



THE CORD

RUTH BLACK

SCI Family Peer Mentor Coordinator in her own words...



This is actually my third association with Magee in the past 33 years. In 1975, when I was a junior in high school, I was a

passenger in a car and broke my neck at C5-6. It was a very different era then relative to treatment of SCI. Luckily, I landed at Magee in early 1976 for rehab. I was one of 4 "quads" and the only woman. I spent 4 months here and made good progress toward the goal of "independence at a wheelchair level". I was determined to walk again and I worked very hard to be "independent at a wheelchair level" until that occurred. I had and have very supportive family and friends. So, although the transition to my new lifestyle was painful and very difficult, the support around me counterbalanced the emotional and physical turmoil.

I returned to Magee in 1988 as a Staff Social Worker following graduate school. It was not my intent to be a medical social worker, (as we were called then) but lack of accessibility was a big deal in the 1980's and I was

having trouble finding accessible social service agencies. I then saw an ad for a job at Magee and applied. The department head and my former social worker, Judy Hirschwald, hired me. She told me in 1976 as an aspiring social worker even then, that my disability need not prevent me from becoming a social worker. She encouraged me to work toward that goal and call her after I got my masters, so I did. I worked here for about 4 years. I then moved into pediatric rehabilitation at DuPont Hospital for Children, where I worked until 2005.

So, here I am again running the Family Peer Mentor Program and I feel right at home. Much has changed for me and Magee in the last 33 years. Unfortunately, spinal cord injuries are still aplenty and the emotional impact wreaks havoc on the families of newly injured individuals.

The power of the peer program lies in the idea of shared experience as a healing technique. When new families gather in the monthly group, for example, and have the opportunity to meet and speak with peer families (those who have gone before them in watching, supporting, grieving, encouraging and celebrating their loved ones) there is an immediate connection and palpable comfort level. Families are grateful to be able to get information, suggestions, and support from those who have "been there, done that". Family peers

actually help ease some of the fear and mystery about the future, and the isolation that inpatient families are experiencing. There is a give and take by both parties that benefits all involved. Unlike the moment in time when the injury occurred, the emotional adjustment and/or coping, is lifelong. So, as peer mentors continue down the path of living with a loved on with SCI, they bring more and more experiences back to share with new families.

It really is a powerful experience for peers and new families alike. Often, new families have so much going on that coming to a group or talking with a peer mentor one-on-one seems low on the priority list. What we are finding though is once they have the experience, they realize how great the need really is.

Family Peer Mentors are volunteers who are specially trained to guide and provide SCI related information and experiences to families and loved ones of newly injured individuals.

We have a small group of Family Peer mentors but would like to recruit and train more.

If you are interested in becoming a Family Peer Mentor, please contact **Ruth Black** at **(215) 587-3030** or **rblack@mageerehab.org**.

For more information, please see page 9.

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This project is supported, in part, by:

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Thomas Jefferson University



Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

Jefferson Health System®

Magee Rehabilitation

Jefferson Health System®

Visit
www.spinalcordcenter.org to learn more about the Regional Spinal Cord Center of the Delaware Valley.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

SPINAL CORD INJURED INDIVIDUALS WITH MODERATE TO SEVERE SPASTICITY NEEDED FOR CLINICAL TRIAL

The Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center of Delaware Valley (RSCICDV) at Thomas Jefferson University and Magee Rehabilitation Hospital is interested in testing new drugs which may benefit persons with spinal cord injury. Jefferson and Magee are participating in a large clinical study to evaluate an investigational medication that may improve spasticity in individuals with incomplete chronic spinal cord injury. We are looking for participants who:

- **Are between 18 – 70 years of age**
- **Have an incomplete spinal cord injury for more than 6 months at a level between C4 and T12**
- **Have moderate to severe spasticity**
- **Be willing and able to stop other antispastic/muscle relaxant drugs**

The study will be double blind and placebo-controlled, which means that

some individuals enrolled in these studies will receive a placebo (or inactive substance) during the study, and will not receive drug at any time during the study. Neither the investigators nor the study participants will know who is receiving drug or placebo until after the end of the study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, some simple questions over the phone will help to determine if you are eligible. Overall participation in the study will include 8 outpatient visits to the SCI Center at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital over a period of 6 weeks. Each of these visits will require approximately 4 hours of your time. You will be paid for travel costs and free valet parking will be provided. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and, you can end your participation, if you wish, at any time.

