

Southern Illinois

Center for Independent Living

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Bogus Service Animals Prompt New ADA Rules

Source: Wall Street Journal

Rhonda Kimmel's 11-year-old West Highland terrier, Maxx, goes with her everywhere—to the mall, restaurants and even to the bank.

What gives Maxx entree to places normally off-limits to canines and other animals is the embroidered, purple vest he sports. It says: "Therapy Dog Maxx."

Maxx is a lot of things, including well-behaved, and he is a faithful companion. What he is not, however, is a therapy dog or a service dog, and Ms. Kimmel is not disabled.

Wayne Short began walking Hillary, his four-foot-long iguana on the boardwalk, the city council passed an ordinance prohibiting undomesticated animals from mingling with the public, according to City Solicitor Guy Ayres.

Mr. Short fought back. He plunked down \$64 to place Hillary on the Internet-based National Service Animal Registry, a private company that, among other things, sells service-animal credentials.

On the company website, where Hillary's picture and registration number is displayed, it says under service type: unspecified. But Mr. Short, who couldn't be reached for comment, has told people that Hillary keeps him calm.

"The gentleman claimed that the iguana was his service animal, so I am not sure the police looked into it further," Mr. Ayres says.

On March 15, the Americans With Disabilities Act started only recognize dogs as service animals. The new regulations include a provision that says the public must accommodate, where reasonable, trained miniature horses as well.

The new rules are an effort to "stop erosion of the public's trust, which has resulted in reduced access for many individuals with disabilities who use trained service animals that adhere to high behavioral standards," according to a Justice Department spokeswoman.

What's more, the new rules do little to get rid of the fakers. "If people are clever and they have a well-behaved dog, they know just what to say to get their dog on board," says Ms. Eames. "Or they can get a friendly psychologist to write a note."

It's risky for businesses to deny access to people accompanied by service dogs—even if they think they are pretending to be disabled—because if suspicions prove to be unfounded, a business could face civil penalties of up to \$55,000 for violating a person's civil rights.

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Still, Ms. Kimmel says the vest, which she purchased online, no questions asked, makes people think otherwise, so they don't object to Maxx. "They know they are not supposed to ask," Ms. Kimmel says, alluding to the federal law that protects people with service animals from inquiries about the nature of their disability.

The various uses for service animals, particularly dogs, have expanded in recent years beyond the traditional tasks of helping blind and deaf people get around safely. Dogs now are used to help people detect the onset of seizures, alert diabetics when their glucose levels drop too low, and remind psychiatric patients to take their medicine.

But the trend also means that there are many more ways to game the system—so pet lovers need never be without their companions, even if the rules say they should leave the shih tzu at home.

Last summer, after Ocean Park, Md., resident Joseph

Feds Unleash Billions for Community Living

Source: disabilitycoop.com

The federal government is opening the door to billions of dollars to help individuals with disabilities access care in the community as opposed to institutions, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said.

The funds made available through the recent Health Care Reform act will allow for the expansion of an existing program that assists people living in institutions move into the community. At the same time, the federal agency is proposing new rules to allow states to access additional federal Medicaid matching funds by agreeing to give preference to community based services over institutional settings.

Federal officials are awarding \$621 million over the next five years to expand the Money Follows the Person program to an additional 13 states. Under the initiative — which is already in place in 29 states and the District of Columbia — money is available to help people with disabilities who are living in institutions transition into the community with services and supports.

The new grants are expected to help 13,000 people in Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont and West Virginia.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health and Human Services is proposing rules for the Community First Choice Option, a new initiative offering states access to a combined \$3.7 billion over the next three years in additional Medicaid matching funds if they agree to eliminate caps on the number of individuals who can live in the community. That program is expected to begin in October.

“There is more evidence than ever that people who need long-term care prefer to live in their own homes and communities whenever possible,” said Donald Berwick, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. “To restrict these individuals to institutions where even the simplest decisions of the day such as when to get up, what to eat and when to sleep are made by someone else must no longer be the norm.”

Building a Brighter Future for the Disabled: Casey's Cookies

By: Bill Kaiser

Last month I was watching Headline News and there was segment that I thought I would share. The segment was about Casey Torman, who was born with Goldenhar Syndrome, a congenital birth defect that includes deformities of the face and spine, and in some cases mental retardation. In addition to having a low IQ, Casey is severely hearing impaired, and has had nine major surgeries to correct curvatures of her spine and severely dislocated hips. Casey is a 2010 special diploma graduate of Gibbs High School in St. Petersburg, Florida.



