



Editor-in-Chief: Bob Wittman

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OUR VISION

THE LEHIGH VALLEY IS A DISABILITY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY THAT IS INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING.

OUR MISSION

AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE, WE IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY.

Greetings and welcome to another edition of the newsletter created to share information about the "Partnership" of persons with disabilities, caregivers, family members, service providers, business, religious, educational and civic leaders, funding source representatives and many others working collaboratively to make the Lehigh Valley region of eastern Pennsylvania more disability-friendly.

WHO WE ARE (www.DisabilityFriendlyLV.com)

The Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community in the Lehigh Valley - also known as The Partnership or PfaDFC - is comprised of individual and organization representative members each committed to a common vision for building on the rich array of resources already present to improve the disability-friendliness of the Lehigh Valley region of eastern Pennsylvania!

The Partnership is designed as a self-governing community collaborative that operates on - and most definitely benefits from - the talents, resources, good will and energies contributed by its members. The Partnership does not replace nor compete with existing disability-specific agencies or programs serving persons with disabilities and their families or other caregivers in our region. The Partnership provides the arena for all advocates to come together for information-sharing, collaboration and action!

VERY SPECIAL ARTS OF PA TO MAKE A VERY SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Director of Statewide Program to Promote 25th ADA Celebration

The Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community and local arts groups will have the opportunity to collaborate in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2015.

Mimi Kenney Smith, director of the statewide organization Very Special Arts, will elaborate on the idea at the next meeting of the Partnership, which will be at 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 16.

Very Special Arts of Pennsylvania exists to provide opportunities in the arts for people with and without disabilities through the development and support of inclusive arts education, by promoting universal access to cultural events and by producing professional, inclusive theater.

VSA PA plans to make the arts the centerpiece of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act all across the Commonwealth in 2015 and is encouraging organizations like PfaDFC to plan events. Randall Forte, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Arts Council, will join Kenney Smith as she offers advice on how to get started.

The artistic talents of people with disabilities have long been recognized. After all, Beethoven and Goya were deaf, Manet lost a leg, Renoir suffered severe arthritis and Monet and Degas both lost their eyesight.

There is no shortage of that kind of talent in the Lehigh Valley. The artistry of local people with disabilities was showcased at the Artability Expo at Lehigh Valley Hospital last year in a program organized by PfaDFC's own Dr. Sweetie Jain, director of LVH's Medical Home Project.

Kenney Smith will explain how they could form the core of a high-profile celebration involving the Lehigh Valley's rich abundance of arts organizations and venues and active disability community.



NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO BE INSTALLED



The Steering Committee of the Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community will welcome two new members when it convenes for its next meeting on June 10.

Long-time PfaDFC members Joan Linney and Jan Haley-Schwoyer were nominated last month to succeed current members Susan Firman and Sam Jones, who decided not to seek second terms on the Steering Committee.

Partnership members will be asked at the May 16 meeting to ratify the ballot that also includes the nominations of Gloria Hamm to serve another three-year term on the Committee and Nelvin Vos to serve as Convener for another year. Because the four face no opposition, the need for members to cast individual paper ballots as part of a formal election process at the meeting will not be necessary.

Haley-Schwoyer, Hamm, Linney and Vos will join current Steering Committee members Polly Beste, Lois Favier, Karen Grady, Cindy Lambert, Rick Walters and Bob Wittman.

ATTENDANCE GROWS AT LATEST "SHOW UP"

The Copperhead Grill on Airport Road in Hanover Township was the setting for the PfaDFC's second "Show Up" event on April 25, which was attended by 10 PfaDFC members and friends. The turnout included five people who participated in a Show Up event for the first time.

Partnership stalwarts Kathleen Britton and Sister Janice Johnson organized the event and selected the Copperhead Grill for this season's get-together because of the plentiful accessible parking near the front door, the barrier-free restaurant floor plan and the accessible public bathrooms. The Show Up revelers occupied a big table right in the main dining room that was expanded with more chairs as additional people arrived.

