



Crossroads

WINTER 2009

SBA of IL Communications Going Electronic

In response to requests from many members and to the rapidly changing communications environment, SBA of IL will begin publishing Crossroads by posting it on the SBA of IL Website.

In the future, many other communications - including notices of special events such as the Holiday Party and Walk/Picnics - also will be posted on the website, rather than being mailed.

In order to continue sending you regular communications from SBA of IL, we need to have your e-mail address.

Please contact us at: sbail@sbail.org and let us know your name and your e-mail address.



Mark Your Calendar

April 2 Robert Farley Seminar	April 4 First Saturday Young Adult Group Meeting
April 25 Emerald Isle Fundraiser	May 30 Spring Golf Outing
June 30 - July 3 National Conference, Orlando	Aug. 2 Windy City Corvettes Raffle
Aug. 9 - 29 Camp Ability Sessions	Sept. 25 Fall Golf Outing, White Deer Run

Calling All Scholarship Applicants

Now is the time to fill out an application for an SBA of IL scholarship for the 2009-2010 academic year. If you are a young adult with Spina Bifida or a high school senior planning to attend college or other post-secondary school, or if you're currently enrolled in one, you are eligible to apply.

The deadline for applications is April 15, 2009.

Scholarship guidelines and applications are available on our website at www.sbail.org. Please call the SBA of IL office at 773-444-0305 for an application by mail or for answers to questions about application guidelines.



Auto Show Preview Benefits SBA of IL

Generous supporters of SBA of IL stepped up again this year to attend "First Look for Charity," the preview of the 2009 Chicago Auto Show, held Feb. 12 at McCormick Place. Amy Maggio, SBA of IL executive director, said, "We are doubly grateful this year to all those who attended on our behalf. This event is one of the most important sources of our income, and we sincerely appreciate the continued participation of our friends."

The black-tie preview benefit is held the evening before the opening of the Auto Show to the public. Attendees enjoyed beverages and hors d'oeuvres while inspecting new cars and enjoying rides in off-road vehicles.

The Chicago Auto Show and First Look for Charity are presented by the new car dealers of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana.



Amy Maggio, SBA of IL executive director, left, greets Board member Lynn Bradtke, right, her husband, Bob, and daughter, Jennifer, at a pre-show reception. To see more photos from the show, go to page 4.

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8th Annual Spina Bifida Fundraiser
 Saturday, April 25th, 2009
Emerald Isle
 6686 N. Northwest Highway (Edison Park)
 Chicago, Illinois
 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.
 OPEN BAR, Appetizers, Prizes, Music & Fun!
 \$40.00 per person (at door)

Camp Applications Available

If you have not already received an application for 2009 Camp Ability, contact the SBA of IL office or download the application at www.sbail.org. The Camp will be held again in northern Illinois at Camp Red Leaf. Camp sessions will run from August 9 to August 29. Please note the change in dates this year. August 9-15th will be for ages 14-18; August 16-22nd ages 7-13; and August 23-29th ages 19 and up.

**Mark Bernstein
 Elected President of SBA of IL**

Mark S. Bernstein has been elected to a two-year term as President of the Association. Bernstein is a partner in the Chicago law firm of Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum Perlman & Nagelberg LLP.

He holds a JD degree cum laude from the University of Michigan Law School and a BS degree in accountancy with high honors from the University of Illinois. He has been a Certified Public Accountant in Illinois since 1985.

Bernstein and his wife, Amy, are the parents of a daughter, Rachel, 15, who has Spina Bifida, and two sons, Eric, 12, and Jonathan, 8. The family resides in Deerfield.



Mark Bernstein, new President of SBA of IL, and his wife, Amy, are shown at the Chicago Auto Show Preview.



Golfers: Join the Spring Swing

Spring Swing, a nine-hole golf outing, is scheduled for Saturday, May 30, at the Palos Country Club, 131st Street and Southwest Highway in Orland Park. Golf will get underway with a shotgun start at 4:00 p.m. Dinner and drinks will follow at 6:30 p.m., along with opportunities to win fabulous prizes.

