

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH



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WHAT THE HECK HAS THIS TO DO WITH EMPLOYMENT?

Pete Seeger, The Folk Process and Empowerment

By **Melvyn R. Tanzman**, *Executive Director*

While reading this newsletter you will find a lot of practical, concrete information about working with a disability. I'm not known for being a conformist, so I will use the Executive Director's prerogative to introduce this issue by writing something completely different, focusing on the less evident questions such as work as opposed to jobs, learning from our history, and developing an attitude of empowerment that can lead to success in your endeavors. Finally, I will recognize a folk music legend whose approach to life, social change and participatory democracy is the inspiration for this column.

"Oh our life is more than our work, and our work is more than our jobs" — Charlie King

This simple message sums up a fundamental vision whereby we all can contribute to our society, whether we are earning a wage or not. I believe that as people with disabilities our most important work is to educate the public (employers, educators, political and civic leaders and the general public) about our capabilities and individuality as opposed to the predominant views and generalizations about people with disabilities. How many times have we heard these views: "The typical person with a severe physical disability is unemployable, it is only exceptional few who achieve success in the workplace"; "People with psychiatric disabilities can be disruptive to a workplace as they are prone to irrational or violent behavior"; or how about "People with developmental disabilities can only work in sheltered settings because they require constant supervision and are easily distracted." These prejudiced misconceptions may often not be said in a direct manner; however, when we are not hired for a job for which we are qualified, we know these unspoken judgments may be the underlying basis for our failure. All too often we internalize these failures, blaming our own "inadequacies" for what are really cultural and societal barriers.

One way to avoid feelings of self-pity and lessened self-worth is to remain active in our communities as volunteers and civic activists. By making ourselves and our abilities evident to people in our communities by remaining active we are slowly changing attitudes by letting people get to know us as individuals with unique strengths. Hopefully, by raising societal consciousness, the attitudinal barriers will fade away. This is the most important work we can do. In addition, it can help us build skills and confidence that can lead to employment.

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In May 2009 folksinger/activist Pete Seeger will turn 90 years old. I have had the opportunity to meet him several times and have found him to be a humble man with an unquenchable passion for social justice for all people. In the mid 1990's he would come down from his home in Dutchess County to participate in a Disability Independence Day march held during July in New York City to commemorate the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. One of my fondest mementos is a photo of my son, then 2 years old, at that march in 1995. He was sitting on a curb holding Pete Seeger's banjo the face of which proclaims "This machine surrounds hate and forces it to surrender." Seeger's presence at this march not as a featured speaker or performer but as an equal participant, and his happiness to let this young child hold his precious instrument speaks volumes about this unpretentious man.

His concerts are more sing-alongs than performances, he would spend much of his time teaching the audience three-part harmonies, empowering them to joyfully sing. His message was that culture can be participatory - don't just sit and listen - get involved in making music and in social change. Much of his work was done as a volunteer including forming Clearwater, a Hudson River Sloop, environmental organization and folk festival committed to cleaning up the Hudson River.

The Folk Festival, the first and largest one in the New York City metropolitan area, has a long history of being accessible to people with disabilities, even prior to the passage of the ADA in 1990. Every stage has a sign language interpreter, accessible port-a-potties are scattered among the others, and if you need a ride, a volunteer with a golf cart is more than happy to provide it. It's a wonderful celebration of our diversity!

Pete Seeger also is a big believer in the folk process, which is to take an existing song, poem, or story and embellish it to make it your own. His most popular song is "Turn, Turn, Turn" popularized by the Byrds in the 1960s; he will tell you the lyrics were taken from the bible. Creativity is often inspired by art that already exists. All music is derived from what has come before. I guess what I take from that is that we all can learn from our past and our history, whether it is civic activism, writing poetry or music, we must embrace our roots.

So an early happy birthday to Pete Seeger! As we work to change social attitudes towards people with disabilities, let's do it in a manner that empowers all people, draws from our diverse and common history, and respects and values all work, paid as well as volunteer. Independent Living is built on this same philosophy.

GOVERNOR PATERSON

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

By Meghan Schoeffling, *Systems Advocate and Housing Specialist*

There have been numerous articles in the news recently about the high unemployment rates throughout the country of about five and a half percent (5.5%). However, the unfortunate truth is that among people with disabilities, the unemployment rate has stayed steady at about seventy percent (70%)! This is despite the fact that people with disabilities, on average, are more highly educated than the rest of the population. Moreover, technology has come so far that there are fewer barriers than ever in the workplace thanks in large part to all the breakthroughs in adaptive technology.

