

THE HAPPENING



Renee Uitto, CLS/OC Citizens' Advisory Committee Chairperson

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2012

THE 2011 HOLIDAY PARTY – OH WHAT A NIGHT!!!!

The CLS/OC Holiday Party was a huge success. With 300 plus people in attendance, this year's party was the biggest yet! Everyone enjoyed a great meal while socializing with friends. Then, once the food was gone, everyone packed the dance floor and boogied down to the music selections of "Dazzle Do Time" DJ Services!! The fun night quickly came to an end and now we are looking forward to another great new year!! Thank you to everyone who attended.

Renee Uitto, Teddy Fitzmaurice and Maria Miller



Long time friends Matt Cooney, Colin McRoberts, Carly Guy, Abigail Branham, and Lindsay Werner enjoying the party.



Adam Schaufler was all smiles on the dance floor



Blake Douroujalian says "rock on!"



The guys - Rommel Tinsley, Bob Bray, Jim Head, Steve Swartz, and Richard Gilmore – "too cool" to dance?



Katie Rodriguez and Scott Knowles give the party thumbs up



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"Don't walk in front of me,
I may not follow.*

*Don't walk behind me,
I may not lead.*

*Walk beside me
and be my friend."*

- Albert Camus



Tradina Taylor, Priscilla Taylor, Steve Bean with baby Maya, Jessica Widzinski, Leslie Nichols, Shawna Viskanstas, Lynette Walker, and Rebecca Pouliot.

STOP FEEDING THE DINOSAUR!



Back in August, *The Happening Newsletter* shared with our readers a great resource, *The Riot! Newsletter*. *The Riot!* is a newsletter for self-advocates - people with disabilities who

speak up for themselves. They write articles that promote self-advocates living in their community and taking charge of their own lives. The e-newsletter is made available four times per year. In the July issue, *The Riot!* began their two-part series titled "Real Jobs for Real Pay" and introduced their "Stop Feeding the Dinosaur" campaign (the dinosaur being sheltered workshops, day habilitation centers, and day centers). *The Riot!* indicates that these places keep self-advocates separate or segregated from other people, and self-advocates promote choices and chances for real community jobs at fair pay.

The July issue focused on things that get in the way of self-advocates getting real jobs for real pay, like being stuck in workshops and day programs. *The Riot!* shares compelling statistics, interesting facts, and information. They indicate we are sliding backwards; in 2009, only 20.3% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving day and employment services worked at real jobs, down from 26% in 2003. Also, the number of people with developmental disabilities attending non-work day programs has more than doubled in 20 years from 18.7% in 1999 to 42.6% in 2009. You can read about the fight, what the fight is about, and how it started. Plus tips on what you can do to get a job.

In *The Riot!*'s October issue, they focused on what people around the country are doing to make things better. Policy makers, advocates, and state leaders around the country are working on "Employment First" policies to create real community jobs. In this issue, you can read about ideas on how you can get involved in Employment First efforts, what states and others are doing to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities get real community jobs, information on how to work and keep your benefits, and other useful information about real work for real pay.

Visit *The Riot!* website at www.theriotrocks.org to read these informative newsletters.

THE R WORD HURTS!

How many times have YOU heard it recently, either on TV or while walking through a mall, or maybe even while



chatting with people you know: "Don't be such a Retard", "This test is so retarded", or "You Retard". It comes in many forms, but no matter how it is said, it is not kind.

When people with intellectual disabilities and their allies let it be known that the R word is hurtful to people, the response tends to be, "I didn't mean anything by it" or "Don't be so sensitive."

Don't be so sensitive!! If any other group of people was publicly labeled and humiliated in movies, on TV, and by celebrities, there would be backlash, boycotting, and extreme letter writing campaigns.....so this leads to the question: - Where IS the outrage?

The promise of respect and dignity as a citizen in our society is something we should expect and insist on for ALL citizens, and therefore, sometimes a little bit of outrage IS warranted. Please don't let people around you use the R word. Help them recognize the effects of what they say and that they have the option to stop.



Pass the word to end the word: using the R word is hurtful. Please use Intellectual Disability instead.

Adapted from a keynote speech Tim Shriver, CEO of Special Olympics, gave at the Alliance for Full Participation Summit on 11/17/11.

