

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

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Winter 2012

NUMBER XXXI

Area Disability Advocates Educate State Leaders

On Tuesday, February 14, more than 200 disability advocates from across the state convened in the Well of the Legislative Office Building to advocate for action on legislation that would improve the quality of life and safeguard the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities.

Access to Independence sent a delegation of 11 advocates to participate in the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL)-sponsored Legislative Day activities that aimed to educate state leaders on pressing disability issues heading into this year's legislative session.

ATI's delegation also met with Sen. Jim Seward, Assem. Barbara Lifton, Assem. Brian Kolb, and Assem. Gary Finch, all representatives of Cortland County residents.

The Access to Independence delegation focused much of its advocacy on issues relating to the state's

current budget negotiations and the importance of implementing systemic reforms to ensure that services and supports for people with disabilities are provided in the most integrated setting.

Advocates spoke with the legislators on several of the proposals that were included in the 2012-13 Executive Budget released in January. Advocates lauded proposed language that would allow for the reinvestment of Medicaid savings from hospital and nursing home closures to expand supportive housing and related services.

Advocates also encouraged legislators to increase appropriations for key housing initiatives such as low-income housing tax credits and the *Access to Home* program, which funds home accessibility modifications for low income homeowners with disabilities.

First Niagara Bank Grant

This past December, the First Niagara Foundation awarded Access to Independence a \$15,000 grant through its *Mentoring Matters Program*.

The goal of the First Niagara program is to reinforce the importance of mentoring and the positive impact it can have on young adults.

Access to Independence plans to use the grant funds to sustain several initiatives relating to its Peer Mentoring Program, including participant stipends, participant and staff training opportunities, program awareness and promotion efforts, weekly workshops and periodic events.

Many thanks go out to the First Niagara Bank Foundation and the employees of the local First Niagara Bank for their contribution of time and efforts to ATI programming!



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

2012 Disability Priorities	2
Special Needs Trusts	3
2012 Bowl-a-Thon	3
Services for Visually Impaired	4
Youth In Power	5
ATI Presents at TASH	5
With Help From a Friend	6
Mentoring Matters.....	6
Sheltered Workshops	7
Business Accessibility.....	8
2010 ADA Standards	8
Help for Health Plans	8
2012 Social Security Changes.....	9
SSI Benefits and Marriage	9
Accessibility Construction.....	10

NYAIL Announces 2012 Disability Policy Priorities

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) has recently announced its 2012 legislative priorities. Each priority aims to address barriers to community living and ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities are protected. Access to Independence is a proud Member and supporter of NYAIL and its 2012 agenda.

HOUSING

- *Make discrimination by landlords based on a tenant's source of income illegal under State Human Rights Law. (S.83: Squadron)*

Landlords often reject tenants with rental subsidies, such as Section 8. Many people with disabilities rely on subsidies and other assistance programs to live independently in the community. Discrimination based on source of income is illegal in New York City. It should be illegal throughout New York State.

- *Incorporate inclusive design features in new residential housing that receives financial assistance for construction from federal, state, county or local governments. (Not yet introduced.)*

Most existing housing stock was not built to meet the needs of people with disabilities or the aging. Housing built using inclusive design features would meet the needs of people throughout the lifespan and allow homes to be visitable to people with disabilities.

CIVIL RIGHTS

- *Incorporate Title II of ADA into NYS Human Rights Law. (A.71: Paulin; and S.2407: Marcellino)*

Under the 1999 US Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision, people with disabilities are entitled to receive the services and supports they need to live in the community and avoid unwanted placement in nursing facilities and other institutions. The proposed legislation would clarify

the scope of protections against discrimination by public entities, including in the provision of services, programs and activities. Public entities would be required to make reasonable accommodations and individuals with disabilities would gain critical access to the administrative enforcement mechanisms through the State Division of Human Rights.

MENTAL HEALTH

- *Amend State Social Services Law Section 384-b to eliminate subdivisions (4)(c) and (6)(a-e), which permit termination of parental rights on the basis of "mental illness or mental retardation". (S. 3026: Huntley)*

Parents with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities are vulnerable to the loss of custody and termination of their parental rights. Since 1976, State Social Services Law has included as grounds for the termination of parental rights, the inability "by reason of mental illness or mental retardation, to provide proper and adequate care..." of a child. The use of these disability-related grounds for termination promotes the discriminatory belief that parents with such disabilities are unable or unfit to care for their children.

