



DAWN AWAKENINGS

Awaken to Independence

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Winter 2015

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) WILL TURN TWENTY-FIVE ON JULY 26, 2015!

Passed on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (commonly referred to as the ADA) was the first truly comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. Its passage was the culmination of a collaborative, bipartisan effort of federal and state agencies, advocacy groups, and people with and without disabilities.

The 25th Anniversary of the ADA is a time when we can pause to reflect positively on a law that has made a tremendous impact on the lives of people with disabilities (and our country as a whole) over the past 25 years. The ADA clearly states the Congressional intent "to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." Although that expansive promise has yet to come to full fruition, the passage of the ADA was a watershed moment for people with disabilities. It should be recognized as such, and that is why the ADA's 25th anniversary is a very important event to honor.

People all over the country are coming together in celebration of the ADA and all that it represents. One example of these efforts is the ADA Legacy Tour. The Tour is a traveling exhibit designed to raise awareness and build excitement about the 25th anniversary of the ADA. The Tour's bus began its journey last July in Houston, TX, and will have made stops in over thirty cities and towns all across the country before its trip comes to an end in Washington, DC on July 26th.

The ADA Legacy Tour does not have any stops scheduled in New Jersey at this moment in time, but DAWN is planning to step up and do our part to celebrate the ADA's 25th Anniversary. Throughout the year, we will initiate monthly activities in celebration of the ADA. Each month's activities will feature different themes related to the ADA. (See page 6 for a list of monthly themes.) In July, a special statewide event will take place as part of this year-long celebration. We look forward to celebrating with you!

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Each New Year brings with it new opportunities to reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and plan for the future. Here at DAWNcil, we will be doing all of that as we make plans to observe the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The staff is already in the process of planning various events and activities to be held throughout 2015 in celebration of this important piece of legislation.

The ADA was passed into law on July 26, 1990. This comprehensive federal law prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, government services, telecommunications, and access to all public and private places that are open to the general public. While amendments in 2008 expanded the scope of the original ADA, its being passed in 1990 was a major breakthrough in civil rights law.

It is because of the ADA's significance that DAWNcil will be holding different educational programs and celebratory activities as the year progresses. We will, of course, announce these as they are scheduled so that everyone can take part. Not only DAWNcil members will be welcome to join in, but also members of the surrounding communities. So help us to spread the word about the ADA and its Silver Anniversary Celebration at DAWNcil.

Another change in this year, is the "new" look of DAWNcil's website. Webmaster Peter Gimbel, with the help of Louisa Valentin-Meléndez, who generously volunteered her expertise on this project, have transformed the website into an attractive, comprehensive, and user-friendly resource for not only DAWNcil members and consumers, but also for others interested in learning more about what we do. Please take a moment to check it out at www.dawncil.org and let us know what you think.

In 2015, we expect to offer those events that our DAWNcil friends look forward to, including the annual picnic, membership meetings, holiday gala, Franki's Fund arts-and-crafts sessions and annual fundraising event, as well as various recreational activities and other programs of interest to those we serve. We hope that all of you will participate and help make these events as successful as they have been in the past.

Like all families, the New Year has – and will bring – exciting new changes to DAWNcil. Thank you for continuing to be a part of that.

Carmela



Changes to the Rehabilitation Act (Section 503)

Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was recently updated. Section 503 requires that companies doing business with the federal government take affirmative action to recruit, employ, train and promote qualified individuals with disabilities. The changes strengthen the affirmative action provisions of the Section 503 regulations. For more information, please visit <http://usodep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2014/07/16/what-you-should-know-about-section-503/>.

DAWNcil's DDD Support Coordination Program

The New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) has designated DAWNcil as a provider of support coordination to DDD-eligible individuals in Morris, Sussex and Warren counties. Support coordination helps ensure that consumers get the services they need from DDD's Supports Program, and assists in developing a self-directed, individualized service plan. The Supports Program provides employment services, day supports, assistive technology, behavioral supports, environmental and vehicle modifications, respite, and other services.

If you become enrolled in the DDD Support Coordination Program, you will be given the opportunity to choose what agency will provide the service. DAWN is an organization with a long history of working as a cohesive team with consumers to help them live the life they want to live. We hope you will decide that DAWN is the right choice for you. If you would like more information on the Support Coordination Program, please call 1-888-383-DAWN. If you choose DAWNcil as your Support Coordination organization, we look forward to partnering with you.

