

**Nothing More,  
Nothing Less  
For All People  
With Disabilities**

**Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.**

# ACCESS NEWS

**Spring 2011 NUMBER XXVIII**

## Advocates Rally in Albany to DEFEND OUR FREEDOM!

On March 15, disability advocates from Access to Independence joined more than 250 other advocates from across the state in Albany to urge state leaders to protect home and community based services for people with disabilities.

On the heels of Governor Cuomo's promise to impose a budget by April 1, and in the face of millions of dollars in proposed cuts to services for people with disabilities, the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities were on the verge of going backwards.

"Our Homes, Not Nursing Homes," resonated throughout the War Room on the second floor of the Capitol, just down the hall from the Governor's Chamber. Following hours of additional chants and the personal stories of dozens of consumers who would be effected by the proposed cuts, Lieutenant Gov-

ernor Duffy and several of his staff members made their way through the mass to address the crowd on the Governor's intentions.

First, the Lt. Governor announced the State's full intention to apply for the Community First Choice option, available under federal health reform on October 1.

Second, the Lt. Governor assured the group of the Administration's commitment to work with them as the Medicaid Redesign process moved ahead, particularly in the rollout of Medicaid Managed Long Term Care.

Lastly, the Lt. Governor spoke to the importance of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) and announced that the CDPAP regulations would be promulgated by April 1.

In April, the Department of Health finally issued the final regulations for CDPAP. One of the most significant changes made in the regulations is that adult children can now be paid to provide attendant services.

CDPAP, which was first created in 1995, had been operating for the past 15 years under the regulations of the traditional personal care program, despite significant differences between the two programs.

This victory not only expands the pool of direct care workers, but it also promotes a cost-effective model that will save the state money while preserving the civil rights of people with disabilities.

## Civic Engagement Awards

On April 21, SUNY Cortland's Institute for Civic Engagement recognized Dr. Judy Bentley, ATI Board Member and SUNY Professor, and Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, for their recent contributions to the quality of life in Cortland County.

In a packed Jacobus Lounge, 100 people congratulated students, student groups, faculty, staff, and community members who have participated in projects that include physical and emotional health, equal treatment, tutoring, mentoring, professional development and housing.

Since 2005, SUNY Cortland has presented awards to area students, faculty members, college staff, and community members to recognize their significant civic engagement and leadership contributions to our community's quality of life.



**Above (left to right):** Dorothy Dumond, Chad Underwood, Aaron Baier and Jarret Withers attended a rally in Albany in March to fight against proposed cuts to services for people with disabilities.

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## Assembly Approves Legislation to Protect New Yorkers With Disabilities from Discrimination

On May 16, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Minority Leader Brian Kolb, along with Task Force on People with Disabilities Chair Michael Cusick, Mental Health Committee Chair Felix Ortiz and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Mental Health Steve Katz, announced passage of an "Assembly Disability Awareness Day" legislative package to prevent discriminatory practices against New Yorkers with disabilities.

Among the Assembly's anti-discriminatory initiatives is a bill that would restore the right of state employees to sue the state for damages due to violations of the ADA, the Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act ([A.3689](#) /Lifton). The bill would also preserve their rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

The Disabilities Awareness Day legislative package also included bills that would:

- Require that the services of sign language interpreters be made available, upon request, at public hearings and meetings and also establish provisions for assistive listening systems to be required in rooms used for public hearings that accommodate over 100 people after January 1, 2014 ([A.1932](#)/Wright);
- Bring NYS into compliance with Federal law by amending the Human Rights Law to define the term "service animal," which would include, but would not be limited to, any guide, hearing or service dog, to have the same definition as they do in the Civil Rights Law. The bill would clarify that a person training a dog to aid a person with a disability has the same rights as a person with a disability ([A.6816](#)/Benedetto);

- Enable registered voters with visual impairments to request Braille or large-print absentee ballots to be sent to their homes. These ballots would also be made available, upon request, at polling places for school board elections until December 31, 2012 when optical scanning machines will be in operation for such elections ([A.5337-A](#)/Cusick);
- Mandate that every high-rise building owner establish and maintain an emergency evacuation plan for occupants and visitors with disabilities. It would also require the plan to be updated and readily available to emergency personnel ([A.6658](#)/Cusick); and
- Require counties to maintain a confidential registry of people with disabilities who may require evacuation assistance and shelter during a disaster and allow people to choose whether they want their name included in the registry ([A.7257](#)/Cusick).

