A National Day of Mourning

On Friday March 1, 2013, RCIL participated along with a number of organizations, including Not Dead Yet and the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, in a vigil to commemorate the lives of those with disabilities who were killed by a family member or caregiver. The vigil held at RCIL represented the Rochester community’s participation in a National Day of Mourning. Different activities took place all across the country.

Our local vigil included five speakers reading various short stories of dozens of victims who were killed by a caregiver or family. Each speaker lit a candle after the readings to honor the victims.

The stories shared were very powerful. They highlighted how the general public has viewed the murders of these people as “understandable”; reflective of how society and the legal system has shown sympathy and leniency for the caregivers committing these crimes. Little public attention is placed on the victim who is killed, but rather on the killer, portrayed as a “victim” who “is burdened” to care for their loved one who is “suffering” with a disability. The media has gone as far as calling the murderers heroes for being strong enough to stop the “suffering.” For many of us this mind set and rationale is inconceivable.

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RCIL’s Leadership Group - Youth Own!

We are looking for tomorrow’s leaders of Rochester’s disability community!

RCIL’s youth leadership group held its first meeting of the year – a game night – on February 16th! Ten individuals got together and got to know each other over pizza, snacks, Wii and PS3. They also made time for a support group discussion. There will be much more to come! The group plans to meet every 2 or 3 weeks; Fridays at RCIL, and occasionally on Saturdays for community events. Movies, shopping, and sporting events are all being discussed for the future; as well as more game nights!

The group got off the ground at a planning meeting in January, where a focus group of teens and young adults decided on a name and an identity for the group. They decided “YO!,” a name that has been around for about a year now, had a nice ring to it, and they decided to keep it. “YO!” stands for Youth Own. The logo that the focus group then selected for YO! picks up the red, white and blue components of RCIL’s logo, but depicts a rising star, symbolic of member’s futures.

The group also created a brochure that can be used to spread the word about the program. In addition a few teens started a Facebook group, where teens and young adults can connect regarding local events the group is having as well as larger events affecting the disability community.

Several members knew each other from Rotary Sunshine Camp, and have plans for some outreach to their fellow campers there. Additionally, young adults who have joined the group hope to become mentors and have plans to pursue work as advocates in the future. As we go forward, YO! will offer plenty of fun along with opportunity for members to grow and develop leadership skills for the future.

Please check out our pictures on the RCIL facebook page: www.facebook.com/RegionalCenterforIndependentLiving or the YO! Facebook page: www.facebook.com/YouthOwn

Don’t forget to “like” us!

DID YOU KNOW?
RCIL’s youth leadership coordinator can . . .

Set you on the path to employment?
Help you connect with ACCES-VR?
Help you research and apply for college scholarships?
Help fill your resume with valuable experience?
Guide you through the process to get out on your own?

Call today at (585) 442-6470 to find out more!
Site Surveys to Keep Our Community ADA Compliant and Accessible for Everyone

RCIL is available to conduct site surveys for individuals that experience accessibility issues at area businesses. If you are or have experienced inaccessibility in the community; possibly a store you cannot access due to heavy doors or broken power doors, cannot freely move about the aisles due to displays or barriers, cannot access the entrance or the parking areas, etc; please let our staff know by completing one of the RCIL Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violation forms. The forms are available at RCIL offices, by email or by mail. If you need assistance in filling out the form – give RCIL a call at (585) 442-6470.

Once the ADA Violation forms is filled out and received by RCIL’s Accessibility Specialist a site visit will be made to document the violation. The ADA Violation Statement Form has 10 areas that are covered along with an expanded complaint area to explain the violations in greater detail. RCIL will conduct a site survey concerning the violation and record the violations or concerns.

RCIL has had success recently in following up with ADA violations that have been filed with our agency. RCIL had success with Goodwill Stores, Inc located at the Stoneridge Plaza in Greece. There were issues with inaccessible routes in the store due to crowded displays and poorly placed merchandise. RCIL conducted a site survey of the business and found that the aisles were not in compliance with the ADA accessible route regulation. An aisle is to be a minimum of 36 inches but the aisles were measuring 32 inches or less in the store. RCIL sent a letter conveying these findings and Goodwill responded and made the necessary changes. RCIL conducted a final site survey and found the store was now in compliance.

