



DON is on the final countdown to the Freedom Fair and Fireworks Festival which will return to Lawrence County on Saturday, July 14th. Activities begin at 4 pm and conclude at 10 pm with a Zambelli Fireworks display.

As the second largest employer in Lawrence County, DON is excited for the opportunity to give back to the community while simultaneously raising awareness of the many barriers that people with disabilities battle on a constant basis. The festival is always a major success on many levels and brings tens of thousands of people into our area. It is our hope to bring our community together, raise awareness, create local jobs and to make Lawrence County strong. There will be entertainment, vendors, and fun children's activities.

The event will take place in the center of the business district, along East Washington Street, for one day only. Since its beginning, the festival has been a family-oriented event and our goal is to continue the work of the past while growing the event for the future.

For information contact Shelley McConnell at 724-652-5144 ext. 181.

## **Upcoming Events:**

### **Freedom Fair and Fireworks Festival**

***Sat., July 14th***

### **ADA Celebration**

***Thurs., July 26th***

### **DON Fishing Derby**

***Fri., Aug. 3rd***

## Community Health Choices Update

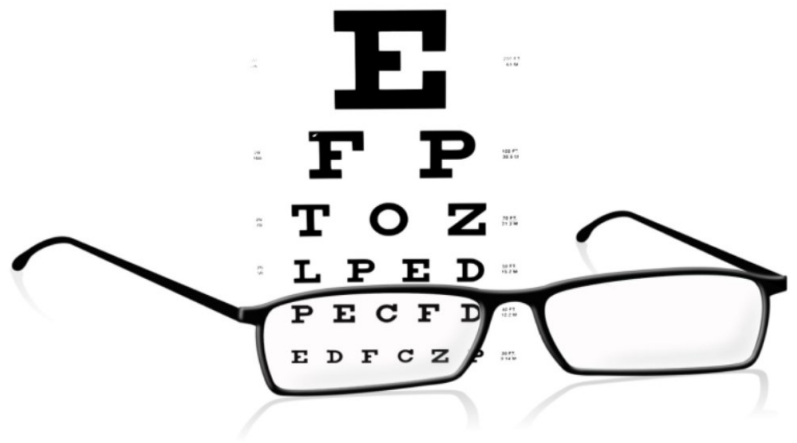
Disability Options Network, in partnership with Pennsylvania Health Access Network and Northwest PA AARP, conducted its first consumer advisory council training. Twenty individuals were in attendance to learn more about how to become an effective member of advisory committees, specifically, those being formed by the new Managed Care Organizations. These trainings will be offered throughout the year in various locations to allow individuals in the 14-county roll-out to attend.

Several Community Health Choices listening sessions were conducted over the last 2 months. These sessions were designed for consumers and providers to come together and discuss concerns-The end of the continuity of care period was June 30-as well as how the new managed care system has been working to date. Many consumers of LTSS have received letters regarding their individual service plans. Please note that EVERYONE has the right to file an appeal if the information received directly affects their health and services. Please act quickly on those concerns. There are specific timeframes by which appeals can be filed and changes can be made or reversed.

With the changing landscape of long-term services and supports, it is important that people receiving those services become educated and motivated to understand what policies and practices affect them. Disability Options Network is here to help navigate the new system by offering educational opportunities, Advocacy, support, and advisory council trainings.

For more information on any of the items mentioned, please contact our office.

### Mission Vision Clinic



**What:** FREE vision screening and new eyeglasses event

**When:** Tuesday, August 28, 9am-3pm

**Where:** 616 Fourth St., Beaver Falls, PA

**To schedule an appointment please call Terry at 724-506-6477.**



## The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

After, decades of activism/advocacy from members of the Disability Community, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. The ADA covers both mental and physical disabilities, plus disabilities of varying degrees. It offers a variety of protections including protection in employment and hiring, access to transportation, access to commercial facilities, service animal protection, telecommunications protection, anti-retaliation and coercion protection. In 2009, amendments extended the definition of disability and made it clear the ADA was designed to be as inclusive as possible in its applicability. The ADA remains an important protection for individuals with disabilities and has improved the quality of life for countless Americans. To date, it is still considered one of the most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation in the world.

Every year, since the signing of the ADA, people across the nation gather on the anniversary of the ADA to celebrate the civil rights of people with disabilities. This year's event will coincide with a Ramp Crawl hosted by a disability advocacy group, Oakland for All. The ADA celebration will begin at 3:30 pm on Thursday, July 26th at Schenley Plaza in Pittsburgh with an awareness rally hosted by Disability Options Network, followed by the Ramp Crawl at 5:30 pm. ASL interpretation will be provided.