However, her parents knew it would be hard for Casey to find a job. Therefore, they decided to establish a non profit business called Casey's Cookies.

The mission of Casey's Cookies is to promote independence and improve the quality of life for developmentally and physically disabled adults through training and employment, and to develop a residential community in the Tampa Bay area where Casey's Cookies employees can live and work in a safe and nurturing environment.

Everyone that works in the kitchen has a developmental disability and is supervised by volunteers. The kinds of cookies that they bake are Chocolate Chip, Vermont Maple, Sugar, and Cinnamon Chip Oatmeal.

You can order cookies and find out more about Casey's Cookies at www.caseyscookies.org.

Beware the Sweepstakes Scammers

Source: www.thesouthern.com

Sweepstakes scammers are preying on the vulnerabilities of elderly Southern Illinoisans and in some cases, making off with thousands from those who can ill afford the loss.

"Sweepstakes scams are very common," David Mitchell of Shawnee Alliance Protective Services Unit said. "The scammers make random phone calls until they latch onto someone and then they don't quit until they get every last penny the person has."

Victims are told they have won a monetary prize, but in order to receive it, they must first fork over some cash, Franklin County Sheriff Don Jones said.

"They give them a complicated story about how they can't receive their winnings until they pay for administrative fees or taxes or some other variation, but what it comes down to is they have to send money to get their multimillion dollar winnings," Jones said.

The victims usually wire money to accounts in foreign countries, most often Canada and Jamaica. Once on the hook, victims often continue paying as other "fees" or "taxes" pop up that must be paid before they get the big payoff, Jones said.

In some cases, store clerks have refused service and alerted police after becoming suspicious that the money is going to a scammer, Jones said.

"But that doesn't stop the victim. They just go to another store to wire the money," he said. "Even after we tell them they are being scammed, they keep sending money."

That's because the scammers are adept at finding people, especially the elderly, who may lack the capacity to resist the scam, Mitchell said.

"The elderly are prime targets," he said. "The scammers will find a person who may not be thinking clearly, who may have some kind of dementia or psychiatric problem that makes them much more susceptible. They may be lonely, and these may be the only calls they get."

In fact, he said, scammers make frequent calls, sometimes up to 50 per day, to pressure victims for more money. "We've seen losses exceeding \$100,000," Mitchell said. "In some cases, family members have had to step in and petition the courts to be put in charge so they can safeguard their assets."

Most money sent to scammers is unrecoverable, Mitchell said.

"You want so badly to help them, but once the money is gone, it's gone. There is so much of this out there and not nearly enough manpower. Prevention is the only way to stop it," he said.

The Illinois Attorney General's Office, which listed such sweepstakes scams as among the top 10 consumer concerns last year, offers educational programs and literature to help seniors avoid falling into a scammer's trap.

The Shawnee Alliance can also help, Mitchell said. The Protective Services Unit can investigate, offer intervention and provide follow-up services. Victims can also be put in touch with other resources, he said.



6 Tips to Job Hunting Online

By: Bill Kaiser

Today, modern job seekers will most likely have to go online to find work. To help those just venturing into the online job marketplace, here are 6 tips to job hunting online.

1. Update and Revise your résumé

Before you apply for a job, make sure your résumé is up to date. If you have not applied for a job for a while, you should check to see if you need to add any work or volunteer experiences. You should revise your résumé to tailor the position that you are applying for. You might have many work and volunteer experiences and you should place the most relevant experiences near the beginning of your résumé. Streamlining your résumé will also allow you to highlight the skills relevant to your job search. Think about your field and what buzzwords your future boss might have in mind, then incorporate them into your résumé. And by the way, the old-fashioned paper résumé is not dead yet; you'll still want a hard copy to bring to an interview.

2. Join a social networking site

The hugely popular business-networking site LinkedIn allows you to create a profile (with those important key words), then link to colleagues, customers, alumni associations — anyone who can vouch for your skills, and who might know somebody who knows somebody (hey, that's still what job-hunting is all about). You can find groups focused on your industry on LinkedIn, and within those groups, there are often job listings. Gwendolyn Ward, who founded a workplace transitions site called FOOW? (Fish Out of Water?), says, "a lot of savvy recruiters have found this the cheapest way to find an employee because they can post the listing for free." Letting friends and colleagues on Facebook know you're looking for work can also generate leads.

