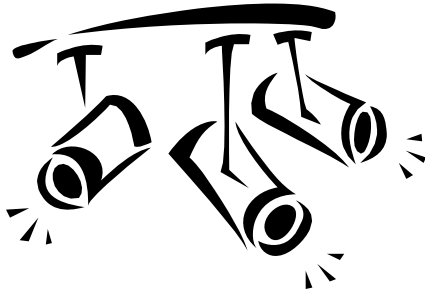


Homewards



A publication of the Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania

March 2007



Spotlight on a Successful Home Modification Project

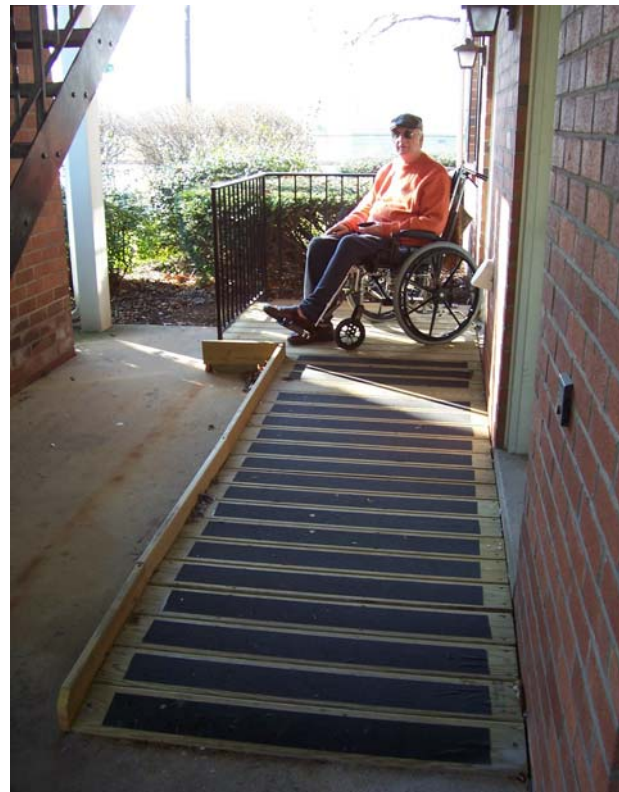
Mark Warren's Road to Independence

By Peggy Robertson

There are many challenges people encounter along the journey of life that cannot be controlled. Some of these challenges can result in a person facing a complete lifestyle change that was never anticipated. When a person becomes disabled after having been able-bodied for most of his or her life, learning to become as independent as possible can present many obstacles. In order for a person who becomes disabled to transition into a more independent way of life, it is critical to get the proper supports and resources. Therefore, people must know where to go to for support, determine what type of support is needed and how that support can be implemented. Although things happen that are out of a person's control that may lead to a disability, there are ways in which a person can gain self-determination and greater independence.

Mark Warren was willing to share his

Inside This Edition...	
PREP	5
Legislative News	6
Visitability Bill	8
Save the Date	10
The RHC Team	10



A ramp to the entrance of Mark Warren's apartment was installed through the SDHP Home Modification Program

story about what his life was like before he had a stroke, and what his life is like now that he has a disability. When talking with Mark Warren it is clear that he is a well educated, articulate gentleman with a vision for his future. Many years ago he

(Continued on page 2)

(Mark Warren continued from page 1)

had been a senior manager with an international steel company in New Jersey and when they down-sized in 1999, he moved to Lancaster to work as a site manager on a project with a business associate in a scrap metal facility. In 2003, after the job was finished, he and a friend traveled out west and while they were there, decided to start a new venture. They secured a job to manage a restaurant in Montana. Mr. Warren came back to Lancaster to settle his affairs before moving out west. His move back to Montana would never take place. One night while he was sleeping, Mr. Warren suffered a massive stroke. He was then placed into the Conestoga View

Nursing (and Rehabilitation) Home and for the first year that he was there, was barely able to move or speak. He received physical therapy and occupational therapy, and eventually regained his speech and was partially paralyzed.

Mr. Warren really wanted to leave the nursing home, he wanted to live as independently as possible. Fortunately, two significant statewide initiatives had been recently implemented that would help Mr. Warren make this transition.

One initiative, the Nursing Home Transition (NHT) was designed specifically to help move people out of nursing homes who are able to live more independently. This

collaborative program was initiated in 2004 between the Governor's Office of Health Care Reform (GOHCR), the PA Department of Aging (PDA), the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), Local County Assistance Offices, Local Area Agencies on Aging, Local Centers for Independent Living, Home and Community-Based Providers and nursing facility organizations. NHT is funded by DPW, PDA and the Office of Social Programs Long Term Living Bureau of Home and Community Based Services.

