

# New Horizons

Housing | nat Supports Independence



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## How Voters With Disabilities Are Blocked From the Ballot Box

Reprinted from Stateline | February 5, 2018 by Matt Vasilogambros

For decades, Kathy Hoell has struggled to vote. Poll workers have told the 62-year-old Nebraskan, who uses a powered wheelchair and has a brain injury that causes her to speak in a strained and raspy voice, that she isn't smart enough to cast a ballot. They have led her to stairs she couldn't climb and prevented her from using an accessible voting machine because they hadn't powered it on.

"Basically," Hoell said, "I'm a second-class citizen."

The barriers Hoell has faced are not unusual for the more than 35 million voting-age Americans with disabilities. As many jurisdictions return to paper ballots to address cybersecurity concerns — nearly half of Americans now vote on paper ballots, counted digitally or by optical scanners — such obstacles are likely to get worse.

Many people with disabilities cannot mark paper ballots without assistance, so they rely on special voting machines that are equipped with earphones and other modifications. But the return to paper ballots has made poll workers less comfortable with operating machine-based systems, said Michelle Bishop, a voting rights advocate for the National Disability Rights Network. Under increasing pressure to oversee a smooth, secure election, untrained poll workers have discouraged the use of accessible voting machines, leaving voters with disabilities behind.

It's a constant complaint from voters with disabilities nationwide, Bishop said. In the last election, for example, a voter called her to report that a machine was placed in the corner, turned off, with a flower wreath hung on it.

"The message is: You're not wanted here," Bishop said. "We get reports of poll workers discouraging their use. They say, 'I haven't been well trained,' 'It's intimidating to me,' 'We'll set it to the side and get through Election Day.'"

Indeed, according to an October study by the Government Accountability Office, nearly two-thirds of the 137 polling places inspected on Election Day 2016 had at least one impediment to people with disabilities. In the 2008 presidential election, it was fewer than half. The GAO also reported that state inspections of voting accessibility had fallen nationally over the same time.

Among the infractions: The accessible voting machine wasn't set up and powered on, the earphones weren't functioning, the voting system wasn't wheelchair-accessible, or the voting system didn't provide the same privacy as standard voting stations.

Lack of access to proper voting machines, among several other issues, has led to a decline in participation, according to a survey of voters in the 2016 election by Rutgers University. Voter participation among people with disabilities has gone down over the past two presidential elections — from 57.3 percent in 2008 to 56.8 percent in 2012 and 55.9 percent in 2016.

Among Americans without disabilities, voter participation also dropped between 2008 and 2012 — from 64.5 to 62.5 percent, according to the Rutgers survey. But that percentage changed little from 2012 to 2016.

Continued Page 5



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# “My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



When I write my column each month, I try to show the commonalities all folks share...disabled and non-disabled. Dealing with death and the loss of a loved one is one of those areas that we all have to deal with from time to time. Recently, I had two people who were part of my life die....one was my cousin and the other was a family neighbor. Both lives impacted me differently, yet significant none the less.

My cousin Helen was my aunt's daughter and she lived in Delaware most of her life. Like some families, we didn't see each other much over the years, mostly because of the distance to her home, a family farm, in Smyrna, Delaware. Helen and her husband inherited the family farm and they raised livestock and was a real working farm. In addition, Helen worked for a bank full time, and her husband, Larry had his own mechanic repair shop. Both worked very hard to provide for their five children. Sometime in October Larry died and we made the trip down to Smyrna to the wake service. It was good to see Helen then and her grown up children, most of whom were married and had kids of their own. I learned from her son, on that day, that Helen also had cancer and that they were dealing with her treatments, etc and I could tell that she didn't have long to go herself. Now, as I write these words, I am planning to attend her wake service as well. Helen and Larry were just good, hard working people who lived for their families and for their community.

Our family neighbor was Jessica, who is survived by her husband Bill, and lived down the street from our family when we lived in the village of Lawrenceville. Bill was a Mobil executive and traveled extensively. The Granvilles had three children, two girls and a boy. Their middle child, Michelle, was close in age to Jen, and the two younger children spent many a day at our house, either in the pool or playing in the basement. Jess was an elementary school teacher, who taught in Trenton, and was a gourmet chef. She also played classical piano, and was such a classy, refined lady. Both she and Bill made a handsome couple.