Partnership Convener Nelvin Vos presented a PfaDFC window decal and information about the Partnership to the Copperhead manager on duty that evening. Vos encouraged the restaurant to affix the window cling prominently on its front door and use it to advertise the establishment as "Disability Friendly," marking the location as welcoming to people with disabilities.

Apart from Vos' brief presentation to the restaurant's manager, there was no formal program at the Show Up event. No official business was conducted, and there was no detailed agenda to follow. Instead, Show Up events - by design - offer PfaDFC members a chance to get to know one another better, to network over common concerns and to enjoy each other's company. Attendees order their own food and beverages off the menu and use the opportunity to deepen friendships and professional connections.



Show Up events are held periodically throughout the year. The next one will be scheduled for late summer or early autumn. The date and time will be advertised well in advance to give people a chance to attend. If you have an establishment to suggest as the site for the next Show Up event or wish to share other ideas, please contact Kathleen (kb200@earthlink.net) or Sister Janice (jjohnson@allentowndiocese.org) directly.

BI-COUNTY LINK PROVIDES CENTRALIZED REFERRAL FOR AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES



Lehigh-Northampton LINK to Aging and Disability Resources is an initiative that takes a seamless approach in the way we assist seniors and adults with disabilities who need help with activities of daily living. The Lehigh-Northampton LINK network consists of both core and collaborative partners.

Lehigh-Northampton LINK's five core partners are the Lehigh County Office of Aging and Adult Services, Northampton County Area Agency on Aging, Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living and both Lehigh and Northampton County Apprise Programs. We work together to provide information and assistance services to seniors and adults with disabilities and foster a collaborative relationship with other agencies throughout the Lehigh Valley that provide supportive services to these populations. These agencies will become Lehigh-Northampton LINK collaborative partners.

Collaborative partners consist of agencies and organizations that work with housing issues, transportation, employment, county government and those organizations that serve people with other disabilities that overlap with the targeted populations. These partners participate in meetings and cross training sessions, both as a participant and as a trainer, to collaborate about available programs and services for the aging and disabled community. Lehigh-Northampton LINK currently has 29 collaborative partners and has held 27 cross trainings. Because of these LINK collaborations, partner agencies are more efficiently and effectively assisting individuals to navigate a complex system of federal, state and local programs while providing a "no wrong door" entry point to needed programs and services.

For more information about Lehigh-Northampton LINK, or to become a collaborative partner, contact Kim Melusky at (610) 782-3096 or email lehighlink@lehighcounty.org. Additional information about this initiative can also be found at www.lehighcounty.org or www.northamptoncounty.org.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD. NO, REALLY!

Order by U.S. Education Department Opens Scholastic Sports to Students with Disabilities



A whole new world of access is being opened to young people with disabilities as a result of an order by the U.S. Education Department to include students with disabilities in sports programs.

Announced earlier this year, the directive requires elementary and secondary schools to make "reasonable modifications" for students with disabilities or create parallel athletic programs that have comparable standing as

mainstream programs.

The change is expected to be as sweeping as the Title IX expansion of athletic opportunities for women in 1972, which led to a huge increase in female participation in sports.

"Sports can provide invaluable lessons in discipline, selflessness, passion and courage, and this guidance will help schools ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to benefit from the life lessons they can learn on the playing field or on the court," said Education Secretary Arne Duncan in announcing the directive.

Education Department officials insist they are not aiming to dramatically change sports traditions or guarantee students with disabilities a spot on competitive teams. Rather, the order instructs schools to include students with disabilities in sports when they are able to keep up.

Advocates for people with disabilities praised the change. A 2010 Government Accountability Office study found that students with disabilities participated in athletics at consistently lower rates than those without. The study also suggested that children with disabilities can benefit from organized sports participation because they are at greater risk of being sedentary than other segments of the population.

