That Day in September 2001

The events of September 11th, 2001 will forever be etched into the memories of millions of Americans. Friends, families and loved ones across the nation had their lives changed in an instant when terrorists brought down four commercial airliners in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately, PCIL was not immune to the terrorists’ agenda. As a result of the attacks, PCIL lost its Executive Director, Colleen Fraser. Colleen was one of 38 passengers lost aboard United Airlines Flight 93 when it crashed into a field at Shanksville, PA.

Being a small non-profit agency, PCIL’s loss of their Executive Director was felt especially hard. However, Colleen’s passing was not just a loss of an administrator, but served as a tragedy that deeply impacted individuals’ with a disability. Throughout the industry, Colleen’s legacy was one of a tremendous advocate, who overcame her own challenges in order to be a passionate defender of people with access and functional needs.

Her contributions and influence on the disability community will never be forgotten. She helped draft the Americans with Disabilities Act, and was a member of the New Jersey Disabilities Council. Colleen’s successor, and current PCIL Executive Director, Scott Elliott states, “She was looked upon in the independent living world as an extremely good advocate; a little redhead that could really speak out loud and clear.” Longtime friend Kate Blissard recalls fondly, “Fraser had a great sense of humor. Her personality was feisty, and yet she was so humble.” Coincidentally, Blissard was supposed to be on Flight 93 with Colleen, but had to cancel because of a family commitment.

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That Day in September Continued from Page 1

Huntley Forrester, who worked with her to get PCIL off the ground in 1996, remembers his former colleague as a person who never lost her passion for PCIL’s mission, and its goal to assist people, regardless of their needs.

The loss of Colleen Fraser cannot be simply put into a few words. Her actions and deeds touched the lives of countless individuals with disabilities. Her zest for living life to the fullest will forever serve as an inspiration to those who knew her. Faser’s efforts serve as a model for what can be achieved in the disability community. To honor her memory and her contributions, PCIL established the Colleen Fraser Fund to assist individuals with access and functional needs to realize their dreams. If you would like to contribute to the Fraser Fund, contact the PCIL offices.

Staff Spotlight: Matt Daly

My name is Matthew Daly and I started working at the Progressive Center in August. I have been hired as an Independent Living Specialist to assist with consumers and different projects around the office.

My interest in social service started my senior year in high school when I had an internship working for a community hotline that provided information and referrals to people in need of counseling. I attended Susquehanna University in central Pennsylvania where, along with many lasting friendships, I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. My career started with a non-profit company called Allies, Inc. where I worked as an Employment Specialist for two years. I became familiar with the Progressive Center when I was assisting with Career Gateway, a program that taught young adults with disabilities independent living skills.

When I am not working I enjoy many hobbies like running, tennis and ultimate Frisbee. I enjoy watching football and hockey, being a fan of the Washington Redskins and Chicago Blackhawks, respectively. Also, I enjoy gaming, on the Xbox 360 and on the computer. When spending time with friends we play sports, video games, and enjoy outdoor activities.

It has been nice meeting the consumers and people with disabilities who have stopped by the office to volunteer or participate in the recreation groups. To those of you who I have not met yet, I look forward to getting to know you in the near future.
WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy announced the official theme for October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month: "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities." The theme honors the contributions of workers with disabilities and serves to inform the public that they represent a highly skilled talent pool that can help employers compete in today's global economy.

"Return on investment means hiring the right talent," said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy. "Workers with disabilities represent all skill sets and are ready to get the job done. This year's theme focuses on improving employment opportunities that lead to good jobs and a secure economic future for people with disabilities and the nation as a whole."

This effort to educate the American public about issues, related to disability and employment, actually began in 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." Then, in 1962 the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month."

"Workers with disabilities represent all skill sets and are ready to get the job done."

Contact Jerery Carbone to find out how your business can improve by hiring individuals with disabilities!
By Drew Zimmerman and Joey Valatka

The morning of October 31st, 2003 was just another typical day for the Hawaiian teenager Bethany Hamilton. Born in 1990 into a family of surfers, Bethany jumped at the opportunity to spend her Halloween morning hours at the beach surfing the waves off of Kauai. Having been a competitive surfer since the age of 8, Bethany found herself among the Hawaiian waves doing what she loved most of all. However, this day would be an experience that would change her life forever.