Losing both people, one a relative and one a good friend and neighbor brought back different memories for me, of my life at different times. My cousin was part of my mother's side of the family so naturally I remembered our visits and family dinners, which were very infrequent, yet still connected me to my Mom's family. Our neighbor Jess, was part of my life as an adult, raising my own family and sharing the same issues all families go through, when raising their kids. Our families probably interacted many times per month, much more than I did with my cousin Helen, and they were probably closer to us than Helen was. When I think of our time together, I can't help but smile.... they were just such nice people.

Both women were great daughters, mothers, wives and professionals who lived life simply, for their families and community. I was privileged to have known both and to have had them as part of my life. Facing death is something that we all have to do-disabled or non-disabled, and should be a wake up call for all of us to cherish the time we have together.

## *From Norman's Desk*



Being left behind is no fun in life. It is no fun as a kid, as a teenager, or as an adult. Growing up with a disability—especially in the 50s, 60s, and 70s—I kind of became use to it, but I certainly did not like it or appreciate it. And still happens today to kids with disabilities.

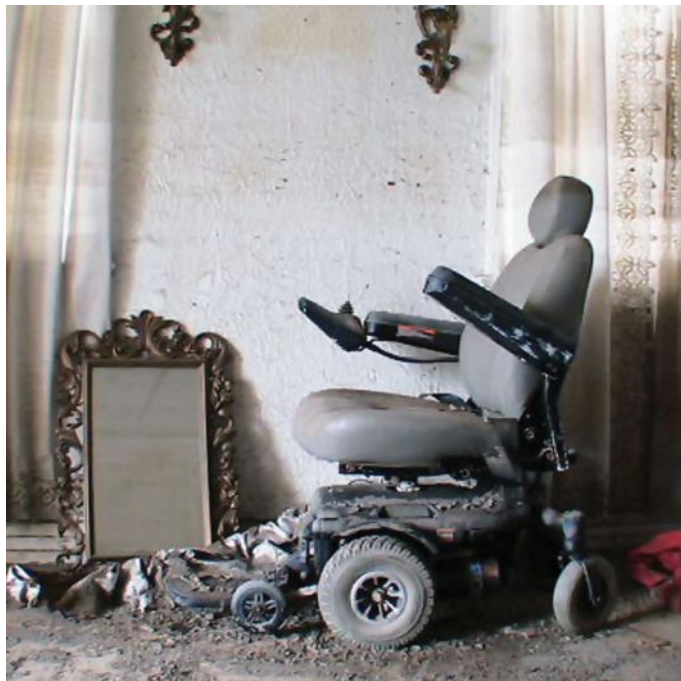
Now there are all kinds of ways to be left behind. One can be left behind economically when one is discriminated in employment because of a disability. One can left behind socially because physical barriers prevent entrance into a social setting. A person can be forgotten in the rush to go someplace and literally mislaid as an afterthought. I have experienced all of these and none of them are pleasant.

After Hurricane Katrina took many lives of people with disabilities who were left behind, there was much talk about “leaving nobody behind” to face a disaster. We were going to educate, train, and plan to include people with disabilities in evacuations—especially at places where people with disabilities were known to be. We were going to include people with disabilities in the planning, the training, and the exercising of that plan.

The results have been mixed so far. In the California wild fires, for example, anecdotal information indicate that people with mobility issues were caught in the fast-moving fires. On the other hand, a center for independent living was able to work with emergency responders to get people evacuated or to help maintain people who stayed behind by their decision. A mixed sample of results that need greater study.

Nobody should be left behind. We still need to work on this in many area of disability—especially in emergency preparedness.

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*Continued from pg 1*

The Rutgers study also notes that many polling places have physical barriers, such as steep ramps and poor path surfaces, which block people with disabilities from voting. Political parties don't target "get out the vote" efforts to people with disabilities and many of them struggle to find transportation to polling places.

Other factors that contribute to the problem — such as a lack of training for poll workers, limited access to registration materials, and insufficient resources for election officials — were laid out in a September 2016 white paper from the Ruderman Family Foundation, a disability rights advocacy organization.

The proliferation of voter ID laws may compound the problem, since people with disabilities are less likely to drive and to carry a photo ID.

"We're segregating in the way we vote," Bishop said. "Separate is not equal. That's a lesson this country should have already learned by now."

