In mid-January of 2011 the Progressive Center began a partnership with Open Doors Organization (ODO). ODO, a non-profit based out of Chicago, IL, was started by Eric Lipp with the mission to increase accessibility in the travel and hospitality industry. Together, PCIL and ODO hoped that by providing disability sensitivity training to all frontline Amtrak employees across the country, people with various types of disabilities would have a more pleasant and relaxed travel experience. The main focus of the training being offered was to teach Amtrak employees how to handle wheelchairs and other mobility equipment safely and how to assist the individuals that use those devices in a dignified manner.

This partnership gave PCIL the opportunity to not only share their knowledge about traveling with a disability, but also to network with individuals from around the country with the same mission to help people with disabilities lead a more independent life. Two PCIL employees, Jerry Carbone and Bob Riskamm, were asked to join the extensive trainer network that ODO put together. Armed with the proper certification and training by ODO, Jerry and Bob were able to provide 30 trainings to hundreds of Amtrak (Continued on page 3)
Resolve to be Ready!
By Scott Ellis

Roughly half of all Americans make New Year’s resolutions and commit to improving their lifestyles or reaching a long-term goal. This year, why not make a resolution that is easy to keep while saving lives and protecting property. For 2012, Resolve to be Ready for emergencies by taking simple steps to prepare your family, your home, your business, and your community in the face of potential disaster.

The year 2011 had seen more billion-dollar natural disasters than any other year on record, according to the National Climatic Data Center. During the first 11 months there were 97 major disasters declared. From Major storms like Hurricane Irene, which battered the U.S. East Coast, to the spring tornadoes that brought devastation from Wisconsin to Texas, we just don’t know where or when emergencies or disasters will strike.

It is because of this unknown that American’s need to make a plan of action and now is the time to think about the basic and individualized needs you, your family, your pets, and service animal will need in case of an emergency. How will you communicate, what supplies you need to keep in your home, car or office? The more you know about what to do in an emergency, the more confident and secure you will feel in your abilities to manage through a disaster.

(Continued on page 14)

Staying Safe & Warm During A Winter Storm
By Matthew Daly

Staying safe during the harsh winter months can be a challenge for any individual with access and functional needs. Up to this point Mother Nature has provided us with a mild winter, but it’s still important to learn helpful techniques that will keep you safe and warm this winter. Below are some useful tips provided by the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes to make the winter a bit more manageable for you.

Prior to a winter storm, the most crucial task is to create a survival kit that can save your life in the event of an emergency. Items to include in this kit are: battery powered NOAA weather radio and portable AM/FM radio, blankets/sleeping bags, first aid supplies, flashlight, batteries, extra medicine, non-perishable food, water, pet, and baby items. Another precaution to take

(Continued on page 9)
employees located in
Philadelphia, New York City,
Albany, and Washington, DC. All
trainers were required to utilize
Amtrak when traveling to and
from their training allowing them
to provided Amtrak and ODO
with valuable feedback on how
these employee trainings were
directly effecting the Amtrak
experience. It is through this
feedback that the training
continues to evolve over time.

Overall, the training program
was a very successful
endeavor that provided disability
sensitivity training to over 8,000
Amtrak employees in 17 different
cities across the United States
covering not only the
requirements of the ADA, but also
the company policies of Amtrak.
The ODO program was such a
success that negotiations are
underway to renew the contract.
In addition, other negotiations
have started in hopes of
expanding the program to airlines
and other rail companies as well.

For more information visit:
Open Doors Organization at
http://opendoorsnfp.org or Amtrak

Amtrak Travel Tips

When booking your travel
call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-
800- 872-7245) to book
your trip. This reservation
line will make sure the
necessary accommodations are put in
place to make your trip as
hassle free as possible!

Additionally, you may
qualify for a discounted
ticket if you are able and
willing to provide proof of
your disability to Amtrak.

Improve your
business, grow
your customer
base, and expand
your talent pool.

