

New Horizons

Housing | nat Supports Independence



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Walmart Sued For Denying Reasonable Accommodations

by **Michelle Diamant** | Reprinted from DisabilityScoop / September 28, 2017

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is accusing Walmart of discrimination for failing to accommodate a longtime store employee with a developmental disability.

The federal agency sued this week alleging that the retail giant violated the Americans with Disabilities Act in the case of Paul Reina who worked as a cart pusher at a Beloit, Wis. location.

Reina, who has a developmental disability and is deaf and visually impaired, had worked at the store for 16 years when a new manager took over. Within a month, Reina was suspended and told to resubmit medical paperwork in order to retain his reasonable accommodations — including the assistance of a job coach — according to the suit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.

Once Reina and his legal guardian provided documentation requesting the continued accommodations, the Walmart store stopped communicating and Reina was ultimately unable to return to work, the EEOC said.

The lawsuit is seeking to recoup lost earnings as well as compensatory and punitive damages for Reina. In addition, the EEOC wants a permanent injunction to prevent Walmart from failing to provide reasonable accommodations in future cases.

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“My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



Well, we are one week away from our Angel Award Dinner, and staff are busy pulling all the last minute details together. Thanks to Board member Karol Moss for heading up this committee and for providing the leadership for this event once again.

At this year's Gala, we are honoring two Mercer County mayor's-- Robbinsville Mayor David Fried, with our June Ronan Angel Award, and West Windsor Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh with our Freedom Bell Award. Both are elected officials for their respective towns.

As we have done in years past, our Angel Award remembers June Ronan, Norman's aunt who was instrumental in establishing Project Freedom in the early days. We honor others in her name, like Mayor Fried, for his support for Project Freedom programs and for people with disabilities. What is most unique about what Mayor Fried has done, is that he has transformed his yearly State of the Township Report into a fundraising event that raises money to help someone in need. Created in 2015, the Mayor calls this program, "Pay It Forward", in which the funds raised at the event, go to provide some specific need in the community of Robbinsville. In years past, he has raised money to purchase a wheelchair accessible van for our Robbinsville tenant Trey Shepherd, as well as making renovations to the home of Debbie Dauer, a Sharon School teacher who has ALS. Over the past three years, his program has raised over \$100,000 for individuals connected to Robbinsville that were in need. A very creative way to present the Township Report and help someone in the process.

Likewise, Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh has continued his steadfast support for a Project Freedom community within West Windsor, since 2006. Under his leadership, an appropriate site was identified for our project, arrangements were made to purchase this site for our community and \$250,000 was contributed to help pay for the engineering and architectural costs so that we could get our project approved by the planning board. In the world of Township politics, these are almost super human accomplishments. Thanks to Mayor Hsueh, our West Windsor construction will start sometime in early March 2018.

Our other honorees are two Project Freedom tenants who have both achieved their independence despite some difficult challenges—Jaime Hooker and Bill Manzo. Both are great examples of people who don't give up, but rather contribute back to society.

And finally, our Employee of the Year Award this year goes to our Woodstown Social Service Coordinator, Sammi DeMaris. Located in Salem County, Sammi has managed our furthestmost site since 2009, with a very minimum amount of support from our central office. It is very gratifying for me, as the boss, to know that our communities are in good hands and having Sammi in Woodstown is most reassuring.

So, our Angel Award Dinner is slated for November 11 and there is still time to call for tickets (609) 278-0075. Hope to see you there.

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 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 officials 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.

One of my heroes in the Disability Movement was Justin Dart. He is credited by many as the force behind the creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dart’s take on people with disabilities voting was simple and succinct: **“Vote as if your life dependent on it...because it does!”**

Voting is a right that every citizen of this great country should exercise. People have died to gain that right. People have died to protect that right. People have died to exercise that right. We need to honor their ultimate sacrifice by voting, and there is no excuse for people with disabilities not to vote.

Norman A. Smith,
Follow me on Twitter @normansmith02
Follow us on Twitter @TheFreedomGuys
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Hamilton Tenant Rides into First in Her First Horse Show

Tina Provost from Project Freedom at Hamilton won two First Place ribbons and medals recently at the 2017 HRH of NJ/ SO Horse Show. Tina rode for the Adaptive Riding Program of the Mercer County Equestrian Center (MCEC).

