

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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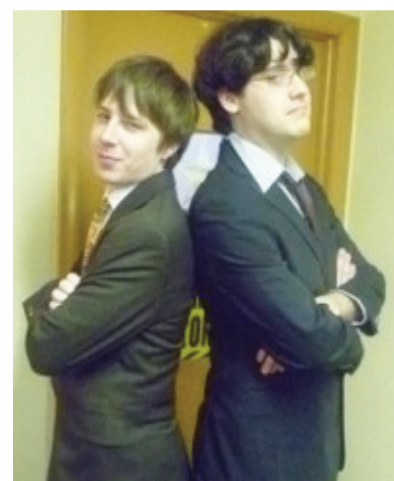
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What PIN Means To Me

by Ian

Since I joined PIN about 9 months ago my life has changed in so many positive ways. I am 25 years old and before being a part of PIN my life was very unstable. Higher education didn't work out too successfully for me. I returned home, worked in several cashier jobs near my home in Lower Merion and didn't have any people my age to hang out with. I ended up walking away from two of those jobs to seek out a life in other states where people I played video games with online lived. I went to five different states over a period of 15 months but, as I found out in each place, those people were not really my friends. I ran out of money and options and really hit bottom in northern New Jersey where I was living in my car. Finally, I asked my parents if I could come home.



Ian and his housemate

Once I was home my Mom started trying to find some way to help me settle down. She did research online and found PIN. She printed out information about the Program and asked me what I thought. I liked the sound of it. My Dad, Mom and I spoke some more about it and soon they were in touch with Nish. After filling out the application, I met with Nish and the young adults in the network. Shortly after my meetings I was accepted into PIN.

PIN has really made a difference in my life. At my age I wanted to be able to live in my own apartment and be independent. I didn't want to fall into the same traps of loneliness and lack of peer connections, I previously experienced. But I knew I needed some help to be able to be on my own since organization and things like that are difficult for me. PIN does that! PIN and the young adults who are part of the Program support me in so many ways. There is the apartment and living supervision that helps me to be on my own. There are meetings about living skills, social activities, dinners, job workshops, outings, First Aid and CPR certification - all kinds of support that allow me to be independent and active. In fact, with the help of people at JEVS and my own work background, I just got a job working for Sadexo at Devon Manor. I am a Food Service Worker and work with the residents as well as in the kitchen. This makes me (and my parents) very happy!

Last, but not least, I have real friends! I may not be friends with everyone, but we are all friendly with one another. There are people in my life now that I can do things with and who care about me and I care about them. PIN has given me a community to be part of and a place where I feel I belong!

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I've Got Your Back Brother *by Pat*



Kyle, Sarah and Cooper

Family is a funny thing. Sometimes you get along with one another and sometimes you don't, but if you're fortunate, it is family that is there for you to celebrate your successes and encourage and support you when life throws curve balls. That is the case with our two sons, Kyle and Cooper. Along with their older sister Sarah they grew up military brats with the ever changing scenery of Germany, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Iceland, Las Vegas, South Carolina and now Pennsylvania. All the moving was hectic but made our family closer (according to their parents).

Cooper has always looked up to his older brother Kyle. Kyle has always been Cooper's built-in buddy. They have always had a bond that seems more like that of twins despite their differences. Kyle recently celebrated his 23rd birthday, is passionate about theology and technology and is on the Autism Spectrum. Cooper is 19, loves computer/video games, music and hanging out with his friends.

Kyle recently joined the Philadelphia Independence Network (PIN) and has been thriving in the program. In the past it was hard for Kyle to make friends. Constantly moving only made this more difficult. With PIN Kyle is experiencing for the first time in his life what it is like not only to have friends, plural, but to be part of a community of peers and have a sense of belonging. However, determining where to live, and with whom, initially presented a quandary for Kyle. There was an epiphany in the family (ok, it was Dad's idea) to have Kyle and Cooper move out together temporarily to help Kyle (and Cooper himself) with the transition to independent living. Both were ready, both were apprehensive, but both were also excited to take this big step. PIN was supportive of this plan despite it not being the typical arrangement.