Contact Jerry
Carbone to find
out how our
training programs
can help your
business advance.
Nick Newell: A fighter in life IN and OUT of the Ring.

By Drew Zimmerman

Very few adults working today can credit the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles with their career success. Then again, MMA fighter Nick Newell is unlike most people you will ever meet. The toughness that has been instilled in Nick from a young age has carried him through a successful wrestling career as a MMA fighter for the XFC, the same wrestling association that helped train the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. While toughness and belief in his own abilities are worthy attributes for anyone, what is equally impressive is that Nick is able to succeed in MMA while having a congenital amputation from birth which affects his left arm.

While his competitors may have at times underestimated his ability to compete, Nick has always felt his condition is nothing more than another facet to his approach to close contact fighting. He states “A lot of people turn down fights with me because they are afraid they are going to lose to me, but the people that do fight me are warriors, and I have a great deal of respect for them.”

Respect and hard work are the key words that guide Nick’s life. He has needed both to achieve the success he desires. In Connecticut, he entered into high school wrestling due to his love of Brett “The Hitman” Hart from the WWE. After establishing records along the way, he decided his post-college career needed the competiveness that only full contact sports brings, so he entered into a career as an MMA fighter.

Like any fighter out there, getting your big break is difficult. It was even more so because of his fighting style. “Promoters gave me a hard time because it was a challenge for them to find people to fight me.” He got a break from Boston promoters, Cage Titans, who were early promoters of Nick giving him a serious chance to fight. Then came an opportunity with the XFC, a league similar to the larger UFC. Nick is very excited to be part of the XFC. “I am grateful to the XFC. They run a great promotion, and as long as I get a chance to fight the best fighters in the world I am happy”.

Nick has blossomed into a strong MMA fighter compiling a 6-0 record to date. He is spurned on by some positive influences in his life. Professionally, he admires guys who can take a punch and keep coming at you like Dan Henderson and Uriah Faber. Privately, he has always had the full support of his family. Nick has always been free to try anything he has wanted to, but admits, “The final call comes (Continued on page 5)
Director’s Comment: Much More Education Required
By Scott Elliott

The Amtrak Disability Sensitivity Training last year was very beneficial to many Amtrak employees, but there is so much more that can be accomplished with Amtrak and countless other companies.

The Progressive Center has trained individuals of many businesses and companies on Disability Awareness related topics including Emergency Preparedness. The list includes Johnson & Johnson, SAMS Club, Trenton Marriott, Rider University, Trenton Thunder, Advancing Opportunities and others. While this list is impressive, we have only scratched the surface. Many more people in each of these entities need the same training.

Connecting with numerous other entities that need this education is crucial. If businesses want to grow their customer base and develop the opportunity for people with disabilities to get jobs then they should get serious about upgrading their training programs to include Disability Awareness courses offered by PCIL.

Our training programs allow diversity, communication, and understanding to develop naturally among employees and customers. Everybody knows someone with a disability and, when the word spreads, everyone wins, especially when businesses get “it”. These educational opportunities make sense for all, particularly during tough economic times.

Nick Newell: (Continued from page 4)

down to my mother; if she is cool with me participating in a sport then it is fine.”

Nick hopes to be fighting with the XFC for a long time, but is also looking forward to accomplishing more great things after his fighting days are behind him. “I would like to open up my own fight school and become a motivational speaker. I helped a kid learn to wrestle with one hand. I have a lot of people contact me on Facebook that I enjoy helping.” He also has a new website www.nicknewell.tv where you can learn all about him.

We can all learn a lot from Nick, who loves to tell anyone with challenges, “With hard work and a right attitude you can reach your goals. If you don’t believe in yourself and your ability you are beat before you start.” That is excellent life advice, in or out of the ring.

In order to expand outreach efforts, the Progressive Center for Independent Living is requesting e-mail addresses of our consumers to provide another means of communication. We are looking to compile a large email list so we can send flyers and newsletters electronically to individuals in the future.