Cost of golf, cart, dinner and drinks is \$100.00 per person; dinner and drinks only: \$45.00.

Sponsorships and great player packages are also available. For more information, contact Don Cassier at 708-710-4258, or birdie@tournamentedgegolf.com.

This event was a crowd-pleaser last year, so be sure to make your reservations soon for the Spring Swing.

President's Message



MARK BERNSTEIN

Greetings and Happy New Year! Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Mark Bernstein, and I am the new president of the Board of SBA of IL. I have stepped into this new role at a time that is both exciting and trying for SBA of IL.

During the last year, we have made great strides as an organization. Our new executive director, Amy Maggio, has now been with us for a year. Her knowledge, experience and management have made a huge difference for our organization. She has helped us focus on what is necessary and important for the families that we serve.

Last year, we changed the location of Camp Ability, and we made big improvements in our camp programming. We also began our celebration of the 40th anniversary of our organization last fall with Sweet Chic. The celebration will continue in 2009. We are planning a state-wide walk this fall to help continue our fund-raising efforts, and to give our friends and supporters an opportunity to meet and work together. Our anniversary celebration has been a great opportunity to reconnect with old friends and partners.

We have also begun to organize new programs to provide more, better and direct services to families affected by Spina Bifida. Beginning this year, we will be establishing meeting groups and workshops meant to serve the different circumstances of those who could benefit from our services. We plan to make the groups informative in an enjoyable social setting. The groups will be designed with the needs of parents, children, teens and young adults in mind. Please be on the lookout for information from us about the details.

All of this is exciting indeed!

We at SBA of IL also realize how trying these times are. The current economic troubles have caused us to examine what we do and how we do it. What we realize is that organizations like ours play an irreplaceable role in making the lives of the people we serve better. There is no other organization in Illinois that is dedicated to serving

people affected by Spina Bifida. Your continued support and participation is therefore critical to our continued success.

On a personal note, I want to congratulate Virginia Munkvold on her upcoming retirement. Virginia has been the voice and face of SBA of IL for many years, and, as many of you know, was often our link to families, friends and partners involved with SBA of IL. We will all miss her. Virginia, thank you for your invaluable service to our organization.

We look forward to seeing and hearing from you during the coming year. In the future, where possible, we plan to communicate by e-mail so please forward your e-mail addresses so we can stay in touch. Best wishes for a safe, happy and healthy year.



Best Wishes to Virginia Munkvold On Your Retirement

SBA of IL office manager Virginia Munkvold has announced that she will retire at the end of April.

Virginia has been a staff member since 1991, following some five years of volunteering. During that time, she has been the face and voice of SBA of IL to thousands of persons who have worked with the organization or called for information and assistance.

She and her husband, Mike, plan to remain in the Chicago area near their three sons, Chris, Scott and Erik, and their four grandchildren.

The entire SBA of IL family wishes Virginia and her family many years of happy retirement!



Virginia Munkvold and her husband, Mike, her "right-hand-man" for forty years.

Seen at the Auto Show Preview Were:



Board member Scott Munkvold and fiancée Rachel Hinrichs.



SBA of IL program director Becky May, left, and friend, Megan Milligan.



Board member Elliott Quigley and president Mark Bernstein



Members of the Windy City Corvettes



Seated, Doug Conroy and wife, Julie. Standing, Board members Tom Hoffland, left, and Don Cassier.

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Win A 2009 Corvette!

You could win a 2009 Corvette in Windy City Corvettes' 18th annual Corvette Raffle. The drawing will be held at the Bill Kay Chevrolet 20th annual Corvette show on August 2, 2009. Proceeds go to SBA of IL. Only 899 tickets to be sold at \$100 each. You need not be present to win. Entrants must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Raffle Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

No. of Tickets _____ @ \$100 each = Amount Enclosed _____

Phone _____ Email address _____

Check here if we can send a 2010 raffle ticket, if the 2009 tickets are sold out.
Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for ticket return.

