New Horizons



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Freedom Village at West Windsor Breaks Ground

West Windsor -- On a brisk day with bright sunshine in October, Project Freedom Inc. held a groundbreaking ceremony Freedom Village at West Windsor, a 72 unit affordable and accessible rental community located on Old Bear Brook Road.

West Windsor Mayor Hemant Marathe, Ph.D., past Mayor Dr. Shing-Fu Hsueh, Council members, Affordable Committee

members and many town officials were in attendance. Also present was Florence Cohen, former chairperson of West Windsor's Affordable Housing Committee, was the committee member who introduced Project Freedom Inc. to the township.

Timothy Doherty, executive director of Project Freedom Inc., welcomed the guests and speakers followed by Herb Schneider, president of the board of trustees, who highlighted Project Freedom's cooperative relationship with the many towns in New Jersey that are home to Project Freedom communities. "Our Project Freedom Villages have been invited into each of the seven towns where we have built a community," said Schneider, "and we have been warmly welcomed by the town officials and the neighbors. We work hard to establish a spirit of cooperation with our new neighbors and with the town."

Mercer County Freeholder Pasquale "Pat" Colavita Jr. spoke about the "freedom provided by Project Freedom's housing." Maria Malo-Messano, Field Office Director, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, praised the inclusiveness of the development and noted that this type of housing was what the federal government encouraged. Claudia Lovas, Deputy Executive Director, New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Tony Lyons, Vice President of East Originations for the National Equity Fund, Benjamin Kruger, Vice President Commercial Real Estate for TD Bank, all spoke about working and partnering with Project Freedom on eight housing projects throughout the years..

Norman Smith, co-founder of Project Freedom spoke about the mission of the organization. "Project Freedom housing is the foundation from which people with and without disabilities can build their lives on," added Smith in his remarks. "What has been started here today will bring freedom to some, a comfortable sanctuary for others, and for everyone the opportunity to say West Windsor is a great place to call their hometown."

The plans for Freedom Village at West Windsor are 72 unit affordable and accessible rental community six two-story buildings with 12 apartments in each building and a Community Center. Each building will have an elevator for easy access to the second floor and a laundry room on each floor for the convenience of the tenants. There will be one, two and three bedroom units which are designed to LEED Silver equivalency which will insure energy efficient units. Eighteen of the units will be set aside for individuals who have a disability.

The new community is funded through Tax Credits awarded by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, National Equity Fund Inc. TD Bank and Investors Bank. The General Contractor for the project is Costanza Builders of New Jersey Inc., the architect is Joseph F. McKernan Jr. Architects & Associates and the Engineer is ESE Consultants, Inc. Construction for Freedom Village will take 14 months to complete.

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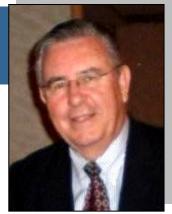
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"My Two Cents" By Tim Doherty, Executive Director

So, as most of you know, Project Freedom holds our "Angel Award Dinner Gala" around this time in November. It is our once a year fundraiser which honors four individuals or organizations that have somehow contributed to furthering the cause for the disabled. Norman Smith was our first honoree, twenty one years ago and we have continued ever since. I started this event when I became CEO, in an effort to gain support for Project Freedom and raise some funds for our tenant programs.



And each year I would work along with the Board Committee and Staff to generate auction items and to get people to attend our dinner. So, I was flabbergasted when the Committee suggested honoring me this year, along with our other honorees. Of course, I am humbled by the honor and by the fact that the board would consider me a worthy candidate. However, I am reminded that this is also a fundraiser, so that I am also expected to raise funds by getting as many folks that I know, to attend this event. Of course I am happy to do so.

Now, in accepting this award, I need to recognize all our Project Freedom staff. We have had tremendous growth over these past six years, and it is due largely to our Executive Team, but also all staff members. Certainly credit goes to Tracee Battis, our Director of Housing Development; Steve Schaefer, our CFO, my own better half, Marion Doherty and of course our founder, Norman Smith. Also, our new (almost two years now) Compliance / Property Manager, Frank Sciarrotta, who contributes daily in supporting our project managers. These folks make my job much easier and enjoyable.