It seems that one of the biggest barriers is employers' attitudes toward people with disabilities. What we need are people who are disabled and competent to be in the spotlight. A major breakthrough came about last March when Governor Elliot Spitzer stepped down in disgrace and New York inherited our new Governor, David Paterson, who just happens to be legally blind.

Governor David Paterson has shown the country that people with disabilities can lead full and productive

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lives. In 1985 David Paterson was elected to represent Harlem in the State Senate. In 2002, he became the first African American Minority Leader in the New York State Senate. He completed the New York City Marathon in 1999. In 2006, Elliot Spitzer chose him as his running mate, and David Paterson became Lieutenant Governor in November 2006. Ever since, the fact that he is blind has made all kinds of news coverage leading to articles about topics such as reasonable accommodations in the workplace. David Paterson has shown New Yorkers and the country that a person with a disability can lead a full and productive life. Not since Franklin Delano Roosevelt has a person with a self evi-

dent disability been governor. It is about time that New York has another governor with a disability. Especially, considering that people with disabilities make up about one fifth (1/5) of the population.

So, now we have a prominent figure in the news and in government. Hopefully, this will go a long way in terms of changing people's perceptions regarding hiring people with disabilities. As unacceptable as the 5.5 % unemployment rate among the population seems to be, the seventy percent (70%) unemployment rate among people with disabilities is disgraceful.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR THE DISABLED IN A WORRISOME ECONOMY

By Scott Smith, Program Director

We are all well aware of the changing economic face of our country; these are difficult times. The cost of necessities like food and fuel are going through the roof, with a gallon of gas currently at over four dollars per gallon. I can't help but wonder what employment opportunities will people with disabilities have during this economic crisis.

Being Able to Think Outside of the Box in a Struggling Economy:

I am sure that my fellow travelers with disabilities are familiar with the concept of thinking outside of a box, because we must do it every day in order to survive in a world that often marginalizes us without thinking. We are often better problem solvers as we are faced with so many obstacles. We must apply all of our creativity and problem solving skills to help create employment opportunities.

Working from Home, a Viable Option When It Becomes Difficult for Us to Travel:

I have observed through the news media that an emerging trend in American society is more opportunities to work from home. Through the wonderful world of the computer, the Blackberry, the fax machine etc., the infrastructure exists to allow us to telecommute. As the

cost of driving to work increases dramatically more employers may offer this option. VESID can offer equipment and other resources to facilitate home employment or a home-based business. There are articles in this current newsletter that consider these options.

During This Time of Economic Upheaval, One Must Learn How to Network to Succeed:

It is imperative that job-seekers develop a tight network of contacts in their communities that can springboard someone into a job. Volunteer, get involved, go to public meetings, talk to people there. If you impress someone as intelligent and capable, that can lead to employment. It is also important to have a recent resume available at all times while looking for employment.

The One-Stop: a Viable Option When Looking for Employment:

It is important for you to utilize all resources available to find employment. The Westchester One-Stop Employment Center in White Plains is yet another place where you can go when you need assistance to develop

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a resume, develop interviewing skills and find a job. For more information about the One-Stop location and services please contact Elizabeth White and at 914-995-2643. For those who live in the Yonkers area they can contact the Yonkers One-Stop Employment Center at 20 South Broadway, Lynn Carr at 914-964-0105.

Optimism in a Tough Economy:

Even in this tough economy it is essential to attempt to remain optimistic so as to motivate oneself to look for

employment. We must focus on our abilities rather than the barriers we face. Throughout this article I have attempted to take a look at the economy honestly. I also feel that I have offered hope for those who are seeking employment or looking for a new job.

If you have any questions or need assistance in locating employment please contact the center at 914-968-4717.



IMPROVING LIFE SKILLS CAN HELP YOUNG JOB SEEKERS

By Ann Chiappetta, Youth Leadership Coordinator

A high school student needs certain skills to look for and land a job. Some skills are familiar, like the kind learned while in school. Others are more complex but worth the effort it takes to improve them. Looking for a job is a lot like researching information for a school project. Being aware of your talents and interests will help you find the right job *for you!* If you aren't sure about your talents or interests, sit down and make a list. Once it's done, show it to a family member who you think can give you some other ideas. Getting input from others can help you focus on which job opportunity you want to explore.

The following list includes the most important skills a first-time job seeker will need:

1. Be responsible. This is the most important skill a young adult needs in order to become successful. What this means is following through with plans, completing tasks and showing yourself and others that you are a reliable person. Don't be afraid to ask questions or make phone calls because knowing is better than not knowing.

