

Lehigh Valley Center
for Independent Living, Inc.
435 Allentown Drive
Allentown, PA 18109-9121

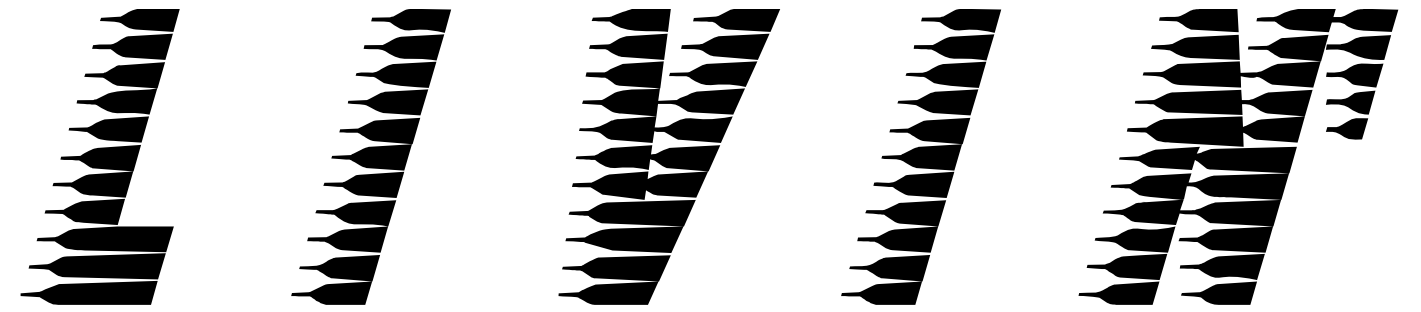
"Providing services to persons with all types of disabilities" A member of the **PA Council on Independent Living** (PCIL), a consumer controlled state association of Centers for Independent Living (CIL's)

LIVIN' is a quarterly publication of the **Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living, Inc.** LVCIL provides information and services to people with disabilities, and other service organizations in Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Businesses or Individuals may sponsor issues of **LIVIN'**



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PAID
Lehigh Valley, PA 18002
Permit No. 233

March-May 2006
Edition, Volume 39



LEHIGH VALLEY
**Center FOR
Independent
Living**

The Official Newsletter of the
Lehigh Valley Center For
Independent Living, Inc.

435 Allentown Drive
Allentown, PA 18109-9121

March-May, 2006 Edition
Volume 39

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www.lvcil.org

See Inside For:

- FYI
- Community Support Corner
- SWAT's New – RAT's Nest
- SLIRS Program Info
- And much, much more!

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LVCIL Hosting Its Second Annual
Silent Auction Benefit



LVCIL will be hosting its second annual Silent Auction fundraising event on **Saturday, April 8, 2006** from 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM at *Mercy Special Learning Center* located at 830 S. Woodward Street in Allentown. All proceeds from this event will be utilized for the services and programs provided by LVCIL to persons with all types of disabilities residing within the Lehigh Valley.

LVCIL is looking for donations from businesses, organizations, professionals or individuals of items such as products, services, tickets, certificates, or anything of interest to the general public. These items will be auctioned off to the highest bidder in order to raise funds for LVCIL.

Refreshments will be served during the auction preview time, which will be 2:30-4:30 PM. The bids will then be reviewed and the announcement of the highest bidder for each item will be made at 5:00 PM. The individuals who made the highest bid will then be able to claim their item(s) once payment is made. Payments will be accepted in the form of cash or a check made out to LVCIL.

Mercy Special Learning Center is located just behind *St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church* at 2nd and Susquehanna Streets in Allentown. This is just a few blocks from the intersection of 4th and Susquehanna Streets. If you need further directions please call LVCIL for assistance.

A few of the items which will be available for bidding include tickets to local cultural, sporting and recreational events, a portrait session, (2) Longaberger baskets, a portable ramp, a small sewing machine, art supplies, a custom made nativity set and dozens of other super items!

We do hope that you will come out and join us and help support LVCIL. Please call Laurie if you would like to volunteer.

