, but do not put on an overload of cologne or perfume.

Lehigh Valley Dining Discount Cards!

10% off any regular food purchase at many area restaurants: Applebee's, Jack Creek Steakhouse, Taste of Italy, Hamilton Family Restaurant, Friendly's, Subway, Perkin's, Pizza Hut, Saladworks, Cali Burrito, Parkland Restaurant... AND MORE!

GOOD FOR ALL OF 2012!



For more info, call Greg Bott at 610-770-9781 ext. 120 or email gregbott@lvcil.org

**Looking for upcoming
LVCIL events?**

**Check out www.lvcil.org
or call 610-770-9781**

Livin' Simple

By: Debbie Rozear

Have you ever had a craving for something sweet, but weren't sure how to make a cake or cupcakes? Well, here's your chance to try this simple recipe, just in time for Valentine's Day.

Sweet Angel Food Cake

Ingredients:

- (1) box Angel Food Cake mix
- (1) 15 oz. can crushed pineapples

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

In a medium size mixing bowl, combine the contents of the cake mix and the entire can of crushed pineapples, including the liquid. Stir until mix is moist and the pineapples are distributed throughout batter.

Spray angel food tube pan (or you can use two bread pans) with non-stick baking spray

Evenly pour batter into pan

Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes. Test if cake is done by sticking toothpick in center of cake (if it pulls out clean, the cake is done)

The last step is... Enjoy your cake!

Having a problem with Metro Plus?

Let them know! Call LANta at 610-432-3200 -or- Easton Coach at 610-253-4055 to let them know the problems you've experienced.

If you're having a problem while on the bus, call 610-253-8333 ext. 1027

You can also fill out a complaint form at:
www.lantabus.org/contactinformation.html

FAN GROUP

Are you a young adult with a disability?

Looking for a social network?

Want to take part in some fun activities?

Join FAN Group, LVCIL's social group for young adults with disabilities. We go out and do all types of fun stuff, such as: IronPigs games, Rascal's Food & Fun, laser tag, the movies, and more!

For more info, please call Greg Bott at 610-770-9781 ext. 120 or email gregbott@lvcil.org. Be sure to check out the events page on www.lvcil.org to find out what events we have planned for early 2012!



Here's FAN Group enjoying pizza after a few great games of laser tag! Some say the Blue team won, some say the Red team won... Either way, it was a great time!

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Adult Autism Waiver

By: Kristy Gehman



Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living has recently become involved with the Adult Autism Waiver through the Bureau of Autism Services (BAS), part of Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare. The Waiver was designed to provide supports to participants living in the community.

According to BAS, one in 110 individuals has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which is a life-long neurological condition and is not a mental illness or intellectual disability. While there is no cure for ASD, those living with Autism can live independent lives in the community and hold fulfilling careers, with the necessary supports.

The Adult Autism Waiver is currently serving 300 participants throughout Pennsylvania. The Waiver offers many different services to those who are currently enrolled: community inclusion, family counseling, assistive technology, behavioral specialists, environmental modifications, job assessment and finding, supported employment, and dieticians. LVCIL offers Support Coordination of services for participants.

While LVCIL has just begun its participation with the Waiver, we are witnessing a great demand for these types of services among our consumers and their caretakers. Due to a lack of funding at the state level, unfortunately, there is now a wait to obtain these services, as all 300 slots have been filled. However, in Lehigh and Northampton Counties alone, there are over 930 residents living with Autism (20,000 statewide), according to the Pennsylvania Autism Census Report, which was conducted by BAS in 2009. While individuals are eligible to receive services through the Department of Education up until the age of 21, services are few and far between after this time.

In response to demand from our consumers, LVCIL is looking to create a support group for caretakers of adults with Autism. Our goals are to help form supports networks and create a dialogue to determine what needs are not being address with current services and determine how LVCIL and other agencies can assist in fulfilling those needs.

Anyone interested in participating in the group or on advocating for additional funding for these necessary programs, please contact Kristy Gehman, Director of Core and Housing Services at 610-770-9781 ext. 129 or email kristygehman@lvcil.org. If interested in finding out more about the Adult Autism Waiver or getting on the interest list, please contact the Bureau of Autism Services at 1-866-539-7689.

From all of us at LVCIL...

Best Wishes to you and yours in 2012!



**Lehigh Valley Center for
Independent Living
435 Allentown Drive
Allentown, PA 18109**

"Providing services to persons with all types of disabilities" A member of the PA Council on Independent Living (PCIL), a consumer controlled state association of Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

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Livin' is a quarterly newsletter that goes out to over 3,000 businesses, disability service organizations, and individuals with disabilities throughout the Lehigh Valley... and beyond!

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Full page ad—\$1,200
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For more information, or to advertise with us, please call Greg Bott at 610-770-9781 ext. 120 or email gregbott@lvcil.org.