HOT OFF THE PRESSES

A New Brochure Explains What the Partnership Is All About

A colorful new brochure, produced by one of the Partnership's own, is available for PfaDFC members to use when recruiting new members or telling friends and colleagues about the Lehigh Valley Partnership for a Disability Friendly Community. You can download and print a copy of the brochure [here](#).

Steering Committee members believe the brochure offers a concise explanation of the Partnership's value as a network of consumers, caregivers, service providers and advocates.

Production of the brochure was led by PfaDFC's own Jan Haley-Schwoyer, a principal in Jangle Advertising, which is based in Nazareth but has clients throughout the region. The marketing and public relations company developed the brochure's eye-catching design and donated the first printing run of copies.

The brochure features a dozen color images that reveal many familiar faces of Partnership members along with photographs of clients and consumers provided by several local service agencies. The tri-fold brochure lists the Partnership's Mission and Vision statements, names the members of PfaDFC Steering Committee, describes the Partnership's work through the committee structure and how it came to be started and explains the advantages of participation.

Copies of the brochure will be available in quantity for pickup at all general meetings of the Partnership or by contacting PfaDFC secretary Cindy Lambert at clambert@gsrh.org.



UPCOMING MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES FOR CHANGE

Community Awareness Committee

The Community Awareness Committee for Change is collaborating virtually this month, preparing reports summarizing the past year's activities and eliciting suggestions for projects for the coming year. The committee will schedule a meeting in June. (Co-conveners: Karen Grady, kgrady@arcofl-n.org, and Bob Wittman, bob@hadcallentown.org)

Housing & Community Accessibility Committee

The Housing & Community Accessibility Committee for Change, also convening as Lehigh Valley LHOT (Local Housing Options Team), will meet at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, June 5 at Allentown Housing Authority's Gross Towers at 13th and Allen streets. At its May 1 meeting, the committee discussed potential projects for the coming year. The committee continues to reach out to developers to urge them to include accessible affordable housing in their projects. (Convener: Bob Wittman, bob@hadcallentown.org)

Transportation Committee

The next meeting of the Transportation Committee will be on May 22, from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Good Shepherd Health and Technology Center.

At the committee's March 28 meeting, Peggy Schmidt from the Partnership Transportation Management Association (TMA) of Montgomery County presented an overview of the Montgomery County TMA. She explained that the TMA is organized as a 501c3 nonprofit and works with businesses, municipalities, school districts and nonprofit organizations to improve access to work, decrease traffic congestion and improve mobility. The TMA offers a variety of programs for businesses, municipalities and the general public - free bike racks, Bike Share and Defensive Walking programs for municipalities and travel instruction programs for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities and students in transition. The Partnership TMA of Montgomery County is funded by PENNDOT, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, membership dues, in-kind contributions and payment for services. (Co-conveners: Kay Welsh, atd140@ptd.net, and Lois Favier, lmfavier@gmail.com)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Members of the Partnership meet on the third Thursday of EVERY OTHER month at 3 p.m. at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 45 N. 4th Street, Allentown, PA 18102.

Remaining meeting dates for 2013 are: **May 16**, **September 19** and **November 21**.

THE PfaDFC DOES NOT HOLD A MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN JULY.



Committees for Change usually meet during the months when the Partnership does not meet or more frequently as projects may require.

If you want to learn more about or are interested in becoming a member of the Partnership or any of its Committees for Change, please visit www.DisabilityFriendlyLV.com and click on "Membership."

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK TOO!



Don't forget that the Partnership is also on Facebook (www.facebook.com). Once logged in, Facebook members should type "Disability Friendly Community" in the search bar. Local, state and national information that may interest persons with disabilities, their family members, caregivers, service providers and advocates is routinely posted as a service to our community.

. . . AND CABLE TV TOO!

Watch for our public service announcements appearing weekly on Service Electric and RCN Cable TV channels.

As always, please accept our most sincere thanks for your interest in *working together* to make the Lehigh Valley region of Eastern Pennsylvania more disability-friendly!