

# New Horizons

Housing That Supports Independence



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## Feds Working To Expand Transportation For Those With Special Needs

by Shaun Heasley | Reprinted from Disability Scoop October 31, 2019



Nearly \$50 million will be available across three new initiatives to enhance transportation options for people with disabilities and other groups, the U.S. Department of Transportation said.

(Clem Murray/Philadelphia Inquirer/TNS)

Government officials say they're dramatically increasing their investment in improving

transportation options for people with disabilities and other underserved groups with a new multimillion-dollar initiative.

The U.S. Department of Transportation said this week that it's committing nearly \$50 million to expand access to transportation for individuals with disabilities, older adults and low-income Americans. "The purpose of this \$50 million new initiative is to identify ways to provide more efficient, affordable and accessible transportation services for people with disabilities, older adults and other underserved communities that often face greater challenges in accessing essential services," said Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

Of the funds, up to \$40 million will be available for communities to "showcase innovative business partnerships, technologies and practices that promote independent mobility for all," the Transportation Department said.

Another \$5 million will be offered as cash prizes for an Inclusive Design Challenge recognizing innovations that improve the accessibility of autonomous vehicles.

Meanwhile, \$3.5 million will go toward projects that enhance transportation options connecting people with jobs, education and health services.

The Transportation Department said the new funds are just the latest step it has taken to grow access for people with disabilities. In the last three years alone, the agency indicated that it has increased its spending on research related to accessibility by 50 percent. "We are focused on streamlining the multiple steps involved in traveling between locations into a smooth and seamless trip," said K. Jane Williams, acting administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.

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# “My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



As I write these words, Thanksgiving is only a few days away, and of course Christmas soon to follow, and then the end of the year. Where did the months go? Seems like we are just saying “Merry Christmas and Happy New Year” and we are back saying it once again. It is also a good time to stop and reflect on what we all have to be thankful for and remember the many blessings we have and enjoy. For me I am most thankful for my family, my friends and my faith.

Family always comes first, and certainly started for me as an adult when I met my wife Marion and we married in 1971. Yes that means we have been married 48 years this year, and I know I got the better of the deal. Shortly after, our daughter Jen came along and then our son Tim. Both happy days, although Jen was born with a disability, it has never lessened the love and joy we had with her birth and her growing up. In many ways, her disability helped us appreciate life so much more—every detail and every challenge is remembered and never taken for granted. Family is the why we do things.

For most of us, we may say that we have many friends, but really are they true friends? Are they there for you when you are in need or need help? Are they willing to listen to your story when you are hurting, and not turn a deaf ear? Will they stop what they are doing, and change their plans in order to help you with your problems? Do they give you “tough love” and tell you the truth, when it would be easier to tell you what you want to hear? Sounds like Mom doesn’t it? But True friends are few and far between, and I think for most of us, if we have three or four, in our lifetime, we have done real good. I have just a couple, who I know are there for me and I for them, whenever and where ever that time may arise.

Finally, Faith in God whatever his ( or her ) name may be, has always helped me with my journey through life. Looking at the world, in all its complexity—how all of nature fits together in a symbiotic relationship, leads me to believe that there must be someone or something greater than me, who has thought and planned this world so perfectly. For Marion and me, looking back on the events of our lives, the birth of Jen and Tim, the work and jobs we have had, the people who have helped us, all provided a clear path for our lives to take. No question someone else has been in charge of our lives—not us. And when the road gets tough, and I don’t know what to do or which way to turn, I just say, “Lord tell me what you want, its up to you”, and somehow, I feel much better. So, as we celebrate Thanksgiving and then Christmas, let’s think about the good things in our lives—our family, friends and faith and enjoy the happiness that comes from all three.

Happy Thanksgiving



## ***From Norman's Desk***

### **35 Years of Impact & Change**

I cannot clearly remember January 1984. I cannot tell you if the month was cold or mild, snowy or dry.

I do remember this. Soon after a snow event canceled a meeting, a few of us decided that this concept called Project Freedom should be more tangible.

Although much work preceded it, 1984 marks the official beginning of a concept transforming into something more real and concrete. In March of that year Project Freedom Inc. came into existence.

Nobody expected that 35 years later Project Freedom Inc. would be opening its fifth complex in Mercer County or being on the verge of completing our ninth complex in a fifth county.

No, we were just trying to solve an immediate housing need. Naively, we did not expect it would take until 1991 to address that need.

