

New Horizons

Housing That Supports Independence

Alert System For Missing People With Disabilities Is Going Unused

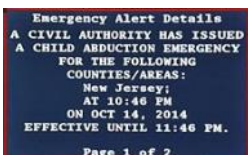
by Amanda Hoover, Reprinted from NJ.com/TNS | September 17, 2019

Edison, N.J. — The last time anyone reported seeing Robert Nicholson alive was on Dec. 10, 2018. It was 39 degrees, with a low forecast of 19. He sat at a cafeteria table inside the REM Day Center in Vineland around 1:15 p.m., waiting to board a bus for a day trip. It was only his second day there.

But by 1:40 p.m., when the bus pulled up, no one could find Nicholson; not in the building, not in the surrounding area. The lead worker told police that was his first day supervising Nicholson, and he knew little about the 28-year-old's needs. But his group home manager said she had provided the necessary information: Nicholson had a "line of sight" classification, meaning he should not go unsupervised — ever.

Officers searched the area from Boulevard, South City Line to North, according to a missing persons report from the Vineland Police Department obtained by NJ Advance Media. They found no trace of Nicholson, who had serious intellectual disabilities.

On December 26, more than two weeks later, a landscaper found Nicholson about 3.5 miles away, frozen to death with just his baseball cap, hooded sweatshirt, jeans and backpack.



Nicholson was one of three men with disabilities in New Jersey who got lost late last year and later died in the cold. The other two, Juan Garcia and Joseph Brockington, were friends who lost their way while walking to a Wawa in Burlington County. Between 14,000 and 16,000 people go missing for all kinds of reasons in the Garden State each year. Some are runaways, others are victims of crime or accidents, and more and more, casualties of the opioid crisis. **But when it comes to adults with intellectual disabilities in full-time care facilities, balancing their autonomy with an immediate response becomes another obstacle for authorities.**

In recent years, legislators unveiled a new tactic inspired by the Amber and Silver alerts. It's called the MVP alert, but none of these tragic cases triggered it. In fact, it hasn't been issued once since the law establishing it passed in 2016. "There's a fine line between independence and restraint that you don't want to cross," Mark Hopkins, chief with the Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue, a volunteer organization that assists with missing persons investigations in southeast Pennsylvania and New Jersey. "Many times you have people that are mentally disabled in one way or another that are very high-functioning that lead normal day-to-day lives much like our own." So whose job is it to decide that? To make sure Nicholson and the other two men, Garcia, 58, and Brockington, 56, have every right to pursue the limited independence they can manage, but won't end up in a stressful situation that can quickly become dangerous? And who's responsible for finding them, if things do go wrong? Is it the State Police's missing persons unit, the local authorities that know every neighborhood, every road and risky spot in town, or an expert search and rescue team armed with bloodhounds? Cases like these — especially ones that go cold — can fall to the bottom of the list.

Here's what happened when the 3 went missing:

The Monday afternoon Nicholson wandered off, police spoke to the day program and entered his information into the FBI's National Crime Information Center database, a system accessible by criminal justice agencies nationwide, and sent out a BOLO.

On Tuesday, police contacted his group home manager. She said the community was worried about him and had formed a search party. Nicholson needed medication twice daily and had already missed two doses. Officers also notified the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office and called his Trac cell phone, but it went straight to voicemail. When they tried to ping its location with AT&T, they found the phone had last received a signal the day Nicholson went missing. Another day went by, and an officer followed up Wednesday. He used another law enforcement system to send out a missing person flyer, which had a description of Nicholson and his photo, to surrounding police departments and hospitals. By then, Nicholson had been missing for almost 48 hours.

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Dental Students Will Soon Be Trained To Care For Those With Special Needs

By Blythe Bernhard Reprinted from DisAbility Scoop | September 3, 2019



Dental school students will soon be required to learn how to care for patients with disabilities under new guidelines from an accrediting body. The Commission on Dental Accreditation approved new standards this summer requiring all U.S. dental schools to train students in the assessment and management of patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities, among other special needs populations.