So, when you have a moment, please send your e-mail address to either Matthew Daly, mdaly@pcil.org or Drew Zimmerman, dzimmerman@pcil.org to be included on the list. If you have any questions, please contact PCIL at 609-581-4500.
News from the Transition Team

By Renee Pfaff and Pam Vernon

The Promoting Self-Advocacy Program, a division of Progressive Center for Independent Living’s transition services, has introduced a new program called Readiness for Employment using Advocacy and Choices in Transition or better known as “REACT”. This new program was developed specifically to help high school students with disabilities towards reaching the ultimate goal of employment.

REACT evolved from the increasing awareness that students in transition really needed to be prepared for what comes after high school - employment. REACT allows instructors to tailor the curriculum to match the individual or group needs. The curriculum focuses on building important skill sets that will help prepare the student for the employment of their choice. Lessons include topics on student self-awareness, learning styles, personal strengths, how and when to advocate, career development, and job readiness including social skills and manners. Our goal is for our students to go into their future with confidence and with a solid plan. Students will have a better handle on whether post-secondary education is required or how to properly link to the resources they may need to get where they want to go.

We look forward to gaining vital information and our continued growth which will allow our students the most successful transition available. We leave you with a favorite quote.

“Nothing works unless you do”
Maya Angelou

REACT is funded through the collaboration of the Dept. of Labor, Div. of Vocational Rehab. Services and through Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Services.

PCIL Remembers Nick Powell

The Progressive Center would like to offer our condolences to the family and friends of Nick Powell. Nick, 27, was killed in a car accident on December 15th, 2011, while on his way to classes at Mercer County Community College. He was a good friend to many PCIL staff members and consumers. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.
The Colleen L. Fraser Fund seeks to support opportunities for individuals with disabilities in NJ that would advance their skills as disability advocates and leaders. The fund honors the work of Colleen L. Fraser and rewards those who wish to reflect her determination.

This year’s Fraser Fund goes to Jessica Lindenberger. Jessica has been working closely with PCIL in her preparation for her transition from high school. The Board of Directors chose Jessica as the recipient due to her many great qualities and strong desire to achieve in life.

As part of the application process, all applicants are asked to share how they intended to utilize the funds and why they felt they were a good candidate for the fund. Below is the letter Jessica submitted to PCIL.

“After I read about Colleen Fraser, I wish that I had known her. She sounds like a person I would have liked a lot. It is amazing that she was talked into a job after college and that she ended up helping other people.

I have learning disabilities that make it hard for me to learn and comprehend. But I work really hard to get everything done for school and work.

I have always loved to work with children and I have had several jobs at preschools and camps. Two boys I took care of at camp had autism and attention deficit disorder. I am really good at understanding people with problems and I help them if they need help.

I am going away to college right now and when I finish; I want to live on my own with a couple of friends and get a job.

At my college, there is one student who is always upset about something and fakes having seizures. When he does that, he gets teased and made fun of. I don’t make fun of him at all and I try to let him know that faking a seizure will make people scared for him. Even though he has problems, I think that he is amazing because he is funny and caring.

I graduated from Hopewell Valley Central High School last year. One of my teachers asked me to come in over break to speak with her class about how I am doing at school and what it is like to be on your own. I told her that I would be happy to do this.

I will use the money from my scholarship to help pay for my college tuition. If Colleen Frazer was alive, I would want her to know that I am doing well at school and to know that I will always stand up for other people with disabilities and for myself.”
Community Connections members have the benefits of enjoying a wide variety of activities out in the community with the community. Other member benefits include discounted tickets, special seating, and often times free food!

Funding for the Community Connections Program is provided by the Mercer County Office for the Disabled.

