

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH



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NEWSLETTER PRINTED BY
MINUTEMAN PRESS OF YONKERS
914-963-2747
WWW.YONKERS.MINUTEMANPRESS.COM

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Melvyn R. Tanzman

Welcome to our Fall 2007 "On the Move" Newsletter. I hope you find the articles and this issue's focus on Employment Services informational and interesting.

While writing this column I tend to reflect not only on the accomplishments of our Center but also where we need to do more. Just like we as people benefit from self-reflection on where we have been and where we want to go, organizations also gain from this process. As always, the feedback and input from our consumers is an essential part of this analysis, and we really want to hear from you. Feel free to share with me and the staff your thoughts and comments. We have several ways you can do this: When visiting WDOMI look for our comments and recommendations box and provide your input in writing; you can also e-mail your comments to me at info@wdom.org; of course, direct communication with our staff is key, so please share with them how you think they are working with you. Remember, this Center is controlled and run by people with disabilities, your peers.

This year has been an exciting year and we have accomplished a lot in our advocacy efforts. At the State level, we have convinced our legislators to prohibit the segregation of inmates of our criminal justice system who have psychiatric problems in "Special Housing Units" (SHUs). SHUs were essentially solitary confinement for 23 hours a day. This barbaric practice could never be considered "therapeutic" and often worsened the inmate's disability. Hopefully, we will now enter a more enlightened period when an inmate's disability will be treated rather than being viewed as something that must be controlled.

As I am writing this, I just received the news that Governor Spitzer signed a law that will incorporate Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act into New York State Human Rights law. In his Press Release the Governor stated: "This law takes a significant step towards a New York that removes barriers to the full enjoyment of the rights of all of its citizens." Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination in places of public accommodation such as businesses, theaters, and other non-governmental public places. This discrimination can include failure to provide physical accessibility. We should thank our State Senators, Assembly members and the Gover-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

nor for this action while reminding them that there is more to be done, including putting Title II of the ADA, which relates to governmental operations, into NYS Human Rights Law.

Given our successes, I wanted to remind everyone that they should contact Meghan Schoeffling, our Systems Advocate, and become a volunteer advocate for the Statewide Systems Advocacy Network. Our

numbers bring us strength. You can make a difference with a phone call, an email or a letter. Contact Meghan and let her show you how.

Until next time, I wish you all health, happiness and independence.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR OWN FUTURE

By Sherry DeFrancesco

How do Independent Living Centers such as Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. differ from other human service agencies?

Here at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. our mission slogan is "people empowering people." In other words, the staff at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. are people with disabilities who give you, the consumer, the power and tools to accomplish your goals. Our staff has the information, resources and ability to empower you the consumer to have control of your own life. This is a very different philosophy from other human service agencies in that we do not tell you how you should be living; rather we encourage and guide you to decide what is right for you and assist you in accomplishing your goals. We believe in consumer control. In other words, when you come to Westchester Disabled On the

Move, Inc. our staff will guide you in the right direction, but you must do the bulk of the work. This is how you learn to become self-sufficient and have your own voice – something people with disabilities have historically not had. Our staff are experts in the field of disability with the resources to share with you, but you must take charge of your own life and do for yourself what is necessary to reach your goals.

The Independent Living Movement as well as Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. is dedicated to moving forward in accomplishing societal equality for all people with disabilities. The equality means having the same opportunities as everyone else without attitudinal and physical barriers. So come on in and join us as we continue to be "on the move."

Are you interested in volunteering at WDOMI?

Please contact Claudia Slater

at 914-968-4717 ext. 21

HUMAN SIDE OF SELF-ADVOCACY

By **Scott Smith**, *Program Director*

The Journey from Sheltered Workshop to Educational Liberation

In 1978, after 10 years of working in a sheltered workshop, making very little money and experiencing nothing but boredom, I made a liberating decision to attempt to go to college and become a social worker. This story tells the human side of self-advocacy. The reader should be aware at this point that this dream did not come true without a lot of blood, sweat and tears. It was truly this early experience that taught me the true meaning of self-advocacy.