Amy C. Beck

LVCIL Executive Director

Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living
435 Allentown Drive, Allentown, PA 18109
610-770-9781
www.lvcil.org

- Yes, enclosed is my tax-deductible donation to LVCIL's **Carl F. Odhner Fund** in the amount of \$ _____
- Yes, enclosed is my tax-deductible donation to LVCIL's **Claire E. Michaels Fund** in the amount of \$ _____
- Yes, enclosed is my tax-deductible gift to LVCIL in honor/memory of _____ in the amount of \$ _____
- Yes, I am enclosing a tax-deductible donation to LVCIL, in the amount of \$ _____
- Please use it wherever you have the greatest need.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

- I would like to be contacted for more information about LVCIL.

Thank you!

Please send completed form to LVCIL, 435 Allentown Drive, Allentown, PA 18109

Thank You LVCIL Supporters!

Lehigh Valley Plastics, Inc. employees adopt LVCIL as the beneficiary of their 2005 Fundraising Efforts

LVCIL Board of Directors:

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By Laurie Geist

Imagine our surprise when we received a call from **Darlene Mason**, an employee of *Lehigh Valley Plastics, Inc.* to inform us that her fundraising committee chose LVCIL to be the recipient of their fundraising efforts for 2005. Well, as if that wasn't enough, this phenomenal group of people held a different fundraiser each month, which were coordinated and executed by **Darlene** and her co-worker and supervisor, **Bonnie Walker**. The end result of all this hard work and generosity of all the employees resulted in LVCIL receiving **\$6,715.77!** This was in addition to items being donated for the **1st Annual Silent Auction Benefit** and one fundraiser that benefited the hurricane victims!

As the staff person who coordinates fundraising efforts for LVCIL I know that this is no small feat. It took much time planning and preparing for each monthly fundraiser. In addition, it takes great energy to get everyone excited and involved in the fundraiser. If you could meet **Darlene** you would understand why they are so successful. She is a very special lady who happens to be a grandmother of 17!

LVCIL wants to take this opportunity to thank the owners and employees of *Lehigh Valley Plastics, Inc.* for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of persons with all types of disabilities residing in the Lehigh Valley. These monies will make a big difference in the lives of many persons served by LVCIL! Each and every one of you is a shining example of the positive results of hard work, persistence, and dedication to making the local community a better place for all of its residents!

Words just cannot adequately express our gratitude for this tremendous act of selflessness and benevolence! We wish Lehigh Valley Plastics, Inc. and all of its employees many, many years of continued success with the business and the community service you perform.

With Great Admiration and Appreciation,
The Board of Directors, Staff, Volunteers, and Consumers of LVCIL

For Your Information (FYI)

LVCIL Closings or Delays Due to Severe Weather

If you are planning to come to LVCIL for an appointment, class, meeting or to volunteer on a day when we are experiencing severe weather conditions, please call our main number at **610-770-9781**. Our opening greeting will advise you if the agency is opening on a delayed schedule, or if the office is closed or closing early.

New Assistive Technology Match Website

Check out this new website, **www.atmatch.com**, that was created to match folks up with the assistive technology they need. You will be able to post items for 50 cents to \$4 per item and also search for items that you may need. All the terms and requirements are explained on the website. Contact information is also available on the website.

Play the ADA Game!

Learn more about the ADA, have fun and help our Mid-Atlantic Region compete! Go to **www.adagame.org** to register to play the ADA game. Earn points by answering multiple choice ADA questions online each day, as you learn about the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. You earn points even if you get the question wrong, and it only takes about five minutes a day. If you plan to register, please contact **bamelio@lvcil.org** or **robgraves@lvcil.org**, if they refer you our region will earn even more points! Play, play, play!

LVCIL Sign Language Interpreter Referral Services

ASL CLASSES

Location: LVCIL/SLIRS, 435 Allentown Drive, Allentown, PA
(ADA Accessible Building) Sign Language Classes

8 week Session

Beginner Class on Wednesday, March 8th to April 26th
6:30 to 8:30 PM Instructor: *Christine Godleski

8 weeks Session

Intermediate Class on Tuesday, March 7th to April 25th
6:30 to 8:30 PM Instructor: *Doni Piccerillo

8 weeks Session

Advanced Class on Thursday, March 9th to April 27th
6:30 to 8:30 PM Instructor: *Doni Piccerillo

**Instructors subject to change, we may add another instructor.*

Descriptions:

American Sign Language for Beginner \$80.00 without book, \$110.00 with book

For the first time signer, or refresher course for basics. Introduction includes fingerspelling, vocabulary and 4 parts of a sign with a hearing instructor. Great for parents and kids to take together.