In order to make NHT available to all 67 counties in the state, 30 cross-agency partnerships were established. Each partnership has an NHT Coordinator whose responsibility is to reach out to people living in nursing homes who may wish to, and are able to relocate to the community. During the time Mr. Warren was in Conestoga View, Deb Stumpf, who currently shares the position of Regional Housing Coordinator at the CIL of Central PA, was an employee of Abilities In Motion (AIM) as an NHT Coordinator. She was



A pull-down table was installed in Mr. Warren's kitchen to allow for a wheelchair and preserve space

(Continued on page 3)

(Mark Warren continued from page 2)

responsible for the NHT in both Lebanon and Lancaster counties.

A second initiative, the SDHP Home Modification Program, enables low- and moderate-income persons with permanent disabilities to make their current home more accessible. This statewide program funded by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development is to provide modifications to make a home more accessible so that people with disabilities can live more independently in their own home for as long as possible. Ms. Stumpf was able to connect Mr. Warren with the SDHP Home Modification program. She noted that all of the Centers for Independent Living in the state are aware of this resource.

While Mr. Warren was at Conestoga View, a social worker referred him to AIM for the NHT program. At that point, Mr. Warren met Ms. Stumpf who became his NHT coordinator. Ms. Stumpf found Mr. Warren to be very outgoing and she knew he was a special person. She did a very individualized in-take

process and highly recommended Mr. Warren for the NHT program. At first Mr. Warren was turned down for the program by United Disabilities Service (UDS), but as fate would have it, the NHT started a pilot program in Lancaster and Ms. Stumpf presented Mr. Warren's case again. UDS did a reassessment and in October 2005 accepted Mr. Warren into the NHT program. Ms. Stumpf and Mr. Warren put together a transition plan so that he could move into independent living. Ms. Stumpf described the process. "I first met with Mark in early 2005. He was very outgoing, he ran the Residency Association at Conestoga View, he is an awesome cook and occasionally did some cooking for close friends there using the kitchen facilities in the Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy Department. Mark was a popular guy there. What I first set out to do with Mark was gain his trust. I feel it is important to honor a person's dignity. Mark was an active participant in planning his transition and he followed through on everything. I knew immediately that he had a lot to contribute to the community. I also wanted to make sure that Mark was well aware of what he really needed in order to live



The front door was modified, the sill was removed, and the wall-to-wall carpeting was replaced with linoleum for the wheelchair to get into the apartment

independently. He recognized that he would need attendant care because there were things he wouldn't be able to do on his own."

Mr. Warren explained, "Deb was essential in helping me move out of the nursing home. She was able to find an apartment for me in a good location that she thought, with some additional modifications, would meet my needs."

Through NHT funds, Ms. Stumpf was able to get a security deposit and most of the furniture for the apartment. Ms. Stumpf contacted SDHP in order

(Continued on page 4)

(Mark Warren continued from page 3)

to apply for home modifications that would make the apartment accessible for someone who uses a wheelchair. Mr. Warren moved into the apartment in August 2006 and although the home modifications were not completed until the end of November 2006, Mr. Warren had his attendant care in place and was able to live independently. Mr. Warren described the modifications for which he was eligible. "A ramp was installed going from the sidewalk to the entrance to my apartment. The front door was modified so that the sill was removed, and the wall-to-wall carpeting in the entranceway was replaced with linoleum to make it easier for the wheelchair to get into the apartment. The doorway from the living area into the kitchen was widened and corner bumpers were added, handrails were installed in the bathroom both on the wall and in the tub area, a kitchen light and fan were mounted on the ceiling and a fold down table was built into the kitchen wall."

In addition, Mr. Warren has an attendant from UDS who comes in Monday through Friday from 8:30 – 11:30 A.M. who provides

companionship, does the grocery shopping, picks up his prescriptions and much, much more. Another attendant, a "floater", usually comes in on Saturdays. Mr. Warren mentioned that he has a lifeline with the American Red Cross in case something should happen when no one is around to help. He also takes advantage of the Red Rose Access Service which is a door-to-door transportation service for seniors and people with disabilities in Lancaster County. He uses this service to go to doctors' appointments and Barnes and Noble once a week.