If anyone is interested in joining Disability Options Network (the Center for Independent Living) at this rally, please contact Melissa Allen at 724-652-5144 ext. 157. The plan is to coordinate an accessible bus transport to the rally.

### **DON Derby**-----



Disability Options Network is hosting a 3rd fishing derby and we would love for you to join us! Bring your own bait, gear, and packed lunch. No Fishing License is required. It will be on August 3rd, 10am - 2pm, located at McDaniel's Launch at Moraine State Park. There are limited seats on our bus, so it will be on a first come first serve basis with reservations due no later than July 27th. You may meet us there! The directions are online at

<https://www.morainepreservationfund.org/map.html>

To make reservations, please contact Jeannie Surgalski at (724) 652-5144 ext. 111 or email at [jsurgalski@disabilityoptionsnetwork.org](mailto:jsurgalski@disabilityoptionsnetwork.org).

## **A Youthful Movement**

Every mass movement for social progress in the history of this country has been led by youth. This holds true for the Independent Living, Civil Rights, and Disability Rights Movements alike. The philosophy that Disability Options Network and other Centers for Independent Living operate from is rooted in the resistance carried out by generations of young people with disabilities.

The intention of our outreach efforts to the youth throughout the 2017-2018 school year was to provide our core services, which includes assistance to make a successful transition from school-to-adulthood, as well as the continuation of developing the next generation of leaders that will take our movement to heights unimaginable to our current world. Our outreach was extended to several school districts as well as a juvenile detention center that houses dozens of youth with disabilities on any given day. Along with our co-learners, we reviewed the history of people with disabilities and movements, learned self-advocacy skills such as how and when to disclose disability and request accommodations, analyzed systems and communities, and developed activities to equip youth with the tools necessary to make decisions for the betterment of themselves and communities.

Although many of the topics were new to the students, they were receptive to the information and eager to learn more. We hope to expand our program by serving more school districts and creating a space for students with disabilities to congregate and focus on issues important to them outside of the classrooms. We also hope to provide an internship for youth to help build our program. As always, helping facilitate the collective power of youth with disabilities will be critical to the success of our center, our movement, and our communities.

### **-----Special Needs Family Fun Day-----**

Please join us for a fun filled day! As a participant you will have the option to be teamed up with a "Buddy" for the event. There are many activities planned for the day such as, a free lunch, variety of games. Activities, crafts, and many more. It will be located at Franklin Park Borough Blueberry Hill Park 1604 Blaine's Way, Sewickley, PA 15143. The event will be on Saturday, August 4th, 12-2 pm. If you are interested in volunteering, want more information on the event, or have questions please contact Matt Cooper with Franklin Park at (412) 364-4115 ext. 347. Please register by August 2nd.

## ***Looking to Make Extra Money?***

### **The Fair Housing Law Center is Recruiting Testers**

What is a Fair Housing Tester? Fair Housing Testers help measure the quality, quantity, and content of information provided to potential renters and homebuyers throughout the housing market (rental, sales, insurance, appraisal, lending, accessibility/design) to determine the difference in treatment between those of a protected class (race, religion, color, national origin, gender, familial status, and disability) and those not. Essentially, testers are like mystery shoppers, where one tester of a protected class is assigned opposite another tester not of a protected class, and then each report on their experiences to the Test Coordinator. The report provided will be evaluated to see if a difference in treatment existed between the two testers. Tester pay ranges from \$40 to \$75 per test, plus mileage. This opportunity is open to all consumers and DON staff. If you are interested in becoming a tester, contact the Fair Housing Law Center Test Coordinator at 724-225-6170 Ext. 2771 or [www.fhlaw.org](http://www.fhlaw.org) and complete the application "To Become a Tester".

### **----- Employment Q & A -----**

*Q. I receive Supplemental Security Income, am I still able to work at a paid job to earn some income?*

The maximum SSI benefits is \$770 per month as of 2018. If you have earned income it will reduce the benefit dollar for dollar, after the first \$22. Based on this formula you can earn \$748 in a month before SSI is reduced to zero. This computation is based on a month to month basis and benefits are determined strictly by the amount and type of income.

*Q. I have income from the Social Security Disability Insurance program. Am I able to return to some level of employment and at what level does returning to work impact SSDI?*

SSDI recipients can't do Substantial Gainful Activity and continue to receive disability benefits. Doing SGA means you are working and earning more than \$1,180 per month in 2018 or \$1,970 if you are blind. There are exceptions for SSDI in that there is formulated trial work period during which you can make more than the SGA amount without affecting benefits.