Big Credit goes to our project managers, who are on the front lines every day. Jackie, Joanne, Ceil, Dara, Laurie, and Sammi, and their support staff, Melinda, Jen, Bri, Joyce, Arlene, Judy, and Savannah, who manage the day to day operations of communities, so that our tenants can live in beautiful, well kept housing.

To our accounting Staff, Heather and Sakina, who now manage the books of twenty four entities, each of which need to be kept separately.

To our maintenance staff, Ed, Doug, Ross, Johnny, Frank, Damien, Mike, John, Len, Tony, Jim and Paul, who cut the grass, fix the plumbing, plow the snow and in general keep our buildings and grounds impeccable-- I am always proud to show our properties to any visitors--be it the first project or the last--they are housing to be proud of.

To our recreation staff, Dana, Maria, Esther, Mary who work to create social opportunities for our tenants to enjoy, to get people out of their apartments and experience some fun.

To our tenant workers, Nate, Jen, Coby, Jeffery and Jason, who are always reliable.

Finally, to our Board Chair, Herb Schneider, and our Board of Trustees, who bear the ultimate responsibility for Project Freedom's growth and advancement. Our Board meetings and committee meetings are robust, discussions, with people who care about Project Freedom and the welfare of our tenants. They are always looking to ensure that we are doing quality work that makes a difference in people's lives.

So, I am honored to be recognized and to share our successes with all our Project Freedom family.

From Norman's Desk



The petition begins: The New Jersey Disability Community wholeheartedly opposes efforts by companies, cities, and states to ban single use plastic straws. These policies create barriers to independence, community integration, and daily living for people with disabilities, work counter to our community ideals of universal access, and place an unnecessary burden on people with disabilities to fight for the accommodations we need to live independently.

The petition was started because well-intended but unwitting legislators are proposing legislation that will literally force people with disabilities who need straws to drink to bring their own to restaurants. The proposed legislation is aimed at saving whales and turtles by keeping plastic straws out of the ocean. A noble and worthy cause, but why pick on people with disabilities who need straws?

Many people with various types of disabilities rely on single-use plastic straws to drink, eat, and take medication independently. Many people reading this can relate to this. Currently, no alternatives to single -use flexible plastic straws exist that are safe, sanitary, and affordable for people with disabilities. Until these alternatives exist, it is unacceptable to create more barriers to independence and access by restricting plastic straw use.

Much of the fervor surrounding plastic straws is based entirely on viral videos and false statistics. Plastic straws make up only about .03% of plastic waste in the ocean (fishing nets by contrast make up 46%). To risk the rights to independence and liberty that our community has fought for only .03% of waste is unacceptable to our community! Furthermore, "offer-first" policies at restaurants have been shown to reduce straw use by up to 80% without creating any barriers to access.

Everybody wants to save the whale and the turtle, but nobody outside of our community seems to grasp that straws are tools for people with disabilities to live healthy, independent, and productive lives as equal members of our community. The disability community believes in creating policies that protect the environment, but we also believe that this can be done in ways that do not harm the disability community.

Though some cities and states have incorporated "disability exceptions" into their straw ban legislation, the disability community remains firm in our opposition. Medical exceptions force people with disabilities to disclose their disability to store workers. Requiring this puts an undue burden on disabled customers who already experience discrimination and victimization.

Misconceptions and stereotypes about what a "real" disability looks like can also lead store people to question the validity of a customer's need for a straw leading them to deny, harass, or shame the customer. Do we want teenaged wait staff deciding who has a disability?

The harsh penalties established by straw ban legislation provide incentive for vendors to err on the side of caution by routinely denying straws to anyone who requests them. It is also unlikely that stores will continue to stock plastic straws because of the (false) perception that people with disabilities make up only a small percentage of the population. This again creates an added barrier for people with disabilities. Now, when we decide to go out to dinner, not only do we have to call ahead to find if the space is accessible, but we must also find out if they have straws.

