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THE DIGNITY OF WORK

Phoenix pet-sitter finds purpose, confidence through Ariz. program that lets people with mental illness earn money while receiving government benefits

By Karina Bland The Republic | azcentral.com

Jill Hogan snapped Bentley into his chest harness and leash and rubbed the old English springer spaniel's head. She walked him slowly down his owner's sloping driveway, a little way down the street and then back up the driveway, talking the whole way.

"All right, all right. There you go, buddy!"

Bentley is 12 years old, a bit arthritic, blind and hard of hearing. "Just a little bit farther — you can do it!"

Up and down the driveway, up and down the street.

It is a challenge that Bentley's pet-sitter understands. Living with a mental illness is like that, too. Up and down, up and down.

For Hogan, having a mental illness has meant a lifetime of falling into depression and climbing out, learning to recognize what's real and what's a hallucination, checking into the hospital and getting out, and experiencing both hopelessness and hope.

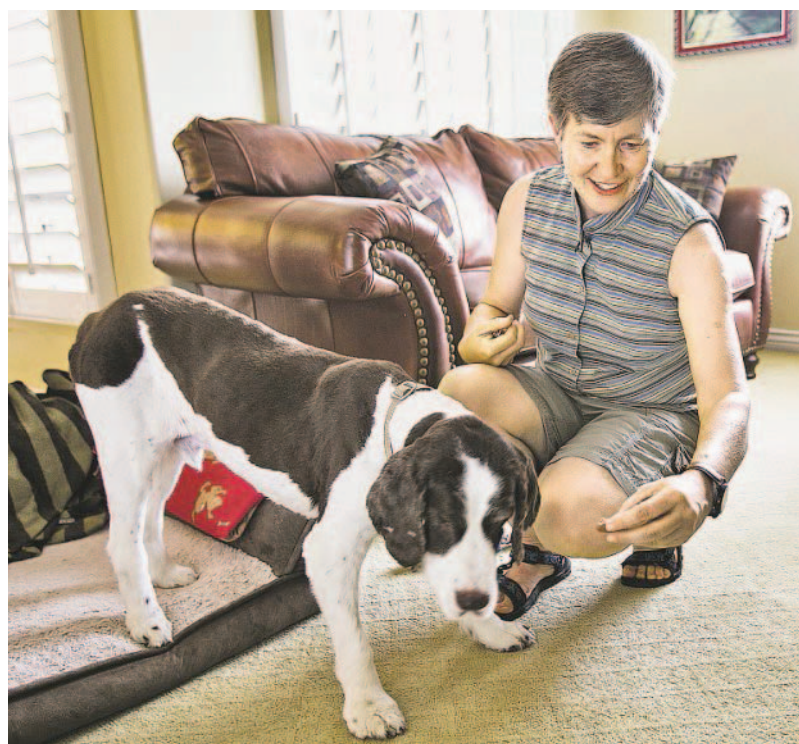
So as Labor Day approaches, a time when people recognize the contributions of workers, Hogan is grateful for a government program that allows people like her who receive federal disability benefits to work part time and still keep those benefits.

Because the chance to work, to run her own business and to own a car allows her a level of independence that makes even her marvel.

People living with serious mental illness often feel dependent — on family, government support, publicly funded services, even public transportation, experts say. And that can fuel feelings of being a burden, having nothing to offer, or even having no reason to live.

See **WORK**, Page E3

Watch video with Jill Hogan describing how the Freedom to Work program has changed her life at azcnarratives.com.



Top: Jill Hogan walks Bentley at a client's home in Scottsdale in June. Above: Hogan became a pet-sitter after hearing about the Freedom to Work program. She met Bentley and his owner almost four years ago. "Like anyone else, people living with mental illness need to have a sense of purpose in our lives," she says. PHOTOS BY TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

Be there — but just don't be seen

It started innocently enough. I received an e-mail from the volunteer coordinator at my son's school asking for parents to help with Picture Day.

I love Picture Day. Kids show up at school with fresh haircuts and new outfits, shirts tucked in, hair neat, faces scrubbed, smiles at the ready.

We'd be herding students into line (in alphabetical order), checking order forms, straightening collars and handing out plastic combs. I could handle that.

I checked my Day-Timer and saw that it was clear that morning. I signed up.

