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CALL 753-6781

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Spring 2008 NUMBER XVI



ATI Awarded \$10,000 State Legislative Initiative

On April 3, ATI received word from Sen. James Seward that a legislative initiative in the amount of \$10,000 had been included in the 2008 - 2009 state budget, at his request, to fund part of ATI's ongoing Access to Technology efforts.

In the award letter, Sen. Seward noted that, "In a time of severe competition for state funds, I thought that your project was worth the extra effort to secure state dollars."

ATI will use the funds to purchase new computers for staff, upgrade and dedicate two computers for use by volunteers, and upgrade and dedicate an additional two computers for ATI's consumer laboratory, making a total of six available to consumers.

ATI Kicks-Off Spring 2008 Employment Conference

ATI kicked-off its Spring 2008 Employment Conference on May 9th with speakers from CheckMate Private Investigations, the Cortland County Personnel & Civil Service Dept., and Cornell University's Employment & Disability Institute. Participants learned about their rights as individuals with disabilities.

The second session took place on May 16th and featured speakers from the Syracuse-area independent living center, ARISE, the Cortland Works Career Center, Employment Connection, VESID, and Kelly Services. Participants learned about new resources and techniques to utilize throughout the job search and employment process.

The third session took place on May 23rd and featured speakers from Walgreens, the Blue Frog Coffeehouse, Cortland County's Disability Program Navigator, and SUNY Cortland's Career Services Department. Attendees learned new techniques for effective communication and interviewing, as well as how to navigate and utilize the variety of local services available to them in Cortland County.

During the course of the workshops, more than 20 participants learned about the process of gaining meaningful employment and the expectations that their future employers would have of them.

ATI Recognizes Outstanding Contributions of Volunteers

On May 16, ATI staff recognized National Volunteer Week and celebrated the invaluable contributions that ATI's volunteers provide the agency throughout the year.

ATI staff each brought in a dish to pass and reminisced about the uncounted times that each of the volunteers had made a huge difference to the agency and its consumers. ATI thanks its dedicated volunteers, including Dorothy Dumond, Vivian LoMonoco, Steve Potts, Karen Sanford, Cheryl Williams and Phyllis Schriefer.

As a token of appreciation, ATI presented each volunteer with a framed Certificate of Appreciation and a \$20 gift card.



Above: Cheryl Williams volunteers at last Fall's ATI Hawaiian Luan Fun Night.

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Little York Plantation
Community Service Weekend
June 20, 21, 22
See insert for details!

26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045



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Consider These Questions Before Joining a Medicare Private Health Plan

For anyone who receives Medicare Health Benefits, the choices for coverage are getting more complicated every year. Medicare Part D prescription plans, managed care plans and fee-for-service plans are just some of the choices from which a person has to choose. These choices can be confusing and overwhelming to navigate.

Medicare Managed Plans are getting a lot of press lately. There are commercials on every TV station, and insurance companies are sending out agents to push their independent plans. Managed care plans are not a part of the original Medicare program. Once you sign up for one of these plans, through Blue Cross/Blue Shield or Humana, for example, you will replace your original Medicare coverage with that of the independent company. If you are approached by an insurance agent to sign-on for one of these managed care plans, consider asking the questions below to make sure that you get the health coverage you need. If you are over 60 and need help deciding if a managed plan will benefit you, please call the Area Agency on Aging at 607-753-5060. If you are under 60, you can contact the Medicare Rights Center at 1-800-333-4114, or visit their website www.medicarerights.org.

Doctors, Hospitals and Other Health Care Providers

- Will I be able to use my current doctors? Are they in the plan's network and are they taking new patients?
- Do my doctors recommend joining this plan?
- What will happen if my doctors leave the plan?
- Which specialists, hospitals, home health agencies and skilled nursing facilities are in the plan's network?

Access to Health Care

- Who can I choose as my Primary Care Physician (PCP)?
- How long will I have to wait for an appointment with my PCP or a specialist?
- How easy is it to get referrals to specialists from my PCP? How long does each referral last?
- Does my doctor need to get approval from the plan to admit me to a hospital?
- Does the plan provide an incentive for my doctor to deny or reduce services?
- If I have or develop a complex illness, what disease-related services are covered?

Benefits

- What other benefits does the plan offer? What rules do I have to follow to get them?
- Are my prescription drugs on the plan's formulary (list of covered drugs)?
- Are there limits or caps on prescription drug coverage?
- If I need a certain type of treatment or a particular drug, will the plan cover it?