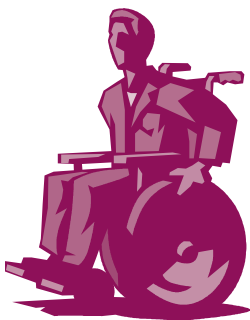
To see if you qualify, please call **Marilyn Owens, R.N. at (215) 955-6579.**

RESEARCH PROJECT FOR THE RSCICDV

Starting last Spring, the combined efforts of SCI Center staff from both Thomas Jefferson University and Magee Rehabilitation Hospital have supported a new multicenter study entitled “Investigation of Assistive Technology for Mobility used by Individuals with a Spinal Cord Injury”. Working together with SCI Centers in Pittsburgh, Georgia, Chicago, Washington DC, Ohio and Northern New Jersey, we are investigating the impact of policy changes on customizability and features of wheelchairs, and the number of working wheelchairs an individual owns. To collect this information, we are looking at the specifics of an individual’s wheelchair usage, relative to the type of wheelchair they were provided, the amount of wheelchair breakdown, the skill of using the wheelchair and quality of life measures for the individual using a

wheelchair for primary mobility. Since it has been shown that reintegration into society following a disability depends on access to appropriate and adequate assistive technology such as wheelchairs, we hope to investigate the effects of the types of presently supplied wheelchairs and how they may be contributing to a person’s functional limitations, even more so than the person’s disability itself. The information (or data) collected over the next 4 years may then be helpful in effecting policy change, relative to prescriptions and funding for wheelchair mobility equipment.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please call **Mary Patrick, RN, RSCICDV Project Coordinator, at (215) 955-6579.**



UPPER EXTREMITY STUDY

The Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Magee Rehabilitation has developed a research tool to measure improvements in arm and hand function in persons with cervical spinal cord injury (neck region). We are seeking volunteers to help us make sure that the scale is valid (measures what it is supposed to measure). **Research participants must have sustained a cervical spinal cord injury.** Subjects will be required to come to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital or Magee Rehabilitation Hospital on either 1 or 2 occasions for about 1½ hours each visit. Those who participate will be reimbursed for time and travel and provided with free parking.

The research tool is called the Capabilities of the Arm and Hand in Tetraplegia (CAHT). The validation and reliability of this scale is very important because it will be used in future clinical trials to measure improvements in upper extremity function. To date, there is no reliable measurement for clinicians to use. This is a very important study and **we need your help.**

If you are interested in participating, please contact **Mary Patrick** in the Spinal Cord Injury Research Office at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital at **(215) 955-6579** and we will be willing to answer any of your questions.

FORMER PATIENT DONATES \$100,000!

Former Magee patient, Caren Sydnor, her husband Jason, and son Wesley paid a visit to Magee on September 3rd. Along with saying hello to her former therapists and friends, Caren did something BIG!

After much planning, Caren and her family made a gift of \$100,000 to start the **Sydnor Locomotor Training Fund!** The fund—which will be restricted—will help others participate in the Locomotor Training therapy that was a crucial part of Caren's rehabilitation.

It's always wonderful when others who have faced challenges and overcome them can think of others like Caren did. And, she promises that this gift is just the beginning as she is working with our Development team to raise money for the fund from family and friends. Magee is grateful for the support of Caren, Jason and Wesley!

PAIN STUDY FOR SCI AT JEFFERSON/MAGEE

The Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center of the Delaware Valley (RSCICDV) at Thomas Jefferson University/Magee Rehabilitation is currently taking part in the SPINAL research study. This study will test to see how well an investigational drug works for your pain associated with your traumatic spinal cord injury.

We invite you to consider participation in the study if:

- You are at least 18 years old.
- You have pain associated with your traumatic spinal cord injury.
- You are dissatisfied with your current pain treatment.