And with that, just a week into the school year, I inadvertently set myself on a course to sabotage my



karina bland

MY SO-CALLED MIDLIFE

new freshman's life.

"Why?" Sawyer asked in the car on the way home from school. His eyes were wide. "Why would you do that?"

"I'm helping out," I said.

"Are you getting financially reimbursed, or are you just doing this out of the hatred of me that lies deep within your heart?" he continued.

(Have I ever mentioned that

my son is in drama?)

"I'm volunteering," I said, my eyes on the road.

"Mom, really, why would you do that?" Sawyer asked as he tapped on my arm with a pen. "Were you thinking, 'Hey, Sawyer's doing well socially; what can I do to destroy that?'"

I started to laugh. He was on a roll.

"The first thing I am going to hear is, 'Hey, Sawyer, is that your mommy?'"

"What are you — a fifth-grader? Is she going to walk you to class?"

"Did she bring you your little lunch box?" And finally, "What is she going to do, get in the picture

See **BLAND**, Page E4

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Work

Continued from Page E1

Part of the world

The first time Hogan tried to kill herself, she was 16. The next time, she was 21. The last time, she was 30.

Now she's 51, and after years of therapy, finding the right combination of medications and hard work on her part, she's created a life with lots of small freedom.

She expanded her business in true entrepreneurial spirit, and when she saw a wrong, she helped right it with the political process.

"My *worst* days now are better than my *best* days ever were when I was having suicidal thoughts," Hogan said.

Back then, she felt disconnected from the world.

Now she feels like she's an important part of it — through her paid work as a pet-sitter and her volunteer work as an advocate for people with mental illness.

At the top of the driveway, Hogan bent down to pat Bentley, his tail wagging.

"Good job, Bentley!" she told him. "Good job!"

Inside, she guided him to his water bowl, and he drank noisily.

"There you go," she said.

"Good boy, Bentley."

Just the sound of Hogan's voice made Bentley wag his tail, which in turn made Hogan smile. That's just one of the perks of the job.

Hogan has worked her whole life, off and on.

After high school, she earned an Associate of Arts degree in theater at Lincoln College in Illinois and a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Phoenix in Colorado. In the years that followed, she worked as a case manager for foster children and sold office furniture with her dad. She was a veterinary technician and a food distributor.

But in the hard times, when her medication wasn't helping, when her depression worsened, or when she was overly stressed, it was often difficult to get to work on time, or stay there, or even call in when she couldn't make it at all.

Employers tried to help. They let her work part time or take leave when she had a setback.

When Hogan moved to Arizona in 2005, she enrolled at ITT Technical Institute and got a degree in computer-aided design.

But by then, she had begun receiving Society Security Disability Insurance, the federal program that provides assistance to people who have disabilities who have worked and paid Society Security taxes.

Typically when a person receives federal disability assistance, he or she cannot have a paying job at the same time.

And that left Hogan feeling desolate: "You feel like your life is over. You have nothing to contribute."

"Like anyone else, people living with mental illness need to have a sense of purpose in our lives," she said. "We are more than our diagnosis."

Unemployment is difficult for anyone, said David Covington, vice president of clinical and program outcomes for Magellan Health Services, the state's largest mental-health contractor. But for people with mental illness who are already struggling with feelings of isolation and being a burden, that loss of productivity can have devastating effects.

"Making a contribution is not based on a quantifiable, win-the-Nobel-Peace-Prize kind of thing. It's me looking at my life and thinking that I am doing something tangible, something that matters," he said.

It can be volunteer work, or paid. It can be as big as holding a full-time job or simply working a few hours a week.

That is the idea behind the state's Freedom to Work program, run by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, the state's Medicaid program. It allows people who receive federal disability benefits — a monthly check and health-care benefits — to start or continue work without losing those benefits.

Hogan heard about the program in 2008 and asked herself, "What could I do?"

She had enjoyed working with animals most. So she started by taking care of the pets of her sister's friend, and then another friend hired her to walk her dog.

Hogan's clientele has grown to 20, all through word of mouth. Her business — Jill Hogan Pet

Sitting — is bonded and insured. She has her own logo, business cards and a good reputation.

Bentley's owner, Brent Adleman, met Hogan almost four years ago when she was walking two dogs near his office complex. He asked for her business card.

She walked Bentley once a week while Adleman was at work, and then twice. Over time it grew to four times a week.

