

The HIRRS Circulator

December 2014, Issue Thirteen

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Special Announcement!

Jim Dickson, co-chair of the Voting Rights Taskforce of The National Council on Independent Living, will be visiting HIRRS with his guide dog on January 5th 2015. He has more than 30 years' experience with nonpartisan voter engagement issues. Mr. Dickson organized the campaign to place a statue of President Roosevelt in his wheelchair at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

In 1987, Mr. Dickson became the first blind person to sail a boat alone from Rhode Island to Bermuda. His objectives were to have a good time and to stimulate public discussion on the abilities of people with disabilities.

Mr. Dickson is a graduate of Brown University. He is married and lives in Washington, DC.

Season's Greetings, friends and family!

We are very excited to bring you another edition of the HIRRS Circulator! Since we knew the winter was coming and it was going to get cold, we have been getting ready to bring in the holiday spirit and cheer. In this issue, you will read some Halloween-time spooky stories, you will hear how HIRRS Circulator staff celebrates Thanksgiving, and you will learn about HIRRS staff's holiday traditions. As always, thank you for reading, and we will write to you again in 2015!

Happy Holidays!

The HIRRS Circulator Staff

Happy Birthday to Clients and Staff Celebrating October, November, and December birthdays!

Paul M – October 16
Sophie – October 29
Mike M – October 30
Daniel M – October 31

Desmond O – November 5
Ian C – November 12
Dave H – December 6
Marcia Y – December 21

What's new at HIRRS

Interview with Grayson

By Duncan M.

I interviewed Grayson, who just started working at HIRRS.

Have you graduated college? Where did you go to school?

I graduated from Lewis & Clark College.

What year did you graduate?

I graduated in 2013.

What was your major?

I studied psychology.

How did you find out about HIRRS?

I was looking online for jobs in the DC area and always wanted a job working with people that have brain injuries. So, this is kind of the dream job.

What will be your major goals while you are working here?

I have two forms of goals. What I hope to take from HIRRS is experience with and understanding of brain injury and recovery. What I hope to give to HIRRS is my time and attention, to help others in their recovery.

Now for my final question. How long do you believe that you will be expecting to stay with the staff at HIRRS?

I hope to be here a good, long while.



Duncan M. and Grayson, our new HIRRS Staffer!

Science Group

By Marie D.

I had such a wonderful time in Science Group. We learned so much about sleeping patterns. Grayson is a terrific presenter. She is very intelligent and is so knowledgeable! I have always liked going to this group and have learned very much.



Members of the new Science Group hard at work!



The Science Group learning about Sleep Patterns.

Spooky Halloween Stories

To get into the spooky spirit of Halloween, we wrote a bunch of very scary stories for our readers. They involve ghosts, ghouls, a haunted house, and a wolfman! We hope you enjoy them, and we hope you had a very good Halloween just like we did!

Trapped in a Miner's Cave

By Tim C.

There used to be a cave man that lived in a cave out in Colorado. His name was JoJo. He had red eyes, long nails, long fangs, and he was half man half wolf. He did not like humans. A few miles away, the Lone Ranger was riding his horse, and he saw dust and smoke. So he went to check it out. The dust and smoke was coming from the entrance of the cave, so he went inside the cave to check it out. That's when he met JoJo. They got into a fight and JoJo tried to choke him to death. Then Tanto came in a few minutes later and killed JoJo. Then he and the Lone Ranger came out of the cave, and went down to the old town.

Scary Movie

By Danny M.

It was October 31. Me and my friend went to the movies to see a scary movie called "The Demon Will Get You." I was in the movie and I wanted to get out after I first started watching it! I wanted to imagine myself turning into an invisible man and just walking out because the movie doors were locked! While watching the movie I noticed that demons, ghosts, and ghouls were coming out of the screen! My friends and I wanted even more to turn on our super powers and break out of the movie theater. I do say so myself that my friends and I went to the theater at the wrong time and place, and what we got for not going to the movies at the right time was scary.

The problem was resolved; we got out of the movie theater because the janitor let us out after the movie was finished. He unlocked the door and asked, "That was probably the scariest movie you have ever seen, wasn't it?" He laughed as we walked past him and continued to laugh walking through the exit door to the theater.



Night Out at the Haunted House

By Duncan M.

Quazar and his girlfriend Sasha decided that on Halloween they would go out to dinner, and then they would swing by the Haunted House, and see if it would be better than the last time they went to the Haunted House. Well, they got to the House, and they paid to get in, when they first turned the corner out of the ceiling came Casper, the Friendly Ghost. And he told them that this House was really a Haunted House, and not a friendly one, so they need to get out the quickest way they can.