Make checks payable to: Windy City Corvettes Charity Account
Send to: Windy City Corvettes, PO Box 353, Orland Park, IL 60462-0353

Adolescent/Young Adult Tele-Program



The Spina Bifida Association of Cincinnati's Tele-program offers a unique, real time opportunity to connect with teens/young adults with Spina Bifida from around the country to discuss relevant topics for living well and planning the future. The program takes place from the comfort of your own home; with no transportation required, all you need is a phone. Toll-free long distance is provided. Everyone must pre-register for access to the toll-free line.

Programs include 1 hour 9-week tele-conference sessions and one-night "Special Topic" programs for those that have an interest in participating but cannot commit to a nine-week schedule. This series of one-night programs will utilize guest speakers from the Spina Bifida community and other speakers knowledgeable on relevant topics. It is a great opportunity to network with other young adults!

For more information or to register contact Sharon Sellet, Tele-Program Coordinator, at 513-467-9292 or email ssellet@sbacincy.org/. You can also visit the website at <http://sbacincy.org/site/>



Central Illinois News By Lynn Bradtke

The annual Candlelight Bowl was held Feb. 7 at Circle Lanes in Bloomington and all the lanes were filled! We appreciate the Spina Bifida families, as well as their friends and coworkers that came out to have fun and support the event. Special thanks to the Central Illinois Corvette Club, the Normal Police Benevolent Association, and the Clinton Eagles for supplying bowlers and donations, as well as to Tim Rood for emceeding the evening.

Our next several meetings should be interesting and include the following speakers: Wed. March 11—Jean Driscoll, Olympian and Boston Marathon champion; Wed. April 8—Christy Kocharek and Doreen Solava, early intervention specialist and physical therapist from SPICE; and May 14—Mimi Ardiss, RN, Spina Bifida coordinator from Peoria OSF. All meetings are held at Carle Clinic, Bloomington, at 7 pm. Come join us!

Check Out lifestyleaccelerator.com

Lifestyle Accelerator is an interactive resource for people with Spina Bifida and their families. The site presents informational pages on various topics. It presents health related information, but also tips on food and clothing that fit the special needs of a person that may be using orthotics or trying to stay on a bowel routine. The site has pages on travel tips, adaptive sports, and more. Commentary on equipment and events is provided as an additional resource. There is also a community forum similar to the forum on the www.sbail.org website, for posting questions and discussing topics.

Videos are an important feature on www.lifestyleaccelerator.com. The site currently has a video on how to set up your bathroom for a cone enema program, how to properly put on AFOs, and a tour of an accessible home.

Creator Annie Brown welcomes you to view the site and send your comments her way at anniebethbrown@hotmail.com. She wants the site to be a resource for those connected to Spina Bifida, and is committed to tailoring the site to the users.



Become a Mentor

Become a mentor to a youth who has a physical or visual impairment. Be a positive role model encouraging these youth to be active, involved and to live life! Use your experiences and knowledge to motivate and influence the lives of youth with disabilities. Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA) is interested in finding adult mentors to work with our youth athletes at various programs and events. Commitment can vary from a few times a year to a more on-going relationship. GLASA is encouraging all those who are interested in applying, or who would like more information to contact: Keri Schindler at (847) 283-0908 or kschindler@glasa.org

The Disabled Sport USA (DS/USA) Youth Sports Mentoring Program is a nationwide initiative conducted in partnership with local chapters to increase youth sports involvement; improve their health and fitness and ensure a safe, fun environment for all participants; and to foster social interaction between people of all abilities through mentoring.

Robotic Surgery Helps Girl With Neurogenic Bladder



AALIYAH

Being a 10-year-old girl in the fifth grade with medical issues is difficult enough--as long as you can laugh about it--but try being ten without laughing. Aaliyah Dellar, 10, can tell you that's even harder when you always have to urinate.

Born with spina bifida, a birth defect that can interfere with bladder control, she overcame many difficulties early in life. "She met all her milestones," said her mother, Paula Thigpen. "She didn't have a lot of the common complications."

But soon after birth, her bladder stopped growing. Worse yet, it was always trying to contract, almost like it was having a spasm. Over time, the walls of her bladder grew thicker and more muscular from the constant contractions.

