

# **ivin'**

Official  
**NEWSLETTER**  
 of LVCIL

Winter 2017

## In This Issue:

I Stand Against "Special Proms" 1  
 Taj & Samantha: Success Story. 2  
 Upcoming LVCIL Events . . . . . 2  
 Thanks to Our Donors . . . . . 3  
 Monthly Giving to LVCIL . . . . . 4  
 Recipe Corner . . . . . 4  
 LVCIL at Cedar Crest College . . 5  
 Galactic Gala Save the Date. . . 5  
 Fishing Event Wrap Up. . . . . 6  
 PATF Information . . . . . 6  
 Bear in the Restaurant . . . . . 7  
 Help is a Four-Legged Word . . 7  
 Donate to LVCIL . . . . . 8

## I Stand Against "Special Proms"

By: Amy C. Beck, LSW, Executive Director

Flashback to June 1979. My dreamy boyfriend (now my dreamy husband) was taking me to my senior prom. With hairspray aplenty, an ivory Gunne Sax gown, white clutch bag and a nosegay from Bob's Florist in Northampton, I was ready. I enter the prom, look around and see that everyone was there... or so I thought! Now, I realize that an entire class of students from my school district were never invited. They weren't even attending school in the same building as me, or district for that matter, and each one of them had a disability. If my disability had been known a few years earlier, I would have been in a different building, too. I would have been excluded from my community because of my disability. This was the norm in 1979: segregated classes for students with disabilities.

Fast forward to today. A well-known football hero begins hosting "special proms for special people." This year the push is for at least 375 of them to be held in cooperation with faith communities. But, in 2017, nearly 27 years since the ADA became law, do we need exclusionary, segregated proms? Haven't our schools made great inroads in creating classrooms and environments for all students?

In the full spirit of the Independent Living Philosophy, which we lift up every day at LVCIL, **I stand against segregated proms.**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

# Taj & Samantha: A LVCIL Success Story

By: Greg Bott, Director of Development

From the moment you walk into Taj and



Samantha's apartment, you feel at *home*. Pictures of family are hung on the walls, movies that all ages can enjoy are stacked neatly on a shelf, burning candles

fill the air with a sweet scent, and New York Giants memorabilia is everywhere. Taj's smile and Samantha's welcoming spirit are infectious. It's hard to imagine that just last year Taj and Samantha were on the verge of homelessness.

Taj and Samantha lived happily together for ten years until their landlord decided it was time to remodel the whole building. That meant kicking everyone out. They were given a deadline but had very little income to cover security deposit, rent and moving expenses. Taj searched online for housing support and stumbled across LVCIL's website. He submitted an online request and was contacted shortly thereafter by Rebecca Strobel, one of LVCIL's Community Support Coordinators.

Rebecca invited Taj and Samantha to LVCIL for an intake and she was immediately struck by just how prepared they were. With some help from family out-of-state, Taj and Samantha already had a plan in place for how to save up money for a new apartment. They were afraid of becoming homeless and knew that there would be limited options for low income and accessible housing, but they remained hopeful. With the help of North Penn Legal Services, Rebecca wrote a reasonable accommodation request to their landlord that ensure Taj and Samantha could remain in their apartment until they could find new housing. Taj and Samantha met with Rebecca to complete a budget, conduct housing searches, visit potential apartments, and fill out public housing applications. All options were on the table and Taj and Samantha were involved in every step of the process.

After countless housing searches, we are happy to report that Taj and Samantha moved into

their new affordable and accessible apartment in August through Lehigh County Housing Authority. Throughout the process, Taj and Samantha remained positive and learned to advocate for themselves and, since moving, Taj applied for and was approved for LANtaVan and he has started seeing a nutritionist. They have also become more social and have made many friends in their building. In fact, they were the first to respond and call 9-1-1 when a neighbor was having an emergency and needed immediate medical assistance.

Taj and Samantha remain in contact with Rebecca and continue to reach out to LVCIL for IL skills, peer support, and other services. Most importantly, they are happy and now have a place to call *home*.

