



DAWN AWAKENINGS

Awaken to Independence

DAWN AWAKENINGS

WINTER 2016

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE CRUCIAL TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In honor of the event, let's take a look at the disability employment situation in America today.

Since its passage in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has revolutionized the disability landscape. The law extends civil rights protections to people with disabilities. This means that people with disabilities are legally protected from discrimination in employment, among other protections.

Employers are obligated to provide "reasonable accommodations" to employees with disabilities who request them. If a person with a disability can do a job with the aid of reasonable accommodations, that person has to be given the same chance of being hired that a non-disabled person would have...at least in theory. But what is supposed to happen and what actually happens don't always match up as well as we would like.

Employment discrimination based on disability has certainly been reduced, but this unjust practice has not stopped. In a recent blog post on the Huffington Post website, Felicia Souza describes her ongoing struggle to find employment as a person who uses a wheelchair. "My job hunts" she writes, "are always a consistent, repetitive cycle: their interested inquiry, followed by multiple successful phone interviews, then palpable surprise and trepidation in-person." In the end, she almost never gets the job.

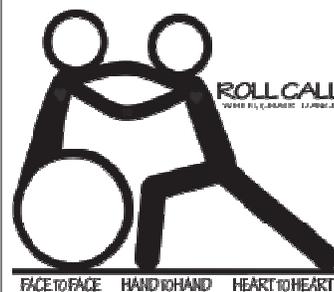
Souza's difficulties are not unique. Disability Scoop reports that new data from the U.S. Department of Labor shows a recent increase in the unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities. Yet the long-term trend is that it is gradually becoming less difficult to find work with a disability. We have come a long way in the area of disability employment, but there is still much work to be done.

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Wheelchair Dance

Roll Call Wheelchair Dance classes!
February 7th and March 6th 1pm to 3pm at Nyemchek's Dance Centre, 55 E Central Ave., Pearl River, NY 10965.



Call 201-391-9498 or visit <http://www.rollcallwheelchairdance.org/>.

From the Executive Director's Desk

A new year is upon us and with it comes the hope of better things. Whether we set a new personal or professional goal – or both -- we all have expectations to be better or to do better as the coming year unfolds. These expectations are a combination of our reflection on the past and our aspirations for the future.

With that in mind, DAWN Center for Independent Living will continue to make those changes and improvements that will not only enhance its ability to effectively serve those with disabilities living in Morris, Warren and Sussex counties, but will also benefit the population as a whole.

In 2015, DAWNcil celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Acts (ADA), the comprehensive federal law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, by holding a variety of events and activities to create more public awareness of this important piece of legislation. We believed that by “looking back” during this year-long observance, we would gain valuable insight as we “look ahead” and plan for 2016.

Thanks to that time of reflection, DAWNcil is ready to move forward in this New Year. We hope that our entire DAWNcil family will join us on this exciting journey, and that each and every one of you have a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

Carmela

Annual Meeting and Holiday Gala

DAWNcil's Annual Membership Meeting took place on Tuesday, December 1, 2015, from 6:30 to 9 pm at Trinity House in Hackettstown. The event agenda included a buffet dinner, induction of new board members and reappointments of existing board members. There was also a presentation on the year in review and a glimpse of next year's goals. In addition, the meeting provided an opportunity for members to share their ideas. Last, but not least, staff member Kristen Carew was recognized with DAWN's Employee of the Year Award!



DAWNcil's annual Holiday Gala was held on Saturday, December 12, 2015, from noon-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.



Annual Membership Drive Letter from Board President Elizabeth Lehmann

Dear DAWN Members, Consumers, and Friends,

It's that time of year again! Autumn is here, when the weather becomes cooler and the winds pick up. It is also time to renew your membership with DAWN Center for Independent Living. For those of you, who are not yet members, please join us. Your dues will help to support our many programs and services. If you are currently a member and have not done so already, please renew your membership now. For your convenience, we have enclosed a 2015 DAWN Center for Independent Living membership form. Additional forms are available online at www.dawncil.org or by calling 973-625-1940.

As a dues paying member of DAWN you can participate in DAWN events, be active in the DAWN activities that influence policy issues at the local, state, and national levels of government, find out what is going on within the disabilities community, and let your elected officers know your viewpoint on the many issues that affect people with disabilities. In addition, as a condition of our corporate charter, only dues paying members in good standing may vote in organizational elections. We value your opinions and hope you will become an active member by paying dues and exercising your membership rights with DAWN.