RCIL also had an ADA violation filed against Kohl’s Department Store located in Webster. The complaint was for cluttered aisles and having an entrance door that was very difficult to open. A site survey was performed and the violations were validated. The store was congested making it difficult to navigate through aisles. RCIL sent a letter to the Store Manager and corrections were made to the store through the corporate office. The manager was very supportive. She was concerned about the violations being reported and wanted to correct the problems. RCIL conducted a follow up site visit and found the store to be in compliance. There were 35 displays removed to make the store accessible. The manager stated that if there are any further issues to not hesitate to contact her. RCIL will have updated information concerning ADA violations issues in our next newsletter.

RCIL wants people to know that if you have questions or concerns about accessibility issues in the community please contact us. RCIL has a fee for service site audit offered for businesses as well to ensure compliance under the ADA. Please contact RCIL’s Accessibility Specialist at (585) 442-6470 with any questions.
Troop Visit to Earn Disability Awareness Badge

On Thursday February 21st one of RCIL’s Independent Living Specialists, Rasheem Broughton, had the privilege of meeting with Boy Scout troop 169 out of Dan Forth Tower in Rochester, NY. There were three troop members who came to visit with Rasheem and learn about what we do here at RCIL, for participation in getting their disability awareness badge.

Part one of their badge assignment consisted of learning proper disability etiquette and person-first language – along with why it is important to know and use appropriate etiquette. The Scouts were also required to visit an agency that works with people who have some type of a disability. They learned about opportunities we offer for training, employment, education and independent living aids such as service animals, canes, and teletypewriters (TTYs). It was an informative question and answering session.

As their final task they will need to make a commitment to their Merit Badge Counselor describing what they will do to show a positive attitude about people with disabilities, and encourage positive attitudes among others. They will discuss with the rest of their troop how their awareness has changed as a result of what they learned here at RCIL.

After speaking with Troop 169, Rasheem feels all three Boy Scouts left RCIL with a better understanding of disabilities. It is his hope that this experience follows them throughout life and allows them to keep an open mind when it comes to interacting, assisting or working with people who have disabilities.

Xavier Scott, Rasheem Broughton (IL Specialist), Jeremiah Maddox and Simeon Alvarez pose for a picture at their visit.
In case after case, very little public attention was put on the actual victims who were killed.

A National Day of Mourning is held each year for just this reason. Attention should be focused on the person with a disability who was murdered - remembering these victims and their lives taken.

As the RCIL Deaf Systems Advocate, Dean DeRusso was also asked to speak about Deaf twins from Belgium named Marc and Eddy Verbessem, who recently chose euthanasia. According to media reports, the deaf twins were losing their vision due to glaucoma and at some point may no long have been able to see. This story became very controversial in the deaf community. Some in the community argued that they had other health problems that contributed to their decision to ask that they be euthanized. Others questioned what type of information and services were offered as an alternative, if any at all. This story was different than the other stories shared at the vigil because the twins asked to be euthanized, as opposed to others making the decision for them, in a country which has legalized euthanasia based on disability.

The press and media coverage focused on the euthanasia. Nobody seemed willing to question what services might be available in Belgium that would ensure the twins could continue living happy, productive lives. We don’t know if the twins faced oppression and were led to believe that their only option was to die. There are still so many unanswered questions.

Today, there are many services and accommodations for Deaf-Blind individuals to live independently in the community. Who knows, if they had decided to live, they could have helped their government learn of better ways to serve the Deaf-Blind community in their country. Not Dead Yet opposes the legalization of euthanasia as a form of discrimination against old, ill and disabled people.