- You are willing to come to our clinic for 8 visits over a 16 week period.

Participants who qualify will receive at no cost:

- Study related physician visits.
- Study procedures and lab testing.
- Study medicines.
- Additionally, you may receive compensation for your time.

RSCICDV will begin recruitment in the fall. If you are interested in learning more about this research study, please contact **Mary Patrick, RN**, RSCICDV Project Coordinator at **(215) 955-6579**.



ONGOING RESEARCH OF THE RSCICDV

Current

1. Investigation of assistive technology for mobility used by individuals with spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: NIDRR supported through SCI Model System of Care*
2. UAB Index of Motor Recovery – Validation of an outcome measure for motor recovery in incomplete spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: NIDRR supported through SCI Model System of Care*
3. Development and validation of the thoracic-lumbar control scale to measure strength and coordination of trunk muscles. *Sponsor: NIDRR supported through SCI Model System of Care*
4. Development and validation of the Capabilities of Arm and Hand in Tetraplegia (CAHT) measurement for upper extremity function. *Sponsor: NIDRR supported through SCI Model System of Care*
5. A four-week, prospective, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial to assess safety, tolerability, Pharmacokinetics and preliminary efficacy of AV 650 in patients with spasticity due to spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: Avigen*
6. A 15-Week, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Parallel-Group, Multi-Center Trial of Pregabalin for the Treatment of Chronic Central Neuropathic Pain After Spinal Cord Injury. *Sponsor: Pfizer Pharmaceuticals.*
7. A United States multi-center study to assess the validity and reliability of the Spinal Cord Independence Measure (SCIM III). *Sponsored by: Craig H. Neilsen Foundation*

Completed Clinical Trials

1. Restoration of walking after spinal cord injury – Reliability of the maximal WISCI level. *Sponsor: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).*
2. A phase II, double blind, placebo-controlled, multicentered study to access the efficacy and safety of HP184 at 100, 200, and 400 mg doses administered orally once daily for twenty-four weeks in adult subjects with chronic spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: Aventis Pharmaceuticals.*
3. Peripheral denervation following spinal cord injury (Using MRI to study nerve function following spinal cord injury). *Sponsor: American Paraplegia Society*
4. Open-label extension of double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel group study to evaluate safety, tolerability and activity of oral Famipridine-SR in subjects with chronic incomplete spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: Acorda Therapeutics.*
5. Restoration of walking after spinal cord injury - validation of the Walking Index for Spinal Cord Injury (WISCI) scale for hierarchical ranking. *Sponsor: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).*
6. Study the effects of Body Weight Supported Treadmill Training in acute incomplete spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: National Institute of Health (NIH).*
7. A multi-site, open label study to evaluate 250 mg oral Neotrofin™ BID in patients with subacute complete spinal cord injury over 12 weeks. *Sponsor: NeoTherapeutics, Inc.*
8. Double-blind, placebo-controlled, 12-week, parallel group study to evaluate safety and efficacy of oral Fampridine-SR in subjects with moderate to severe spasticity resulting from chronic, incomplete spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: Acorda Therapeutics.*
9. A phase I/IIa dose-ranging study to evaluate the safety, tolerability, and pharmacokinetics of BA-210 and the neurological status of patients following administration of a single extradural application of Cethrin® during surgery for acute and cervical spinal cord injury. *Sponsor: BioAxone Therapeutics, Inc.*

SPINAL CORD SOCIETY

The Spinal Cord Society is a large grass roots organization with thousands of members throughout North America and other countries. Its goal is cure of chronic spinal cord injury paralysis. The Spinal Cord Society puts 100% of its funding into research for the cure of spinal cord dysfunction. The Spinal Cord Society meets at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital on the 6th floor at 1 pm on the first Saturday of every month. If you would like to support this research, consider attending one of these meetings.

For more information, please contact **Chris Cellucci** at cellucci@ursinus.edu or **(610) 296-7429**, or **Dennis Ledger** at dledger@csc.com or **(856) 468-4401**.