The discrimination experienced by people with disabilities in matters involving housing and transportation also was addressed with measures that would:

- Permit tenants with limited mobility because of their physical disability to be granted a preference for occupying a vacant housing unit on a lower floor in the same project operated by the New York City Housing Authority ([A.3420-A](#)/Titus);
- Establish the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Riders' Council for People with Disabilities to examine all aspects of the MTA in order to make recommendations on how to better respond to the mass transit needs of individuals with disabilities ([A.745](#)/Kellner);
- Create a tax credit for transportation companies for purchasing

new vehicles that are accessible to persons with disabilities ([A.966-B](#)/Kellner); and

- Establish the minimum width for accessible parking spaces and access aisles to each be eight feet to ensure adequate space for people with disabilities to enter and exit their vehicles, especially for those equipped with wheelchair ramps that open on the side of a vehicle ([A.3363](#)/Lavine).

In addition, Assembly Resolutions were acted on to mark the House's more than two decades of observing Disabilities Awareness Day ([K.502](#)) and honoring the recipient of the Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., Award, which recognizes commitment to disability issues ([K.509](#)).

Legislation to crack down on the discriminatory practices that deny people with disabilities affordable and safe housing is also expected to be acted on by the Assembly later in the session. The bill would make discrimination by landlords based on a tenant's source of income illegal under the New York State Human Rights Law ([A.1121-B](#)/Bing).

"The Assembly's annual observance of Disabilities Awareness Day not only recognizes the accomplishments and contributions of people with disabilities and New York's disability advocates, but it also zeros in on some of the challenges they face. I'm pleased to say that the legislation we approved today includes anti-discrimination measures for the protection of people with disabilities that will ensure their most basic rights in the areas of housing, emergency preparedness, transportation and the election process," said Silver (D-Manhattan). -- *Lindsay Miller, NY Association on Independent Living.*

## ATI Readies to Celebrate 21st Anniversary of the ADA!

On July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. The ADA established a set of mandates that aimed to eradicate the discrimination of people with disabilities.

Since that time, the ADA has expanded opportunities for people with disabilities in America; however the full promise of the ADA will only be achieved if public entities remain committed to their efforts to fully implement the ADA.

Therefore, in honor of the 21st anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act, Access to Independence is planning to host several events and educational opportunities to celebrate the many achievements and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

This year, ATI's month-long ADA Celebration will kick-off on Saturday July 16<sup>th</sup>. At 10:00 AM people with disabilities, their family and friends are invited to participate in a Stroll & Roll. Participants will gather at ATI then walk, stroll and roll through-out downtown Cortland and ending up at the Courthouse Park where the ADA celebration picnic will take place. The stroll & roll is an inclusive 'march' recognizing downtown businesses that have made changes to become more accessible.

ATI will host the community to its annual ADA picnic for to celebrate the ADA. There will be a reading of the ADA's 21st Anniversary Proclamation and there will be

a keynote address by Mr. Thomas Earle, a licensed attorney involved in legal rights of people with disabilities and the CEO of Liberty Resources, Inc., a Center for Independent Living in Philadelphia (see bio to the right).

There will be live music, additional entertainment by WXHC Hometown Radio, food catered by Audrey Jones and family, inclusive games, and much, much more! A vendor fair featuring local and regional vendors who serve the needs of individuals with disabilities may also be part of the day's happenings.