COMMUNITY
Living SERVICES

Oakland County Division

642 E. Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI 48220
Phone: 248-547-2668

Happy New Year 

LIVING WITH ASPERGERS

By Anthony Taormina



As a 24 year old man, life is all about changes. But, then again, there are things that stay the same. The sky is blue. I'm still obsessed with weather and sports. Once in a while, I will watch Sonic the Hedgehog....

Autism is a developmental disability that affects speaking and interaction with others. People with autism are often resentful of change and prefer that things stay the same. The rate of people living with autism is growing. According to Autismspeaks.com, 1 out of 110 kids is diagnosed with a form of autism. I have Asperger Syndrome; a trait of autism which focuses not just on speaking, but also focuses on certain behaviors and interests. The topic of Aspergers can be very controversial, as there are some people who do not see Aspergers as a disability, but as a different cognitive style.

Throughout my life, I was fascinated by things such as light and colors. I always enjoyed different colors; red, blue, yellow, green, purple, and so on. I also always played with light switches - on for light and off for dark, on/off, on/off and so on. Some of those things I still do today and say, "Cool, look at that."

My interests in certain topics continued through my childhood and well into high school. One topic that never left me was my fascination with weather. I called myself the "King of Weather," and I tied this passion to my earlier obsession, colors. I always envisioned a purple cloud, black tornado, blue rain, yellow lightning, and a red and orange sunset.

One thing I've noticed about myself is that I have a creative mind. I often think about heroes and villains, and I enjoy writing books. Many of my fascinations still continue today, especially in my writings, as I still often refer to myself as the King of Weather.

When it came to sports, I wasn't very good. My mom was afraid that I would not be able to succeed in a sport, so in an effort to protect me, she wouldn't let me participate for many years. In 2002, my mom relented and I was able to participate in my first sport: middle school track and field. I threw shot-put and ran in the 70 meter dash and the 100 meter dash. I had fun being part of the team. I must admit, I finished last in every race I was in, but I enjoyed being part of the team none-the-less, and I had fun in every

event I ran. It was this experience that helped me find a new area of interest: managing sports teams. I was always fascinated about sports. I enjoyed watching basketball, hockey, baseball, track, and even wrestling. My family is full of avid sports fans. I followed their views initially, and have become an avid sports fan and Team Manager for various sporting events.

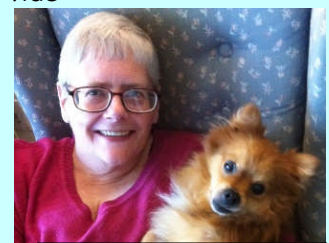
In 2002, I was told that I have Aspergers Syndrome, and that was the reason for many of my fascinations. I had a choice: to be sad about it, or accept it and teach people about it. I chose the latter and made it a personal goal to teach my friends and others about autism and Aspergers Syndrome.

In 2003, I had a Psychology class where I decided to talk about autism and Asperger Syndrome. At that time, only a few friends knew that I had autism. I was nervous about talking about the subject. I had two of my friends in the class as I presented the speech. I had tears in my eyes. I was afraid of how people would view me following the speech. Once it was done, I got a standing ovation and at the same time, gained a bigger acceptance of who I am.

In 2006, I graduated from Lake Orion High School. It makes me happy to know that I helped my fellow classmates have a better understanding of both autism and Aspergers Syndrome. As I said before, life is about changes, but then again, there are things that stay the same. Even after all these years, I'm still obsessed with weather and sports, and that's OK. In order to focus on your future, you can't forget about your past, the things you have done, and who you are. They help you build your future.

A Poem by Eva

The old year is over it is part of the past
Now is the time to make each minute last
A new year is coming very, very fast
It's like a big sailing ship with a high mast
We can be afraid and act very small
We can be brave, climb it head held tall
We are not helpless in the rip tide
Not just along for the ride
Let us not try to hide
Rather turn to the side
Go for a horse ride
We can laugh and play
Enjoy the sun's ray
Make the most of every day
Tell the world "I'm here to stay"



Eva Buckmaster with her dog
Lucky

MEDICAID/MEDICARE HEARING

By Renee Uitto

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is developing a plan to integrate care for people who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid. People who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid are often called “dual eligibles.” On Tuesday, December 6th, I attended a “Dual Eligible” Hearing in Lansing regarding the upcoming changes in the service delivery system for people who have both Medicaid and Medicare. I heard some compelling testimony from people all over Michigan about the potential effects of changes in the way services are authorized and provided for people with dual eligibility.