DAWN Center for Independent Living empowers people with disabilities to live independently, to strive for equality, and to take control of their lives. Consumers with disabilities and their families may benefit from a broad array of professional and recreational services and can participate in programs supporting this empowerment. Dues paid members have a voice in selecting events, programs, and activities offered to the membership. Members show the value they hold for DAWN's programs and services by participating in meetings, advocacy and recreational events, and by voting in the organizational elections. Active members take part in the governance of DAWN Center for Independent Living. They vote. They make their voices heard. Responsible active members move DAWNcil beyond being a service provider to being a community of people working together to better the lives of those living with disabilities and their families in communities throughout Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties.

Members, please send in your renewal today. If you have not yet joined, please consider joining us. Should you have any questions, please contact me, call the office, or e-mail info@dawncil.org. Thank you and I look forward to you joining us for another successful year.

Very truly yours,

Elizabeth Lehmann

Elizabeth Lehmann, President
Board of Directors



Emergency Preparedness Toolkit

In September, we mailed out our Emergency Preparedness Consumer Informer, a guide to getting ready for emergencies. With the approach of winter and the threat of severe weather, now is a good time to make sure you are prepared for an emergency. This is especially important for people with disabilities, who may have special needs to take into account.

In addition to the information we mailed out, there is also an extensive list of emergency preparedness resources (the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit) available on our website at <http://www.dawncil.org/emergency-prep/>. In case you missed it or never received it, the Emergency Preparedness Consumer Informer is available at the same web address. If you prefer a paper copy, you can print the document or contact us at 973-625-1940 to request a copy in the mail.

Air Travel with a Disability

by Lindsay Tuman

On November 18, 2015, the Northeast ADA Center's Institute on Employment and Disability presented "Air Travel for People with Disabilities: Intersection of the Air Carriers Access Act (ACAA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)" through a webinar. This topic has emerged because of recent stories that have made national news. The theme that was expressed was for the individual with a disability to always plan ahead, as well as communicating needs respectfully and firmly to avoid mishaps. The webinar reviewed the rules and regulations in relation to where each law goes into effect throughout the different phases of travel. The ADA covers most elements prior to boarding the aircraft, whereas the (Continued on page 6)

DAWN Employer Workshop

by Lindsay Tuman

On September 28, 2015, DAWNcil held a half-day interactive employer-focused workshop with support from the Morris County Society for Human Resource Management. The title of the event was "Best Practices for Successful Workforce Inclusion." Attendees had the opportunity to network with other employers and learn new information that will help leverage their opportunity to become more inclusive employers for people with disabilities. John O'Neil, Director of Disability and Employment Research, shared statistics related to national trends based on a survey conducted of 3,013 people with disabilities. A panel of employers shared their experiences regarding best practices of successful inclusion of employees. Brian Fitzgibbons, Assistant Field Director from (continued on page 6)

ADA Celebration

On June 28th, DAWNcil and Morris County hosted a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A family fun day was held at Morris Plains' Central Park. Activities included the announcement of winners of the ADA Creative Contest, which asked students to submit creative projects with the theme of "What the ADA Means to Me." Entries were displayed in various places at the celebration.



A project entered in the ADA Creative Contest.

There was also a wheelchair softball game at the park's accessible ball field. Visitors enjoyed food from different vendors and the chance to find out about disability-related organizations, several of which had convenient information tables at the event.

In addition to the accessible ball field, visitors had the opportunity to check out the park's accessible playground. This new playground allows children with mobility impairments to go anywhere their peers can go. It also features adaptive equipment, such as a wheelchair accessible swing.



The wheelchair softball game was a highlight of the event.

The event was a fitting celebration of the ADA's quarter century of existence. Since its passage on July 26, 1990, civil rights for people with disabilities have been better protected than ever before. Many barriers have been removed, allowing people with disabilities to participate more fully in their communities. We still have a long way to go, but it is still important to celebrate the progress we have made!

A Note on Language

Disability advocates have long been taught to use "person-first language": instead of "disabled person," we have learned to say "person with a disability." This emphasizes that people with disabilities are not defined by their disabilities. Yet some people prefer to say "disabled person" because they understand the disability as an inherent part of an individual's identity.

Which do you prefer, identity-first or person-first?



Air Travel with a Disability *(continued)*

... ACAA covers the transition from the airport onto the plane for air travel.