For the second year in a row, ATI will hold its Art-Ability Expose at the Homer Center for the Arts from July 22<sup>nd</sup> to August 26<sup>th</sup>. New this year will be an opportunity for individuals to donate their art work towards a silent art auction. The proceeds from the auction will be used to benefit programs at ATI. Original creative works by people with disabilities will be on display. Such artwork may comprise original paintings, photography, poetry, sculpture, drawings, mixed media, and computer generated works.

For more information on any of ATI's planned events in celebration of the 21st Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Fran Pizzola, Community Education Coordinator, by phone at: 607-753-7363; or by email at: [fpizzola@aticortland.org](mailto:fpizzola@aticortland.org).

***We hope that you will take some time to celebrate with us the civil rights achievements of the past 21 years!***

## ATI To Host Disability Advocate!

Mr. Thomas Earle, a licensed attorney involved in legal rights of people with disabilities, and the CEO of Liberty Resources, Inc. a Center for Independent Living in Philadelphia, will speak at ATI's July 16th ADA Celebration Picnic at Courthouse Park.

Mr. Earle will share his experiences in advocating for the civil rights of people with disabilities, on the ADA and on the Olmstead Act of 1999 (people with disabilities of all ages should be served in the "most integrated setting"). Mr. Earle will also share his experiences as the Regional ADAPT representative in the Philadelphia area. (See article on ADAPT on page 9.)

Mr. Earle served as the Chairperson of the Philadelphia Bar Association's Legal Services to Persons with Disabilities Committee from 1998-2001, and has numerous other distinctions.

In 2003 Mr. Earle became Liberty Resources, Inc.'s CEO. In 2009, Mr. Earle was inducted into the Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council's Hall of Fame.

Please plan to join us in welcoming Mr. Earle to our community!



**Above:** Thomas Earle, long-time disability activist and CEO of the Philadelphia, PA-based Liberty Resources, Inc. will keynote ATI's 2011 ADA Picnic Celebration at the Courthouse Park on July 16.



Visit us online at:  
[www.aticortland.org](http://www.aticortland.org)  
Find us on Facebook!

## “With Help From a Friend, You Can Reach the Stars!”

The Access to Independence (ATI) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) aims to help people with disabilities develop improved work readiness skills. Through one-on-one peer mentoring, career exploration, weekly workshops, monthly support groups, and collaboration with other area employment-focused agencies, the PMP provides opportunities for participants to learn, develop skills, and most importantly, work.

Bill joined the PMP in 2010 through a volunteer experience setup by ATI and the Employment Connection A.C.E. Program. Initially, Bill’s goal was to secure a job as a computer specialist or teacher.

While he brought with him several years of experience in this field, Bill struggled with the barriers of Multiple Sclerosis and Mental Health stigma. While Bill retained much of his experience, he needed help to develop the soft skills that would make him successful. Through the PMP and his volunteer position, Bill would work on his confidence, inter-personal, goal-setting and time management skills.

Bill began working with a mentor to develop a plan of action for a Peer Mentoring Computer Class through ATI. Bill created materials for the class and promoted it to the public. Bill also began to attend the weekly PMP workshops and monthly support groups to network with his peers, build his class attendance and of course, get help when he needed it. Bill then officially started the PMP Computer Class.

At first, Bill held separate classes where he would teach groups of individuals about how to use specific computer programs. Bill quickly realized that he was unable to spend much one-on-one time with participants because he needed to focus on the whole group. With support from the PMP and A.C.E., Bill was able to navigate this barrier by changing his services from a group setting to a one-on-one experience.



“It was difficult for me to work with people in large groups,” said Bill during an interview. “I needed to show each person individual attention to ensure they understood what was being taught.”

Over time, Bill and his mentors worked together to re-shape the computer class into a one-on-one tutoring service. As a tutor, Bill works with individuals on basic and advanced computer skills. Through this experience Bill gained new inter-personal communication skills and learned new ways to manage his time. Bill set and reached goals for himself which boosted his confidence.