### **Barriers to Voting**

In few places is this gap more visible than in West Virginia — a state with the highest percentage of people with disabilities, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and one of the worst voter participation rates for people with disabilities.

Just 46 percent of West Virginians with disabilities who were eligible to vote participated in the 2016 election, worse than any other state but Kentucky, at 42.5 percent, according to the Rutgers researchers. Gina Desmond, an advocate for Disability Rights of West Virginia, said the lack of access has led many people with disabilities to question their role in the democratic process.

In a predominantly rural and mountainous state, transportation options are limited, said Susan Given, the executive director of Disability Rights of West Virginia. Polling places in the state's 55 counties are spread out and often located in outdated buildings that aren't accessible to people with disabilities.

Recently, Disability Rights of West Virginia hired an advocate who will visit polling places this year to see whether they are accessible. The organization also holds outreach events at high schools, psychiatric hospitals, homeless shelters and service providers to explain the voting rights of people with disabilities.

Voter participation among West Virginians with disabilities did go up by 3 percentage points since the 2012 election. But, Desmond said, the state has a long way to go.

### **Success in Colorado**

In Colorado, where 69 percent of registered voters with disabilities voted in 2016 — among the highest rates in the country — advocates and state officials have taken numerous steps to make voting accessible, according to Jennifer Levin, a senior attorney at Disability Law Colorado.

In the decade following the passage of the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), Disability Law Colorado went to all 64 counties in the state, met with clerks, checked for accessibility barriers, and used state funding to help polling places meet federal HAVA and Americans with Disabilities Act standards. (Nationwide, physical barriers to voting places have steadily dropped since 2000, according to the GAO.)

Now after every election, the secretary of state releases a county-by-county audit on whether localities are meeting standards for accessible polling places. After the 2016 election, for example, Denver satisfied a majority of disability access criteria, while El Paso County, home to Colorado Springs, met every one. Because of this enforcement, Levin said, accessibility shortcomings in the state are rare.

In 2015, her organization again partnered with the secretary of state's office to test five new voting machines. After collecting data, officials settled on one machine that every county will use for voters with disabilities. Now, voters can choose to use a paper ballot or an accessible machine ballot.

The state's adoption of vote-by-mail and automatic voter registration for all voters also has made it easier for people with disabilities to cast their ballots.

Other states have taken similar measures. Before the 2016 election, New Hampshire adopted a new tablet-based voting system for the blind, while Rhode Island recently became the ninth state to enact automatic voter registration — which eliminates the need for people with disabilities to submit paper forms that are not accessible to them.

Levin finds poll workers are still afraid of new technology. "We get complaints where a person walks in and asks to use the machine, and a worker says, 'It doesn't look like you need it,'" Levin said. "They were discouraged and intimidated by it."

City officials in Washington, D.C., said they had poll workers ask every voter whether they want to use a paper ballot or a machine, taking away any excuse for unplugged machines or untrained workers. But several polling places still fall short, according to a 2016 survey by Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services, a nonprofit advocacy organization.

Some states are trying to bridge the access gap through legislation. In New York state, where the voter participation rate among people with disabilities is 48.8 percent, Senate Democrats in January introduced 13 voter-focused pieces of legislation. One bill would redesign paper ballots to be more readable. Another, written by state Sen. Michael Gianaris, would allow the distribution of voter registration forms at offices that provide services to people with disabilities, while also allowing voters to change their precinct to one whose voting systems are more accessible.

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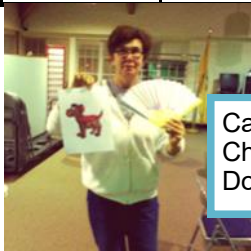
*Continued pg 10*





## Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
1-Mar	Thur	St Patty's Day Wreaths	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
15-Mar	Thu	Robbinsville Wellness Class	Prog. Time 6:30 -8:00 PM
22-Mar	Thu	Robbinsville Easter Crafts	Prog. Time 6:30 -8:00 PM
28-Mar	Wed	Robbinsville Games	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM



Carol shows off Chinese Year of the Dog Coloring



Chinese New Year fan by Diane



## Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
7-Mar	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
14-Mar	Wed	Hamilton Wellness Class	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:00 PM
21-Mar	Wed	Hamilton Easter Crafts	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:00 PM
27-Mar	Tue	Hamilton Games	Prog. Time 5:30 -8:00 PM