For more information visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/index.htm>

## Exercise Your Right to Vote

*Vote as if your life  
depends on It,  
because it Does,  
"Justin Dart*

The general election is Tuesday, November 6, 2018.

The last day to REGISTER before the November election is October 9, 2018. This is important if you are a new voter or you need to make changes such as address, name, & party to an existing registration.

Other important dates you may need to know include:

*September 17, 2018* - the first day to apply for an absentee ballot, and *October 30, 2018* is the last day to apply for an absentee ballot.

*November 2, 2018* - last day for County Boards of Elections to receive completed absentee ballots.

To register to vote you can obtain a paper application from your County's Elections Bureau, Disability Options Network, OVR, other State funded programs, or register online at: <https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us>

You can also visit their website to confirm that you are registered, confirm your polling place location, and apply for absentee ballot. *Note:* Because of the recent redistricting by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, your polling place may have changed.

Remember, you have the right to vote if you are 18 years or older by election day, are registered to vote, and have any of the following forms of ID: state issued photo ID, voter identification card or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows your name and address.

### **Craft Corner**

Disability Options Network is a great place to showcase and sell your handmade items. We accept items created by people with disabilities for display and marketing, as space is available.

If you wish to submit items, please contact Kris Scanlon at (724)-652-5144. Vendors will be responsible for stocking items and providing pricing details.

## **Meet your Independent Living Coordinators**

My name is Amanda McCoy and I am an Information and Referral Specialist (I&RS). I joined DON Services in 2017 where I worked as a Lead Teacher in the daycare. I then shifted to my current position in January 2018. As part of my duties, I work on the newsletter, social media, help with documentation, review and program development. I am originally from Tennessee, where I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Child & Youth Development with a Minor in Psychology from Milligan College. I'm bilingual in English and Spanish. My original plan was to work with children in a hospital setting as a Child Life Specialist. To reach this goal, I interned at Johns Hopkins University Hospital, then volunteered at West Virginia University Children's Hospital. In 2016, I married a wonderful man and we moved to Hookstown, PA and then moved to Georgetown, PA where we live with our two pets (Dottie and Princess). I was born with cerebral palsy, this is why being an Information and Referral Specialist is close to my heart, because I know the struggles one's face on a daily basis. However, with the help of those around me I have been able to achieve my dreams. Now I am at a place where I can help others do the same and there is nothing more rewarding. In addition to my work, I enjoy horseback riding, skiing and spending time with all my pets.

## **Medical Assistance Benefits for Workers with Disabilities**

For people with disabilities one of the biggest obstacles to working was health care coverage. Earning too much money meant risking losing vital Medicaid health care benefits. Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) lets Pennsylvanians with disabilities take a fulfilling job, earn more money and keep their full medical coverage.

Applications for MAWD can be submitting online by visiting <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/healthcaremedicalassistance/medicalassistancebenefitsforworkerswithdisabilities/index.htm> OR by contacting your county assistance office (CAO) to apply, or to find out more about MAWD. Call the Department of Human Services Helpline at (800) 692-7462 for more information. TTY/TTD users can call (800) 451-5886. To be eligible for MAWD, you must:

- ◆ Be at least 16 years of age but less than 65 & be employed & receiving compensation
- ◆ Have a disability that meets the Social Security Administration's standards\*
- ◆ Have countable income below 250% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines\*\*
- ◆ Have \$10,000 or less in countable resources (resident property and one automobile are not countable assets)

\* Disabilities may include physical or developmental disabilities, mental health or intellectual disabilities.

\*\* Contact your county assistance office for details.

MAWD recipients pay a monthly premium for coverage, since it functions like health insurance coverage for someone working, but the premium is just 5 percent of countable monthly income.

## WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR CREDIT SCORE

- **Check your credit report for errors periodically.**

There is a one in five chance that you have an error on your credit report. Get in the habit of checking your once-a-year free credit report at



[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). Look for mistakes and if you spot an error, dispute it easily online through [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). Most disputes are resolved within 30 days.

- **Become an authorized user.**

Consider becoming an authorized user on a spouse's or family member's account, ideally one with a high credit limit, low balance and great payment history.

- **Divide your monthly payments.**

Instead of making one big credit card payment per month, make one payment before the statement closing date and another before the billing due date. This reduces the balance that's reported to the credit bureaus.

- **Consider adding rental history.**

Mortgage payment history is reported to the credit bureaus each month but now renters can also take advantage of a good rent payment history. Your landlord has to agree to have a third party send your rental history to the bureaus for a small fee. Learn more at [www.rentreporters.com](http://www.rentreporters.com) or [www.renttrack.com](http://www.renttrack.com)

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