

FOCUS ON INDEPENDENT LIVING

The Official Newsletter of AdLib Center for Independent Living

BE AN ADVOCATE



ADVOCACY WINS!

PCA PROGRAM PROTECTED!

2024 brought some major challenges as MassHealth proposed changes to the PCA program that would have cut hundreds of people in Berkshire County from the program. Our community rallied and made it known that PCA services are vital--and we won! When Governor Healey signed the state budget, language was included that protected eligibility for the PCA program. Our network of advocates also managed to delay a proposed centralization of intakes and assessments for services including PCA. Conversations continue about how to improve coordination on intake for services, but our advocacy efforts ensured that we are part of the conversation. Thank you to everyone who made their voices heard!

BRTA FREE RIDES AND EVENING CHAIR CAR SERVICE

The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority recently expanded chair car services to include additional evening and weekend hours. This has long been a request of the disability community and a grant has allowed BRTA to deliver! Please be sure to utilize this service to ensure that it remains available for years to come.

Another big win within transportation—ridership will be free for all BRTA services including, chair car, from November 29th 2024-September 30th 2025! A huge thank you to the Healey administration for funding to make this possible and the BRTA for continuing to find ways to support our community.

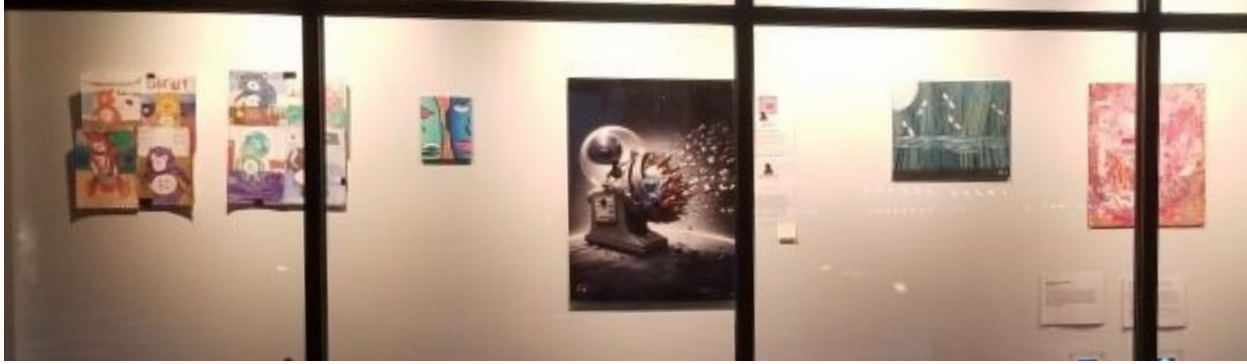
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ART SHOW RECAP

BY JEFF MALDEREZ

AdLib Inc. Center for Independent Living was honored to participate in the Downtown Pittsfield First Friday at Five's Arts Walk, marking the final event of the 2024 season. The new front windows of the AdLib building showcased a diverse array of artwork created by both consumers and staff. The display featured various media, including collages, canvas paintings, colorful drawings, an aluminum print, and digital animations presented in digital picture frames.

If you were unable to attend, some art remains on display, and we encourage you to view the exhibit right from North Street. This art show coincided with Disability Pride, commemorating the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It embodies and celebrates the theme of *Unity: The Harmony of Differences*.

In a time when hope and strength through unity and togetherness is more essential than ever, this art display invites viewers to celebrate differences, recognizing them as integral parts of the rich, interconnected whole – which is the tapestry of life.

AdLib artists warmly welcomed members of the public, fellow art enthusiasts, and even the mayor of Pittsfield, whilst providing detailed explanations of their work and sharing their vision for a peaceful future where everyone is included, supported, and valued.



“WHEN THE POWER OF LOVE OVERCOMES THE LOVE OF POWER, THE WORLD WILL KNOW PEACE.”
-JIMI HENDRIX



WELCOME NEW TEAM MEMBERS

AdLib is so excited to have continued success with great staff! Welcome to Ayden Crisp, IL/TAP Advocate; Heather Schoene, RN, Clinical Supervisor; Maricelli Torres, RN, PCA Nurse Evaluator; Gigi Daley, PCA Skill Trainer; Lisa Richards, PCM Director; and Matt Gilbert, PCA Administrative Coordinator.

We also want to welcome back Tia Demary who rejoined the team in November and congratulate Kyla White, Systems and Compliance Coordinator; and Scarlet Knowlton, Receptionist/EVV Specialist, on their new positions.

EMERGENCIES CAN HAPPEN AT ANYTIME--ARE YOU PREPARED?

