

Winter Issue

December 15, 2010

Volume 1/Issue 2

## Fight the Winter Blues

Winter is upon us and it looks to be another round of cold, snowy fun. With the cold and snow come extra challenges for us all. Here are some strategies to help a Minnesotan get through!

First, if you are a driver – use extra caution out on the roads and around town. Precautionary measures have two benefits. First they can help you avoid unnecessary accidents and/or injury. Second, they can help you share the road better with others. This is especially

true during times when sidewalks have not been cleared, forcing pedestrians and those in wheelchairs to share the roadway with you! So give yourself extra time to get where you are going and use safe driving practices out there. Not being stressed out when traffic is moving slowly because you gave yourself extra travel time and not dealing with the repercussions of an accident are great ways to avoid winter blues!

Second, stay connected! The snow and cold can be reason enough to stay inside, but staying connected

to family, friends and community organizations help maintain well-being and social balance. Don't lose touch and look for fun ways to explore the community or keep

up regular commitments, whether it is a weekly lunch group, a monthly book club or finding an interesting workshop series to join.

Third, keep up with your health. vitamin D deficiency is of large concern during the winter months. This is a good time to get your vitamin D levels checked –

mine was only at a three last winter! Yikes!

Fourth, laugh! Find ways to enjoy yourself and don't pass up opportunities to laugh. Going to a movie theater can be a bit on the spendy side, but there are discount times, cheaper theaters and many economical movie rental options. You could also visit a local comedy club, attend a play at your neighborhood middle school, junior high, or high school or just hang out with the special friend who always has you chuckling about something!

*By Beth Ismil*

## PCA Star Spotlight

Michael Harrison has been a member of the direct support professional team assisting me since January 2007. He has worked nearly 7,200 hours.



We have spent slightly over 20 percent of our lives together during that time!

Over the years, he has always been there in case of emergencies. In several cases, I've called Mike and he has arrived at my door within 30 minutes. He has provided a tremendous sense of safety and security, reducing my anxiety, frustration and depression that often arises when there is instability or uncertainty regarding how I will get my needs met.

Mike also studied culinary arts and has made some incredible meals ranging from grilled steak, roasts, casseroles, chili, soups, breads, desserts... needless to say, frequently trying to diet (albeit unsuccessfully)!

Mike genuinely practices person-centered support and demonstrates the philosophy of independent living. His patience and "ask no questions, we'll just get it done" attitude truly makes living life... living \*MY\* life... so much easier.

*By Lance Hegland*

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## Give the Gift of Independence

As I celebrate new birthdays I have learned that less is the "new more" in my life.

But there are a few things that keep me living independently (some do "double duty") that I find indispensable:

1. On a cold winter's day when the heat is turned down to save money and energy, I place a large dry fluffy towel or beach towel over the shoulders or over my legs and feet for warmth.

2. If flannel sheets are not in my budget, I use a large dry terry cloth towel out of my bathroom closet either on top of my fitted bed sheet or di-

rectly on top of me like a blanket. The towel holds the body's heat in to keep me warm.

3. Thirty years ago I purchased an "Oven Pull" that continues to support me in my love for cooking healthy. It is the size of a standard kitchen utensil made of wood or metal products. The "oven pull" fits in my hand with a handy notch cut on the end that grabs a properly installed hot oven shelf and pulls it out of the oven so you can baste your turkey or remove food from



the oven. There is another notch to push the hot shelf back inside of the oven. If you are tired of burned fingers and oven mitts that don't do the job but you bake or broil, this is for you. It also makes a great affordable gift for the cook in your life. Google "Oven Pull" to choose your style.

4. My "ROCKER KNIFE" is portable for eating out at restaurants. I also prefer it to regular kitchen knives for preparing meats or cutting some fresh fruits and vegetables. Google "Rocker Knife" or ask for it at medical supply stores (often must be ordered special) along with other specially designed silverware and adaptive tools.

5. Handy squares of Dycem non-slip material go everywhere I go. They are useful for grasping grab bars and door knobs, turning on and off table lamps, and keeping things where I need them to be. Find a host of other uses at the Dycem website. [www.dycem.com](http://www.dycem.com)

What adaptive equipment can't you live without? Tell PEP all about it!

**By Patricia Anita Young**

## Review: Temple Grandin



After the success of her book, "Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism," Temple Grandin's life story came out on television

in 2010, starring Claire Danes.

The film received five Emmy nominations, with Danes winning an Emmy for her role. But what did this film mean to ME, as the mother of an autistic child? Oh, how I wish I had seen this years ago.

It gives me hope as I struggle to find glimmers of sunshine in the challenges our children face every day when they are differently-abled. The world around keeps shouting "different" from the equation, but this film stands up and shouts back "ABLED!" It is a reminder to me to keep fighting through the challenges, as I fight for the "able" to stand out, not just the different. And it reminds me that I must get up each day, remaining as strong as I can as an advocate for my child.