Book: *A Basic Course in American Sign Language*

American Sign Language for Intermediate \$80.00

A continuation of Beginner ASL. Students will focus on improving ASL vocabulary and begin sentence structure. Reception skills will be introduced. Will learn about ASL and about Deaf Culture with a Deaf instructor.

Book: *A Basic Course in American Sign Language*.

American Sign Language for Advanced \$80.00

A continuation of Intermediate ASL. Students will focus on improving ASL dialogue. This class will have hands up experience with the Sign Language Club and other Deaf events.

Book: *A Basic Course in American Sign Language & Sign Naturally Level 1. Provide your own books.*

For refund/cancellation policy please contact: slireferral@lvcil.org

- **At least 5 people must register for a class to run**
- **Classes taught in ASL**
- **For refund/cancellation policy please contact: slireferral@lvcil.org**

ASL Class Registration

Enclosed is my check payable to LVCIL for \$80.00 or \$110.00 with book. (Circle one.)

- I am registering for the ASL Beginner Class.
 I am registering for the ASL Intermediate Class.
 I am registering for the ASL Advanced Class.

Name	
Address	
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Log onto to **www.igive.com** and do your shopping online from the comfort of your own home, and a percentage of your purchases will be donated to the agency you identify (LVCIL, of course)! There are hundreds of companies and stores to choose from and best of all your merchandise will be delivered to your door. No crowds and traffic to deal with and more time to spend with family and friends!



Housing Tales: How can I help you?

By Debbie Rozear



As a Community Support Coordinator at *Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL)*, my job is to provide services in finding housing. I will guide and support in finding Affordable/ Accessible housing for individuals with disabilities. There are several services that are available through our agency. Services include, but are not limited to; **Peer Support, Individual Advocacy, Information and Referral, Training and Educational Seminars, Transportation Assistance, and Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service (SLIRS).**

When you first call LVCIL, you will be greeted by a pleasant, helpful voice that will answer all of your questions and guide you in the direction you seek. The first thing that we would do is set up an appointment for you to come in and fill out some paperwork which we call intake forms. After the intake

form is completed, you are entitled to receive all of the services that we provide through our agency.

Specifically, when applying for the housing services, we will determine a number of things:

- How much can you afford?
- Where are you interested in living?
- How soon are you looking to move?
- Is there an underlying reason why you are moving, foreclosure, eviction, etc?
- Has your income level changed due to a recent disability, and you can no longer afford where you are living?

Is your move sudden? Do you have to be out by the end of the week because of an eviction or foreclosure? These situations do not happen over night; it takes many months to go through the whole

process. Calling into the CIL expecting to find a new place immediately; this just does not happen. Sometimes, LVCIL gets calls asking for one of our apartments and if there is any availability. LVCIL does not have any apartments on site or in the community. There are a few different resources that we use in order to find housing for individuals and families. Some of the ways we find housing include the newspaper, computer websites, landlord contacts, and by word of mouth. At our agency, we encourage independence. Therefore, if you become involved in the search for that perfect apartment or house, it will shorten the length of time spent searching for your dream home. Obtaining a new apartment or house may take anywhere from a few days to a few months. Your input is vital and always greatly appreciated.

