



*“Spring is when  
you feel like  
whistling even  
with a shoe full of  
slush”*

*Doug Larson*

**Inside this issue:**

**Adopt-a-Platoon** 1

**Alternative Therapies** 2

**SSI Work Incentives for Students w/ Disabilities** 3

**Long Road to a Basic Right** 4

**Visual Supports Training** 4

**Wandering Souls for Haiti** 5

**Calendar of Events** 6

# FOCUSABILITY

## Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

### ADOPT-A-PLATOON



For the last several years, NRCIL has proudly participated in Fort Drum’s Adopt-a-Platoon Program. This year, we have adopted a small platoon from the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team (1<sup>st</sup> BCT) Headquarters, leaving for Afghanistan in March. This program began in 1998 as a way to ensure a better deployment quality of life to our brave men and women fighting for our nation. The Adopt-a-Platoon program is active for all branches of the military and is at every military installation in the United States.

Please help NRCIL in supporting our troops in their time away from their loved ones and friends. We will be collecting personal care items, books, games, non-perishable food items, magazines and more to send in care packages once a month to our platoon. Ideas for items that can be donated can be found at <http://www.adoptaplatoon.org/new/pdf/care.pdf>. As you can imagine, mailing boxes adds up quickly, so if you prefer, donations are also being accepted to assist with shipping costs.

*For more information, please contact Jennifer Sibley, Fort Drum Family Advocate at (315)785-8703 or [jennifers@nrcil.net](mailto:jennifers@nrcil.net). Thank you all for your support and look for updates on our platoon throughout the year*

### NRCIL ANNOUNCES A NEW PROGRAM!!



May 1, 2010, NRCIL will start an employment program to help consumers learn skills needed to start finding jobs. Some of the areas that we will concentrate on will be interviewing skills, writing resumes, using the internet to find job openings, and traits employers look for in new employees. Many practical topics will be covered, and personalized topics can be addressed as requested.

We will also have a support group for people returning to work to talk about their experiences, both good and bad. Tips for success and coping skills will be shared.

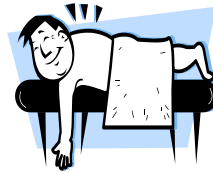
We look forward to meeting with and assisting people who are looking for jobs, and increasing independence for all the consumers we work with.

## Natural Remedies Content by Health.com editors, independent of sponsor

### How to Get Your Medical Insurer to Cover Alternative Medicine Treatments

More insurers are covering alternative therapies like acupuncture.

By Jeanne Lee



Although it may seem obvious that acupuncture helps relieve, say, your chronic back pain, insurance companies often consider such therapies—from massage to herbal supplements—outside the medical mainstream. They are, after all, still referred to as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). However, many insurers do cover selected therapies on a case-by-case basis, depending on the way you request reimbursement.

“If you talk to insurance people, they quote you by the book and say massage is not covered. Yet, I would say one-third of our Blue Cross Blue Shield patients are getting some reimbursement,” says Paul Rubin, a chiropractic physician at WholeHealth Chicago, a medical center that integrates traditional and alternative medicine. And even if your insurance company refuses to cover alternative treatments, there are ways you can reduce your out-of-pocket expenses.

#### Insurance Coverage

The best way to get reluctant insurers to cover alternative therapies is by making a good case that your treatment is medically necessary. The simplest way to do this is to get a prescription. Ask your primary care doctor to write one that includes the diagnosis and the frequency and length of treatment. Although they may not advertise the fact, some insurers will rubber-stamp CAM treatments if they are prescribed by a physician. Some of the most frequently covered therapies include chiropractic care, massage therapy, acupuncture, herbal remedies, homeopathy, and mind-body stress management.

One of Rubin’s patients, a woman in her mid-50s, came to his office with fibromyalgia; she had chronic pain and fatigue. She was treated by an internist, who prescribed the pain medication Lyrica, and she also saw an energy healer, an acupuncturist, and a massage therapist on staff. WholeHealth Chicago submitted a detailed claim to the insurer that included a prescription for the CAM treatments and receipts that used standard diagnostic and treatment codes. Her insurance paid for the internist and therapeutic massage, says Rubin, although the acupuncture and energy work were denied.

Another strategy is to convince the insurance company that covering alternative treatments may save them money in the long run. Some conventional treatments for chronic back pain, for instance, cost far more (and in some cases may be less effective) than alternative options such as acupuncture and biofeedback. “To a certain extent, it’s playing the insurance game,” says Rubin. “I would never ask anyone to not tell the truth, but if you can make the case clearly that what is being done is clinically necessary as an alternative to pharmaceuticals or surgical procedures, the insurance company can see, ‘Gee, this treatment is \$200, while medication would be \$600 and surgery would be \$10,000.’”