The Importance of a Circle of Support during the Self Advocacy Process

What made my quest to become a social worker in 1978 extremely challenging was the reality that I only had a special education degree or background; thus it became important to garner a circle of support, that is, professionals who believed in my ability to accomplish my goal. The professional who was the catalyst or my greatest supporter was my rehabilitation counselor in the sheltered workshop; she would bring this writer books from the local public library so that I could study; she would drive me to the placement exam classes at the local community college (Rockland Community College). At this time the college had an open admissions policy whereby virtually any student who could successfully complete placement exams could enter the college and study. This rehabilitation counselor also reconnected me to the state rehabilitation program commonly known at that time as OVR, The Office for Vocational Rehabilitation. They have now changed their name to Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, or V.E.S.I.D., to reflect a broadened perspective. After I completed the placement exams, all of which I passed, it became necessary to advocate to my V.E.S.I.D. counselor to bring him into my circle of support. I must say initially he was skeptical, saying,

“What will you do if you fail?” “I will be in the workshop where I have always been for the last 10 years and no one at V.E.S.I.D. questioned this waste of resources.” It was negotiated, therefore, that if I received a grade of less than a B, V.E.S.I.D. would withdraw its support for this goal.

Knowing What You Need Is Essential to Successful Self-Advocacy:

In 1978, there was no Americans with Disabilities Act; and the schools/colleges were not required to provide supportive services to any student with a disability. At this time, I was the only student with a visible disability on the entire campus of Rockland Community College. When I needed notetakers, I had to recruit a volunteer and provide the student who agreed to take notes with paper and/or carbon paper. By the time I finished my associate’s degree in human services, I was on the Dean’s list three times and had a grade point average of 3.85. I definitely met V.E.S.I.D.’s criteria for success, right folks! By the time I requested to go on for my Baccalaureate and Master’s degrees in social work, the V.E.S.I.D. district office was part of my circle of support.

A Final Word of Encouragement for Those Who Wish to Self-Advocate

I would like to provide some final words of encouragement for those who are aspiring Self-Advocates. My first piece of advice would be: Believe in Yourself. There are many who may doubt your abilities and see only your limitations – you must convince them to buy into your dream. When they do, you will have developed a circle of support of people you trust and who can help you realize your dream. Finally, be willing to work hard especially when the work gets hard. Your drive to accomplish your goal will be infectious and others will work hard to support you.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS

By Sherry DeFrancesco

I am excited to announce two new programs at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. The first is a **Youth Leadership program**. The objective of this project is to match up nondisabled and disabled youth alike to work together on a community-based project created, planned and implemented by the youth groups. The focus of this project is to promote self-advocacy and leadership among youth. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work closely with youth groups to bring more awareness about disability into the local community.

The second new initiative at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. is a **Peer Mentoring program**.

The main focus of this program is to bring together consumers who have had success utilizing the vocational rehabilitation system, i.e., VESID and CBVH, with consumers who are just entering the system. Mentoring will be provided by successful consumers to those who need encouragement and guidance through a sometimes confusing and complicated system.

The success and independence of people with disabilities is our mission here at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. These two new programs will enable our staff to promote our mission and assist more people with disabilities to reach their goals.

MEET THE NEW STAFF

Youth Transition Specialist

I am **Jerry Farrell**. I hold a Master's degree in Social Work from Fordham University and am licensed by the State of New York to practice Social Work. I have been hired by Westchester Disabled on the Move, Inc. to implement a Youth Transition Plan under a grant from the State of New York. My job encompasses making necessary referrals to service providers; outreach to families which includes facilitating a parents group; working with families and students toward developing a transition plan as part of the overall Individual Education Plan. I will be running workshops, conferences and group activities toward an effort to enhance and encourage students to develop skills necessary toward living independently within the community. I will also be making an effort to continue to incorporate transition services into the class room. I can be reached at the following: Phone (914) 968-4717 ext. 11. Email: jerryf@wdom.org.

Peer Mentoring Coordinator

I am **Phyllis Greenberg**, the Peer Mentoring Coordinator at Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc. I was hired to be involved in a grant that will provide peer mentoring and supports to individuals (mentees) with developmental, physical, sensory, learning and mental health disabilities. The Peer

Mentoring and Supports program will assist mentees in navigating the VESID and CBVH Systems. The ultimate goal of the grant is to increase the number of consumers who achieve positive employment outcomes. I will be recruiting mentees and mentors from a variety of sources: VESID and CBVH, employment centers, peer run organizations, Yonkers School District. Mentees will participate in group workshops based upon a curriculum that I will research and compile, as laid out in the peer mentoring and supports grant. Simultaneously, I will be meeting with the mentors to give them an orientation on mentoring. After the mentee workshops are completed, the mentees will be introduced to mentors with whom I have matched them up. Mentors will meet with their mentees a minimum of once a month on an ongoing basis as they progress through various stages of the VESID/CBVH system. I will oversee this progress and deal with mentee problems that require professional intervention or mentee-mentor relationships that need reassignment. I will also be arranging job shadowing in experiences in areas of interest to the consumers and organizing special events such as Diversity Job Fairs to bring together employers and potential employees. Phone: (914) 968-4717 ext. 19. E-mail: phyllisg@wdom.org.