While on the waves off Kauai’s North Shore, the 13 year old was viciously attacked by a fourteen-foot tiger shark. Bethany had no warning of the attack. She was lying on her surfboard and felt a strong back and forth tugging on her arm. The terrifying incident left the teenager adrift on the waves and losing blood rapidly with a severed left arm. Not panicking, her friends were able to make a tourniquet from a surfboard leash and get her to shore safely. Looking back on the attack, she said, “I had a tremendous sense of peace through it all.” Bethany survived despite losing sixty-percent of her blood and undergoing several tricky surgeries. She always believed that faith in her doctors and God would see her through this very challenging time in her life.

To her credit, Bethany did not use the loss of her arm as an excuse to stop doing the one thing she loved, surfing. She was back in the water surfing a mere month after her trauma. She returned to competition in January 2004, and realized her ultimate dream in 2007 when she became a professional surfer.

How has Bethany Hamilton turned this experience into a positive that could benefit others who have sustained life altering injuries? Soon after her recovery she started the non-profit agency called Friends of Bethany. It was started with the assistance of Bethany’s family and friends to assist individuals who were victims of shark attacks, and those who have suffered traumatic amputations. The agency promotes self-worth and a love of God to find inspiration for life’s difficulties. She is also directly involved with other charities that provide solutions to individuals with challenges to overcome obstacles while maintaining a relationship with God. Some of her other endeavors include: Beating the Odds Foundation, Christian Surfers, Walking on Water, and the Foundation for a Better Life. She has also written several books, and her life story

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Get Out and Vote
By Matthew Daly

During the election on November 8th we will be choosing the people who will represent our state and local interests when determining public policy. The problem is that many people do not exercise the right to vote. The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) found that in the 2008 presidential election, 57.3 percent of people with disabilities voted, compared to 64.5 percent of people without disabilities.

Everybody should vote because of one simple concept: numbers. A vote that stands alone does not make much impact but the combined votes of a group of people can make an impact. The AAPD found that in the 2008 presidential election, 14.7 million Americans with disabilities voted, making them the second largest voting minority group in America. The previous statistic brings me to my point. In order to get elected, policy makers must create platforms that appeal to their constituents by serving their needs and ultimately getting their vote. If people with disabilities vote in large enough numbers it will force policy makers to address the needs of people with disabilities, making a positive impact upon the lives of people with disabilities throughout America.

I hope that this article has inspired you to vote on November 8th. If you have any difficulties with inaccessible polling locations please contact Matthew Daly at the Progressive Center for Independent Living at (609) 581-4500.

Bethany Hamilton: Continued from page 4

is now a major motion picture titled Soul Surfer.

Clearly, Bethany Hamilton has done her best to make her life better, despite being the victim of a traumatic and permanent injury. She never let her new obstacles get in the way of her life goals. That is a lesson anyone can learn from. Bethany stated, “I think my motivation came from my passion for the sport, for the ocean.” People need to find their own motivations to get through life’s challenges. We hope that Bethany’s story inspires people to continue to pursue their dreams.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Keep these important dates in mind as we move closer to Election Day;

October 18, 2011
Voter Registration Deadline for General Election

November 1, 2011
Deadline for Mail-In Ballot Applications by Mail for General Election

November 7, 2011
Deadline for In-Person Mail-In Ballot Applications for General Election

November 8, 2011
General Election Day
News from the Transition Team

By Renee Pfaff—Mercer Office and Pam Vernon—Hunterdon Office

Summer is traditionally a time for vacations, relaxed schedules and summer jobs, but, for some, it is an opportunity to continue learning. The Progressive Center took advantage of these extended school year programs to continue the Promoting Self-Advocacy Program at Fisher Middle School in Ewing, Hunterdon Central H.S. and Spring Run School.

The Ewing students received two sessions a week for five weeks which focused on building their social skills. Students were taught effective communication techniques and learned to “read” each other better. They also had the opportunity to develop an acrostic poem which demonstrated their understanding of advocacy. We concluded our social skills unit with a few team building activities that further emphasized to the students the necessity of proper communication skills.

Communication was the main theme for the summer. PCIL had the opportunity to work with another non-profit organization, Advancing Opportunities, to bring the latest high-tech communication systems to our students at Ewing and Spring Run School. The students were assessed for communication needs and then shown products or applications to help. We were all impressed with what is available to promote ease in communications. The transition team will be sharing the information throughout the PSA school year.