Currently, Bill continues to provide computer tutoring services to individuals through the ATI Computer Lab on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Bill also continues to attend PMP workshops and support groups to maintain his skills and to provide assistance to others in the group. Bill is well on his way to creating a job for himself as a dynamic computer specialist who understands the importance for individualized support.

**Keep up the great work, Bill!**

## Eyes on the Future

### Vision Support Group

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday monthly

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

*Get support from peers with similar vision barriers.*

*Learn about assistive tools and technology.*

For more information, contact Aaron Baier by phone: 753-7363, or by email: [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org)

## COMPUTER CLASSES

**Mondays & Wednesdays**

**2:00 - 4:45 pm**

**Thursdays**

**1:00 - 3:00 pm**

**ATI Computer Lab**

**For more information, please call 607-753-7363.**

## Peer Mentoring Program

**Every Thursday**

**3:00 - 4:00 pm**

**ATI Community Room**

For more information, contact Aaron Baier

Phone: 607-753-7363

Email: [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org)



*Above: Bill Siedenburg poses in front of a workstation in the ATI Computer Lab where he offers free one-on-one basic and advanced computer training to individuals.*

## Youth In Power!

**Get empowered...  
Use your abilities...**

**Advocate for what you want!**

**Last Wednesday,  
Monthly 4:00 - 5:00 pm  
CYB - Teen Center  
35 Port Watson Street**

**For more information,  
contact Aaron Baier at:  
607-753-7363**



**Communities That Care**  
Partnering for Smart Choices & Healthy Behaviors  
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## **Join Our Disability Advocacy Network!**

- Keep current on federal, state and local disability issues!
- Receive email alerts on policy and budget matters!
- Fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities!
- Join more than 900 statewide advocates to fight for change!

**Email Chad W. Underwood at:  
[cwunderwood@aticortland.org](mailto:cwunderwood@aticortland.org)**

## **'Jump Start 10' - 2011 CACTC Youth Conference**

On May 24, the Cortland Area Communities That Care (CACTC) Coalition, along with partner agencies, held its 2011 youth conference, titled *Jump Start 10*. The conference targeted Cortland County students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and featured a variety of panels and interactive sessions which aimed to promote positive choices, leadership, and community involvement to students who have reached a pivotal point in their lives.

The event kicked off with motivational keynote speaker Louis Larsen, who shared his experiences and wisdom from career services at SUNY Cortland and now at Ithaca College. From there students rotated through breakout sessions.

In "Making Choices," prevention professionals discussed their perspectives on the subject of substance abuse. Students heard real-life experiences from panelists, including Kimberly McRae-Friedman from 7VCASA and ATI's Chad W. Underwood.

"It's Your Community," brought together a panel of leaders from our community to discuss the importance and current opportunities for students to get involved through volunteerism and leadership. Panelists included John Sua-

rez from SUNY Cortland's Institute for Civic Engagement and Amy Johnson from Cortland High School.

"Future Options" welcomed a panel of local business owners and entrepreneurs who discussed the rewards and pitfalls of owning a business. Panelists included Jodi Wainwright from Bangles Bags and Bling, and Karina Murphy from The Blue Frog.

The Conference concluded with "Leadership Speak Out," an interactive session where participants asked questions to a panel of local leaders, including: Judge Julie Campbell, Syd McEvoy of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Marie Walsh of Catholic Charities, Sandy Price a Cortland County Legislator, and Dr. Erik Bitterbaum of SUNY Cortland.

Partnering agencies included: Access to Independence, CACTC, Catholic Charities, Cortland City Youth Bureau, Cortland County Youth Bureau, Cortland Works Career Center, and Seven Valleys Health Coalition. Many thanks to all of the presenters, panelists and co-sponsors for their efforts to make Jump Start 10 a success for Cortland County youth.

