

New Horizons

Housing That Supports Independence

Study finds small but persistent NJ voter disability gap By Michael Hill Correspondent NJTV News

Asbury Park's Wali Mohammed injured in a car accident was among the 16 million Americans with disabilities who voted in last year's presidential election, according to a new Rutgers University study. Mohammed says he physically goes to vote in all elections with hope for those sworn in to office.

"I just don't believe they know the struggles that a person with all disabilities, I don't care what kind of disability, I don't think they know what they go through every day just to get up in this chair, just to move around," said Mohammed.

Rutgers Professors Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse crunched Census Bureau data and found more than 62 percent of registered voters without disabilities voted in the Nov. 8 election and nearly 56 percent with disabilities voted.

"I think the good news is that a majority of people with disabilities do vote and clearly they are as interested in the issues as people without disabilities. When we ask them questions about do you follow politics, are you interested in the issues, there really is not a difference there," said Schur.

The professors found the disability gap, the percentage between those with and those without disabilities, persists across the last three presidential elections. Kruse, who was recognized by the Obama administration as a senior economist, calls the gap sobering.

"We were kind of hoping that we would see some closing of that disability gap, but it hasn't. That means it's very stubborn and there's a lot of things going on," said Kruse.

Accessibility among them a week before the 27th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"I think that progress has been much too slow in making polling places accessible," said Kruse.

"Some people say, well vote by mail and that'll just solve the problem. And we found a majority of people with disabilities say that they would prefer to vote in person in a polling place. There's a symbolic and important aspect of showing up and being counted and participating with others in the act of voting," said Schur.

During last month's national disability voter registration week, advocates from the Alliance Center for Independence, New Jersey League of Women Voters and several other organizations staged Rev Up rallies to sign up voters with disabilities.

"With 56 million people with disabilities in our country. We need to have our voice heard, and in order to do that we need to be out, we need to be voting, we need to be getting involved. Not just at home posting on social media, but out in people's faces," said Alliance Center for Independence Executive Director Carole Tonks.



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“My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



Recently, our family went on a summer vacation to Florida, to our favorite place—Walt Disney World. This required that we get on a plane for the two hour ride from New Jersey to Orlando, Florida. In the past, when the kids were young, we were able to use the bathrooms on the flight, even though they are not even big enough for one person, let alone a mother and her daughter. Today, however things are different. Jen is a woman, with a disability, who needs a handicapped bathroom. Guess what? There aren't any on short flights such as these.

This is something that I was amazed to find out, and that is that on most short domestic flights in the US, most of the planes flying those routes are Airbus 320 which only have very small standard lavatories—none for disabled people. In addition, originally, airlines were exempted from the Americans with Disabilities Act until it was revised in 1986 under the 1986 Air Carrier Access Act, which has required accessible lavatories on the wider- twin aisle planes. The DOT has an Access Advisory Committee which has been studying changes to the current law that would require more accessibility on the single-aisle planes such as the 737 or the A320.

Even the larger planes which fly overseas on long trips, don't really have the kind of accessible lavatories that a disabled person needs. Most reports that I have read state that these lavatories are still too small to get a regular size wheelchair in, for someone to transfer out of and onto the toilet. Many folks with a disability claim to dehydrate the day prior to a flight, so that they will not have to use the restrooms on a plane. This seems ridiculous knowing that the airlines have made concessions to people so as to bring their companion animals on the flight with them. These “service” animals are important to that person, however I would think that solving the bathroom issue would be paramount to the companion issue.

Suffice it to say, Jen was okay for our trip, having taking care of business prior to our flight. One thing to note, however is that there are more delays today on flights, which can add to the time, someone is forced to sit on the plane. Our flight out of Philadelphia was delayed over an hour going out, and two hours coming back—time which could be made more difficult for someone with a disability who is unable to use the lavatory on a plane.

This condition is really unacceptable. I know friends who use a wheelchair and simply don't fly anymore, because of the embarrassment or inconvenience of having to be “loaded” on the plane and into a seat by way of an aisle chair. This is more like a hand truck for packages than for people. Also, those who use a power chair, and try to take that chair on the plane, have found it to be completely destroyed, leaving them without their most precious asset.