Since the time Mr. Warren suffered a stroke, he has taken control of his life in many ways to become more independent. Mr. Warren has been accepted in an MBA program at a nearby Pennsylvania State University. He said that he has already arranged for transportation and will be getting a computer. Mr. Warren also talked about some of his other interests. "I enjoy going to Barnes and Noble because I like to read. I read a lot of historical fiction and am particularly interested in the civil war. I do all of my own cooking

and make great spaghetti and chili. I'm also combining my love for cooking with my love for books. Right now I am about thirty pages into writing a cook book. It's an exciting project and my sister in Florida will help me put it together for publication. The cook book is geared toward tools and techniques that make cooking easier for a person in a wheel chair. The pages will be moisture resistant and the book will lay flat no matter what page it is opened to."

Mr. Warren expressed his gratitude to Deb Stumpf, and Celia Michl and Gail Hoffmann, both of whom work with SDHP. Mr. Warren also graciously thanks Murray Management, the property manager where he lives, and especially Jen Fry for their cooperation in the progress of the apartment modifications. These individuals have been instrumental in getting the supports and resources Mr. Warren needed to live independently and to make a contribution to the community. Mr. Warren exemplifies the concept of self-determination in housing and making choices that will positively impact the direction of his life.

Preparing For Successful Renters

By Peggy Robertson

The Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania (SDHP) is rolling out a new training program that will equip Pennsylvanians with the information needed to become successful renters. PREP, the Prepared Renter Program, a collaborative effort of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) and SDHP, will provide the tools to help tenants and landlords communicate successfully in order to create a positive rental experience. Under Statewide Housing Coordinator Mary Penny's leadership, and with input from the Regional Housing Coordinators and PHFA, a training curriculum has been developed that will assist renters and landlords in the intricacies of the rental process.

PREP is designed to inform renters about a variety of topics including an assessment of their housing needs, understanding the language of a lease, how to communicate with landlords and how to create and work within a budget. The training will provide specific strategies

to address different concerns such as restoring credit problems, overcoming criminal histories and understanding difficult housing markets. In addition, an explanation of different housing options will be presented which will help a renter determine what is affordable, what locations are realistic and what preparation is needed to make decisions about where to live. The training also includes information about what recourse renters can take if they feel they are a victim of discrimination.

Of particular value for renters in the training is the creation of their own personal PREP folder. Throughout each chapter of the training, worksheets will be included that will help the renter keep track of the entire rental process from beginning to end. This will help renters stay organized as they look for, and find housing that best meets their needs.

Worksheets that will help participants get to the point where they are ready to sign a lease include:

- Budget Sheets with details about the

renter's income and expenses

- Basic Data Sheets that include personal information about the renter
- Financial Information Sheets to list income sources, assets, and bank accounts for all members of the household
- Previous Housing References Sheets to record the contact information about people who can be called as positive referrals for the renter
- PREP Checklist Sheet that lists all of the documents, paperwork and possible payments needed when the renter is ready to rent
- Rental Search Tracking Sheet that keeps a record of the rental search so that the renter will be able to make an informed choice about the best place to live

The PREP training will provide renters with what they need to think about before they start looking for housing, and then anticipate the challenges they may face based on what their personal circumstances are.

(Continued on page 6)

(PREP continued from page 5)

By taking advantage of the PREP training, renters will be equipped with the tools to overcome any challenges that may arise during the rental process and find housing to meet

their needs. In addition, a list of resources will be included with the training that will have the names of different agencies that can offer assistance. In some cases, the process may take a bit longer, but it will be

worth it in the end.

To learn more about PREP and when trainings are being offered call 610-873-9595, toll free at 877-550-7347 or send an email to mary@sdhp.org.

Legislative News of Interest to PA Disability Community

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's (DPW) has announced two important changes of interest to the disability community in Pennsylvania that can be found on their website at www.dpw.state.pa.us.

Governor Rendell Names a New Deputy to Lead Improvements in Long Term Living Systems and Services

On January 27, 2007, Governor Edward G. Rendell appointed Mike Hall to lead the commonwealth's efforts to expand and strengthen Pennsylvania's long term living system. Hall, with 25 years of experience in long term care and social services, will serve as deputy secretary for Long Term Living. He will be responsible for coordinating and improving the extensive network of state-supported long term living services currently funded and administered by the departments of Aging and Public Welfare.

"As part of my Prescription for Pennsylvania health care reform initiative, I am creating this new position and bringing in a talented and proven leader to boost the quality, cost effectiveness and breadth of options available to Pennsylvanians who need long term living services and supports," Governor Rendell said. "We want to maximize every dollar we invest in the long term living system to ensure that low- and moderate-income seniors and adults with disabilities can receive the services and supports they need, in the right setting."