So she always had that uncomfortable feeling that she urgently had to go to the bathroom. She stopped drinking juice. She couldn't have soda. She even cut back on water, to less than two cups a day. Still, she had to be cautious. If she tensed up, if she stumbled or fell, if she laughed just a little too hard, she leaked urine. This does not go over well at school.

"We refer to this condition as neurogenic bladder," said Mohan Gundeti, MD, assistant professor of surgery and chief of pediatric urology at the University of Chicago Medical Center. Sometimes, in patients with spina bifida, the bladder is very small. Aaliyah's could barely hold six ounces. Worse yet, the bladder has frequent involuntary contractions. This pushes the urine back up the ureters into the kidneys, where it slowly but inevitably causes damage, including frequent infections.

Medication helped a little, said her mom, but despite two years of trying different treatments, the problem continued to get worse. Because of recurrent infections, Aaliyah was constantly on antibiotics, which ultimately damaged her hearing. Then she was found to have the first signs of kidney damage. "We could see excess fluid in both kidneys, and significant scar tissue in one," Gundeti said. "It was time. We had to treat this problem."

Five Operations in One



MOHAN GUNDETI, MD

An expert in minimally invasive urologic surgery, Gundeti had performed the operation to enlarge and relax tiny neurogenic bladders many times. A time-consuming, complicated procedure, "it is like doing five operations in one," he said.

It begins with a big incision, about six inches long, from above the navel down to the pubic area, followed by placement of retractors to pull the stomach muscles out of the way. Through this hole, they isolate about 12 inches of intestine, which they open lengthwise to create a large patch of tissue, all while retaining the tissue's original blood supply.

Second, they reconnect the severed ends of the intestine to re-establish the normal function of the bowel.

Third, they cut through half of the bladder, opening the sphere into a cup shape. Then they close the bladder opening with the patch of intestine. "This makes the bladder bigger, more than twice the original size," said Gundeti. "Plus, it can no longer contract with the same force."

Fourth, they isolate the appendix, again retaining its blood supply. They snip off the tip, converting it into a hollow muscular tube. To secure good drainage of the enlarged bladder without a leak, they implant one end into the posterior wall of the bladder and connect the other end to the skin of the lower right abdomen. Fifth, they pull the tip of the appendix through the skin. Then they assemble three little overlapping flaps, like the top of a cereal box, to close and protect the opening, keeping it clean and preventing leaks.

Robotic Approach Eliminates Large Incision

For this case, however, Gundeti decided to modify this difficult but proven surgical approach. He would eliminate the initial incision.

This required a crucial tool, the \$1.5 million da Vinci robotic surgical system. The adult urologists at the

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Medical Center had been using the robot since 2002, primarily to treat prostate cancer; they have performed nearly 2,000 operations with it.

Pediatric urologists, however, have been slower to adopt the technology. Last December, Gundeti became the first pediatric urologist in the region to use it.

“She’s gonna like this. No big scars.”

Changing tools, and this first-time-ever approach, forced him to rethink Aaliyah’s entire surgery. No one had ever done the full operation this way. For this lengthy, complicated procedure, he invited his colleague adult urologist Gregory Zagaja, MD, to assist.

When you begin an operation with so many steps, one that takes six to eight hours for the most experienced surgeons, “you can’t easily stop in the middle,” he said.

Making the operation even more difficult, Gundeti would take no shortcuts. “There are robotic tools to speed up the process,” he said, “ways to use a stapler to put tissues back together or close a cut quickly rather than sewing each stitch by hand. But I believe meticulous hand sewing of the connections is superior.”

“Dr. Gundeti told me the operation would take six-to-eight hours,” her mother said. Aaliyah went to the OR at a little before 4 p.m. on February 21.

“At 10 o’clock I thought: ‘OK, that’s six hours.’ At midnight I thought: ‘OK, that’s eight.’ I had a lot of confidence in Dr. Gundeti, but I’m a mom and I started to get a little anxious.”