If you want a little inspiration in your own journey as an advocate for yourself, for a family member, or for a loved one, this movie hits home to the special challenges we face on this journey.

**By Raelene Roper**

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## Mark Your Calendars for Holiday Fun

Beginning Thursday, Dec. 9

**Holidazzle Parade:** The annual parade runs every Thursday through Sunday at Nicollet Mall beginning at 6:30 p.m. Directions and parking information can be found at [www.holidazzle.com](http://www.holidazzle.com). Through Dec. 19. Free.

Through Jan. 2

**Chocolate: The Exhibit:** Explore the plant, the products and the culture of chocolate through the lenses of science, history, and popular culture at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul. For more information call 651-259-3000. Up to \$10.

Thursday, Jan. 27

**Special Olympics Polar-Bear Plunge Kickoff:** This year's kick-off will be held at Jimmy's Food and Drink, 1132 East Country Road E., Vadnais Heights. The kick-off will include free food, raffles, music, merchan-

dise sales, photo slide shows and more. There are already more than 1,000 "plungers" registered! RSVP your name and address to [polarbearplunge@somn.org](mailto:polarbearplunge@somn.org) by January 15.



Beginning Thursday, Jan. 27

**St. Paul Winter Carnival:** This annual event started in the late 1800s to combat claims that this part of the country was uninhabitable due to its inclement weather, as well as to

celebrate its tremendous growth. Come and celebrate with the local community! The celebration includes a royal coronation, the Grand Day Parade, the Torchlight Parade, Campbell's Kids Day, Ice Sculpture Carving, Klondike Kate Cabarets, Pow Wow and a historic art exhibit. For more information call 651-223-4700 or visit [www.winter-carnival.com](http://www.winter-carnival.com). Through Feb. 6.

Beginning Thursday, Feb. 3

**Swan Lake:** The classic tale will be performed by The Voronezh State Ballet Theatre of Russia. The company of 54 distinguished Russian dancers. The play will show on Feb. 3 at 7:30 p.m. and Friday, Feb. 4 at 7:30 p.m. For more information and tickets call 612-624-2345 or visit [northrop.umn.edu/events](http://northrop.umn.edu/events). Up to \$58.

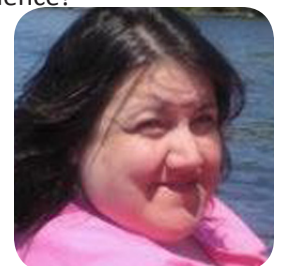
By Beth Ismil

## The PCA Experience

I love the fuzzy warm feeling you get when you put a dollar in the Salvation Army bucket during the Holidays or how good it feels when you help serve food at a homeless shelter. But there's nothing more rewarding than having a person with challenges smile back at you and say 'thank you for your help.' Even if it's just changing a light bulb that they can't reach, it just feels great to know how much they appreci-

ate your help. That's why I decided to become a PCA. Most of the work as a PCA comes naturally for me. Maybe it's because I have a son with autism and I know how valuable PCA services are. There are a few things that I am still learning, but my client is a great trainer and has taught me a lot. I try my best to be patient as I build my relationship with my client and remember that at the end of the day even those

of us with many challenges are just like anybody else. It is realizations like these that remind me that being a PCA is a great experience!



By Raelene Roper

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## It's All Gravy Baby: Recipe for Turkey or Chicken Gravy

There's nothing like some steaming gravy over your mashed potatoes on a cold winter's day!

### Ingredients and Equipment

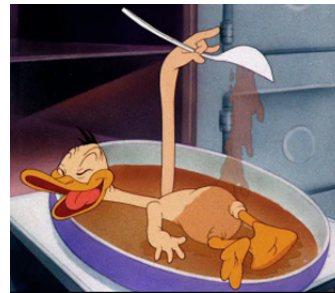
- Turkey or chicken broth - preferably the juices from a cooked turkey or chicken, but canned (or boxed) chicken or turkey broth from the grocery store will work, too. They have fat free versions!
- Two medium onions or one large onion
- 3 tablespoons of Cornstarch
- Large pot or saucepan
- One teaspoon thyme
- One teaspoon sage
- 1/2 teaspoon marjoram
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon dry rosemary, or

two sprigs fresh.

- One medium onion - diced - I do about 1/4 inch squares but anything from 1/2 inch slices or smaller is fine.

### Step 1 - Drain off the fat

Just drain all the liquids from the turkey into a large pot! Next, ladle off the fat that will float to the top! At far left is gravy with fat floating on top. At right, gravy after spooning off the fat.



### Step 2 - Bring the broth to a low boil

Start the gravy heating over medium heat on the stove. Add

sage, marjoram, paprika, dry rosemary and diced onion.

### Step 3 - Thicken the gravy

Mix cornstarch with a half cup of water and ground thyme. Mix until there are no lumps. When the gravy is boiling (a rolling boil), pour in the seasoning, stirring continuously.