The change means that by mid-2020, schools that offer degrees in dentistry, orthodontics, dental hygiene and dental assistant programs must include clinical training with a “special needs” population of patients in their graduation requirements or risk losing their accreditation.

The National Council on Disability helped push for the change in standards after publishing a report in 2017 showing that adults with developmental disabilities are at higher risk for poor oral health and face multiple barriers to accessing care, including a shortage of appropriately trained professionals.

The change in dental education standards is a “huge breakthrough” after 20 years of work from dental professionals and disability advocates, said Amged Soliman, attorney advisor with the council. “People with disabilities, specifically intellectual and developmental disabilities, can’t get dental care because dentists aren’t trained to treat them,” Soliman said. “It’s not fair they simply can’t get dental care because nobody knows how to do it.”

The practice of dentistry is no different for patients with autism, Down syndrome or other developmental disabilities, but the interactions might be, said Dr. Rita Marie Bilello, dental director of Metro Community Health Centers in New York City and a professor of dentistry at New York University. The lights, sounds, textures and smells of a dental office can pose sensory challenges. Dental providers have to be willing to break protocol and allow a patient with autism to wear headphones, or decline the use of water picks, for example, she said. Because there may be trust or anxiety issues, “you have to take the time to develop a relationship,” Bilello said.

Historically, only students who completed residency programs in hospitals or who specialized in pediatric dentistry received any clinical training with patients with developmental disabilities, Bilello said. That means people with disabilities are regularly turned away or sent to hospitals for dental care, where they may be treated under unnecessary sedation.

The move from the accrediting body follows the American Dental Association’s revision of its code of conduct in 2018 to prohibit denial of care to patients with physical, developmental or intellectual disabilities and to refer patients to another dentist with appropriate equipment or expertise if necessary.

With the changes to dental training standards and the code of conduct, dental professionals will be better prepared to serve all of their patients, Bilello indicated. “If even a percentage of the graduating providers realize ‘I’m capable of doing this,’ it’s going to do wonders at chopping down the disparity,” Bilello said. “If you give somebody the opportunity to really learn and to be exposed, it makes you a better dentist. You have increased confidence not only in yourself, you have the ability to empathize in a way that translates to any patient you’re ever going to treat.”



From Norman's Desk

Readers of my monthly column should know by now that I'm also interested in politics, and especially the intersection of politics, disability, and the resulting public policies that impact on people with disabilities.

The interest stems from being trained as a journalist during the Carter-Ford presidential campaign on a college campus with many activists with disabilities. I caught the "inside politics" fever.

And, by happenstance, I became involved with two political campaigns upon returning to New Jersey. One for a Republican and one for a Democrat, and I quickly learned that disability-related policies are not partisan issues at the local level.

I also learned that participating in campaigns is a great way to educate people in politics about "our issues," and it is very helpful in building up credibility if you decide to do something unusual like start building housing to support people with disabilities. Advocating for something new to politicians who know you personally is so much easier.

This is why I encourage anybody with a disability to get involved with politics. First and foremost as voters. Then, if you like a candidate, become involved by volunteering with the campaign. Become engaged, ask questions, and don't just focus on disability issues.

We live in the Community. We need to ask about issues beyond our own because our needs for safe neighborhoods, effective and efficient local governments, well maintained infrastructure, and well-run services are just as great as our able-bodied neighbors.

I'm a great believer in democracy even as messy and raucous as ours is right now. What is happening now, however, is not that unusual if you delve into early U.S. history. If Twitter existed, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton might have used to insult and degrade each other in their campaigns. They used the printing press instead for their ugly diatribes.

Our democracy is cheapened by the ugly discourse, but it is endangered much more by people opting not to participate in the process. Sure, there are winners and losers with participatory politics and elections, and, sure, democracies sometime make huge mistakes with major consequences. The key to democracy is to stay engaged no matter who wins or loses.