This really is a call to action. We all need to let our Federal Legislators know that this present condition is unacceptable, and that people with mobility issues have the right to travel just like anyone else.



From Norman's Desk

This year will be the twelfth time in my life that I cast a vote for the governor of NJ. I remember back in 1973 being forced to vote two weeks ahead of time by absentee ballot because my polling place was not accessible. I remember in 1992 being challenged at the poll because of my disability, and I remember the empowerment I felt by calling a state hotline while at the poll to “fix” the situation to my satisfaction.

Times have changed for people with disabilities in terms of voting ease. Now most polling places and polling booths are accessible. Voting early by mail is encouraged for everyone in many states. Yes, there are still barriers to voting—especially in other states, but there is no excuse for any person with a disability not to vote.

Yet LAST YEAR I read an article FROM the Arizona Capital Times about people with disabilities voting, and it cited a report from the Research Alliance for Accessible Voting. The report said that people with disabilities voted at a lower rate than their able-bodied peers in the 2012 election. The rate was 56.9% in the able community vs 48.1% for people with disabilities. Our vote was 12% less than people who were able-bodied, and we wonder why some elected off do not pay attention to us!

The article also contained a quote from Phil Pangrazio, a person with a disability and the CEO of an Arizona-based center for independent living. Pangrazio said: “With barely half of our community overall voting in any given election, it is critical that we each take our civic right – and our duty – seriously. Not voting may just be one of the most selfish and irresponsible acts a citizen could commit.”

I agree with Pangrazio—especially with what is happening in Washington and Trenton these days. Nothing about us without us, right? Well, the decision process for our issues is moving ahead at all levels of government. We need to be involved! We need to be involved from the start by voting! Before we demonstrate, before we sit-in, before we get arrested, WE NEED TO VOTE!!! The rest is meaningless unless we exercise our right to vote. To paraphrase our great leader Justin Dart: We need to vote as if our lives dependent on it! We all need to vote on November 7!

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Reading to Therapy Dogs Improves Student Literacy Attitudes

Reprinted from Disabled World 05-31-2017

Second-grade students who read aloud to dogs in an afterschool program demonstrated improved attitudes about reading, according to researchers at Tufts Institute for Human-Animal Interaction at Tufts University.

Reading skills are often associated with improved academic performance and positive attitudes about school in children. Researchers wanted to learn if animal-assisted intervention in the form of reading aloud to dogs in a classroom setting could contribute to improved skills and attitudes.

"Previous studies have evaluated the impact of therapy dogs in children's literacy programs outside of the academic setting, including our previous research evaluating children reading to dogs in a library program," said the study's corresponding author Deborah Linder, D.V.M., research assistant professor at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University and associate director of Tufts Institute for Human-Animal Interaction. "However, little has been done to assess the effects of this type of reading program in schools, where children may experience greater stress, challenging social situations and fear of negative feedback."



For this pilot study, participating second-grade public school students were divided into two groups.

To be eligible to participate, children had to meet the guidelines for average second grade literacy skills, as measured by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), a tool used by the school to assess reading skills. For six weeks, one group read to a therapy dog for 30 minutes once a week; a control group followed a standard classroom curriculum. Children's reading skills were assessed biweekly and attitudes about reading were assessed pre- and post-intervention. Proper training and health requirements were put in place to ensure the health and safety of the animals, their handlers and the children involved.

As part of the DIBELS assessment of reading skills, the study participants read passages aloud for one minute while teachers assessed their ability to read and comprehend the passage. Reading attitudes were assessed using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), which asks 10 questions about attitudes to recreational reading and 10 about academic reading. Children select pictorial responses that offer expressions ranging from "very upset" to "very happy."

Scores assessing academic reading attitudes increased significantly among the children who read aloud to dogs. Reading skill scores did not change significantly in either group, nor did attitudes about recreational reading outside of school.

It is possible that reading skills did not improve for the control or intervention group because participants had average reading skills; evaluating children reading below grade level may demonstrate a larger impact, suggest the researchers. Other influencing factors that warrant further study include frequency of the read-aloud sessions and duration of the interventions; longer or more frequent programs may show a greater difference between the control and treatment groups.

"One of the most important aspects of facilitating reading skill development is motivating a child to engage in reading," said the study's senior author Lisa Freeman, D.V.M, Ph.D., professor at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine and director of Tufts Institute for Human-Animal Interaction.