EDUCATION

- *Include the history of people with disabilities as required curriculum in all elementary and secondary schools. (A.8466: Cusick; and S.2352: Grisanti)*

In order to fully integrate people with disabilities into the community, societal attitudes toward people with disabilities need to change. Education on civil rights of people with disabilities is the foundation for ensuring these rights are protected and attitudes changed. This bill would adopt a statewide curriculum to promote greater awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT

- *Establish a small business tax credit for the employment of people with disabilities. (S.4107: Addabbo; and A.8385: Cusick)*

Working age people with disabilities in the State have a 34.5% employment rate, resulting in an employment gap between people with and without disabilities of 40.9% (*Disability Matters*, Center for Independence of the Disabled New York, 2011). The tax credit created by this legislation would provide an incentive for small businesses to hire individuals with disabilities.

TRANSPORTATION

- *Cap fares for paratransit at levels no higher than the base fares for transportation of non-disabled adults utilizing the public transit system. (S. 1225: Duane; and A. 737: Kellner)*
- *Require transportation service providers, (e.g., taxis and limousines), to purchase accessible vehicles. (Not yet introduced.)*

The limited availability of accessible transportation services is a major barrier faced by individuals with disabilities. It often leads to unemployment, the inability to access medical care, lack of access to polling sites, and isolation. Many people with disabilities rely heavily on the provision of paratransit services; however, public transit budget woes have led to an increase in cost for such services. The paratransit bill would cap paratransit fares. In addition, the increased availability of accessible transportation options would result in considerable savings to the state Medicaid program as the cost of paying for ambulettes to transport wheelchair users to medical appointments would decrease.

For more information, contact Chad W. Underwood by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: cwunderwood@aticortland.org.

Supplemental Needs Trusts: Enhancing Lives of PWD

A Trust is a legal arrangement where someone manages resources for the benefit of someone else. The person managing the trust is called the “trustee” and the person entitled to the assets in the trust is called the “beneficiary”. In the case of a Supplemental Needs Trust (SNT), an eligible beneficiary must have a severe and chronic disability and receive government benefits.

Historically, parents established an SNT trust for an adult child with a disability to avoid jeopardizing the child’s eligibility for government benefits. The SNT allows for resources to be set aside for the continuing benefit of a person with a disability without disqualifying that person from receiving government benefits such as SSI and Medicaid. If the SNT is properly managed, the person with the disability will benefit from the resources in the trust and have an enhanced quality of life.

There are two types of SNT’s: self-settled and non-self-settled. A non-self-settled trust is made up of assets that did NOT belong to the beneficiary, nor did the beneficiary have a present right to receive the assets before the trust was created. An example of this kind of trust would be one created by a third party and funded by property that passes to the trust by direction of someone’s will, by a gift, or by a transfer. A self-settled trust contains assets of the individual with the disability. Self-settled trusts can be cre-

ated by using personal injury awards, a person’s savings, investments, and in some cases income.

The biggest difference between non-self and self-settled trusts is “The Payback Provision”. In cases of self-settled SNT’s, Medicaid programs do not require the recipient to spend down his or her assets before receiving services if those assets are held in a SNT. However, a federal law requires that the trust pay back any remaining trust assets to the state Medicaid program on the death of the beneficiary. The law does not require the trustee to save assets during the beneficiary’s lifetime in order to cover the payback obligation.

An SNT can pay for most, if not all, of the beneficiary’s expenses, including housing, transportation, education, recreation, travel, household goods and additional healthcare or therapy costs which are over and above those covered by Medicaid and Medicare. A very important thing to consider when choosing a trustee is making sure that he or she understands the rules of making payments for items out of the trust.

For more information on Special Needs Trusts, contact Susan Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org. You may also contact CNY Legal Services at 315-703-6500, or NYSARC, Inc. Trust Services at 800-735-8924.

2012 Bowl-a-Thon Success

On Saturday, February 25, more than 75 bowlers convened at Cort-Lanes to enjoy a half-day of rocking music, inclusive recreation fun, pizza, and door prizes donated from more than 30 local businesses!

This year’s bowl-a-thon was ATI’s biggest and best ever! In addition to perennial participants, this year’s fundraiser featured a number of group and individual challenges. Those challenges included various groups of youth, as well as an inaugural challenge of students and professors from Tompkins-Cortland Community College and SUNY Cortland!

One of the more exciting events during the day was a challenge between John Suarez, ATI board member and Service Learning Coordinator for SUNY Cortland’s Institute for Civic Engagement, and Dr. Dan Pukstas, ATI board member and TC3 English Professor. John agreed to bowl blind-folded and with a cane. Unfortunately, the results of the challenge have not been released.

The 2012 ATI bowl-a-thon would not have been such a success without the ardent support of community donors and businesses. Business sponsors included: Alliance Bank, Cortland Dental, Economy Paving, and Yaman Real Estate. Sherry & Keith Brickner and family were lead sponsors for this year’s event.

Many thanks go out to all of this year’s bowlers and contributors!