CIL Membership Organization (CMO) Meetings) :

Meetings are scheduled on the second Tuesday of the month at LVCIL in the **Carl F. Odhner Community Room from 1:00-3:00 p.m.** unless otherwise noted. Although these meetings are scheduled for the benefit of members, consumers, Board and staff of LVCIL; non-members and the general public are also welcome to attend. **Please RSVP to Laurie if you plan to attend any of the events listed above by calling 610-770-9781 ext. 20 or via email at: lauriegeist@lvcil.org . Contact Christine Kalogris via email at christinekalogris@lvcil.org, TTY at 800-725-4616, or fax at 610-770-9801 to request a Sign Language Interpreter at least one week in advance.**

Friday, March 17th a St. Patrick's Day dance from 3:00-6:00 PM in the *Odhner Community Room*. A DJ will be on hand to spin tunes and light refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, April 11th- 1:00-3:00 PM- join us as **Jamie Kelly from the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation** discusses options for acquiring the Assistive technology you need.

Tuesday, May 9th-1:00-3:00 PM- join us as **Kathy Perlow** discusses the *Community Exchange Program*.

Freewheelers Activities



Basketball:

Practices are Thursdays 7:45 to 9:30 pm Bethlehem YMCA, Broad St. Bethlehem PA
Games held at Eastside Youth Center, Allentown: March 25th, April 29th

Bowling:

Saturday's-7 pm March 4th, 18th, April 8th, 22nd

Tennis

Wednesdays from 12-2:00 pm indoors at Lehigh University's Lewis Tennis Center

Lehigh Valley Tennis Classic

A Nationally Sanctioned wheelchair tennis tournament will be held July 8-9, 2006 at Lehigh University.

Basket Bingo

Watch the LVCIL website for upcoming dates

Monthly membership meetings:

First Thursday of the month at the **Mezza Luna Restaurant in Allentown, PA**

All are welcome to attend and play whether you have a disability or not. **Call Bob Amelio** for more info or directions to any of our events at **610-770-9781 ext. 11**

2006 Launch of Wellness for All Program

by Thérèse Gyauch

On March 6, 2006, *The Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL)* resumes its **Wellness for All Program**. Meetings occur Mondays, 4-5pm. The program runs from spring through early winter, approximately 42 sessions, each year. Once registered, individuals may selectively choose which events from the program's calendar they wish to attend-all events or just a few. Consumers can attend based on their personal and educational needs.

Now in its third year, the wellness program serves people with disabilities, their family members, and/or care providers. Supported in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED) through Representative Jennifer Mann's office, the program emphasizes mind-body wellness. **Amy Beck**, the center's director, emphasizes the importance of the program stating that "...people with physical disabilities especially need to focus on their total health" and that they are often "woefully underserved by the mainstream population's health institutions." Historically, the LVCIL's client population has demonstrated a high level of interest in exploring wellness topics. As part of this program, they can develop and individualize health goals that meet their unique needs and focus on long-term health needs.

Third-year veteran, Meredith Baum, returns as the group's teaching registered dietician, and second-year veteran, holistic health educator Therese Gyauch joins her. During 2006, we will again address a broad range of topics. In line with structure of past years, half of all **Wellness for All** sessions will be nutrition topics and the remaining half of the sessions will be lifestyle topics. Among this year's nutrition topics expect to see such topics as portion control,

Continued on page 5

What Is A Rat?

By Robbie Graves (Advocate)



Yes, a rat is a furry little critter with a long tail, but for our purposes, **RAT** is short for Regional Action Team. **RATS are a group of people organized for a common purpose. We will meet at least once** a month and discuss various issues pertaining to advocacy such as how to write effective letters and what to expect when meeting legislators, but the main reason to meet will be to discuss the issues that matter to you and to organize campaigns to help bring about the positive changes we want. There will be trips to Harrisburg to meet with our legislators and other advocacy actions. There will be other activities as the group sees fit. These groups are *Your Groups*. If you are interested, please call me to get on the mailing list.

Thank You and Let's Advocate Together for Our Rights!

More RAT News:

The Regional Action Team will be meeting every second Wednesday of every month at the CIL from 1:00 to 2:30 pm. Everybody is welcome to attend. You can call me at 610-770-9781 ext. 26 for more information. We have some fun and interesting projects in the works that we think will really make a difference for people with disabilities in the Lehigh Valley. We have had around ten to fourteen people attend our previous four meetings and have had some great discussions and all have learned from each other.