After boiling for one minute, turn down the heat to very low. The gravy should have thickened. If you want it thicker, just repeat this step.

### Step 4 - You're done!

*By Beth Ismil*

## How to Maneuver Through the Slippery Streets of Winter

If pedestrians had clout, the sidewalks would be clear and dry and the cars, not the people, would have to deal with avalanches of plowed snow from the boulevards. It's hard enough for an able-bodied person to sash through the thoroughfares of the Twin Cities, with routes reduced by snow piles and narrowed by ice. But what about the rest of us?

It's time for Minnesota drivers to recognize that road-worthy wheelchairs are not in the way of traffic-- they ARE traffic. If a side-

walk isn't shoveled well, it may be necessary to drive your wheelchair



on the side of the plowed street, with the direction of traffic.

Regardless of the frustrated drivers who are confused by seeing wheelchairs on the road, I find taking the street is often the wiser choice because you don't even know if a cleared sidewalk will have a clear curb-cut at the end.

Curb-cuts are the vital little slopes from sidewalk to street that are so easily blockaded whenever the plow pushes snow to the curb.

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## Best Movies for a Winter of Love

Ever notice how the number of couples quadruple in winter? Maybe it's an attempt to save on heating bills! It's prime time to cuddle up together for relaxation and a little romance; commonly couples catch a movie after the early sunset.

These six date movies are my recommendations for your dates' different interests. Each of them addresses disability issues as well as the novel topic of love, sure to provoke discussion by the end of the date.

**Benny and Joon** (1993) ★★★★★

It's the classic romantic comedy with Johnny Depp. Cute and unforgettable, its characters transition towards independence and love while dealing with mental illness.

**Gattaca** (1997) ★★

Touching and thoughtful, in this film a dark, daring dystopian future is explored and dreams are realized. The name comes from the chemical shorthand of DNA: GATC. It deals with genetics, disability, life and death. If you're in the mood to discuss current events and the future, but don't know how to broach these subjects with your date, you could make it a dinner-and-dark-movie night.

**The Diving Bell and the Butterfly** (2007) ★★★★★

This dark, touching chick flick is based on the true story of a former

editor of Elle Magazine who became disabled mid-life. It's a stunning, memorable French film -- but it only gets three stars because it partly plays on pity for the paralyzed main character.

**50 First Dates**

(2004) ★★★★★

This quintessential date movie with Adam Sandler uses comedy to deal with brain injury issues and the conflict between falling in love and feeling like a burden. You'll be laughing until the end, which is all about the persistence of love -- with a little help from adaptive technologies for someone with a disability.

**Mozart and the Whale**

(2005) ★★★★★

This awesome romantic comedy is based on a true story about creating community and finding love among autistic adults. This is the ticket for couples seeking a heart-warming happily-ever-after -- that really happened.

**Coming Home** (1978) ★★★

Not enough people have seen this daring, sexy drama from Jane Fonda's anti-war years. It tenderly addresses love, loyalty, war-injured bodies and hearts. It's certain to start those conversations about how lives can change when passion prevails-- and yes, the guy in the wheelchair gets the girl for once!

*By Becca Reilly*

## Slippery Streets

*continued from page 4*

In the summer you have to deal with gawking pedestrians who stand right on the slope you need to drive down, as well as inconsistent curb-cuts -- some sidewalks and bike paths leave you high and dry.

In the winter, you can't always tell which sidewalks are accessible because the plow's piles are in the way! The city pays shovelers to do the grunt-work of clearing curb-cuts -- be sure to thank them whenever you see them!

It's unfortunate, however, that the city prioritizes the downtown walkways, considering them the most highly trafficked, without getting to all the curb-cuts we need.

Without a vehicle, you really could be snowed in this winter, especially if you live in a suburban or rural community.

But going out and visiting friends this holiday season and into the new year is still important and quite possible -- our communities don't hibernate and neither do we.

So, as you head out into the wind, bring a flashlight, remember to charge up your cell phone and powerchair and boldly go where few powerchairs have gone before this season. Someone's gotta make those first tracks in the fresh snow!

*By Kerry Nelson & Becca Reilly*



# PEP Talk

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## Changing Lives One Heart at a Time: The Life of the Volunteer

Volunteering is one of those simple ways to stay connected to your community, and the wonderful people in it.

Volunteering is one of those simple things that changes lives forever, one heart at a time. There are so many organizations that provide

opportunities to give back or to pay it forward, that anyone interested in volunteering can find something that fits their skill set or interests.

If you are interested in volunteering, check out [www.handsontwincities.org](http://www.handsontwincities.org). This website has information on lots of volunteer op-

portunities here in the twin cities area. You can also check out [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org) for opportunities.

Is volunteering already part of your life? Well then we want to hear about it! Write or call and share your experiences with us today!

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