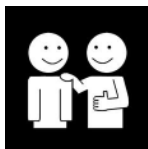
The proposed changes in the state’s plan for serving people with Medicaid and Medicare could begin as early as April 1, 2012. The goal is to implement a delivery system that improves the quality, coordination, and effectiveness of care for dual eligible individuals, but there are a lot of sides to the issue. Some are for the changes, as they think people receiving services will have more options. While others believe that they could lose some of the options and/or service providers that they currently have.

These potential changes are confusing to everyone involved and there are many aspects unknown at this point, particularly what will the service array be and what entity or entities will be making authorization decisions in the future. People testified at the hearing stating fears that people with developmental disabilities could lose access to some of their existing choices. The State of Michigan promises to keep stakeholders informed as much as possible with their website to answer questions and where they will post important documents related to integrated care, www.integratedcare@michigan.gov.

When I testified, I stated that I have had both Medicaid and Medicare for fourteen years, and I am very happy with who provides my services. Now, I fear that could all change, and I wonder if I will have the same choices that I do now. There are still many things that I am not clear about with regard this new plan, so I will continue to attend stakeholder meetings and hearings and monitor the website. I encourage others to do the same.

Stakeholders may submit their comments on integrated care at any time to: Integratedcare@michigan.gov.

RECOGNIZE YOUR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



Do you have a direct support professional that is extra special and deserves recognition? Then, nominate them for Direct Support Professional of the Year.

ANCOR, the American Network of Community Options and Resources, is seeking nominations for its 6th Annual Direct Support Professional Recognition Award competition. The association will select an award recipient from each state and the District of Columbia, and a national recipient from among the nation’s most accomplished Direct Support Professionals. Direct Support Professionals are the frontline workers who support people with disabilities as they lead productive, meaningful lives.

ANCOR will announce the recipients of the state and national awards at ANCOR’s 2012 Conference, *Leading Cultures of Innovation and Advocacy*, in May, in Washington, DC. The national winner will be invited to attend the conference at ANCOR’s expense. **The deadline for submissions is 5:00pm on February 8th.** For instructions and online nomination, visit website at www.youneedtoknowme.org.

TOOLS TO KEEP TRACK OF HEALTHCARE POLICY AND REFORM



Staying current with health care legislation can be overwhelming. Rules and regulations can change from state-to-state and family to family, depending on circumstances. When it comes to your health and well being, you probably have some questions and would like to stay informed.

We have found a great resource for you, with links to several official US government websites and some non-partisan sites that can help answer your questions about health policy, pending legislation, and what it all may mean to you.

The below link will hook you up with several useful links, including the links to: Americans with Disabilities Act, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Children’s Health Insurance Program, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), Disability.gov; Disability Laws, HealthReform.gov, Kaiser Family Foundation, Kaiser Global Health Policy, Kaiser Health Reform news and information, Kaiser State Health Facts, Library of Congress, Social Security Disability Online, Disability Compensation. Plus much more.

Follow the link: <http://www.care2.com/causes/how-to-stay-informed-about-health-care-policy-and-reform.html>.

“BELL” GRANT - COMMUNITY MEDIA NETWORK



Many of our readers may be familiar with Community Media Network (CMNtv), as they are the network that airs the popular disability awareness show, Community Corner, which just celebrated its 50th episode.

Community Media Network is a nonprofit organization that manages Public Access Cable Television for eleven municipalities in southeast Oakland County. Back in August, CMNtv was awarded a grant by the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition in partnership with United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan. The grant was titled “Including our Neighbors.” CMNtv was awarded the grant to fund a project entitled “The Bell”, which rings in all people to participate together as neighbors.

“The Bell” consists of three groups of 12 individuals, both with and without disabilities, for the purpose of video-documenting personal perspectives on what is important in their lives. The members tape footage using small cameras provided by the grant. The group discusses potential themes together and arrives at a consensus before launching out with their assigned cameras. They then reconvene on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month and the footage is gathered and shared, saved on hard drives, and the editing process begins.