2. Being prepared. Thinking ahead, keeping track of your tasks, and having a set of realistic goals will help you practice being prepared.

You become more responsible and prepared, when you:

- Have a positive attitude
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Learn from your mistakes
- Take responsibility for your choices
- Set realistic goals based on informed decisions
- Know how and when to ask for help
- Be a self-advocate—know your rights, know how and when to ask for help, and never give up.

WDOMI offers a youth leadership program designed to help young people learn these skills. If you are interested in enrolling in the youth leadership program, contact Ann Chiappetta, Youth Leadership Coordinator at 914-968-4717.

FINDING A JOB

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A SELF-ADVOCATE

By Jerry Farrell, LMSW, *Transition Specialist*

Self-advocacy is an important skill set for all areas of one's life. However, in relation to present economic conditions, these skills are indispensable when one is seeking employment. Therefore, this article is basically a guide on how to become a more effective self-advocate when preparing to obtain a job.

One important aspect of self-advocacy involves the ability to perform a self-appraisal. Appraising something basically means to become aware of the value it holds. With this in mind, an aspect of being an effective self-advocate when looking for work involves being both realistic and ambitious toward appraising one's abilities. Hence, this process is dynamic as it consists of a positive and critical approach to one's self. Since an employer appraises the value of a person's ability to generate positive results at the work place, it thereby also becomes clear that people must put themselves in the best light possible when bringing themselves to the job market.

What is the best way to achieve the goal of presenting your self in the best light possible? This is where ambition and reality merge. To overvalue your job skills without accounting for areas that require further growth is just as wrong as devaluing your talents and unique qualities.

An important first step toward being an effective self-advocate in relation to obtaining a job is to be accurate about where one is in relation to job skills and personal habits. Being accurate is also what makes possible the confidence required to present oneself in a positive light. This is because becoming aware of positive qualities you presently hold engenders confidence facilitating the allowance of accepting areas requiring further effort toward growth. This way one allows for the development of further positive characteristics that in turn can make one more attractive to potential employers.

Below are practical steps to consider:

- 1) Sit in a quiet uninterrupted place and reflect on what positive qualities you presently hold.

- 2) Write these positive qualities down and carefully review for accuracy. (Remember being accurate is important as you may have not accounted for truly positive qualities you already hold as well as overestimating other qualities.)
- 3) Ask someone you trust to review the list with you.
- 4) Do the same steps in relation to areas you know require further effort.

Other important areas to consider regarding self-advocacy skills as they relate to employment are:

- 1) Knowing what skills the present job sought after requires and evaluating yourself in relation to such skills.
- 2) Being open to developing the skills necessary to obtain a particular job.
- 3) Becoming aware of the kind of job that is best suited to your present needs and desires.
- 4) Going to your local library to find what classes are available to improve skills.
- 5) Going to your local one-stop employment center for assistance to improve skills and gain knowledge of available jobs.
- 6) Becoming comfortable with articulating your strong points at an interview (practicing interviewing skills is helpful).
- 7) Self-advocacy involves persistence and the ability to be assertive without becoming aggressive.
- 8) Knowledge of the difference between internal and external barriers and acting accordingly. An example of an external barrier could be a structural impediment either physical or economic. An internal one could be a negative attitude. This skill requires patience as moving external barriers

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usually takes time and continued circumscribed effort on the part of many - networking becomes necessary here. Also, changing internal barriers can be just as daunting because it requires uncomfortable feelings due to moving away from what is most familiar.

- 9) Patience, because one must be wary of becoming discouraged. Discouragement, although understandable, can lead to defeatism; however, being a self-advocate implies you have the skill necessary to defend against this. The kind of patience essential to self-advocacy does not imply apathy

but its opposite, intense interest. With knowledge of a greater cause one garners strength toward achieving their goal.

There are many areas to address in relation to employment, and this newsletter offers other important aspects to consider. However, self-advocacy as noted previously is a skill that is important to all areas of your life and especially important in light of the current state of the economy. With knowledge of this, one must vigorously prepare themselves to become more aware of what positive qualities they presently have to offer as well as what they desire to learn.

Are you interested in volunteering at WDOMI?

Please contact Claudia Slater

at 914-968-4717 ext. 21

WHY AN INTERNSHIP MAY BE GOOD FOR YOU

By Ellen O. Weinstein, Youth Transition Coordinator

Work 5 – 10 hours a week and not get paid! You may ask what is in it for you?