The landscape of developing supportive housing has changed because of Project Freedom. Before our first apartment complex was completed, Project Freedom successfully brought together state agencies that never collaborated together on a housing project before. Today, this collaboration happens constantly in developing supportive housing.

In fact, the term "supportive housing" was not even used when the first tenants moved in to Freedom One in 1991. Yet the concept of lease-based housing with optional support services has been the "Project Freedom model" since 1984. A fact that may only be noted here, but is still nonetheless true.

Another fact is that many of the support services existing today did not exist in 1991. Project Freedom joined others to help bring these services into existence to support our tenants. This advocacy continues today to support those we house and serve.

Project Freedom also blazed the initial path to bring the concept of inclusive emergency planning to New Jersey three years prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001. While the practice of involving people with disabilities in emergency planning is more common today, Project Freedom's was the initial key tool for bringing this to people with disabilities. The work continues.

"True freedom is to have power over oneself for everything," wrote French philosopher Michel de Montaigne in 1588. For 35 years Project Freedom has implemented this concept for people with disabilities through our housing and advocacy. This happens through the generous support of friends and contributors.

With your help, our impact will be greater in the next 35 years as we promote freedom through independent living. This is the season for giving, and if you are so inclined to give to Project Freedom, it is not too late to become a 2019 Supporter! Your gift will be appreciated and acknowledged by yours truly.

Project Freedom is an AmazonSmile charity, and you may select us if you participate in that program as you buy gifts. Go to [smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2532804](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2532804) and Amazon donates to Project Freedom Inc.

Meanwhile, I hope all of our readers have wonderful and joyous holidays, receive the gift of peace and love, and have the companionship of those dearest to you.

Norman A. Smith,  
Follow me on Twitter @normansmith02  
Follow us on Twitter @TheFreedomGuys  
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# 2020 Club Freedom Memberships Due



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Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone no. \_\_\_\_\_

In order to fully participate in recreation you must join Club Freedom

Any questions, please contact Norman Smith 609-448-2998 or email: [projectfreedom1@aol.com](mailto:projectfreedom1@aol.com)



## Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
4-Dec	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 A
19-Dec	Thu	Hamilton Holiday Party	Prog. Time 4:00 -6:00 PM
19-Dec	Thu	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM



## Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
12/3	Tues	Massages	As Scheduled
10-Dec	Tue	Lawrence Friends Connection Meet	4:00 -6:00 PM
12/11	Wed	Nutrition	7:00 PM
12/18	Wed	Lawrence Tenant Holiday Party	4:00-6:30 PM





# Happy New Year!

## Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
2-Dec	Mon	Robbinsville Friends Connection Meet	Prog. Time 6:00 -8:00 P
13-Dec	Fri	Robbinsville Holiday Party	Prog. Time 4:00 -6:00 P
30-Dec	Mon	Robbinsville Friends Connection Meet	Prog. Time 6:00 -8:00 P



## Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
12/03	Tues	Heart to Heart Chair Massages	1:15 PM - 3:30 PM
12/05	Thur.	Northfield Bank Presentation	3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
12/06	Fri.	Mercer Home Pokeno	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
12/07	Sat.	Friendship Connection Outing	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM
12/14	Sat.	Friendship Connection Party	12:00 PM - 3:00 PM
12/18	Wed.	Heart to Heart Chair Massages	9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
12/18	Wed.	Holiday Diner/Tenant Meeting	4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
12/27	Fri.	Friendship Connection Activity	4:00 PM - 7:00 PM





# ***My Doctor Said I Wouldn't Walk. I Can.***

*By John Altmann / Reprinted from the NY Times / Aug. 29, 2019*

My grandmother showed me how to surpass the expectations that the 'medical model' had set for me.

I was born with bleeding on the brain, which caused me to develop a type of cerebral palsy known as spastic quadriplegia, which affects both the arms and the legs. Early in my childhood, I received inadequate medical care because of instability in my family life. When I was 7 years old, a court granted custody of me to my grandmother on my father's side, and my life took a turn for the better.

I can't imagine what it must have been like for her then — at 67, when she should have been enjoying some leisure after all her societal toil — taking on the responsibility of raising a young child, let alone a physically impaired one, in an ableist society.

In spite of those circumstances, my grandmother determined to give me the best chance for succeeding in a world committed to maligning people who look like me. She did not care about the barriers put before us, and she instilled in me a fire to engage and push through them as she did.