In their first episode, the group captured thoughts on the subject, “what makes me happy?” Jay Wiencko, Executive Director of CMNtv, said that it was wonderful to hear the range and depth of the responses shared. In their second episode, participants asked questions on-camera to potential candidates for US President (whomever that may be). This was shot in front of a green screen, so the background can be replaced with footage shot by the participant that is thematically linked to the question. The last episode was initiated over Thanksgiving and intended to inspire each participant to reflect on ways in which we, or others, might be “giving back” to those in need.

“The Bell” has a website, www.thebellproject.org. The site will eventually have each video episode online for viewing on demand, and pictures and bios of the participants. Jay Wiencko indicates, “the group, as it was intended, is made up of individuals with and without disabilities; and by enhancing the inclusion of people of ALL abilities, we hope to broaden people’s awareness that we are all human, and indeed have very many common needs, feelings, and passions in life.”

“The Bell” project will be open for enrollment for the next session that is scheduled to begin in January 2012. If you are interested in participating, or would like more details call Jay at Community Media Network, 248-589-7778.

NEW BEGINNINGS AND NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS



It’s that time again: a New Year. And for many of us, that means new beginnings and **resolutions**. This is the time of year that so many of us make promises to ourselves to make positive changes in our lives. Do we really need a holiday to do this? Of course not! We can make positive changes in our lives whenever we want, but a new year is a fresh start!

Perhaps, after all the holiday fun, parties, turkey, cookies, pies and candy, your resolution is to lose a little weight.

A great way to take off a little weight is physical activity. Evidence shows that regular physical activity provides important health benefits for all people. The benefits include improved cardiovascular and muscle fitness, improved mental health, and better ability to handle daily life challenges.

You can learn more about physical activity specifically related to individuals with disabilities from the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability at www.ncpad.org. Here you will find great information and resources on getting active.



ANNUAL COMMUNITY SYSTEM SATISFACTION SURVEY



OCCMHA contracts with MCET (Michigan Consumer Evaluation Team) to conduct various surveys on their behalf. MCET will be doing the annual Community System Satisfaction Survey in December and January. For the past several years, OCCMHA has asked MCET to conduct face to face surveys for persons with developmental disabilities. This means MCET may call you to set an appointment to meet with them, either in the community or at your home, to conduct the survey. If you have questions about this survey you can contact OCCMHA at (800) 341-2003.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Employer of Record Training will take place on



Wednesday, February 8th, 2-4pm, at the CLS/OC office, 642 E. Nine Mile Road in Ferndale. This training is available for people supported by CLS and their staff. Topics will include how you could go about hiring your own

staff, the expectations of any staff you hire and your role as employer. Registration is required before January 27th. If you are interested, call Leigh Hilbert at 248-547-2668 to register.

CALLING ALL PARENTS - What Will Happen to My Loved One After I'm Gone?



Many issues will remain vital over a person's lifetime; housing, meaningful work, financial resources, social activities, proper nutrition, enjoyable pastimes, and reliable healthcare. A plan needs to be in place to ensure our children or family member will get the care they deserve after you're gone (i.e. Who will do what I do, when I no longer can?). This meeting for parents/family members of individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities will take place on January 24th, 7:00- 9:00 pm, at Providence Hospital Medical Building - eighth floor, 22250 Providence Drive, Southfield.

Carol Obloy, the Executive Director of The National PLAN Alliance, an organization that has helped over 27 other communities throughout the United States develop "Future-Care" Plans will speak on the value of planning and options for families.

To register and for more information visit namimetro.org or call (248) 625-9453.

Get ready for "Show Me The Money Day



2012" Show Me the Money Day is an annual statewide event in Michigan held on the last weekend in January. Local events held at numerous communities through vendor fairs and free financial

education classes. This year's Show Me the Money Day kicks off with the press conference at the State Capitol on Friday, January 27, 2012 and continues with local events on Saturday, January 28, 2012.

The press conference at the state capitol on January 27th will begin at 10:00am and will highlight the importance of outreach on tax credits like the Earned Income Credit (EIC), the Child Tax Credit, and free tax assistance services through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. It will also draw attention to the resources that will be offered by the local Show Me the Money Day events the following day.