- 1. What is an Internship?** Internships are usually unpaid positions but demand the same responsibilities and work ethic that a paid position requires. Previous experience in the position is usually not expected and supervision and training is available.
- 2. What's in it for you?** You can focus more on your interests and talents than specific education or training. For example, if you have a dog, cat or bird and love being with animals, you might consider an internship in a pet shop, a veterinarian's office or at a nature center.

You will also learn job skills that you can apply to any and every job in the future:

- being responsible for your hours
- meeting a dress code
- reporting to a supervisor
- doing some things that you did not expect from a position
- learning new skills

Internships allow you to discover what you do not want to do as well as what you want to do and provide skill development. The ideal experience is an internship that leads to a paid position.

WORKING WITH PERSONAL ASSISTANCE: INTEGRATING TWO WORLDS

By Melvyn R. Tanzman, Executive Director

People with severe physical disabilities often rely on the assistance of others to complete basic personal care tasks that many temporarily able-bodied people take for granted: getting out of bed; dressing; toileting; and eating are just some of the activities people need assistance with. Given these needs, many incorrectly assume that people with this level of need are unemployable - I know this because I have had many friends and colleagues over the years who have defied this expectation. Granted, there are many challenges that must be overcome: issues such as getting personal care done early enough to report to a workplace; receiving personal care while in the workplace; keeping Medicaid eligibility while earning an income (private employer health insurance rarely pays for personal care); arranging for transportation; all of these issues require flexibility, creativity and persistence. Many folks with disabilities have developed these qualities dealing with the everyday barriers they face and can apply them to these new challenges.

Can Personal Care Be Provided in a Flexible Manner that Promotes Employment and Independence?

Most personal care is provided by “traditional” licensed home care providers. These agencies usually serve the frail elderly following what is known as a “Medical Model” of care. That is, the home care recipient is treated as a patient who follows a care plan developed by a medical professional, usually a nurse. The consumer’s desires, preferences and need for autonomy and independence are often not taken seriously. Nurses often worry more about their own liability if a consumer decides to take informed risks in order to be independent, productive and fulfilled. In most cases this model of care is not one which encourages flexibility, creativity and taking risks.

Home care nurses often expect to visit the consumer in their home every several months, thus you will be expected to take off from work on those days. These agencies can rarely arrange for care to be provided during the very early hours such as 5AM. People with severe disabilities can take 2-3 hours in the morning to prepare for the workday, which requires early personal care. The nurses from these agencies may view the provision of care in the workplace as highly irregular and may even insist that this is not allowed under the Medicaid program. Other issues including whether a personal care

worker can drive a consumer to work using a vehicle owned by the consumer can also raise many questions. All of these issues can be more difficult if a professional rather than the consumer is calling the shots or developing the care plan.

Consumer Directed Personal Assistance offers the Consumer the Opportunity to Call the Shots

Consumer Directed Personal Assistance is a program available to all self-directing recipients of Medicaid Personal Care that gives more rights and responsibilities to the recipient of home care services to control and manage their own care - that is, to call their own shots. If a person is willing and able to recruit, interview, hire, train, manage and fire their own personal care assistants without the regular involvement of a nurse or case manager, many of the problems regarding lack of flexibility in traditional home care agencies can be resolved. For instance, you can make arrangements for a schedule that truly meets your needs; thus, if you need assistance at 5AM and you can find somebody who lives close by who is willing to work for you at this hour, no problem. While the county will still determine the number of hours of care you need, issues such as when, where and how the care will be provided is up to you and your assistant.

Yes, there are more responsibilities: you will have to recruit and choose your own assistants and the agency will not be there to provide replacement workers if your assistant is sick or on vacation; you will have to train and supervise your workers yourself and you will have to complete regular timesheets. It isn’t for everyone, but if you believe you can manage these responsibilities, it may provide the flexibility you need to work and utilize personal care.

There are four agencies in Westchester County that work with the CDPA Program. One, Concepts of Independent Choices (COIC) is an offshoot of Concepts of Independence, the first consumer-directed home care agency in New York State and possibly in the nation. It is also the only provider in Westchester that provides only CDPA services as the others also provide traditional medical model home care that is directed by nurses rather than consumers. To learn more about Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Services contact WDOMI or you can call Concepts of Independent Choices at 1-866-666-4441.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

By Scott Barber, Community Work Incentives Coordinator

One in four people that we encounter in our lives have some sort of disability. That being said, there will come a time in most people's lives where they may need a reasonable accommodation in the workplace. It can be as simple as a seat for a person with a back injury or a screen reader for a person with a print disability or a person that is visually impaired. Add in the physical barriers that a person with a physical impairment faces and we can come up with many situations that a person with a disability may encounter in which they could use a reasonable accommodation. Although this may seem overwhelming and expensive, most reasonable accommodations cost less than \$500 for a person with a physical disability. Reasonable accommodations for a person with a mental illness can cost under \$100.