"She's a lifesaver for me. I couldn't do it without her," Adleman said. "When she's with him, I don't worry at all."

Even on the weekends, Bentley went over by the garage door about 10 a.m. to wait for Hogan. Laughing, Adleman said, "I tell him, 'She's not coming today. You're stuck with me.'"

Hogan is her own boss, and there's independence that comes with that. But it also means she has to stay on the ball.

"It gives you a sense of responsibility," she said. And there are no more days when she feels like there is no reason to get up.

"It's not just about walking dogs. It's about having your customers count on you," she said. The animals, too: "They can't tell time, but they know when you are coming."

They greet her at the door, smiling as dogs do, tails wagging.

Bentley lay half on and half off his bed in the living room, Hogan beside him. The dog stretched out and pushed his head onto Hogan's knee.

"I need to be needed," she said. She especially felt that way during the past few weeks as Bentley's health worsened.

There's also the freedom that comes with the extra money she makes. Hogan has always been frugal, but living on Social Security means having just enough for necessities.

With her job, she can afford to have a car to get to the houses of her customers and to pick up friends who don't have transportation of their own.

And because she's working, she can say yes to going out to dinner or to the movies with friends. "Saying, 'No, I can't afford it' all the time got old," she said. She can take her nieces, ages 10 and 13, out for smoothies.

The exercise she gets walking the dogs she cares for is a bonus.



"It's not just about walking dogs," says Jill Hogan, with Bentley. "It's about having your customers count on you." TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

Some medications for mental illness can cause weight gain. Hogan is in great shape.

Most important, the more she worked, the more referrals she got. As her customer list grew, the more confident she became: "It is really a sense of pride."

"So many times our identity is wrapped up in our work," she said. "It means so much more to be able to answer someone when they ask, 'What do you do?' by saying, 'I'm a pet-sitter' than to say, 'Oh, I don't work.'"

Because that leads to another question: "Why not?"

Telling anyone that you have a mental illness is difficult, Hogan said. Many people don't understand what it entails or the treatment and medication available.

It is even more difficult when the person you are telling is a potential employer.

"There is that fear of rejection," Hogan said. Yet she also can see it from an employer's point of view.

"It's hard for an employer because they need someone to do the job. They need someone who is stable," she said.

To be honest, Hogan says, people with mental illness often worry a lot on their own.

"That's so humiliating to know yourself that all of a sudden you may not be capable of doing your job. We know what we've been through, and we know that it could happen again."

Adleman had no concerns about Hogan.

"Every one of us has chal-

FREEDOM TO WORK

AHCCCS, the state's Medicaid program, offers insurance for qualified individuals who are working and have a disability.

Participants must:

» Be 16-65.

» Be an Arizona resident.

» Be a U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant.

» Be working and paying taxes.

» Have a Social Security number.

» Receive Social Security disability or is determined blind or disabled.

» Not be eligible for any other AHCCCS program.

» Have countable monthly earned income (after allowable deductions) under \$2,328 per month.

Details: 602-417-6677, 800-654-8713, www.azahcccs.gov.

lenges in our lives," he said. "I think it's wonderful that Jill is out there working."

In 2010, when Hogan was last hospitalized, she let her customers know she would be unavailable for a week or so. One customer asked so many questions that Hogan ended up explaining her mental illness.

The customer asked her own doctor whether it was safe to have Hogan working in her home. The doctor assured her that it was, and Hogan still has