Costs

- Do I have to pay a monthly premium?
- How much is my co-payment for a visit with my PCP or a visit with a specialist?
- How much will I pay for brand-name drugs? How much for generic drugs?
- How much will I pay for a hospital stay?
- How much will I pay if I use a non-network doctor or hospital?
- Are there higher co-pays for certain types of care, such as hospital stays or cancer treatment?
- Is there an annual out-of-pocket maximum?
- Are all services included in the out-of-pocket maximum?

Service Area

- What service area does the plan cover?
- What kind of coverage do I have if I travel outside of the service area?

Enrollee Satisfaction

- How often do members leave the plan?
- How do members rate the health care they get from the plan?
- How satisfied are members in general?

Access to Cutting Edge Technology

This edition's review of cutting edge technology focuses on three websites that offer products and information geared toward independent living. To access each website, just type the listed "URL" into the address bar of your internet browser. For those who do not own a computer, ATI's Consumer Computer Lab provides all the tools you need to access these great online resources.

DisabilityInfo.gov is the #1 connection to the Federal government's disability-related information & resources. It provides easy access to information about national disability programs, services, laws, legislation, and benefits. Find the resources that are right for you and learn how to utilize them. To learn more, go to www.disabilityinfo.gov.

RehabTool.com is a site that provides access to disability-related news, events, products, and resources. By providing up-to-date information and products, RehabTool.com aims to help indi-

viduals with disabilities improve their independent living skills with assistive technology. Find products, learn what's new and upcoming, and gain support from the forum. To learn more, go to www.rehabtool.com.

HealthVault.com is a Microsoft online tool that allows individuals to setup an account and store all medical information in one secure place. Simply obtain your records in an electronic format and upload them to your HealthVault.com account. The account tools allow you to ensure maximum security of your information and to share it only with people that you specify. To learn more, go to www.healthvault.com.

If you are interested in learning more about how to use any of the above tools, contact Aaron Baier at 753-7363.

If you are interested in learning how to use a computer or how to access the Internet, contact Susan Lewis at 753-7363.

ATI hosts RCIL's Joann Marshall at Board-Staff Retreat

On Saturday, April 5, ATI held its annual Board-Staff Retreat in its Community Room. The yearly event offered an opportunity for staff to share with Board Members about the work that they do throughout the year.

This year's event featured a guest keynote speaker, Ms. Joann Marshall, Chief Operating Officer of Utica's Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL). Ms. Marshall facilitated an open discussion entitled, *Becoming a High Impact Independent Living Center*.

At the event, Ms. Marshall emphasized the importance of ATI staying in tune with its mission

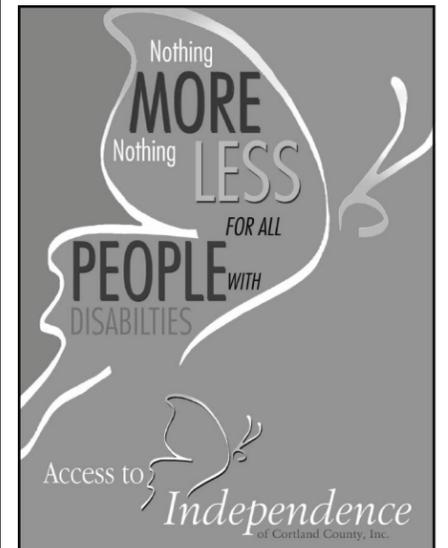
and values as it undertook the process of growing as an agency. She said that it was important for ATI to become a community leader by way of working with non-traditional partners in order to facilitate that growth.

Ms. Marshall suggested that ATI should consider "beefing up" its culture by revitalizing, redefining and better communicating the agency's mission, and developing, discussing and putting into operation the agency's core values.

Many thanks to the board members, staff and to Joann Marshall for their contributions to making this year's retreat great!

Board Members

Joe Abdulla, Chair
Polly Cator, Vice Chair
Edward Lancellotti, Treasurer
Peter Morse-Ackley, Secretary
Lori Allen
Angela Burchfield
Debbie Geibel
Paul Hamilton
Tom Hartnett
Helene Maxwell
Daniel Mullins
Donna West



Staff Members

Mary E. Ewing, Executive Director
Aaron Baier, Peer Mentoring Specialist
Kim Christie, Receptionist
Rob Ferri, Architectural Barrier Specialist
Sue Lewis, Independent Living Advocate
Fran Pizzola, Program Coordinator
Chad W. Underwood, Syst. Advocate/PM Coordinator

ATI's Peer Mentoring Program Facilitates Successful Job Shadowing Experiences!

