



## The Family Care Act Bill

On June 5th on the steps of the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Disability Options Network had the privilege of standing with State Representative Dan Miller, and State Representative Wendi Thomas, and several other advocates to introduce The Family Care Act. This act would create a state fund so that workers who have family members with serious illnesses would be able to retain their jobs and income in times of crisis.



The act would end the painful choices that Pennsylvanian families must make between keeping their jobs and caring for an ill family member. Representing DON at the rally were JC Scialabba, Eileen Best, Sarah Reeves and Amanda McCoy.

The Family Care Act was officially introduced July 9 as Senate Bill 580. Co-sponsors are still needed and advocates continue the push.

## DON is Looking for Families Interested in Home Ownership

DON is in search of families interested in purchasing new homes on New Castle's Lower East Side.

DON is in the process of building single floor, universally designed,



energy efficient two and three bedroom homes with attached garages. These homes cost approximately \$120,000 to \$140,000 to build and will have sales prices of approximately \$42,000 to \$47,000 based on the number of bedrooms.

The mortgage payments including taxes and insurance could be less than most rent payments with lower utility costs.

Please contact Anita McKeever at 724-856-4221, Ext. 283 for more information.

### Upcoming Events

**Freedom Fair  
Fireworks Festival**  
*Sat., July 20*

**DON Fishing Derby**  
*Fri., Aug., 2*

## **Myths about Work and Medicare or Medicaid**

You may have heard this myth: "If I try to go to work, I will automatically lose my Medicare and/or Medicaid."

Here are the facts if you or someone you know is interested in working while receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits:

- If you earn enough that your SSDI payments stop, you can still continue to receive Medicare for more than 7 years (at least 93 months) after you use your 9-month Trial Work Period.
- If you currently receive Medicaid and SSI, you could be eligible to continue to receive Medicaid even after you stop receiving SSI benefits due to work.
  - To be eligible you need to meet certain requirements, which include earnings below a threshold amount set by your state.
- Even if your earnings exceed your state's threshold, you may still be eligible and should talk to Social Security if you have high Medicaid costs. In some states, you may be able to apply to buy Medicaid from the state Medicaid agency if you are working. In PA this is called Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities. To qualify for MAWD in PA, you must be between 16 and 65 years of age; be disabled or have a chronic health problem and working in some capacity. You also must have: income under 250% of the Federal Poverty Level and less than \$10,000 in resources. That means a person with an annual income of \$35,000 still can qualify for Medicaid.

Working does not necessarily mean losing access to federal or state health care benefits. There are protections in place to help people who receive disability benefits and who work to keep those important benefits.

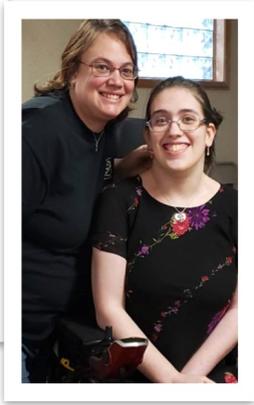
Disability Options Network is an Employment Network and can support people with disabilities under the Ticket to Work program with Social Security Administration.

If you would like to learn more about how your benefits might be impacted if you would like to consider returning to work, please contact the Center for Independent Living, Disability Options Network, and ask to speak to Jenn Britton, who has been trained as a community partner benefits counselor, and can provide guidance to consumers wanting to know how their benefits will be impacted by a paycheck.

## Out and About

### Fishing Derby

On May 10th, Disability Options Network hosted their annual fishing trip. Consumers, employees, and family members enjoyed a beautiful day at the lake.



### King & Queen Dance

On April 26th, DON held a disco themed night. Consumers enjoyed dancing to the groovy music and enjoyed food donated by local businesses.



### Summer Bash



On June 21st, DON hosted their annual summer event at Cascade Park. Beautiful weather made for a great day to mingle with friends, co-workers and consumers as a nice kick-off to summertime.