While some may suggest that people who need straws simply carry around their own, this is an unfair request for several reasons. First, with straw bans sweeping the nation, single use plastic straws will inevitably become more expensive and difficult to obtain even for individual use. Second, it creates an unnecessary financial burden on people with disabilities who already experience increased rates of poverty, functioning as a form of "disability tax." Eventually, these costs will be passed on to the taxpayer as the need for straws becomes "medicalized" to justify them as medical necessity so Medicaid picks up the ever increasing expense.

In light of all of these reasons and more, the disability community is asking the New Jersey Legislators three things. First to reject any legislation that restricts access to single use plastic straws. Second, create an action plan to ensure the voices of people with disabilities are heard on all legislation *before* it reaches a vote. Finally, pass legislation that explicitly protects the right of people to access single-use plastic straws upon request in accordance with the ADA.

Maggie Leppert of the Alliance Center for Independence provided much of the factual foundation for this column. My thanks to Maggie, a future leader in the NJ disability advocacy community.

Norman A. Smith, Follow me on Twitter @normansmith02 Follow us on Twitter @TheFreedomGuys "Like" us on Facebook.com/ProjectFreedomInc

Lawmakers Look To Improve Care For Kids With Complex Conditions

Reprinted from October 1, 2018 DisAbilityScoop by Blythe Bernhard

Melissa Herrera says the most frustrating part about parenting a child with complex medical needs is repeating herself over and over to health care providers. "If you can have something there that communicates the foundation of the child, it can take so much stress away from the parent," said Herrera, whose 8-year-old daughter Angelica was born with a brain anomaly that affects her hearing, vision, motor control and coordination.

Legislation that aims to help parents like Herrera coordinate their children's care is moving closer to passage through Congress. The Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act, known as the ACE Kids Act, was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives' Energy and Commerce Committee in September.



The bill creates a subcategory of children on Medicaid with complex medical conditions defined as affecting two or more systems in the body and causing physical or cognitive impairment. Each child's "enhanced pediatric health home" — usually a children's hospital — would be reimbursed for coordinating their care, inside the hospital and at different specialists, including those across state lines.

The ACE Kids Act allows those out-of-state specialists to qualify for Medicaid reimbursement in the child's home state without any additional paperwork. It would also connect the pediatric health homes electronically, so the child's health records can be shared more easily among providers.

About 500,000 children across the country are believed to have multiple health conditions that place them in the category of medically complex, including many with developmental disabilities like autism, Down syndrome and cerebral palsy. The majority of children with complex medical needs are covered by state-funded Medicaid insurance. "We really see the opportunity to improve care and reduce costs, by coordinating services for children that require multiple specialists, multiple hospitalizations in multiple states," said Jim Kaufman, vice president of public policy at the Children's Hospital Association.

At least half of children with Down syndrome have additional medical conditions, according to the National Institutes of Health. Most commonly, children with Down syndrome are more likely to be born with heart disease and can go on to develop leukemia, hearing and vision problems, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, celiac disease and immune disorders among other conditions. "The ACE Kids Act will improve the process by which children with Down syndrome who participate in the Medicaid program, and who also have other complex medical conditions, are able to obtain quality care and coordinated treatments," said Ashley Helsing, director of government relations for the National Down Syndrome Society, which supports passage of the bill along with Autism Speaks, the Autism Society and the March of Dimes.

Because it is relatively rare for a child to require complex care, most children's hospitals do not have a comprehensive staff of specialists for every need, said Kaufman from the Children's Hospital Association. Without one national list of Medicaid providers, children now undergo repeat X-rays and other unnecessary procedures because of the lack of coordination across hospitals and across states, Kaufman said.

The legislation is expected to save the government money by reducing hospitalizations and unnecessary procedures. While the bill only covers children on Medicaid, military and private insurers are expected to follow, he added.

If the bill becomes law, Herrera hopes that she won't always have to serve as Angelica's nurse, case manager and insurance advisor as well as her mother. "I think the support really helps parents be able to be the best they can be for their children," said Herrera, who works as a parent navigator for the Children's National Health System, a pediatric hospital in Washington, D.C.

