

# DAWN AWAKENINGS Awaken to Independence

Fall - 2011

## NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH 2011

This year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme is "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities." This theme acknowledges that people with disabilities are a diverse and skilled pool of workers.

"The ADA and the special education laws have combined to produce the best-educated population of people with disabilities in U.S. history," Senator Tom Harkin told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Corporate Disability Employment Summit in April.

The theme also challenges the myth that hiring workers with disabilities is prohibitively expensive for small businesses. Hiring disabled workers does not increase workers compensation insurance rates. Nor is providing accommodations prohibitively expensive — of the workers with disabilities who do need accommodation or special equipment, 56% of these cost less than \$600, while many are free.

**"More than 20 years after the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities...are making immeasurable contributions to workplaces across our country. " — President Obama, October 3, 2011**

According to a Kessler Foundation/NOD Survey in 2010, a third of employers surveyed indicated that people with disabilities display more dedication and create less turnover than the general employee pool. Most employers also indicated that employees with disabilities have the same abilities and workplace behavior as employees without disabilities.

Furthermore, there are tax benefits available for businesses who hire employees with disabilities. The Disabled Access Credit provides a non-refundable credit for eligible small businesses that incur expenditures related to providing access to people with disabilities. The Barrier Removal Tax Deduction encourages businesses of any size to claim a deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for qualified expenses related to removing architectural and transportation mobility barriers. Finally, the Work Opportunity Credit provides eligible employers with a tax credit up to 40 percent of the first \$6,000 of first-year wages of a new employee if the employee is part of a "targeted group" — employees with disabilities are a targeted group. For veterans with a service-related disability, this tax credit is increased to up to the first \$12,000 of first-year wages.

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### **SAVE THE DATE**

### **Franki's Fund—**

### **Tricky Tray**

### **Annual Event**

**Sunday, November**

**6, 2011 – Zeris Inn,**

**372 Route 46 East,**

**Mountain Lakes, NJ**

**12:30 – 4:30 p.m.**

**The mission of Franki's Fund is to offer young adults with special needs ages 14 – 25 an opportunity to explore artistic and vocational pursuits. Donations of various ranges can be made.**

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The past few months have been unprecedented times for us all in regard to both the weather and the economy. I hope that you have all survived the last two storms with minimal impact. We had some minor complications here at DAWNcil with both Hurricane Irene and the October Nor'easter. Our Hackettstown office was not accessible after the Hurricane due to flooding in the area, and our Denville office had a complete loss of power for a few days due to the Nor'easter. Fortunately we are now back up and running. If nothing else, we now have a heightened awareness of how important it is to have plans in place in the case of an emergency. In this edition, we have focused on emergency preparedness and what each of us can do to be prepared. I hope you will create an emergency plan for yourself and your loved ones so that the next time we are caught off guard, we will be better prepared.

This edition also focuses on the issue of employment for persons with disabilities. Since October is National Disability and Employment month, we wanted to share information with you about what our country is doing to hopefully change the dreadful statistics surrounding the employment of persons with disabilities. For any individual, gainful employment is the key to self sufficiency and full inclusion. Anyone who wants to work can and should work. There are many myths surrounding employment for people with disabilities from the employers' perspectives as well as from the individuals' perspective. As DAWNcil moves ahead, the issue of employment will be a primary focus for the organization. Our school based program, STEP-UP, will now include an expanded curriculum with an emphasis on vocational self-awareness and collaboration with vocational counselors to ensure students are well connected before transitioning to adult services. For more information on this program and DAWNcil's plans for the future, I hope you will join us at our annual meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 9:30 pm.

Best Regards,

*Carmela*

## FEMA TO TEST EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM NOVEMBER 9TH

As part of their ongoing efforts to keep our country and communities safe during emergencies, the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Emergency Management Agency will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The EAS test plays a key role in ensuring the nation is prepared for all hazards, and that the U.S. public can receive critical and vital information, should it ever be needed. The first nationwide test will be conducted Wednesday, November 9 at 2 p.m. ET. This test may last up to three and a half minutes, and will be transmitted via television and radio stations within the U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii, the territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. Similar to local emergency alert system tests, an audio message will interrupt television and radio programming indicating: "This is a test." When the test is over, regular programming will resume. For more information about the nationwide Emergency Alert System test, please visit [http://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media\\_records/6407](http://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media_records/6407) and [www.FCC.gov](http://www.FCC.gov). On November 9 at 2 p.m. EDT, please remember: *Don't stress; it's only a test.*

## ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS

### **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

LIHEAP is an energy assistance program that helps low-income residents meet home heating costs. The 2011 application period runs from November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 to April 30, 2012.