## Upcoming LVCIL Events

**Every Other Monday (Feb. 6th & 20th, Mar. 6th & 20th, Apr. 3rd & 17th)— Peer Support Group. 1:00 pm-3:00 pm @ LVCIL, 713 N. 13th St., Allentown.** We're here to listen! For info, please contact Debbie Rozear at 610-770-9781 ext. 124 or email [debbierozear@lvcil.org](mailto:debbierozear@lvcil.org).

**February 25th—Understanding Relationships Workshop. 1:00 pm-3:00 pm @ LVCIL, 713 N. 13th Street, Allentown, PA.** Jena Gant will lead a workshop on the different types of relationships, how to identify unhealthy relationships and how to build healthy ones. Please note any accommodations you may need during registration. PCA's must be provided by the participant. RSVP required by February 20th. For more info or to RSVP, please contact Rebecca Dubin at 610-770-9781 ext. 115 or [rebeccadubin@lvcil.org](mailto:rebeccadubin@lvcil.org).

**March 2nd—AccessCheck Webinar: Simple Ways to Improve Your Accessible Parking. 2:00-2:30 pm.** From signage to slope, join the experts from AccessCheck to learn how to improve the accessibility of your parking lot. To register: [www.accesscheck.org/how-we-can-help](http://www.accesscheck.org/how-we-can-help)

**April 6th—AccessCheck Webinar: Customer Service Tips and Tricks. 2:00-2:30 pm.** Join the experts from AccessCheck to learn how to improve the access to your goods and services. To register: [www.accesscheck.org/how-we-can-help](http://www.accesscheck.org/how-we-can-help)

# Thank you to our recent donors!

## ABOUT LVCIL:

The Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL) empowers people with all types of disabilities to achieve independence and live their dreams.

LVCIL provides four core services for its consumers: Information and Referral, Individual and Systems Advocacy, Peer Support, and Independent Living Skills Education. The organization also provides Housing Search and Support, including specialized services for Veterans, a 24-hour Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service, School- and Community-Based Transition Services, Job Coaching for Youth in Transition, Pre-Employment Transition Services, Supports Coordination for Adult Autism and Office of Long Term Living Waivers, ADA Accessibility Site Surveys, Educational Programs, and Community Outreach.

## FOR MORE INFO:

LVCIL  
713 North 13th St.  
Allentown, PA 18102  
**Phone:** 610-770-9781  
**Fax:** 610-770-9801  
**Email:** [info@lvcil.org](mailto:info@lvcil.org)  
[www.lvcil.org](http://www.lvcil.org)

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# “Empowering people with all types of disabilities”

## Join LVCIL’s Monthly Giving Program Today!

By: Robin Nieto, Major Gifts Officer

Every day, I hear stories from our staff that give me pause. They tell me stories of families who were living on the street just a few months ago, but now have their own apartment. They tell me stories of young adults who were told that they would never be able to work, but now they have a job. And, they tell me stories of people who have been disenfranchised, but now they feel empowered.

The services and support that we provide to our consumers is truly *life changing*, but we cannot do it without the support of our donors. **Your** generosity (that’s right, you reading this article!) is what truly makes a difference in the lives of our consumers.

We hope to continue our important work, and I invite you to become a part of what we do. For only a few bucks per month, you can join our **FaCILitator Society** and become an integral part of our future.

Consider these giving levels and their impact:

- **\$5/month**—Funds one full year of CommUnity Club for two young adults
- **\$15/month**—Provides a full day of job skills training for a Career Path participant
- **\$25/month**—Feeds one homeless family through Emergency Food Outreach

As a member of our **FaCILitator Society**, your monthly gift will help to sustain our programs and will help to ensure that every person with a disability has access to our services.

Last year, we served 877 consumers—more than at any point in our history. Your monthly investment will help to fund the future of LVCIL.

For more info, or to start your monthly giving program, please visit [lvcil.org/monthlygiving](http://lvcil.org/monthlygiving). You can also call me at 610-770-9781 ext. 152 or email [robinnieto@lvcil.org](mailto:robinnieto@lvcil.org).