My grandmother enrolled me in physical therapy, which I received in school and at an outpatient center a few times a week. Before long, I was getting around with a walker, then on crutches. My gait was abysmal — my legs were bent and my heels were raised off the ground. My posture left much to be desired. Still, it felt wonderful to have that kind of mobility, however limited, especially when I thought about all the other things I could not do, like tie my shoes. My grandmother, though, had grander ambitions for me and my life with cerebral palsy. She wanted me to know whether there was any possibility at all of me walking short distances without my mobility aids.

At one point we went to see my pediatric doctor. He told us in no uncertain terms that if I had not already walked — at 7 years old — that I never would. My doctor wasn't entirely wrong to think this; every time I tried to stand on my own two feet, I would almost instantly fall to the ground. My doctor's prognosis was informed by what is commonly called the "medical model" of disability, which among other things distills disability down to an individual's body. It is highly quantitative, using empirical data about the body to arrive at an account of a particular disability. Needless to say, my stats weren't stellar.

My grandmother was enraged by this visit, and as we left the office, she looked me straight in the eyes and told me something that has become my personal mantra ever since: "Don't you ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something." Our determination was reignited. Each day after that, my grandmother would put me through exercises to improve my mobility. She would put two chairs inches apart from each other and have me try to walk from one chair to the other. I failed repeatedly to take a single step. We would engage in this exercise tirelessly and though it felt like it took eons, I was eventually able to take a single step without falling to the ground. Soon one step became two, two steps became three, and then I made it from one chair to the other.

My training soon involved greater distances between chairs. And I improved. Even though my form when I walked wasn't "normal," I was defying the expectations of my doctor and by extension, the medical model of disability and its judgment of my body's capabilities. I had done the seemingly impossible.

On one day, I found that everything just clicked for my body. I began walking even more. Given the inability of my muscles to maintain an erect posture I had to keep going forward or risk falling. When I was on the move, it was always from one piece of furniture to another so I could brace myself. The feeling of such movement, movement that my body had supposedly denied me, was exhilarating. No matter the so-called deficiencies of my movements, they were *mine*.

My grandmother, my sister and the rest of the people who surrounded me had tears in their eyes that day. Those whose ableism has religious undertones might say that my breakthrough was a gift from God. That may well be true, for who am I as a mere man to shun such an idea from the world of possibility?

Reflecting on this day now, however, I have a different understanding of it, one that doesn't include the language of "miracles" and "cures." I do not deny that the medical model of disability has a degree of legitimacy; it's true that the muscles in my body have spasticity to them that an able-bodied person's does not. But the medical model does not have



a monopoly on disability. To reduce a disabled person to an aggregate of figures, without affording them a more holistic framework to operate in, is to commit a kind of dehumanization, one that is legitimized by its grounding in medical science.

No, to respect our humanity and to see disability as robustly as possible, one must remember the *subjective* aspect, which means being mindful of our social relations, our thoughts, our feelings and everything in between. Only then, can one truly begin to apprehend this phenomenon in our world we call disability.

I still am and forever will be a disabled man: I need to traverse the open expanse of the world on crutches, and many who see me doing so will make a litany of assumptions, each one more prejudicial than the last. I will still be dismissed as defective by some and fetishized as an inspiration by others. I will still deal with discrimination. But when I am able to get up from this chair and walk the way I walk to my bed, I can lie down and shut my eyes to such bigotry for the night. I can be lulled to sleep in the knowledge that my relationship with my body is not imposed on me by others, by ableism and its machinations. It is in my sovereignty, a relationship I get to define and affirm.

And I affirm that my body is beautiful. I affirm, despite the medical model that classifies me as abnormal and sets the limits of my body's possibilities, that it was the hearts of all those who embraced me and exalted my humanity that allowed me defy those boundaries, to cross those borders and walk into the open terrain of human freedom.

*John Altmann is a writer. His essay, "I Don't Want to Be Inspiring," appears in the new book, "About Us: Essays From The New York Times Disability Series," edited by Peter Catapano and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, published by Liveright.*

## ***Lyft Offering Rides To Job Seekers With Disabilities***

*by Shaun Heasley / Reprinted from Disability Scoop / November 4, 2019*

In an effort to help people with disabilities access job training and get hired, one of the nation's leading ride-sharing services plans to offer free or discounted rides.

Lyft's Jobs Access Program will provide complementary or lower-cost rides to individuals with disabilities and other targeted groups in more than 35 markets across the U.S. and Canada.



The company said rides will be available to get to or from job training programs, interviews and to get back and forth from work for the first three weeks of employment before new hires typically get their first paychecks.