A year from now we may be in the most contentious presidential campaign in my experience. In the next 12 months, I intend to bring you fact-based information on where presidential candidates stand on disability-specific issues. For example, I can report right now that of the 10 top Democratic presidential candidates, only Sen. Karmala Harris has specific policies targeted toward people with disabilities.

This may have changed by the time you read this, and if so, I will report that next month. If other candidates start generating disability-specific policies, it will be as a result of people with disabilities becoming engaged.

So, let's get engaged!

Norman A. Smith, Associate Executive Director -
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Norman and Rep. Chris Smith who represents Robbinsville and Hamilton



Norman with Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman who represents Lawrence, Hopewell, and West Windsor



Norman with Rep. Andy Kim who represents Toms River and Westampton

(Continued from pg 1) An officer followed up on Thursday as the 72 hour mark ticked near. No one had seen Nicholson.

The reports obtained by NJ Advance Media drop off until Dec. 26, when Nicholson was found dead by a retention pond on a property near Vineland High School, having frozen to death. He wasn't far from busy Chestnut Avenue, where hundreds of students come and go from school each morning and afternoon alongside residents of condo complexes.

Vineland's chief of police did not respond to a request for comment about the search for Nicholson, and if officers had taken other action to find him aside from searches in those first three days. The day program from which Nicholson disappeared did not respond to a request for comment either.

Just weeks earlier, on Nov. 1, Garcia and Brockington, who also had intellectual disabilities, never returned from a walk in Eastampton. In February, Brockington was found dead in the nearby Smithville Park. Officials ruled hypothermia as the cause. The same news came for Garcia in early April, when an active search recovered his body. A worker from their group home had reported the two missing around 9:39 p.m., less than three hours after they left for a walk to a nearby Wawa.

Both men had lived at the Catholic Charities home for six years, and had permission to walk to Wawa and around the nearby park, records show. Usually, Brockington led and Garcia followed, the two taking the residential road, or maybe the foot path that runs alongside it to the park. But a staffer found it odd when they had not yet returned, and notified police. An officer entered the men as missing into NCIC, a national crime database. The officer checked the surrounding area, but did not find Brockington and Garcia. According to the police reports, there was no way to contact them. Brockington wore a black sweatshirt and jeans, Garcia a black winter hat.

It was warmer that day, unseasonably warm with a high of 73 and lows in the high 40s. It stayed like that all week, with lows only dropping below 40 twice. Still, both men were not found until months later, after they had separately frozen to death.

Eastampton police put a notice on their Facebook page with photos of the men on Nov. 4 at 4:30 p.m., nearly 72 hours after they disappeared. Two of Brockington's family members called to check in, one expressing frustration with how the home had handled his disappearance. She asked for information about starting a search party. A bloodhound from the Mercer County Sheriff's Department was dispatched to the scene, but it didn't find anything. Emails were sent to the press with information to distribute. Calls from witnesses started pouring in. They would continue through the month.

First, a woman said she saw the men at a pizzeria, then another said they were all the way in Ocean Grove, a seaside town in Monmouth County. Another woman said she saw the men at a hospital. Police searched their rooms, and talked to family. None of the leads panned out. Eventually, a hiker in search of deer antlers saw Brockington face down in an icy creek in the park. Two months later, a park ranger came across Garcia, who was also in a creek, tangled in brush. Authorities suspected no foul play in any of the three deaths. A spokeswoman for Catholic Charities, the organization operating the group home where Garcia and Brockington lived, declined to comment for this story.

How can we fix this?

The problem extends beyond New Jersey, and lawmakers here have tried to make things right. In 2016, the state legislature passed an MVP alert law, which stands for "missing vulnerable persons." **To qualify for the MVP alert, officials must have reason to believe the person has a mental, intellectual or developmental disability or defect. But they must also be operating or riding in a known vehicle, entered into NCIC, believed to be in danger of death or serious bodily injury and authorities must have sufficient information to believe the alert would assist in locating them.** It does not apply to those who are suicidal, as authorities fear plastering the alert on a road sign could further distress those already experiencing trauma.

