



## LINK INK April—May—June 2016



### Tax Credit Proposed For Disability Caregivers

by Michelle Diamant

A bill introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives would establish a new tax credit designed to ease the burden of family members caring for people with disabilities. (Parents and others who provide care for people with disabilities could be eligible for a tax credit under a new proposal.)

A bill introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives this week would allow family members who care for older people and those with disabilities to receive up to \$3,000 in tax savings annually.

"This is more than just another tax credit," said U.S. Rep. Linda Sánchez, D-Calif., who introduced the legislation along with U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y. "This is about how we can help older adults and people with disabilities live independently in their own homes and communities."

To be eligible, caregivers would have to be working and earning at least \$7,500 per year.

The tax credit would offset expenses for everything from groceries to home modifications, transportation and hired help to care for individuals with long-term needs who can't perform at least two activities of daily living like eating, walking, dressing or grooming.

Family members could qualify for providing care to a spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, child, niece, nephew, brother or sister-in-law, or father or mother-in-law under the

proposal known as the Credit for Caring Act.

"These families are making enormous sacrifices and oftentimes struggle to make ends meet. The expense of providing personal, at-home care can add up quickly. It's only fair that we support our caregivers," Reed said. "It's a win-win. Families will stay together and those in need of assistance have access to better care."

### Positivity Prevails Among Those Touched By Down Syndrome

by Shaun Heasley

Surveys indicate that families largely have positive feelings about having a member with Down syndrome. In the vast majority of cases, a new analysis finds that parents and siblings of those with Down syndrome report positive feelings about having a family member with the chromosomal disorder.

Among families surveyed, researchers found that in 87 percent of cases individuals with Down syndrome, their parents and siblings all said they loved each other.

Moreover, in 83 percent of families, parents and siblings said they were proud of their family member with Down syndrome and the individual also expressed pride in themselves.

The findings come from an analysis published in the April issue of the American Journal of Medical Genetics Part A. For the paper, researchers reviewed responses from members of 41 families who participated in a series of 2011 surveys that looked at parents, siblings and individuals with Down syndrome.

By cross-referencing the three surveys, researchers were able to assess how attitudes of one family member might impact others.

"This study provides a more complete, interwoven portrait of the modern-day family with a member who has Down syndrome," said Brian Skotko, co-director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Down Syndrome Program and an author of the paper.

The analysis found that the severity of a person's Down syndrome had little influence on attitudes within families.

However, parents' feelings about their children with the developmental disorder did appear to have an impact. Younger siblings ages 9 to 11 were more likely to say that they were embarrassed by their brother or sister with Down syndrome if their parent reported similar sentiments. Along the same lines, siblings over age 12 were more likely to say they would "trade in" their affected brother or sister if their parent

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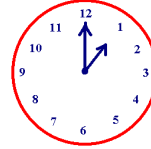
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indicated regret in having the child, the analysis found.  
"Our study demonstrates that positive attitudes tend to dominate within modern-day families who have members with Down syndrome, although the challenges were not insignificant for some," Skotko said. "I think it will be surprising to some that families who have children with Down syndrome feel so positive and even enriched. But our respondents have shared a resiliency that has translated into meaningful life journeys."



**We have changed our office hours.**  
**Please note that our office hours have changed**  
**The office will be open Monday thru Friday**  
**from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**  
**and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**  
**We will be closed from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.**



**Please make sure to call ahead and make an appointment with the person you want to see at the office to make sure they are available to visit with you and can address your concerns or answer your questions.**

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and tolerant of the weak and the strong.  
Because some day  
You will have been all of these

*George Washington Carver*

**SMILE**

Lifetime Dental Care in Hays will host a "Give Kids A Smile" day April 1. It is an annual volunteer program that provides free educational, preventive and restorative services to children from low-income families. Space is limited.



For additional information, call (785) 625-7969.  
Lifetime Dental Care is located at 2701 Sternberg Drive, Hays, KS



## Brain Injury Facts and Statistics

More than 3.5 million children and adults sustain an acquired brain injury (ABI)

each year, but the total incidence is unknown.

An ABI is any injury to the brain that is not hereditary, congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma.

Typical causes of ABI include:

- Electric Shock
- Infectious Disease
- Lightning Strike
- Near drowning
- Oxygen Deprivation (Hypoxia/Anoxia)
- Seizure Disorders
- Stroke
- Substance Abuse
- Toxic Exposure
- Trauma
- Tumor

More than 12 million Americans live with the impact of ABI.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a subset of ABI and is caused by trauma to the brain from an external force.

At least 2.5 million children and adults sustain TBIs in the U.S. each year:

2.2 million are treated in emergency departments for TBI each year.

280,00 are hospitalized for TBI each year.

50,000 die because of TBI each year.

The number of people who sustain TBIs and do not seek treatment is unknown.