"Our results suggest that reading to dogs in an academic setting has the potential to provide motivation, which will help inform future research into this animal-assisted intervention," Linder added.



Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
1-Aug	Tue	Hamilton Games & Salad Making	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:00 PM
3-Aug	Thu	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
15-Aug	Tue	Hamilton Baking with Dana 	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:00 PM
24-Aug	Thu	Hamilton Gardening & Crafts	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:00 PM
30-Aug	Wed	Hamilton Wellness	Prog. Time 5:00 -6:30 PM



Lawrence Goes On

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
2-Aug	Wed	Lawrence Games	Prog. Time 3:00 - 5:00 PM
3-Aug	Thu	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping 	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
9-Aug	Wed	Lawrence Games	Prog. Time 3:00 - 5:00 PM
16-Aug	Wed	Lawrence Games - Day Program	Prog. Time 1:00 - 3:00 PM



St Gregory Church Volunteers Provided Robbinsville Tenants With New Clothing

Bags and bags of new shirts, pants and underwear with tags intact came to Robbinsville from St Gregory Church. Tenants were invited to take items they needed and many responded to the offer. Thank you St. Greg volunteers!

Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
10-Aug	Thu	Robbinsville Games & Baking w/ Dana	Prog. Time 6:30 - 9:30 PM
14-Aug	Mon	Robbinsville Games	Prog. Time 6:30 - 8:30 PM
15-Aug	Tue	Robbinsville Chair Yoga	Prog. Time 6:00 - 7:00 PM
22-Aug	Tue	Robbinsville Gardening & Crafts	Prog. Time 6:30 - 9:00 PM
28-Aug	Mon	Robbinsville Water Balloons	Prog. Time 6:30 - 8:00 PM



Our flower and vegetable garden in Robbinsville is really beautiful



Tenants enjoy a delicious salad before going to hear a concert in the park at Robbinsville



Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
8/3/17	Thu	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM
8/8/17	Tue	Heart to Hearts Chair massage	1:15 PM to 3:15 PM
8/16/17	Wed	Tenant Movie/Puzzle Afternoon	2:00 PM
8/23/17	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM
8/24/17	Thu	Greenwood Cemetery/Princeton Abby Cemetery Preplanning Seminar	1:30 PM



Starting in August we will have the "Hopewell Book Exchange" for the tenants in the Community Room.

As a T5 paraplegic with two young boys, a wife, a full-time job and a nonprofit to run, I can use all the help I can get around the house to stay on top of things. With that in mind, I decided to go all-in on the emerging smart tech revolution when I remodeled our house to make it more accessible following my injury two years ago. When going the smart home route, there are a number of good options — Amazon’s Echo, Google’s Home, Apple’s HomeKit — all voice-operated, cloud-based, artificial intelligence smart home solutions, each with slightly different options. The Echo retails for \$179.99; Google Home for \$129; and Apple’s HomeKit can run off any iOS-using device. All three require the purchase of compatible home appliances.



I decided to go with Amazon Echo, a simple black cylinder that sits on my dresser and serves as the central brain connecting an array of applications and appliances to help my family with day-to-day tasks and also help me live more independently. In addition to my main Echo, I have numerous Echo Dots placed throughout the house (Echo Dot is the smaller, speakerless version of the Echo, which retails for \$49.99).

Right out of the box, after the initial set-up, all you have to do to use the Echo is utter its wake-up word, “Alexa.” Once someone says the magic word, the Echo will listen and try to answer whatever question, or do whatever task is commanded next. I can ask Alexa how long my commute will be, what the weather forecast is, or what’s on my calendar. Alexa’s responses are almost instantaneous — giving me the quickest route to the office, or advising me to dress warm because the weather forecast suggests a drop in temperature. My wife uses Alexa to order pizza delivered or to call Uber. We use it to set timers, reminders, and to keep track of our grocery list. My kids use it to help with checking their math homework by asking, “Alexa, what is 12 times 12?” The list of things Alexa can do is simply amazing and grows with each update. Or if you’re looking for a Bluetooth speaker to play your music library from your tablet or smart phone, Alexa can do that, too. The sound quality is better than you’d expect.