Shortly after 2 a.m. they told her the operation was complete, it had gone well and she could go see her daughter. “I expected her to be covered with bandages and gauze and tape,” she recalled, “to have a big swollen belly with a big wound. But there was none of that. I was stunned. Her belly was flat and normal, no bandages, not even a band-aid, just a few little cuts that looked like they had been covered with glue.” “Oh, I thought, she’s gonna like this. No big scars. She could wear a bikini. I would not want her to wear a bikini,” she added, “but she could. She could wear a tank top and not worry about people seeing her scars. There just were no real scars.”

Faster Recovery, Much Less Pain

“Patients like that aspect,” said Gundeti. Surgeons like it because the superior magnification and decreased blood loss result in a much more precise procedure. There is less risk of infection, no big wound to heal, just five small punctures, no prolonged recovery and much less pain.

“The risk of embarrassing accidents is a thing of the past.”

After the open operation, he said, “we used to tell patients no physical activity for six weeks. Aaliyah, however, has no such restrictions.” She started drinking six hours after surgery and eating within 24 hours, which she “greatly appreciated,” Gundeti said. “This significantly hastened her recovery. She went home about four days after her surgery.

“She hasn’t had a leak since then,” her mother said. “She can drink water, or juice, even soda. She’s enjoying the freedom she never had.”

Aaliyah still has to use a catheter to urinate, but it’s much easier now. Before the operation she had to squat in the bathroom and insert the tube into her urethra, which can be difficult. Now she inserts the tube through a tiny opening on her lower abdomen, below and to the right of her belly button. “It’s much simpler and not so embarrassing,” said her mother, “and she doesn’t have to do it so often.”



**Come join Robert Farley,
Attorney at Law on April 2nd, 2009!**

The Spina Bifida Association of Illinois is pleased to sponsor a special workshop for our families conducted by Robert Farley, a world-renown attorney and disability-rights advocate. Bob has provided legal representation to individuals with disabilities for over 20 years and has particular knowledge and insight into the protection of assets; estate planning, guardianship, transition issues and rights, etc. Find out first-hand about how to protect your child with Spina Bifida by attending on Thursday, April 2nd at the Naperville Library (Nichols Branch), 200 West Jefferson Street, Naperville, Illinois. The workshop will be held from 7:00-8:30 pm and reservations are on a first-come basis. For more information and to make a reservation, please call Virginia at: 773-444-0305.

Holiday Party Memories

By Linda Faust

Despite hard economic times and a tough time fund raising, the holiday party was wonderful. The close to 250 people that attended enjoyed beef sandwiches, chopped salad, mostaccioli, and a variety of desserts. The children loved making crafts, getting their faces painted, and above all, the visit from Santa who brought them some pretty cool toys and gifts. Our lack of microphone for a while didn't hamper the excitement over the raffle as guests pitched in relaying the winning numbers to those who couldn't hear the caller. The winners were so happy to get their desired items. Of, course, no holiday party is complete without the chocolate fountains that also made an appearance this year. Yummy!

As usual this year's party was a great time and a nice opportunity for families to come together and support each other. I would like to express my gratitude to our very special donors and volunteers who make this whole event possible. Without them there would be no holiday party and I would like to tell you a little about each of our donors. Please keep these special companies in mind and support them when you can because they support you.

Woodland Foods is a provider of specialty foods from around the world. They always donate a fabulous gift basket of their gourmet foods. You can get great recipes and new dinner ideas from their website www.gourmetstore.com. Go take a look.

Amvets Post #66 in Wheeling donates \$1000 that helps to purchase all the gifts. Their members serve active duty armed forces personnel, their fellow veterans and their community through a variety of programs. They have a website where you can learn more about them www.amvetspost66.com.

The Tea Treasury, www.teatreasury.com, strives to provide fresh, high-quality tea from around the world while maintaining affordable prices and environmental responsibility. These teas are wonderful. My favorite is the blueberry. They also have gift items that are pretty sweet so keep them in mind when you are looking for something different to give someone. They always donate a gift basket.