## ***SSI Work Incentives Available to Transitional-Age Students with Disabilities***

### **Earned Income Exclusion**

The *Earned Income Exclusion* applies to all SSI beneficiaries, including any student earning wages from school sponsored employment program or other employment. Under this exclusion, some earnings each month are not counted when calculating your SSI countable income. For many students with disabilities, the *Earned Income Exclusion* alone will ensure that most of their SSI benefits are maintained while the student participates in school sponsored paid employment or other paid work situations.

There are three parts to the exclusion. The first is the general exclusion of \$20 of income from any source. The second part is the earned income exclusion of \$65. The third part is the exclusion of one-half of the remaining earned income. That is, for every two dollars in earned income, one dollar is deducted from your SSI check.

If, for example, an individual is receiving the maximum SSI benefit rate in New York State and is living with others, they will receive \$697 per month in 2009. If they earned \$100 per month from earned income the calculation would be:

#### **Earned Income Exclusion Calculation**

\$100 earned income	
- 20 General Income exclusion	
\$80	
-65	
\$15 divided by 2 = \$7.50	
\$697.00	
- 7.50	
\$689.50 adjusted SSI payment	



### **Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)**

If a beneficiary is under age 22 and a full time student attending high school, college, or a vocational school like BOCES, Social Security will disregard monthly earnings from work up to \$1,640 per month to a maximum of \$6,600 per year. This exclusion is applied before the *General Income Exclusion* and the *Earned Income Exclusion*, when determining your SSI monthly payment amount.

For example, a full time high school student receiving SSI benefits of \$697 per month has an opportunity to earn \$1,740 per month from work. These earnings may be excluded under SEIE up to a maximum of \$6,600 per year in 2010. In addition, the student excludes another \$85 (\$20 *General Income Exclusion* and a \$65 *Earned Income Exclusion*) of monthly earnings.  $\$1,740 - 1640 \text{ SEIE} = \$100 - 20 = \$80 - 65 = \$15$  divided by 2 = \$7.50.  $\$697 - 7.50 = \$689.50$ . \$689.50 is your new SSI payment amount.

#### **SEIE Calculation**

\$1740 Gross Income	
1640 SEIE	
100 Countable Income	
-20 General Income Ex-	
clusion	
\$ 80	
-65 Earned Income Exclu-	
sion	
\$ 15 divided by 2 = \$7.50	
\$697 - 7.50 = \$689.50	



## Long Road to a Basic Right

KATIE BROWN Special to the Times Union

ALBANY -- It has not been an easy road for Brad Williams in the fight to gain equal access at the voting polls for people with disabilities. Williams, who is executive director of New York State Independent Living Center, said New York lags behind the rest of the country on the most fundamental right guaranteed to American citizens: the right to vote. We can focus on turning out the vote for people with disabilities within the state," he said, "but it's hard to do that when you cannot consistently guarantee that a polling place is accessible -- and that one can vote privately and independently. He said New York lacks a law requiring each polling place to comply with the guidelines of the landmark Americans With Disabilities Act. Williams and his colleagues at the center on Washington Avenue backed a bill that would require New York to update its voting machines, but Gov. David Paterson vetoed it in September, contending that the state could not afford the changes in voting machines at a time of "financial straits. Williams' efforts and achievements stand to gain greater public attention in a new film by him and Doug Usiak. HAVA in New York: The Long Road to a Fundamental Right" contains interviews with disabled activists, doctors, lawyers and other supporters and a timeline that marks the progress of the movement for equal access. The 27-minute documentary also details the roadblocks yet to be overcome. HAVA stands for the federal Help America Vote Act. "The Long Road" was recognized at the Picture This Film Festival in Calgary, Canada, and has been submitted to other festivals at New York University, Berkeley, Calif., and Melbourne, Australia. We don't give up," said Williams, who is hopeful that New York will finally update the polling system by the 2012 presidential elections. We want to exercise our rights," Williams said. We want to be involved in the political process.

Katie Brown, a senior at Union College majoring in media and politics, is a Times Union intern. To view the HAVA documentary or to help advocate for polling place accessibility, call Brad Williams at 427-1060 or go to the New York State Independent Living Council Web site, <http://www.nysilc.org/>.

## Visual Supports for Children with Disabilities

Presented by Jennifer Sibley

**March 23, 2010**

**6:00 pm-8:00 pm**

Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

210 Court St. Suite 107

Watertown, NY 13601



To request accommodations and to RSVP, please call Jennifer Sibley at (315)785-8703.