Cooper and Kyle moved in to Narberth in December and have been doing very well. They are figuring out how to pay bills, feed themselves, do laundry, clean up after themselves (ok, this isn't going so well yet) and all those other tasks you need to do to get along on your own. They enjoy being on their own together most of the time. Kyle is fully involved with new PIN friends and activities, and Cooper is busy working and doing his thing, though we still aren't sure what that is. They don't see each other a lot but, no matter what, they've got each other's back.



Meet Katie, Our Activities Coordinator

As the Activities Coordinator for PIN, Katie works with the PIN team to identify and lead a variety of activities. Some of the activities are geared toward entertainment, some are good for members' health and others offer a great learning experiences. Whatever they do, the group has fun and supports one another, like when Katie leads weekly exercise classes, PIN members have game and movie nights or go out into the community for things like dining and bowling. On their request, PIN members even attended a flea market. They also explore the rich cultural offerings of the Philadelphia area like the Constitution Center.

In addition to leading PIN activities, Katie helps members adjust to living independently. This includes apartment checks and working with members in their homes to learn how to manage daily living activities like safety, cleanliness and hygiene. She offers suggestions on how to do laundry, preserve the freshness of food, and she provides tips for shopping.

Katie is one of the newest members of the PIN team and the members think she is great. She is young and enthusiastic and



Katie with her younger sister Chrissy, one of PIN's newest members.

relates well with the entire PIN community. She is just one more reason why the PIN program is growing and individual members are thriving.

Questions for Katie, please email her at kaitlin.buckley@jevs.org



- 7 PIN members attended: David M., David L., Ian, Kyle, Adam, Billy and Bruce spent the day skiing and tubing in the Poconos, thanks to a generous PIN family who offered their vacation home to the group.
- It was a long day, and the adventures started en route. Ian was one of the drivers, and his car had a flat tire on the turnpike. He pulled over, and he and his PIN passengers handled the situation safely and appropriately.
- Three members were experienced skiers, though two hadn't skied for about 10 years. They fell a lot, but had a great time.

- The tubers had a blast; they were first in line and first to race down the hill. They went down headfirst, feet-first, on their backs, on their stomachs, limbs flailing, sometimes wiping out, always smiling.
- Our hosts provided a wonderful lunch and made everyone welcome. We had to head home a bit earlier than expected because bad weather was forecasted.

Everyone is eager to do this again next year!

Healthier Living

The PIN community is fortunate to have a number of health professionals' among our friends and family network. Recently, a Registered Nurse and Physician who just happen to be mothers of two PIN members co-facilitated alongside PIN staff a discussion around healthy living. We want to make sure that members are making good choices for eating and exercising. We also want members to have the information they need to make healthier choices.

The group participated in interactive and fun discussions that included topics like:

- Medication
- Value of water
- Healthy food choices & reading labels
- The problems with sugar and sugar substitutes
- Value of exercise

We provided an assortment of healthy and not so healthy food items to discuss. While members live independently, we want to ensure that they are aware of the differences between unhealthy and healthier foods.

We realize that we may not always make the best food choices, but having the proper information can help us make healthier choices. Now, when members have occasional sweets or chips, they now know how exercise can counterbalance the unhealthy food choices.

Additionally, we discussed eating disorders; how to recognize the symptoms of eating disorders, and, how to get help. We



Kyle, Josh and their moms with some healthy and less healthy food choices

discuss their improved eating habits and any challenges they might be experiencing.

Overall, the evening was a HUGE success. Everyone had fun and learned something new about the value of good nutrition and health. Our health professionals, aka moms, were impressed by PIN members' knowledge, openness, and willingness to accept and help their fellow PIN members. After all, that's what PIN is about – building a collaborative and supportive community!