Thanks for your outstanding support!

## Recipe Corner

By: Dana Pammer, Cedar Crest College

My name is Dana and I’m a dietetic intern from Cedar Crest College. It’s been great working with everyone at LVCIL and helping consumers plan easy, healthy meals. Here’s a simple recipe that anyone can try at home:

### Mini Meatloaf Recipe

#### Ingredients:

- 1lb lean ground beef, ground turkey or ground chicken
- 1/2 yellow onion, chopped
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup quick oats
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup tomato sauce
- Salt, pepper and garlic powder to taste

#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Spray muffin tin with nonstick spray.
3. Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl.
4. Take a small amount of the meat mixture and roll it into a ball using your hands.
5. Place one ball into each muffin tin.
6. Drizzle ketchup on the top of the meat.
7. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until meat is cooked (no longer pink, 165 degrees interior)

## Inclement Weather Reminder:

In the event of bad weather, check WFMZ or [wfmz.com](http://wfmz.com), LVCIL’s website and Facebook. You can also call LVCIL’s general number for updates at 610-770-9781.

*of disabilities to achieve independence."*

## LVCIL Transition Services, Now at Cedar Crest College!

By: Greg Bott, Director of Development

The **Transition Experience Program**, or **TEP**, is LVCIL's newest pre-employment transition program for students with disabilities. This **FREE** program is perfect for students who are in their last year of high school.

TEP is a 9-week course held at Cedar Crest College that helps students prepare for the workforce or post-secondary education.

During the first **3 weeks**, students learn about enrollment at community colleges, technical schools, state universities and other institutions of higher education. Students tour post-secondary schools and hear from guest speakers, including professors, staff and students.

In the remaining **6 weeks**, students learn essential workplace skills, including: time management; problem solving; accepting constructive criticism; following deadlines; conflict resolution; interpersonal communication; employment applications; and mock interviews. Students also take part in hands-on work experiences and job shadowing in the following fields:

- Customer service
- Data entry
- Clerical/Admin
- Custodial
- Maintenance
- Information technology

Following the 9-week course, students continue to receive job or post-secondary services from LVCIL Career Coaches.

TEP is a great supplement to traditional school services and is **FREE** for schools. The Spring II and Summer sessions are filling quick!

For info, contact Barry Unger, TEP Coordinator, at 484-725-9657 or [barryunger@lvcil.org](mailto:barryunger@lvcil.org).

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FOURTH  
BE WITH  
YOU.**

**SAVE THE  
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GALA**

**MAY 4, 2017  
AT LCCC**

**PROCEEDS TO  
BENEFIT  
LVCIL'S PRO-  
GRAMS  
AND  
SERVICES.**



# Another Year, Another Successful Fishing Event

By: Brian Rogers, Community Accessibility Program Coordinator

For the third year in a row, LVCIL held its **Fishing in the Park** event in partnership with the Allentown Parks & Recreation Department. The fully inclusive day of fishing and fun was held in Lehigh Parkway. This year set another record as more than **500 people** attended! Incredible!

We're continuing to build and grow this event, and this year we had many vendors that helped to encourage everyone to explore the outdoors and their community. Vendors included: Friends of Allentown Parks, Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays, America on Wheels Museum, Lehigh Valley Zoo, Wildlands Conservancy, Allentown Police Department, Archery Addictions, and Lehigh Valley River Runners.

Special thanks to Olympus for sending a bunch of volunteers to help with the setup, casting instruction, bait, and tear down of the entire event. Also, we'd like to thank the Lehigh County Fish & Game Protective Services. Each year, they donate fish and stock the creek for us, and the event would not exist without the fish!

Mark your calendars, the **2017 Fishing in the Park event will be on Saturday, September 23rd!**



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For more info, visit [patf.us](http://patf.us) or call Rebecca Strobel at 610-770-9781 x153 or [rebeccastrobel@lvcil.org](mailto:rebeccastrobel@lvcil.org).