2011 End of the Year Recreation Review

By Drew Zimmerman

To battle the cold New Jersey weather, the Progressive Center and the Community Connections Recreation Program concentrated on holding a series of fun indoor events for our consumers to enjoy. In November, PCIL consumers and guests were at the Kelsey Theater to enjoy the showing of AIDA. The show featured the music of Tim Rice and Elton John. A great time was had by all. In December, PCIL held our holiday party at Project Freedom in Hamilton. Trivia contests, music, games and catered food by Fred and Pete’s were all highlights for the nearly 50 visitors. However, nothing can beat Santa and Mrs. Claus when it comes to holiday cheer. They made a special appearance to give out gifts to PCIL participants and their families. It was a bright spot to the holiday season for many PCIL families.

In other news, the Social Club saw its biggest attendance ever, as it got together at the Lawrence Grill at the Quaker Bridge Mall. It was an amazing event with over 30 people showing up for great casual American food. We had some family members come, and welcomed several new visitors to our recreation program. We also had Writer’s Block meeting where many artists brought their new creations to share.

2012 Outlook for Community Connections

By Drew Zimmerman

The Trenton Titans Hockey Club are back on the local sports scene! The Progressive Center has tickets to several Titan games now through late February. There are a few tickets left. If you would like to some catch great hockey action, contact Drew Zimmerman today. The Grounds for Sculpture will be hosting the Second Annual Writer’s Block Art Show in May. We need new and old artists to bring their best artistic efforts to the upcoming Writer’s Block meetings. Be on the lookout for meeting announcements. The Art Show is a truly special event. Don’t miss your chance to be a part of the 2012 edition. The Social Club will be meeting several times throughout the year as well. Come and join fellow consumers and family members at great area restaurants. In addition, there will be many other recreation events in the next several months as the weather gets warmer. Check your mailbox for terrific events to be announced. If you have any questions about any recreation event, contact Drew Zimmerman.
Staying Safe & Warm During A Winter Storm

By Matthew Daly

(Continued from page 2)

includes insulating all exposed water pipes outside the home and make sure that space heaters are not left unattended because they can become a potential fire hazard.

During a severe winter storm it is important to close off unoccupied rooms and open spigots to allow a small, continuous drip to prevent freezing pipes. Also, it is advised that you wear layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing and consume plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and high caloric foods. After a storm it is important to remember to clear walkways and sidewalks to prevent injury and remember to report damage like broken pipes and downed power lines to your utility company as soon as they are spotted.

In the event of a power outage the following procedures are advised. Keep a cooler nearby to store perishable foods in the event of a prolonged outage. Keep a supply of flashlights and batteries on hand and avoid the use of candles as they pose a fire hazard. Always remember to keep your car tank at least half full as gas stations usually rely on electricity to power their pumps. And finally, remember to use gas powered generators in well ventilated area!

If you need assistance preparing for the upcoming winter, or would simply like emergency readiness resources and reminder cards contact the PCIL offices at 609-581-4500 or visit us at 1262 Whitehorse-Hamilton Sq. Rd., Building A, Suite 102, Hamilton NJ 08690.
As the Holiday season approached, PCIL hosted their second annual holiday party for their consumers and family members. The event was held on December 8th and was attended by over 40 people. Guests at the party played games, answered trivia questions, and enjoyed food catered by Fred and Pete’s. Everyone had an amazing time sharing gifts and community togetherness.

One of our participants, Mike Bassen, gave a wonderful summary of the event, “One cold December night in 2011, I went to Project Freedom in Hamilton. When suddenly I saw a bunch of people from PCIL who were going to their holiday party. We got gifts from Santa and Mrs. Claus. There were cookies and desserts galore! Also, I went with my family to this great holiday party! Overall, my experience at this PCIL 2011 Holiday Party was amazing.” The main event of the evening, of course, was a guest appearance made by Santa and Mrs. Claus!

Thank you to the PCIL staff for donating their time, Fred and Pete’s for catering the event, Project Freedom for opening their doors, and Santa for taking time out of his busy schedule to make this holiday party a memorable experience for our consumers.