Sgt. Jeff Flynn, a New Jersey State Police spokesman, said the search for Garcia and Brockington did not trigger the alert because the men were walking. The State Police was not involved in the search for Nicholson. Flynn also said the State Police's missing persons unit has "indicated that investigative methods, like cell phone activity, credit cards and social media tend to be the most successful" in locating the missing. They employed those tactics and put troopers on the ground in the search for Garcia and Brockington. The problem: Those living in group homes often do not have cell phones, credit cards or social media accounts to track. They were not three men on the run, leaving a paper trail as they charged tickets or made phone calls. They were lost and confused.

Participation in the MVP program is voluntary, department by department, and that part is key. And, what does "vulnerable" mean, anyway? State Sen. James Beach, D-Voorhees, who sponsored the legislation, declined an interview through a spokeswoman, but issued the following statement. "These incidents are extremely troubling," he said. "While we can work to improve the response when individuals wander away from their care facilities, we must also look at why these situations arise and what can be done proactively to prevent them and keep our state's most vulnerable safe."

NJ Advance Media's inquiry to Beach also included the fact that no cases have triggered the alert. His statement did not address that fact. To some experts, these alerts are helpful. To others, they're "feel-good" laws that look like sweeping overhauls to the tragic issue, but really do little to chip away at the persistent problem. "It went from being cool to, how can I turn this off? We have a lot of different alerts and a lot of systems, some of which work, some don't," said Hopkins, the chief of Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue. "I think the only system that actually works is education, and education focused at the impacted demographic." That means training the officers and departments who often have never had a missing persons case before. They're common in cities and with larger departments, but in small towns, the reports can often fall to the bottom of a busy cop's priorities. I think there's an overall problem in the world of missing persons, in that many many many times, we wait too long. Especially in the case of missing adults," said Lisa Valentino, the New Jersey outreach coordinator with Community United Effort, a national nonprofit that assists in missing persons cases. "People are like, they have a right to walk away. But again, you're talking about someone who's left the facility, who's vulnerable in a different way, and somehow they're still getting lost in the cracks."

Nicholson had no family to advocate for him. His aunt, Lilian Lighty, had not heard from her nephew for years, and had assumed he was with his mother, who was also missing. Upon learning of his death, she was devastated. She found out months later after reading NJ Advance Media's report. "He was the sweetest kid ever. He used to call me, asking how I was doing," she said. "He loved my husband, who had the same name: Robert." Nicholson's father, who his aunt and cousin say was not involved in his life, is suing state agencies as well as the group home and day program. He is seeking \$20 million.



Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
4-Oct	Fri	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM



Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
10-1	Tues	*Meet & Greet with Savannah! -NEW!	4:00 PM
10-3	Thur	Massages	Sign up time
10-3	Thur	**Circle of Health Introduction -NEW!	4:00 PM
4-Oct	Fri	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
10-7	Mon	People & Stories	1:30-3:00 PM
10-8	Tues	Lawrence FLU shots	10-12 PM
10-10	Thur	Tai Chi @ -NEW!	4:00 PM
10-17	Thur	"Let Your Yoga Dance" - NEW!	4:00 PM
10-23	Wed	Nutrition	7:00 PM

****Meet & Greet with Savannah: Project Freedom Friends Connection!! New activities with fun new experiences!***

*****Circle of Health: Come join Carol, Liz and Kate for fun NEW activities to help manage your stress and expand your wellness!***



Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
7-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
8-Oct	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
21-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
22-Oct	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
28-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM



Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
10/3/19	Thur	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	1:15 PM to 3:15 PM
10/4/19	Fri	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM
10/8/19	Tue	*Meet N Greet with Savannah for Tenant Programs	3:00 PM
10/23	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

****Meet & Greet with Savannah: Project Freedom Friends Connection!! New activities with fun new experiences!***

In Lieu Of Guardianship, States Look To Supported Decision-Making

by Eric Russell, Reprinted from the Portland Press Herald/TNS | September 4, 2019

DAMARISCOTTA, Maine — Until last year, Joshua Strong wasn't in charge of his own life. Like many other adults with autism, Strong was deemed incapacitated by a judge early in adulthood. Most of his decisions were turned over to a legal guardian — in his case, his father.

