



ONE VISION

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**INTEGRATION, EQUALITY, AND OPPORTUNITY
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.**

What to See at the AT Makers' Fair!

by John Flaherty

The second **Assistive Technology Makers' Fair Conference** will be hosted by **TRPIL** at the Monroeville Convention Center on September 24th and 25th. In addition to presenters from across the US and Canada who will be speaking on how people with disabilities can find their own solutions, there are panel discussions planned on DIY answers in recreation, fashion, and home automation.

Our keynote speaker is **Brady Fulton**, who tours the country helping people with disabilities develop innovative and creative approaches to the challenges they encounter. Also, **Dr. Therese Willkomm** will facilitate the AT Makers Café where registrants (with assistance from Pitt student volunteers) will construct devices to take home.

Throughout the Expo, representatives with the **Intermediate Unit One's Fab Lab** will be demonstrating equipment that can create custom items from your designs, and Wednesday afternoon features demos from the **Access Mob Pittsburgh** partnership with local makers, and Chatham University's chapter of **Go Baby Go**, who create adaptive power mobility solutions for toddlers who need them. They will have examples of their work on hand.

Come join us for learning and fun!

*Transitional Paths to
Independent Living* 

www.trpil.com

**Transitional Paths to
Independent Living
(TRPIL)**

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For help registering,
call **John Flaherty** at **724.223.5115 x1371**

(turn over for calendar)



New Voice, Same Vision

by Brenda Dare

At our annual business meeting on August 22, **TRPIL** CEO Kathleen Kleinmann spoke alongside Shona Eakin, CEO of **Voices for Independence (VFI)**, located in Erie, PA, about an upcoming merger between the two organizations. Efficiencies and best practices adopted by both offices will allow us to be more competitive in a rapidly changing managed care environment.

Behind the scenes, the boards of both organizations have been working diligently for more than a year to craft bylaws and create a structure that honors the legacy Kleinmann has built for the past 30 years, while moving independent living forward in western Pennsylvania. (Two question-and-answer sessions were held for TRPIL members about these bylaws changes prior to the membership meeting.)

Though the merged organization will eventually carry the name "Voices for Independence," the newly crafted bylaws will make it a membership organization, much like how TRPIL is today. For the first time, **VFI** will have members – from both north and south – that elect people to the board.

Both CEOs spoke of the long association between our CILs, and the joint history we share. In fact, Shona Eakin grew up in Lone Pine, and is a 1987 graduate of Trinity High School. Her first job after college was working for **TRPIL**. "There are a lot of similarities between what happens at Voices and what happens at **TRPIL**, because I started here," Eakin said during her part of the discussion.

The membership in attendance voted overwhelmingly to accept the new bylaws which clears the way for the merger to move forward. There was one dissenting vote. That consumer said that they are skeptical of the proposed changes and just could not bring themselves to vote "yes." However, they are keeping an open mind, and trusts that staff will ensure the consumer experience in southwestern PA counties will not change.

Consumers interested in learning more information about the merger should look for upcoming communications sessions that will involve staff from both offices. Such sessions are planned throughout September in both service areas.

If you have questions about any communication sessions or require a reasonable accommodation to attend, please call **724.223.5115** and ask for information regarding the *TRPIL/VFI joint communication sessions*.

Current Issues

by Kate Blaker

TRPIL strives to inform members about issues and programs that can assist you in your community life and independence, as well as give you information about issues and pending legislation so you may help advocate for them.

PA ABLE Savings Program for Disability is a savings program for those disabled before the age of twenty-six with a qualifying disability. (There is pending legislation to increase the age to forty-six.) A PA ABLE account gives eligible individuals (and their families and friends) a tax-free way to save for disability-related expenses while maintaining government benefits. The savings account contributions can be used for various needs such as housing, transportation, education, and assistive equipment.

PA ABLE accounts are an addition to, not a replacement of, government programs. They do not affect eligibility for any federal needs-based programs, including Medicaid. However, there is a limitation for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

Proposed legislation about the **Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP)** will implement a brokerage/broker to schedule trips and contract with transportation providers (who may not be your local provider). MATP provides transportation to medical appointments for Medical Assistance recipients who do not have transportation available to them. The individual's county of residence provides the type of transportation that is the least expensive while still meeting their needs.

There are issues with the broker who may use drivers who are not properly trained or licensed to transport individuals with disabilities. Also, individuals might not know who will be taking them back. There are further concerns that if local providers lose this funding for MATP to a brokerage system, then the Shared Ride program would have an increase in fares.

Advocacy is needed to tell lawmakers what impact this legislation will have in our rural areas, that have few or no known providers, as well as the personal cost of limiting the availability of needed trips for medical appointments.

THE BROKERAGE OF MATP WILL AFFECT ALL SHARED RIDE PROGRAMS

MATP trips account for 36% of shared ride service operated by Freedom Transit. What does the brokerage of MATP mean for riders?

- MATP riders will be forced to call the regional for-profit broker to schedule their trips and would no longer be transported by Freedom Transit.
- As a trickle down effect, **all other shared ride programs will receive a fare increase** due to decreased riders on the vehicles while maintaining the same operating cost to provide the service.
 - ◆ This includes fare increases for seniors and persons with disabilities as well as the possibility of trips to senior centers no longer being provided as a free service.
- Shared ride service hours and locations will become more limited.



WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

For more information on the MATP brokerage and how it would impact your transportation services, please visit freedom-transit.org.



TRANSITIONAL PATHS TO INDEPENDENT LIVING STRENGTHENS CONSUMER CHOICE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH LEADERSHIP, SERVICES, AND PROGRAMS.



September 2019

Day	Time	Event/Activity
Wednesday September 4	1:00–3:00	Carnegie Museum of Art: Access + Ability <i>Come see some of the latest and greatest Assistive Technology (AT). The bus will leave TRPIL at 10:30 am. The bus will leave the museum at 3:00 pm.</i>
Thursday September 12	1:00–3:00	Voter Participation 101 <i>Everything you need to know about voting and why it matters.</i>
Wednesday September 18	12:30–1:00	Healthy Cooking Luncheon <i>Open to consumers and employees. Covered dishes are welcome! Bring your favorite healthy recipe!</i>
Wednesday September 18	1:00–3:00	Advocacy Afternoon <i>Educate, Advocate, Organize!</i> <i>We want to hear from YOU! Come share your ideas on how to grow our Membership Program.</i>
Tues & Weds September 24 September 25	10:00–3:00	AT Makers' Fair in Monroeville <i>See cover article on page 1. Limited transportation available; call for details. The bus will leave TRPIL at 10:00 am. The bus will leave Monroeville at 3:00 pm.</i>

RSVP for all events at least one week in advance!

As always, members can come in for Wii Wednesday (enjoy virtual bowling, golf, tennis, and more!) and Ed Pahula's Internet Café Training.

Have an Idea for Our Calendar?

Become a member (or renew your membership) by contacting **Matt Taylor** at mtaylor@trpil.com, or call **724.223.5115, ext 1385**.