## **ATI Promotes Development of Self-Determination For Youth**

On April 15, ATI partnered with OCM BOCES to facilitate its Self-Determination workshop for more than 50 students.

ATI's Self-Determination workshop aims to provide assistance and information to students who may need help to deal with the barriers in their own lives. Topics include self-advocacy, using peer supports, setting goals, IEP diplomas and CSE meetings and dealing with bullying. Workshop facilitators connect with students as peers and work to motivate students to take control of their lives and their educational experience.

For more information on ATI's Disability Awareness Day workshop series please contact Aaron T. Baier, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org).

## Youth Lead Cortland Youth in Power Group

Over the past three months, the ATI's Youth Transition program received some much needed volunteer assistance from two OCM BOCES Work Experience students. Jennah and Jon, two youth from Homer High School, worked hard to provide data entry and general office assistance to ATI staff and programs. More importantly, they learned about leadership and had the opportunity to use those skills.

Jennah and Jon took the lead on one of ATI's up-and-coming projects, the Cortland Youth in Power group. Together, the two young leaders developed a full workshop on teamwork for the April 2011 session of Youth in Power. They not only developed an agenda, but promoted and facilitated the event with one of the best turn outs to date.

Jennah and Jon began the program with an ice-breaker to get to know their audience and to learn more about each other. They then challenged the group to an entertaining game of "crab soccer" in which participants were challenged

to think outside the box and rely on support from their team.

### Nothing About Us, Without Us!

If you're a youth with a disability, or want to get involved in activities to make a difference, join Cortland Youth in Power. Meetings are held monthly, on the last Wednesday of each month, from 4:00 - 5:00 pm, at the Cortland City Youth Bureau Teen Center on 35 Port Watson Street.

For more information on Cortland Youth in Power contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org).

### Thank you Jennah & Jon!



## Housing Consortium On Track

Over the past several months, ATI has lead the way to reinvigorate the Cortland County Housing Consortium. The Consortium comprises key stakeholders who work to improve the housing crisis in Cortland County.

Currently, the Housing Consortium is focusing its efforts on areas such as: affordable and accessible housing, senior housing, improving substandard buildings, resolving issues with rental and student housing, maintaining quality housing for middle-income professionals, and updating antiquated laws.

Currently involved in the Housing Consortium are representatives from Access to Independence, Cortland County Chamber of Commerce, Catholic Charities, Cortland County Area Agency on Aging, Habitat for Humanity, City and County government, and other interested individuals.

"The problems with housing in Cortland County are too large for any single entity to handle on their own," said Aaron T. Baier, Housing Advocate for ATI. "We need to pool our resources in order to be effective. Without a dedicated and comprehensive effort to identify housing issues and knowledge of the resources available in our community, we will not be able to make necessary improvements."

For more information and to get involved in the Cortland County Housing Consortium, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org).

Access to Independence held its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Bowl-a-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, March 19, 2011 at Cortlanes. More than 75 participants bowled at this year's event. In addition, 20 area businesses donated door prizes and another 6 businesses sponsored this event by making a contribution.



Many thanks to all the businesses that donated to this year's Bowl-a-Thon. Many thanks to all of the bowlers for securing sponsors and for raising funds to help ATI continue to provide resources and advocacy for people with disabilities.

	<b>Terri Maxson</b> Vice President
	18-25 South St. McGraw, NY 13101 (607) 836-6474 x 15 Fax (607) 836-6799 terri@higginsupply.com www.higginsupply.com
UNDERWIRES GARMENT BONING ORTHOPEDIC STAYS ORTHOPEDIC HARDWARE	

## ATI Work Readiness Services: Job Shadows & Internships

This year, Access to Independence has been hard at work building relationships with local businesses to provide job shadowing opportunities to its Peer Mentoring and Youth Transition participants. Through job shadowing and career exploration, participants have the opportunity to network with local employers, gain insight into their career interest, and even obtain experience in a specific field.

