



MetroWest Center For Independent Living

People with Disabilities Living in the Community

December 2014



We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

We enjoyed our annual Holiday Open House. As usual, it was a treat to see consumers and friends in a non-working setting.

Along with the new governor, we're expecting some changes from the State house in the new year. Secretaries, Commissioners, Legislators, and priorities may change, so we will all have to adjust, educate and advocate to ensure our priorities continue to be heard.

We wish everyone a wonderful holiday season, and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Paul W. Spooner, Executive Director
MetroWest Center for Independent Living

Holiday Open House

Thanks to everyone who attended our annual Holiday Open House, and thanks to the MA Statewide Independent Living Council for co-hosting! We also celebrated Rose's birthday - she was very happy (*NOT!*) to be the center of attention. Photos from the event are posted on our [website](#).

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MWCIL




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Living

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Join Our Mailing List!

20 Years
**Americans with
Disabilities Act**
July 26th celebrating 20 years of the ADA

Holiday Tips

Holiday parties and events can be landmines for anyone. We all have personal family baggage, limits on our resources and a finite amount of energy. Psych Central has some great advice for everyone on how to manage your holidays, limit your stress, and enjoy your family and friends. Visit their [Coping with the Holidays](#) web pages for some common sense ideas on how to proactively get the most out of the season. Psych Central is geared towards people with mental health conditions, but everyone can benefit from their

advice.

Emergency Preparedness

As we head into winter, with a touch of global warming, the weather can disrupt transportation, heat and electricity, water and more. Now is the time to make sure that you have access to what you need, regardless of the circumstances. Make a written plan, post emergency phone numbers, sign up with local responders and/or Town Hall, talk to your friends and care-workers and make an emergency kit with necessities. *If we're lucky, the plans will not be needed.*

Visit the [MWCIL Emergency Preparedness webpage](#) for resources on how to plan for an emergency.

Download this [document from the Red Cross](#) to help make your plans.

Opposition to New Jersey Assisted Suicide Bill

New Jersey is in the midst of rushing through a bill to legalize assisted suicide - Bill S382. John Kelly of Second Thoughts and Not Dead Yet is asking that opponents please *rush an email to senators in NJ*. While the hearing is Monday, December 15, and emails now won't get into the official testimony, we should continue to loudly oppose this bill. The recent death of Brittany Maynard escalated the issue. Whether or not assisted suicide was the right path for her, the proposed legislation has inadequate safeguards, and is a recipe for abuse of elders and people with disabilities.

Visit the [Second Thoughts website](#) for more information.

Proposed Email:

TO: SenVitale@njleg.org;
CC: SenAllen@njleg.org; SenAddiego@njleg.org;
SenWhelan@njleg.org; SenRice@njleg.org;
SenGordon@njleg.org; SenCodey@njleg.org;
SenMadden@njleg.org; OLSAideSHH@njleg.org;
BCC: dcoleman@NotDeadYet.org;
JKelly@NotDeadYet.org;

SUBJECT: Testimony against S382 from [Your Name]

BODY OF THE EMAIL:

"Testimony of [*your name*] Before the New Jersey State Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee, December 15, 2014

Dear Chairman Vitale, Members of the Committee:

My name is [*Your Name, optional affiliation*], and I am testifying against the assisted suicide bill, S382."
[*Insert your opinion and story*]

FAQ - Interacting with a Guide Dog Team

Thanks to John Winske and John Usinas of the Disability Policy Consortium for this link.

Patty Fletcher of Campbell's Calamites has posted an excellent [FAQ on Interacting with a Guide Dog Team](#). Top Tip: "When in Doubt, Ask the Handler!". Patty defines the "team" concept, along with specific details on how the team works together, and how others should interact with the team.

One take-away, besides learning new facts to replace my many misconceptions, is *talk to the person!*

Unless you have your own Guide Dog, we guarantee that you will learn something after reading this FAQ guide.