In the last three months, the ATI Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) has setup and facilitated five job shadowing opportunities for its Mentees. Job shadowing opportunities serve four purposes for a participant: 1) to determine if a job is truly interesting; 2) to experience a working environment; 3) to learn about the duties and expectations of the observed job; and 4) to learn about employer expectations and responsibility. ATI facilitated each job shadowing experience by first considering a Mentee's interests, vis-à-vis their Individual Goal Plan, and then by identifying potential worksites that might satisfy that goal.

Eric Moscicki, who is currently attending Tompkins - Cortland Community College to earn an Associate's degree in computer networking, shadowed Nick Pizzola, an independent Information Technology Consultant. Eric learned first-hand about what was involved with transitioning a small business network from an old server to a new server. Eric even had an opportunity to assist Nick with a number of the transition processes. Eric assisted with software installation and watched closely as Nick performed some of the more complicated tasks to get the server up and running.

Rob Vega, who is setting his

sights toward a degree in criminal justice and substance abuse counseling, shadowed Joan Stivers, a local substance abuse counselor who performs awareness outreaches, training, and prevention counseling for at-risk individuals. Rob prepared a list of questions for his one-on-one interview with Joan. The two immediately found common ground and discussed the in's and out's of being a human services provider.

Kari Wasser, a Senior at Cortland Senior High School, shadowed Beverly, a Graphic Designer from GraphTex, a local business that develops graphics for a variety of products. Kari toured the GraphTex facility learning about the various processes of creating a design and applying it to different products. Kari was most excited when she observed Beverly apply a finished design to a t-shirt.

Kristen Buck, a Mentee who takes pride in her cooking, shadowed Jackie, a Bakery Chef at the Cortland Price Chopper Supermarket. Kristen toured the bakery facility learning about all of the equipment that is used there. Kristen was most impressed with the outstanding teamwork and collaboration of individuals as they quickly moved around her to complete the various projects they were working on. Kristen experienced first-hand the type of work environment that a bakery offers and how much work really goes on behind the counter.

Donna Spinner, a creative individual with a fondness for flowers, shadowed Melody, a florist at the Cortland Price Chopper Supermarket. Donna toured the floral department, learned about the various tasks that Melody was responsible for completing, and



Above: Karen, Kari and Katrina Wasser, and Karen Sanford join Scott Hopko for a May job shadowing opportunity at Hopko Designs.

even learned the name of a few flowers and plants. Donna's favorite part of the experience was when she had an opportunity to put together a bouquet.

Karen Wasser, Kari Wasser, Katrina Wasser and Karen Sanford explored their interest in computer graphic design by shadowing Scott Hopko, the owner of Hopko Designs, a local graphic design company. As a group, the four participants observed the methods used to develop graphics and had an opportunity to ask questions of Scott after the tour.

Moving forward, ATI will continue to reach out to new businesses and to collaborate with other local workforce development partners to facilitate job shadowing opportunities for each PMP participant.

ATI proudly announces:

Arthritis Support Group

Meets every other Tuesday

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Call Fran Pizzola at 753-7363 for more information.

ATI proudly announces:

Worksite Wellness Group

Every Monday & Wednesday

3:30 - 4:45 pm

Call Fran Pizzola at 753-7363 for more information.



The American's with Disabilities Act "ADA"

Workshop Series:

Every Second Thursday of the Month - 1:30 to 3:30 P.M.

Nine Interactive Programs

Program 1: (6/12/08)

Disability Awareness and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The Status of People with Disabilities in America

Program 2: Program 3: (08/14/09)

Tapping into Talent: Best Practices in Hiring, Accommodating and Retaining People with Disabilities

Program 4: (09/11/08)

Serving Customers with Disabilities: Reaching Out; Expanding Your Market

Program 5: (10/09/08)

About Hidden Disabilities: The Legal, Practical and Human Side of Non-Obvious Disabilities

Program 6: (11/13/08)

Americans with Disabilities Act - Title II: A primer for state and local governments

Program 7: (12/11/08)

Americans with Disabilities Act - Title III: A primer for private business and commercial facilities

Program 8: (01/08/09)

Accessible Technology In The Workplace

Program 9: (02/12/09)

Accessible Web Sites: Everyone Benefits

Who: Frances A. Pizzola, ATI Program Coordinator

Where: Cortland Works Career Center - 99 Main Street, Cortland

How: Call Cortland Works Career Center at (607) 756-7585

Baier Represents ATI in National Youth Leadership Network

In January, Aaron Baier, ATI Peer Mentoring Specialist joined the Accessibility Committee of the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN). NYLN is a national organization that promotes the development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness of youth with disabilities.

