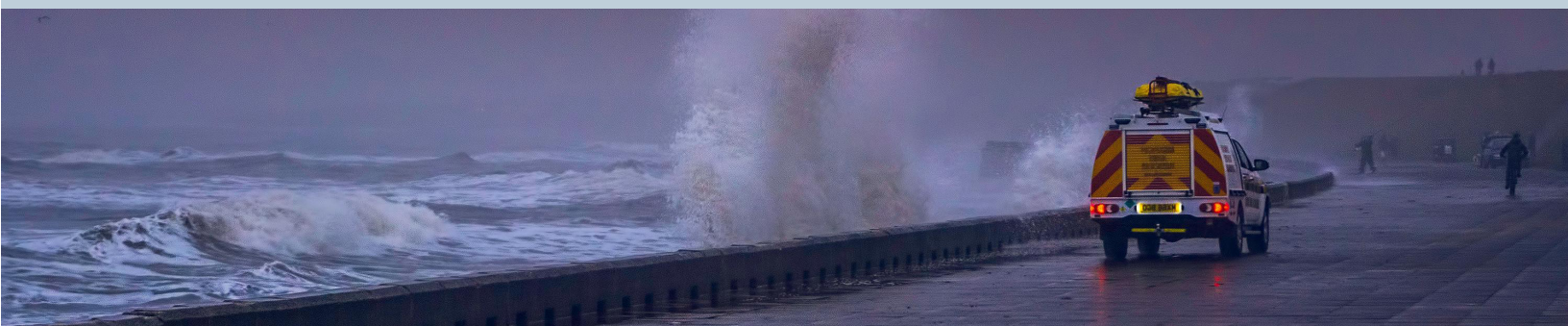


# Forward

BY PROGRESSIVE CENTER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1996.

SUMMER 2025  
VOLUME 90



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## REGISTER READY: WHY NJ RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD SIGN UP

- By Kelly Boyd, Access and Functional Needs Planner  
at the NJ Office of Emergency Management

Hurricane season is fast approaching—and it's a long one. Beginning June 1 and ending November 30, hurricane season often impacts NJ residents with severe weather that causes power outages, flooding, and property damage, among other issues. For individuals who have disabilities and may be affected more than others, it is especially important to have an emergency preparedness plan and sign up for Register Ready.

Funded by the NJ Office of Emergency Management, Register Ready is a secure database designed to help emergency managers and first responders plan for and support people with disabilities and access and functional needs (DAFN) who may need assistance in the event of a disaster.

Individuals are encouraged to register if they have a physical, developmental, cognitive or behavioral disability, language barrier, or transportation challenge

*This publication is brought to you  
by staff of Progressive Center for  
Independent Living and  
Mercer County ADRC.*

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that may make it difficult for them to safely shelter in place or evacuate in a disaster. Those who have a temporary medical condition, such as an injury, illness, or high-risk pregnancy, are also encouraged to register. Agencies that provide care or assistance for vulnerable populations may register on behalf of the individual they assist.

There is no cost to register, and information provided via Register Ready is kept confidential. Information is used solely for emergency planning and response purposes. It is important to note that communities use Register Ready in a variety of ways. Emergency managers and trusted personnel may use the information to plan, send public messaging, assist with evacuation, and support sheltering and post-disaster recovery.

After registering, we recommend you contact your local Office of Emergency Management

to learn how staff utilize Register Ready and what you can do to enhance your own preparedness. For a listing of County Offices of Emergency Management, please visit: <https://www.nj.gov/njoem/about-us/county-coordinators.shtml>

To register, please call 2-1-1 or visit [www.registerready.nj.gov](http://www.registerready.nj.gov). You may also contact your County Office of Emergency Management for assistance with registering.

For more information on how to prepare for all types of emergencies, please visit:

- NJ Office of Emergency Management- <https://www.nj.gov/njoem/>
- American Red Cross-How to Prepare for Emergencies- <https://www.redcross.org/get-help.html>



# ONE SIMPLE WISH

The Progressive Center for Independent Living is proud to be a Community Partner with One Simple Wish, an organization dedicated to granting wishes primarily for children in foster care. Through this partnership, wishes can now also be granted to adults living with disabilities who are facing extraordinary circumstances.