Consumers Reflect on the Event

“Thank you for the nice comforter I wanted for those cold winter nights soon to come. I put my gift under the tree because I don’t want to open it until Christmas.”

—Patrice Jetter

“The Christmas party was splendid, a real treat of good food. Thank you again and have a good holiday and happy New Year.”

—Barry Borgianini
“I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful holiday party. I had a very enjoyable time playing Scrabble and having those delicious big cookies! Santa was very generous to me; giving me a movie AND dinner package, wrapped very pretty.”

–Jackie Turkel
In every newsletter from now on, PCIL would like to feature contributions from its consumers and families on how PCIL services have helped them. This quarter’s letter was written by one of our consumers to a local newspaper. We were honored to receive this letter, and hope that other PCIL families have had positive experiences that they would like to send to us for the newsletter.

We enjoy hearing from our consumers on how we help them. If you would like to write us regarding your experiences receiving PCIL services please email Drew Zimmerman at drew.zimmerman@pcil.org or Matt Daly at matt.daly@pcil.org.

The following is a letter written on September 7, 2011. The author is a consumer of the Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL) who wanted to acknowledge PCIL for the assistance that our organization has provided.

To Editor:

I wanted to share a story that you can consider for your section entitled “A Day in the Life…” It involves an organization in our Hamilton Community that deserves recognition.

My name is Teri and I relocated here from North Carolina with my son. He has special learning needs and a disability from birth. My sister directed me to an organization called Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL). Their website is www.pcil.org.

My son and I have been working with Drew Zimmerman, the Independent Living Specialist and the rest of the team including Scott Ellis and Scott Elliott. They have worked to give us support and assistance in making our lives better. Their help has been instrumental in helping my son learn more life skills, including volunteering and participating in their advocacy work for others with disabilities. They are experienced, knowledgeable, and have resources to find available support throughout the area. All three of these men have helped my son with a job based on his ability level, and have directed us regarding housing we may qualify for. They have begun to help us change our lives. We would not have made it this far without them.

I want to recognize them for the time they give to being advocates for those with many types of disabilities. They see the need in our community for us to recognize those that may be different and those that may be handicapped physically or mentally. Their work helps to change people’s perceptions of disabilities and provides education to the community.

Thank you, Teri
WASHINGTON – The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced the launch of TSA Cares today, a new helpline number designed to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions, prior to getting to the airport. Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint.

“TSA Cares provides passengers with disabilities and medical needs another resource to use before they fly, so they know what to expect when going through the screening process,” said TSA Administrator John Pistole. “This additional level of personal communication helps ensure that even those who do not travel often are aware of our screening policies before they arrive at the airport.”

Since its inception, TSA has provided information to all travelers through its TSA Contact Center and Customer Service Managers in airports nationwide. TSA Cares will serve as an additional, dedicated resource for passengers with disabilities, medical conditions or other circumstances or their loved ones who want to prepare for the screening process prior to flying.

When a passenger with a disability or medical condition calls TSA Cares, a representative will provide assistance, either with information about screening that is relevant to the passenger’s specific disability or medical condition, or the passenger may be referred to disability experts at TSA. TSA recommends that passengers call approximately 72 hours ahead of travel so that TSA Cares has the opportunity to coordinate checkpoint support with a TSA Customer Service Manager located at the airport when necessary.

Every person and item must be screened before entering the secure area of an airport and the manner in which the screening is conducted will depend on the passenger’s abilities and any specific equipment brought to the security checkpoint.

TSA strives to provide the highest level of security while ensuring that all passengers are treated with dignity and respect. The agency works regularly with a broad coalition of disability and medical condition advocacy groups to help understand their needs and adapt screening procedures accordingly. TSA holds quarterly meetings with this coalition to inform them about current training and screening procedures used in airports. TSA recently hosted a teleconference with members of these groups to announce the long-standing plans to implement TSA Cares for travelers and inform them of the upcoming launch.

All travelers may ask to speak to a TSA supervisor if questions about screening procedures arise while at the security checkpoint.