We are interested in forming a Regional Action Team specifically for people in their late teens and early twenties. This group will probably meet somewhere in the community and will be focused on issues that matter most to young people, developing advocacy skills, but most of all, socializing and having a good time! If you are interested or if you know someone who might be interested, please call me at the CIL.

The RATs are compiling a list of doctors and medical facilities that are accessible and accommodating to people with disabilities. If you know of a doctor or medical facility that you have had a particularly good experience with (perhaps your own), please give me a call at the CIL.



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The Rat's Nest

By Robbie Graves

Do you have a beef with something? (Part Two)

In the last newsletter, we talked about how to complain when you have an issue involving employment, access or activity run by a local or state government, public transportation, and public accommodations (access at any facility that serves the public). In this issue, let's talk about housing. If you feel that you have been discriminated against because you have a disability in matters pertaining to housing, your avenue to complain is through the *United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)* and your grievance will fall under the Fair Housing Act. HUD has designed a very simple and short form with which people can fill out in matter of minutes then send to the **HUD regional office in Philadelphia**. We have a supply of these forms at the CIL. Feel free to contact me if you need one and I would be glad to either send one to you, or you can make an appointment to come in and I would be glad to help you fill it out.

The first thing you should do is contact your landlord or housing agency in writing (keep a copy for yourself), and present your complaint in a polite, yet firm manner. Describe what your complaint is in detail and exactly how you want it remedied. If you are not satisfied with the result or if you get no response, by all means, make your complaint heard. For more information on HUD or the housing

complaint process, you can contact HUD at www.hud.gov or at 1-888-799-2085 or 215-656-3450 (TTY).

There are other options in the complaint process. If the act of discrimination occurred within the city limits of Allentown, you can call the Allentown Human Relations Officer **Nicholas Butterfield** at 610-437-7616. He can be contacted for information and referral in situations regarding discrimination and failure to provide reasonable accommodations in housing, employment and public accommodations. You can also contact the **Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC)**. The PHRC enforces the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against any person because of a disability in areas of housing, employment and public accommodations. The regional office that serves our area is in Harrisburg and can be contacted at 717-787-9784 or at 717-787-7279 (text telephone). The PHRC website can be found at www.phrc.state.pa.us and has a tremendous amount of information on accessibility, disability law, the complaint process, and the forms needed to begin the complaint process. The PHRC has been very helpful with situations in recent months and sometimes it might be useful to start with the PHRC as I recently have had two complaints with HUD that were

referred to the PHRC after the initial complaint was filed with HUD.

To wrap up, in Pennsylvania people with disabilities are protected on the Federal level by the Americans with Disabilities Act, Fair Housing Act and other laws. On the state level, we are protected by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, enforced by the PA Human Relations Commission. In the City of Allentown, there is a third level of protection, the Allentown Human Relations Ordinance.

Again, if you feel discriminated against, you should always start with presenting yourself in a calm, rational manner and with the mindset that you are trying to educate the other person as to why what they did or did not do was wrong. If you feel that you are not being heard, you should pursue a complaint. Education is the best defense. You should become familiar with the laws and how to file a complaint to assert yourself if you feel you experienced discrimination. If more people were more vocal and asserted themselves when discriminated against, perhaps the acts of discrimination might decrease. What business wants to deal with a steady stream of complaints and having to answer to a government agency about their business practices? In addition, as acts of discrimination against people with disabilities come to light, more people will become educated about just what is right and wrong.

Community Support Corner

Stigma Associated with Mental Illness

By Carol Olson

Mental illness is not a discriminatory disease. It does not matter what your age is, your sex, nationality or economic status. It can affect anyone at any time.

Medical science has made great strides in treating mental illness. However, a majority of our brain function still remains a mystery. It has been determined that many mental illnesses are due to a chemical imbalance in the brain. We rarely think of our brain as an organ that can malfunction or become diseased. Mental illness is no different then any other disease that causes a chemical imbalance of your body. The only difference is it's the brain vs. a different organ. Diabetics have a chemical imbalance with their glucose levels; some people have an imbalance with their thyroid levels, which could cause hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism.

People with mental illness often display behavior type-symptoms such as sadness, moodiness, irritability, and in severe cases, hallucinations and/or total withdraw. Instead of receiving compassion and understanding, people with mental illness will often receive hostility, stigma and discrimination.