See WORK, Page E6

	9/1/13	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30
LOCAL CHANNELS	3 KTVK I Hate My Hair! Paid Program			CS! Miami: Crime Wave. Horatio tries to stop bank robbers. (cc) (HDTV)		Criminal Minds: What Happens at Home ... Pursuing a killer who targets women. (cc)	3TV News at 9 Sunday (N) (HDTV) The Sports Show (HDTV) (cc)	Unsealed: Alien Files (cc) (HDTV)		Unsealed: Conspiracy Files (cc)	
	5 CBS 60 Minutes (N) (cc) (HDTV)			7:01 Big Brother: Contestants face eviction. (N) (cc) (HDTV)		Unforgettable: Line Up or Shut Up. A body is found in a pricey sports car. (N) (cc)	The Mentalist: Red Velvet Cupcakes. A woman dies after seeking love advice. (cc)	CBS 5 News at 10 (N) (cc) (HDTV)		10:35 Leverage: A crew of thieves.	
	7 KAZT Dr. Stacy Lee-Kingdom Increase	Fountain of Life House of Worship		Palm Valley Church		Kelley Steele	Reginald T. Steele: Making A Difference	Fresh Start TV	Fire & Water: Teaching.	Kenneth Cox Ministries	
	9 PBS Globe Trekker: Greek Islands. Greek islands Hydra and Patmos. (cc)			The Queen's Palaces: Palace of Holyroodhouse. The Palace of Holyroodhouse. (cc)		Masterpiece Mystery!: Silk. Martha defends a teenager. (N) (cc) (HDTV)				Dalziel and Pascoe: A Killing Kindness. Serial killer quotes Shakespeare. (cc)	
	10 FOX American Dad: Stan gets amnesia. (HDTV)	The Simpsons: Black-Eyed, Please. (HDTV)		The Simpsons: Dark Knight Court. (HDTV)	Bob's Burgers: Family Fracas. (HDTV)	Family Guy: Space Cadet. (cc)	Family Guy: The Gig-wife. (HDTV)	FOX 10 News at 9pm (N) (cc)		FOX 10 News at 10pm (N) (cc)	FOX 10 Sports Night (N) (cc)
	12 NBC America's Got Talent: Twelve semifinalists perform. (cc) (HDTV)					TV's Funniest of the Funniest: A Paley Center for Media Special: Funny moments in television history. (N) (cc) (HDTV)				12 News at 10pm (N) (cc) (HDTV)	10:35 Sports Tonight (N)
	15 ABC ABC Fall Preview Special Presented by The Chew: A look at new fall shows. (N) (cc)			Secret Millionaire: Wing Lam: Mobile, Ala. Wing Lam travels to Mobile, Ala. (N) (HDTV)		MDA Show of Strength Telethon: Raising funds to support the MDA. (N) (cc) (HDTV)				ABC15 News at 10 (N) (cc)	10:35 ABC15 Sports Sunday (cc)
	19 TBN Believer's Voice of Victory (cc)	Creflo Dollar (cc)		The Bible ('66) - Michael Parks, George C. Scott. John Huston's epic adaptation of the book of Genesis. 'NR'							Finger of God
	28 UNI Aqui y Ahora (cc) (HDTV)			Parodiando (N) (cc) (HDTV)				Sal y Pimienta (cc) (HDTV)		Noticias Univisión Arizona	Noticiero Univisión: Fin de Semana
	35 KFPH Choques Extremos			Eraser, el Protector ('96) - Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Caan. Un agente del gobierno protege a una testigo de criminales. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)				Peligro en Bangkok ('08) - Nicolas Cage, Shahkrit Yamnarm. Un asesino se convierte en el mentor de un chico callejero. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)			
	39 TELE. Into the Sun ('05) - Steven Seagal, Matthew Davis. Un ex agente de la CIA busca a unos asesinos. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)					Taken ('08) - Liam Neeson, Maggie Grace. Ex-espía usa sus viejas habilidades para salvar a su hija. 'PG-13' (cc) (HDTV)				Titulares Telemundo (HDTV) (cc)	Operación Repo (cc)