It's All About Work: Year 2 and Counting

by Pamela Whiteman, Independent Living Transition Specialist

It's All About Work is in its second year. The program introduces the idea of work and career exploration, but at the same time allows each student to learn about the most important thing they need to learn about - themselves. The program empowers each student by having them discover who they are and who they can become. The future is a scary, difficult concept for everyone, but it is much more difficult if people have always told you that you cannot do things. Each student learns about their preferences, what accommodations they will need to succeed, what help and services are out there, and about self-advocacy. The group at High Point Regional High School in Sussex, which ended in December, worked extremely hard and asked great questions; they are full of possibilities. The parents were invited to the parent transition learning session at which many of their questions were answered and they received valuable information about transition planning and resources. Congratulations to attending parents and educators for taking an active role in their children's/students' planning for the future. It's All About Work also includes a variety of services for adults who are out of high school and interested in gaining skills and knowledge for success in the world of work.

Annual Meeting

DAWNcil's Annual Meeting took place on the evening of Wednesday, November 19, at Trinity House in Hackettstown. DAWNcil members and staff chatted and mingled as they enjoyed a buffet dinner catered by Mama's Pizza. Executive Director Carmela Slivinski and Board Vice President Lydia Kirschenbaum addressed the group with a presentation about DAWNcil's past, present, and plans for the future.

During the presentation, Janine Mellini was presented the Employee of the Year Award. This annual award is voted on by the staff and given to a staff member "who truly exemplifies excellence in professionalism, collegiality, commitment to our consumers, and the ideals for which DAWNcil stands." Janine Mellini is DAWNcil's dedicated and hard-working Program and Administrative Assistant. Congratulations to Janine!

The Annual Meeting is also a time to conduct some routine official DAWNcil business. Mike White and Lydia Kirschenbaum were officially reconfirmed as members of the Board of Directors of DAWNcil. As always, DAWNcil's Annual Meeting was an enjoyable event that helped bring our community closer together.



Janine Mellini receives Employee of the Year Award at the meeting.

Holiday Gala

DAWNcil's annual Holiday Gala was held on Saturday, December 13th from 12-4 pm at Skylands of Randolph. DAWN members, friends, family and staff enjoyed fun, food and good times. There was music, dancing and beautiful artwork from our Franki's Fund program participants. Everyone had their traditional great time at the Holiday Gala this year!



DAWN and the ADA: From an Intern's Perspective

By Brian Coleman, Intern

My internship is at DAWN Center for Independent Living (CIL). As we all know, this agency is a not-for-profit organization located in Denville, NJ, that works with individuals with any type of disability with the goal of advancing their independence. DAWN's mission is to empower people with disabilities to strive to take control of their own lives by encouraging their independence.

The "Independent Living Philosophy" is at the heart of both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the mission of DAWNcil. The essential element of "the Independent Living Philosophy" states that all individuals (including those with disabilities) have the right to choose where they live, go to school, work, play and conduct their life. People with disabilities who can remain independent may be less prone to be discriminated against. This idea of independent living is the cornerstone of DAWNcil which is committed to providing the resources to enable people with disabilities to remain independent. The principle of advancing independence empowers people with disabilities and is consistent with the principles in the ADA.

In order to accomplish their mission, important services provided by DAWN which clearly support the Americans with Disabilities Act legislation include the following:

- Providing tools that encourage independence and self-advocacy
- Promoting public awareness of the rights, needs, and desires of individuals living with disabilities
- Offering community activities that create new experiences and opportunities
- Creating informed communities that advance the Independent Living Philosophy
- DAWN provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living skills.

As an intern, I have observed first-hand the impact of DAWNcil and its ability to carry out the mission set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Whether it's delivering Thanksgiving turkeys for those in need or helping an individual secure food stamps, the staff is making a difference. Therefore, the 25th anniversary of the ADA is indeed a special event for DAWNcil.



Franki's Fund Fundraiser

The 6th Annual Franki's Fund Gala was held on Sunday, November 2, 2014, at Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. The afternoon included a tricky tray auction, 50/50 raffle, four-course dinner, entertainment and samples of the beautiful work created by our Franki's Fund participants.