**Universal Service Fund (USF):** USF makes energy bills more affordable for households with annual incomes at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Level. Benefits appear as a credit on the household electric and/or gas bill.

If you have any questions about LIHEAP or USF, or to find your local application agency, call 1-800-510-3102. More information can also be found online at <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/hea.html>.

**Temporary Relief for Utility Expenses (TRUE):** TRUE provides financial assistance for gas and electric bills to moderate income households. For more information about TRUE, visit <http://www.ahanjtrue.org>. Warren and Sussex County residents can call (732) 982-8710 for further assistance. Morris County residents, call MCOHA at 973-644-4884.

**NJSHARES:** NJSHARES provides financial assistance to individuals and families in need of temporary help paying their energy and heating bills. Applications can be made at any of the 321 local intake agencies sites across the state. DAWNcil accepts applications for Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties and can be reached toll-free at 1-888-383-3296.

**Winter Termination Program (WTP)** – WTP protects those receiving certain public benefits from having their gas and electric shut off between November 15 and March 15. Additional protected persons are those unable to pay utility bills because of special circumstances that may cause financial hardship. For more information regarding WTP, call 1-800-624-0241.

**Lifeline Program** – Lifeline provides an energy benefit to seniors and people with disabilities who meet Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled eligibility requirements or receive SSI. The benefit is also available to customers who have electric and gas costs included in their rent. For more information about Lifeline, call 1-800-792-9745.

## SAVE THE DATE! DAWNCIL HOLIDAY GALA DECEMBER 10

Join us for fun, food, dancing and guaranteed good times at DAWNcil's annual Holiday Gala! This year's event will be held at Skylands in Randolph, 792 Route 10 West, on Saturday, December 10th from 12-4 p.m. The cost is \$25 for dues paid members and \$35 for non-dues paid members. Transportation and other accommodations can be provided (such as an assistant, an interpreter, a special diet request, etc.), but you must give at least two weeks notice. Two weeks notice is required. For further information please contact Marc Molde, at 973-625-1940 x211, or email [info@dawncil.org](mailto:info@dawncil.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NOVEMBER

16

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING,  
BETHLEHEM CHURCH, 758 RT 10,  
RANDOLPH, 6:30-9:30 PM**

21

**BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP,  
DENVER, 6 PM**

### DECEMBER

1

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING & PRESENTATION ON NYC TRAVEL. 6-8 PM,  
DENVER.**

19

**BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP,  
DENVER, 6 PM**

## DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### SPOTLIGHT ON: DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (DVRS)

#### What is DVRS?

The New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) exists to help individuals with disabilities that are having trouble finding or holding onto a job because of their disability. An example of services provided includes (but is not limited to): vocational counseling, skills training, job placement services, and home and vehicle modifications. Additionally, DVRS works with employers to make recommendations to remove any potential barriers in the workplace for employees with disabilities.

#### Local DVRS locations:

##### **Morris County**

7 Sussex Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Morristown, NJ 07960-3886  
Phone: 973-631-6304

##### **Warren County**

223 Stiger Street, Suite A  
Hackettstown, NJ 07840-1217  
Phone: 908-852-4110

Visit <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/>  
or call 609-292-5987 for a list of  
additional locations.

Three years after the devastating economic crash of 2008, many Americans are still experiencing symptoms of the resulting recession; facing untold challenges trying to meet their basic needs and pay down mountains of household debt. While the whole country is suffering the consequences of the economic bubble bursting, troubling statistical evidence indicates that people with disabilities are paying an even higher price.

“Research shows us that people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the recent downturn in the economy,” testified Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Kathleen Martinez before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. “Between October 2008 and June 2011, the rate of job loss among workers with disabilities far exceeded that of workers without disabilities, with the proportion of employed U.S. workers identified as having disabilities declining by 9 percent.”