We are excited to share that our first wish was granted to a mother and her two children who lost everything to a devastating house fire. This wish was made possible by one of our Support Coordinators, who wishes to remain anonymous, and was truly a blessing for a family in need.

Martha, a single mother of two young daughters, became homeless in March 2025 after a fire destroyed her home. Although she has since found a new place to live, she and her girls are still adjusting to their new reality. Martha, who attends church every Sunday with her daughters, loves to cook on the grill — a tradition her eldest daughter

especially enjoys helping with. Their grill, however, was lost in the fire.

When asked what would help her family most right now, Martha shared that a new grill would bring back a sense of family and normalcy, especially for her daughter, who is looking forward to a barbecue birthday party this summer. This simple wish for a grill will help Martha and her daughters create new memories and rebuild their sense of home.



*One Simple Wish donated a grill to a PCIL family in hopes of bringing back normalcy after a tragic house fire.*

*If you or someone you know has an extraordinary story and could benefit from having a wish granted, please reach out to The Progressive Center for Independent Living at 609-581-4500.*





*Consumers are all smiles at our Bowling Event this summer.*

## ●●●● COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS ●●●● RECREATION PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

■ By Ruth Roberson of PCIL

Spring was in full swing at The Progressive Center for Independent Living, and with it came a wonderful season of connection, laughter, and shared experiences. Our recreation events brought people together in accessible and welcoming spaces, each designed to support community engagement, emotional well-being, and personal growth for individuals of all abilities.

We kicked off the season with a spirited Bingo Night, where the energy in the room was matched only by the enthusiasm of our participants. Held at the United Presbyterian Church of Yardville, the event created an inviting space for old friends to reconnect and new connections to form. As each number was called, the room filled with anticipation and joy, and winners walked away with fun prizes like tumblers, planners, headphones, and more. It was a night that reminded us how something as simple as a game can offer so much—engagement, mental stimulation, and a sense of belonging.



*Above: Participants showing their excitement for Bingo Night!*



Shortly after, we returned to one of our most popular activities, Bowling Night. Hosted at Hamilton Lanes, this event came by request from many who had enjoyed it in the past, and it did not disappoint. As participants slipped into their bowling shoes and were assigned to lanes, spontaneous teams were formed, often mixing friends and strangers alike. It was heartwarming to see the encouragement and cheers exchanged between bowlers. Whether someone was bowling a strike or trying their best for a spare, everyone was part of the action. Beyond the fun, the event also supported physical wellness, offering a chance to move, stretch, and engage in a low-pressure activity that encouraged confidence and camaraderie.

To round out the quarter, we headed to the ballpark for an exciting night at a Trenton Thunder baseball game. This outing not only gave participants the chance to enjoy America's favorite pastime—it also happened to be the team's Strike Out Cancer Night. The stadium buzzed with purpose and unity as fans came together to support an important cause while watching the Trenton Thunder take on the Spikes. The energy of the crowd, the music, and the on-field action made for an unforgettable evening. Two of our participants even caught foul balls during the game, adding an extra burst of excitement to an already special night. Whether people came for the thrill of the game, to cheer on the cause, or simply to enjoy time with others, the experience provided lasting memories and meaningful moments of inclusion.

All our events are created with accessibility at the forefront, ensuring that individuals of all abilities can fully participate and

feel included. As always, these gatherings are open to everyone, and we are proud to continue offering meaningful recreational opportunities that foster a strong sense of community.

We look forward to more adventures in the months to come, and we thank everyone who joined us in making this season so special!



*Above: Consumers enjoying a night of socializing and Trenton Thunder baseball!*

*Join Us Next Time!*

Find all our upcoming events

[www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events)

[www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj](https://www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj)

[www.instagram.com/pcil\\_nj](https://www.instagram.com/pcil_nj)

# PROGRESSIVE CENTER SECURES INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT

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■ By Renee Pfaff of PCIL

The Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL) is proud to announce that we have been selected as a recipient of the Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program, funded through the Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services.

This grant opportunity will strengthen our commitment to fostering safer, more inclusive communities for individuals with disabilities in Mercer and Hunterdon counties. Through this funding, PCIL will launch three key initiatives:

## 1. Mental Health First Aid Training

We will provide mental health first aid training designed specifically for first responders, medical personnel, and social workers. This training will help these professionals better recognize and respond to mental health needs during emergencies and daily interactions.