The bill still needs approval of the full House and Senate, along with a signature from President Donald Trump to be implemented. But children's health care advocates are optimistic that the bill, with its bipartisan support, will pass this year and start improving coordination and communication among providers by 2019. "These kids are living longer and thriving, so we need to make sure we have that health care delivery system that supports their families," Kaufman said.



Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
Nov 1	Thur	People & Stories	1-2:30 pm
Nov 1	Thur	Thanksgiving Games	4-6:30 pm
Nov 6	Tues	Elections: Polls Open @ Lawrence	
Nov 8	Thur	People & Stories	1-2:30 pm
Nov 13	Tues	Massages	
Nov 14	Wed	Amerigroup hosts Pizza & BINGO	3:00 pm
Nov 15	Thur	People & Stories	1-2:30 pm
Nov 27	Tues	Movie AND Coloring	2:00 pm
Nov 28	Wed	Games	4-6:30 pm
Nov 29	Thur	People & Stories	1-2:30 pm



Do You Know Anyone Who Has a Passenger CDL License and Would Like to Volunteer to Drive for Our Various Rec Programs?





Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
2-Nov	Fri	Hamilton Thanksgiving Games	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:30 PM
9-Nov	Fri	Hamilton Wellness Class	Prog. Time 5:00 -6:30 PM
21-Nov	Wed	Hamilton Stress Relief Coloring	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:30 PM



Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)		TIME
8-Nov	Thu	Robbinsville Thanksgiving Games	Prog. Time	6:30 -9:00 PM
14-Nov	Wed	Robbinsville Games	Prog. Time	6:30 -9:00 PM
26-Nov	Mon	Robbinsville Stress Relief Coloring	Prog. Time	6:30 -9:00 PM



Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
Nov 1	Thurs	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	12:00PM - 2:00PM
Nov 2	Fri	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00PM
Nov 6	Tues	General Election Day - All day	
Nov 8	Thurs	Senior Store Hosting Insurance Presentation	3:00PM
Nov 15	Thurs	Northfield Bank Financial Planning Presentation	3:30PM
Nov 18	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	9:30AM - 11:30AM

Theater Program Gives Stage To Children With Disabilities

by Hannah Covington / Reprinted from the October 2, 2018 Star Tribune/TNS

ANOKA COUNTY, Minn. — When the music flips on, something electric strikes 14-year-old Nick Motlomelo's long limbs. His hips swivel, his body bends, his shoulders shimmy.

Sometimes the magic happens on cue, in sync with the rest of the performers putting on a special version of "Annie Jr." And when it doesn't, 13-year-old classmate and mentor Liliana Becker is there to help Nick, who has Down syndrome, get to the right spot on stage and remember that he's part of a bigger group.

Liliana and Nick belong to a cohort of actors from Northern Starz Children's Theatre in Ramsey, participating for the first time in a national theater pro-



gram for young people with special needs. The program, called the Penguin Project, pairs cast members with developmental and neurological disorders with peer mentors who guide them through the four-month process of staging modified versions of well-known musicals. "The need is huge," said Andy Morgan, a developmental pediatrician and founder of the Penguin Project in Peoria, III. "These children have incredible talents. It's just that they have very limited opportunities to show it."

Organizers point to the power of theater to help traditionally isolated children and their families build a vibrant social network. Parents say they've seen their children transform, gaining self-confidence and forging friendships that outlast the production. Since its debut show in 2004, the Penguin Project now has more than 20 replication sites across 16 states. Northern Starz marks Minnesota's first. Some envision the growing program as the "Special Olympics for theater."

More than 30 Minnesota performers, ages 10 to 22, recently wrapped up their work on "Annie Jr.," which ran in August at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. Next year's Penguin Project production is already taking shape, with plans to stage a show every summer, said Rachel Bohnsack, executive director at Northern Starz.

That's welcome news for Nick's mom, Donna Motlomelo, who noticed from the first night of the program that Nick was sleeping with his script. For months, he ran his lines and danced in the kitchen. He carried business cards with the show dates to pass out to classmates.

"He loves music. He loves the stage," Motlomelo said. "It's hard to get him to leave."