This was Tina's first competition in a horse show. Tina has been participating in Project Freedom's Equestrian Program for three years run through the Mercer County Equestrian Center (MCEC). This was the first time a tenant from Project Freedom "showed" with the MCEC team.

Tina entered in an equitation class and obstacle course class. She was judged by two judges in each class, an HRH of NJ judge and a Special Olympics judge. Both judges pinned Tina 1st place ribbons and medals in all classes.

HRH stands for Health and Recreation through Horses of New Jersey.

Tina rode a horse named Czar. Czar is owned by Elaine Andrushko of Robbinsville, and she allows MCEC to use Czar in their programs.

Tina has been training at the Mercer County Equestrian Center in weekly riding lessons since 2014.

Overall the MCEC Team riders won 10 first places, 5 seconds, 3 thirds, 1 fourth, and 1 fifth.

MCEC had 4 employees, 4 volunteers, and 2 horses at the show



Tina riding out of the equitation ring proudly holding up her 1st place ribbons and medal. MCEC employee Elizabeth Ruck is leading her horse and MCEC volunteer Staci Bolton



MCEC Team- (starting far left) Tori Hamm, Nicole Patnick, Delaney O'Connell, and Tina Provost. Not pic-



Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
2-Nov	Thu	Robbinsville Fall Craft	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
6-Nov	Mon	Robbinsville Movies	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
9-Nov	Thu	Robbinsville Thanksgiving Games	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
20-Nov	Mon	Robbinsville Baking Pumpkin Pies	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
21-Nov	Tue	Robbinsville Chair Yoga	Prog. Time 6:00 -7:00 PM
27-Nov	Mon	Robbinsville Wellness	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM



Hamilton Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
1-Nov	Wed	Hamilton Baking Pumpkin Pies	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:00 PM
8-Nov	Wed	Hamilton Fall Craft	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:30 PM
9-Nov	Thu	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
17-Nov	Fri	Hamilton Thanksgiving Games	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:00 PM
30-Nov	Thu	Hamilton Wellness	Prog. Time 5:30 -6:30 PM

Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
9-Nov	Thu	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
21-Nov	Tue	Lawrence Fall Craft	Prog. Time 4:00 -6:00 PM
29-Nov	Wed	Lawrence Games	Prog. Time 3:00 - 5:00 PM



Hopewell Events

11/3/17	Fri	Mercer Home health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM to 4:00 PM
11/14/17	Tue	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	1:15 PM to 3:15 PM
11/27/17	Mon	Tenant Movie Afternoon 	starting at 2:00 PM
11/29/17	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM



Celebrate the Holidays
with a
Lawrence Community
Band Concert
December 14th
7PM to 9 PM
Project Freedom
at Lawrence

General Public
All Tenants Invited!

Mercer Tenants who
Need Transportation
Please Call
Mary or Esther in
Robbinsville



Caregivers Act Clears Senate

by Michelle Diament | Reprinted from DisabilityScoop / October 10, 2017

Legislation to establish a federal strategy to address the needs of family caregivers — including those supporting people with developmental disabilities — is gaining steam.

The U.S. Senate unanimously approved a bill known as the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage, or RAISE Family Caregivers Act late last month. The

legislation now goes before the House of Representatives. The measure would direct the secretary of health and human services to create and implement a national plan to “recognize and support family caregivers” that incorporates recommended steps that can be undertaken at the federal, state and local level.

In addition, the bill calls for the secretary to convene a family caregiving advisory council comprised of federal officials and stakeholders in the community to weigh in on what the government can do to assist an estimated 40 million family caregivers nationally.

Sponsored by lawmakers from both parties, the caregivers act has support from Autism Speaks, the Autism Society, Easterseals, United Cerebral Palsy, The Arc and other disability groups.

“By passing the bipartisan RAISE Family Caregivers Act in the Senate, we have taken an important step forward to formally recognize and support our family caregivers across America,” said Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., who spearheaded the legislation along with Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine. “If we are serious about ensuring that our older adults and loved ones with disabilities receive the highest quality care in their own homes, then we owe it to our current and future generations to continue to fight to see the RAISE Family Caregivers Act move forward and be signed into law.”