## 2. Community Emergency Preparedness Education

PCIL will work closely with local emergency management officials to educate our community on emergency preparedness. Together, we aim to ensure that individuals with disabilities and their families have the information and resources they need to stay safe during crises.

## 3. ADA Accessibility Assessments for Businesses and Municipalities

Our team will offer assessments to businesses and local governments to help them identify ways to improve accessibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These evaluations will support efforts to make public spaces more welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

We are excited to move forward with this important work and look forward to partnering with our community to build a stronger, safer, and more inclusive future for all.

As part of this grant, we will be seeking participants to join our advisory panel to help guide these initiatives. If you are an individual living with a disability and are interested in getting involved, please contact Renee Pfaff at 609-581-4500, ext.111







## YOUR RESPONSE MATTERS: GET TRAINED TODAY!

■ By Stephanie Wilmot of PCIL

At the Progressive Center for Independent Living, we are proud to share the impact of our Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings, having certified over 40 individuals in both Youth and Adult MHFA. These trainings provide essential skills to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health or substance use challenges in adults (18+) and youth (ages 12–18). Through the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, participants earn a three-year certification as a Mental Health First Aider, learning the evidence-based ALGEE action plan: Assess, Listen nonjudgmentally, Give reassurance, Encourage professional help, and Encourage self-help strategies.

We believe these skills are crucial for everyone, especially those on the front lines of our community. That's why we are

actively seeking to build partnerships with local first responders, including EMTs, firefighters, law enforcement, medical professionals, and municipal leaders. By equipping more community members with MHFA training, we can foster a safer, more supportive environment for all.

*If interested please contact Stephanie Wilmot at 609-581-4500 ext. 129 or via email at [stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org](mailto:stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org).*





*Consumers enjoying their time at Riding with Heart.*

## RECREATION EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS (R.E.C.C.)

■ By Bette Ann Sinclair of PCIL Hunterdon

Hunterdon's RECC program has been growing in the number of people who have been attending PCIL's hosted events. It's all about getting out socially, enjoying the event, and having fun! Inclusion in community events fosters empowerment, connection, and joy—especially for individuals with disabilities.

In May, consumers met at Riding with Heart Stables in Pittstown, NJ. They offer equine-assisted programs to provide a powerful blend of physical engagement and self-esteem. Participants built their confidence and improved motor skills while bonding with the horses, whose intuitive and non-judgmental nature created a safe and supportive space. The experience fostered not only personal growth but also community awareness and acceptance, as volunteers,

staff and participants enjoyed this time together in a spirit of mutual respect and encouragement.

Similarly, the watercolor painting event in June, led by Pam LaFevre, President of the Hunterdon Watercolor Society at the Hunterdon County Library, offered a unique opportunity to express one's creativity. In this welcoming environment, consumers painted pictures by artists like Monet, Renoir, and Edvard Munch, among others. They were encouraged to explore their artistic voices, gaining not only new skills but also a sense of accomplishment and belonging. Pam's patient and inclusive approach ensured that everyone, regardless of their experience level or physical ability, was able to fully participate.

| *Continued to next page.* |



Together, these programs highlighted the profound benefits of inclusion, where individuals with disabilities were not just accommodated but celebrated for their contributions and talents.



*Above: Participants posing at our equine-assistance event held in May 2025.*



*Above: Consumers getting a hands on experience at the Riding with Heart Equine-Assistance Therapy demonstration.*



*Above: Participants posing showing off their watercolor creations!*

*Join Us Next Time!*

Find all our upcoming events

[www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events)

[www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj](https://www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj)

[www.instagram.com/pcil\\_nj](https://www.instagram.com/pcil_nj)





*Michael Reynolds  
participating in a race!*

# RACING ON WHEELS

■ Michael Reynolds Interviewed by Amy Watts of PCIL

*Michael Reynolds is supported by Amy Watts for independent living support at the Progressive Center for Independent Living. Michael lives in The Residence at Voorhees, which is overseen by LCB Senior Living.*

**Q:** What made you want to participate in running races?

**A:** About 3-4 years ago I was watching the Boston Marathon, and I was watching for someone who works in my facility who was running in the marathon. While I was watching, I saw runners pushing a wheelchair and I thought to myself, "that could be fun to do", and "I'd like to try that." I spoke to the person at my facility who ran in the marathon, and we researched how to do this together. We learned about "Duo teams," which are two runners who push a person in a wheelchair.