'Incredible children'

Several thousand young artists with special needs and their mentors have passed through the Penguin Project since Morgan founded it 14 years ago. More than 1,000 children were involved in the program last year alone. The Penguin Project also was one of 12 groups from across the country awarded a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2017. The program braids together two of Morgan's passions. He's a longtime theater lover and a pediatrician who specializes in the care of children with developmental disabilities. Theater, he said, has therapeutic value by fostering social interactions and boosting communication skills, self-esteem and self-confidence for children who may have few friends and limited social outlets. One by one, Morgan can recount stories of transformation.

There's the young man with an autism spectrum disorder who was so overwhelmed at the beginning of the program that he curled into a ball in the middle of the rehearsal floor. Two years later, he took the stage as a lead in the show, a feat he repeated several times.

Another actor, with Down syndrome, spent the first rehearsals hiding in the supply closet. By showtime, the shy performer nearly had to be pulled off the stage, so enamored was he with his moment in the spotlight.

Just as important are the quieter moments, like a girl with autism spectrum disorder who got her first phone call from another kid to hang out, Morgan said.

Peer mentors, organizers say, often undergo just as much change as the young performers, who are known as "penguins." Some mentors end up going into careers related to special needs, becoming therapists or special education teachers.

At Northern Starz, performers and mentors paired themselves up with partners with whom they naturally clicked. Most are close in age or share interests. The mentors stay on stage behind their penguins like friendly shadows, wearing similar costumes and ready to help out if needed.

Mentors learn lines they may not get to recite. Memorize songs the audience may not hear them sing. Commit to months of rehearsals all while knowing that the crowd's eyes will mostly be focused elsewhere. "These are incredible children, as young as 8 or 10 years old, who give of themselves so willingly," Morgan said. "They are the stars behind the scene. They are the backbone of what we're doing."

Life skills

It was this mentor relationship that drew Northern Starz to the Penguin Project.

"It's something that really doesn't exist in our area," said Michelle Sharon, a special education teacher and the mentor coordinator for "Annie Jr." at Northern Starz. "They are not just learning theater skills. They are learning life skills."

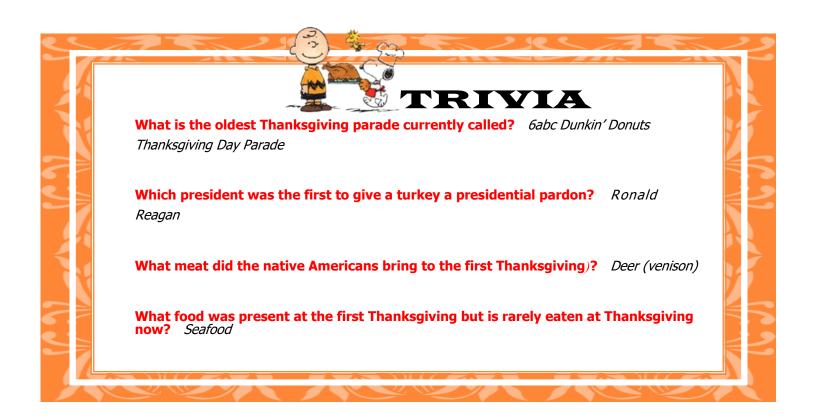
Fourteen penguins and 20 mentors worked together since April on "Annie Jr.," learning by heart a tale about a plucky orphan in Depression-era New York City.

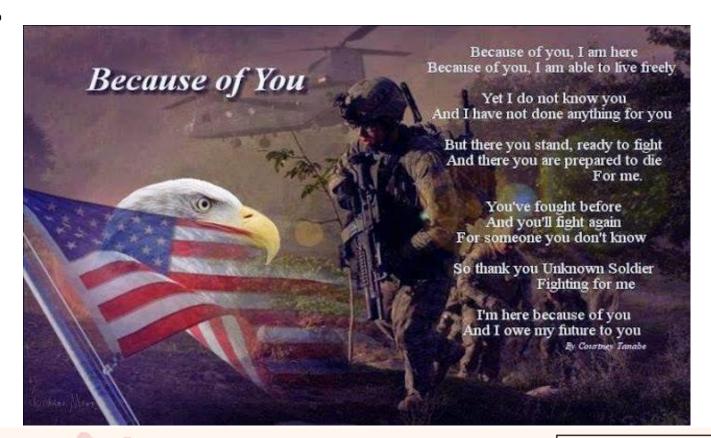
At the beginning, it was challenging for parents of penguins to step back and allow the mentors to step in, Sharon said. Andrea Haglund, whose 14-year-old daughter Elaina was in the production, is the first to admit that sitting on the sidelines during rehearsals can be tough. Elaina has Williams syndrome, a genetic condition characterized by medical problems, developmental delays and cognitive challenges. But Haglund said she's proud of the bond Elaina has formed with her mentor, including grabbing lunch together outside of rehearsals. The dances, Elaina said, were tricky to learn. But the big payoff comes on the stage. "It feels like you're flying on air when you're doing a play," she said.