The hours of operation for the TSA Cares helpline are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST, excluding federal holidays. After hours, travelers can find information about traveling with disabilities and medical needs on TSA’s website.

Press Release
December 22, 2011
Contact: TSA Public Affairs
(571) 227-2829
You can start by taking these simple steps:

1. **Be informed.** Know the hazards and risks in your area and learn what you need to do to get ready for them.

2. **Make a family emergency plan.** So you know how you would communicate with and find your loved ones if a disaster hit. For example, think about how you would reach your kids at school or your spouse at work. If you had to evacuate, where would you go? Thinking this through in advance will make a big difference.

3. **Build an emergency supply kit.** Both at home and in the car – that includes water, food and first aid supplies to help you survive if you lose power or get stranded in your car. This is especially important for dealing with icy roads and snowstorms this winter.

4. **Get involved!** Be an advocate and educator for safety and emergency preparedness within your community by contacting your local Citizen Corps.

5. **Using modern-day technology can help individuals and families prepare, adapt and recover from disruptions brought on by emergencies or disasters.** FEMA reminds all Americans to implement the following in advance of an emergency.
   - Learn how to send updates via text and internet from your mobile phone to your contacts and social channels in case voice communications are not available.
   - Store your important documents such as personal and financial records in the Cloud, on a secure and remote area, or on a flash or jump drive that you can keep readily available so they can be accessed from anywhere.
   - Create an emergency information document at Ready.gov by using the “Family Emergency Plan” template in Google Docs or by downloading the “Ready Family Emergency Plan” to list your emergency plans.

PCIL can assist those needing assistance assembling personal “Go Bags” or emergency preparedness kits. These “Go Bags” are in limited supply and are on a first come first serve basis. Contact Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Scott Ellis, for more information on how to obtain a “Go Bag” or learn to create your own.

*“Go Bags”*

History has shown us that the government can’t do it alone when it comes to preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. FEMA is only part of our nation’s emergency management team – along with our other federal partners, state and local governments, non-profit and voluntary organizations, the private sector and most importantly, the public.

*Information from FEMA*
Training Update
By Jerry Carbone

The Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL) provided training for DRNJ (Disabilities Rights New Jersey) on the topic of Emergency Preparedness for individuals with disabilities. This two hour training covered information for general emergency preparedness and a brief disability sensitivity program that covered history and proper terminology while interacting with people that have disabilities. During the training, we presented three participants with emergency “Go Bags” from the Red Cross. These bags contained the basic necessities for an individual to sustain themselves in an emergency situation for up to three days. During the training, several participants expressed interest in learning more about the equipment. An Evac-U Trac Stair Chair that was purchased shortly after the September 11th attacks proved to be an excellent training tool. We took the time not only to explain how the chair worked, but also let them practice operating the chair. The three ladies that took part in the demonstration said they felt much more prepared to deal with an emergency evacuation should one ever arise.

For more information about Disabilities Rights New Jersey, please check out their website at http://www.drnj.org.

Evac-U Trac Stair Chair

About Training Programs

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

Upcoming Trainings

The calendar is filling up fast! The next training we have is for the RIDER University Leadership Development Program, taking place on February 20th. If you would like to setup a training, please contact Jerry Carbone at 609-581-4500 or via email at jerry.carbone@pcil.org
NOW that 2012 has begun, it is the perfect chance to start your PCIL membership. Having a PCIL membership is a great way to show your support for our mission. If you support and wish to involve yourself with advocacy and independent living for individuals with disabilities please join as a member of PCIL. Those of you who were previous members already know the many benefits of membership. The free member dinner is certainly a yearly highlight, as are discounted pricing for all recreation events. The savings members get on events throughout the year make membership a real value. There are many membership pricing levels to meet almost any budget. To request a membership form or to find out more about membership contact Drew Zimmerman at pcil at 609-581-4500 or drew.zimmerman@pcil.org.