“The mission of Franki's Fund is to offer young adults with special needs, ages 14 to 25, an opportunity to explore artistic and vocational pursuits that would enrich their lives and expand their horizons.”

DAWNcil's Plans for the ADA Anniversary

In honor of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, DAWNcil is planning celebration activities throughout the year. Each month's activity will have a theme related to the ADA. Monthly ADA 25th anniversary celebration activity themes have been planned as follows:

| MONTH | THEME |
|-----------|---|
| January | The ADA and the Independent Living Movement |
| February | Communicating with local businesses about accessibility |
| March | Accessible Transportation |
| April | Creative contest – “What the ADA means to me.” |
| May | County Resource Fair featuring the ADA. |
| June | Accessible recreation and the ADA. |
| July | Anniversary celebration with the New Jersey CILs |
| August | Emergency preparedness |
| September | Schools, education and the ADA |
| October | Employment and the ADA |
| November | Accessible voting and the ADA |
| December | To be determined |

The climax of all of these activities will be a statewide event to be held on Sunday, July 26 (the date of the signing of the ADA). In the meantime, to kick off our year of celebration, intern Brian Coleman has written an article on DAWN and the ADA (see page 5).

DAWN in the Community

NJ Disability Pride Parade

The 4th Annual New Jersey Disability Pride Parade & Celebration was held on Friday, October 3rd, 2014 at 9:00 AM in downtown Trenton, NJ. Over 500 people and organizations representing a wide variety of disabilities marched and rolled from the NJ State House to a post-parade celebration on a nearby street.

The purpose of this annual event is to bring people, organizations and businesses together to celebrate pride with the disability community and to promote the belief that disability is a natural and beautiful part of human diversity while generating national awareness for the disability community.

College and Career Fair at Celebrate the Children

By Pamela Whiteman, Independent Living Transition Specialist

DAWN Center for Independent Living (CIL) had the pleasure of participating in the College and Career Fair hosted by Celebrate the Children. The event was a great success; we were able to provide information about the services that DAWN has to offer young adults during their transition age and beyond. DAWN's four core services (peer support, employment services, independent living skills, and advocacy) were discussed along with the students' prepared questionnaires. One student in particular was very interested in the process of becoming an advocate. I had a chance to sit with a young man who is nonverbal; he used technology-facilitated communication. This student has a mission in life to become an advocate for children without a voice. He asked me questions about the process of becoming an advocate and why I became an advocate. He also asked how he could become an advocate; I suggested that he first become a volunteer at an agency that gives children a voice. He thanked me for helping kids like him and his impassioned words reminded me why I love working with others to see their goals and dreams realized.

Employment Event by Lindsay Tuman

On September 30th, DAWNcil hosted an employment event at the Hampton Inn hotel in Denville, titled "Employer Empowerment for Workforce Inclusion," where employers in the community came to learn how community partners can offer inclusive employment opportunities. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the One Stop Career Centers participated, speaking about their services in regards to collaborating with employers in the community. There was a segment about questions that employers may want to know the answers to but are hesitant to ask, in which two attorneys spoke about disability and reasonable accommodations from an employer perspective. The last segment was featured a panel of individuals and employers with and without disabilities speaking about their own personal experiences with inclusive employment practices.

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DAWN MISSION STATEMENT

DAWN Center for Independent Living empowers people with disabilities to strive for equality and to take control of their own lives by:

- Providing the tools that encourage independence and self-advocacy.
- Promoting public awareness of the needs, desires and rights of individuals living with disabilities.
- Offering community activities that create new experiences and opportunities.
- Creating informed communities that advance the Independent Living Philosophy.

DAWN PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES AND MORE:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| - Independent Living Skills Training | - Advocacy |
| - DDD Support Coordination | - Peer Support |
| - Living Well with a Disability | - Recreation |
| - Skills for Independent Living (SkIL) | - Information and Referral |
| - Early Intervention Service Coordination | - Next Chapter Book Club |
| - Aktion Club (Morris County only) | - Care Management |
| - Brain Injury Alliance Support Group | - It's All About Work |
| - Working Well with a Disability | - Employment/EN Services |

For questions or comments about the newsletter, contact the Newsletter Coordinator, Peter Gimbel, at pgimbel@dawncil.org or 973-625-1940 ext. 219.