Mardi Gras Cake was enjoyed by all



Lori and Megan work on Chinese New Year crafts



## Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
6-Mar	Tue	Heart to Heart Chair Massage	Scheduled times
7-Mar	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
8-Mar	Thur	St Pat's Cards & Grass Hopper Pie with Dana	Prog. Time 3:00 -7:00 PM
10-Mar	Sat	Lawrence Games	Prog. Time 1:00 -3:00 PM
14-Mar	Wed	Nutrition	7:00 PM
15-Mar	Thur	Movie	2:00 PM
20-Mar	Tue	Lawrence Spring Wreaths & Healthy Shakes	Prog. Time 3:30 -6:00 PM
22-Mar	Thur-	Keep Calm and Color On	3:00-5:00 PM



## Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
6-Mar	Tue	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	1:15 PM-3:15 PM
9-Mar	Fri	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM
13-Mar	Tue	Mercer County Criminal Justice Reform Seminar	3:30 PM
21-Mar	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

## *In My Chronic Illness, I Found a Deeper Meaning*

NY TIMES DISABILITY JAN. 10, 2018 by Elliot Kukla



I became disabled overnight in a car accident. The car accident was a dream, but the disability was real.

I dreamed I was driving through the ravaged streets of Oakland, Calif., at the end of the world. I turned the corner and careened inescapably into a white chemical blaze. I woke with a start, the white flash still burning behind my eyes, the worst headache of my life piercing my left temporal lobe. I remembered my mother having a brain aneurysm years before and knew the “worst headache of my life” was not to be ignored. My wife and I hurried to the hospital, expecting life to change forever. Once at the emergency room, things moved quickly: CT scans were ordered, crystal clear spinal fluid was drawn from my

back.

Eight hours later, I was told I was perfectly healthy.

What they meant, but wouldn't say, was that they didn't know what was wrong. Over the next weeks and months, it became obvious that I was far from well. The terrible headaches continued, I developed burning nerve pain all over my torso, I was wrapped in a thick brain fog, I sprouted mouth ulcers, I was crushed with exhaustion. I would open my mouth and be unable to speak. I could get lost in my own house between bedroom and bathroom, and forget my wife's name. I started having seizures.

By then, I had discovered that I was no longer trusted by my doctors about my own body or experiences. I reported odd, terrifying and sudden physical changes; they recommended cognitive behavioral therapy and Weight Watchers. I felt exiled from the world of the well, isolated by thick walls of suspicion. I'm used to feeling like an outsider; I'm the first openly transgender rabbi ordained by a mainstream movement (Reform Judaism). I am used to being rejected and told I should not exist. But nothing prepared me for the outsider status of being chronically ill.

Think about that for a moment: Approximately 0.6 percent of American adults identify as transgender, just under 0.2 percent of the world population is Jewish, and 100 percent of us will get sick, yet it is being chronically sick that makes me feel like an outsider. That's how much our society fears and rejects the core human experience of being ill, of having a body that gets sick, that ages, that is not controllable.

I went from doctor to doctor looking for answers, but overnight I had gone from being a trusted rabbi and chaplain (who works with seriously ill and dying people on hospital medical teams) to a “hysterical” chronically ill person. Though I had seen it happen to my clients, I now understood firsthand that being disbelieved is nearly universal for people with chronic illnesses, especially those that are largely invisible or hard to diagnose or both. I had believed that as a health care professional, equipped with skills and advocates to navigate the system, I would be treated differently. I soon learned how hubristic that was.

Eventually, because of the tireless advocacy of my wife, I was diagnosed with central nervous system lupus (an autoimmune disease that attacks the brain and central nervous system), as well as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and complex migraines. My lupus diagnosis would later be taken away and then given back countless times as suited the needs of health insurance and disability insurance companies to sort and manage me and decide how much care I was entitled to. The needs of my body were virtually irrelevant in this process as my diagnosis became a monetized affair where I had to jump through increasingly difficult hoops to “prove” it.