So they started to look for the best way out. Well, they went to the first door that they could find and when they opened it out came the ugliest Batman they had ever seen, and he started shooting sharp bats at them, but they were able to get out of there alive. As soon as they entered the next room they met up with the ugliest Robin they had ever seen. And he was swinging all over the ceiling from all these drapes that were hanging all over the place. So Quazar got an idea that he would get in front of him and cut one of his ropes, so that when he grabbed it he would fall, and it worked. So they got out of that one alive. And they went on to the next room. When they got into that room sure enough they met up with another great friend but not really. Lo and behold they met up with the great Hulk. This guy, you know, is sure enough not going to play no games, and he is not going to let you get out so easy. Well, Sasha, she is scared to death and screaming, so Quazar, he got to do something. He decides that he better try to get the Hulk to be a little more of a nice guy. But that doesn't seem to work so he tried to settle him down.

Thanksgiving Traditions

For this edition of the newsletter, we wanted to let you in on our Thanksgiving traditions! Below you will find some examples of how we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. Gobble gobble!

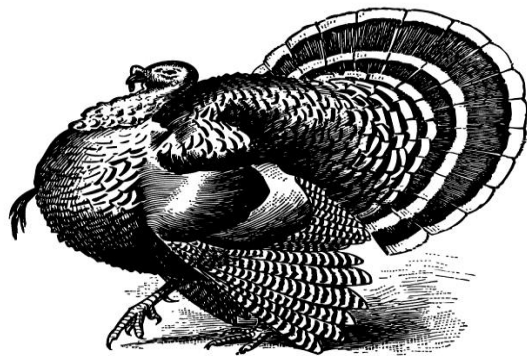
It's my favorite holiday of them all.

Contains family, friends, and yes FOOTBALL!

A lot of good things to eat,

This holiday can't be beat!

~ Trish D.



I am picked up on the eve of Thanksgiving, and my family and I do shopping. We cook together, watch the game together if there is one, give grace, and spend our holiday's enjoyment with each other.

~Desmond O.

I would like to go out to dinner with my son, Gately, and then go back to his home for dessert and spend the night. We would like to go out for dessert. We have steak for dinner. I would like mashed potatoes and gravy.

~Denise R.

I spend Thanksgiving with my family. We usually have a very big spread of everything. I have a very large family, so it's a very big deal. We usually plan to have everybody to have the plans for what they are going to do for Christmas. We usually have all of our family try to get together on Christmas.

~Duncan M.

On Thanksgiving, me and my family get together around the table and eat turkey and watch the football games. I play Madden NFL 12 with my cousin. I help in the kitchen to cook, clean, and set the table. Then, we say our grace and then eat at 7:30 pm. Sometimes, you see family members you haven't seen in a long time.

~Alusine T.

In November, on Thanksgiving Day, me and my family like to get together. The family members that like to get together are my mom, step dad, uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandparents. The food we like to eat is the Thanksgiving works, even the dessert, and we all like to give thanks to what we are grateful for, which is pretty much about life.

~Danny M.

Some Thanksgiving traditions we have is a turkey butterball (extra large), cranberry sauce dip for the homemade French fries, sweet potato with marshmallows on top, roasted almond and pecan pie, green beans (buttered), and steak with BBQ sauce. We eat around five o'clock in the afternoon. Family from my mom's side come from Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Florida. On my dad's side, they hail from New York (Brooklyn).

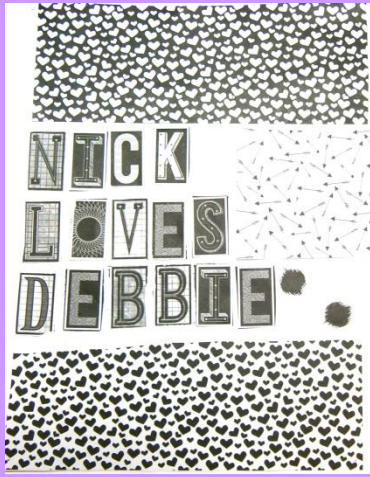
~Andrew K.

Creative Expression

The participants of Svetlana's Creative Expression Group looked through the "Blackjack" paper pad by Recollections and admired its many patterns. The only instructions were to create two-dimensional pieces of art that will amaze spectators with their imagination and uniqueness. And amaze us they do!