	45 MNT Family Guy: Stewie Loves Lois. (cc)	Family Guy: Hell Comes to Quahog.		The Big Bang Theory (cc) (HDTV)	The Big Bang Theory (cc) (HDTV)	The Big Bang Theory (cc) (HDTV)	The Big Bang Theory (cc) (HDTV)	30 Rock: Jack's promotion jeopardized.	30 Rock: Liz's ex-boyfriend calls. (cc)	The Office: The Incentive. (cc) (HDTV)	The Office: The List. (cc) (HDTV)
	49 Daystar John Ankerberg: Apologetics program.	Michael Youssef		Rod Parsley (cc)	Redemption (cc)	The Hal Lindsey Report	End of the Age With Rev. Irvin Baxter	Joel Osteen (cc)	The Blessed Life	2013 Fall Sharathon	
	50 ION Law & Order: Criminal Intent: Malignant. Supplier tampers with cancer drugs. (cc)			Law & Order: Criminal Intent: Tomorrow. A wealthy man's children are murdered. (cc)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent: The Pilgrim. Detectives uncover terrorist plot. (cc)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent: Shandeh. Philanderer's wife is murdered. (cc) (HDTV)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent: Con-Text. Self-help guru implicated. (cc) (HDTV)	
	54 CW Two and a Half Men (cc) (HDTV)	Two and a Half Men (cc) (HDTV)		Rules of Engagement: Dirty Talk.	Rules of Engagement (cc) (HDTV)	Scrubs: Med school at Sacred Heart.	'Til Death: Speed Bumps. (cc) (HDTV)	The First Family: The First Makeover. (cc)	Mr. Box Office: Man Up. (cc) (HDTV)	Are We There Yet? (HDTV)	Are We There Yet? (HDTV)
	A&E Bad Ink (cc) (HDTV)	Bad Ink (cc) (HDTV)		Duck Dynasty (cc)	Duck Dynasty (cc)	Duck Dynasty (cc)	Duck Dynasty (cc)	Duck Dynasty (cc)	Duck Dynasty (cc)	Bad Ink (cc) (HDTV)	Bad Ink (cc) (HDTV)
	APL River Monsters: Unhooked (cc) (HDTV)			Alien Autopsy (HDTV)		Mermaids: The Body Found: The Extended Cut: Half-man, half-fish, all conjecture. (HDTV)				Mermaids: The New Evidence (HDTV)	
	BBC 4:00 A Knight's Tale ('01) - (cc)			Copper: The Fine Ould Irish Gentleman. (N)						A Knight's Tale ('01) - Heath Ledger, Mark Addy. A peasant poses as a knight for a shot at jousting glory. 'PG-13' (cc) (HDTV)	
	BET 5:30 Daddy's Little Girls ('07) - Gabrielle Union, Idris Elba. 'PG-13' (cc) (HDTV)					Sunday Best: Semi-Finals: It Ain't Over. (N)	Sunday Best: Finale. (Season Finale) (N)			Sunday Best: Semi-Finals: It Ain't Over.	
	CMT 5:15 Pure Country ('92) - George Strait, Lesley Ann Warren. 'PG' (cc)					National Lampoon's European Vacation ('85) - Chevy Chase. 'PG-13'				10:15 Urban Cowboy ('80) - (cc) 'PG'	
	COM 5:41 Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay ('08) - Kal Penn. 'NR' (HDTV)					Gabriel Iglesias: Aloha Fluffy: The comic discusses his family.		9:34 Kevin Hart: Seriously Funny (cc)		Gabriel Iglesias	
	COX 7 Paid Program	Paid Program		The Stem Journals	Su Vida (Your Life)	Step Outside	Sam Cooking Guy	The Stem Journals	Su Vida (Your Life)	Step Outside	The Movie Loft
	DIS Good Luck Charlie	Good Luck Charlie		Jessie (cc) (HDTV)	Jessie (cc) (HDTV)	Austin & Ally (cc)	Austin & Ally (N)	Austin & Ally (cc)	Austin & Ally (cc)	Jessie (cc) (HDTV)	Dog With a Blog
	DSC Airplane Repo: Undercover and Out of Time.			Airplane Repo: Mid-Air Collision. (cc)		Gold Rush: The Frozen North. (cc) (HDTV)		Gold Rush: Ends of the Earth. (cc) (HDTV)		Jungle Gold: Bailed Out. (N) (cc) (HDTV)	
	E! Keeping Up With the Kardashians (HDTV)			Keeping Up With the Kardashians (HDTV)		Keeping Up With the Kardashians (HDTV)		Keeping Up With the Kardashians (N)		Total Divas: Nattie's bachelorette party. (N)	
	FAM 5:30 You Again ('10) - Kristen Bell. 'PG' (HDTV)			Failure to Launch ('06) - Matthew McConaughey. 'PG-13' (HDTV)				Burlesque ('10) - Cher, Christina Aguilera. 'PG-13' (HDTV)			