UROLOGY CLINICAL TRIALS

A Multicenter, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled, Parallel-Group Study of the Safety and Efficacy of Repeat Treatment with Two Dose Levels of BOTOX® (Botulinum Toxin Type A) Purified Neurotoxin Complex Followed by a Treatment with BOTOX® in Patients with Urinary Incontinence Due to Neurogenic Detrusor Overactivity

PI: Patrick Shenot, MD

Sponsor: Allergan

This study is an international multi-center study to determine the efficacy and safety of a new experimental medication for the control of urinary incontinence, a symptom of an overactive bladder, in patients with either thoracic or lumbar spinal cord injury or multiple sclerosis.

A Placebo-Controlled, Randomized, Safety and Efficacy Study of BOTOX® (Botulinum Toxin Type A) Purified Neurotoxin Complex in Patients with Neurogenic Detrusor Overactivity and Neurological Respiratory Impairment

PI: Patrick Shenot, MD

Sponsor: Allergan

This study is an international multi-center study to determine the efficacy and safety of a new experimental medication for the control of urinary incontinence, a symptom of an overactive bladder, in patients with cervical spinal cord injury or multiple sclerosis.

An Open-Label Multicenter Study of Augmentation Cystoplasty Using an Autologous Neo-Bladder Construct in Subjects with Neurogenic Bladder Following Spinal Cord Injury

PI: Patrick Shenot, MD

Sponsor: Tengion

The study is being conducted in adult patients with spinal cord injury who have failing bladders that predispose them to a risk of kidney failure and incontinence even when they receive optimal medical therapy.

If you are interested in taking part in any of these studies or for more information, please contact **Christine Hubert** at (215) 955-9954 or christine.hubert@jefferson.edu.

NEW COORDINATOR FOR ADOLESCENT/YOUNG ADULT SERVICES

Magee Rehabilitation is happy to welcome Marykate Hanson, MS as Adolescent/Young Adult Coordinator for Magee Rehabilitation Hospital. Marykate comes to Magee with a wealth of experience in providing direct human services to children, adolescents and their families. The experience she brings to this new position includes working in a variety of juvenile and young adult arenas, including correctional systems, group homes, behavioral healthcare and school social services.

Marykate will be spearheading a new program specifically designed for the unique needs of the adolescent and young adult populations we serve at Magee, including those between the ages of 14 – 20. She will have responsibilities on the inpatient and outpatient sides of

rehabilitation, relationships with community resources and settings to help better meet the special needs of this patient population, especially as they attempt to return to the community, home, school and the social scene. She will be involved in building relationships with institutions/agencies referring adolescent patients, as well as developing specialized inpatient programming to meet the age related needs/desires of this patient population.

We are pleased that the Percival Roberts Trust has recognized this need, and supported this position and specialty programming with a grant to Magee Rehabilitation specifically for this unique service.



SPINAL CORD INJURY SUPPORT GROUPS

SCI FAMILY PEERS

Family Peer Mentors are family members and/or loved ones of individuals who have sustained a SCI and have successfully transitioned to living life with a disability. They are volunteers who are specially trained to guide and provide SCI related information and experiences to families and loved ones of newly injured

individuals.

Mentoring can be done in the form of participating in the family group which is held monthly at Magee or contacting a new family by telephone or face to face if possible. Given the geographic area Magee serves, we attempt to be creative and flexible with mentoring requests.

The SCI Family CARE Group meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. in the 5th floor lounge on the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital.

For more information or to become a Family Peer Mentor, please contact **Ruth Black, LCSW** at **(215) 587-3030** or **rblack@mageerehab.org**.



FAMILY PEERS ARE NEEDED!

As a family peer counselor your commitment will entail attending two evening training sessions. After training you assist families by meeting with them in person or over the phone and by becoming involved in the Family CARE Group. As our family peer counselors can tell you, this will be the most rewarding volunteer experience you have ever had. You have the expertise and experience that families so desperately need.

To find out more, please contact Ruth Black, LCSW at (215) 587-3030 or rblack@mageerehab.org.

SCI PEERS, sharing experiences

The SCI-Peer Consultant Group provides individuals who have suffered a SCI the chance to learn from those who have rehabilitated following such an injury.