November General Recreation

Club Freedom Events Highlighted

1-Nov	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
6-Nov	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
7-Nov	Tue	Election Day - Go Vote	
8-Nov	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
9-Nov	Thu	Hamilton/Lawrence Shuttle/Walmart	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
11-Nov	Sat	Angel Award Gala	
13-Nov	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
14-Nov	Tue	Dine Out - Dinner - Cracker Barrel	Bus Leaves PFR 4:30 PM
15-Nov	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
16-Nov	Thu	Mall Trip Jackson - 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
20-Nov	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
22-Nov	Wed	Mall Trip Moorestown Mall 5 Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 A
23-Nov	Thu	Thanksgiving Day PF Offices CLOSED	
24-Nov	Fri	PF Offices Closed	
27-Nov	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
29-Nov	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM



Nov. 2
Nelson Major
Nov 3
Gary Zarrilli
Nov 4
Mark Wagner
Nov. 11
Nil Jseswani
Nov 12
Dawn Taylor
Nov. 13
Wendy Tirado

Nov. 16
Wayne Kraemer
Nov. 18
Lorrie MacGregor
Nancy Mollica
Nov. 22
Frank Vitella
Nov. 23
Nancy Bassetti
Nov. 24
Peggy Newman

Nov. 11
Salvatore John & Nancy Mollica
Nov. 17
Joyce and Vernon Reed



TD Bank Plants Trees at Westampton Complex

Nearly 40 employee volunteers from TD Bank joined the New Jersey Tree Foundation to plant 37 trees and 21 shrubs at Freedom Village in Westampton on Wednesday. TD Tree Days is a community-based program that nurtures and expands urban forests and green spaces in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods.

Since 2010, more than 285,000 trees and shrubs have been planted. Freedom Village is an affordable housing complex with units for residents with disabilities. Volunteers planted Linden, Dogwood, Black Gum and Hornbeam trees throughout the complex.



Feds Take Aim At Inaccessible Housing

Reprinted from Los Angeles Times/TNS by David Zahniser, August 4, 2017



LOS ANGELES — City officials used federal funds to build housing that had sinks, doorways, balconies and other features that could not be used by people in wheelchairs, prosecutors allege in new federal documents.

The complaint, filed this week by the U.S. attorney's office, amends a lawsuit lodged by two whistle-blowers against the Los Angeles and its Community Redevelopment Agency six years ago.

Prosecutors contend the city fraudulently obtained millions of dollars in federal grants by falsely certifying that the money was being spent in a way that complied with federal accessibility laws. Those laws require that a percentage of federally funded housing projects serve tenants who use wheelchairs or have other impairments. In the updated filing, prosecutors said federal housing funds have been provided to the city for more than 300 residential projects since 2001. Yet those properties are "largely inaccessible," the complaint says.

Prosecutors allege that neither the city nor the redevelopment agency maintained a wait list of accessible units for people with disabilities, as required by federal law. They also identified design problems in dozens of projects, such as:

- Balconies too narrow to be used by people in wheelchairs,
- Ramps and doorway thresholds too steep for wheelchairs to roll over,
- Steps that blocked access to common areas,
- Mailboxes, sinks and grab bars installed beyond the reach of wheelchair users,
- A lack of visual alarms and tactile signs to help residents with hearing or visual impairments.

Representatives of City Atty. Mike Feuer declined to comment. Two months ago, Feuer spokesman Rob Wilcox called the U.S. attorney's actions in the case an "abuse of power." Wilcox said the city had already shown its commitment to accessible affordable housing by reaching a legal settlement with three nonprofit groups that made similar allegations. That agreement, approved last year, calls for the city to spend more than \$200 million over a decade to ensure that 4,000 units of affordable housing are accessible to those with disabilities.

One of the three nonprofit groups that settled, Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley, filed the whistle-blower lawsuit, along with a North Hollywood resident who uses a wheelchair.

Prosecutors said that the federal government is entitled to an amount equal to triple the damages suffered for each fraudulent act committed. Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office, said his agency does not have a specific damage amount. "Our goal is to see the United States fully compensated and to deter similar misconduct," Mrozek said in an email.

The complaint also calls for the city to pay penalties. Under the False Claims Act, violations that occurred before Nov. 2, 2015, carry a penalty ranging from \$5,500 to \$11,000, according to the filing.

Project Freedom Inc.
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MOVIES



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Mondays from 10:30 am–2:30 pm
Call 977-1234 if interested