**Q:** How did you find out about Ainsley's Angels?

**A:** In our research, we came across Ainsley's Angels, which is a group of Duo team runners in NJ. I was able to get in contact with Dave Goldstein, who is the Director of the South Jersey chapter. Dave told me he ran with his son Josh and shared that he passed away recently. He then invited me to do the 10K "The run for the bridge" in Philadelphia on 11/3/25 with him in memory of him. I said "yes" and the two of us not only did that run, but also the Philadelphia half-marathon on 11/30/25.

**Q:** What about being in races/runs makes you want to continue?

**A:** Being a part of these races gives me the feeling of exhaustion and exhilaration at the end of them that everyone feels who



participates in sports. I feel a sense of accomplishment and a “rush” at times. The running community is always welcoming and supportive of each other, and I like being a part of that.

Q: What advice would you give someone interested in being a part of a “Duo team”?

A: Being the person in the chair is an active experience. You are in constant contact with your runners and actively plan routes, watch for road hazards, and help the runners navigate the course. Also, don’t expect any racing chair to be as comfortable or as supportive as your everyday chair. Be ready to feel, and likely hit, every bump in the road. I find that I need a few days to recover from every run as my body is sore, and while I am exhilarated, I am also exhausted.

You also need to have a team of people who support you. The Residence at Voorhees management and staff have been amazingly supportive of me. They get me to the races I want to attend, cheer me on for all my races, and ensure I have everything set up correctly. Without this team, I would not be able to participate.

Q: Would you recommend Ainsley’s Angels?

A; YES! In my experience, the South Jersey chapter is full of people who are supportive and help you with any type of accommodation you might need. The races fill up fast and there are a wide variety of types (local community, city runs) and lengths (5K, 10K, half and full marathons) for you to choose from. Runners and participants in wheelchairs interested can register through Ainsley’s Angels, choose their local chapter, and indicate which run they want to participate in.

Ainsley’s Angels of America  
<https://ainsleysangels.org>



*Michael Reynolds  
posing after a race!*



*Inspiring sign from  
Ainsley’s Angels  
event.*



# RESOURCES TO KNOW



## OneWell Health Care

Assistive Technology (AT) can transform lives, helping individuals with disabilities and older adults improve mobility, communication, learning, and daily living. OneWell Health Care provides personalized AT services to support independence at home, school, and work.

Their experienced team offers:

- Customized evaluations
- Hands-on device training
- Help accessing funding (Medicaid and more)
- Ongoing support and maintenance

Remember, AT isn't just equipment, it's empowerment. To learn more, contact OneWell at [www.onewell.org](http://www.onewell.org), or call 1-888-ONE-WELL (1-888-663-9355) to get started.



## GoodRx

If you are looking for ways to save on Prescriptions, check into GoodRx, which is an affordable medication option for low-income individuals. No insurance is necessary, and people can save up to 80% on prescriptions. By accessing GoodRX app or visiting their website, you can compare pharmacy prices and show your coupon at the counter; it's that easy. Download the GoodRx app from the App Store or Google Play or visit [www.GoodRx.com](http://www.GoodRx.com).



## Too Good To Go

Too Good To Go is a free app that connects users with local restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores offering leftover food at a fraction of the original price.

How It Works:

1. Open the app and find "Surprise Bags" nearby
2. Reserve and pay through the app
3. Pick up your bag during the scheduled window

Each bag typically costs just \$3 to \$5 and contains food worth two to three times more. This is a great way to obtain affordable meals for budget-conscious users. To get started, simply download the Too Good To Go app from the App Store or Google Play, set your location, and start enjoying great food for less.

# PEER GROUP

## JUNE-JULY SCHEDULE

Anyone may attend.

Sessions currently run every other Tuesday from 5:00pm - 6:30pm

Registration in advance is required.

[www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events) or by calling (609) 581-4500.

Some sessions are partially funded by Community Connections and may have a small cost.

**AUG  
5**

### **FAMILY FUN NIGHT**

Join us for Family Fun Night and enjoy a variety of outdoor games with friends! (5:30pm - 7:30pm)

### **FLOWER PRESSING**

Join our peer support group for a creative session of flower pressing and make your own unique art!