Quality Services for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Since 1973, when the Rehabilitation Act was passed into law, state agencies like Adult Career & Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR) and the Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped (CBVH) have existed to provide employment services to individuals with disabilities. But who oversees these agencies and their programs for quality assurance and growth?

Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act mandates each vocational rehabilitation agency to have a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to serve in an advisory capacity. The state agency and their respective SRC are overseen federally by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

The NYS CBVH is different from other vocational rehabilitation agencies. Not only does CBVH provide traditional vocational and employment services to individuals with visual impairments, but they also provide life-long services to improve their overall ability to live independently. These services include independent living skills training, educational supports, communication (Braille, and assistive tools), youth transition, vocational rehabilitation, and senior/aging services.

The nature and scope of the CBVH SRC is to deliberate and make recommendations to CBVH policies, procedures, and operations as they may affect consumers or consumer applicants of CBVH services statewide. Additionally, the SRC assists in the development of

federally required State Plans and annual updates to those plans. To accomplish these objectives, the SRC works through four primary committees: Quality Assurance & Needs Assessment; Policy & Procedure Planning; Workforce Development; and Membership.

It is important that each SRC has a diverse membership in order to guide the positive growth of CBVH. The SRC is comprised of members who represent blind consumers, deaf-blind consumers, parents, educators, business, industry and labor, consumer advocacy groups, the NYS Workforce Investment Board and the NYS Independent Living Council. Ex Officio members represent the NYS Office of Adult Career & Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR), the NYS Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for People with Disabilities (CQCAPD), the NYS Office for the Aging (OFA), and various representatives from CBVH who provide information and assistance as requested by the Council.

All SRC Meetings are held in Albany, open to the public and include a public comment segment on the meeting agenda for individuals to provide input or bring issues of concern to the Council.

For more information on the CBVH SRC or to participate in Public Comment, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

Eyes on the Future

Vision Support Group

2nd Thursday monthly
5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

Get support from peers with similar vision barriers.

Learn about assistive tools and technology.

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

Youth In Power!

Get empowered...

Use your abilities...

Advocate for what you want!

2nd & 4th Wednesday,
Monthly 4:00 - 5:00 pm

CYB - Teen Center

35 Port Watson Street

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

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.

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: cwunderwood@aticortland.org

Youth In Power - Advocating for a Better Future

The Access to Independence (ATI) Youth Transition Program (YTP) aims to ensure that youth with disabilities have opportunities to succeed in school and to gain the skills necessary to successfully transition to community life. Youth need support to graduate from high school, to learn basic living skills, to remain active in the community, to prepare for college or trade school and to secure employment. The YTP provides that support through a variety of services to the students. Those services compliment the efforts of parents, families, teachers and other community supports.

Through the YTP, young people with disabilities can benefit from a variety of services. One-on-one peer mentoring offers youth an opportunity to learn from a peer in all aspects of life. Peer counseling and advocacy services offer youth a support system which they can use to ensure fair treatment in current and future endeavors. Work readiness services provide youth with opportunities to learn and gain experience in employment through job shadowing, weekly workshops and monthly support groups.

Raising a young person with different needs can be especially challenging for parents. The YTP offers parents an opportunity to have an advocate to attend Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings for their students. Parents gain much needed support to ensure that a youth has everything they need to achieve their goals.

The YTP offers services to schools as well! Self-Determination workshops are available to special education classrooms that offer students a look at community life, college, self-advocacy needs, and goal-setting, as well as offer them interactive activities to reinforce healthy decision making and the independent living philosophy.

Students with disabilities may also face stigma from their peers. To address this, ATI offers Disability Awareness workshops to all students grades K-12. The Disability Awareness workshops cover the history of disability and the independent living movement. Presenters share personal experiences related to their own disabilities to highlight the real "ability" of individuals with disabilities.

For more information on ATI's various Youth Transition services, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

ATI Presents at TASH 2011

This past December, SUNY Cortland and Access to Independence joined forces to present at the TASH 36th Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The team shared information and findings on their continued collaboration in developing a community needs assessment on the unmet needs of youth with disabilities who have IEPs.

Dr. Judy Bentley (SUNY Cortland Professor and ATI Board Member), Mary Ewing (Executive Director) and Chad Underwood (Chief Operating Officer) highlighted the group's findings from more than six Focus Group discussions held among various stakeholders, including youth, parents, teachers and administrators.

Rather than presenting a classroom-style workshop, the team presented a Poster of information to more than 250 interested attendees who trickled by at their own pace, asked their own questions, and shared additional insight.

TASH is an international association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates and professionals who are joined in the effort to fight for a society in which the inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the norm.