In order for a person to receive a reasonable accommodation they must first be able and willing to disclose that disability to an employer or supervisor. Then the person requesting the accommodation should have an open dialog with their employer or supervisor to discuss what assistance is needed for what tasks. This will make it clear what services are needed and why.

Once the accommodation is decided upon, the proper paper work will need to be completed. Some employers require the employee to fill out specific forms and others may just require a letter explaining the need for a reasonable accommodation. It is important to remember that, although it is the law that reasonable accommodations are provided by the employer, the employer is not obligated to make an accommodation that would cause undo hardship.

Reasonable accommodations enable people with disabilities to be as productive as their coworkers without disabilities. This saves the employer money in the long run. An employer is not required to lower the standard for a worker with a disability. People with disabilities have been proven to work harder than their co-workers. This may be due to the fact that people with disabilities have had to work harder to get to where they are and therefore are willing to work that much harder.

Referenced from Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE "ON THE MOVE"?

Please contact Westchester Disabled On the Move to be added to our mailing list. Contact us by telephone at 914-968-4717.

On The Move editions are published in Spring and Fall.

TELEWORK!

POTENTIAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

By Siva Kessler and Elizabeth White, *Disability Program Navigators*

As job market trends indicate, there is a need to provide more job opportunities for the increasing number of people with disabilities, as well as a way to address the economic, environmental and social issues affecting all of us. In response to these and other factors, telecommuting has become a more integrated part of the workplace. This article, in question-and-answer format, will define the concept and outline the pros and cons of this less traditional workplace environment and its benefits and disadvantages to persons with disabilities, either currently working, but who may need to make adjustments on the job to accommodate their disability, or those seeking employment.

Q. What is telecommuting, or telework?

A. Telecommuting is a growing trend in the job market which allows for the opportunity for work to come to the worker, instead of the more familiar approach of the worker to the workplace. This can be through both a formal or informal arrangement between employers and their part- or full-time workers.

Q. Whom may telework benefit, and how?

A. Telecommuting can provide the worker with a more balanced family and work life, a decrease in the cost and consumption of gasoline, wear and tear on a vehicle, and less stress related to travel to and from work. Employers can also decrease their overhead expense at the worksite. These considerations are of particular importance to persons with disabilities, both short- and long-term, who want to remain productive, but whose personal needs may have changed. More flexible hours, less travel, a higher rate of productivity—all make it possible for persons experiencing the onset of disability, or those whose disability severely limits their mobility—to continue to earn income, contribute to their communities and society as a whole, and interact with others performing similar jobs, regardless of proximity. Telework is also a viable alternative for anyone considering a new career, or who is transitioning from unemployment to work. Furthermore, research shows that telecommuters tend to be more productive, as they are not distracted by in-office politics, tensions, or the stress of inflexible hours and commuting to and from work.

Q. What are some examples of telework jobs?

A. Telework jobs include, but are not limited to, customer service, data entry, freelance—writing, design,

technological assistance, and entrepreneurship. Unlike the on-site person, however, the home-based worker has more flexible hours to accommodate their own and/or family's needs while continuing to earn valuable income. Hospitals need not hire an onsite transcriptionist to furnish written translations of doctors' dictation if they can provide the same service for less money to people who need or choose to work from home.

Q. What skills are required to successfully perform a telework job?

A. Telecommuting (or telework) requires the same skills on the job that are necessary at a fixed workplace, but provides more flexibility. This is particularly true when considering jobs in customer service, technology, consultation and freelance, and transcription and data entry. For example, Jet Blue Airlines processes its reservations and other customer services primarily through telework: calls which are received by an employee at their home, and are handled similarly to the reservationist sitting at a desk at a call center or the airport. A hospital in need of transcriptionists to write out doctors' dictation can "out-source" its needs to workers off site, who, with the requisite typing and computer skills, can perform the essential functions of the job. A telework employee or independent contractor is expected to return calls and emails promptly, and to complete paperwork in a timely and professional manner — just as in a job at a fixed workplace. People who telecommute should have excellent communication skills, as they may be working in teams spread out over a wide geographic area, but who need to keep in frequent and regular contact.

