

Spring 2016

## In This Issue:

- 1....Caroline's Cart for Easier Shopping
- 1....Adaptive Tools for Spring Cleaning
- 2....May is Mental Health Awareness Month
- 2....Accommodations for Mental Health Conditions



*Caroline's Cart allows families with special needs to shop with greater ease.*



*PerfectClean Easy Grip mop handle.*

## Shopping Made Easier with Caroline's Cart

Many parents don't give much thought when stopping into the grocery store with their children. For caregivers of individuals who use wheelchairs or have other special needs, however, a regular trip to the store can pose some daunting logistical challenges.

After her daughter, who uses a wheelchair, outgrew the child seat in traditional shopping carts, one mother decided to tackle the problem she and other caregivers have of trying to maneuver both a shopping cart and a wheelchair through a store. Drew Ann Long teamed up with a company called Technibilt to create a shopping cart that would meet the needs of both children and adults with disabilities, and their caregivers, and allow them to participate in "mainstream society through the common activity of grocery shopping." Caroline's Cart is named after Long's daughter and features a passenger seat that is safer, more comfortable, and more accessible for families.

Retailers across the nation have begun providing Caroline's Carts. Target, for example, has committed to providing at least one cart in most of their U.S. stores by mid-March. In the Pittsburgh area, several Giant Eagle stores also have them available. Long hopes that eventually all retailers will offer "an equal opportunity shopping experience for parents & caregivers of special needs children by furnishing them the option of a Caroline's Cart. All families deserve to have this option, so they can enjoy the freedom of shopping with their special needs child." Visit <http://www.carolinescart.com/> for more info.

## Adaptive Products for Spring Cleaning

As the weather turns nicer, many of us turn our energy toward tidying up around the house. For people with limited mobility, cleaning can be a difficult chore. Fortunately many products are widely available, affordable, and designed to help make the job a little easier.

Cleaning tools with extendable handles and adjustable features can help people who have difficulty reaching, stooping or bending. The long-reaching handle and swiveling head in the Swiffer Duster Extender, for example, helps users reach high and low places at any angle. The PerfectClean Easy Grip mop handle has an ergonomic, curved shape that is easier to grasp. It is adjustable to help ensure a perfect fit, and has two nonslip foam grips.



Battery-operated Scumbuster Xtreme scrubbing tool.

Individuals with arthritis, pain or weakness in the arms or hands can have a tough time scrubbing showers and bathtubs. Battery-operated tools can do much of the work. For instance, the Scumbuster Xtreme power scrubber has an extendable handle and is designed to clean showers, tubs, and other bathroom surfaces. Similarly, the Scrubbing Bubbles Power Toilet Bowl Scrubber cleans toilets with greater ease.

Robotic vacuums and mops are a hands-free solution for cleaning floors. With many brands and models on the market to choose from, robotic cleaners move on their own around and under furniture without the need for a person to be in the room. While pricier than traditional vacuums and mops, robotic cleaners can be a wise investment for individuals who cannot easily use the traditional tools. Products with the right design can make cleaning easier this spring and year-round!

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## May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

At the end of each spring, organizations and individuals across the country observe Mental Health Awareness Month. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, over 43 billion American adults lived with some type of mental illness in 2014 - that's just over 18% of all adults in the U.S.! This May, join the effort to raise awareness, erase stigma, and advocate for equal care for those living with mental health disorders. Visit <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may> or <https://www.nami.org/mhm-hb> for more information and resources.

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## Accommodations for Mental Health Conditions

Mental illness can be an "invisible disability" because it is not always obvious to casual observers. We likely live and work alongside individuals with mental health conditions every day without realizing it. Yet sometimes mental health disorders can negatively impact one's work. While mental illness affects each person in unique ways, some common limitations and workplace accommodations might include:

**Difficulty Managing Stress** - Provide modified schedule; assign a mentor to help manage stress; encourage use of employee assistance programs; identify triggers and work to eliminate them, within reason.

**Difficulty Concentrating or Focusing** - Reduce distractions by providing private workspace, white noise machine, flexible break schedule, or telecommuting options.

**Difficulty Managing Time** - Provide to-do lists, calendars, mobile devices or watches with programmable alarms and reminders; use color-coding to organize and prioritize tasks.

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### Goodwill SWPA's Assistive Technology Program

118 52<sup>nd</sup> Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Adrienne Tolentino

Accessibility & Assistive Technology Coordinator

412-632-1877 | [adrienne.tolentino@goodwillswpa.org](mailto:adrienne.tolentino@goodwillswpa.org)



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