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A letter to a first year parent

Building independence and encouraging agency—an email from Jan Bechtel, Director of Integrated Studies at Millersville University
“Dear Parent

Thank you so much for your email. I appreciate the effort to be prepared. One of our staff will be in touch and set up a one on one with Student this week to make sure she is all set and knows what to do next week. We are also finalizing coaches' arrangements, so they should be in touch once those assignments are sent out.

Here is where the change begins, and you can transition and allow us to step in. We will send all emails now to Student, and it will all be about building her independence. It takes time, and it is a huge adjustment because she is used to having you there to assist.

Coaches will begin supporting Student in classes and out of classes, and she will meet one on one for check-ins each week and also hold meetings with her coaches. I know this is hard, especially because she is learning remotely, but it is so essential to start directing her to us.

Just ask yourself if Student was on campus already would you be emailing me to meet? I gave parents some advice last semester when we had to transition to remote learning. I said each time you go to take the lead, ask yourself if Student was on campus would I be doing this? If the answer is no, then encourage Student to do it and reach out to us.

It will be a huge adjustment, especially because she is physically home, but I know she can do it. So, some practical things you might be doing to help her prepare is to pick the place where she will engage in classes, complete homework, do research, and Zoom. Organize a comfortable and dedicated study space. "Millersville It" so she is excited about it. I hope this all makes sense, and you know that I mean this with the most heartfelt respect and understanding. From here, I should be receiving emails from Student with questions, and that will be a great place to start.

This doesn't mean you cannot reach out. But school questions about being ready and what to do should come from Student. We will have bumps in the road, but I know she can do it once she knows it is up to her to take the steps.

Thank you for reaching out.”



Honoring the life and work of one of the disability community icons—**Thomas Gilhool (1938-2020)** who was a main figure in the fight to open schools to individuals with disability. Gilhool' work as a lead litigator in *PARC v. Pennsylvania*

ended the practice of denying children with disability their right to a public school education and was the catalyst that led to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (since renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or the IDEA).

You can watch an [Interview with Thomas Gilhool](#) on Institute on Disabilities at Temple University's Visionary Voices web site, see him [speaking at the Educational Disability Law Symposium](#), or read [The Philadelphia Inquirer's article](#).

WHAT IS HAPPENING/RESOURCES

- [Mark your calendars— Millersville University' Disability Film Festival will roll out virtually on September 10 and October 28, 2020.](#)
- [The Keystone Institute's Online Course An Introduction to Social Role Valorization will be held on September 22-October 1, 2020.](#)
- [TASH will hold their fourth annual Outstanding Leadership in Disability Law Virtual Symposium and Award Celebration, on Wednesday, October 7, 2020.](#)
- [The AUCD2020 conference Achieving Equity: Leading the Way in the Next Decade will be held virtually on December 7-9, 2020.](#)
- [The filmmaker, public speaker, and disability rights advocate Dan Habib is now offering a wide selection of virtual presentations for 2020-2021.](#)
- Watch at your leisure the Opening Doors to College Film at <http://openingdoorstocollege.com/> and share your story on the [Community Stories](#) page.

DID YOU KNOW?

PIHEC in collaboration with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) developed an infographic on [“How to apply to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation \(OVR\) for participation in Inclusive Postsecondary Education”](#). You can download the infographic on our website under Resource tab. <https://pihec.com/resources/>

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