On March 29, Greek Peak's Hope Lake Lodge hosted a worksite tour for participants to learn about their hospitality services. Bonnie Haines, Human Resources Director, shared her experience, policies and practices throughout the tour.

On April 19, Country Inn & Suites also provided a tour of their hotel and participants shadowed their front desk and housekeeping staff for a glimpse of the job requirements. Teri Keegan, General Manager of the hotel shared with participants the importance of a positive and helpful attitude and explained the in's and out's of the hotel business.

On April 26, Pall Trinity Corporation provided an in-depth worksite tour of their facilities and the wide range of job opportunities from entry-level to technical.

Thanks to Barb Kasperek, HR Director, participants met with staff in different departments and asked about the various projects that they work on and the qualifications needed for those jobs.

ATI also helps to setup internships and volunteer opportunities for job seekers who want to improve their work skillset. For example, when Jamie Yaman, Broker Associate and Sales Manager at Yaman Real Estate, sought ATI guidance to secure a volunteer for a project, ATI connected him with a young person, Taylor, who was seeking new work experience. Taylor volunteered her time to help develop a Community Events Calendar for the Agency.

ATI supports career exploration within the agency as well. On April 11 and 13, ATI hosted two job shadowing students from the OCM BOCES Office Technology class. Joe and Kimberly's goal was to see how the office functions and learn about unique qualifications of the disability advocacy field.

For more information on ATI's Work Readiness services and to get involved in career exploration and job shadowing opportunities, please contact Aaron T. Baier, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at [abaier@aticortland.org](mailto:abaier@aticortland.org).

## Secret Work Incentive!

If you are receiving SSI and would like to try to work, the Section 1619 (b) work incentive may be for you. This provision allows individuals, in most cases, to retain Medicaid when they lose SSI due to increased wages.

If an SSI beneficiary works, the first \$65 (or \$85 if there is no unearned income) of wages each month are not counted. The SSI check is then reduced by \$1 for every \$2 of gross monthly wages. For a person who lives alone, SSI eligibility will cease if they earn \$1,607 or more per month. This is because countable income would be equal to the SSI living alone rate of \$761 per month.

Section 1619 (b) allows Medicaid to continue if a person loses SSI due to wages. If the person is still disabled and would be eligible for SSI if the wages were not counted, Medicaid should continue. In New York, the income limit is \$43,421 in wages per year. The income limit can be higher if medical expenses are high enough.

To remain 1619 (b) eligible, the individual's resources and unearned income must stay within SSI limits.

To find out more about the 1619 (b) program, call Sue Lewis, ATI Benefits Counselor and IL Coordinator at 753-7363.

## ATI Wants You!

*ATI is currently recruiting interested individuals with diverse backgrounds, with and without disabilities, to serve on its Board of Directors.*

**For more information, please contact:**

**Mary E. Ewing, Executive Director**  
**by phone: 607-753-7363; or**  
**by email: [mewing@aticortland.org](mailto:mewing@aticortland.org)**



*Above: Kim Christie, ATI Receptionist, helped to facilitate ATI's 2011 Spring Social Night on May 18. More than 25 consumers and guests attended!*

## Access to Home is On! Still Accepting Applications for Home Accessibility Modifications

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) continues to accept applications from qualified homeowners for the completion of home modifications to make them more accessible. Modifications may range from minor improvements, such as the installation of grab bars, new door handles, lighting fixtures or modified sink handles, to major renovations, such as the installation of accessible kitchen and bathroom amenities to the relocation of a bedroom to the first floor of a home. Other modifications may include wheelchair ramps and lifts, expanded doorways, and the installation of special devices for people with visual or hearing impairments. All adaptation work will be specifically tailored to meet the needs of those with physical disabilities and seniors with an age-related disability.

