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MetroWest

Center for Independent Living, Inc.

December

Along with everyone, we at MWCIL are shocked and saddened by the tragedy in Newtown. We hope that this horrible event finally tips the scales, and mental health services and attitudes improve so that more people living with mental illness can get the help that they need. Gun control laws are needed to ban automatic assault weapons. And all gun sales need to include mandatory background checks.

The shakeup in Governor Patrick's cabinet (replacing 4 of 10 Secretaries) was recently in the news, along with the Senate vote on the U.N. Disability Rights Treaty.

We would like to thank everyone who made our first annual Awards and Fundraiser Gala a success. In our last newsflash, we neglected to mention the MA Senate, MA House of Representatives and the City of Framingham suprising me with citations, knowing that I would *need* this boost to get through the Roast! I appreciate the kind words.

We wish everyone a happy holiday season!

from Paul W. Spooner,
Executive Director of MWCIL

Newtown Tragedy

Statement Issued from the Autistic Self Advocacy Network

In response to media reports that the perpetrator of the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut may have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum or with a psychiatric disability, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) issued the following statement on December 14

"Our hearts go out to the victims of today's shooting massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut and their families. Recent media reports have suggested that the perpetrator of this violence, Adam Lanza, may have been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a diagnosis on the autism spectrum, or with another psychiatric disability.

In either event, it is imperative that as we mourn the victims of this horrific tragedy that commentators and the media avoid drawing inappropriate and unfounded links between autism or other disabilities and violence.



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Holiday Open House

Thanks to everyone who attended our annual open house on December 14. We enjoyed the company of consumers, staff, BOD, elected officials, regional service people, and staff from other IL Centers. We've posted photos of the event on our website.

[MWCIL Photos](#)

Donations

If you appreciate MWCIL and the support it provides you, please consider a gift of any amount. By showing your appreciation and giving back, MWCIL can provide more services for the community. We thank you! Go to [MWCIL Webpage](#) or click on the Donate button.

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Autistic Americans and individuals with other disabilities are no more likely to commit violent crime than non-disabled people. In fact, people with disabilities of all kinds, including autism, are vastly more likely to be the victims of violent crime than the perpetrators.

Should the shooter in today's shooting prove to in fact be diagnosed on the autism spectrum or with another disability, the millions of Americans with disabilities should be no more implicated in his actions than the non-disabled population is responsible for those of non-disabled shooters.

Today's violence was the act of an individual.

We urge media, government and community leaders to speak out against any effort to spuriously link the Autistic or broader disability community with violent crime. Autistic Americans and other groups of people with disabilities persist in facing discrimination and segregation in school, the workplace and the general community. In this terrible time, our society should not further stigmatize our community.

As our great nation has so many times in the past, let us come together to both mourn those killed by acts of heinous murder and defend all parts of our country from the scourge of stigma and prejudice."

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The U.S. Senate failed to ratify the treaty on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. MA Senator John Kerry says that the efforts are not over, and another vote will happen next year - with better results we hope. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is detailed on this [UN website](#).

The scene and the misinformed rhetoric surrounding this vote were surreal. Former Senator Bob Dole sat at the front of the Senate floor, in a wheelchair, and asked that voters support the treaty. The 61 votes for and 38 against did not meet the 2/3 required. Anderson Cooper interviewed Senator Mike Lee, and confronted him on his misinformed viewpoints. While Cooper didn't change Lee's mind, the interview provides some insights into the fearful and paranoid opposition. Abortion rights, and parental rights somehow made their way into a discussion about international disability rights. [The Blaze](#) covered the Cooper interview.

Let's hope our legislators regain their common sense before the next vote!

Power Soccer in Boston



The newly formed Boston Brakers, a power wheelchair soccer team, played their first game against the Sudbury Sharp Shooters on December 1 at the Tobin Community Center in Boston's Mission

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Hill. The Brakers scored one goal against the seasoned Sharp Shooters. They would like to see more local teams form, and encourage everyone to come see them play at the Tobin Center on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 12 - 2. Visit their [Facebook page](#) for photos from the first game.

"The Boston Brakers came about after the US Power Soccer Association was invited to Boston this past May 12th to hold a soccer clinic for anyone in a power wheelchair who wanted a chance to try out the sport. After a great turnout, the newly trained players with the support of the Boston Self Help Center (BSHC) and court time provided by the Tobin, continued to practice and scrimmage among themselves until recently joining a league.

The game is played in a gymnasium with 4 power wheelchair players to a side. Each team has a goalie, center and 2 wings. Using bumper guards and a larger soccer style ball, the players pass and push the ball up court to score on the opposing goal. There are two 20 minute periods separated by a 10 minute halftime.

Power Soccer is gaining popularity in Massachusetts. Already there are teams in Sudbury, Canton, and Auburn. It now looks like Boston can officially be added to that list. Within days following the May soccer clinic event, the Mission Hill / Fenway Trust awarded BSHC a grant to purchase startup power soccer equipment (plastic bumper guards and large soccer balls). Joining a league and now hosting its first game are major milestones for this group.

Here's a [youtube clip](#) of the Boston Brakers playing soccer.

For more information regarding Power Soccer and joining in future power soccer activities, call Jim Wice, the Power Soccer Project Director, at 617-772-0203, or to write to him at jwice@email.com. "



Thanks to Greater Boston Chapter of National Spinal Cord Injury Association for this story.

Governor Patrick Changes his Cabinet

After Governor Patrick asked for a 2 year commitment from his 10 member cabinet, 4 Secretaries have resigned.

JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, is replaced by John Polanowicz who currently

runs St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Brighton.

Jay Gonzalez, Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, is replaced by Glen Shor who has been the head of the Connector, the state agency that helps people shop for health insurance.

Paul Reville, the Secretary of Education, is replaced by Matthew Malone, the Superintendent of the Brockton Public Schools.

Marybeth Heffernan, the Secretary of Public Safety, is replaced by Suffolk County Sheriff Andrea Cabral.

We will miss the contributions of Secretary Bigby and Secretary Gonzalez to disability issues.



AgrAbility

Say What?

AgrAbility is a USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) sponsored program that assists farmers, ranchers and other agricultural workers with disabilities. While no contacts are listed for Massachusetts, the 20 year old program sounds very positive. The [University of Maine AgrAbility program](#) provides services for Maine.

According to an AgrAbility flyer: "At its heart, AgrAbility is a rural job creation and retention program. The people it serves are accustomed to hard work and typically shun government handouts. What they need are the tools to keep making a living in agriculture after a disability, and AgrAbility staff members have a toolbox of potential solutions to help them".



In addition to working with farmers who have acquired a disability, AgrAbility also funds agricultural training for returning veterans with disabilities, particularly TBI and PTSD.

The Toolbox section of the national website has Assitive Technology solutions for every aspect of farming. Many of the suggested tools would be helpful for the suburban gardener.

AgrAbility typically conducts assessments to determine the

barriers that need to be overcome. Peer support programs are also important.

Check out the [AgrAbility website](#), and learn more about this valuable program.

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