Show Me The Money day events on Saturday, January 28th will take place at the following locations:

- Battle Creek - 10:00am-3:00pm at Battle Creek YMCA, 182 Capital Avenue Northeast. For more information contact Courtney Ziny, Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan, at courtneyz@caascsm.org or 269-441-1378.
- Flint area - 10:30am-2:00pm at Courtland Center Mall, 4190 E Court St # 17 in Burton. For more information, contact Carlos Cisneros, Mott Community College, at carlos.cisneros@mcc.edu or 810-762-5125.
- Lansing- 10:00am-2:00pm at Capital Area District Library - Downtown Lansing Location. For more information, contact Amber Paxton, Asset Independence Coalition, at aic.midmichigan@gmail.com or 517-256-1466.
- Saginaw- 9:00am-1:00pm at First Congregational Church, 403 South Jefferson Avenue. For more information, contact Marsha Cooley, United Way of Saginaw County, at mcooley@unitedwaysaginaw.org or 989-755-0505.

Show Me the Money Day is a project of the Michigan Earned Income Credit Coalition (MEIC) and coordinated by the Community Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM).

You can visit the Show Me The Money website at www.showmethemoneyday.org.

“Moving Forward” Peer Support Specialist/Peer Mentor Training



Training is now available for persons who have an interest in working as a peer support specialist/peer mentor in Oakland County. The “Moving Forward” training is a 17-hour training for individuals receiving services who have an interest in working as a peer support specialist/peer mentor. This is open to persons with developmental disabilities or mental illness. The training topics include: Role of a Peer Support Specialist, Using Your Story as a Tool, Listening and Communication, Gentle Teaching and others. The training is one day a week for five weeks, 9am-12pm. You must be able to attend all five training days.

The Spring Sessions will take place February 27th, March 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th. The Fall Sessions will take place on September 10th, 17th, 24th, and October 1st, and 8th. All trainings will be held at MORC, 1270 Doris Road in Auburn Hills. For more information or to sign up the training please contact Sherri Rushman at 248-975-9531.

SPEECHCRAFT CLASS IS BACK!



This eight week class will increase your confidence speaking in front of a group or in public. Learn in a small group setting how to effectively “tell your story” and “wow” the audience with your speeches, while having fun!

The classes take place every Tuesday at 1:30-3:30pm at the OCCMHA office, 2011 Executive Hills Blvd in Auburn Hills. There are two sessions to choose from the first beginning on January 10th and going through February 28th. The second session begins March 6th through April 24th.

To register for a class contact Sherri Rushman at 248-975-9531 or rushmans@occmha.org.



The next CAC meeting will be held on Monday, January 31st from 12-2pm.

THINGS TO DO IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Plymouth Ice Festival storms into Plymouth



on January 20-22. The Plymouth Ice Festival will feature over 100 ice sculptures, live music and entertainment, interactive family shows, winter-themed tasty treats and a variety of additional events to interest all ages. Plus, many

Downtown Plymouth merchants will also be holding individualized in-store events. For more information about this festival including directions and a schedule of the events visit their website at www.plymouthicefestival.org.

Cat Fanciers' Association Cat Show will take place on January 28th-29th. Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) All Breed and Household Pet Cat Show will feature 225 cats and kittens. Exhibition and judging occurs throughout both days by



internationally qualified CFA judges. This cat show will be held at the Allen Park Community Center, 15800 White Street in Allen Park from 9am-4pm. Admission at door: \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, \$3 kids ages 6-12, under age 6 - no charge. Free parking on-site. For more information call (248) 393-1986

Ferndale Blues Festival will begin on January 27th and go through February 4th. The annual



Ferndale Blues Festival will bring music, food, and revelry to downtown Ferndale. This festival averages more than 60

concerts held over nine days at two dozen locations. Each year, the Annual Ferndale Blues Festival donates 100% of proceeds to local charities. Most of the concerts are free with no cover charge. For more information about this event including a schedule of the concerts visit their website www.ferndalebluesfestival.org

Michigan Winter

Dog Classic will take place on January 19th-22nd at the Rock Financial



Showplace in Novi. The Michigan Winter Dog Classic is Michigan's largest Dog Show. Enjoy educational demonstrations, obedience and conformation judging, and breed seminars. The Michigan Winter Dog Classic will host more than 6,000 dogs, 160+ breeds of “man's best friends” throughout the four day show. Lots of fun for the whole family. For more information including ticket prices and times, visit the website www.themichiganwinterdogclassic.com.