3. Set up a microblog with Twitter or Tumblr

If you're not comfortable sending out your own short messages, you can still sign up to receive them from companies or people you're interested in. Maybe you'll even find out about job openings. Anita Bruzzese, a nationally syndicated workplace columnist, says she spoke with an employer who advertised for a job through Twitter and heard back from interested applicants within 10 minutes (yup, he ended up hiring one of them). It was not only free advertising for the employer, it assured him or her that the applicants were interested enough in the company to read its Tweets. "Do all employers do that?" Bruzzese asks. "No. But it's one more [source for] information."

4. Carefully research the latest developments in your field

Who might be hiring? What qualifications are certain employers looking for? Bruzzese likes to use a fishing analogy: "Don't just cast a wide net ... Your chances of catching something aren't going to be very high. But if you talk to other fishermen first, find out where the good fish are, find out what kind of bait they like, your chances are much better."

5. Browse the job-hunting websites

Sites like Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com allow you to post your resume. These two job-hunting websites are well-known and have many job postings. If you are from Southern Illinois, you can go online and check with the Southern Illinoisan newspaper for job postings. The web address is www.thesouthern.com.

6. Investigate potential employers

Be sure to investigate a company before sending in your résumé, and never give your bank account or Social Security number by e-mail to someone who says they're going to offer you a job. If you have doubts, the Federal Trade Commission suggests checking with your local consumer protection agency, state Attorney General's office or the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed against the company.

According to job search experts, these 6 tips will assist you with searching, connecting, and making a great virtual impression to employers.



Illinois Assistive Technology Program

By: Bill Kaiser

The Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) is a not-for-profit agency that promotes the availability of assistive technology services and programs for people with disabilities. IATP serves all people with disabilities in the state of Illinois, their families, service providers, state agencies, private industry, educators, and other interested individuals, regardless of age or income.

Illinois was one of the first nine states funded under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, as amended. IATP's primary focus is on education, employment, community living, information technology and telecommunications. Their mission is to enable people with disabilities so they can fully participate in all aspects of life. They believe disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes a person's right to:

- live independently;
- enjoy full inclusion and integration in mainstream society;
- benefit from an education;
- pursue meaningful careers and;
- enjoy self-determination and make choices.

IATP has many programs to assist people with disabilities, such as

- Device Loan
- Cash Loan
- Homeownership
- Assistive Technology Classifieds
- Assistive Technology Evaluations
- Training

For more information on the Illinois Assistive Technology Program, go to www.iltech.org or call (800) 852-5110.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization

If your household has not applied for Energy Assistance or Weatherization for your home, contact the Western Egyptian Outreach Office in the county that you reside to make an Appointment.

| Number of People In Household | GROSS Income For 30 Days Prior To Application Date |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | \$1,354 or less |
| 2 | \$1,821 or less |
| 3 | \$2,289 or less |
| 4 | \$2,756 or less |

Western Egyptian's phone number is 618-684-3341. You can also visit Western Egyptian's website www.weec.org to get more information concerning their programs.

SICIL

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This newsletter is available as a hard copy and on audio tape. Consumers may use SICIL's Resource Library for Internet access to read our newsletter.

Local Transit Info Now Online Source: thesouthern.com

With a click of the mouse, Southern Illinoisans can now explore their public mass transportation options to enable them to get to medical appointments, jobs, educational facilities and other places as needed around the region.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development has a new website giving all of the pertinent transportation information. Found online at www.sirides.com, the website is a Rural Medical Transportation Network project from the center. The site includes maps showing the coverage areas of the five mass transit districts in the region along with hours, contact information and other details.



"This is a one-stop site bringing together information about all of the transportation options in Southern Illinois," said Dennis Presley, project coordinator for the Rural Medical Transportation Network.

Presley said many times people have nonemergency medical needs and getting the necessary treatment hinges on getting to the treatment site. The public transportation providers can make it happen affordably and the new website connects people to those opportunities, he said. The network also links people to transportation for other needs including jobs, school and more.

Included in the Rural Medical Transportation Network are the Central Illinois Public Transit, Jackson County Mass Transit District, Rides Mass Transit, Shawnee Mass Transit District and South Central Illinois Mass Transit District.

Users will find the telephone numbers, hours, links to the websites for each transit district and other information on the site.

"With gas prices in the \$3 dollar plus/gallon range, people are having to make difficult budget decisions but the goal of the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development's Rural Medical Transportation Network is to give Southern Illinoisans affordable access to medical service sites and other places they need to be and this umbrella website is the next step in providing that service," Presley said.

For more information about the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development's Rural Medical Transportation Network, contact Presley at 618-453-3314.