The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is alarmingly high –

*As of September 2011, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 16.1% - compared with 8.5% for people without disabilities.*

even in an economic climate where the rate of unemployment in the general population peaked at about ten percent. According to the United States Bu-

reau of Labor Statistics, 21% of people with disabilities participated in the labor force in September of 2011, compared with 69% of people without disabilities. Nearly one-third of workers with a disability were employed part-time, compared with about one-fifth of workers with no disability. The unemployment rate for people without disabilities was 8.5% during this period – and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was a staggering 16.1%.

The 2010 Kessler/National Organization on Disability Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities found that only two in ten working age Americans with disabilities are employed, versus six in ten of those without disabilities. Gainful employment leads to financial solvency, which can result in greater opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently. One of the most alarming consequences of unemployment and underrepresentation of people with disabilities in the workforce is a much higher incidence of poverty among people with disabilities than is found in the general population. According to the Census Bureau, the US poverty rate among the entire population rose to over 15 percent, compared to 27.9 percent of people with disabilities living below the poverty line. Households comprised of people without disabilities earned a median income of \$58,736/year in 2010, while those with disabilities earned less than half that amount -- \$25,550 per year.



## EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

There are many organizations dedicated to uniting people with disabilities with employers, or assisting people with their job searches or information about accommodations. Here are just a few:

**Getting Hired:** <http://www.gettinghired.com>

This website is the largest national employment and networking portal connecting people with disabilities and employers who are committed to hiring workers with disabilities. The website is easy to navigate, and searches can be conducted by job title, keyword, company name or location. There are also articles, forums and blogs available.

**USA Jobs:** <http://www.usajobs.gov/IndividualsWithDisabilities>

This website advertises government positions and provides a variety of links to other employment resources for people with disabilities.

**Hire Disability Solutions:** <http://jobsearch.hireds.monster.com/>

Hire Disability Solutions pairs job seekers with companies who would like to hire workers with disabilities. Users can post their resume and search existing positions.

**HirePotential:** <http://www.hirepotential.com/career/>

HirePotential works primarily with businesses that actively support diversity, and specializes in employing people with disabilities, mature workers and veterans. HirePotential's job postings focus on the areas of engineering, information technology, customer service, finance and administration.

**America's Service Locator:** <http://www.servicelocator.org/>

This website connects individuals to employment and training opportunities available at local One Stop Career Centers. The website provides contact information for a range of local work-related services, including unemployment benefits, career development opportunities and educational opportunities.

**ABILITYJobs:** <http://www.abilityjobs.com/>

ABILITYJobs is the largest resume bank of people with disabilities. Job seekers are encouraged to post resumes (which can be done anonymously). After creating a job seeker account, users can set up personal job alerts and view jobs.

**Hire Heroes USA:** <http://www.hireheroesusa.org/>

Hire Heroes USA provides free career placement assistance to returning veterans, specializing in the career placement of those who are disabled or injured.

**National Business and Disability Council (NBDC):** [http://nbdc.com/job\\_seekers.aspx](http://nbdc.com/job_seekers.aspx)

The NBDC website offers resources for job seekers with disabilities including links to local and national resources, and webcasts on resume writing and disclosure. Users are encouraged to post their resumes on the national resume database offered on the site.

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** <http://askjan.org/indiv/index.htm>

JAN provides free consulting services for individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities that affect employment. Services include one-on-one consultation about job accommodation ideas, requesting and negotiating accommodations, and rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws.

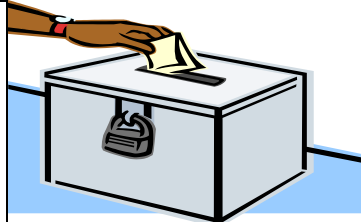
## EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY 101

If you are a person with a disability who wants to work and you are currently living in the state of New Jersey, there are a number of resources available to you to help you achieve your goals. Your first stop should be to visit the New Jersey WorkAbility website, located at <http://www.njworkability.nj.gov>. NJ WorkAbility is a state and federally funded program that provides Medicaid health benefits at a higher income eligibility level than ever before, to people with permanent disabilities who are working.