It's very frustrating that after all of these years there is still the stigma with mental illness. The media plays a big role in this. How often have you read in the newspaper or watched the news on TV do they report on a story of someone with mental illness has committed a crime? Yet research shows, only a small amount of the majority of people with mental illness commit a crime. But you wouldn't know that by reading the newspapers or watching the news on TV. The reporters like to

sensationalize news stories related to crimes committed by people with mental illness.

Another factor in the stigma associated with mental illness are the comedians. For some reason, mental illness is considered something to joke and laugh about. I don't see anyone making fun of the person who stumbles and falls over because his or her glucose level has dropped too low. Or how about someone who has balance issues and looks like they're "drunk" when they walk. Do you hear anyone cracking jokes about their illnesses? Halloween is one of the worst offenders. People think it is funny to dress up looking like a person in a strait jacket or sell items with the merchandise wearing a strait jacket. What is so funny about that? Laughing at or making fun of a person because they are so ill they need to be restrained for their own safety? I don't find anything amusing about that.

Ironically, the news media is also the best source for helping to break the stigma barrier. They have a wide range of coverage and can get in touch with a wide range of people who can be educated on people with mental illness.

There are ways you can help stop the stigma.

1. **Speak out and tell your story.** This will help to dissipate the embarrassment associated with mental illness. I had the experience once where a co-worker of mine told me they would not be able to work with a person with a mental illness. When I told her I had a mental illness, she was floored. I think because I was "normal" and could function in society like everyone else, she never

suspected it. She must have had in her mind the stigma that people with mental illness drool on themselves, are violent or act "crazy."

2. **Help people with mental illness as best you can to re-enter society.** Give that person all of your support and encouragement. Show society people with mental illness can be functioning members of society.

3. **If you hear of anyone reporting false information or telling jokes about mental illness, respond to those people and let them know the facts.** Reporting accurate information is one way of helping to dissipate the stigma. In today's society, with everything being politically correct, no one should be making fun of people with mental illness or cracking jokes about it. This is a serious disease and should not be taken lightly. It would not be proper for someone to make fun of a person with, say, cancer or diabetes. Why should mental illness be the exception?

The stigma with mental illness has gone on way too long, in my opinion. It is time for society to be educated on this terrible disease and do away with all the negativity and embarrassment associated with it. The only way this can be done is by not remaining quiet. Consumers need to speak out. And the media needs to start writing articles that show mental illness in a better light rather than the negative all the time.

If you are interested in advocating for mental illness or for any disability, please contact Robbie Graves at the LVCIL 610-770-9781 ext. 26.

Information obtained from the National Mental Health Association.

2006 Wellness Program

Continued from page 3

healthy recipe choice, organic vs. conventional fruits/vegetables, the psychology of eating, and lifetime weight maintenance goals. In conjunction with its wellness program, the LVCIL also encourages the use of its wheelchair accessible scale by participants to promote weight control and total health awareness amongst program participants. This year, life-style topics will again focus on stress management skills, such as therapeutic breathing techniques, mindfulness, pain control techniques, relaxation & imagery techniques, sleep hygiene, and social support issues. In addition to facilitated lectures and discussions,

this group chooses a wellness-related book to study each year. This book becomes part of a monthly ongoing study—a chapter per month. In response to program members' needs, facilitators create health programs and invite speakers to the LVCIL site. *Wellness for All* is an ever-evolving program, intended to meet consumer-driven needs

As the area's only cross-disability organization, LVCIL consciously seeks to maintain it focuses on the whole person--emphasizing the importance of addressing physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and social needs—in its wellness program.

Individuals wishing to attend the *Wellness for All Program* must first register with LVCIL staff. The process takes just a few minutes. To register and/or check the program schedule, please call LVCIL administrative assistant Brenda Palmer at 610-770-9781, ext. 15. Questions about this health program are welcomed and encouraged. To check what the current presentation topic is for each week, you may call 610-770-9781, ext. 23, and you may hear a pre-recorded message about the current topic.

We look forward to seeing new and returning participants at upcoming meetings!

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