Cortland Recovery Center
New Weekend Hours



Friday 2-8pm
Saturday 2-8pm
Sunday 11-6pm
 (Starting Friday, January 13, 2012)
 Phone Number: 607 423-7472
 Email: cortlandrecoverycenter@gmail.com
 37 Central Ave. Cortland

OCMBOCES 
 Committed to Your Success

The Center for New Careers
 Adult Job Training & Continuing Education
 1710 NYS Rt. 13
 Cortland, New York
 607-758-5111
www.ocmboces.org

Office Technology, Pharmacy Technician, Medical Assistant, HVAC/R, Electrical Maintenance Technician, Automotive Technician, and more...

 **Family Counseling Services**
 of Cortland County, Inc.

10 North Main Street
 Cortland, NY 13045
 607-723-0234

The most experienced private, not-for-profit counseling service in Cortland County.



Above: Dr. Judy Bentley, Mary Ewing and Chad W. Underwood met with dozens of TASH 2011 attendees to discuss ATI's ongoing youth needs assessment.

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

The Access to Independence (ATI) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) strives to help each of its participants to achieve successful community employment. The PMP focuses on goal setting, problem solving, attitude, and advocacy, as well as developing and utilizing support systems, all to help job seekers with disabilities to find the skills and confidence needed to gain and retain employment independently. The PMP also embraces peer support as a conduit for participants to communicate and learn from each other’s failures and successes.

John has been a participant and mentor in the PMP for three years. While John worked for a local business for more than 5 years, he was recently laid-off due to company cut backs. Although he was disheartened, John took a positive approach and immediately sought advice and assistance from his support system.

A support system includes friends, family, service providers, and networks that are invested in helping a person achieve a goal. In John’s case, his support system included the ATI PMP, a peer network of friends and co-workers, and supported employment services through Employment Connection. Employment Connection has already begun work to help John identify new opportunities in the job market. John’s friends are being helpful by giving him ideas on potential opportunities and by encouraging him through a frus-

trating and unexpected job search.

“I need a job,” John said during a recent PMP event. “I’m working really hard to get back to work. I’ve been talking to friends and my former co-workers to see what is out there.” Every day, John is making progress toward his next career. His experience and desire to help others is what drove John to become a mentor in the first place. John’s determination to find new employment will only strengthen his abilities as an effective mentor.

As a mentor in the PMP, John (and other mentors) serves as part of

other people’s support systems. Not only does John provide motivational support, he also shares real-life experiences and serves as a sounding board for mentees to discuss issues and successes related to the job search, community resources, and goal management.

John attends weekly workshops and monthly support groups (schedule permitting) and also works one-on-one with mentees whose goals are similar to John’s field of interest, maintenance. With his previous employer, John was a tremendous advocate for career exploration and even encouraged his employer to participate in ATI job shadowing events.

John’s dedication to achieving his own goals is a model for anyone in the market for a job. There is no doubt that John’s skills and abilities will be put to good use in his next career opportunity.

Good Luck John!



Mentoring Matters.....

This past January, Cortland celebrated National Mentoring Month by joining forces to expand existing mentoring programs. National Mentoring Month aimed to: 1) raise awareness of mentoring in its various forms; 2) recruit individuals to mentor, especially in programs that have waiting lists; and 3) promote the rapid growth of mentoring by recruiting organizations to engage in mentoring.

Cortland Community Mentors is a recently established collaboration of mentoring programs that exist at Access to Independence, Cortland YWCA, and Family Counseling Services. Cortland Community Mentors also partners with SUNY Cortland and the Cortland Area Communities That Care (CACTC) coalition.

Cortland Community Mentors aims to recruit qualified mentors from across the County, including SUNY Cortland, to provide youth and adults with mentoring opportunities, including: educational assistance; employment coaching; social and emotional support; and prevention of risky behaviors.

Mentoring not only helps participants build valuable life skills, but it also promotes independent thinking, problem-solving, and self-determination. (Next page...)



Above: John Glazier poses for a recent photo during a recent visit to Access to Independence.

..... Mentoring Initiatives

The Access to Independence Peer Mentoring Program provides educational and employment support to transition-aged youth (14-21) and adults (22+). The Peer Mentoring Program offers weekly workshops, monthly support groups, job shadowing and career exploration, as well as a unique one-on-one mentoring experience for participants.

The Cortland YWCA's Bridges for Kids program provides children, ages 5 to 11, with positive adult role models. Each child is paired with a trained adult volunteer with whom they spend a few hours each week doing one-on-one activities. By establishing a trusting relationship, the child is provided with the opportunity to develop a positive self-image.

The Family Counseling Services Youth Assist Program is designed to give youth extra support to build confidence and develop appropriate social, communication and decision-making skills. One-on-one and group mentoring is offered to youth in grades 6 and up. The Youth Assist Program also offers tutoring services through the Homework Help Program to students ages 9 and up.