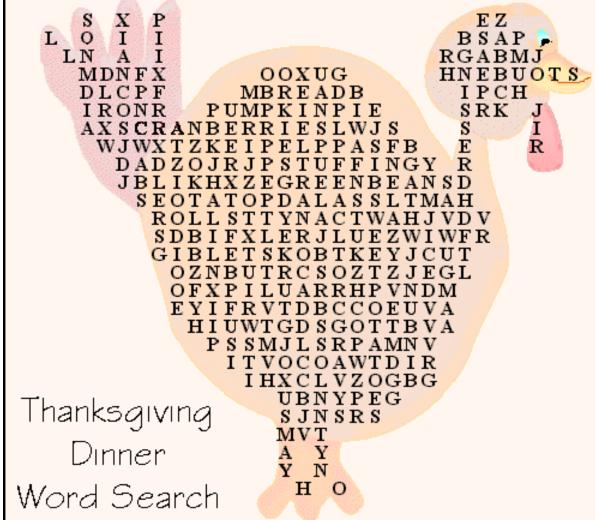
During one of the final rehearsals, a costumed Elaina smiled at her mom from the stage, her golden banana curls bouncing. Nearby stood Nick and his mentor, Liliana, who have known each other since kindergarten.

In the audience sat Nick's family, marveling at how the Penguin Program has helped him with his reading and made him more aware of being part of a bigger group, rather than the center of attention.

Moments before his favorite song, Nick beckoned to his relatives to join him on stage for "Don't Stop Believin." The Journey rock anthem ends all Penguin Project shows and rehearsals, allowing performers, mentors and families to sing together. As the first notes sounded, Nick began to move, his body twisting, jumping, bobbing. His family and new friends surrounded him under the bright lights until the song ended, the crowd onstage hooting over the applause.





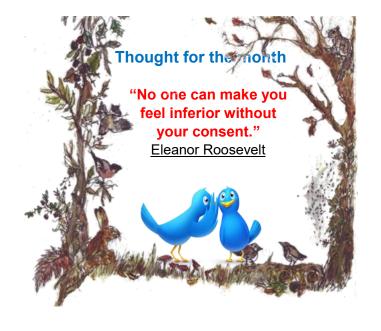


apple pie bread corn cranberries dressing giblets gravy green beans ham peas potatoes pumpkin pie rolls salad stuffing sweet potatoes turkey yams



NOVEMBER General Recreation Club Freedom Events Highlighted

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5-Nov	Mon	Day Program - Hamilton NO BUS	2 PM-4 PM
6-Nov	Tue	Election Day - Go Vote	
12-Nov	Mon	Veterans Day Observed - PF Offices Closed!	
13-Nov	Tue	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 A
14-Nov	Wed	Mall Trip Freehold 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
15-Nov	Thu	Columbus Farmers & Flea Market	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
17-Nov	Sat	Angel Award Gala	
19-Nov	Mon	Day Program - Hamilton	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
20-Nov	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 A
21-Nov	Wed	Mall Trip Moorestown Mall 5 Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 A
22-Nov	Thu	Thanksgiving Day PF Offices CLOSED	
23-Nov	Fri	PF Offices Closed	
26-Nov	Mon	Day Program - Hamilton	2 PM-4 PM
30-Nov	Fri	Holiday Lights - PA 5 Consumers Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 4:30 PM





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