



Congratulations to many of our members for reaching employment milestones.

Adam recently started a new job (top)
Ian was promoted and is now a full-time employee with paid benefits (right)
Josh celebrated his 1 year anniversary at his full-time job (lower right)
Jake recently started a new job (below)

PIN members and mentors contribute to the community

Toys for Tots – official Narberth location (right)

PIN is a program of JEVS Human Services



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PIN POINTS

a newsletter from
Philadelphia Independence Network

JEVS Human Services'
Community-Based Program,
Where Young Adults with Disabilities
Live in Their Own Apartments,
with Supports

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Why PIN is the Best

by Jon

For me the PIN program is more like a second family. While I love my family a lot, PIN gives me a supportive community of friends and caring mentors. Since joining PIN, I have many friends who I hang out with in the community, my apartment and theirs. We go to the movies together, play various games together, and of course we go out to eat together. For my birthday, I took several of the PIN members (my friends) out to dinner to celebrate. We had a good time hanging out and just having fun together. With my PIN friends I am able to be myself. I participate in many social activities with PIN. I really enjoy our meditation sessions, meditation helps me relax and it improves my well-being. I also enjoy our group cooking sessions -- it's nice to cook with friends. We have gone on many outings including laser tag, the Spirit of Philadelphia, the chocolate exhibit, bowling, ice-skating, etc.



Jon skating at Philadelphia City Hall skating rink

PIN offers me a lot of fun, but also offers me other things that are helping me to increase my independence. Our Skills4Life sessions have helped increase my confidence, self-esteem and have helped me become a better public speaker. In addition, our Skills4Life sessions continue to help me prepare for the workplace. PIN has an amazing mentoring support team - Marnisha, Meghan, Kate, Marty and Phil are all supportive of every member. The PIN mentors visit my apartment regularly to make sure that I am doing a good job of maintaining it, and that I'm safe. The mentors help me organize my apartment, give me great tips for keeping my apartment clean, and provide guidance in other areas of my life as well. The mentors are less like "staff" and more like friends, they provide



Jon with some members taking in some Philadelphia Christmas sites

supports in the community, in the home, and they challenge me and other members beyond our self-identified limits. The mentors encourage all of us to be the best we can, and sometimes they are a little pushy, but I know it's because they care. The mentors have also supported me and other members through some personal and difficult times. The PIN mentors believe in me and the other members!

With PIN I have the best of both worlds, support from my parents and my sister who love and support me in everything I do. Then there's my PIN community of friends, who, like me are finding their path in this world. We understand each other, and we support and care about each other. Just like my real family, my PIN family is there for me, and I am there for them!

Building our Community through Activities



PIN family picnic

Socializing and social connections are important for human development, but many people living with disabilities are socially isolated. This is not true for the members of the Philadelphia Independence Network (PIN). Our members are living full lives through the supports that PIN offers. One area of support in particular is community and social activities.

When we first launched PIN in the fall of 2011, our members relied on the program director to facilitate and participate in most of the activities. Back then, the activities included gathering to play old-school board games, going out to dinner, watching a movie and celebrating members' birthdays.

What a difference time, support and a community of friends have made! Today, members often take the lead and initiate activities and group gatherings on their own. Members get together for dinner, sporting events and parties just to name a few examples. The young adults who join PIN become comfortable with each other through the regular group interactions and activities that the program facilitates. From that, members gain an understanding of each other, form mutual trust and are strongly encouraged and supported by the

mentor team to participate in social activities together outside of PIN. Nowadays, our group activities include, but are not limited to, the theatre, ice-skating, movies, amusement parks, the Spirit of Philadelphia, karaoke, the Philly car show, comedy night, mindfulness meditation, sporting events, simple cooking lessons (make your own pizza, soup, and omelets), bowling, game-night with dads, and the chocolate exhibit at the Academy of Natural Sciences. The PIN community has now incorporated charitable giving into the program, collecting canned goods and other non-perishable items, and donating them to the local Narberth Community Food Bank. Members also collected and donated animal toys, food and other essential items to a local Philadelphia animal shelter in addition to a volunteer day of service. PIN members also participated in our first Toys for Tots campaign and collected over 150 toys from family, friends, and the Narberth community. PIN is now the "official" collector of Toys for Tots in the Narberth Borough. Our members fully embraced each of these activities and had fun while contributing to the community. As PIN has grown, our members have found friends, a broad range of activities available throughout each week, and the ability to suggest and plan additional activities for some or all of the members. In other words, PIN members have the opportunity of a rich and full life.



What could be more fun than an exhibit on the history of CHOCOLATE



Members enjoying a game of air hockey

What PIN Means to Us

by Diane



Photo of Jon taken by Denise

Jonathan has been a member of PIN for more than 15 months. My husband and I are proud of him and grateful to be part of the PIN community.

Three years ago, as we anticipated Jon's graduation from college, I worried about what his life would be like when he returned home. At college, he was busy living on a small pretty campus surrounded by students his own age. He was coming back to his old room, a part-time volunteer position and too much free time. A year after he graduated, I saw that we were so comfortable hanging out together as a family that we were not making progress towards independent living for Jon. We didn't know if PIN was the answer or not, but I am glad we gave it a try.

The benefits of being in PIN did not appear overnight, but by now it is obvious: we made the right choice! Jon is growing into a young man willing to take risks both in sharing his own challenges and experiences, making new friends and trying new activities. He is learning to seek out guidance from others, not just his parents, and is more comfortable participating in discussions with Marnisha, Meghan, Kate and the PIN members. He is learning to live up to the responsibilities of maintaining his own apartment with regular visits from the PIN team to keep him on track. The PIN activities,

such as the mindfulness meditation on Sundays, have been fun and useful. Now we are focusing on setting short-term and long-term employment goals for Jon. He has already tried out different jobs, thanks to Phil's efforts, and, in the process, learning more about what work he would like to do.

If I could have foreseen where we are today, I would have been less worried as Jon's college graduation approached. PIN has changed Jon's life and moved him – and our family – forward in unexpected ways. Living independently is best learned by doing it, not by talking about it. PIN is providing the support necessary to make it happen.

Need Disabilities Funding in Pennsylvania?

A variety of federal and state agencies in Pennsylvania can provide financial support for people with disabilities. Navigating their requirements can be confusing. The following is the first of a series of articles to help individuals understand what is available, how to determine eligibility and how to apply.

For more details, you can go to the state's websites or you may email us at pin@jevs.org and we will help you navigate.

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocation Rehabilitation (OVR) provides funding to eligible individuals with a broad range of disabilities or chronic conditions. Funding may cover work skills assessments, career exploration, finding a job and on-the-job support. Eligibility is based on income and whether you have a documented physical, mental or emotional impairment which results in a substantial impediment to employment, and on income. OVR will evaluate your income and determine if you can be fully funded or if you will need to contribute toward the cost of service. If you collect SSI or SSDI, and otherwise qualify for service, you are eligible for full funding.

For details on services provided and eligibility visit the OVR website or contact your local OVR office (directory on the site) is www.portal.state.pa.us. On the left side tool bar, click on **Individuals**, scroll down to Compensation for People with Disabilities and following those links.