If Strong wanted to make a big purchase, he needed permission. If he wanted to alter his medication regimen, he needed his father's OK. If he wanted to begin a romantic relationship, his dad might have to make a ruling on that, too.

That all changed on June 6, 2018, when Strong became the first person in Maine to dissolve a guardianship in favor of something called supported decision-making. It allows him to create a team of people who serve as sounding boards, but all decisions — about financial matters, about health care, about relationships — are legally his to make.

Strong's case helped pave the way for a change in the way the state's courts will treat people with intellectual disabilities. A sweeping overhaul of Maine's probate code that was approved by the state legislature this year and took effect Sept. 1 adds supported decision-making as an alternative to consider in lieu of guardianship.

Strong's father, Jim, said he never imagined when his son was growing up that he would have this life — his own apartment, multiple jobs and control of his own checkbook.

Parents Were Determined

Strong long had a goal of being independent, but it wasn't always easy. Jim Strong said when he and Jaime had him evaluated at a young age, professionals told them he needed to be institutionalized. Becca Emmons, executive director of Mobius, said that's something she still hears from virtually every client — they are told they'll never succeed on their own.

But the Stronges were determined never to institutionalize their son. Early in school, he was in a separate classroom because he was easily overstimulated, but eventually he joined his peers. His parents got him all the in-home support they could. They later divorced, and their son split his middle and high school years between Maine and Massachusetts, where his mother lived. He graduated from Amherst Regional High School in 1999 at age 20.

His father, who is an attorney, petitioned the court in 2002 for guardianship and conservatorship, when Strong was 25. A guardian has decision-making authority for all aspects of a person's life unless excluded by other laws. A conservator is appointed to protect and manage the money and property of an incapacitated person.

Strong has received support services going back to his childhood from a variety of agencies, but he's been with Mobius the longest, more than a decade. Mobius provides a variety of services — employment, residential, case management and behavioral health — to 130 clients, mostly in Lincoln County. When Strong first started there, he required around-the-clock care and sometimes two staff members. But through medication and behavioral health support, his anxiety lessened.

His first step toward independence came in July 2011. Janice Warring, his program manager at Mobius, wrote to the court that Strong had made steady progress, which resulted in a reduction of support.

"He is responsible for paying rent and utilities monthly. All accounts are in his name. His Social Security is sent to DHHS, who in turn send it to him for monthly expense," Warring wrote. "Strong works up to 20 hours weekly. He manages his funds independently with minimal assistance to balance his bank account. It is the belief of Joshua, his father/guardian James Strong, DHHS, and I that Strong is no longer in need of a conservator relating to financial matters."

A judge granted the petition in July 2012, which allowed Strong to manage his own finances, but his father remained his legal guardian.

Strong continued to become more independent. In an annual guardianship report filed with the court in September 2014, Jim Strong wrote that his son continued to thrive. He managed his own Supplemental Security Income payments, took his medication without supervision and lived independently with daytime support staff of 30 hours per week.

"Joshua continues to reduce his dependence upon SSI assistance and hopes to become totally independent financially in the foreseeable future," his father wrote.

A similar report was filed the next year. No reports were filed in 2015 and 2016, because Strong's situation had not changed. In January 2018, Jim Strong wrote: "He has become self-sufficient to the point that it is anticipated that a motion to terminate guardianship will be filed within the next two months."