## **Meet Your Coordinator, Jeannie Surgalski**

I have been with Disability Options Network for 8 ½ years. Being a part of the CIL, I have worn many hats, but Housing is my focus. The most fulfilling part of being an Independent Living Coordinator is helping consumers locate accessible housing in Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

In the years before DON, I worked at the Butler Blind Association, the Butler Housing Authority, Challenges-Options in Aging, and Butler Catholic Charities as a Homeless Caseworker.

I have not traveled far from where I grew up in Ambridge. Butler has been home for forty-one years. I unexpectedly ended up working in New Castle. I was a single mom for many years. I have a son, age 35, who lives in Philly. My daughter, aged 32, just moved back to Pennsylvania from California. We have had many cats over the years but I am now owned by an orange tabby, named Colby.

I enjoy fishing, reading and being out in nature. The beach is my favorite place on earth.

## **The Wellness Program**

Disability Options Network is offering a new, innovative and consumer-driven Holistic Wellness Program based at the Thaddeus Stevens Building. The Wellness Program will focus on the Eight Dimensions of Wellness which include physical, Emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, occupational and financial.

The program is designed to be self-directed with each participants setting individualized goals and objectives. Participants are invited to include their attendant/care giver in all aspects of the program. Participants will develop personalized, daily wellness activities and implement those activities throughout the following week to reach their personal wellness goals.

The next cohort will begin in early September.

For more information or to request an application to participate, please contact Fiona Snyder at 724-652-5144 ext. 232.



## **DON to Receive Award this Fall**

DON will be honored at the 5th annual Impact Awards luncheon hosted by the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce on September 27. The luncheon is meant to celebrate the community and economic development contributions in Lawrence County and organizations that invest their resources to make the county a better place to live and work. It also features the graduation ceremony for the Leadership Lawrence County Class of 2019.

DON is honored to be receiving the Community Development Champion Award.

### **Problem Solving 101**

Encountering problems in life is something we can all relate to. These problems can range from minor and solvable without a second thought to a roadblock that takes up all of our time, and heaps on stress and worry until it's taken care of. No matter what the problem is, though, there is a basic process that we can use in order to determine the best option available.

#### Step 1: What is the problem?

You want to really figure out what the problem is. Give it a name! Label it. Some problems might need to be broken down into smaller pieces and dealt with individually; that's okay! For example, let's say that the washing machine is broken. This is actually a few problems put together: Clothes aren't getting clean, and there is no money budgeted to fix the machine. One may be able to be solved in the short term, while you work on a longer-term solution.

#### Step 2: What are your choices?

For this step, you want to take each individual problem and spend time working through the choices you have. They aren't all going to be the best option, and some might be very uncomfortable choices, but you need to see and understand all your options to pick what works best for you. You need to come up with at least 3 or 4 options to give yourself choices. Let's use our example above. We'll work with the first identified problem: the clothes aren't getting clean. Option 1 is probably going to be 'fix the washer', but that doesn't give us all the possible solutions. We'll add a few more choices. Option 2: "hand wash clothes in the sink". Option 3: "go to a laundromat". Option 4: "ask to use the washing machine at a friend's house." Some of these choices are going to be more desirable than others, but now you have a list of possible ways to approach this problem, instead of only one.

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**Step 3: What are the likely consequences of these choices?**

For each of your options, you want to consider what will happen if you pick that choice. You're considering the good things, as well as the bad, and you're looking at both short-and long-term results that might happen. For our example options, we'll look at the pros and cons (good and bad) of Option 2 (hand washing the clothes in the sink): The Laundry will be clean, but it will take a lot more time. You will likely save money on the water bill but end up using more laundry soap.

**Step 4: Decide on your best option**

Now that you've figured out the potential outcomes of each option you have, it's time to make a choice. Almost every decision is going to have positive and negative consequences—your job is to pick the one that you are the most comfortable with. Can you live with the good AND the bad things that come with making that decision?

**Step 5: Act!**

After doing all this work, you have to actually take action on the decision you have made. Deciding to paint a wall doesn't make the paintbrush get up and dip itself. You have already considered the good and the bad parts of what consequences your decision will have and have decided that you can live with them. The only thing left is to act.