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Disability Program Navigator

My name is **Elizabeth White**, and I live in Westchester County with my black Labrador Seeing Eye dog, Princess. I graduated from Manhattanville College with a Bachelor of Arts in music, and obtained a Master of Arts from Western Michigan University in Rehabilitation Teaching, specializing in blindness and low vision. As the new Disability Program Navigator for Westchester Disabled on the Move, I am enjoying meeting consumers, conferring with colleagues, sharing ideas, solving problems—all while learning about various disabilities. It is an exciting and welcome challenge to work among the many agencies that serve our consumers to gain understanding of the integration of those services and how to best meet their varying needs. I am privileged to participate in the consumers' career exploration and job preparation, and I'm continually inspired by the empowerment that is gained from all their hard work to find and retain employment. When I'm not working, I'm probably walking around town, at home reading or knitting, enjoying a latte or cappuccino. I'm also active in my church's wor-

ship band, as well as a performance group, singing and playing various instruments, including piano, rhythm and bass guitar, mandolin, and recorder. Phone (914) 968-4717 ext. 36 or 995-2643. E-mail: elizabethw@wdom.org

Office Assistant

Hi, my name is **Sheral Creacy** and I am the new office assistant here at WDOM. Let me tell you what my first day was like here at the office. Well, first things first I assisted my supervisor Sherry by cleaning the office, by weeding out things that need to be stored away or thrown away! But seriously speaking I am here to answer the telephones, keep our reception area neat and tidy and our literature up to date. I also assist our staff when needed. I do filing and other office duties. I greet our consumers and our guests with a smile and warm cup of tea or coffee. So when you call you probably will hear my voice directing your call to one of our staff members to assist you.

WHAT IS THE ONE STOP AND THE SERVICES AVAILABLE?

Hi, my name is **Siva Kessler** and I am an **Assistant Disability Program Navigator**. I am located at the White Plains One Stop, 143 Grand Street. The purpose of my job is to help individuals who have a disability to navigate the One Stop and ensure their needs are met.

The One Stop provides a full array of employment and training services for Westchester County residents. One Stop customers are job seekers who are nineteen years or older who are unemployed or underemployed. One Stop services include intake and orientation, assessment (full vocational assessment, diagnostic testing, interviewing, and case management will be available to eligible individuals), employment plan, job search, placement assistance, job keeping and career counseling where appropriate. Additionally, the One Stop provides labor market information and offers workshops (workshops may include Word, Excel, interviewing skills, resume writing, job search on the internet). Newspapers, peri-

odicals and copier/fax/phone are available to aid with your job search.

An individual will first attend an Orientation; they will then be referred to the DPN who will assess that customer's needs to determine if the One Stop Services are a good match; if so, the DPN will then refer the customer to either Staff Assisted Services (these individuals should be job ready) or to Intensive Services (these individuals should have a barrier that determines them to be not job ready). They will be assessed for strengths and weaknesses and could be referred for training, using an Individual Training Account (these funds are available only for certificate programs). If training is not appropriate, then the individual will be provided with a Case Manager who will assist with the job search and provide job leads. If it is determined that the One Stop is not an ideal match for the individual there are a number of other programs and services available that an individual could be referred to.

VESID INFORMATION

FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

By Phillip Dyson, Transition Coordinator

Parents

VESID, which stands for the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, is the state agency which provides opportunities for eligible persons to gain the skills necessary to obtain employment. Whether your child is going on to college, a trade school or a supported employment program, the ultimate goal of the agency is to help your child obtain employment.

To be eligible for services an individual has to have a documented disability. This means that a physician, psychiatrist, or certified substance abuse counselor has to certify that you have a physical or mental impairment which significantly affects your ability to work. In the case of your child, having the classification as a Special Education student and he/she is eighteen years of age and older, he/she may be eligible for services. As long as your child will turn eighteen by the end of their senior year, he/she should apply for VESID. I recommend that your child apply for VESID services as early as possible during their senior year in order to decrease the possibility of a lapse in programming after graduation. Individuals who have left school before completing the requirements, i.e., aged out or dropped out, can also apply for services.