Strong's service provider, Mobius, had launched a pilot program with Disability Rights Maine about supported decision-making. When Brimmer learned about Strong and that he wanted to dissolve his guardianship, she took his case. The petition for termination of guardianship was filed in May 2018. It took the judge a month to grant it. The order included a brief note: "Joshua Strong is utilizing supported decision-making and is therefore no longer incapacitated." His support staff took him to lunch at Applebee's to celebrate.

Part-Time Jobs

Elisha Lowe, Strong's primary support staff member, has been with him for four years. Lowe helps Strong cook and gives him rides to appointments, the grocery store and his jobs. She said he still looks to her for guidance but rarely needs it. "He does awesome no matter what," she said.

Last Wednesday he returned to his part-time job as a crossing guard for the Great Salt Bay Community School in Damariscotta. He retrieved his yellow vest and double-sided stop sign from his locker, then walked outside to the buses. "How was your summer, Josh?" a bus driver asked. "Excellent," he replied before asking about the driver's family. "How long have you been doing this now?" he asked. "Thirteen years," Strong said. "Has it been that long?" the driver asked.

Strong has another job at the local IGA grocery store, where he sweeps and takes out the trash for an hour every day, Monday through Friday. He also does janitorial work at Mobius' offices.

Once a week he attends a community supper at a local church. It's a free supper, but he said he tries to make a donation when he can. He watches Marvel superhero movies and "Days of Our Lives." Sometimes he swims at the Boothbay YMCA. He has a group of friends he's met through Mobius, and his social calendar is active. Some of his friends are in romantic relationships, but Strong labeled his current status as "playing the field."

Strong has a great deal of self-awareness about his diagnosis. Whenever he leaves the house, he has a checklist: Check the stove. Make sure the faucet isn't running. Turn the computer off. He calls it his "OCD."

He's continually setting goals for himself. He recently started riding a bicycle, with the goal of riding it to work and appointments. So far, he's only been in his driveway. He has friends who drive, but Strong isn't sure that's for him. One day maybe. He knows his limits.

And even though his father is no longer his guardian, Strong said he's "still in the habit of asking him for approval." "Structure is important," Jim Strong explained. "He still calls every night, and getting that phone call in is an important part of his day."

He paused for a moment before adding, "Mine too."

Sneak Peak at Gibbsboro Construction



How to Disclose a Disability to Your Employer (and Whether You Should) Reprinted from the NY Times / July 10, 2019 by Lizz Schumer

If you, like thousands of others, live with a visible or invisible disability, here's what you need to know if you want to tell your employer. The invisible nature of my chronic illness protects me from a whole universe of discrimination and microaggressions, but it also insulates me from potential support.

The cost of staying silent

Perhaps you've seen the little self-disclosure boxes on job application forms. Employers are prohibited from directly asking anything about your disability; that puts the onus on the employee or applicant to educate the employer, said Eve Hill, a disability rights attorney. You can request the accommodations you may need and explain how you can best perform the job, but that can be as much a burden as an opportunity, she said. "In the best outcomes, you become the guide on how to do this well," Ms. Hill said. "That's an extra burden that people with disabilities bear." Disclosure during the interview process can open up a world of support. Or, worst case, it can reveal an atmosphere in which you wouldn't feel comfortable working, anyway. And hiding a major part of yourself — assuming you have that ability — takes its own toll.

Legal requirements vs. reality

The Americans with Disabilities Act forbids employers from discriminating against applicants or employees on the basis of disability, but the gap between the letter and application of the law can swallow people whole. Emily Johnson was denied a handicapped parking spot at work because her boss wanted to leave it open for visitors who might need it. Holly Nelson, who has a hearing impairment, was terminated from a new position during her probation period because she didn't hear a supervisor's instructions. Jocelyn Mondragon called to reschedule a job interview when her motorized wheelchair broke down. Instead, the hiring manager canceled entirely. Roz Tolliver's supervisor told her she was "broken" and would never get promoted. Allyson DuPont started her own company after getting fed up with access barriers related to her wheelchair. All of these stories are horrifying. Many are technically illegal. None are particularly unique.