**Step 6: Evaluate your choice**

You thought we were done, didn't you? While it doesn't seem like it should be part of this process, you need to take the time to consider how your choice went. Now that you've put your plan into practice, did it work out the way you thought it would? What would you change in the future if you had to do this again? Would you make the same choice, or are other options looking like a better idea now?

## **DON Insurance Agency**

DON Insurance Agency will soon celebrate it's first anniversary and it continues to grow. The Agency is now located at the Central Building on 101 S. Mercer St, Suite 104 in downtown New Castle, PA.

Employees of DON have entrusted DON Insurance Agency to provide and issue their insurance coverages for their Auto, Home & Renter's Policies and have seen a savings in their insurance premiums. For example:

- Lora Kobayashi saved over \$768
- Eric Danielson saved over \$1000
- Jason Ketchel saved over \$600

In addition to Auto, Home and Renter's Insurance, DON Insurance Agency also handle Annuities, Commercial Lines of Coverage, Life and Recreational Vehicle Insurance through a network of independent insurance companies. The agency is open to the public, not just company employees.

Contact John Magliocca or Melissa Librizzi at (724) 698-1807 for all your insurance needs and see how much you might save.

## Traveling with a Disability

Traveling can be stressful and infuriating. Millions of Americans will experience the lines, lost luggage, and delayed flights that can cause someone to have a bad day. But for a smaller subset of Americans, those with disabilities, travel can be a nightmare. In a recent news story, an amputee had his lithium batteries confiscated by airport security. He had gone through the process of having them pre-approved and had documentation to prove it. He was forced to stay in bed his entire vacation because no one would listen. Two years ago, a man with cerebral palsy was forced to crawl from the airplane to his wheelchair at the gate when the aisle chair that was supposed to be waiting for him wasn't present. He had repeatedly stated that he had to use the bathroom very badly, but again no one would listen. Traveling is a time when people with disabilities can lose their dignity and we need more awareness about these issues. Most travel issues related to disabilities are not as dramatic as these examples but can still be dehumanizing.

I can relate to these stories. When my husband and I sat down for our flight home after I accompanied him on a work trip, I looked at him and said, "I wish I was normal." The moment you enter the airport doors you might feel like everyone's eyes are on you wondering, why you are there. They will look to your traveling companion, assuming you are too incompetent to respond to questions. And if you are alone even for a moment, they will ask you if you are lost. Some of these people are well meaning of course, but ignorance takes a toll over time.

So, if you are someone with a disability, remember, you have the same rights as any other traveler and you need to know what you are stepping into emotionally before you decide to take a trip. If you are not someone with a disability, please remember when you interact with someone who has a disability that good intentions, while noble, are not as important as dignity.

Written by:  
*Amanda McCoy*

## Help to Manage Medications

Keeping track of prescription medications can be a confusing and potentially dangerous task for many. The problem of medication overload is a big one. More than 32 million Americans – 10% of the populations – are on at least five different prescription drugs. Thankfully, services like PillPack, My Med Pak, etc, offer a simple way to package your medications in dosages packets and delivery these packages right to your door. Ask your pharmacist for services available in your area.



## Freedom Fair Fireworks Festival 2019

DON is organizing the Freedom Fair Fireworks Festival for a second year. The event will take place Saturday, July 20, 2019. The festivities start at 10 am and conclude with fireworks at 10 pm.

This year's event will include disability information vendors, food vendors, craft vendors, information vendors, a hot dog eating contest, lego building contest, a children's fashion show, children's fireworks and street entertainers such as a juggler, stilt walker, and a balloon artist. Also, several bands will be performing - Dante Thomas Swing Band, Lawrence County Brass, Eugene & The Nightcrawlers, The Dorals, and Train Wreck.



Look for an advertisement in the Weekly Bargain Bulletin or you may hear our radio commercials on 95.1 WILLIE FM or 1200 WSKY AM News.

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