Magee can match peers based on injury level, social situations, age, gender, marital status, recreational interests and

vocational experience.

To request a peer consultation, or to volunteer as a mentor, contact **Marie Protesto** or **Sonya Dibeler** at **peers@mageerehab.org** or **(215) 587-3174**.



SCI RESOURCE GROUP

This group provides education, recreation and support opportunities to individuals with spinal cord injuries. Traditionally, meetings are held at Magee on the second Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room.

However, social outings are scheduled based on availability and pricing.

We are always looking for new topics. If you have an idea for a topic or would like more information, please call **Marie Protesto** or **Sonya Dibeler** at **(215) 587-3174**, or e-mail **peers@mageerehab.org**.

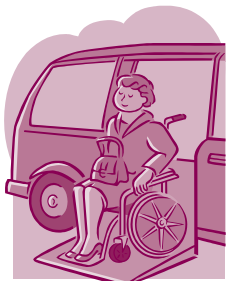
WOMEN'S DISABILITY SUPPORT GROUP

To help women with spinal cord dysfunction explore their thoughts and feelings about life with a disability, Magee provides a Women's Support group each Mon-

day afternoon. This group addresses topics such as relationships, career issues, intimacy and sexuality.

For more information

about this group, contact **Marie Protesto** or **Sonya Dibeler** at **peers@mageerehab.org** or **(215) 587-3174**.



WHEELCHAIR SPORTS

MAGEE WHEELCHAIR SPORTS TEAMS

Magee Freedom Wheelchair Tennis: Our wheelchair tennis season runs from April to October, so the 2008 season is wrapping up. For 2009, we are planning to compete in several tournaments in the Delaware Valley, as well as travel to Michigan and Louisiana.

Magee Kixx Power Soccer: Last season our power soccer team continued its growth by hosting a clinic and traveling to several scrimmages. This season, we plan to add more scrimmages and recruit more players as we continue to grow our young team.

Magee Eagles Quad Rugby: Continuing our tradition of outreach, the rugby team has scheduled the following demonstrations:

Friday, October 24th - Stockton University

Wednesday, October 29th – University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (USP)

November 8th & 9th - Tournament at Slippery Rock University

We will host the 18th annual **Beast of the East quad rugby tournament** from **November 21st through the 23rd** at Riverwinds Community Center in Thorofare, NJ. Teams from as far north as New Hampshire and as far south as Florida will make the trip for this hard-hitting ten-team tournament.

Magee Sixers Wheelchair Basketball: We will host the Sullivan Classic Wheelchair Basketball tournament on the weekend of December 13-14 at Riverwinds Community Center in Thorofare, NJ. Attendance is free.

The Magee Sixers will perform a demonstration during halftime of the Philadelphia 76ers game against Portland on Wednesday, January 14th, 2009.



As the new Wheelchair Sports Coordinator at Magee, AJ Nanayakkara hopes to grow what is already one of the strongest hospital-based wheelchair sports programs in the country. We plan to focus on two main objectives:

1. Recruit new athletes!

Physical activity is an integral part of physical and psychological well being. Everyone, regardless of ability or disability, should have access to recreation, and we plan to actively recruit new athletes to join our sports teams. If you already play a wheelchair sport and would like more information about our programs, or if you have a disability and are interested in a sport that we do not yet offer, please contact us!

2. Become more involved in our community!

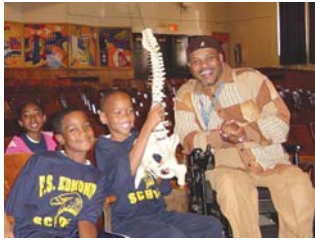
Our wheelchair athletes recognize how fortunate we are to have a rehab hospital such as Magee fund our sports program, and we plan to give back by performing more outreach events in the Philadelphia area. Some of our teams already perform demonstrations at local universities. All our teams look to both educate and entertain as we bring the excitement of wheelchair sports to our community. If your organization would like any of our teams to perform a demo, please let us know.