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How to have the conversation

Under the A.D.A., companies with more than 15 employees are required to provide reasonable accommodations to people who disclose a disability, which the law defines as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities." Those with invisible disabilities may be asked to provide medical documentation to support their need for requested accommodations, and to suggest adaptations that will enable them to perform to their full potential. "The accommodation changes how you do the work. It doesn't change *whether* you do the work," Ms. Hill said. "You still have to meet the basic productivity requirements, the basic outcomes of the job, just in different ways or in a different location or using different equipment." Ms. Hill and Dr. Goldberg both stressed that communication is key when requesting an accommodation. "The employee can suggest things that might be helpful, when making their case to the employer," Dr. Goldberg said. "As long as it doesn't pose undue hardship, there's really no reason for them not to do it." Preparation is also essential. "You ultimately need to be your own advocate," Mr. Findley said. "Before disclosing your illness or disability in the workplace, come up with a list of answers to questions, and before listing duties you don't feel comfortable performing, come up with solutions that will allow you to keep doing your job." If the employee is feeling in any way concerned that the employer is not responding positively, make sure you're taking notes and keeping records of those interactions," Ms. Goldberg said. "If things do unfold and you have to take further action, you'll have a written record."

Timing is everything

The A.D.A. protects people from losing their position because of disability, but it doesn't prevent microaggressions or water cooler chatter that can turn toxic. "Even though it's prohibited by law, the law is not a guarantee that discrimination won't happen," Ms. Flaherty said. "Unfortunately, bias and misperceptions abound, and employers will sometimes make bad decisions based on that false information. So I totally understand why people don't disclose and stay in the closet about it." If you do decide to seek accommodations, Ms. Hill suggests doing so before disciplinary action takes place, or as close to afterward as possible, so no one ends up in a defensive position. "You want to keep it out of the law as much as you possibly can," she said. "You want to say, 'I'm still a great employee. I'm having this barrier to doing just the best work you're ever going to find. How can we work together to fix this barrier?'"

Living in the light

Ms. Huber discovered a network of empathetic colleagues once she talked to them about her disability. By writing extensively about her life with chronic pain, she gained confidence that supported her work, as well. "Disabled does not always mean 'can't work,'" she said. "I work very differently now, but I also appreciate how much I get done as I have learned to understand what daily schedule and conditions are best for my body."

Lizz Schumer is a freelance journalist and the author of "Buffalo Steel." Follow her on Twitter: @eschumer.



October General Recreation Club Freedom Events Highlighted

2-Oct	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
4-Oct	Fri	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
5-Oct	Sat	Tuckerton Seaport Museum - 5 NEEDED	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
7-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
8-Oct	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
9-Oct	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
14-Oct	Mon	Columbus Holiday - PF Offices CLOSED	
16-Oct	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
17-Oct	Thu	Columbus Farmers & Flea Market	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
19-Oct	Sat	Mercer Women's Expo	Bus Leaves PFR 10 AM
21-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
22-Oct	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
23-Oct	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies
24-Oct	Thu	Mall Trip Jackson - 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
28-Oct	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
30-Oct	Wed	Equestrian Riding at Hopewell	Prog. Time Varies

Project Freedom Inc.
223 Hutchinson Road
Robbinsville, NJ 08691

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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

CLUB FREEDOM TRIP ONLY
Tuckerton Seaport Baymen's Museum and Village



October 5, 2019

Free Admission / Transportation \$3 per person
Lunch is on you...we will stop somewhere

Bus Leaves Robbinsville Complex. 9:00 or 9:30 am
Club Freedom Members May

Contact: Mary or Esther 609-448-2998

CLUB FREEDOM ONLY

Mercer County Women's Fall Expo

October 19, 2019
10—4 pm

At Crockett Middle School, 2631 Kuser Road, Hamilton, NJ
Free Admission for expo and transportation.

Bus Leaves Robbinsville at 9:30 am
We stop for lunch, but it is on you

Contact Mary or Esther
609-448-2998