**Qualification Criteria #1:** Successful applicants must meet at least one of the four following criteria: (1) A household member must presently be in an institution and unable to return home because of physical barriers that exist. (2) A household member must have a disability or have substantial difficulty with activities of daily living, and be at risk of institutional placement. (3) A household member who has a disability or is aging receives medical home care services that cannot be effectively administered because of physical barriers. (4) A household member who has a disability or is aging has the capacity for self-care, or is being cared for by family members, but quality or safety of care is at risk because of physical barriers in the home.

**Qualification Criteria #2:** Successful applicants must also meet certain income guidelines: (1) One-person households must have annual income between \$11,950 – 31,800. (2) Two-person households must have annual income between \$13,650 – 36,350. (3) Three-person households must have income between \$15,350 – 40,900. (4) Four-person households must have income between \$17,050 – 45,450.

**Qualification Criteria #3:** Successful applicants must provide proof that the property to be modified is current on mortgages, property insurance and all property taxes, and that the property is the permanent residence of the applicant. For successful applicants who rent their home, tenancy must be verified with written permission from the owner for any modifications.

Priority will be given to applicants needing accessibility modifications for nursing facility transition, or for diversion from institutionalization, so as to remain in their home. All other applications will be accepted on a first come basis. Each applicant must complete a detailed application process.

Late last year, ATI received word that the NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation had authorized and approved a \$300,000 *Access to Home* grant effective through October 2012. ATI will use those funds, along with a \$15,000 award from Thoma Development, to administer the program and to provide accessibility modifications for approximately 20 low-, very low-, and extremely low- income households.

Over the past five years, ATI has provided ramps, home modifications and assistive technology solutions to more than 100 individuals through a variety of funding sources. Since 2006, ATI has secured more than \$1,000,000 in funding from the State's Housing Trust Fund Corporation to run its *Access to Home* program and has completed more than 65 projects.

For more information on ATI's *Access to Home* grant or its various other architectural barrier programs, please contact Audrey Jones by phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: [ajones@aticortland.org](mailto:ajones@aticortland.org). You may also visit our website: [www.aticortland.org](http://www.aticortland.org). Accessibility is what we do!



## What Is ADAPT?

ADAPT is a national grass-roots community that organizes disability rights activists to engage in nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience, to promote the civil and human rights of people with disabilities

ADAPT activists are continuously fighting for freedom. They chant, sing, wheel in the rain, go without sleep and even get arrested. In May, while advocating against discriminatory proposals in Washington D.C., 91 ADAPT activists were arrested while DEFENDING OUR FREEDOM (see article to right).

ADAPT is an activist organization, that is, participants give their time and energy to bring about change in the long term care system and to FREE OUR PEOPLE!

To become involved with ADAPT you must have an active interest in the issue of changing the long term care system, getting people attendant services in the community and getting folks out of nursing homes and other institutions. The key word is active. The only dues are the ones you pay in blood, sweat and tears, but the dignity and pride you receive in return can not be valued. Check out the ADAPT website for more information: [www.adapt.org](http://www.adapt.org).

For more information on ATT's Statewide and National disability advocacy efforts, contact Chad W. Underwood, COO, by phone: 753-73636, or by email: [cwunderwood@aticortland.org](mailto:cwunderwood@aticortland.org).

## ADAPT / Disability Advocates Storm Congress

During the first week of May, 300 members of ADAPT took over the Rotunda of the Cannon House Office Bldg., demanding that Congress derail Rep. Paul Ryan's FY 2012 budget proposal. Under the Ryan Plan, Medicaid programs would be cut by 35%, which translates to a loss of \$772 billion in human services. The Ryan Plan proposes a system of Medicaid block grants for states, giving states greater ability to make cuts.

"The Ryan Plan is today's version of the 'Final Solution' for the 60 million people who rely on Medicaid," said Randy Alexander, an organizer with ADAPT of Tennessee. "A real solution for containing costs is to give Medicaid recipients of long term care services greater flexibility to receive those services in their own homes rather than in costly institutions. Let's get real about what we've known for decades: government spending on institutional reimbursements is breaking America's bank."