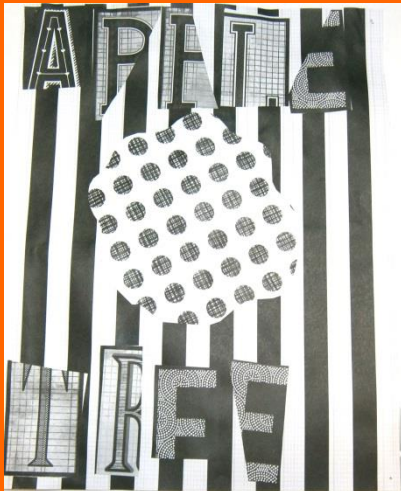
"Life in Structure" - Trish D.



"High School Love" - Nick M.



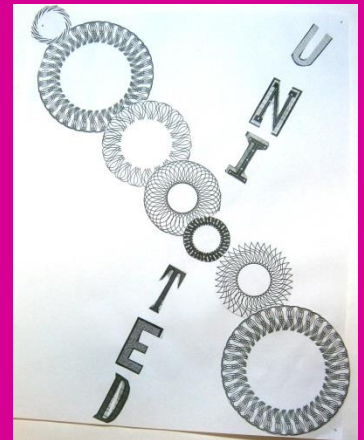
"One Day at a Time" - Jermaine L.



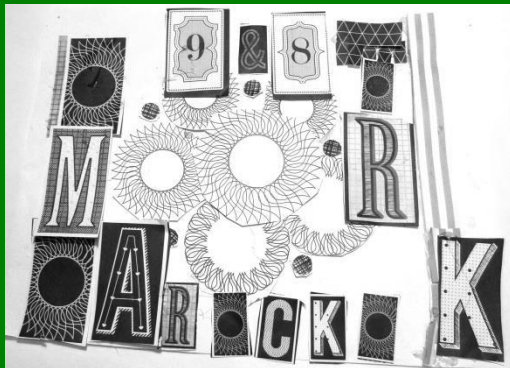
"Apples" - Ian C.



"Lost" - Duncan M.



"United We Stand" - Adwoa



"Confucius Says and Mark Agrees" - Mark S.



"Just a Girl" - Svetlana

Colorful Poetry

Group members discussed the connection between colors on one hand and ideas and emotions on the other. They pointed out that there are historical, cultural, psychological and even physiological factors that influence how people perceive colors. They also agreed that personality and life experience contribute to how we understand colors.

Please enjoy this rainbow of poems!

Black is a Positive Color!

By Trish D.

The color I'm thinking about is black.
It has negative connotations, but black
looks beautiful on me! One reason for
the negativity is because it's a negative
color.

(Listen to my self-made poem:)

"I love black, not yellow, green or blue
Some people think it's scary;
How 'bout you?
I'm thinking of black because it was just
Halloween
Tomorrow I'll go back to my favorite-
Dear ole green!

Poem of Many Colors: Double Rainbow

By Duncan M.

I saw a double rainbow yesterday and
it was the prettiest thing I just must say.
I ran straight home and told everyone and
they told me I was just having some fun.
So I told them to come with me and look
up in the sky.
And you will all see that I do not lie.
And Lo and Behold, they looked up and
they saw the most beautiful rainbow
you ever did see.
And now you can believe
that there is always something magical
somewhere that you can see.

Gold Value

By Jermaine L.

Gold is often thought about as value.
Connection with money.
Also the color of a sunny sky.
Regarded in more than a physical worth.
But also an emotional value.
Looking up at a sunny sky.
It can just be good in more ways than one.
And when the sun directly shines on it.
It makes a brighter day even brighter.
Except it makes your day, not future,
as in song, so bright
you have to wear shades this time.

Purple

By Mark S.

Purple is my favorite color,
it's a color that can describe the day
turning into night.
The taste of a cool grape popsicle
on a summer day.
The Color Purple can be a movie title,
the name of a song,
or a football team's defense.
So, as you can see, the Color Purple
can be described in taste, sight, smell,
pop music and culture.
And yes even sports!
The Color Purple is all around you.
All you have to do is look
so you don't miss anything.

The Color that Makes Me Happy

By Marie D.

I have always loved the color blue
I often buy merchandise that is blue even if I have more than a few.
Blue skies make me happy because they are a symbol of a beautiful day.
The sun is more vibrant without grey clouds.
I can tolerate cold weather in the sun.

Fall Activities and Outings Recap

The National Museum of the American Indian

By Daniel M.

