

## Board member encourages disabled veterans to become better advocates - for themselves

Bill Farr is a newly elected CDR Board member who wants veterans with disabilities to know that they can become advocates for themselves, and that Center for Disability Rights is their single point of access to services and resources that they need regardless of the type of disability they have.

The West Haven resident is a client/patient at the VA Center in town. In a recent interview with 'Forward Together...', he spoke about the limitations of the VA, and how CDR can help Veterans to become better advocates.

Farr explained that when the VA first opened in 1952, it was strictly administered by veterans for veterans. But over time it became less of a place of shared experience, and more of a bureaucracy. As a way of illustrating what he means, Farr shares that although staff at the VA do ask veterans what their needs are, and what their goals are, they box veterans in with an approach that tells them what to expect, how things will be done, and what they can get and what they can't get.



Farr said that he asks Vets what their impressions are, and they say that they feel as if they are under the government's 'thumb'.

A friend of Farr's who is a VA client runs a NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) and needs a ramp put on his house. But the VA will not build it because it is not doing this any longer. This is one example why, Farr says, he is telling the Vets at the VA to get themselves down to Center for Disability Rights. At CDR they can get help finding the resources they need to accomplish their goals.

The pertinent questions for Vets are 1) "how do I get this done?" and "what resources do I need?". "We veterans have to learn to fight for ourselves" says Farr. "In the military we are trained to think the "military" way 24/7; and we are almost brainwashed to think that this is the way it will always be in our lives".

Although the VA offers the 'Community Reintegration Program' (CRP), Farr found that reentering the community was still hard. "I knew there was something wrong with me, and didn't know what. I was having nightmares about people that were sent to places and dying, but I didn't realize the toll it was taking on me".

"My 'medication' was alcohol" explained Farr. Prior to being discharged from the military, a physician said I had 'something'; but he didn't say what". Nobody did in those days. The doctor prescribed Farr medications for depression and hyper tension, but once those ran out, that was it. there was no follow up care.

"When I arrived in West Haven in 1991", continued Farr, "my life was a wreck. I didn't know where to turn". I didn't know anything, and no one ever helped me to understand anything about what to expect and what I was going through". Finally, a Dr diagnosed me with PTSD, and he recommended a long term treatment program. "I had to start my life all over again", explained Farr.

"I never stepped out of the circle provided by the VA because I thought the VA was my only means of rescue". Today we have men and woman returning from war with missing limbs and other issues who have no where else to go outside of the VA for job training and referral, social integration, and other things".

*(Story Continues on Page 4)*

## Ask the ADA Person

**Q: Dear ADA Person:**

I have severe allergies and asthma. A co-worker of mine who has a cubicle in the same area that I do wears a lot of perfume. I dread coming to work because I am always getting sick from the scent. I talked to her about it, but she says it is her right to do what she wants.

I talked to my boss about it; but he says there is no company rule against wearing perfume, and there is nothing he can do about it. He did say that he understood if I needed to take more frequent breaks or if I need more sick time.

I don't want to be out sick - I want to do my job. Don't I have rights under the ADA? *Sneezy and Grumpy*

**A: Dear Sneezy and Grumpy:**

If you have chronic allergies and asthma or a condition known as Multiple Chemical Sensitivity or MCS, and that chronic illness affects one or more major life activities such as breathing or working; then you are a person with a disability as defined by the ADA.

Title I of the ADA covers Employment matters. Your work place may have ADA obligations if there are 15 or more employees in your company. In Connecticut, you may still have State protection if your company has less than 15 if it has 3 or more employees.

If your company is a covered entity, then you should ask your boss (in writing) for reasonable accommodations so you can do your job functions. Although flex time and additional sick days may be forms of reasonable accommodation, you should ask to be moved to another area of the office or have a closed environment in which to do your work where the air quality can be controlled.

Your company can also adopt policies banning fragrances, smoke, and other air quality irritants from the office.



## CDR Membership Renewal 2014-15

As a membership driven organization, we rely on the continuing support of our members. Members are the driving force that ensures the continuation of programs and advocacy that empower people with disabilities.

The Center for Disability Rights thanks its members for being part of us. In that spirit, it is again time to renew your Membership in our organization. The 2014-15 Membership Enrollment Forms will be mailed out soon

In addition to voting privileges, there are even more advantages to being a member:

- Enjoying quality presentations and programs at quarterly membership meetings.
- Receiving our bi-monthly newsletter, CDR *Forward Together* newsletter.

Please review our standard memberships options and consider the greater value you can get for upgrading to premium. Our Membership period is based on our fiscal year, which runs from October 1 to September 30.

After you receive the forms, so that CDR can maintain an orderly member renewal process, return the enrollment form and dues ASAP to keep your membership active.

What makes CDR different than Centers for Independent Living in Connecticut and elsewhere is that our Membership is the driving force behind making changes to how we, the disabled community, is perceived in society. Many voices speaking together can truly effect change.

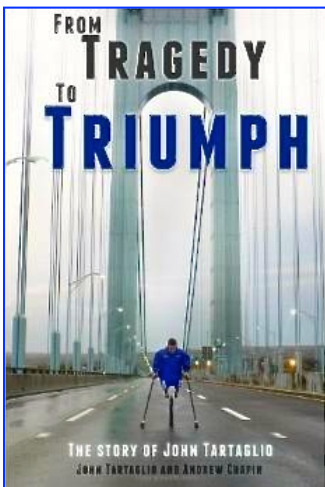
## Author John Tartaglio featured at next membership meeting

John Tartaglio will be featured at the next CDR General Membership Meeting on October 30. The meeting will be held at the Savin rock Conference Center on Rock Street in West Haven, from 6-9 P.M.