Materials and refreshments will be provided

Childcare available with 24 hours advanced notice.



My home is nothing but blood and rubble Streets strewn with madness and sorrow wandering souls amid  
living rabble Survivors left with doubtful tomorrows

"Where were you from my brother?

Weren't you from just down the road?

I see Lady Earth has also claimed your daughter Wish you a companion as you two go?"

"Join me my brother, Good company we'll be.

Though our path I can't yet see."

"Perhaps to market we should wander?" Said another soul as she approached.

"My daddy has been that way" said the child "A lot of folks are there, but no more sellers"

Another group approached and confirmed, "Yes, only the ones who look through us now They all seem so  
sad, in pain and looking. But not for what we are, I think, somehow."

"Then join us my friends" said the father to the rest "Perhaps we can find our way together.

Perhaps to the sea"

He looked to a smoky horizon

"There seems to be something tugging at me"

The wandering souls plodded on

Gathering thousands on their way

Some confused, many angry, many accepting Toward old homes and family they would roam Finding the  
same each time it was done

The world was destroyed.

All they ever knew.

But the road was becoming lighter

With every stray man, woman and child And every trip to things now left behind

The wandering souls walked with heavy hearts As they realized why their party grew

The ones who looked through them mourned their loss Not knowing they were with friends

The wandering souls had the easy part.

Many know each other from before and some will find loved ones waiting on the shore when they finally reach the  
peaceful waters

of a luminous sea at the end of their paths however long the journey may take

Pray they need to wander no more. -**Scott McGregor**



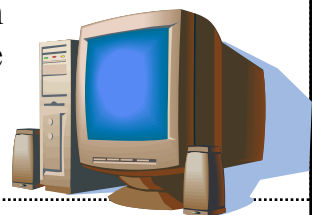
# 2010 Annual Chili Cook-Off



NRCIL’s Holly Lowe, Carol Porter, Bill O’Neill, Shelly David and Tim Connor shown above as they volunteered at the 2010 Chili Cook-Off to benefit the Volunteer Transportation Center. Not photographed are many other NRCIL staff that helped shop, prep, serve, and staff the NRCIL table.

## ***NRCIL HAS NEW EQUIPMENT***

The New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired recently awarded NRCIL a brand new computer with JAWS software. This system is set-up for use by people who are blind or with visual impairments and gives them access to written information from the internet and from other sources through e-mail. This computer will be in our reception area and available for use from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM , Monday through Friday. Please call ahead and reserve the computer to insure it is available when you arrive.



## PEERS TOGETHER

### A Mental Health Self-Help Group

Every Wednesday @ NRCIL

2:30-3:30

- Confidential
- Foster Friendships
- Develop Coping Skills
- Share Experiences
- Information & Resources
- Vent & Discuss Issues
- Self-Advocacy Skills



## FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS



### Autism Spectrum Disorders Group

2nd & 4th Monday of every month NRCIL 12:00-2:00

### Parents of Children w/ Disabilities

1st & 3rd Thursday of every month NRCIL 5:00-6:30

### YALE (Youth Advocacy)

1st & 3rd Thursday of every month NRCIL 5:00-6:30

### Exceptional Parents/Exceptional Children

2nd Tuesday of every month ACS Bldg. Ft. Drum

### Love & Logic Parenting

Individual & Group -Call for details

### Families Together Chapter Meetings

First Thursday of every month (Call for details)

### Respite Committee Meeting

3rd Thursday of every month @ NRCIL 12:30-2:30

### Ft. Drum Brothers & Sisters

1st Tuesday of every month @ Ft. Drum

*Family Support takes its direction for activities and training from you...if you have ideas and/or would like to get involved, please let us know what's on your mind. Also, this list is subject to change. Please call for updates, additions, deletions, reservations, etc. @ 785-8703. Childcare is available for all groups, call to reserve.*

## SAVE THE DATE!!!

### 6TH ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH WALK

WATERTOWN, NY

MAY 19TH, 2010

10:00-2:00

PICNIC@THOMPSON PARK

## Love and Logic Parenting

NRCIL is now offering Love and Logic parenting classes to parents, grandparents, and foster parents. Love and Logic is a nationally recognized curriculum that puts the fun back into parenting.

### Jeff. County

March 2nd, 10th, 16th, & 24th 5:00-7:00

April 7th, 14th, 21st, & 28th 9:00-11:00

### Lewis County

March 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th 6:00-8:00

March 9th, 16th, 23rd, & 30th 1:00-3:00

