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## VOR Weekly E-Mail Update

*News and views for VOR advocates*

### **Action Center**

1. Reminder: Members of Congress are coming home today. Schedule a District office meeting with your U.S. Representative today!

### **Holiday Cheer**

2. 1224: The Spirit of Christmas

### **Reaching the Media**

3. Southbury group questions review of center's costs

### **Federal Budget Update**

4. Wrapping up 2011, New Budget Threats for New Year

### **VOR and You**

[1. Reminder: Members of Congress are coming home today. Schedule a District office meeting with your U.S. Representative today!](#)

### **Holiday Cheer**

2. 1224: The Spirit of Christmas

By Fred C. Lokuta, Director of White Haven ICF/MR

**The Dispatch (Pennsylvania) \* December 4, 2011**

The musical group Twelve Twenty Four performed at the Hazleton Area High School auditorium on November 19. The pure talent that each band member shared with the audience was unmatched. The evening was filled with overtones of the true meaning of the season and made everyone reflect on the spirituality that Christmas brings.

In the purest sense of the word "giving," Twelve Twenty Four gave this performance as a gift to 152 residents of White Haven Center, none of whom had ever witnessed anything like this before. On that evening, the center's residents, families, staff and friends came together to experience once-in-a-lifetime moments that words could never adequately describe.

From Twelve Twenty Four's beautiful blend of rock infused Christmas music to their story telling messages of hope, it all came together. The audience was mesmerized with the merging of guitars, drums, bass, string instruments, a hint of brass and the most beautiful vocals ever heard. The band's "angel" offered all of us a reminder of the innocence of our youth that the season brings.

Throughout the performance, the audience clapped along with the music, listened to the stories and experienced the true meaning of Christmas. The spirit of giving surrounded us. For the 152 residents of White Haven Center, no better gift could ever have been imagined.

Words can never describe the depth of gratitude that our White Haven Center family has for the gift of Twelve Twenty Four. When thanked for their generosity, band members Richie Kossuth and Lenny Kucinski replied, "It was you who gave us a gift."

Please know that the spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Northeast Pennsylvania. For the members of Twelve Twenty Four, their performance is a true reflection of their outward generosity and compassion. [Read full editorial here.](#)

### **Reaching the Media**

#### **3. Southbury group questions review of center's costs**

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##### **Hartford Courant \* December 12, 2011**

Family members and guardians of some profoundly disabled residents at the Southbury Training School are questioning a preliminary legislative analysis that shows it costs nearly twice as much to care for the clients at the sprawling state-run facility compared to privately run programs in the community.

The Southbury Training School Home and School Association claims the legislative analysis by the General Assembly's Program Review and Investigations Committee did not accurately compare services at Southbury with those provided by the private sector. The association made the claim in a letter to state lawmakers, provided Monday to The Associated Press.

The group said a "comparative analysis" needs to be done to determine whether residents of Southbury can receive equal or better care in private settings. The association claims cost documents provided by DDS show Southbury provides more services, such as speech and rehab therapy.

The final report is to be presented Dec. 20 to the legislative panel. A bipartisan-led committee is studying residential and day services for the nearly 15,500 Department of Developmental Services clients, including a comparison of costs of state services and those available from state agencies.

The Southbury group said many guardians remained concerned that the services offered at Southbury will not be available in the private settings.

"Nearly 80 percent of STS residents have severe and profound levels of intellectual disability, and many of them have complex medical needs as well," said Sally Bondy, president of the Southbury association. "They will continue to need the high level of services that STS provides even if they are transferred to the community system."

### **Federal Budget Update**

#### **4. Wrapping up 2011, New Budget Threats for New Year**

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##### **The Arc, eNewsletter, December 15, 2011**

Despite the failure of the Congressional Super Committee to reach agreement on a plan to cut the deficit, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security are not out of the woods yet. The Committee's failure means that deeper, across the board spending cuts take effect starting in January 2013 that exclude these entitlement programs. But because many Members of Congress are balking at including defense programs in this round of cuts, they could pass legislation to change the formula, putting Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security back on the table

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