Once determined eligible for VESID services, your child will be assigned to a counselor. The counselor will contact your child, usually by letter, with an appointment date to meet with the counselor. This is your child's opportunity to talk about his or her vocational goals. If your child isn't sure about the type of work they would like to pursue, VESID can provide your child with a vocational assessment to help him/her determine their vocational skills and focus on a job area. Applications for VESID services should be available through the special education office at your child's school. Westchester Disabled On the Move also conducts orientation meetings for VESID applicants on the first and third Friday of each month. On the first Friday of each month, the orientation session is held at 20 South Broadway, 11th

floor Conference Room Yonkers 10701. On the third Friday of the month, the orientation session is held at the Riverfront Library (across the street from the Yonkers train station on the second floor). Both orientation sessions begin at 10:30am. and run until 11:30am. If you have any questions, you can contact me at 914-968-4717, ext. 25 or you can also contact VESID directly at 914-946-1313.

Students

It's important to remember that high school is over. Your counselor will not call you to remind you to go to your vocational training programming. This is the time for you, as a young adult, to take an active role in your future. You should keep in contact with your counselor whether things are going well or badly. This shows your counselor that you are motivated and are serious about wanting to go to work.

It's a good idea to have some concept about the kind of work you'd like to do before meeting with your VESID counselor. However, this isn't a necessity. VESID can help you figure out your strengths and weaknesses and, based on your strengths, help you explore areas of possible training to lead to employment.

Remember, your counselor is very busy and may not be able to speak to you at the moment you may need. Keep trying to reach them! Don't just leave one message and not call again if you don't hear back from your counselor. Also, keep in mind that you should use the services of your independent living center. Westchester Disabled On the Move has staff responsible for working with youth to help them resolve issues which may come up involving their vocational training. You can also utilize the services of the Client Assistance Program (CAP), an advocacy program designed to assist people seeking services from VESID. Don't let a problem get out of control! Seek help as early as possible. Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask questions and speak up for yourself.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CAN BE THE KEY TO PRODUCTIVITY AND INDEPENDENCE

By Meghan Schoeffling, Systems/Housing Advocate

People with disabilities face many obstacles when it comes to finding employment. One problem is that employers often perceive people with disabilities to be more limited in their capabilities than we are. It becomes our responsibility to educate ourselves as to what is available to assist us in the work place. Also, it is essential that we learn to advocate for ourselves with agencies such as VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) or CBVH (Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped). These agencies will provide assistive or adaptive equipment that we need to be successful in the work place. They will also provide the training that is essential to become expert at using the appropriate adaptive equipment.

Adaptive technology can assist people with disabilities with education, communication, work, recreation and with activities of daily living. In essence, these are tools that we, as people with disabilities, can use to achieve greater independence in our lives.

There are a variety of programs and technology designed to assist people with different types of disabilities. For instance, people with upper dexterity

deficiencies often utilize voice recognition programs which forgo the need to type. Also, there is additional adaptive equipment to make it possible to maneuver a mouse. There is technology available to people with speech impairments, such as speech synthesized programs to effectuate clear communication.

Technology is not just available for people with physical disabilities; there is technology for people with sensory impairments. Computer programs such as screen readers for the blind and text enlarging programs for the visually impaired are also available. There are a variety of programs for people with learning disabilities as well. These programs work with you to help organize your thoughts, programs that will read to you and even enhance your ability to learn.

While there are many real obstacles that face people with disabilities, there are also many tools available to alleviate some of those barriers. The skilled use of appropriate adaptive or assistive equipment can transform a person with a severe disability into a capable and proficient employee.

WORK INCENTIVES PLANNING AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES AVAILABLE

In October 2006, the Social Security Administration (SSA) replaced the Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program with the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program. Social Security awarded 99 cooperative agreements to a variety of community organizations to serve as WIPA projects. The WIPA projects will provide all SSA beneficiaries with disabilities (including transition-to-work aged youth) access to benefits planning and assistance services.

Each WIPA project will have Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) that are in charge of providing work incentives planning and assistance directly to Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities to assist them in their employment efforts. Westchester Disabled On the Move's **Scott Barber** will be assuming the role of the CWIC for Westchester and Putnam Counties. He will conduct outreach efforts with Social Security's Program Manager for Recruitment and Outreach contractor, to beneficia-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

ries with disabilities (and their families), who can participate in Federal or State work incentives programs. The CWIC will also provide information on Medical Insurance needed to maintain work. The CWIC will work in cooperation with Federal, State, and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities.