Benefit Express Services are Benefit Management Experts specializing in offering state-of-the-art Benefit Administration and enrollment tools and services. This company donates money that helps pay for the food and other party costs. Since this company deals with businesses and not individuals, one way to support them is to just keep them in your thoughts and wish them much success. www.benefitexpress.info

Massage Envy at 2652 New Sutton Rd., Hoffman Estates, IL donated a free one-hour massage certificate. Who doesn't love a massage? Please visit their shop for specials and information on the benefits of massage for your health. You can also get the info from the web www.massageenvy.com. They are one of the only shops offering the hot stone massage, which I personally found to be fantastic.

Cobra Electronics Corporation is a leading designer of mobile communications products in the United States, Canada, Europe and around the world. After 50 years of innovation, the company continues to grow by boldly entering into new product categories. They are always very generous with their donations of electronic equipment like 2 way radios and power inverters for our raffles. The money we raise selling raffle tickets helps cover the costs of the party so without these great prizes there would be no party. You can see a complete list of their products and where to buy them at www.cobra.com.

Whole Foods Market - Local flavor taste of the state. Caring for local communities and the environment is important to Whole Foods Market. Our Local Flavor Program honors this by offering a wide variety of natural and organic locally produced artisan food and products in our Midwest stores while adhering to our strict quality standards. Buying local lets you enjoy products that were grown and produced in our community, contributing to the success of local vendors, purveyors, distributors and economy. Feel good about where you shop. They always donate a really sweet gift basket for our raffle. I like to shop there because they have products you can't find anywhere else.

Murphy's Restaurant & Lounge is a new donor this year. They donated a gift certificate for our raffle. If you

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are local, or even if you aren't, stop by on a Friday night when they have live bands or Saturday nights for karaoke. All the people are very nice and it is a friendly neighborhood place. Visit the website www.murphysofarlingtonheights.com for menus and other events they offer.

Scenter of the Mind is my company and I donate a gift basket of my handcrafted, natural soaps and herbal products every year. Actually that is how I got started running the holiday party. I called the girl who was running it to donate a gift basket. She was overwhelmed with work and things and needed help with the party. One thing led to another and my family and I found ourselves fundraising, shopping, wrapping, baking and eventually running the holiday party. So please visit my website and recommend me to friends and neighbors. www.scenterofthemind.com.

We also have some private donors and of course our fabulous volunteers that make this all possible. Please keep them in your thoughts and wish them well so they can continue to help us provide this wonderful event.

Sheila & Jim Kniskern & family • Mr. & Mrs. Scott Kniskern • Ellen & Mike Doti
Christina & Christian Gomez • Hannah Martin • Anne & Mark Suarez

I apologize if I left anyone out but know that you are appreciated.

Happy faces were the rule at the Family Holiday Party, held Dec. 6 at the Learning Academy in Rolling Meadows. Youngsters played games and everyone enjoyed a tasty lunch while awaiting the arrival of the jolly man in the red suit, who brought gifts for the young children. Pictured below and on page 10 are some of the attendees at the event.

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Teen Transition Corner:

Start Planning for Your Future. Do You Have a Medical Health Summary?

By Rebecca Boudos, LSW

Do you have a medical summary? Do you know what a medical summary is? At times it may seem overwhelming to remember all of your past and current medical history. That is why it is important to have a written summary to share with your doctor or to use for an emergency. We encourage everyone to have a medical health summary.

This is a sheet that provides information about you! You can hand write it on a sheet of paper or make one on the computer. Include your name, date of birth, emergency contact information, a list of medical conditions, your immunization records, allergies, current medications and doses, and list all of your previous surgeries including the dates and hospital.

You may also want to include the contact information for your doctors, social workers and any clinic coordinators, as well as your insurance information. Include any other information that you feel is important to share with your doctors. Bring this with you to your medical visits, and carry a copy with you at all time. It will be especially helpful when you meet new doctors, who may not know all of your past information. Make sure to update it as needed.

A great tool to make a medical summary is MyHealth Passport, a customized, wallet-size card created by Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, ON. Just go to the link <http://www.sickkids.on.ca/myhealthpassport>. Click on Spina Bifida Passport, enter in your information, and print a copy. You can laminate a copy and keep one in your wallet or bag.