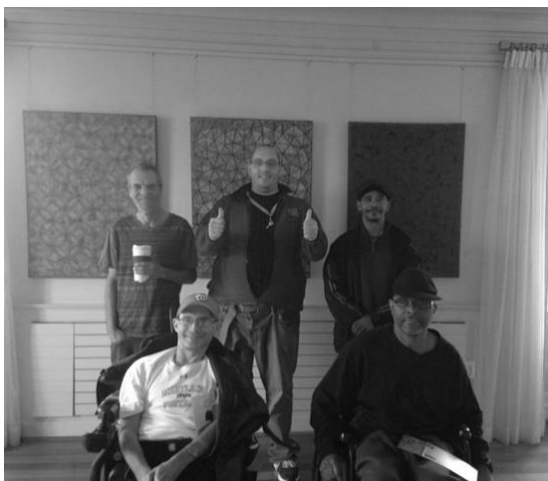
I went to the Native American Museum today. We walked through the whole museum. The exhibit I liked the most was the Our Lives: Contemporary Life and Identities exhibit. I liked the video clips and the artifacts they had. The most awesome artifact was a snow mobile. The gift shop was awesome, but very pricey.

I thought the outside of the museum was awesome, dramatically built. The bottom floor was cool, but the 4th floor was the best. The 4th floor had a lot more to look at than the other two floors we saw.

The Museum at Strathmore Mansion

By Mark S.

On October 29, 2014, clients and staff went to the Mansion at Strathmore to its museum. The history of the site: In 1964 the land where Strathmore stands today was a piece of land from Lord Baltimore to Thomas Brooke, Jr. The artist who had an exhibit at the museum was named Grace Hartigan. She was born in Newark, New Jersey on March 28, 1922. As she grew up, she became interested in the arts, but it wasn't until January 1948, after seeing a Jackson Pollock exhibition, that Grace Hartigan started to form her own abstract art. So for the next six decades until her death in 2008, she continued to do abstract paintings that HIRRS clients and staff saw. It's an activity that all families should go to.



Tim C., Daniel M., Andre B., Mark S., and Jermaine L. at Strathmore Mansion Museum

My Class at Montgomery College

By Liz K.

Have you ever taken a class at Montgomery College? If not, let me tell you about it. The name of my class was Communication and Anger. I took this class this past fall. We learned how to talk properly by using calm voices. The class also taught me how to handle my anger. We did worksheets in class and some role playing. We did not have any homework for the class, so we did all our work in class. I enjoyed taking this class because it was interesting. I also enjoyed meeting new people in the class and I learned a lot. I would definitely recommend it for other people to take. Thank you for reading my article, and have a nice day!

Recent Outings	
October 7	Joe's Record Paradise
October 10	Wheaton Mall
October 24	Movies - Ouija
October 29	The Museum at Strathmore Mansion
November 7	Mormon Temple
November 12	American Indian Museum
November 21	Movies - Dumb and Dumber To
December 5	Holiday Party at Elks Lodge
December 10 and 12	Holiday shopping - Wheaton Mall
December 17	Bowl America



Andre B., Daniel M., and Tim C. at the National Museum of the American Indian

HIRRS Staff Holiday Traditions

Interview with Rashida

By Tim C.

I interviewed Rashida. I learned about her holiday traditions with her family.

What holidays do you celebrate?

I'm an American citizen, I celebrate them all! Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day.

Do you celebrate the religious aspects of holidays?

Yes, that's the only reason I celebrate them!

Do you carve pumpkins on Halloween?

No.

What did you do as a child during the holidays?

I went to visit my family in Brooklyn, NY.

What are your specific holiday traditions?

I make sure I celebrate all my holidays with my children.

Do you exchange presents on holidays?

Yes, I do.

Do you make any special meals or exceptions on holidays when it comes to food?

For Christmas, I follow a Caribbean tradition and make a special meat dish called Pepper Pot.

Do you bake cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve?

Yes, we do bake cookies for Santa, but I forgot to eat them last year!

Interview with Shakita

By Andre B.

I interviewed Shakita, who is a new staffer at HIRRS, about her holiday traditions.

What holidays do you celebrate?

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter.

Do you celebrate the religious parts of holidays?

Yes, mainly on Christmas because it signifies the day Christ was born.

Do you carve pumpkins on Halloween?

Yes, with my children.

What did you do as a child during holidays?

Visit friends and family.

How do you celebrate Halloween?

Well, I do like to dress up, so I normally go to Halloween parties.

What are your holiday traditions?

Well, on Christmas Day, my family and I normally get together and have a big feast and exchange gifts.

Do you prepare for holidays like with an advent calendar?

Yes.

Do you exchange presents on holidays?

Yes.

Do you make any special meals or exceptions on the holidays when it comes to food?

Every Thanksgiving my family makes a traditional 3-layer cake made with pecans, chocolate, vanilla pudding, and whipped cream.