While each of these programs caters to a unique population, they complement each other to ensure that everyone has access to positive role models. All three programs are working collaboratively to facilitate uniform training sessions for interested participants. That training has been developed by the National Mentoring Center.

For more information, or to get involved with Cortland Community Mentors, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Lawsuit Challenges Overuse of Sheltered Workshops for PWD

On Wednesday, January 25, the Oregon chapter of the Cerebral Palsy Association and eight individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities filed a class-action, the first of its kind in any state.

While intended as stepping stones to jobs in the competitive labor market, some sheltered workshops have drawn fire from critics who say too many people with disabilities are being segregated and exploited by them. Those critics also say sheltered jobs tend to perpetuate a stereotype that individuals with disabilities are incapable of real work.

Sheltered workshops, sometimes called "work-activity programs," are facilities funded by state and local agencies and nonprofit groups around the country that provide jobs to people with disabilities who perform basic, unskilled labor such as packaging or basic assembly tasks.

Workers at these facilities are typically paid less than minimum wage, according to U.S. labor standards for piece work.

The plaintiff class the lawsuit seeks to encompass consists of several thousand individuals with various mental and physical disabilities who are qualified for integrated employment or programs to move them into mainstream jobs.

There are currently more than 2,300 people with disabilities who are segregated in sheltered workshops in Oregon at any one time, most of them "stuck in long-term, dead-end" facilities "that offer virtually no interaction with non-disabled peers, that do not provide any real pathway to integrated employment and that provide compensation that is well below minimum wage," the suit says.

In 1988, about half those people were receiving state support in making the transition to mainstream work environments that pay competitive wages, the suit says. By 2010, that number had dropped to less than a quarter.

The suit says Oregon's "over-reliance on sheltered workshops and its failure to timely develop and adequately fund integrated employment services" violates protections against discrimination under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act.

The lawsuit comes a year after the National Disability Rights Network published a critique of sheltered workshops, saying they "have replaced institutions in many states as the new warehousing system and are the new favored locations where people with disabilities are sent to occupy their days."



Find us on
Facebook!

- OR -

Visit us online at:

www.aticortland.org



Above: Dr. Dan Pukstas and John Suarez congratulate each other after bowling at ATT's 2012 Bowl-a-Thon.

It Makes Sense to Make Your Business Accessible to People With Disabilities

Almost one out of every five Americans is a person with a disability, and each is a potential customer. Moreover, there are another 70 million baby boomers who will be over age 65 by the year 2030. Already, they are demanding products, services and environments that meet their age-related physical needs. Studies show that once people with disabilities find a business where they can shop or get services in an accessible manner, they become repeat customers

Making your business **INCLUSIVE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** is not just the **LAW**, it is **SMART BUSINESS!**

ATI and the SUNY Cortland Downtown Partnership invite you to attend an interactive training workshop entitled: **ADA Title III: A Primer for Private Business and Commercial Facilities.**

The following topics will be covered at this training:

- Awareness of customers with disabilities
- Effective interaction with people with disabilities
- Legal considerations / discrimination
- Program accessibility
- New construction & business modifications
- Case scenarios
- Questions and answers/ Resource list

Date: Friday, March 2, 2012

Time: 1:30 to 4:00 pm

Place: Beard Bldg., 9 Main St., Cortland

Fee: \$25.00 per person

Contact: Fran Pizzola, 607-753-7363

2010 ADA Standards In Effect March 15

The Department of Justice has revised its regulations implementing the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA). These revisions clarify issues that have arisen over the past 20 years and include the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design.

Although it's been 22 years since the passage of the ADA, people with disabilities are still excluded from everyday activities, such as shopping at a corner store, going to a neighborhood restaurant, or using the swimming pool at a hotel on the family vacation.

The revised ADA regulations and 2010 Standards are intended to end discrimination by instructing state and local government entities (Title II) and private businesses and places of public accommodation (Title III) to fully comply with design standards for accessibility.

For more information on the ADA revised Title II and Title III Regulations and the 2010 Standards of Accessible Design, visit [www.adata.org](http://wwwadata.org) to view nine Fact Sheets.

Help Available for Medicare Savings Plans & Part D Prescription Plan Costs

Did you know that help is available to pay for Medicare Part B and Part D premiums?

There are several levels of assistance in the Medicare Savings Program. If you have Medicare and receive between \$928 and \$1246 (for a single person), you may qualify for help paying your Part B insurance premium. If you receive \$928 or less as a single person, you might be eligible for help paying your deductibles, coinsurance, and copays too.

For either program, the resource level for a single person is \$6,680. Countable resources include checking and savings accounts, stocks and bonds. Resources that don't count include your home, your car and your personal belongings. If you think you might qualify, contact your local Medicaid office to apply for the Medicare Savings plan.