The NYLN also aims to foster the inclusion of young leaders with disabilities into all aspects of society at local, state and national levels. Furthermore, the NYLN strives to communicate about issues important to youth with disabilities and

the policies and practices that affect their lives.

Mr. Baier's most recent activity with NYLN has related to its Accessibility Committee. Mr. Baier reported that the Committee was developing a presentation with supporting documentation to educate young voters with disabilities on the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). He said the presentation would also address methods of voting accessibly, and how to report inaccessible polling places. He said that the resource would be distributed throughout the U.S.

ATI Seeks Your Support

Earlier this month, ATI launched its 2008 *Friends of the Center* campaign. ATI seeks your financial support to help us to fund additional programming and services to people with disabilities to help them achieve their independence.

Specifically, your support will help ATI to continue building a system that will allow people to move from nursing homes back to their own apartment/home. It will help ATI expand its accessibility construction services to provide ramps and other environmental modifications to people with disabilities. Your support will further ATI's ability to implement its youth transition program, which aims to ensure an 'accessible' future for our children. Lastly, your support will provide resources to increase our advocacy efforts on disability issues.

In addition to the *Friends of the Center* campaign, ATI facilitated two fundraisers in April that offered supporters and consumers an opportunity to have fun.

On Saturday, April 12, roughly 50 ATI supporters participated in a bowl-a-thon at 281 Bowl. The event raised roughly \$1,000 for ATI.

The following weekend, ATI staff and volunteers facilitated a 50/50 raffle and sold t-shirts and hats at the 2008 Crown City Lumberjack Invitational, held at the J. M. McDonald Sports Complex.

Visit our website at:
www.aticortland.org

Email us at:
info@aticortland.org

Phone: (607) 753-7363
Fax: (607) 756-4884

SUNY Cortland Students Complete Service Learning

Over the past four months, seven SUNY Cortland students completed 20 hours each of service learning, volunteer work at ATI to fulfill requirements of their Urban Sociology class at the college.

Ashley Bleck, Marie Coyle, Amanda Goff, Coleen MacCracken, Jesse Meyer, Ken Mulvihill and Jennifer Nicks complemented their sociology coursework by dedicating a combined 140 hours towards a variety of ATI initiatives, including awareness and fund development efforts.

The students began their service learning internships with a tour of the ATI office and introductions to each of the staff. The students reviewed past agency newsletters to better understand the work of independent living centers.

Significant accomplishments of the group included development of a spreadsheet to facilitate the agency's 2008 *Friends of the Center* campaign; organization and execution of the agency's April 12 bowl-a-thon fundraiser, and development of an awareness bulletin for ATI's involvement in the 2008 Crown City Lumberjack Invitational.

At the end of the semester, all seven students were appreciative of the experience, just as all ATI staff were appreciative of the students' outstanding contributions.

Interested in Becoming a Volunteer Disability Advocate?

- Keep up-to-date on current federal, state and local disability issues!
- Join our local network and take action!

Please call Chad W. Underwood at 753-7363 for more information.

Time to Improve Polling Place Access With a Law

Excerpts from a May 5 article in the Syracuse Post-Standard, written by Mr. Brad Williams of the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC).

A federal court earlier this year mandated that an accessible ballot marking device be located at every polling place in New York state for 2008 primary and election days to ensure the state's compliance with the Help Americans Vote Act (HAVA).

In the past few months, New York has witnessed significant progress in implementing HAVA, the 2002 federal law which required states to replace outdated voting technologies (including New York's aging voting lever machines) and provide accessible voting for people with disabilities.

The state has compiled a list of accessible machines and counties are in the process of purchasing the ballot marking devices for the upcoming elections. NY has also begun to set time frames for the implementation of new voting technologies by 2009.