CDR is honored to host Mr. Tartaglio as his story is an inspiring one: despite losing both legs and one bicep due to a rare bacterial infection, he advises us that we need to set goals to be able to overcome adversity.

In a speech given at the University of Connecticut in 2013, Tartaglio explains how his disability has led to his successes: "I believe that when we set our goals, we need to pursue what we value - what means the most to us"

As chronicled in his autobiography *Live Life without Limitations*, his life was uneventful, as he notes, "your average normal teen." However in the Summer of 2004, just before his Senior year of High School, he woke up one day with an unbearable pain in his legs. He had been diagnosed with Mono and he thought nothing more of it.



He jumps ahead to the day of August 22, 2004 and when he woke up something was different. "I and my family could not have been prepared for what happened that day"Valley\_Blog\_Header-1

Tartaglio had contracted a bacterial infection so rare that he says that only 35 persons in medical history that had been diagnosed with. "In one day I became disabled . I woke up devastated and angry and upset"

Doctor said that with the level of severity, you would never be able to walk again "This is something I thought I had more control over."

Yet, he set a goal: to walk and receive my diploma and graduate on time with my classmates. He says "with the support of family, friends and school officials, each aspect of the goal was aligned so that goal would be realized"

Not only did he graduate from High School on time, he attended Fairfield University and participated in endurance events such as 5k and 10K races. Ultimately, he set one goal "I never thought I would be able to achieve - to be able to run a marathon. I had family and friends to offer support" in order to meet that goal.

As noted earlier, Tartaglio had a seemingly impossible goal that meant so much to him: "I had a goal that I valued. To me, running the New York City Marathon meant that I had overcome my disability...so to not attain this goal would be so much harder than the work it took" to be able to meet it.

At a 2010 speech at the Walter Camp 'Breakfast Group in New Haven, Tartaglio encouraged his listeners to support 'your teammates, your family and friends and to continually challenge yourselves on a daily basis...because there will be days when it is tough, From my experience, I have learned that how far you fall does not determine who you are, it's how hard you work to pick yourself up"

There is so much more to his story. Please plan to attend this event to learn more about this dynamic motivational speaker and hear more of his inspiring message that pertains to all.

***Members in good standing who stay for the entire event will receive a copy of Tartaglio's book Live Life without Limitations, He will have books for sale for non-members, the general public and members who would like to purchase additional copies.***

## Board Member encourages disabled veterans to become advocates

*(Continued from Page1)*

Where CDR differs significantly from the government run VA with its top-down approach, is that it helps people to develop their own self awareness and self-advocacy skills. Veterans can also receive peer counseling, information & referral, skills training, technical assistance, and advocacy to build self-reliance and control over their own lives.

“Last week I was at the VA talking to staff there and I told them that I would really like to become a peer specialist there and be able to do one-on-one or group work to assist VA clients”. “I want to be able to help others to learn what their VA entitlements are; what their rights are as human beings, and get them connected to CDR”.

***“I have been telling consumers at the VA like you wouldn’t believe...to get down here to CDR.”***  
***Bill Farr***

“You know the VA is like being in school: sit down, be quiet, and follow the rules”. But their come a time when Veterans grow out of that and get to the point where they develop their own sense of what they want and need for their lives”. CDR, of course, like all Centers for Independent Living, promotes the personal choice of people to live their own lives their own way.

Farr’s future includes getting more education. In his first semester at UNH, Farr actually made the Dean’s list but had to discontinue his education when the Government changed the rules. “I wanted to be a lawyer” says Farr, and I was already taking criminal justice and pre-law courses”.

Although Farr was unable to finish his education, he is still fighting to get the funding back to enable him to finish his education. “I want to finish my education”, explains Farr with a knowing smile,” I am not too old nor is my mind that far gone”. “ I am not going to stop”.

Now Farr aspires to obtaining a four year paralegal degree. “I need the degree to advocate for people or to guide them to advocate for themselves to get what they need”

Bill Farr believes that being a part of CDR makes him an even better advocate. States Farr, “People should know that just because they have a disability, it doesn’t mean that they have to restrict what they want to do - they are still capable. There should be someone encouraging people to think ‘Let me try that’”.

### CDR Calendar of Events

Sat Sep 20	9th Annual CDR Wheel-A-Thon	9:00 AM–12:00 PM	Savin Rock Conference Center, W.Haven
Wed Oct 1	CDR Membership Committee Meeting	4:30 PM	CDR, 764B Campbell Ave, W.Haven
Wed Oct 1	SILC Annual Meeting	TBD	NEAT Marketplace, Hartford
Wed Oct 22	ADACC State Conference	8:15 AM-4:30 PM	Newington Senior Center, 120 Cedar St.

Please visit the CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance Calendar. hosted by SILC. for statewide disabled events. See the calendar at: <http://www.calendarwiz.com/ctdisabilityeventcalendar>



The Center for Disability Rights is a consumer-controlled, community based organization - a single point of access to resources for all regardless of disability.

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