Every 13 seconds, someone in the U.S. sustains a TBI.

One of every 60 people in the U.S. lives with a TBI related disability.

Every day, 137 people in the U.S. die because of a TBI-related injury.

There are many causes of TBI:

Falls—40.5 %

Struck by/against—15.5 %

Motor vehicle—14.3 %

Assaults—10.7 %

Unknown—19 %



At least 5.3 million Americans live with TBI-related disabilities.

When someone sustains a brain injury, many people are affected:

Survivors and their parents, spouses, siblings, extended families, and friends.

Healthcare providers, including surgeons, physicians, counselors, rehab therapists, social worker, and personal care attendants.

Insurance companies that issue auto accident, individual, and group health, disability, life and re-insurance policies.

Attorneys of all types, including those who handle personal injury, insurance and disability claims, civil rights/discrimination, domestic actions, wills, Estates, and trusts.

Educators at every level, but especially special education teachers and those who prepare America's future healthcare workforce.

Government agencies that administer health and social programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SHIP).

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), vocational rehab.  
Employers of all types.



## Disability Integration Act Introduced



ADAPT's Disability Integration Act, which protects the right of people with disabilities to live in their own homes and not nursing homes, was introduced Dec. 18 by Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., as S.2427 "This is an all-inclusive bill that says if

you have a right to long-term supports and services in an institution, then you have that same right in the community," says ADAPT activist Stephanie Woodward, who is also Director of Advocacy at the Center for Disability Rights, an advocacy organization in Rochester, N.Y.

The DIA, a civil rights bill structured on the ADA, requires public entities and insurance companies that provide long term supports to serve eligible people in the community. Waiting list, capping services, underpaying workers or taking other actions that restrict access to community-based services would be illegal.

"When you're forced to live in an institution and segregated from the community, your civil rights are being violated," says ADAPT activist Jensen Carabello, who is also vice chairman of the Center for Disability Rights. "The DIA will ensure this doesn't continue to happen to people with disabilities."

ADAPT organizer Bruce Darling adds that unlike earlier attempts at similar legislation, the DIA does not depend upon Medicaid. "It's about having the supports we need to not just live in the community but to lead full and independent lives," says Darling. Who is also CEO at the Center for Disability Rights. "The failure to provide that assistance would constitute a form of discrimination."

For more information on the Disability Integration Act, visit ADAPT at [www.adapt.org/main/diamain](http://www.adapt.org/main/diamain)



EQUALITY ♦ LAW ♦ JUSTICE

## Tommy Hilfiger Debuts Adaptive Clothing Line

A major clothing designer is launching a line of apparel just for children with special needs.

Tommy Hilfiger is offering a new collection of adaptive children's clothing on its website.

The 22-piece children's offering is comprised of items that look just like clothing in the company's regular spring collection, but include magnets, Velcro and other modification to allow for easy on and off for kids with disabilities.

All of the items are priced the same as the versions for typically-developing kids, the company said.

For the clothing line, Tommy Hilfiger collaborated with the nonprofit Runway of Dreams. Mindy Scheier founded the group—which works to increase the availability of fashionable clothing for kids with special needs—after adapting jeans for her son Oliver who has a rare form of muscular dystrophy and wears leg braces.

Tommy Hilfiger's new adaptive clothing collection includes pants with adjustable-length legs, fasteners that use Velcro and magnets and other modifications while retaining the style of the company's mainstream clothing.

"Every detail was considered so the clothing is not only functional but looks exactly the same as the TH Kids collection," Scheier said in a Q-and A about the new t-shirts, jeans, dresses and other items.

Beyond their work with Tommy Hilfiger, officials with Runway of Dreams said they are looking to work with other brands and designers to make adaptive clothing available for people of all ages with different abilities





## **Crime Odds Double For Those With Disabilities** **by Michelle Diamant, Disability Scoop**

People with disabilities remain far more likely to be victims of violent crime, new federal statistics indicate.

There were 1.3 million nonfatal violent crimes committed against persons with disabilities in 2013, according to data released this month from the U. S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. Overall, people with disabilities were more than twice as likely to experience violent crime as compared to the general population, the agency said.

Within this population, those with cognitive disabilities were the most likely to report being victims of violent crime and about half of the victims had multiple conditions. The vast majority of crimes cited were related to simple assault followed by aggravated assault, robbery and rape or sexual assault.

The findings are based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey of about 90,000 households asking about their experiences with crime whether reported or unreported to authorities. Just under half of the incidents involving people with disabilities were reported to police, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found. In other cases, those surveyed said they didn't seek law enforcement assistance because they dealt with the matter another way, believed the incident was not significant enough or



## **THIS -N -THAT**

While presenting at the Grammys, Stevie Wonder took the opportunity to call attention to the needs of people with disabilities. Wonder, who was on stage to present the award for song of the year, teased that only he could read the card with the winner's name because it was written in Braille. "You can't read it. You can't read Braille, Wonder joked during the Grammy Awards Ceremony. The singer, who is blind, then got serious, " I want to say, before I say the winner, that we need to make every single thing accessible to every single person with a disability," Wonder said to rousing applause.