Q. How can a person recognize and avoid a telework "scam"?

A. As in the past when our mailboxes were stuffed full of false advertising, the Internet has become yet another tool for con artists who prey most often on older persons, those with disabilities, those in lower socioeconomic brackets, and those with few or no job skills. Therefore, when conducting an initial Internet search for various telework jobs, the words "work from home," "work at home," "home business opportunities" should be avoided, in favor of search terms such as "this is a telecommuting position," "must have home office," or "this is a [freelance], [independent contractor] position."

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Telework is changing the face of the traditional workplace, increasing job opportunities for people moving from one career to another, from unemployment to earned income, and/or for people with disabilities whose only barrier may be their ability to get to one location, but, if given the chance, would be at least as productive as any other employee or independent contractor. Telework benefits parents who want to raise their children. It benefits employers by giving them access to previously untapped reserves of workers, such as expe-

rienced older persons who wish to continue working, but want more flexibility, and those who prefer a more non-traditional approach when creating the balance in their lives. If this article has helped enumerate more choices for you, the reader, please check out these websites for further information and details:

www.eeoc.gov
www.hrtools.com
www.jan.wvu.edu
www.teleworktools.org

APPLYING TO VESID AND MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE

By **Phyllis Greenberg**, *Peer Mentoring Coordinator*

What is VESID? VESID is a state agency and stands for Vocational Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Its purpose is to assist people with all phases of the job seeking process. The agency's ultimate goal is to have consumers be successfully employed. This article outlines the steps for applying to VESID and preparing for meeting with your VESID counselor. If these are done correctly, you have a better chance of having your application processed quickly and obtaining the services to which you are entitled.

STEPS FOR APPLYING TO VESID:

1. ORIENTATION

a. Orientation time schedule:

VESID requires that you attend a "Community Information Session" (Orientation) before you complete an application to the agency. In Westchester, these sessions begin promptly at 10:30 and end at approximately 11:45 am. In White Plains and Yonkers, locations and session dates are as follows:

VESID Office, 75 South Broadway, 1st Floor, White Plains, ***Every Wednesday.***

Yonkers Employment Center, 20 South Broadway, 11th Floor Board Room, ***First Friday of each month.***

Yonkers Riverfront Library, 1 Larkin Plaza, Conference Room 2B, ***Third Friday of each month.***

For questions regarding the Yonkers orientations, contact Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. at (914) 968-4717. If you have questions about the White Plains orientations, contact Westchester Independent Living Center at (914) 682-3926.

b. What happens in orientation

i. The conductor of the orientation will outline to you 1) what VESID is, 2) what makes you eligible for services, 3) what services the agency offers/does not offer, 4) what an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is. He will also tell you how important it is to be ready for work when you apply for VESID. For instance, you may be ready, willing and able to work, but due to a poor housing situation, you need to concern yourself with finding a new residence.

ii. The orientation leader will distribute VESID booklets, which include the VESID application and other forms. He or she will explain what each form is and how to fill it out. Don't complete the forms during the orientation and give it to the presenter. When you have all of the forms done and have obtained the completed

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medical/school documentation, make a copy of everything and send in ONE package to VESID. DO NOT have your treatment provider or school send the information. If you take control of assuring everything is submitted together, it will be more likely that all required documentation stays together. This will shorten the time it takes to process your application.

iii. It is essential that you give the presenter complete and accurate information regarding the nature of your disability(ies). Based upon the disabilities/medical conditions you identified, you will then be given the appropriate medical forms for your doctor(s), substance abuse counselor, and/or treatment provider to complete. If you don't identify all of your disabilities it is likely that you will have to get more information later. This will slow down your application.

iv. If you were in special education classes or think you have a learning disability, you will be asked to request your most recent school records, which are an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and psychological testing results from the last school you attended.

v. If you have questions about completing the VESID applicant packet— Leave a phone message for Christine Clark, VESID Counselor Assistant, Mondays-Fridays, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. There is a sheet with her contact information in your VESID booklet.

2. ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW

If VESID determines that your application is complete, you will receive a letter in the mail within 60 days to come for an eligibility interview. VESID uses the information that you give during this interview, as well as all of the paper documentation that you have provided, to determine your eligibility for services.