Like most of us, I had been raised to see illness as something temporary: a stopover on the way to recovery or to death, not a place to live. But weeks, months and then years passed, and I did not get better. My doctors, and even some friends and family members, suggested that I could get better if only I tried harder, relaxed more deeply, thought more positively. I became a lightning rod for others' fears of disability, dependence and fragility. In a political moment where health care is treated as a luxury and hurricane victims are blamed for their own disasters, an ethic of personal responsibility reigns. But sometimes, sick people just stay sick. And there's no meditation, medication, positive outlook, exercise or smoothie that can fix it.

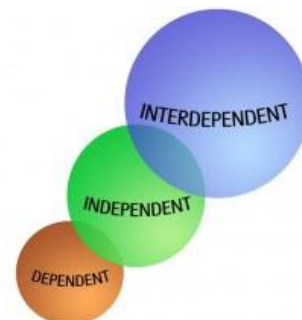
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Eventually, I stopped hoping to be well, or even pretending that I lived in that future-heavy land of hope anymore. I stopped trying to “overcome” my body and started living a present-tense life in chronic illness. As the pace of my life slowed, I could appreciate sensual pleasures in a new and heightened way: sunlight outside my bedroom window, my dog’s velvety fur, a cool breeze in my garden, richly colored flowers. On days when my brain was too fogged to do anything, I let myself float in and out of a rich, infinitely layered dream world.

With great difficulty, I learned how to accept care. A child of neglectful and absent parents, I had been fiercely independent for most of my life; now, as fatigue gripped my body, I needed help preparing food, showering, doing laundry, managing my medications. This demanded a difficult, profoundly spiritual vulnerability. I realized that if I were truly to see myself as equal to my seriously ill clients, and not performing a kind of “charity” in my work, I had to come to terms with the necessity of interdependence.

**We are born needing care and die needing care, and I am no exception. At brief moments in the middle of life, we hold the illusion of independence, but we are always driving on roads we did not build, eating foods we did not pick or raise. Allowing the illusion of my own independence to drop away unmasked a fundamental truth of being human.**



Like many people, I had once measured my worth by my capacity to produce things and experiences: to be productive at work, share responsibilities at home, “show up” equally in my friendships and rack up achievements. Being sick has been a long, slow detox from capitalist culture and its mandate that we never rest. Slowly, I found a deeper value in relationship beyond reciprocity: an unconditional love and care based in justice, and a belief that all humans deserve relationship, regardless of whether we can offer anything measurable back. In these discoveries, I’ve been led by other sick and disabled people, whose value had always been apparent to me. Amid the brilliant diversity of power wheelchairs, service dogs, canes and ice packs, it’s easy to see that we matter just as we are.

Eventually, my body did change. I am now able to stay awake longer, and my pain has receded to a dull throb. I can leave the house more; I can visit my clients and mentor my hospice volunteers, for which I am grateful. But I don’t see myself as cured, nor do I imagine a cure will come. This is merely another chapter in the life of my body. If I’m lucky enough to get old, my body will change again. Because of my illnesses and family history, I’m more likely to develop dementia. As I age, my body and mind will surely become more disabled. I will lose cognitive and sensory capacities. My skin and muscles will sag and disintegrate. I will depend more and more on other people. I will not be able to control my bowels or my surroundings as tightly. I will lose teeth, hair and precious memories. This is not a tragedy. This is what it means to be human.

Elliot Kukla is a rabbi at the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center in San Francisco and a co-director at the Kol Haneshama: Jewish End of Life Care volunteer hospice program.

*Disability is a weekly series of essays, art and opinion by and about people living with disabilities. To reach the editors or submit an essay for consideration, write [opinionator@nytimes.com](mailto:opinionator@nytimes.com) and include “Disability” in the subject field.*

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*Continued from pg 5*

"We're looking for ways to make voting easier at a time when people are trying to make voting harder," said Gianaris, a Queens Democrat. "Our record for voter participation is abysmal. The fight we're having right now is to open up the process. Hoell, now the executive director of Nebraska's independent living council, which advocates for independent living among people with disabilities, said she was tired of facing obstacles.

"Part of my way of dealing with these things is I just go to the top and start yelling," Hoell said. After HAVA was enacted, Hoell went to John Gale, Nebraska's secretary of state, to persuade him to invest in accessible voting machines, better train poll workers, and make polling stations compliant with federal disabilities regulations.

In the years since, she said, his office has found ways to include people with disabilities in the voting process.

As a result, according to the Rutgers study, Nebraska has the highest voter participation rate among persons with disabilities in the country, at more than 70 percent.