Of the 60 million people counting on Medicaid right now, 8.5 million are people with disabilities; 8.8 million are low income frail, elderly and disabled individuals who rely on Medicaid to plug the gaps in Medicare coverage, such as long term care. Medicaid pays for vital services such as wheelchairs and prostheses for people with spinal cord injuries; prescription drugs for people with mental illnesses; services to assist people with intellectual disabilities to live and work in the community; and screening programs to diagnose disabilities for children.

There is widespread support for services for the people with disabilities and older Americans. According to a recent Washington Post-ABC News poll, 69% of Americans oppose cutting Medicaid. These results are consistent with a 2010 Harris survey that found that 89% Americans supported a tax increase to assure that people could receive services in their own homes, rather than being forced into nursing facilities or other institutions.

"We cannot accept this invasion of our liberty any longer. The institutional bias in federal and state policies steals our freedom, our families, our homes, and our very lives," said Bruce Darling, an organizer with Rochester ADAPT. We don't need flexibility in Medicaid cuts. We need flexibility in Medicaid spending so people can choose the less expensive community service options they want, and that will ultimately contain costs."

ADAPT wants Representatives Paul Ryan, John Boehner and Michelle Bachmann to publicly withdraw their support for Medicaid budget cuts and Medicaid state block grants. Without this commitment, ADAPT has decided to make a point that we are willing to do whatever it takes to defend the right of people with disabilities and seniors to live in our homes, not nursing homes and institutions. It is unacceptable for our own government to mistreat the 60 million Americans who rely on Medicaid.

By night's end, 91 members of ADAPT were arrested at Cannon House Office. FREE OUR PEOPLE!

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## Barrier-Free + Accessible Design + Assistive Technology = Universal Design: Part VII

Universal design is a concept that emerged from "barrier-free," "accessible design" and "assistive technology." It relates to the idea that all products and environments should be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. It relates to people who are young or old, and with excellent or limited abilities. In short, universal design accommodates limitations.

There are four common aspects to universal design that apply to any environment: **Flexibility:** making the environment adaptable to your needs as they might change over time; **Simplicity:** ensuring things remain accessible with housekeeping, storage, entertaining, maintenance and routine daily functioning; **Stylish:** keeping the environment beautiful and comfortable while being accessible; and **Safety:** eliminating risk factors that may lead to accidents.

This edition we are going to talk about universal design in the workplace. A universally designed workplace could potentially eliminate the need for specialized accommodations and also provide a safer and more productive environment for all employees.

- *Environmental* - effective lighting; adequate space for travel and maneuvering; minimal noise levels; elimination of obstacles in path of travel; accessible entrances.
- *Controls and Tools* - accessible door handles, light switches, elevator controls, faucets; tools with textured grips with a diameter which minimizes grasping force.
- *Workstation and Storage* - minimal glare; blinds or curtains on windows adjacent to workstation; adjustable chairs and workstations (ergonomic furniture); storage in range of reach for all employees; organizers and file folder storage on the desktop.
- *Computers* - accessibility features in operating systems; training in the ergonomics of seating posture and positioning; ergonomic use of keyboard, mouse and monitor.
- *Communications* - volume controls on telecommunication equipment; accessible, high contrast signage; alternate formats (large print, electronic files).
- *Safety* - multi-sensory alarm signals (auditory, visual); emergency and safety equipment clearly identified and placed in a conspicuous location.

Please remember, accessibility in the home, workplace or business is not just for people with disabilities. If you think about it, accessibility is important for all people from youth to seniors; in all settings from work to home to business...remember the Universal Design concept!

For more information on ATP's various architectural barrier programs, including our accessibility construction and aging-in-place services, please contact Audrey Jones by phone: 753-7363, or by email: [ajones@aticortland.org](mailto:ajones@aticortland.org).

  
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