The ACAA and ADA have areas where the laws overlap. These include: ticket counters, kiosks, baggage check-in and retrieval, jet bridges, mobile lounges, level entry boarding ramps, info systems, and signs that locate facilities. As of December 12, 2006, all new kiosks must be fully accessible. The law states that an individual is required to travel with a companion in three circumstances: when the individual is transported on a stretcher, is unable to comprehend or respond to safety protocols, or has an impairment so severe that the individual cannot assist themselves. A myth that was dispelled was that a traveler with a disability does have an obligation for providing advance notice to the airline prior to reservations/booking a flight for any necessary accommodations. Advance notice is needed within 48 hours when the use of a portable electronic respirator is used on a flight over 19 seats, transporting a power wheelchair with less than 60 seats, when 10 or more individuals with disabilities are traveling as a group, the transport of an emotional support animal, transport of any service animal on a flight scheduled to take 8-plus hours, and accommodations of a passenger with a severe hearing or vision impairment. Advanced notice needs to be provided if the individual needs to have the access aisle wheelchair on the aircraft with them for the restrooms. Flight attendants under the ACAA are to transport passengers to the restrooms, but are not to provide any personal care.

The ACAA rules are that the mobility device is to be returned the way it was given, and there is compensation for any lost or damaged devices at the original purchase price. Air carrier staff cannot get off the plane unless all passengers are off. Emotional support animals are not considered to be service animals, therefore, 48 hour advance notice must be provided with documentation from a licensed mental health professional. The letter is good for a year. Service animals only need advance notice if the flight is more than 8 to 10 hours. Individuals with disabilities can only be placed in exit rows only if the person can perform a series of functions necessary in an emergency evacuation. Staff are mandated to have trainings. Both travelers and airline carriers have rights and responsibilities. There are two resources to file a complaint if needed: http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/CP_DisabilityandDiscrimination.html and <http://www.justice.gov/crt/how-file-complaint#two>.

DAWN Employer Workshop *(continued)*

... DVRS shared updates in the changes to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), along with a hands-on exercise demonstrating how to successfully navigate inclusive hiring in relation to job applications and appropriate questions that can and cannot be asked prior to hiring or once the employee is hired. Employers were given the opportunity to brainstorm about how to create an inclusive workplace environment in which workers with disabilities are treated as equals.

DAWN in the Community

Calais School Transition Fair by Danielle Lepore

On November 4th, my co-worker, Brienne Lermond, and I attended and represented DAWN Center for Independent Living at the Calais School's Second Annual Transition Fair located in Whippany. This was a wonderful opportunity for parents, students, case managers, and other interested individuals to learn about the valuable services available to those transitioning out of the school system. Individuals and families had the chance to meet and talk with a variety of advocacy agencies, supported employment agencies, trade schools, colleges, social service agencies, and public entities about the types of services and programs they offer. This event not only provided students and families with the opportunity to learn about different services and programs, but also offered service providers the ability to network with various state and local agencies in order to learn about the different services we all provide and how we can come together to serve our community as a whole.

Disability Pride Parade by Kelly Kryspin

This year was the first time I had attended the Disability Pride Parade in Trenton hosted by the Alliance Center for Independence on October 9, 2015, and it was definitely an experience I will never forget. The amount of positivity and excitement from the people that participated in this event was contagious — where you can't help but to have a smile on your face the whole day. I had the opportunity to walk in the parade among people from all over New Jersey and even met some people from neighboring states including Pennsylvania and New York. While there were many aspects of this day that I enjoyed, my favorite part was the live entertainment that took place throughout the afternoon. From motivational speakers to musicians and dancing, it was wonderful to see all of the different types of talent. I was one of several DAWNcil representatives that attended this event and I think that as a group our favorite part of the day was watching our co-worker Lindsay Tuman perform her wheelchair dance routine to "Fight Song" by Rachel Platten. Overall, this was a wonderful and rewarding experience that allowed us to express our pride not only as service providers but as advocates for the disability community.

Morris County Wellness Fair by Roberta Schwartz and Jennifer Escala

At the Morris County Employee Wellness Fair on October 6, 2015, DAWNcil employees Roberta Schwartz and Jennifer Escala manned a table. They distributed information on Dawn Center for Independent Living including information on Early Intervention Service Coordination, early child developmental stages, and disability resources in Morris County. They spoke to attendees about Case Management and Morris County resources for the disabled and their families, and locations of other Centers for Independent Living in the state. Roberta and Jennifer obtained some information from other presenters about healthy living and resources available in Morris County. Case management received two new client/referrals on which to follow up.

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We are on the web!
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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.