It may also be important to wear a medical alert bracelet, which can help in an emergency. Check out some bracelets at <http://www.americanmedical-id.com/>

Are you looking for something more fun and stylish? Check out Lauren's Hope at <http://www.laurenshope.com> or 800-360-8680 for more teen friendly designs.

If you have any questions about making a medical summary, feel free to contact Rebecca Boudos, LSW, Transition Coordinator at Children's Memorial Hospital's Spina Bifida Clinic, 773.327.2142 or rboudos@childrensmemorial.org.

Internships Available

Progress Center for Independent Living provides service for people with disabilities of all ages so that they can obtain, increase, and maintain their independence within the community. Among the services offered is one related to employment.

The Employment Advocate directs a 12-20 week, part-time paid internship program. Additionally, the Employment Advocate also helps people in the community with resume and cover letter writing; offers job readiness training; provides information on laws, programs, and services available to protect employment rights, and assists interns in establishing and accomplishing goals related to employment.

For the internship program, Progress Center for Independent Living typically accepts six interns (Staff Associates) per year. The Associate is required to work 20 hours per week at a wage of \$7.50 per hour.

During the Internship, Staff Associates will:

- 1) Learn about the Independent Living Movement and most specifically, the role Progress Center plays in the community.
- 2) Provide basic office assistance and operate equipment, including copier, fax machine, and phone.
- 3) Begin a career search with job placement as a goal.
- 4) Participate in various projects and presentations with Supervisor and other staff.
- 5) Learn about programs, services and laws, which are available to protect employment rights.
- 6) Work on developing and/or refining job readiness skills through participation in job club.

The Qualified Applicant must:

- 1) Be a client of the Department of Rehabilitation Services and submit a referral from a DRS counselor.
- 2) Have completed High School and/or have previous work experience.
- 3) Show a desire to reach personal goals.
- 4) Have a desire for working with people.
- 5) Enjoy working as part of a team yet be capable of working independently once proper accommodations have been made.
- 6) Have an interest in disability advocacy and services.
- 7) Live in Cook County.
- 8) Respond with a letter of intent and a resume.

The Center, located at 7521 West Madison St., Forest Park, will sponsor a workshop on the program on Monday, March 23. If you would like more information and are considering applying for the internship program, please contact Sara Capetillo at 708-209-1500 ext. 23.

FIRST SATURDAY Young adults group

Join us Saturday April 4th from 1:30-3:30pm as the SBA of IL begins the FIRST SATURDAY group for young adults! The kick-off meeting will include refreshments and an open-house style opportunity for people to meet. All young adults (age 19-30) with Spina Bifida are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served from 1:30-2:00pm and a social group meeting will follow. Take advantage of this great opportunity to make connections, learn about exciting opportunities like Camp Ability, and meet new friends! For more information and the location, contact the SBA of IL office at sbail@sbail.org or (773) 444-0305.

A message from the Smith Family

We are Jeff and Cindy Smith and we saved our daughter's cord blood at birth. We are seeking to compile a list of other parents of children with Spina Bifida that have also banked their child's cord blood. This list will allow us to communicate with each other as to stem cell progress. If you have your child's cord blood saved, please join our list by emailing jcsinc@hotmail.com.

Hello! My name is Jonathon Ruiz ...

I was born with Spina Bifida. From age 4 to 11, I walked with AFO assistance. I played basketball and baseball with able bodies. During the end of fifth grade I was going through a growth stage, which caused me to tether, which affected my legs. I was struggling to hold my balance and my body started changing. To a point, I was unable to play the sports I know how to play and enjoyed, until one day a wonderful lady approached my mom and me about wheelchair basketball.

From then on I have not put down the ball. We are so blessed that there are wheelchair sports out there. This has given me a second chance to continue to play the sports I enjoy so much. I am part of a wonderful team, the "Windy City Warriors." Our team has won two state championships (IHSA).

Last year I was given the challenge to step up and be a team leader. Six out of nine players went onto college leaving us with only three players. Two players chose not to play, leaving our team to start with all new players. Becoming a team leader paid off, because last year our team came in second place in the Midwest Conference and fourth place in Nationals. I am proud of our team and of myself for not giving up on our team.



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