To be eligible for NJ WorkAbility, you must be between the ages of 16 and 64, employed full or part time, and have a permanent physical or mental disability. Self-employed individuals are also covered, if they can provide documentation of self-employment and income. You can earn as much as \$52,000 (gross) annually and still be fully eligible for Medicaid coverage through NJ WorkAbility. The Medicaid coverage includes all medical and healthcare services normally available through Medicaid. These can include but are not limited to: medical equipment, outpatient counseling, medical transportation, dental and vision care, personal care services, pharmaceutical and other medical services.

If you are interested in applying for NJ WorkAbility, call 1-800-356-1561 for an initial screening and information. Applications are taken and eligibility determinations are made at your County Board of Social Services.

### ELECTION DAY LEGAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



### DISABILITY BENEFITS 101 CALCULATOR PROVIDES INFORMATION FOR NJ JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) is New Jersey's designated protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities pursuant to federal statutes intended to protect the legal, civil, and human rights of people with disabilities.

DRNJ attorneys will be available by telephone to answer questions concerning problems that may arise for individuals with disabilities while voting. Any person needing assistance can contact DRNJ at (800) 922-7233 or (609) 633-7106 (TTY) from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

If you have any questions please contact Mary Ciccone, Managing Attorney, at (609) 299-9742.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Disability Services (DDS), in partnership with the World Institute on Disability (WID), has launched an upgraded version of New Jersey Disability Benefits 101 (NJDB101).

The online program allows people with disabilities to calculate the amount of income they can earn without jeopardizing their disability benefits, and is located at <http://www.njdb101.org/>.

The tool is also useful for individuals participating in the NJ WorkAbility program.

"Employment empowers people with disabilities to gain financial stability and a sense of personal achievement," said DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "NJDB101 serves as a tool for individuals, whose disability benefits remain essential, to make informed decisions about employment."

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Where will you be when the next disaster strikes? According to a recent poll by the Harris Interactive Survey, 53% of people with disabilities say that they have not made plans to quickly and safely evacuate their homes. Here are some tips from FEMA and the American Red Cross.

**GET INFORMED** – Learn about hazards that threaten your area, and any disaster response/evacuation plans that are already in place for people with disabilities. If you do not drive, find out what your community's plans are for evacuating those without transportation. Know how to connect and start a back-up power supply for essential medical equipment. If you use a personal care attendant, see if their agency has a plan in place for disasters. **NJ Register Ready** gives residents with special needs and their families, friends and associates the opportunity to provide information to emergency response agencies, so emergency responders can better plan to serve them in a disaster or other emergency. To register, visit <https://www13.state.nj.us/SpecialNeeds/>

**MAKE A PLAN** – Meet with your family and/or caregiver and discuss your disaster plan. Record contact information for family, caregivers, work, school and other supports. Learn the best escape routes out of your home, as well as the safest places in your home for different types of disasters. Take your pets with you if you evacuate, but plan ahead for people-only shelters by developing a list of places that could board your pet in an emergency. Service animals may remain with you. If you use an electric wheelchair, have a manual wheelchair for backup. Arrange for more than one person to check up on you in an emergency.

**MAKE A SUPPLY KIT** – Assemble a kit containing supplies you would need in an emergency, and keep the kit readily accessible.

Supplies may include:

- \*Battery-operated flashlights and lanterns, and radio, to keep up with the news if the power is out.
- \*A 3-day supply of non-perishable food and manual can opener; and a 3-day supply of water – at least 1 gallon per person per day.
- \*Medical equipment and assistive devices. Medications, list of prescriptions, doctor and pharmacist.
- \*Basic first aid kit, including sanitation and hygiene items.
- \*Cash, credit cards, checkbook, ATM card.
- \*A list of emergency contact information
- \*Copies of important documents
- \*Supplies for service animals and pets: food, ID tags, etc.

For more information, visit the NJ Office of Emergency Management at [http://www.ready.nj.gov/plan/special\\_needs.html](http://www.ready.nj.gov/plan/special_needs.html) or <http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/>.

## HURRICANE HELP FOR NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS

Over \$81 million of federal assistance has been approved to help our state recover from the damage from Hurricane Irene.