**AUG  
19**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**  
**OUR WEEKLY SESSIONS RETURN THIS SEPTEMBER**

**September 9**

**Suicide Prevention Speaker**

**September 16**

**Dessert Island (Emergency Preparedness)**

**September 23**

**Stress Toolbox**

**September 30**

**Navigating Boundaries**





E-mail: [info@pcil.org](mailto:info@pcil.org)  
Site: [www.pcil.org](http://www.pcil.org)  
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IG: @pcil\_nj

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Teresa Pirretti

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<b><i>Vice President</i></b>	Michele Tyler
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# your DOORWAY

## QUARTERLY

A quarterly publication written by the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Connection to help support older adults, those living with disabilities, and their caregivers

### ARTICLES BY ADRC

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**Mercer County Office  
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ADRC	(609) 989-6661
Nutrition	(609) 989-6650
TOLL FREE	(877) 222-3737



# 988

## SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

## 988 Hotline - Help Is Available!

988 is the three-digit number to call, text, or chat for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Formerly called the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Lifeline, the 988 Lifeline offers a direct connection to free and confidential support for anyone experiencing a suicidal, mental health, and/or substance use crisis. The 988 Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

There is no reason too big or too small to contact 988. People can also call, text, or chat 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need support. Call, chat, and text services are available in English and Spanish. Call services with interpreters are available in more than 240 languages.

Callers in need of American Sign Language services can directly dial 988 on a videophone or click the “Deaf/HoH” button on [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) to connect with skilled counselors who can communicate in American Sign Language and are trained in working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

To further support NJ residents in need of behavioral health support, the New Jersey Department of Human Services recently launched the 988 Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Team (MCORT) program. These teams respond to non-life-threatening mental health, substance use, and suicidal crises without law enforcement or other emergency personnel when it is safe to do so for callers 18 years old or older. They work in coordination with the State’s 988 Lifeline centers and are dispatched when a 988 crisis counselor assesses that community outreach would be helpful and the person calling 988 consents to receiving such services.

Mobile crisis outreach response teams are composed of a two-person team in the field under remote supervision by a third professional. The professionals involved include a trained peer support specialist and an experienced bachelor’s level professional. As needed, a master’s level supervisor will provide clinical backup and supervision remotely.

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The teams are designed to arrive on scene within one hour in nondescript vehicles. Upon arrival, the team will attend to the individual and de-escalate the crisis, provide linkage to ongoing community services as appropriate, and offer follow-up support. When possible, they also may provide transport to additional levels of care and treatment.

“The takeaway here is that 988 can help when you’re struggling, with no judgment, and refer you to other helpful services and

treatment,” said Renee Burawski, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services at the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

“Anyone experiencing mental health struggles or emotional distress should call or text 988 or chat at [988Lifeline.org/chat](https://988Lifeline.org/chat), which is available 24 hours a day, every day.”

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Text or call 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).



## STATEWIDE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM

**Services To Provide Short-Term,  
Intermittent Relief to New Jersey’s Caregivers**

Caring for anyone is a huge job. The Statewide Respite Care Program offers services to the person who needs care so that you, the caregiver, has respite - that much needed break.

To learn more or start the application process, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at **(609) 989-6661** or **[ADRC@mercercounty.org](mailto:ADRC@mercercounty.org)**.

## Showcasing Community Partners

Dear Reader:

At the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), we have several facets to the work we do. Many people know us for the direct assistance we provide to older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers in our community, but you may not know that we also provide grant funding to agencies that provide assistance and support programs.

We are proud to have played a role in bringing these opportunities to residents, and we want to highlight our partners as they support those we serve in Mercer County.

The articles to follow in this edition of *Your Doorway* provide information and success stories from some of those programs.

■ Reed Thomas

## COUNTY SPOTLIGHT: Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County Geriatric Care Management and Kosher Café

- Provided by Jewish Family and Children's Service

Do you need guidance through the maze of senior care? Jewish Family and Children's Service's Geriatric Care Management Program is available to meet the needs of vulnerable and/or functionally impaired Mercer County residents aged 60 or older regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. The agency serves older adults regardless of income or frailty through care management and support services.

Jewish Family and Children's Service's geriatric care managers understand that older adults prefer to "age in place" – to remain in your home and community as long as possible. The intent is to maintain your independence and comfort in familiar surroundings while adapting to changing needs and abilities. The agency's experienced care managers can help you navigate these challenges through a no-cost, in-home assessment that evaluates your situation. A care plan is developed to include referrals to community resources as well as assistance with benefit programs, housing applications, transportation, and nutrition.