	FOOD The Shed (HDTV)	Bubba-Q (HDTV)		The Great Food Truck Race (HDTV)		Chopped: Gyro meat and hearts of palm.		The Great Food Truck Race (N) (HDTV)		Cutthroat Kitchen (N) (HDTV)	
	FX 4:30 The A-Team ('10) - Liam Neeson, Bradley Cooper. 'PG-13' (HDTV)					The Proposal ('09) - Sandra Bullock. A woman pretends to be engaged to evade deportation.				'PG-13' (HDTV)	The Proposal - (cc)
	GAME Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader? (cc)			The Newlywed Game	The Newlywed Game	The Newlywed Game	The Newlywed Game	Family Feud (cc)	Family Feud (cc)	\$100,000 Pyrr.	\$100,000 Pyrr.
	HGTV House Hunters (cc)	Hunters Int'l		House Hunters (cc)	Hunters Int'l	Extreme Homes (cc) (HDTV)		Love It or List It, Too: Siva and Sinna. (cc)		House Hunters Renovation (N) (cc) (HDTV)	
	HIS Pawn Stars: Fired Up.	Pawn Stars (cc)		Pawn Stars (cc)	Pawn Stars (cc)	Mountain Men: End of the Line. (cc)		Mountain Men: Thin Ice. (cc) (HDTV)		Mountain Men: Marty builds a second cabin.	
	LIFE 4:00 Julie & Julia ('09) - Meryl Streep.			A Walk to Remember ('02) - Shane West, Mandy Moore. 'PG' (cc) (HDTV)		Teen Mom 3: Hope for the Best; Second Thoughts. Briana must take legal action. (HDTV)				2013 MTV Video Music Awards (HDTV)	
	MTV Ridiculousness	Ridiculousness		Catfish: The TV Show: Artis & Jess. (HDTV)		See Dad Run (cc)	Wendell & Vinnie (N)	Racing Stripes ('05) - Bruce Greenwood, Hayden Panettiere. 'PG' (cc) (HDTV)		Oprah: Where Are They Now? (HDTV)	
	NICK Sam & Cat (cc)	Sam & Cat (cc)		Hathaways	Hathaways	See Dad Run (cc)	Wendell & Vinnie (N)	Racing Stripes ('05) - Bruce Greenwood, Hayden Panettiere. 'PG' (cc) (HDTV)		Oprah: Where Are They Now? (HDTV)	
	OWN Oprah: Where Are They Now? (cc) (HDTV)			Oprah: Where Are They Now? (N) (HDTV)		Oprah's Next Chapter: Lindsay Lohan.		Oprah: Where Are They Now? (cc) (HDTV)		Oprah: Where Are They Now? (HDTV)	
	SPIKE Bar Rescue: Rock 'N Roaches. (HDTV)			Bar Rescue: Jon T, He Don't Like It. (HDTV)		Bar Rescue: Bottomless Pit. (HDTV)		Bar Rescue (HDTV)		Tattoo Rescue: Funkytown Is Going Down.	Ghost Mine: Descent Into Darkness. (HDTV)
	SFY The Abyss ('89) - Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. An oil-rig crew must search for a sunken nuclear sub. 'PG-13'					Transformers ('07) - Shia LaBeouf, Tyrese Gibson. Two races of robots wage war on Earth.				PG-13 (cc) (HDTV)	
	TBS 300 ('07) - Gerard Butler, Lena Headey. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)					Sister Wives (cc)	Sister Wives (cc)	Sister Wives (N)	Sister Wives (cc)	Breaking Amish: LA: Judgment Day. (N)	
	TLC Dateline: Real Life Mysteries (cc) (HDTV)			Breaking Amish: LA: Sin City. (cc) (HDTV)		Sister Wives (cc)	Sister Wives (cc)	Sister Wives (N)	Sister Wives (cc)	Breaking Amish: LA: Judgment Day. (N)	
	TNT The Taking of Pelham 123 ('09) - Denzel Washington. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)					Four Brothers ('05) - Mark Wahlberg, Tyrese Gibson. 'R' (cc) (HDTV)				10:15 Four Brothers ('05) - 'R' (HDTV)	
	TOON The Smurfs ('11) - Hank Azaria, Neil Patrick Harris. 'PG' (HDTV)					World of Gumball	Looney Tunes	The Cleveland Show	Family Guy (cc)	Bob's Burgers (cc)	Family Guy (cc)
	TRAV Food Paradise: Sausage Paradise. (cc)			Food Paradise: Steak Paradise 3. (cc)		RIDE-iculous (N)	RIDE-iculous (N)	Adam Richman's	Bikinis & Boardwalks	Rock My RV With Bret Michaels (N) (cc)	
	TRU Storage Hunters	Storage Hunters		Storage Hunters	Storage Hunters	Storage Hunters					