## **Workplace Disability Discrimination Claims At Record High - by Schaun Heasley, Disability Scoop**



Complaints of disability-based job discrimination are on the rise, hitting an all-time high, federal officials say.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said charges of job bias related disability rose 6 percent to total 26,968 for the 2015 fiscal year.

That is the highest number on record and comes after two straight years of declines.

Of all the disability-related claims received last year, 6,069 were resolved in favor of the person who brought the complaint, the EEOC said, with the agency collecting nearly \$129 million in monetary benefits for those harmed.

In total, the EEOC received 89,385 charges of workplace discrimination last year. Disability played a role in nearly a third of them.

The EEOC began tracking disability-related workplace discrimination in 1992. In addition, the agency also monitors employment discrimination complaints related to race, color, sex, age, religion, pregnancy, genetic information and national origin.

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## **Lego rolling out Mini figure in Wheelchair**

Lego said it will include a boy in a wheelchair in a forthcoming set of its iconic mini figures.



The toymaker confirmed the plan after a handful of websites that report on Lego revealed pictures and video of the new product taken at an industry event recently in Germany.

The wheelchair will be part of a LEGO City set called "Fun in the Park" that will be available in June, said Michael McNally. Senior director of brand relations for LEGO Systems, Inc.

Lego and other toymakers have been encouraged to offer products representative of people with disabilities by the U.K.-based campaign Toys like me.

## **Greyhound to Pay \$375K To Resolve ADA Allegations**

By Shaun Heasley



Greyhound will compensate passengers and take other steps to resolve Justice Department allegations of widespread ADA violations.

In a deal with the U.S. Department of Justice, Greyhound will compensate passengers with disabilities and pay a fine to settle allegations that it repeatedly violated the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Justice Department said this week that Greyhound Lines Inc. will pay \$300,000 to certain travelers identified by the federal agency and the company will hire a claims administrator to compensate an unlimited number of others who faced disability discrimination in interactions with the bus service.

The agreement comes in response to a Justice Department complaint alleging that Greyhound failed to maintain lifts and other accessibility features on its buses, did not assist passengers with disabilities getting on and off buses and did not allow individuals using wheelchairs to make travel reservations online.

“The ADA guarantees people with disabilities equal access to transportation services so they can travel freely and enjoy autonomy,” says Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “This agreement marks a major step toward fulfilling the promise of the ADA, and we applaud Greyhound for entering the consent decree.”

The deal, which must still be approved by a judge, calls for Greyhound to pay a civil penalty of \$75,000 and improve its online booking system in addition to compensating passengers.

The company has also agreed to make annual, in-person ADA training mandatory for all employees and contractors who interact with the public.



## **Nike Unveils Shoes For People With Special Needs**

Thanks to a plea from a teen with cerebral palsy seeking shoes he could put on his feet independently, Nike is introducing sneakers designed specifically for people with disabilities.

Matthew Walzer, then 16, wrote an open letter to Nike in 2012 asking the athletic-wear giant to make a more accessible line of shoes that would still provide the support people like him need.

“At 16 years old, I am able to completely dress myself, but my parents still have to tie my shoes. As a teenager who is striving to become totally self-sufficient, I find this extremely frustrating, and at times, embarrassing,” Walzer wrote. “My dream is to go to the college of my choice without having to worry about someone coming to tie my shoes everyday.”

Now, Walzer is getting his wish.

The company said this week that after working with Walzer for three years on testing prototypes, they are introducing an “easy-entry footwear system.”

Rather than rely on laces, the new approach uses a wrap-around zipper system to secure the shoe. What’s more, a larger opening at the back makes it easier to slide the foot in and out.



“In talking to Matthew and many other athletes with disabilities, the ease of entry was just as important as the lacing solution,” Tobie Hatfield, a Nike designer, said in a posting on the company’s website. “While varying levels of mobility make it difficult to provide a universal solution, we feel this is a significant development for anyone who has ever struggled with independently securing their foot within Nike shoes.”


Starting Thursday, limited quantities of the LeBron Soldier 8 FLYEASE will be available on Nike.com. Additional FLYEASE styles are in the works, the company said.

“I knew what I was doing was, in football terms, ‘a Hail Mary,’ and to be quite honest I had very low expectations. I was expecting a very polite letter back in recognition of my request,” Walzer, who is now a sophomore at Florida Gulf Coast University, said in the Nike posting. “There are not enough ‘thank yous’ in the world to express my undying gratitude.”

*by Shaun Heasley, Disability Scoop*

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