"John" is a 63 year-old client referred to Jewish Family and Children's Service from the Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC). He is the patriarch of a large, supportive family, and a major medical

| Continued to next page. |

event led to chronic medical issues. When he enrolled in the Geriatric Care Management Program, he was socially isolated because walking was difficult. He was about to lose his health insurance and did not have adequate financial resources. The care managers helped him navigate the complex paperwork to enroll in benefit programs, including prescription medication assistance, health insurance, medical equipment, and nutrition. He shared that this process was overwhelming and greatly appreciated the agency's support and knowledge when applying for these programs.

If you are interested in the Geriatric Care Management Program, please call 609-987-8100 and ask to speak to a care manager in the Senior Services Department.

If you like good food and conversation, please stop by Jewish Family and Children's Service's Kosher Café at Congregation Adath Israel at 1958 Lawrenceville Road in Lawrenceville. Seniors aged 60 or older enjoy a delicious, free, catered lunch every Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The agency's staff encourages you to bring a friend or make new ones! You can also participate in the "Topic of the Day" that brings everyone into the conversation. Some of the topics have been:

- Veterans - where they served and their experiences
- Phones, computers, and technology
- Books, movies, and music



*Above: The Jewish Family and Children's Service's Kosher Café in Lawrenceville.*

"The Kosher Café is a lifeline for our seniors," said a Kosher Café staff member. "One participant has been coming since the pandemic started. She tells me every day that she wouldn't be alive without our food. She no longer feels alone since coming and making friends. Most of our clients feel the same way. We talk to everyone each day to make sure they have all they need. If they have any concerns, we help in any way we can."

To register for the Kosher Café, please contact Debi Henritzy, Kosher Café Coordinator, at 609- 987-8100 ext. 236.

Open to all Mercer County residents who are 60 or older, both programs are offered through funding from the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC). Voluntary donations are accepted.



# COMPASSIONATE CARE AT HOME:

## Mount Carmel Guild's Home Health Nursing Program Helps Seniors Age with Dignity

■ Daren Miller | Executive Director, Mount Carmel Guild

For many older adults in Trenton and the wider Mercer County community, the dream is simple: to age in place - safely, comfortably, and with dignity in their homes; however, as chronic conditions set in and mobility becomes limited, even everyday health tasks can feel overwhelming. That's where Mount Carmel Guild's Home Health Nursing Program steps in, offering skilled, compassionate care right where it's needed most.

This long-standing program provides free in-home nursing services to low-income, homebound seniors aged 60 or older. There's no cost to participate, no insurance billing, and no out-of-pocket expenses for families. The Guild's registered nurses bring their clinical expertise and a whole lot of heart into the homes of seniors dealing with conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and

dementia.

Each patient receives regular, scheduled visits, usually every two weeks by the same nurse, fostering trust and continuity. Nurses assist with everything from medication management (e.g. pre-pouring pills, monitoring blood thinners, and administering injections) to wellness checks, nutritional guidance, and communication with doctors, pharmacies, and caregivers. The Guild also connects patients to local resources like Meals on Wheels or transportation assistance to medical appointments.

What makes this program special isn't just the clinical care, it's the personal connection. Take "John," a quiet and soft-spoken 72-year-old man referred by his case manager. John lives alone and was trying to manage his diabetes with insulin injections, but his blood sugar levels remained dangerously unstable. His doctor couldn't determine whether the

| *Continued to next page.* |

medication was ineffective or if John simply wasn't administering it correctly.

When a Mount Carmel Guild nurse visited John at home, the answer became clear: John hadn't been shown how to properly use the insulin QuickPen. With patience and kindness, the nurse walked him through it, step-by-step, and stayed until he felt confident. She scheduled follow-up visits to monitor his progress, and within weeks, his glucose levels stabilized. Most importantly, John felt empowered, supported, and no longer alone in his health journey.

The services we provide help prevent unnecessary emergency room trips so our seniors may stay safe at home. As the need grows, especially for medically underserved seniors, Mount Carmel Guild is expanding this critical work.