"For the unemployed, reliable transportation to a job interview or to the first few weeks of work can mean the difference between successful, long-term employment and lost opportunities," Lyft said in a statement about the new initiative launched late last month. "We are focused on communities that stand to benefit most from short-term transportation support, ranging from veterans to individuals with disabilities."

The ride-sharing service is partnering with nine organizations — including Goodwill and the National Down Syndrome Society — to connect with people in need of transportation.

Ashley Helsing, director of government relations at the National Down Syndrome Society, said the Lyft program addresses a major need.

"There are roughly two million people living with disabilities in the United States. Of those two million, nearly 30 percent, or 560,000 people, are unable to leave their home because of transportation barriers," Helsing said. "The ability to get around easily, especially for employment in the disability community, is crucial to the future."

## ***Autonomous food delivery robots that are just knee-high and travel on the sidewalk on college campuses are branded a menace for disabled people***

Article Reprinted from Dailymail.com by Marlene Lenthang

***People with disabilities are voicing their complaints over a series of food delivery robots starting to roll out on college campuses across America.***

The self-driving wheeled robots, engineered by Starship Technologies, are a part of a new autonomous local delivery service designed to transport food and packages.

However, the knee-high bots have become a menace for some people with disabilities, with one woman saying she had a life-threatening encounter with the AI technology.

Emily Ackerman, a PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh and disability rights activist, says she was trying to cross a street in her power wheelchair but couldn't make it over the curb due to a motionless Starship Technologies robot stationed at the end of the crosswalk.

'I found myself sitting in the street as the traffic light turned green, blocked by a non-sentient being incapable of understanding the consequences of its actions,' Ackerman revealed in an op-ed for CityLab



She revealed that Starship and the university reached out to her following the incident. Following a phone call with Starship, the mobile technology company issued a statement saying they're committed to the disability community. Still, the robots returned to campus just four days later but under heavier human surveillance. The robots originally appeared on campus supervised by humans but have started to roll out on their own.

Starship's self-driving delivery robot is designed to carry items within a four-mile radius including packages, groceries and foods, once requested via mobile app. The robots have so far been tested in over 100 cities in 20 countries and are emerging on American university campuses including the University of Pittsburgh and George Mason University.

The robots are equipped with cameras to help them maneuver across streets and weave through sidewalk traffic. Now Ackerman is calling for the company, and other tech giants, to hire more disabled engineers and designers to make their products more inclusive and friendly for people with disabilities.

'The advancement of robotics, AI, and other "futuristic" technologies has ushered in a new era in the ongoing struggle for representation of people with disabilities in large-scale decision-making settings,' Ackerman said in her op-ed. 'We need to build a technological future that benefits disabled people without disadvantaging them along the way. Companies must practice accountability from their positions of power,' she added.

Starship Technologies tells DailyMail.com that they reviewed video footage from their robot of Ackerman's incident and said she was able to travel past the robot and onto the curb without incident.

'We are always grateful when any potential issues are flagged to us that can help make us better. We have reviewed the footage from the reported incident and are glad to see that Emily was able to travel past the robot without stopping,' the company said. 'We work with many community organizations, including people with disabilities, with the aim to ensure everyone feels comfortable with this technology and that we are mindful of the needs of various community members,' the company added.



## December General Recreation Club Freedom Events Highlighted

2-Dec	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
4-Dec	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
<b>5-Dec</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Mall Trip Moorestown Mall 5 Needed</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM</b>
7-Dec	Sat	Friends Connect "Blanket-to-Vet" Trip	Bus Leaves PFR TBD
9-Dec	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
11-Dec	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
12-Dec	Thu	Robbinsville Groundbreaking Ceremony	
14-Dec	Sat	Friends Connection Holiday Party	Bus Leaves PFR 10:30 AM
16-Dec	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Robbinsville	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
<b>17-Dec</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Mall Trip Philadelphia Mall 5 Needed</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM</b>
19-Dec	Thu	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
20-Dec	Fri	PF Employee Holiday Party	
23-Dec	Mon	No "Day Rec" program	
<b>24-Dec</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>PF Offices Closed - Happy Holidays!</b>	
<b>25-Dec</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>PF Offices Closed - Happy Holidays!</b>	
<b>27-Dec</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Holiday Lights-PA 5 Needed To Go</b>	<b>Bus Leaves PFR 4:30 PM</b>
<b>31-Dec</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>PF Offices Closed - Happy New Year!</b>	



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and advocating opportunities for independent living for people with disabilities**