Magee Wheelchair Sports is always looking for volunteers who would like to learn more about wheelchair sports and help our teams at practices and tournament. If you have any questions or would like more information on any of our teams, please contact **AJ Nanayakkara** at **(215) 587-3412** or **ananayakkara@mageerehab.org**



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

THINK FIRST



To help prevent disabling head and spinal cord injuries among children, teens and young adults, Magee's Think First Program holds dynamic presentations at schools. Our program is part of the nationally coordinated Think First program. Presentations consist of injury prevention lessons and testimonials from adults with disabilities.

If you have a spinal cord injury or brain

injury and are interested in changing behaviors and saving lives, please consider joining Think First and speaking to students. Since Magee values your experience we will reimburse you for your time.

If you are interested or know of a school that would like to host one of our assemblies, please call **Joe Davis**, Think First Coordinator, at **(215) 587-3400**.

Alcoholics Anonymous

This group meets every Sunday at 6:30 p.m. in Magee's Cafeteria.

For more information about AA, please call **Joe Davis** at **(215) 587-3400**.

LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE DISABLED

The Legal Clinic for the Disabled provides free legal services to low-income people with disabilities in the five-county Philadelphia area, including current and former patients of Magee Rehabilitation

Hospital. Located in Magee's main hospital, the Legal Clinic provides free advice and representation on civil cases involving wrongful eviction, divorce, domestic violence and abuse, custody and support, identity theft, unfair

debt collection practices, healthcare coverage, powers of attorney, guardianship, wills and other issues.

For more information, contact the Legal Clinic at **215-587-3350**.

Legal Clinic for the Disabled Welcomes Linda Peyton as its Executive Director

Since 2003 Ms. Peyton has served as project director of LCD's Anti-Violence Initiative for People with Disabilities. Before joining LCD, she served 20 years as a trial and appellate attorney for the Defender Association of Philadelphia. She also teaches as an adjunct professor at Temple University and Arcadia University.

Ms. Peyton took over management of the organization on August 29, 2008.

"We are delighted that Linda will be managing our organization," said Amy Slater, President of LCD's Board of Directors. 'With her legal skills and experience, Linda has achieved "super lawyer" status. She was clearly the outstanding candidate in terms of legal acumen, not to mention her passion, commitment and sense about the Legal Clinic's mission, and her vision for the future. We look forward to working with her in the coming years.'



WEBSITE of INTEREST

<http://disstud.blogspot.com/>
Disability Studies, Temple U.

Cool stuff in the world of Disability Studies, Geography, and History. Based at Temple University in Philadelphia, with contributors from coast to coast. Check out the 'Notable Blogs' list - your portal to the disability blog world.

HIREABILITY

hireAbility is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities seek employment throughout Philadelphia and South Jersey. Headquartered at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital with offices in Blackwood, NJ, hireAbility works with a number of area businesses and receives

daily updates on open positions in the region.

hireAbility offers customized job search assistance.

The organization also partners with various community agencies that provide computer and assistive technology training as well as other skills

training. In addition, hireAbility can refer you to organizations that provide housing programs, transportation information and other services designed to help individuals return to work.

For more information, please call **(215) 587-3080**.



PATIENT RESOURCE CENTER

The Patient Resource Center (library) has moved to the 6th floor! Feel free to stop by. We have tons of interesting fiction, a number of best seller books including notable books that made Oprah Winfrey's Book Club list. There are about 600 leisure/romance/mystery novels to choose from as well as a broad selection of relevant professional periodicals. You may have noticed that we have three computers spaced just right for patient, visitor and staff access and to supplement these resources, we also have an assortment of VHS tapes and DVDs that are available to you for your use either at Magee or home.

Our book club began in October. This is an exciting time of change for our library and we would like your participation to help this book club initiative and make it great in every way possible. Make the library your place of rest, relaxation, com-

fort and enjoyment. Volunteers and Venus Bradley are on hand to assist you as best we can with research requests, scheduling the reading room, or locating meaningful information.

Also, it is noteworthy to state that the library has flavored coffee available at the low price of 60 cents for an 8 ounce cup. This is our way of making your visit more like home while you read the Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Times or the magazine/book of your choice.