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WORKSHOPS

AdLib staff member Valerie Pease hosted four workshops on Emergency Preparedness that walked participants through preparing for emergencies that may displace you from your home or force you to shelter in place for an extended period. Valerie's expertise comes from training in emergency response and volunteering for the Red Cross. During the workshops she shared ways to ensure people with disabilities receive accommodations and essential needs are met. Each workshop participant also received a kit that included four days of nutrition blocks and packaged water, hygiene and first aid kit, flashlight, emergency blankets, and masks. There are still kits available to households with a person with a disability. Valerie is available to assist individuals with developing their personal plan. To request a kit and information please contact Valerie Pease, ext. 14, vpease@adlibcil.org

I NEED HELP WITH HOUSING, WHERE DO I START?

So you're looking to move...
The rental process and finding assistance to move can be stressful. Here are some helpful hints to make it easier.

By Sara Hadsell

1. Subsidy (rent based on income) and voucher support have long waiting lists, so apply for them first even before you think you need them. You can apply via CHAMP online, at Pittsfield Housing on Columbus Avenue, and at Hearthway on Fenn Street in Pittsfield.
2. Get ALL the documents you need! To get a subsidy or rental unit you will need:
 - a. Official Photo ID (state issued)
 - b. Social Security Card
 - c. Income statements (including SNAP or other benefits)
 - d. Birth Certificate
 - e. Proof of Employment or other income
 - f. School enrollment if you are looking for a local preference
3. Begin your search for private/self-pay landlords. Most apartment listings and applications are online. If this is a barrier, find a local agency to help.
4. Get your CORI (through Community Legal Aide) and a credit report (experian.com or by mail). Check them and be sure that they are accurate before giving to a potential landlord. Many private landlords will let you submit your own rather than paying an application fee.
5. Visit Upside413 on Fenn Street in Pittsfield and apply for a letter of intent (LOI) from RAFT. If you need help with moving costs, you will need their approval letter to submit to potential landlords.
6. Keep all of your contact information current. Failure to reply to mailings or emails will mean losing out on apartments or being kicked off subsidy lists.
7. Fill out a general rental application and have it with you for viewings. That way you'll have all of your information ready to fill out paperwork. Most landlords choose from applications collected at viewings.
8. Maintain a log of applications submitted for your records and to follow-up. If your contact information changes you will need to know which agencies to reach out to and update.

It can be a lot of work, but completing these steps ahead of time can greatly increase your chances of being accepted by landlords. If you aren't able to complete these steps on your own here are some agencies who may be able to help (eligibility criteria will apply): AdLib, Elizabeth Freeman Center, 18 Degrees, Soldier On, ServiceNet, Upside413, Berkshire Community Action Council, MassAbility (formerly MRC), MassHire, Construct, and Wildflower Alliance.

NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US!



ADLIB NEEDS YOU!

AdLib and other centers for independent living are founded on the principles of self-determination, equal opportunities, and self-respect. As a person with a disability, you are the expert in your own needs and your perspective is essential in shaping services and supports in the Commonwealth.

To fully embrace the IL philosophy AdLib needs consumers and their supporters to play an active role in our center! Here are ways that you can support AdLib:

Share How AdLib Has Impacted Your Life: AdLib is looking for consumers willing to share their story to be used for advocacy, promotion, and reporting. Stories can be shared anonymously, or you can choose to include a photo. If you are interested in sharing your story please contact Jeffrey Malderez, ext.46, jmalderez@adlibcil.org

Become Part of the Consumer Advisory Board: The consumer advisory board (CAB) is going to start meeting every other month in 2025. This group will provide feedback on state proposed policy changes, take part in advocacy initiatives, and give input on AdLib services and events. Each meeting will also include refreshments and socialization. If you are interested in being part of the CAB please contact: Megan Bonneville, ext. 43, mbonneville@adlibcil.org

Apply to Become a Board Member: As a non-profit, AdLib is overseen by a Board of Directors. Board meetings take place monthly for nine months of the year. Board Members must be willing to make a commitment to participate in Board activities and to be informed of AdLib's activities and mission. Adlib is currently looking for board members with expertise in housing, systemic advocacy, fundraising, legal expertise, and people with lived experience. To learn more about the application process please contact Sally English, Executive Director, senglish@adlibcil.org, ext. 50

Purchase AdLib Gear: AdLib has partnered with 413Fundraising to create an online store with AdLib merchandise. With each purchase AdLib will receive a donation, and you will continue to spread the word for AdLib! Visit our website and click on Shop to see what we have. www.adlibcil.org

Year End Giving: For those who have means, financial contributions are a great way to ensure that AdLib will be here for years to come. No amount is too small, and all donations qualify for tax exemption. Donations can be mailed to AdLib, Attn Sally English, 215 North Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.



ADLIB, INC.
215 NORTH STREET PITTSFIELD MA
413-442-7047



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