However, the decision to upgrade to accessible voting machines for people with disabilities now requires a shift in focus to ensure that all polling sites are accessible as well. A prior U.S. Department of Justice opinion states, "Having an accessible voting system does little good if voters cannot even enter the polling place.

There is no definitive study that evaluates the accessibility or inaccessibility of the state's 7,000 polling places. While some progress has been made, inaccessible voting sites still exist.

NYSILC is working in cooperation with the NYS Board of Elections (NYSBOE) to actively remedy sites that were identified

from complaints NYSILC received on Election Day 2007. The current list identifies 101 polling sites that were investigated.

Some of the changes were relatively simple and required signage, while others were so involved that it required the moving of the polling sites. If needed, there are federal and state funds available for counties to get reimbursed for accessible modifications made to polling sites through a program of the NYSBOE.

Yet, the reality is that full compliance with polling place access guidelines won't occur until there is a strong state law in place that allows citizens the opportunity to evaluate the progress and to assess when the job is complete.

Fortunately, such a bill exists in S.6311 / A.244, the Polling Site Access Bill. The purpose of the bill is "to update the state election law to be consistent with federal accessibility requirements, eliminate state polling place accessibility waiver language and include provisions to the election law to reduce confusion regarding polling places access requirements, and increase the likelihood of substantial compliance."

ATI Wants YOU!

ATI is actively seeking new individuals, with and without disabilities, to serve on its Board of Directors.

If you are interested and/or you would like more information, please contact:

Mary E. Ewing, Executive Director, at 753-7363.

ATI Presses Ahead With Youth Activities

ATI continues with a full court press to expand its scope of programming for youth with disabilities throughout Cortland County.

On five occasions over the past three months, ATI has sponsored outreach tables at the Cortland Jr. Sr. High School during lunch periods to spread the word about ATI's programs, the agency's collaboration with the school on the Model Transition Program (MTP), and to increase awareness of the importance of self-advocacy. Those outreaches also aimed to help jump-start the development of a youth-driven Youth Advocacy Group at the school. While initial interest was sparse, ATI gained useful insight to help implement the group, full-force, next Fall.

On May 8, ATI also participated in an Agency Awareness Day outreach at Cortland High School, during which over 70 students from throughout Cortland City School District and their parents learned about available programs and opportunities.

On May 10, ATI co-sponsored the Cortland Area Communities That Care (CACTC) 2008 Youth Conference at the Ramada Inn. Over 75 students in grades six through 12 from schools throughout Cortland County participated in this year's event. The event featured an award-winning poet, actor and inspiring speaker from New York City, Carlos Andres Gomez, who provided the event's opening remarks and facilitated a workshop entitled, "Finding Your Majority of One."

On June 5, ATI will be collaborating with the Cortland County Youth Bureau, Cortland Works Career Center, OCM BOCES, and the Cayuga-Cortland Work Investment Board to set up a table at Cortland County's Youth Career Fair.

In the months to come, ATI is poised to facilitate a series of disability awareness workshops that aim to serve every Homer junior and senior high school student during a three-day span.

SAVE THE DATE!

2008 ADA Celebration

**Friday, July 11
12:00 - 5:00 pm**

**Suggett Park
Rotary Pavilion**

Live Radio Broadcast!

Food Provided!

**2nd Annual Watermelon
Eating Contest!**

SAVE THE DATE!

Free Reading Service for People with Visual Impairments

Blind and low-vision people now have a way to have printed documents read to them over the phone through a new service, called ReadThisToMe. All a person needs is a phone line and a fax machine (no computer is required).

Here's how it works: 1) Fax a document that needs to be read to the ReadThisToMe toll-free fax number. 1-877-333-8848. The first page of the fax needs to be a cover page that includes your first name and callback (voice) phone number. The document itself can be just about anything: a handwritten letter, a bill, a food label, a multi-page magazine article - just about anything that can be faxed. 2) A volunteer reader from ReadThisToMe will call you back, usually within an hour, and read the document.

The service is available throughout the U.S. and Canada and is absolutely free (though donations are gladly accepted).

Access To  Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.



Accessibility Construction Services

26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045
Phone: (607) 753-7363

Planning a home remodel?

Having difficulty with daily activities?

Concerned for the safety of a parent?

History of falls? / Fear of falls?

Call us for a free estimate (607) 753-7363

We are your Local Accessibility Experts!