Hall's appointment is the next step in the Rendell administration's continuing effort to better coordinate and improve the quality and cost effectiveness of state-funded, long term living services in Pennsylvania. At Governor Rendell's direction, the commonwealth has already taken significant steps to improve the long term living system, including dramatically expanding home and community-based options, implementing a successful and innovative nursing home transition program, and creating the inter-agency Long Term Living Council to provide strategic direction to the ongoing reform efforts.

Hall was selected because of his impressive career in long term living and his success at improving the quality and cost effectiveness of publicly-funded, long term living programs. Hall most recently served as deputy commissioner for health, integrated

(Continued on page 7)

(Legislative News continued from page 6)

access and strategy in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to his leadership role in Maine, Hall held a number of executive-level positions in the Vermont Department of Aging and Disabilities.

He also brings substantial legal experience, having worked at Vermont Legal Aid Inc. from 1982 to 1996, serving as director of the Senior Law Project, the state ombudsman, and director of the Elderly Law Unit. Hall is a Master's graduate and fellow from the Rutgers University Eagleton Institute of Politics. He received his J.D. from the Washington University of St. Louis School of Law and a B.A. in political science and economics from Blackburn College in Illinois. Pending Hall's scheduled arrival in early March, Linda Blanchette will serve as interim executive director of the Long Term Living Council. The council's current leader, Michael Nardone, is returning to the Department of Public Welfare to serve as deputy secretary for the Office of Medical Assistance Programs.

Secretary of Public Welfare, Estelle B. Richman Announces Creation of new Office of Developmental Program

On February 7, 2007, in an effort to continue addressing the needs of Pennsylvanians with disabilities, Department of Public Welfare Secretary Estelle B. Richman announced the creation of the Office of Developmental Programs. Richman said the new office was created through a reorganization of the Office of Mental Retardation and the establishment of the Bureau of Autism Services.

"Families have made great strides in the past few years in alerting us to the growing number of children and adults being diagnosed with autism and they have helped us to prepare a path in which to provide for their unique needs," said Richman. "By establishing this new office, we're taking an important step to help families access information and supports that are so vital for their loved ones."

Autism is a lifelong brain disorder that affects as many as 1-of-every-166 children born in the U.S., or one child every 21 minutes. The number of people across the U.S. diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder over the past 15 years has risen by a staggering 2,000 percent.

Creating the new Office of Developmental Programs within DPW was one of the core recommendations of the Autism Task Force, whose findings were released in December 2004. In its initial stages, Office of Developmental Programs will house a Bureau of Mental Retardation Services and a Bureau for Autism Services, as well as necessary support bureaus. Kevin Casey, currently the deputy secretary for the Office of Mental Retardation, will continue as the deputy secretary of the Office of Developmental Programs. Nina Wall-Cote will serve as the director for the Bureau of Autism Services, which will provide expertise and supports for all state agencies which serve Pennsylvanians with autism. For more information about the department or services available to Pennsylvanians with autism, visit www.dpw.state.pa.us

A Step Towards Visitability in the Commonwealth

By Peggy Robertson

SDHP has long been an advocate of Visitability, which promotes a one no-step entrance into a home, doorways with at least 32 inch clear space and a first floor powder room large enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair. In October of 2006, Pennsylvania passed legislation that will provide incentive by way of tax credits to make the option available to local municipalities to make residential improvements for accessibility.

Senate Bill 1158, known as the Residential Visitability Tax Credit Act (the Act), was sponsored by Senator James Rhodes of Schuylkill and Senator Jim Ferlo of Pittsburgh. The Act provides for a tax credit to encourage property owners to include Visitability design features on their properties. Visitability design features are defined in the Act which can be found at www.legis.state.pa.us.

According to Paul O'Hanlon, Esq., Staff Attorney for the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania, "The ordinance in Pittsburgh

was modeled after the Atlanta Ordinance that was championed by Eleanor Smith, founder of Concrete Change. In Pittsburgh, there was a commitment to creating a public process to hear all points of view about Visitability. Several meetings were held to educate the public and dispel myths that were perpetuated as fact. Invitees to these meetings included developers, architects, contractors, realtors, government officials, community members and consumers. The workshops focused on designing the Pittsburgh of the future and addressed the challenges to making houses Visitable from the perspective of architects, developers and builders. In addition, Eleanor Smith was the guest speaker for a special presentation on "Visitability: The Why and the How".

After months of education and advocacy, City Council proposed that a Committee of 15 individuals be formed to come up with a plan for action. Representatives from Disability Agencies, Developers, Architects, Government Officials, etc. came up with a compromise that was the basis for the Act.

