



The News Eagle

Serving the Lake Region and Pike County

Hawley, PA



92

[more...](#)

Thursday August 4, 2005

[Print Page](#)

THURSDAY AUGUST 4, 2005 Last modified: *Tuesday, August 2, 2005 8:35 AM EDT*

Pike Discusses Needs, Services for Disabled

by *MIKKI UZUPES - Senior Writer*

PIKE - The Pike County Commissioners declared Wednesday, July 27, as Americans with Disabilities Act Day, and local advocates highlight some of the successes and setbacks for disabled members of the community.

When the board met Wednesday, July 27, Richard Selser recounted the long and difficult journey to the Americans with Disabilities Act that has helped insure people are judged on the basis of their abilities and not their challenges.

MAKING STRIDES

Selser said people with disabilities want to be included and involved in the community, "That's what it's all about," he explained. It was the Civil Rights Movement that first opened the doors to accessibility and equality, but as recently as the mid-1970s people with disabilities unrelated to job performance were routinely denied employment because they would make people feel uncomfortable.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 represents the strongest piece of legislation protecting the rights of the disabled to employment, state and local governments, transportation, public accommodations and telecommunications through the nation, not just among those who receive federal funding.

Pike County has had some successes in that area, including the installation of a handicap lift at The Columns museum, owned and operated by the Pike County Historical Society. Selser said despite the fact that there is no sign pointing to the lift, it is still being used by people who learn of it through word of mouth.

Selser said he also met recently with the PA State Police to step up the enforcement of handicap parking regulations in their patrols. He said the effort is aimed at outright violators - those who have no handicap placard or registration symbol - not the pretenders who have permits to use the spaces but do so when the occupants are able-bodied enough to park elsewhere.

LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

But there is still much to be done. Selser said the county does not have its own Social Security Office, forcing residents to travel to Lackawanna County to visit the nearest office. Most recently, Oscar Santizo of Northeast Resources Unlimited said a proposal to fund a Office of Vocational Rehabilitation was turned down for grant funding in favor of a project in Bucks County.

Santizo said there are also plans to create a Center for Independent Living in Pike County to serve the disabled population. Selser explained these types of centers enable people with disability to live with dignity by providing information, referring them to community services, providing advocacy, housing and employment assistance.

"(Centers for Independent Living) provide all the services you need in order to function independently," Selser explained.

Already the effort has temporary space at the County Complex in Blooming Grove where the Human Resources Center operates an manufacturing and training facility.

Ralph Mastrangelo of the Center for Independent Living in Lackawanna County said the proclamation is the first step. He said he appreciates the Commissioners' efforts at creating awareness of the challenges faced by the disabled community and invited the Commissioners to go a step further by demonstrating those challenges by being wheelchair bound for a day.

He said he could arrange such an awareness campaign and supply the chairs.

SHARED RIDE

The commissioners also had Robin LoDolce, director of the County Area Agency on Aging, discuss efforts to expand the Shared Ride program in Pike to include adult with disabilities. Currently, Aging operates a subsidized transportation system for senior citizens and for the those on the Medical Assistance.

The county, she said, has been approached about seeking funding to expand that program to serve the adult disabled population. The county operates a fleet of 11 vans and relies heavily on five volunteers to move these folks around to the senior center and medical appointments as well as to necessary shopping and other activities.

LoDolce said one of the challenges for Pike County is that it is served by a number of health care networks stretching in to New York State, New Jersey, Wayne, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties.

The PA Department of Transportation, which oversees the Shared Ride Program, would cover 85 percent of the fare, while the county is seeking funding from other sources for the remaining 15 percent that can also be paid by the client.

LoDolce said the funding would like cover the cost of an additional van as well as the fare reimbursement, and in the end will likely make the county transportation system more efficient. The biggest complaint she gets about the system is the fact that the buses are often carrying only one or two people, which should improve with the addition of disabled individuals.

ARBITRATION ROOM

In the long term, Commissioner Richard Caridi said the county will need to consider spinning off the transportation element of the Aging function because it is beginning to occupy too much time that should be devoted to the administration of other programs in that department.

A number of other counties in Pennsylvania operate these types of networks through a transportation authority, whose primary focus is on the operation of the Shared Ride Program.

In other business, the commissioners agreed to rent additional office space in Milford near the Dimmick Inn, in the former Myer & Myer offices, to free up space in the Pike County Courthouse for the handling of minor judicial proceedings such as arbitration.

The Pike County Commissioners meet Wednesdays, 9 am, in the Commissioners Conference Room, County Administration Building, 504 Broad St., Milford.

Web note: Questions or comments about this article should be directed to news@neagle.

[Close Window \[x\]](#)

THE RIVER REPORTER

VOLUME XXXI No. 31

Narrowsburg, NY

Sections

News
 Editorial
 Columns
 Feature
 Arts & Leisure
 Outdoors
 Sports
 Obituaries
 Forum
 Photo Gallery
 Classifieds

Directories

Government
 Calendar
 Links

TRR

About us
 Supplements
 Archives
 Advertising
 Photo Reprints
 Subscribe
 Newsstands
 Contact us

Submission

Press release
 Event
 Classified ad

Amphibian

Amphibian
 online

newsstories

Pike commissioners to assist disabilities group

By [TOM KANE](#)

MILFORD, PA — Oscar Santizo wants to see a Center for Independent Living established in Pike County. Now, the closest one is in Scranton.

Santizo, who is the spokesman for Northeast Resources Unlimited, which serves handicapped people, also wants to get some of the transportation money PennDOT has been handing out to other groups.

“They don’t know we exist,” Santizo said. “There’s about \$6 million that they did not use this year. We think we deserve to get some of it for transporting disabled Pike residents.”

The Pike County Commissioners agreed with him at its recent meeting on July 27 and will write letters of support that he will need to get funding from the state’s transportation system.

“A transportation grant that Northeast Resources Unlimited could possibly get from PennDOT would pay for another van or perhaps more that would be used for handicapped people to go to doctor’s appointments, for shopping and other essential things,” said Robin LoDolce, executive director of Pike County Agency on Aging.

Right now, LoDolce’s agency is working on the development of a more efficient schedule for vans that would avoid empty or nearly empty vans on return trips.

“We’re trying to make it possible to help more people with transportation resources, especially handicapped people,” she said.

Santizo’s group has recently found a temporary home in Lords Valley, PA.

“Right now, we have been given some space by the Century 21 Select Group in Lords Valley,” he said. “But we are looking to move into another space provided by Mark Hoover of the Human Resource Center, which is also group that serves the handicapped.”

He’s hoping eventually to have their own Center for Independent

Living here in Pike, he said.

A center would assist the handicapped with sign language instruction, filling out job applications, getting food stamps and transportation services.

Santizo and his group applied recently to the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a grant to build such a center but were turned down. "We going to try again but this time with the support of more organizations that serve the handicapped than we had last time," he said.

"We're not giving up," Santizo said. "One of these years, they'll say yes."

Problems? Comments? [Contact the Webmaster.](#)

Entire contents © 2005 by the author(s) and Stuart Communications, Inc.