3. VESID COUNSELOR INTERVIEW

a. Once VESID decides that you qualify for services, you will receive a letter telling you to come in for a meeting with the counselor to whom you are assigned. The counselor will begin discussing your plan with you and decide what evaluations you should have to obtain a better view of your vocational strengths. If you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment with a VESID Counselor, please make sure to call and cancel or reschedule it. It creates a better impression for someone who does not know you and is measuring whether you have appropriate work behaviors.

b. Preparing for the VESID Counselor Interview. Before meeting with your counselor, try to have a plan in mind of your vocational future. Below are a few planning suggestions. If you have difficulty performing these tasks yourself, ask someone else for assistance.

i. Read the VESID booklet. On pages 4-6, there is an extensive list of the services that the agency provides for people that meet the requirements, and often the VESID counselors do not tell you about these services. They include 1) special transportation for a client who cannot take public transportation, 2) assistance in dealing with agencies such as the Social Security Administration and the Department of Social Services; 3) reasonable accommodation such as a particular software program to help a blind person utilize the computer.

ii. Read the IPE pamphlet that is included with the VESID booklet and see whether you can answer the questions about yourself at the end of the booklet.

iii. Search on the Internet for a description of various jobs/vocations/careers that sound interesting and for which you think you would be qualified.

iv. Go to the library and look at the Jobs/Career Opportunities section.

v. The One Stop Employment Center also has information about careers and skills that are in great demand.

4. CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)

If you disagree with what your VESID Counselor is recommending for you, you have the right to bring a complaint to his supervisor. If you discuss the situation with the supervisor and are still dissatisfied, there are other steps you can take within VESID. If none of these steps work, you may contact your local Client Assistance Program to assist you in dealing with VESID, and to obtain additional information regarding vocational rehabilitation. Your local CAP Coordinator is:

D.A. Johnson
Westchester Independent Living Center, Inc. (WILC)
200 Hamilton Avenue, 2nd Floor
White Plains, New York 10601
Phone: (914) 682-3926; Fax: (914) 682-8518
TTY: (914) 682-0926
Email: info@wilc.org

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Ability Beyond Disability - (914) 242-0600

Enables individuals whose independent living skills are impaired by disability, illness or injury, to achieve and maintain self-reliance, fulfillment and comfort at home, at work and in the community, by providing the best comprehensive home, health and rehabilitation services.

AL-Anon - (212) 941-0094

Offers hope and help to families and friends of alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous - (212) 647-1680

The primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

A Ride for All - (718) 706-7433

Provides comfortable wheelchair accessible Minivans at affordable rates.

Beeline Bus System - (914) 813-7777

Provides information on bus schedules.

Boys and Girls Club - (914) 423-9736

Offers programs and services that promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence.

Budget and Credit Counseling Services -

(212) 675-5070

Assists with budgeting so that a person can reduce their debt.

Burke Rehabilitation Hospital -

(914) 597-2500

A provider of dedicated rehabilitation services in Westchester County.

Catholic Charities - (914) 476-2700

Catholic Charities USA provides strong leadership and support to enhance the work of the local agencies in their efforts to reduce poverty, support families, and empower communities.

City of Yonkers Camp Pride - (914) 377-6438

A camp for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

City of Yonkers Office for the Aging -

(914) 377-6822.

Assists seniors who reside in Yonkers

Commission For the Blind and Visually Handicapped - (914) 993-5370

The mission of the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped is to enhance employability, to maximize independence, and to assist in the development of the capacities and strengths of people who are legally blind.

Concepts of Independent Choices - (866) 666-4441

COIC is an offshoot of the first Consumer Directed Personal Assistance (CDPA) provider in NYS. CDPAS is an alternative to traditional home care services. The program allows people with disabilities who are Medicaid-eligible more control over their personal care services. COIC is the only agency that only provides CDPA services in Westchester County.

Dept. of Senior Program and Services - (914) 813-6300

Assists seniors residing in Westchester with everything from Information and Referral to case management.

Disability Program Navigator - (914) 968-4717

DPNs serve as disability resource specialists to assist individuals with disabilities "navigate" through available programs and services in the local One-Stop system.

Family Services of Westchester - (914) 937-2320

Offers a broad range of social and mental health services to strengthen and support families and individuals in dealing with a variety of issues.

Family Service Society of Yonkers - (914) 963-5118

A home care organization that serves Yonkers and the surrounding region and is recognized by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Organizations.

Golden Crown Driving School - (914) 949-0419

Provides driving lessons for people with disabilities.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)



HELPFUL RESOURCES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

Music Conservatory of Westchester - (914) 761-3900

A community school for music and theater arts with many exciting opportunities for sharing learning experiences and making friends.