You can also get help paying your Part D prescription Plan costs. If you have up to \$16,425 in yearly income and up to \$13,070 in resources, you may qualify for this help. If you think you may qualify, you can apply online at www.ssa.gov, or contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 for assistance.

For help with the application process, contact Susan Lewis, Independent Living Coordinator, by phone: (607) 753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org.

Questions about transportation?



SEVEN VALLEYS HEALTH COALITION

Contact:
Jan Dempsey
Mobility Management Coordinator
607-756-4198

www.way2gocortland.org

Bus Buddies
can help too!



Social Security Changes for 2012

There are some changes that have been made in Social Security and Medicare for 2012. Here are a few of the biggest changes:

- First and most important, Social Security issued a 3.6% COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) to benefit recipients for 2012. This COLA increased benefit payments for people receiving SSI, SSDI, and Social Security Retirement. The increase was effective January 1, 2012.
- Social Security also approved an increase in the Medicare Part B premium. The Medicare Part B premium will be \$99.90 for 2012. With this increase, Medicare Part B will now cover screenings and counseling for alcohol misuse, depression, and obesity.
- For people who started receiving Medicare in 2011 and have been paying \$115.40, this will be a decrease. For everyone else, it will be an increase of \$3.50.
- Remember, if you did not sign up for Part B when you were eligible, you may be responsible to pay a 10% per year penalty for not enrolling on time. You will not have to pay a 10% per year penalty if you had other insurance that had coverage as good as or better than Medicare Part B.
- If you do not receive Extra Help to pay your Medicare Part D plan (prescription plans), you should already know about the “Donut Hole”. If you don’t receive help paying for your Part D plan, you will be responsible for paying for your drugs once your total cost reaches \$2,930. You will have to pay for your drugs until your total cost reaches \$4,700. Once you reach \$4,700, your cost will drop dramatically under catastrophic coverage. Until you have reached the \$4,700 limit, you can receive a 50% discount on brand name drugs covered under your plan. You can also receive a discount on some of the generic drugs you may use during the “donut hole”. Check with your plan to find out what the discount is.
- You may be responsible to pay a penalty for your Part D plan if you didn’t sign up when you were first eligible. When you sign up for a plan, they will let you know what that penalty will be. If you had other, credible drug coverage, you will not have to pay a penalty.
- If you receive SSDI and work part time, you can now make up to \$1010 per month without fear of losing your monthly benefit. The income limit for someone who is blind is now \$1690.

Of local concern, please note that there will no longer be a Social Security Representative at the County Office Building on Thursdays.

These are many of the changes for 2012. If you have questions about your benefits and how this year’s changes can impact you or someone you know, contact Susan Lewis, Independent Living Coordinator, by phone: (607) 753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org.

How will getting married impact my SSI benefits?

SSI counts earned income and unearned income when determining how much a person needs in SSI cash benefits.

When a person receiving SSI marries a person who has any kind of income their benefit check could be reduced or eliminated.

Social Security says a married couple share income. So.....part of the Social Security Disability benefit income or earned income from one person in a marriage is shared with the person on SSI. This is known as spouse-to-spouse deeming of income. The person on SSI will experience a reduction in cash benefits or possibly the loss of SSI eligibility depending on the amount of income deemed from one spouse to the other spouse who is receiving SSI. In addition, upon marriage they share resources. The resource amount is \$3,000 for a couple. So eligibility for SSI could also end because of excess resources.

If both spouses receive SSI, their separate SSI checks will be merged at the married receiving benefits level. This amount will be less than if the couple were still receiving individual checks.

The bottom line here is to make sure you know how marriage is going to affect your benefits before you get married. Then you can make an informed decision as a couple. Contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 for further information. You can also contact Sue Lewis at 753-7363 for assistance.

Accessibility Construction Services - We are your Accessibility Experts!

The Fall 2011 *Access* News featured an article on the variety of funding sources available to individuals to improve home accessibility. Most of those funds are based on income, however. What happens if you don't meet the financial criteria to qualify for one of those programs? Access to Independence can still help to make your home accessible through its fee-based, Accessibility Construction Services (ACS) program.

The ACS program offers a variety of specialized services for individuals and businesses, including: Accessibility Assessment and Evaluation, development of Scopes of Work, project estimates, project planning and management, contractor negotiation and management, inspections and permits, and ADA compliance consultation.

Access to Independence employs two accessibility experts who are available to assess your needs. Audrey Jones, Architectural Barrier Programs Coordinator, has a degree in Construction Technology, as well as more than 10 years experience in the construction field. Audrey has already seen through completion 30+ home accessibility modifications in the Central New York area!

Richard Platt, Architectural Bar-

rier Specialist, has more than 30 years experience in code enforcement and in building and remodeling homes in the Cortland area.