Do you bake cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve?

Yes, it's always been a tradition.

Interview with Sophie

By Ian C.

What do you eat at Thanksgiving?

Whatever is on the table, because I want to give thanks to whatever I have been blessed with.

What is your favorite Thanksgiving food?

Stuffing. Hands down.

Do you watch the Thanksgiving Day parade?

No, I don't like parades.

What are you thankful for this year?

My job at HIRRS and grad school.

When does Christmas start for you?

December 1st.

What is your favorite Christmas song?

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.

What is your favorite part of Thanksgiving?

Being with family.



Tim C. and Rashida

Happy 6-Year Anniversary to Brain Blast!



Participants of Brain Blast came together to celebrate 6 incredible years of support and friendship with cake and soda!

"Brain Blast" refers to one hour meetings which have occurred between 9:30 and 10:30 each Thursday morning without fail -- with the exception of Holidays or weather closures -- for the last six years. The group started as an inquiry or exploration prompted by Maggie Hunter to see if there was a way for clients to "mentor" one another. 9:30 - 10:30 was chosen as a time when most Day Program clients were starting their days. The first meeting involved simply asking what was working and not working, and what would the group want more or less of, or something different. The group knew me only as Eddie's step-dad and as a "volunteer." That first meeting generated a long list and the group said they wanted to meet the next Thursday to review the list and next steps. Over the years, individuals have self-generated the skills of: listening to and supporting one another, self-advocating and problem solving, and they discovered the joys of contributing to one another and the thrill they have in knowing they make a difference.

Hallmarks of Brain Blast are:

1. It is completely voluntary. No one ever has to attend. Participants can show up and leave at will. They can talk their heads off or never say a word -- up to them; no one is ever put on the spot to speak.

2. What happens in Brain Blast stays in Brain Blast -- except/unless the group wants something taken to staff.

3. I am a "volunteer". I choose to be there week after week. I am a "neutral facilitator" and work for the group. It is their meeting to discuss what they choose -- my job is to get out of the way and let the Group's conversation flourish.

--Chris K.

Last Thursday it was the 6th anniversary of Brain Blast. Chris, the guy in charge, and his side kick Ellen (who's Trish's mom) who sometimes moderates for him, come in every Thursday without fail, and let the clients speak their minds on any topic they want. You might ask yourself where did the name Brain Blast come from? It came about from Desmond who was there from the beginning. The party itself was fun, with clients and staff enjoying the festivities with cake and soda. Fun was had by all, so here's to another 6 years, for the best is yet to come for Brain Blast and others.

--Mark S.

If you've ever been at Brain Blast, then you know what to expect...the unexpected! Everyone at Brain Blast is trying in whatever form it might encompass to reach rehabilitation, thus are able to share what works, and what doesn't. We're a team! We support and encourage one another with advice that we've learned through personal experience. We trust one another so that our discussion stays private.

--Trish D.

Brain Blast is one of my favorite groups because we speak what's on our minds, what we've done, where we've gone. There are so many things I can say about it but I will make it short and sweet. For me personally, Brain Blast is just a magnificent group. It helps me more than you can imagine. Thank you for reading my story, and I hope you have a wonderful and a joyous holiday.

--Jason P.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Fill in the table below, and then write your answers in the corresponding numbers in the story New Year's Resolution to create a funny story to ring in the New Year.

New Year's Resolution

This year is going to be a _____ (1) year because I'm making a New Year's resolution. Last year, I resolved to stop _____ (2) _____ (3) and I didn't succeed, so this year I will try again. Last year, I tried to remind myself of the advice: _____ (4), but that advice is just not good enough, so this year I will try something different. I will start the New Year by _____ (5) _____ (6). Some popular New Year's resolutions are to _____ (7) _____ (8), _____ (9) more, and _____ (10) less. Wish me luck, and I hope that you are able to keep your New Year's resolutions!

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1) _____
Adjective | 6) _____
Noun |
| 2) _____
Verb ending in -ING | 7) _____
Verb |
| 3) _____
Plural Noun | 8) _____
Noun |
| 4) _____
Common Expression/Saying | 9) _____
Verb |
| 5) _____
Verb ending in -ING | 10) _____
Verb |

Pictures from the HIRRS Holiday Party!

On Friday, December 5, HIRRS clients and staff came together to celebrate the holidays at the Elks Lodge! There was delicious food, wonderful decorations, good conversation, and some pretty groovy music and dancing!



Jason P. with his electric guitar at the holiday party.



Liz K. and Santa (Chris K.) at the holiday party.



The dance floor at the holiday party!