ABOUT OUR Transition Team

PCIL offers several different Transition Services for students with disabilities to help make the transition from school to college or work easier. These programs are made possible through various grants.

If you are interested in finding out more information on these programs please contact Renee Pfaff or Pam Vernon.

Pictured Below: Results of a team building exercise completed with Ewing students. The objective was to build a bridge with only tape and straws that could manage the weight of reams of paper.
PCIL Receives Funding for Assistive Tech.

PCIL’s Transition Specialists recently had the opportunity to learn about various devices and software programs that can assist students and adults who are experiencing difficulty with reading, writing and communicating. The funding for this program was provided through Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ). Training on the assistive technology (AT) was provided by Advancing Opportunities. Once we became familiar with the technology PCIL then selected 14 students to participate in an individual assessment to match their needs with technology. Advancing Opportunities led students through self-assessment questions to determine if they would benefit from AT in the classroom and at home. The majority of the participating students were impressed with the devices and applications and were eager to have them accessible.

Each student will be given a summary completed on the technology that was introduced to them, and this information will be shared with their school Child Study Team. Many of the programs are available at little to no cost, which should please all parties concerned. Most of the programs that were shared can be simply downloaded onto a computer and are readily available to these students.

PCIL had the wonderful opportunity to be introduced to high tech, and expand our transition program materials. Through the grant, PCIL was able to purchase some of these tools to have available for individual trial at our office and in the classrooms.

Anyone interested in learning about AT or trying out some of the software is encouraged to contact Renee at the Mercer office or Pam at our Hunterdon office.

- Renee P. & Pam V.

These programs benefit those who are visually impaired, have difficulty reading or process better when hearing their documents. These programs convert text to sound.

Speech Recognition: Windows 7

This program is helpful for those who have difficulty using a keyboard, dyslexia, or have other writing challenges. You simply speak into a microphone and your text will appear! One may access this program through the control panel by selecting “Ease of Access” & then “Speech Recognition”.

FREE PROGRAMS

Typeit Readit: schoolfreeware.com

and

ReadPlease: readplease.com
Writers’ Block
Shines at Art Show

On August 6th the Writers’ Block Creative Expression Group held their Art Show at Grounds for Sculpture. The show was located in the Visitors Center and welcomed hundreds of individuals from the area to see what the Writers’ Block Artists had created. Over 25 different artists contributed pieces in a variety of mediums ranging from metal work to paintings, photography and poetry, to jewelry, drawings, computer generated images and a dress. There was even originally composed music by a Writers’ Block artist playing to enhance the mood!

The Writers’ Block Creative Expression Group was started in December of 2010 for adults with access and functional needs to share their artistic creations. Every artist is equal at Writers’ Block meetings, and it is essential that the artists who attend the meetings feel comfortable in expressing their feelings through art. After all, art is a great platform for individuals of any ability to share their feelings. That welcoming feeling acceptance was certainly felt by the contributing artists through the positive public feedback. Visitor April from Palmyra said, “Wonderful show-inspiring creative and fun.” Steve S. said, “This was a beautiful experience, thank you for sharing this art with us—such great talents!” Another visitor stated, “It is so wonderful to see the images in the artists’ minds. Humanity is the common thread.”

Drew Zimmerman, Coordinator of the group, stated, “The show served as a wonderfully positive platform for individuals with access and functional needs to be able to share their works to the public. Individuals within this spectrum don’t always have a recognizable and supported opportunity to have a public and positive impact or our communities. We are grateful to the Grounds for Sculpture for providing this outlet to our artists.” Other artists were equally excited about this special event, Barbara Mayo commented, “I was astounded to know that people were interested in my drawings. I am thrilled to display them.” Mike Powell, a poet felt, “It was new and

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Writer’s Block Showcases Talent at Mayor’s Tent

The artistic creations of the Writer’s Block Creative Expression Group made its Septemberfest debut on September 18th, where it served as a focal point of Mayor Bencivengo’s Special Needs Committee Tent. Approximately, ten artists from the group had their poems, drawings, and paintings at the PCIL Art Show tent. Some of the artists that were featured in the show were Cindy Martinez, Carina Marzec, Mark Wilkie, and Lorraine Evans.