What makes the Amazon Echo a truly marvelous tool for people with spinal cord injuries is its ability to integrate with third-party smart-home solutions. The list of third-party solutions continues to grow daily, but here are a few solutions I’ve integrated with the Echo to simplify my daily life.

- Integrating my Echo with Phillips Hue smart lights gives me the ability to control my kitchen, living room, and master bedroom lights with simple voice commands. “Alexa, turn off the kitchen lights. Alexa, turn on the bedroom lights.” I replaced the vast majority of my home’s standard lights with Philips Hue lights that are controlled by Alexa. My kids tend to leave lights on wherever they go, but now I can turn everything off with a simple voice command.



The Amazon Echo (left) and Dot (right) can be used to turn lights off and on as well as tap into your favorite playlists or answer trivia questions.



- Integrating my Echo with the Harmony Hub and Universal Remote Control gives me voice control of my entire media center. I can say, “Alexa, turn off the TV,” as I’m getting ready for bedtime. Or I can tell Alexa to turn on Netflix if I feel like binge watching *Breaking Bad*. One feature I really like is being able to turn off my entire living room media center from the comfort of my bedroom. With Echo, you don’t have to be in the same room as the appliance you want to control — you can do it from anywhere you have an Echo or Echo Dot.

Integrate Harmony with Echo and you can control your entertainment center with your voice

- Integrating my Echo with the Samsung SmartThings Hub gives me the ability to turn lamps and other appliances on and off. Whatever I plug into a SmartThings Smart Outlet is at my command. You can also swap out your standard light switches with SmartThings Smart Switches to allow them to be controlled by the Echo. I control a floor heater and table fan that are plugged into SmartThings Smart Outlets.

- Integrating my Echo with Nest allows me to turn up the AC or heater with a simple voice command. Being able to control my Nest thermostats with my voice and keep my house just the temperature I want is my favorite feature.

“Alexa, turn the downstairs heater to 70 degrees.” Larger homes with dual climate zones can be controlled independently.



SmartThings Hub can be used to control lamps and other appliances that turn on or off.

I’ve been using Amazon Echo and the third-party smart home solutions for over a year now, and I’m truly grateful for this technology. For me, the ability to issue voice commands, without having to transfer into or out of my wheelchair and do the work manually, has saved me an incredible amount of time and frustration.

Resources

- Amazon Echo, www.amazon.com/echo
- Apple HomeKit, www.apple.com/ios/home
- Google Home, madeby.google.com/home
- Phillips Hue, www2.meethue.com
- Harmony Hub, www.logitech.com/en-us/product/harmony-hub
- Samsung SmartThings Hub, www.smarthings.com
- Nest, nest.com

**The Atlantic City Airshow
"Thunder Over The Boardwalk"**



Club Freedom

August 23, 2017

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**Transportation \$ 3 per person
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BIRTHDAYS

August 1
Martin Battisti

August 12
Lorraine Schreiber

August 17
Dawn Watkins

August 19
Cindy Arkuszewski

August 21
Chardornay Brown

August 24
Cecilia Funk

August 25
DeManuel Edmondson

August 26
Renea Whitaker

August 30
Cynthia Hill

August 21
Chardornay Brown

August 24
Cecilia Funk

August 25
DeManuel Edmondson

August 26
Renea Whitaker

August 30
Cynthia Hill

August General Recreation

Club Freedom Events Highlighted

5-Aug	Sat	Trenton Thunder Baseball Game	Bus Leaves PFR 5:00 PM
7-Aug	Mon	Day Program -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
8-Aug	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
10-Aug	Thu	Lunch at Seaside Dock, 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFI 9:30 AM
16-Aug	Wed	Dine Out - Dinner - Texas Roadhouse	Bus Leaves PFR 4:30 PM
17-Aug	Thu	Asbury Park Boardwalk 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFI 9:30 AM
19-Aug	Sat	Aquatics Hamilton YMCA	Bus Leaves PFR 11:30 AM
21-Aug	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
22-Aug	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
23-Aug	Wed	Atlantic City Air Show 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFI 9:00 AM
24-Aug	Thu	Columbus Farmers & Flea Market	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
26-Aug	Sat	Trenton Thunder Baseball Game	Bus Leaves PFR 5:00 PM
28-Aug	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM



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GAMES



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