*Stateline is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news service of the Pew Charitable Trusts that provides daily reporting and analysis on trends in state policy.*

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## ***True Facts About Saint Patrick***



### **St Patrick's early life**

Patrick's family lived on a small estate near the village of Bannavem Taburniae. (This name cannot be placed on any current map of England or Wales.) Although his father was a deacon, Patrick was not a believer:

### **Enslaved by pirates**

In his teens, Patrick was captured by a gang of Irish pirates and taken as a slave to Ireland. Patrick came to believe that this was a punishment for his lack of faith. He was put to work for six years herding sheep and pigs on Slemish mountain in County Antrim. While he was a shepherd, Patrick spent much of his time praying.

### **Escapes after six years**

In an escape bid (while he was a captive in Ireland), Patrick stowed away on a boat bound for Britain, and it landed not far from where his parents lived. Patrick decided to follow his vocation to become a priest, and after a dream he was inspired to return to Ireland. Patrick spent several years studying before he felt ready to take up the life of a missionary.



### **Patrick's return to Ireland as a missionary**

Patrick eventually returned to Ireland, as the country's second bishop, and brought the message of Christ to many people who had never heard it. As a missionary Patrick baptised many thousands of people. It was not an easy task. Patrick tells how his life was at risk, and how he was sometimes imprisoned by the local pagan chiefs. We know that Patrick sometimes made things easier by giving gifts to the chiefs.

Poignantly, Patrick also writes of his longing to leave Ireland. But he knew his duty, and remained in Ireland.



Patrick had problems not only with himself, and the local pagans, but suffered from some backbiting by fellow clergy who accused him of seeking to win personal status. The claim nearly broke his heart, but anyone who reads his *Confessio* will soon realise that Patrick was the last person to think that he deserved any glory for himself.



Everyone's Irish  
On March 17th.

# General Recreation

## Club Freedom Events Highlighted

1-Mar	Thu	Robbinsville St Patrick's Craft/Shake	Prog. Time 6:30 -9:00 PM
<b>3-Mar</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Harlem Globe Trotters TRIP CLOSED</b>	
5-Mar	Mon	Day Program at Robbinsville	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
<b>9-Mar</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Trenton Farmers' Market</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 10:00 AM</b>
12-Mar	Mon	Day Program at Robbinsville	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
<b>13-Mar</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Parx Casino - Philadelphia - 5 Needed</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM</b>
14-Mar	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
<b>15-Mar</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Mall Trip Moorestown 5 Needed</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM</b>
19-Mar	Mon	Day Program at Robbinsville	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
<b>20-Mar</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Movies—Hamilton AMC 24</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 10:00 AM</b>
<b>22-Mar</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Columbus Indoor Farmers Market</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM</b>
<b>24-Mar</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Dine Out - Church Dinner - Columbus</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 3:00 PM</b>
28-Mar	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
29-Mar	Thu	Day Program—Roebing Museum Trip	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
<b>30-Mar</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Good Friday - PF Offices Closed</b>	

### ★ HAPPY BIRTHDAY! ★

March 7  
**Trey Shepherd**

March 9  
**Jennifer Doherty**

March 25  
**Doug Knox**

March 27  
**Kittie Wisniewski**  
**Melinda Sciarrotta**



March 27  
**Kittie & Frank Wisniewski**

### St. Patrick's Day Word Search

Find the hidden words associated with Ireland.

U Q Y X T Q T W T H U R L I N G R W  
V P K R E T S L U K C E I R I S H S  
Y W N L I L F G F R V I R M D I E L  
V N E N O T S Y E N R A L B S Q V I  
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CONNACHT  
CORK  
DANCE  
DUBLIN  
EMERALDISLE  
FAERIES  
GAELIC  
GOLD  
GREEN  
HURLING  
IRELAND  
IRISH  
JIG  
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Robbinsville, NJ 08691

Non-Profit  
Organization  
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Permit #1083

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Project Freedom Inc. is a 501 (c)(3 ) not for profit organization dedicated to developing, supporting and advocating opportunities for independent living for people with disabilities

***Project Freedom's Day Program  
Will Be Held At Robbinsville and Hamilton  
Community Centers on Alternating Dates.  
Please Check The Calendar Inside For Dates  
and Times***