The Residential Visitability

Tax Credit Act now paves the way for local taxing authorities in Pennsylvania that levy a tax on a residential property to authorize tax credits if:

- The uniform design standards contained in the Act are provided within the eligible residential units.
- The tax credit authorized shall be limited to any new or renovated dwelling that contains Visitability design features that enhance the usability of the dwelling for persons with significant mobility impairment and which minimize the cost of full accessibility modifications, if necessary, at a later time.
- The amount of the tax credit shall be determined by the governing body and shall not exceed \$2,500, or the total amount of the increased amount of property taxes owed during the first five years from the time the tax credit is approved, whichever is less.
- The governing body shall determine the form in which any eligible property owner shall apply for the credit and may adopt rules and regulations for the approval and disapproval of applications.

This is the press release from Senator Jim Ferlo when the bill passed in the Legislature.

FERLO ANNOUNCES UNANIMOUS PASSAGE OF VISITABILITY BILL

HARRISBURG, October 18 2006

State Senator Jim Ferlo (D-Pittsburgh) announced today that his legislation, to encourage forward-thinking Visitability home improvements by way of a tax credit, had passed the Legislature unanimously.



State Senator Jim Ferlo

“I would like to thank the leadership in the Senate and House and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their unanimous support in moving the bill to the Governor’s desk,” Ferlo said. “This is an important piece of legislation that will serve the needs of those with mobility impairments, the future needs of the elderly, and all who hope to age in their own homes.”

Senator Ferlo sponsored Senate Bill 1158 with Senator James J. Rhoades (R-Schuylkill) as local enabling legislation. The intent of the bill is to make the option available to local municipalities that can determine whether or not to incentivize residential improvements for accessibility, by granting a tax credit.

“A diverse coalition of groups advocating for this bill deserves praise for their yeoman effort,” Ferlo said. “The PA Builders Association, the Builders Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh, the PA Association of Medical Suppliers, United Cerebral Palsy of Pittsburgh, and Three Rivers Center for Independent Living have done the heavy-lifting to get unanimous approval for this measure.”

As a City of Pittsburgh Councilman, Senator Ferlo led the citywide Visitability tax credit initiative. It passed City Council shortly after his move to the Senate, only to be held up due to the absence of local enabling legislation at the State level.

“For decades, we’ve built without giving full thought to our future needs or the mobility needs of our neighbors,” Senator Ferlo said. “We urge the Governor to sign Senate Bill 1158, which encourages residential home construction and renovation that truly lays out a “Welcome” mat for all Pennsylvanians.”

Governor Rendell signed the bill on October 28th, 2006. He stated in his press release, “By signing this bill into law, local governments will be able to provide some tax relief to people who need to

renovate their homes to make them more accessible – or build new homes with handicapped accessible features.

“This means seniors, people who are in wheel-

chairs and people who are not able to get around the way most people are used to getting around will be able to enjoy a better quality of life because obstacles in their own homes will be removed.”

Save the Date June 25, 2007

SDHP, in collaboration with the PA Housing Finance Agency, is holding a unique event during the June Housing Services Conference. Join us for a comprehensive review of issues and programs that relate to the housing needs of people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. This event will take an in-depth look at what is working now, lessons learned along the way, and what is on the horizon. Watch for more information and registration soon.



The Regional Housing Coordinator Team: Standing from left to right: Lynn Stewart (CIL of Central PA), Deb Stumpf (CIL of Central PA), Carla Mitcheltree (CIL of North Central PA), Connie Burnett, (Voices for Independence), Catherine Friedman (RLO), Lisa Case, (PHFA) and sitting in front, Mary Penny, Statewide Housing Coordinator (Not pictured is Steven Chopek, Allegheny County Disability Connection)

HOMEWARDS is published by the Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania and made possible through generous support from the PA Developmental Disabilities Council and the PA Housing Finance Agency.

Executive Director: Gail Hoffmann

Newsletter Editor: Peggy Robertson

For more information, contact SDHP at: **SDHP**, 717 E. Lancaster Avenue, Downingtown, PA 19335

Telephone: 610-873-9595

Fax: 610-873-9597

Toll free: 877-550-7347

Website: www.sdhp.org

SDHP Board of Directors
John Tassone, President
James Gutowski, Vice President
Lynn Stewart, Treasurer
Tracy Beck, Secretary
Pamela Auer
Arthur Marzaldi
Lynne Miles
Corey Rowley
Richard Anthony Young
Gail Hoffmann,
Executive Director

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DOWNINGTOWN, PA
PERMIT NO. 251

Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania
717 East Lancaster Avenue
Downingtown, PA 19335