The program welcomes individuals of all faiths, backgrounds, and cultures and is accredited by the National Institute for Home Care Accreditation under private duty nursing standards. Although it does not provide daily home health aides, the Guild's nursing team fills a vital gap in community-based elder care.

If you or someone you know could benefit from this program, contact Corinne Janoska at 609-392-5159 ext. 113 or [cjanoska@mtcarmelguild.org](mailto:cjanoska@mtcarmelguild.org). To hear directly from patients, visit [www.mtcarmelguild.org](http://www.mtcarmelguild.org) and watch the moving testimonials that bring home the value of this program.







## Arc Mercer Recreation Program Shines at Consumer Talent Show

■ By Sam Stolz, Cultural Communications Manager: Arc Mercer

The Arc Mercer’s Recreation Program recently burst with energy, creativity, and joy as consumers took the stage for a much-anticipated talent show. With more than 30 acts participating, the event showcased the incredible range of abilities within the community—from soulful singing to high-energy dancing and everything in between.

The crowd was treated to a dynamic afternoon of performances that celebrated self-expression and confidence. Each act was met with loud applause and supportive cheers from fellow consumers, staff, and families.

After much deliberation from the judging panel, the top three winners were announced:

**1st Place:** Tim, who stole the show with his animated and entertaining performance of classic nursery rhymes, brought smiles and laughter to everyone in attendance.

**2nd Place:** Daniel delivered a powerful performance of Tom Petty’s “Free Fallin’” with which he earned a strong connection

with the crowd and a well-earned second place.

**3rd Place:** Brian, whose rendition of “The Gambler” – his signature song, captivated the audience and earned him a well-deserved spot on the podium.

In addition to the outstanding talent on display, the Recreation Department hosted a fundraiser during the event, raising \$178 to support recreational activities and supplies. These funds will help expand creative programming and community outings.

The talent show was a shining example of Arc Mercer’s commitment to celebrating the abilities and passions of the individuals we serve, and LaShana Deacon, Caryn Coyle, and Matthew Cook from the Arc Mercer’s Recreation Department worked especially hard to organize this incredible talent show.

For more information about Arc Mercer, visit [www.arcmercer.org](http://www.arcmercer.org) or call the Family Supports department at 609-931-1015.

# From Trainee to Mentor in the Arc Mercer's Food Service Program

■ By Sam Stolz, Cultural Communications Manager: Arc Mercer

Arc Mercer's vocational program is designed to empower individuals by providing hands-on training and skill development. One of the program's greatest success stories is Nasir, a dedicated and hardworking consumer employee who has made tremendous strides in his professional growth.

Nasir started his journey working at the Arc Mercer Café, where he honed his food service skills and developed a strong work ethic. Through the agency's structured food service training program, which consists of four levels, he advanced steadily, demonstrating both technical proficiency and leadership qualities. Nasir has reached Level Four, also known as the Mentor Level, where he guides others on their paths to success.

A significant milestone in Nasir's journey was earning his ServSafe certification, a credential that highlights his expertise in food handling and safety. With this accomplishment, he is mentoring Celesta, another consumer enrolled in the program. Nasir is supporting Celesta as she prepares for her ServSafe certification by sharing his knowledge and experiences to help her succeed.

This achievement not only showcases Nasir's dedication and hard work but also underscores the impact of the Arc

Mercer's vocational program in fostering independence and career development. Nasir's growth from a trainee to a mentor is a testament to the program's mission of empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve their fullest potential.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and expertise of the Arc Mercer's vocational staff, who work tirelessly to teach valuable skills and provide the necessary tools for success. Their commitment to training and mentoring consumers ensures that individuals like Nasir have the opportunity to grow, develop confidence, and achieve their goals.

Nasir's success is a proud moment for the Arc Mercer community. His journey exemplifies how meaningful employment and structured training can transform lives, paving the way for greater self-sufficiency and confidence. As he continues to mentor others, Nasir proves that incredible achievements are possible with the right support and determination.

For more information about Arc Mercer's programs, please visit [www.arcmercer.org](http://www.arcmercer.org) or call the Family Supports department at 609-931-1015.



# PROJECT FREEDOM TENANTS CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH MUSIC, DANCE, AND A FIDDLER

■ Norman Smith, Co-Founder/Associate Executive Director: Project Freedom

A few days before St. Patrick's Day, tenants from all three of Project Freedom's legacy sites came together at Freedom's Legacy at Robbinsville to celebrate Irish heritage with a corned beef and cabbage meal, authentic Irish music, and authentic Irish dancing performed by award-winning dancers.