Both Audrey and Richard have completed specialized training about the Americans with Disabilities Act, Universal Design concepts, and state and federal accessibility guidelines. Furthermore, Audrey is in the process of becoming a Certified Aging in Place specialist.

So, what exactly are home accessibility modifications? The sky is the limit. Of course there are the more obvious modifications, such as ramps (aluminum, wooden or modular), interior and exterior chair lifts, roll-in showers and grab bars, to name a few.

Access to Independence has tremendous experience designing

bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms to make them universally accessible, including the installation of accessible appliances, widened doorways and ceiling tracks, among many other modifications.

Whatever the need might be, Access to Independence is committed to providing clients with the highest quality, barrier-free remodeling services and products that are designed to make the home environment more user friendly, safe and aesthetically pleasing! Access to Independence has the advantage of understanding disabilities and developmental issues across the lifespan.

For more information on ATP's Accessibility Construction Services program, contact Audrey or Richard by phone: 607-753-7363. You may also email ajones@aticortland.org.



Accessibility Construction Services
26 North Main Street
Cortland, NY 13045



607-753-7363

We are your Accessibility Experts!

MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE LOCALLY

Providing Local Jobs

Marietta's products that are sold around the world are made right here in Cortland.

mariettagroup.com



Got rent?

The Cortland Housing Authority has a rental assistance program that may be able to help you!!

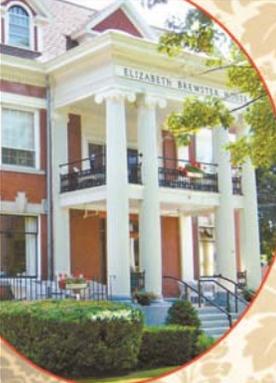
The Section 8 Housing Program helps qualified people meet their monthly rent bills by paying a portion of their rent directly to their landlord.

Interested persons may pick up applications at the Housing Authority offices located at
42 Church Street or 51 Port Watson Street
Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

or

Call 607-753-9364 or 607-753-1771 to request to have an application sent by mail





Warm and gracious accommodations available for men, women and couples at Homer's best kept secret.

Elizabeth Brewster House
~ Established in 1891 ~

Contact Thomas L. Obuck for detailed information on our lovely historic Adult Home. Inquire about Veteran, widow of Veteran and insurance benefits!



Thomas L. Obuck
41 South Main St., Homer, N.Y. 13077-1323
(607) 749-2442



YELLOW LANTERN KAMPGROUND
CORTLAND N.Y.

YELLOW LANTERN KAMPGROUND
1770 ROUTE 13 NORTH
CORTLAND, NEW YORK 13045

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.YELLOWLANTERNKAMPGROUND.COM
OR E-MAIL YLKINCORT@AOL.COM

FOR RESERVATIONS, CALL 607-756-2959
205 SITES, RECREATION & POOL FACILITIES
1 MILE FROM I81
FAMILY OWNED SINCE 1987

Andrews Agency Inc
Personal & Commercial Insurance

Richard A. Andrews, LUTCF, Owner
rich@andrewsagencyinsurance.com

Lisa P. Soler, Agent
lisa@andrewsagencyinsurance.com

...Insuring your way of life since 1991

Ithaca Office: 800 West State Street Ithaca, New York 14850
Ph: 607-273-7551 or 888-228-9559
Fax: 607-256-8790

Cortland Office: 35 Main Street Cortland, New York 13045
Ph: 607-218-6001 or 888-228-9559
Fax: 607-218-6279

EC EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION

Kelly Garrett
Intake Specialist

4059 Route 281 Cortland, N.Y. 13045
PH: (607) 756-8070 ext. 2841 • Fax: (607) 756-6380
e-mail: kellyg@jmmurray.com

Lavish Salon
\$5.00 Off Any Service

37 Main Street - Lower Level
phone: 607-756-2427
website: www.lavish-beauty.com

Cortland County
Chamber of Commerce

Investment in Business... Investment in Community...

37 Church Street Cortland, NY 13045
www.CortlandAreaChamber.com

Ph (607) 756-2814
Fax (607) 756-4698
info@CortlandAreaChamber.com

Mark's Pizzeria (607) 753-6066
105 Main Street Fax: (607) 753-8995
Cortland, NY



Jared Carlton
Owner
EST. 1982

Counseling Services of Cortland
Individual Counseling

17-29 Main Street Suite 202
607-662-0209
607-662-0238
gmoss@twcny.rr.com

Gregory Moss, LCSW/R

www.counselingservicesofcortland.com

A.V.R.E.
SERVING THE TWIN TIERS SINCE 1926

Seeing Things Differently

Association for Vision Rehabilitation & Employment, Inc.
174 Court St., Binghamton, NY 13901
607-724-2428 www.avreus.org

Cortland Regional MEDICAL CENTER
The Center of Your Care

www.cortlandregional.org

Cortland Housing Assistance Council, Inc.