## PROMS—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

EVERY student should be able to attend their actual school-sponsored prom if they choose. No one can deny that segregated proms have an essence of pity and that there is a “feel-good” sense for any participating non-disabled helpers about getting a person with a disability to a contrived prom. But, I ask: Do these “special proms for special people” make up for wrongs against people with disabilities in the past? I find that hard to believe. Though I support someone’s right to choose to attend a segregated prom, this prom *must not and cannot* be the only choice. No matter how I look at it, I see exclusion.

We’ve discussed these proms since 2015 in our Cross Disability Efforts project through the PA Developmental Disabilities Council. It’s been a topic at dozens of forums across the Commonwealth. It seems that individuals and families with no knowledge of Disability Rights or the ADA are not troubled by segregated activities at all. However, many people with knowledge of Disability Rights—including advocates and persons with disabilities across the state—have taken issue with “special proms for special people.”

I understand that my position may not be shared from agency-to-agency, or from person-to-person, and, again I want to stress that I support each individual’s right to choose to attend a segregated prom. But, what message are we sending to future generations? Are we really saying that segregation is acceptable?

We must provide every opportunity for people with disabilities to be included in all aspects of life. Inclusion is the foundation of a strong and vital community, one that is welcoming of *everyone*. I fear if we continue this tradition of “special proms for special people,” we will just accept that it is acceptable to alienate people with disabilities from other areas of life. I fear that this path will lead us back to 1979, back to the year of my prom, when exclusion was acceptable. That’s not the type of world I envision for our future generations.

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## There's a Bear in the Restaurant!

By: Brian Rogers, Community Accessibility Program Coordinator

Bob Amelio, Bear (Bob's service dog), and I travel quite a bit performing ADA accessibility site surveys and trainings across the state. While on the road, we like to take advantage of the fine cuisine offered at the many Chinese buffets this state has to offer.

During one of our buffet visits, we were waiting to be seated when an employee came up to us and said, "Sorry no dogs allowed." We kindly informed her that Bear is a service animal and that he is allowed in the restaurant. As Bob proceeded to enter the restaurant, the young women jumped in front of him and tried to escort us to the back where no one else was sitting. When we realized her intent, Bob told her he has the right to sit wherever he wishes.

We found a table on the main path from the seating area to the buffet. Bob made sure to position himself on the pathway side so that Bear was in full view of patrons and employees. Throughout our meal, we noticed the fear of our hostess as she tried to perform her job in the presence of Bear. Bob and I started to discuss the issue and we realized that maybe this wasn't a case of ignorance of the ADA at all. Maybe it was cultural.

Does the restaurant have to follow the rules of the ADA and allow the service animal? The answer is always YES. The only place in a restaurant that a service animal is not allowed is in the kitchen. However, if you ever find yourself in a similar situation, think about how the other person is feeling. Try to ease the persons fear by explaining what the service animal does for you, assure them the dog has been trained not to attack, and allow them to see that the dog is a tool to help improve your independence.

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## Help is a Four-Legged Word

By: Debbie Rozear, Community Support Coordinator



Jane has been a consumer at LVCIL for many years. Last year, when we hosted a program for the general public from Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), Jane decided to become a volunteer puppy raiser. She recently received a lab/retriever cross named Holmes III. He is yellow in color and only 10 weeks old at this time. Jane will be teaching him socialization and obedience training until he is returned in August 2018 at which time he will go through a minimum of 6 months advanced training. The hope is that after this time he will be teamed with his forever companion who happens to have a disability. This team will travel side by side through life more independently.



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# Living'

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For more information,  
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610-770-9781  
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## YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!



Every day, LVCIL *breaks barriers* and *changes lives*.

You can be a part of this change! **Donate today** and your gift will help us provide high quality, person-centered services to our consumers. Achieving independence *starts with you!*

- \$5    \$10    \$25    \$50    \$100    \$250
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LVCIL, Attn: Greg Bott, 713 N. 13th St., Allentown, PA 18102**