+ Stephen Drake, a Research Analyst for Not Dead Yet, read a letter by Dick Sobsey titled “Father’s Day 2000” as a closing for the event. The letter was a powerful testament from a father of two children with disabilities who wants to remind people of what the true definition of a hero is. He was raised during a time when Roy Rogers and Dale Evans were what television and the media portrayed as heroes, and they had a child with Down Syndrome. Today as Dick raises his own children with disabilities, he sees how the media portrays heroism – men who are labeled heroes for killing their own children and sparing them a life of misery being disabled. These fathers are now what society sees as a hero for being “brave” enough to murder their child. The letter concludes by noting that these men are not heroes and should not be glorified for what they have done. Rather we should all salute and celebrate the fathers (and mothers) of a child with disabilities who wake up everyday and do the best they can to support, raise and love their child.

Not Dead Yet continues to fight for the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities worldwide. Hopefully, those who attended this service will spread the word that those who take others’ lives are not heroes and that everyone’s life is valuable.
Medical Record Review for Veterans

The National Personnel Records Center of St. Louis, Missouri holds a well kept secret that could make a big difference to many military veterans. This building houses all service, medical and dental records of service men and women from all branches who are no longer active. A large majority of these military veterans are never informed that they may be entitled to compensation for service-related disabilities. Very few veterans even know that this building exists and that they can, in fact, have access to these records.

The majority of veterans know to get a copy of their DD-214 or other comparable separation paperwork to confirm that they did, in fact, serve in the military. However, few are told to make copies of their service, medical, and dental records upon discharge. It is important for veterans to know that these documents are not restricted to you and can be accessed at anytime.

You may be asking, “What is so important about retrieving copies of my records?” Service records contain important details of military service and experience, and your medical records contain valuable information! Medical records can identify service-related injuries and disabilities, which make you eligible for compensation.

Many veterans believe that if they are entitled to compensation due to a service-related disability they will be informed by Veterans Affairs (VA). Unfortunately, this is not accurate or possible. The VA simply cannot thoroughly review the records of every service member no longer on active duty.

It falls into the hands of military veterans. If there is a monthly payment to which you are entitled, do you want it? If so, please follow these two steps to ensure you get what you may be entitled to for your service.

1. Contact the National Personnel Records Center located in St Louis, Missouri to request copies of your service, medical and dental records. To order online, go to: https://eservices.archives.gov. You can also mail a request to the National Personnel Records Center at 1 Archives Drive, St Louis, MO 63138. You can send them a completed form SF-180 or simply request your records (be specific about what you are requesting – i.e. complete copies of medical records).

2. Bring your medical records to either the American Legions or the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to act as a reviewing agent. They will file your request for service-related disability to the VA, on your behalf.

Please contact RCIL’s Veterans Outreach Advocate at (585) 442 – 6470 or rpierson@rcil.org with additional questions or for further information.
Effective July 1, 2013 there are new regulations for the U.S. Department of Education’s student loan discharge policy for student loan borrowers who have a permanent disability. There will be more consistent ways of determining eligibility for discharge under these new policies.

Please contact any of RCIL at (585) 442-6470 for additional details and to find out how we can help you out with this process.

RCIL has a Loan Closet of Assistive Devices for both Adults and Children!

Contact RCIL at (585) 442-6470 or email TRAID@rcil.org for more information on how we can help you today!

If RCIL doesn't have an item, we will search to see if one of the other regional TRAID’s has the item for you!

Mark your Calendars!
RCIL Board Meeting:
Thursday, April 18th, 2-4pm
497 State Street, Rochester, NY

Members are encouraged to attend. Not a member of RCIL?
Contact Linda Taylor at (585) 442-6470 to join or request to speak to the Board!

Problems with this newsletter?
Have you changed addresses?
Are you receiving too many copies?

For mailing adjustments, please contact Kristin Salter at ksalter@cdrnys.org or (585) 442-6470.

See what’s happening online!

Go to http://www.rcil.org for more information on our services and advocacy or go to one of our social media pages below

http://www.facebook.com/rcilnys
http://www.twitter.com/rcilny
http://www.youtube.com/rcilvideo

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