How Medicaid Forces Families Like Mine to Stay Poor

by Andrea Louise Campbell

This story, provided by [Vox.com](#), is about a family in California, and how Medicaid's means testing requires recipients to become and stay poor. The author is the sister-in-law of a woman who gets a significant disability in an accident. Among the many disturbing parts of Medicaid and Medi-Cal is that it is almost impossible to find out how they really work. The family learned about some facts 2 years after they were relevant, and officials still couldn't explain what the family should do ("Share

of Cost" for example).

Does this happen in Massachusetts? While the story line may not follow exactly the same path, the short answer is yes. In order to receive disability benefits needed to survive, recipients have to be poor with no assets and little income.

Quoted from the story (fyi: Massachusetts is the same):

"Medi-Cal is a poor person's program,...And it's not really even insurance - it's a loan." Thus, any inheritances Dave and Marcella might receive will go to Medi-Cal. Any Medi-Cal services that Marcella uses after the age of 55 will be added to a tab that she will rack up over the rest of her life; when she and my brother die, the state will make a claim on their estate for reimbursement, as Logan will no longer be a minor at that point. He will inherit nothing.

Thank you to John Winske from the Disability Policy Consortium for this link.

A Leading Disability Advocate Leaves the Senate

by Ramsey Cox

Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who authored the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), bid farewell to the Senate after 30 years of service. Harkin said government is about "giving hope to the hopeless."

[read more from The Hill](#)

Senator Harkin at the NCIL March on Washington last July:



Thanks to AAPD for the link.

Service Dog Issue in Franklin

The [Milford Daily News and Wicked Local](#) posted this story about a first grade student and his service dog in Franklin, MA (MWCIL Service Area). Austin recently received a service dog who can detect and respond to Austin's seizures. Unfortunately, the Franklin school district refused to assign Austin's aid to handle the dog.

Some of the issues included school contracts and ADA requirements. According to [Canines for Disabled Kids](#), the ADA does not require the school district to provide a handler for the dog. The school district said that special education aides are not trained to deal with a dog.

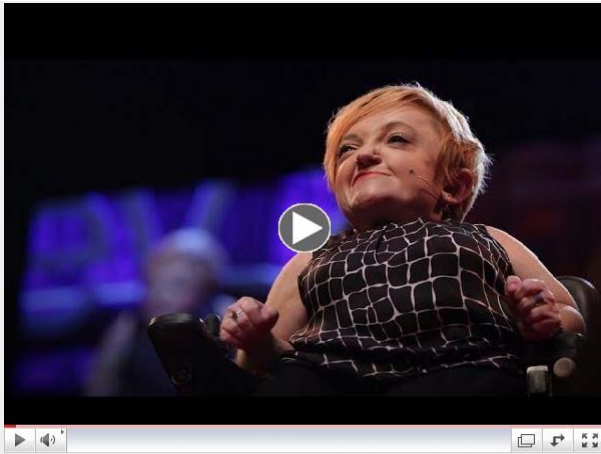
After Austin's mother posted the story on social media and was interviewed on television, the district relented and Austin will be able to have his dog in school.

While the details have not been made public, a job advertisement for a dog handler (30-40 hours/week) in the Franklin Schools was recently seen in the newspaper.

We have to think that there may be other options besides hiring a full time dog handler - it just doesn't feel like a common sense solution, but regardless, we are glad that Austin will have the protection at school of his service dog.

Sad News from Australia

We were saddened to learn of the death of Stella Young. Her spirit and on-point opinions will live on in her YouTube documentaries.



Stella Young: I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much

Also read this article by Andrew Street printed in the Sydney Morning Herald titled How Stella Young Changed My Mind About Matters of Life and Death. She will be missed.

Got News?

Send us your ideas!

This monthly section is for news and comments from our readers. You can suggest something for us to research, give your opinion on a topic (relevant to people with disabilities of course), or let us know of what is working and what needs improvement in the community. Please email Sue at srorke@mwcil.org. Thanks!

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