Please allow us the opportunity to provide you with extraordinary customer service and an enviable user friendly environment. You may contact **Venus Bradley** at **(215) 587-3146** with any questions, concerns or suggestions.

Hours of operation

Monday & Wednesday
9:30 am - 8:00 pm

Tuesday & Thursday
11:00 am - 5:00 pm

Friday
9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Sunday
12:00 pm - 5:00 pm



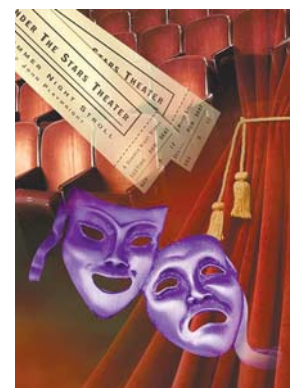
Theatre Arts Classes Join the Magee Players!

Fall Term starting Sept 26-Dec. 11, 2008

Experience the art of acting, playwriting, mime, storytelling and performing in a professional center city theatre.

Classes are open for adults with disabilities in the tri-state area. Rehearsals and performances at Magee Rehab Hospital and The Amaryllis Theatre Companies' space at 20th and Sansom, Philadelphia.

If you or someone you know would be interested in learning more, please call **Keith Currens** at **(215) 587-3071**.



ARTICLES

DANCE YOUR HEART OUT

Dancing has become popular among all types of disability groups. It is easy to learn basic dance techniques, whether you have a mobility, hearing, or vision impairment.

Dancing from your wheelchair

Dancing from a wheelchair might seem impossible to some, but whoever said you have to use your feet to be able to dance? In the professional ranks of the wheelchair dancing world, there are a plethora of techniques and rules when learning the how-to's of wheelchair dance. Professional wheelchair dance, a sport featured in the Paralympics, has several dance categories: Combi dance (a partner dance with one partner in a wheelchair and the other able-bodied); DUO dance (partner dance with both partners in wheelchairs), Group dance (a group of more than two wheelchair dancers with or without non-disabled partners), and Single dance (a wheelchair-user dances alone).

Dancing is a sport, an art-form, a way of life for some; anyone—no matter their disability—can participate in this centuries old form of expression.

Partners do traditional dances such as the Waltz, Tango, Vienna Waltz, Samba, and many others. Organized recreational mixed-ability dance troupes also perform square dancing, ballet, line-dancing, hip-hop, and jazz.

How do they do it? Well, it involves a lot of imagination and hard work.

- Spinning the wheelchair in timed circles with the beat of the music is a

common move you'll see dancers perform.

- Pushing the chair in different movements, weaving at times, is also a common move.
- A more obvious way to dance from your wheelchair is by using your upper body. There are thousands of dance moves professional and recreational wheelchair dancers can perform by using their upper body.
- Watch what other dancers are doing and try it yourself. You never know, you might just be able to pull it off.
- Music along with movements is very important in competitive wheelchair dancing. Just like in "regular" dancing the couple should be two as one. The emotion and interpretation of the music should be shown in the movement of the dancers.
- And lastly, professional wheelchair dancers can perform the same dances as "normal" dancers. Let your wheels become your legs.

And to really shine on the dance floor, make sure you lose any self doubts or feelings of self-consciousness you may have lingering in your head. A confident dancer is a beautiful dancer.

"I think of my chair when I'm dancing kind of like ice skaters think of their skates. It's an accessory for me to use, to glide and to do beautiful spins and so for me, it's a beautiful tool to interpret dance," said Alana Yvonne Smith, a wheelchair dancer.

Tiffany Carlson is a C6 quad and a freelance writer residing in Minneapolis, Minn.

This article is reprinted in part from an article by Tiffany Carlson from the Theater and Dance section of www.Disaboom.com.



Wheelchair Dance Websites

Wheelchair Dancing Overview

<http://www.exploredance.com/wheelchairdanceinvite.html>

American DanceWheels (includes video clip)

<http://www.americandancewheels.com>

Atrium Dance Studio

<http://www.atriumdance.com/DanceLessons/AdaptiveBallroom.php>

Wheelchair Dance Sport USA

<http://www.wheelchairdancesportusa.org>