



July 27, 2016

Independent Living Team Board Report

MCIL Welcomes Timothy Redd as our new Independent Living Specialist

By Timothy Redd



I am a person with a disability. My whole life has been about defying the odds and not allowing a disability to define me. There are many barriers that exists for people with disabilities that can make it difficult to live independently. I am here to tell you indeed it is possible. I have osteogenesis imperfecta, brittle bone disease. My childhood was characterized with broken

bones, surgeries, and intense physical therapy. I don't know where I would be had I not had supportive parents who encouraged me that I could do anything I wanted to do.

I know all too well the realities that can impede a person with a disability progress towards true independence. I have been separated in a class solely because of my disability. I was stuck in the house not able to go to work due to the lack of reliable transportation. I faced the challenge of finding accessible affordable housing and took legal action against a local apartment community who refused to accommodate my accessibility needs. I navigated the tedious process of applying for disability, been victimized by

discrimination, and through it all triumphed over blatant ignorance that comes along with encountering people who don't understand people with disabilities. These are some of the chief barriers so many in my community rally against daily.

I have overcome all these challenges on my own and achieved my own independence. This has not been a small feat. However, it is the most fulfilling and liberating feeling ever. I would not trade any of what I have dealt with because it has been necessary to make me know my strength. What I have learned in my own journey is how to advocate for myself. I am thrilled to be a part of the Memphis Center for Independent Living and excited to work with others like myself as an independent living specialist. I am here to support people in their own advocacy and offer support through information referrals and by sharing my life experiences to inspire. Currently I am pursuing a BA in Sociology with Ashford University. In my spare time I love to travel, museums, discover new local eateries, shop, and listen to music.

Tennessee Access Law paves Way for Guide Dog Users to Seek Justice

By **Christina Clift**, Friday, August 19, 2016

Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee traveled to Murfreesboro to support Mr. James Boehm and his guide dog Shep in court. They wanted to send a clear message to Criminal Court Judge McFarland and to former Uber driver, Ms. Douglas that guide dog users were no longer going to let discrimination go unchallenged.



At 3:30 A.M. on Tuesday August 9, 2016, eight members of the Memphis chapter of the National Federation of the Blind began a three and a half hour trip to Murfreesboro to meet members from other chapters and divisions of the NFB of Tennessee. Everyone needed to arrive by 8:00 A.M. at the Rutheford County courthouse in room 102, for the case of Rutheford County verses Ms. Rolonda Douglas. It would be the first case of its kind because instead of being a civil prosecution, this would be a criminal case.

On April 28, 2016, Mr. Boehm and Shep were left stranded at an animal hospital in Murfreesboro, TN. The Uber driver defiantly squealed away, refusing to transport the guide dog team.

"I was distraught and infuriated all at once!" stated Mr. Boehm, who filed a police report with the Rutherford County sheriff's department. After an investigation, the state Attorney filed charges against Rolonda Douglas for violating the Tennessee Access Law and scheduled her to appear in criminal court on August 9, 2016.

Read more on the MCIL Journal:

<http://mciljournal.blogspot.com/2016/08/tennessee-access-law-paves-way-for.html>

MCIL in the Commercial Appeal

[From the Commercial Appeal, August 6, 2016: "Affordable Care Act rules arrive to combat health care discrimination in Memphis," By Kevin McKenzie of *The Commercial Appeal*] More than 25 years since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, issues such as accessible examination tables or restrooms in a physician's office may crop up, said Tim Wheat, program director for the Memphis Center for Independent Living.

Yet, in Memphis and statewide, the biggest obstacle to health care access for people with disabilities is the state's refusal to accept Medicaid expansion dollars that the Affordable Care Act offers, Wheat said.

Gov. Bill Haslam's Insure Tennessee plan would cover an estimated 200,000 low-income people who don't qualify for federally subsidized

coverage through the HealthCare.gov insurance market place. The state's Republican-controlled legislature has rejected the governor's plan.

"Often it's people who need preventive care, need basic things to help them live healthy, so they don't get more chronic problems, bedsores, different things like that," Wheat said.

Voter information at MCIL

Upcoming Dates for the General Election:

Election Day: November 8, 2016

Last day to register to vote: October 11, 2016

Request an Absentee Ballot by: November 1, 2016 (return the ballot Election Day)

Early voting begins: October 19, 2016

Early voting ends: November 3, 2016

All MCIL consumers are asked if they would like to update their voter registration and we offer assistance to help them to register or update their voter registration.

HOPE Accessibility Advocacy at Memphis Homeless Shelters

HOPE, the homeless advocacy group that MCIL has worked to start and assisted to organize, is asking that Memphis homeless shelters provided necessary access to people with disabilities. MCIL supports the equal justice position of the advocacy group, but now they are directly demanding equal access at Memphis homeless shelters for people with disabilities.

The long-time problem has been that people receive some assistance, like being carried upstairs, but the programs have not been required to have equal ADA access. HOPE and MCIL are working together to change the inequality at the Memphis shelters.



People Power

Allison Donald attended the ADAPT Youth Leadership training this month. Following is an excerpt from her upcoming blog piece.

By Allison Donald

Sunday April 19, 2015 changed my perspective on the power that I possessed being a person with a disability. I was in line with people from all over the United States and we had come together as a collective force to declare access is a civil right in the streets of Washington DC. I was nervous and fraught with anticipation, because I had never been a part of anything like this in my life. I don't know if it was the stories that Sher Stewart would share with me about her and Deborah's numerous arrests or Michael Heinrich sitting with me in the capital and explaining to me why this movement is so urgent and necessary, or maybe it was the sense of freedom and belonging I felt, because for once this square peg fit into a round hole. I was hooked and I knew where I had found a home with

ADAPT. I wanted to learn as much as I could which led me to Rochester, New York to attend the ADAPT Youth Conference August 5th-9th. ...

Read More at: <http://mciljournal.blogspot.com/>

Social Media Report