Northern Westchester Center for the Arts - (914) 241-6922

Offers classes and workshops in dance, music, theater and the literary and visual arts. The Northern Westchester Center for the Arts is a community arts center in Mount Kisco that also sponsors Eclipse Theater, a resident teenage theater company, and Nova Dance, a touring teenage dance company.

Office for the Disabled Westchester County - (914) 995-2957

The Office for the Disabled is here to answer your questions, provide assistance or direct you to resources.

Salvation Army Community Center - (914) 963-0183

The Salvation Army is committed to serving the whole person, body, mind and spirit, with integrity and respect, using creative solutions to positively transform lives.

Section 8 Program - Yonkers - (914) 793-8400 x132

Provides housing assistance.

Social Security Office - (800) 772-1213

Assists people with information on programs and services run by the Social Security Administration.

South East Consortium for Special Service - (914) 698-5232

The South East Consortium proudly serves children and adults (age 4 and beyond) with various disabilities and special needs in certain locations in Westchester County.

SPARC Program and Resource Connection - (914) 243-0583

Teachers explore the strength of their inner spirit to re-energize their work.

Unemployment Insurance - (888) 209-8124

Services for individuals after a loss of employment.

VESID - (914) 946-1313

Assists people with disabilities to obtain employment and/or the services they will need to become employed.

Victims Assistance Services - (914) 965-0217

Promotes rights and services for victims of crime and crisis.

Volunteers of America - (914) 741-2200

Volunteers of America developed an extensive system of programs for abused and neglected children, youths, the homeless, and others. The group operates nursing and assisted-living facilities and retirement communities, and provides affordable housing for families, seniors, and the disabled. Other services include substance-abuse prevention and treatment programs and work-release and other convict rehabilitation programs.

Westchester ARC - (914) 428-8330

Serves children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Services include early intervention, preschool, educational advocacy.

Westchester Art Workshop - (914) 606-7500

An art institution resource for residents of Westchester County.

Westchester Coalition for the Hungry and Homeless - (914) 682-2737

WCHH is a corporation composed of autonomous food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, service organizations, and individuals interested in alleviating hunger and homelessness in our region.

Westchester Jewish Community Services - (914) 761-0600

WJCS has programs throughout Westchester, providing a wide range of services for people who live or work in Westchester County.

Yonkers Department of Parks and Recreation - (914) 377-6428

Find out about recreational activities in the City of Yonkers.

Detach and Save



~ You don't want to miss this event ~

Join Honorary Chairwoman Legislator Lois T. Bronz and Westchester Disabled On the Move on Thursday, October 23, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains, New York for the 7th Annual Spirit of Independence Awards Ceremony from 6:00 – 9:00 pm.

The event was established to recognize and to celebrate people and/or entities that have embodied “the *Spirit of Independence*.” People with disabilities strive to attain independence individually as well as collectively.

This annual event features four awards:

The Spirit of Independence Award will be presented to **Debby Bennett, VP for Client Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Southern New York Chapter**. This award is presented to an individual who has contributed significantly to efforts that promote independence for and empower people with disabilities.

The Maureen Keating Tsuchiya Advocate of the Year Award will be presented to **Elizabeth Mark, Co-Chair of the Westchester Disability Advocacy Partnership**. This award will be presented to an individual who mirrors the ideals of advocacy and grassroots activism which were characteristic of Maureen for whom the award is named. In addition, the recipient will be presented with a monetary award that will be donated to advocacy activities and/or programs of their choice.

Corporate Citizenship Award will be presented to **The Journal News**. This award acknowledges the commitment of a corporate culture which values and accommodates people with disabilities as employees and customers.

New York State Excelsior Award for Excellence. This award was initiated by State Assemblyman Michael J. Spano and it recognizes the exemplary contributions that a person with a disability has made to the Yonkers community. Honoree to be determined.

Advance dinner reservations are required. For more information, call Claudia Slater at 914.968.4717 x-21 or visit www.wdom.org/spirit

ON THE MOVE
Fall 2008

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(914) 968-6137 (fax)
info@wdom.org

Save the Date

Thursday, October 23, 2008

Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc.
Celebrating over 20 years of People Empowering People

Honors

Debby Bennett
National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Southern New York Chapter
Spirit of Independence Award

The Journal News
Corporate Citizenship Award

Elizabeth Mark
Advocate for Youth and People with Disabilities
Maureen Keating Tsuchiya Advocate of the Year Award

The Crowne Plaza, White Plains, New York, 6:00 – 9:00 pm
For more information and to purchase tickets visit www.wdom.org