All Social Security and SSI disability beneficiaries age 14 and over are eligible for WIPA services. To schedule an appointment, please contact Scott Barber, Community Work Incentives Coordinator. Please call (914) 968-4717.

SECTION 55-A OF CIVIL SERVICE LAW

***Sets aside Non-Competitive Government
Jobs for People with Disabilities
<http://www.cs.state.ny.us/>***

By Scott Barber D.P.N.

Section 55-a of the Civil Service Law enables people with disabilities to obtain employment with local municipalities and county government. Each municipal civil service agency in the state may designate no more than 700 jobs as non-competitive (i.e. no civil service exam is necessary) for people with disabilities who are qualified for the job. In order to be employed under Section 55-a by a local government agency, the person with a disability should apply directly to the supervisor for the job for which they are qualified. If the employer is interested in a candidate with a disability they will consult the Personnel Officer. The Personnel Officer or municipal civil service commission will consult with the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped and the State Education Department to determine if the person with a disability is able to perform the job. If the person is able to perform the job duties, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped or the State Education Department will certify to the municipal civil service agency that the person has a certifiable disability and is eligible under Section 55a.

training, and supporting employees. It is also the responsibility of Department of Human Resources for Westchester County to interpret the provisions of the New York State Civil Service Law fairly and equitably, and ensuring fair employment and equal opportunity under the law to all persons regardless of disability status. The Westchester County Department of Human Resources posts a list of current county job openings each week. These job openings are usually open for ten days during which a person can submit the application. County employees are considered before prospective employees who come from outside of government. Some positions will require that you take a civil service examination in the future regardless of disability status.

The Department of Human Resources for Westchester County is responsible for recruiting,

EMPLOYMENT FACTS YOU CAN USE

Did you know?

- The Westchester County Board of Elections is recruiting Election Inspectors to work during the Primary and General Elections from 5:30 AM-9:30 PM. The rate of pay is \$225 per day. Applicants must be: at least 18 years of age; registered voters in Westchester County; able to speak, read and write English. Bilingual inspectors in English and Spanish are particularly needed.
- A person on Social Security Disability can earn up to \$640 per month and not have it counted towards their Trial Work Period.
- The Medicaid Buy-In Program in New York allows a person with a disability to work and be eligible for Medicaid. The maximum earned income for eligibility is \$52,000 for a single person and \$69,000 for a couple.

For more details call WDOMI.

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.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Ability Beyond Disability
(914) 242-0600

AL-Anon
(212) 941-0094

Alcoholics Anonymous
(212) 647-1680

A Ride for All
(718) 706-7433

Beeline Bus System
(914) 813-7777

Boys and Girls Club
(914) 423-9736

Budget and Credit Counseling Services
(212) 675-5070

Burke Rehabilitation Hospital
(914) 597-2500

Camp Pride
(914) 377-6438

Catholic Charities
(914) 476-2700

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

Disability Program Navigator
(914) 968-4717

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

Family Services of Westchester
(914) 937-2320

Family Service Society of Yonkers
(914) 963-5118

Food Patch
(914) 923-1100

Golden Crown Driving School
(914) 949-0419

Music Conservatory of Westchester
(914) 761-3900

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

Office for the Aging
(914) 813-6400
(800) 342-9871

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

Salvation Army Community Center
(914) 631-1338

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

Social Security Office
(800) 772-1213

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

SPARC Program and Resource Connection
(914) 243-0583

Special Program and Resource Connections
(914) 243-0583

Unemployment Insurance
(888) 209-8124

VESID
(914) 946-1313

Victims Assistance Services
(914) 965-0217

Volunteers of America
(914) 741-2200

Westchester ARC
(914) 428-8330

Westchester ARC-Recreation Dept.
(914) 949-9300

Westchester Art Workshop
(914) 606-7500

Westchester Jewish Community Services
(914) 761-0600

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

Yonkers Dept. Parks and Recreation
(914) 377-6428

Detach and Save



ON THE MOVE
Fall 2007



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info@wdom.org

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Save the Date

Thursday, October 11, 2007

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

Honors

Assemblywoman Amy R. Paulin
Spirit of Independence Award

Maureen Keating Tsuchiya (posthumously)
Maureen Keating Tsuchiya Advocate of the Year Award
(Formerly The Advocate of the Year Award)

Verizon Foundation
Corporate Citizenship Award

The Crowne Plaza, White Plains, New York, 6:00 – 9:00 pm
For reservations call Claudia Slater at 914.968.4717 x-21 or email to claudias@wdom.org