If you sustained losses or damage from Hurricane Irene, you may be eligible for disaster aid through FEMA. Call 1-800-621-FEMA to register. To register online, visit [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov).

After registering with FEMA, homeowners and renters may be referred to the Small Business Administration (SBA) to apply for a low-interest disaster loan. For more information, contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 or (TTY) 800-877-8339.

**The assistance deadline for FEMA registration and SBA loan applications for New Jersey residents is November 30, 2011.**

If you are concerned that your home or business may have mold growth as a result of flooding, check out the online resources provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at <http://www.epa.gov/mold>.

**Do you need help cleaning up mold, flood damage or debris? Assistance is available; just call 2-1-1.**

## WARREN COUNTY NEWS

### THOMAS M. KENNEDY EXCELLENCE IN ACCESSIBILITY AWARD GOES TO LA BELLA VIA

The Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Warren County Advisory Council on Disabilities presented Sal LaDuca, owner of the Italian eatery La Bella Via, located on 41 Third Street in Phillipsburg, with the Thomas M. Kennedy Excellence in Accessibility Award. The award is named in honor Warren County resident Kennedy, who was a tireless advocate for people with disabilities.

The award recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations that are user-friendly and accessible to all and/or have initiated notable efforts which have facilitated accessibility.

La Bella Via was established in 2006. LaDuca used his own resources without tax credits or grants to make the restaurant exceed ADA standards. The restaurant has two clearly marked handicapped spaces, a ramp from the lot to the front door, an accessible patio and a wide entrance.

"I really wasn't expecting this. I'm honored to accept this," LaDuca told the freeholders upon receiving the award.



### WARREN COUNTY RESIDENT RECEIVES HOME MODIFICATION GRANT



Belvidere resident Billy Muha, left, received a Home Modification Grant provided by the Neilsen Foundation, from DAWNcil Information and Referral Specialist Marc Molde.

### FREEHOLDERS DECLARE DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH



Warren County Freeholders Jason J. Sarnoski, Everett A. Chamberlain and Richard D. Gardner present Warren County Advisory Council on Disabilities representative Mary Papaserge with a proclamation stating October is Disability Awareness Month in Warren County.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SUSSEX COUNTY

**GRANT NEWS:** Thomas White of Montague received a home modification grant from the Neilsen Foundation to make his home more accessible.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### November 7th—

Sussex County Disability Services Advisory Council Meeting—12:00 pm, at Frankford Library, Newton

#### November 15th—

Caregiver Expo, sponsored by Sussex County Department of Human Services, from 3:00 to 7:00 pm @ Selective Insurance, 40 Wantage Avenue, Branchville.

## MORRIS COUNTY MINUTES

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### November 5th—

17th Annual Craft Fair, held at Morris View Healthcare Center, 540 West Hanover Avenue, Morris Township, 10 am to 4 pm.

#### November 9th—

An Evening for Caregivers, held at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center, 60 N. Jefferson Road in Whippany. From 6-8 pm.

#### November 10th—

Morris County Advisory Committee on Aging, Disabilities and Veterans Meeting: 12:00 pm 340 West Hanover Avenue, Morris Township

#### November 13th—

Annual March for Military Families, held at County College of Morris from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Morris County has a variety of resources on the internet for consumers to keep up with the latest county and local news.

The official website of Morris County:

<http://www.morriscountynj.gov/>

**Or check out Morris County's other social media outposts:**

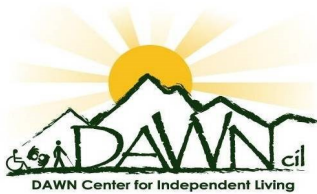
<http://www.facebook.com/morriscountynj>

<http://www.twitter.com/morriscountynj>

<http://www.flickr.com/morriscountynj>

<http://www.youtube.com/morriscountynj>

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We are on the web!  
[www.dawncil.org](http://www.dawncil.org)  
[twitter.com/dawncil](https://twitter.com/dawncil)

### 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:

- Information and Referral
- Living Well with a Disability
- Next Chapter Book Club
- Aktion Club (Morris County only)
- Nursing Facility Transition
- Independent Living Skills Training
- School to Adult Life (*STEP-UP* Program)
- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Recreation
- SAIL
- Care Management