The day was organized by Project Freedom's Recreation Team and was sponsored in part by a grant from the Mercer County Office on Aging/ Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) and by Project Freedom's generous supporters. Self-proclaimed fiddler Bill Turner entertained more than 25 Project Freedom tenants with Irish ballads and tunes as they ate. Bill switched between his violin and his guitar for a variety of tunes.

About an hour into the program, the entertainment literally kicked into high gear with the appearance of a troop of dancers from Kotelnicki School of Irish Dance in Hamilton. Led by Justin Kotelnicki and Erinn Carroll, five students from Kotelnicki School performed six dances in both "hard" and "soft" shoes as proud family members looked

on. Justin described each dance and some of the international awards won by the dancers. In the last dance, Justin invited the tenants to join the dancers' family members for a traditional social dance for groups.

All enjoyed the celebration and, as you know, everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day!



*Above: Bill Turner playing Irish ballads on his violin.*

| Continued to next page. |



*Above: Kotelnicki School of Irish Dance in Hamilton dances.*



*Above: Participants and dancers pose for a group photo.*



*Above: Tenants joined in for a traditional Irish social dance.*

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

### Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP)



## GRANT SERVICES YOU NEED

PASP provides routine, non-medical personal care assistance to adults with permanent physical disabilities 18 years of age or older and are employed, preparing for employment, attending school, or involved in community volunteer work and who are able to self-direct their services. The goal of this program is to support individuals with physical disabilities so that they may remain active participants in their community. The PASP offers participants choice, flexibility, control, and the opportunity to manage their personal care assistance services. Eligibility is not income based, but there is a cost share based on income.

### CONTACT US NOW!

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**DDS**  
NJ DIVISION OF  
DISABILITY SERVICES



# Medi-Cool Program

The summer heat has officially returned across Mercer County. As temperatures and humidity rise, many residents are struggling due to a lack of air conditioning in their houses. Did you know that there is a program that can help?

With funding from the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), two area agencies, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, and Rise, A Community Service Partnership, have partnered to provide air conditioning units with 5,000 BTUs for Mercer County low-income seniors and/or adults who live with a disability. Catholic Charities and Rise have begun screening applicants and will continue to do so until all units are distributed.

If you are interested, you must schedule an eligibility screening. To be eligible, you must:

- Be age 60 or older and living with a disability or illness that restricts normal daily tasks, threatens your ability to live independently, or puts you at risk of harm due to unfavorable environmental conditions
- Be age 18 or older, living with a disability, and receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Have income at or below 200% of the

poverty line (\$2,608 monthly income for one person)

- Have assets of less than \$2,000
- Not have received an air conditioner through this program within the last three years

You must provide the following required documentation:

- Proof of income (recent paystub, disability award letter, etc.)
- Prescription from primary care physician that must specify medical illness/condition and reason for needing an air conditioner
- Proof of assets (recent bank statement)
- Proof of residence (utility bill, lease, etc.)

Approved applicants will receive a voucher and be scheduled to pick up their air conditioner from a storage facility in Trenton on a specific date and time. Please note that individuals receiving the air conditioning unit must bring someone with them who can help carry the unit home from the scheduled pick-up appointment.

If you want to schedule an eligibility screening and/or if you have any questions, please contact Catholic Charities at 609-394-8847 ext. 104 or [MercerMedicool@cctrenton.org](mailto:MercerMedicool@cctrenton.org) or Maitiel Jimenez of Rise at 609-443-4464 or [mjimenez@njrise.org](mailto:mjimenez@njrise.org).



**NJ DEPARTAMENTO DE  
SERVICIOS HUMANOS**

**Programa De Servicios De Asistencia Personal  
(PASP, por sus siglas en ingles)**

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Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving

Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving is a program that provides in-home services to seniors at risk of placement in a nursing home. JACC includes an array of services designed to supplement the assistance given by the individual's caregiver network. Qualified individuals may have the opportunity to hire their own eligible family, friends, or neighbors to provide the care they need.

To learn more or start the application process, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at (609) 989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty.org.



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*A PCIL & ADRC NJ Collaboration*

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FREE MATTER FOR  
THE BLIND AND  
HANDICAPPED

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