We construct permanent ramps and also install temporary ramps. All ramps comply with ADA / ANSI Codes, as well as all local building codes.



36 Taylor Street Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: (607) 753-8271
Fax: (607) 756-6267
Established 1973

CORTLAND EYE CENTER
Jacqueline Ferguson, MD
Michele Barno, OD
Shelly Skjolaas, OD

1160 Tompkins Street Cortland, NY 13045
Tel 607-753-7528
FAX 607-756-8163
www.cortlandeyecenter.com

TANNER-IBBOTSON, INC.
INSURANCE WITH INTEGRITY

1109 Commons Avenue Cortland, New York 13045
Phone: 607.756.7531
Fax: 607.753.3050
www.cortlandinsurance.com
email: btoglia@tanneribbotson.com

Brian M. Toglia Vice-President



Business, Group Health, Life, LTC

Catholic Charities of Cortland County

- Emergency Food Pantry, Medications & Basic Needs
- Community Mental Health & Recovery Services
- Adolescent Support Services

33-35 Central Avenue Cortland, New York 13045
Tel: 607-756-3992 Fax: 607-756-5999




Communities That Care
Partnering for Smart Choices & Healthy Behaviors

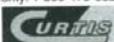
www.cortlandareactc.org
Informed, Involved, Invested

BRIDGESTONE Firestone.

Air Conditioning • Computer Diagnostic
NYS Inspection • Starting & Charging
Transmission Rebuilding & Replacement
Wheel Alignment • Lube Oil Filters
Steering & Suspension
Other Tire Brands Available

270 Tompkins Street Cortland, New York 13045

Rich Borra (607) 753-3329
Out of County: 1-800-479-3329


RACKER CENTERS
Creating Opportunities for People with Special Needs



www.rackercenters.org • 866-408-9263

Port, Kashdin & McSherry
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

111 WEST ROAD • CORTLAND, NEW YORK 13045
PH: 607-756-5681 • FX: 607-756-8320
email: portkash@twcny.rr.com

Offering a Complete Range of Home Medical Equipment & Supplies
Delivery • Set-Up • Maintenance

We Are Your Local Provider For:

- CPAP & BiPAP
- Oxygen Concentrators
- Portable Oxygen Nebulizers
- Power Chairs, Scooters & Lift Chairs
- Wheelchairs
- Hospital Beds
- Walkers & Canes

Cortland Regional Home Health Services
"We're Here for You"

HAVE A QUESTION?
 Call us at **756-3880**
 160 Homer Ave., Cortland
www.crmhomehealthservices.com

CORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Cortland Housing Authority has 380 high quality apartments available in its senior/ disabled and family developments throughout Cortland County. A single person could earn up to \$32,400 and a family of five up to \$49,950 and still qualify to live in one of our apartments.



We have senior/disabled **efficiency** and **one bedroom** apartments located in the City of Cortland. We also have **one bedroom** senior/disabled units in Homer, McGraw, Marathon, Truxton and Cincinnatus.

Our large family apartments (**3, 4 and 5 bedrooms**) are located in the City of Cortland. We also have **two and three bedroom** family apartments scattered throughout the county in Homer, Truxton, McGraw, Cincinnatus and the City of Cortland.

There are short waiting lists for apartments in most of our developments.



Call 607-753-1771 today for an application.

AUTO CRAFTING
Mobility Solutions



Serving upstate NY since 1978

▼ **Specializing In** ▼

- Lowered Floor Minivans
- New/Used Full Size & Mini Vans
- Vehicle Financing & Leasing
- Trade Ins - Wheelchair Lifts
- Scooter Lifts - Hand Controls
- Full Line Service Center

www.AutoCrafting.com

Rochester - Syracuse - Buffalo
1-866-889-1867

SevenValleysHealth.org

WHERE WE 2 RE GO

Putting health care information at your finger tips! Agency and resource information for a lifetime of healthy living.



...when you want to know!

Cortland Area Child Care Council...
 Where families and child care come together.



Are you looking for care?
 We can help you:

- Learn about different kinds of care
- Explore help paying for care
- Look for quality
- Choose child care

Are you caring for children?
 We can help you:

- Get your business started
- Get the training you need
- Improve your quality of care
- Join the Child Care Food Program
- Connect with families

111 Port Watson Street
 Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: 607-753-0106
 Toll free: 1-877-785-KIDS
 Website: www.cortlandchildcare.org




RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PERMITTED NO. 49
 CORTLAND, NY
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 PRESORTED STANDARD MAIL

Access To Independence
 OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

26 North Main Street
 Cortland, New York 13045