The Mayor’s Special Needs Committee tent featured area agencies that assist people with access and functional needs to live better lives. The tent featured agencies like the ARC, YourResource, SKOR, Robert Wood Johnson, and Allies.

Septemberfest served as a prime opportunity for the Hamilton area public to become familiar with these agencies, their staff members, and meet consumers as well. During the hours of Septemberfest, a few PCIL consumers showed up to greet the public and explain their artwork.

While it was a much smaller exhibit than the show at the Grounds for Sculpture in August, the work on display represented a good cross section of the marvelous talents on display at Writer’s Bock. In the future, the Progressive Center looks forward to being at the forefront of the Mayor’s interests at Septemberfest.

-Drew Zimmerrman

Writers’ Block Shines at Art Show continued from page 8

exciting to be part of the show, and it showed a lot of people here in town that people with disabilities can be creative and interesting artists.” Glen Moore stated, “The collection is diverse and the show looks like a real professional show.”

Next year the Progressive Center

Writer’s Block Group will have a much more expansive show at the Visitors Center. It will be over a five week period beginning sometime in April of 2012.

-Drew Zimmerrman
Summer Update

By Drew Zimmerman

Over the summer the recreation department hosted some fun activities despite the hot and humid weather we experienced! Softball teams assembled for the annual Miracle League Softball game at the Hamilton – Sawmill YMCA and baseball fans attended the annual Trenton Thunder baseball game outing. In addition, everyone had a great time aboard the pontoon boats and eating food from Fred and Pete’s at our annual Mercer County Picnic. Check out the many photos from these events posted in the Recreation Department Gallery online at www.pcil.org/recreation.

Upcoming Fall Events

Now that the hot days of summer are over, it’s time to think of all the cool fall events coming up in the recreation department for PCIL consumers and their families.

Late September has the Social Club joining up for some yummy food at Red Robin.

Consumers also need to be on the lookout for tickets to a classic football clash on November 12th when the Princeton Tigers host their long-time rivals, the Yale Bulldogs. PCIL members will have first priority on these tickets, and there may be further availability to a limited amount of consumers. Please visit our webpage on the PCIL website.

Boomer takes a bite out of PCIL director Scott Elliott!
Training Update

Recently a fellow human service agency, *Advancing Opportunities*, enlisted PCIL to provide disability sensitivity training to their employees. Some would think that a human service agency that specializes in assisting people with disabilities would not need training like this. However, all the feedback that was received from the twenty-eight individuals that attended the training was not only favorable, but they also took something positive away from the experience. Many of them learned about the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) while others learned the updated etiquette and proper terminology for working with different groups of people with disabilities. Each participant learned something new and felt that any company would benefit from this program.

In light of the success of this training, and the new contact we have with the Advancing Opportunities organization, PCIL would like to offer our services not only to local businesses and emergency workers, but also to any other agencies that would like a refresher course on disability sensitivity.

For more information on trainings, please contact: Jerry Carbone either by phone at 609-581-4500 or by email at jerry.carbone@pcil.org.

PCIL offers disabilities awareness training for businesses and local organizations.

These classroom training sessions were developed by Cornell University to help bring awareness and special training to companies looking to expand their market and workforce to include people with disabilities.

To find out how our programs can help your business out, please contact Jerry Carbone at 609-581-4500 or by email at jerry.carbone@pcil.org.
Colleen Fraser Fund Helps Carry on Tradition, Seeks 2011-2012 Applicants

Last year’s recipient of The Fraser Fund was Patrice Jetter, a 47-year-old from Hamilton, NJ. With help from The Fraser Fund, Patrice will take her talents to the Art School of Philadelphia, “I am finally getting the opportunity to live out my dream of not just going to an art class, but to a college dedicated to the arts. This is really fabulous. I still can’t believe it!”

PCIL is taking applications for the 2011-2012 Fraser Fund. If you are a passionate person with a disability and have a dream we want to hear from you. Do you think you are making a positive difference in the lives of other people with disabilities, we want to hear from you!

To apply, send a letter to: The Fraser Fund, 1262 Whitehorse-Hamilton Square Road, Madison Corporate Center, Building A, Suite 102, Hamilton, NJ 08690 or email Scott Elliott at scott.elliott@PCIL.org

If you would like to make a donation to the Colleen Fraser Fund contact PCIL. All types of donations are accepted.