

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

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Summer 2015

NUMBER XLV

ATI Awarded \$150,000 for Access to Home Program

New York State Homes and Community Renewal has awarded Access to Independence (ATI) \$150,000 to adapt homes for people with disabilities eligible for Medicaid in Cortland, Broome, Madison and Onondaga counties.

ATI will use the funds to help 11 individuals continue to live safely and comfortably in their home, or to return to their home from an institutional setting.

ATI also secured \$5,500 in matching funds from the City of Cortland to support projects in the City of Cortland specifically.

Since 2006, ATI has received \$1.65 million in Access to Home grants to help more than 97 families remain in their home and in the community. For more information, contact Audrey Jones by phone: 753-7363.

Area Disability Advocates Rally in Washington, D. C.

On July 28, Access to Independence (ATI) sent a team of 16 disability advocates to Washington, D.C. to fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities in conjunction with the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) annual march, rally and Capitol Hill visits.

The team of 7 youth and 9 adults joined more than 1,400 others to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to launch advocacy efforts around a new Disability Integration Act.

Upon arriving in Washington, D.C. the advocates walked to the Capitol to participate in a rousing rally that included nationally renowned disability advocates and Congressional leaders.

Following a brief tour of the Capitol, advocates met with representatives of Senator Charles

Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. They also met personally with Congressman Richard Hanna to speak about pressing disability policy issues that would effect our local community.

ATI's advocates spoke fervently about Cortland's need for improved availability of an accessible transportation system and access to accessible, affordable and integrated housing. The advocates offered myriad examples of how the lack of both effected the ability of many to live and work independently in the community.

ATI's advocates encouraged the leaders to support legislation that would provide people with disabilities the same opportunities that exist for people without disabilities.

For more information, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.



Above: ATI's Advocates who traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in NCIL's July 28, march and rally.

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Also Thanks To:

ATI Board Members, Cortland County Chamber of Commerce, Kory's Place and WXHC (John Eves & Eric Mulvihill)



ATI Celebrates 25th Anniversary of the ADA!

More than 150 consumers, friends, family members and community supporters attended ATI's July 25 celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), making it one of the biggest ADA Celebrations in Cortland ever! ATI launched the day of festivity by continuing its traditional stroll and roll through downtown Cortland to the Courthouse Park. Six new vendors participated in this year's vendor fair, including the Area Agency on Aging, Fidelis, H&R Block, iCircle, Penn-York Medical, SUNY Cortland, AutoCrafting, Seven Valleys Health Coalition and the Franziska Racker Centers.

Chad W. Underwood, ATI's CEO, welcomed guests by providing opening remarks on the advocacy efforts of ATI over the past year. He highlighted ATI's myriad trips to Albany that brought 24 disability advocates to the state's capital to fight for continued civil rights at the state level. He explained how this critical advocacy led the Senate and the Assembly to pass a number of bills, including one that was recently signed by Governor Cuomo that will incorporate Title II of the ADA into New York state law.

Chad also honored, in memoriam, Mike Pizzola and Larry Pfister, two local advocates "whose spirit and fervent belief that people with disabilities deserve nothing less than full equality and whose support has motivated us to push forward no matter what barriers stand in our way".

Fran Pizzola, Community Education Coordinator, started her advocacy career promoting the ADA on a volunteer basis which then led to the creation of ATI was the keynote speaker. In her speech, she included history and perspective of the structural changes that occurred in Cortland County over the past 25 years. Fran then outlined a vision for the future where work needs to continue with eliminating attitudinal barriers and the stigma of disability that many individuals with disabilities face daily.

Chris Farkas, former Executive Director of the Community Action Program of Cortland County (CAPCO) was in attendance and provided remarks on his perspective of the importance of change the ADA has brought. Chris is credited for his early advocacy efforts and grassroots organizing at CAPCO. Mary Ewing, ATI's former Executive Director and current Program Manager also provided remarks.

Cortland County Legislator Mary Ann Discenza and City of Cortland Mayor Brian Tobin Mayor read ADA proclamations and gave recognition to ATI for the important work it provides to businesses and individuals with disabilities in Cortland County. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton shared her personal stories regarding the ADA's development in Washington, D.C. and reinforced the importance of the ADA and civil rights for all people.

Kory's Place catered this year's event with hot dogs, hamburgers and salads. WXHC provided a live on-site broadcast and facilitated an open mic session for those in attendance. Last but not least the day ended with ATI's legendary watermelon eating contest, because when all is said and done we all just want to have fun!

2015 Holiday Gala

Saturday, December 5, 2015

6:00 - 9:00 pm

SUNY Cortland Alumni House

To purchase your tickets, call 607-753-7363,
or visit us at 26 North Main Street, Cortland, NY.

Tickets are \$30.00 each or 2 / \$50.00.

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2015 National Disability Employment Awareness Month Calendar

Every October, Access to Independence recognizes National Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) with free employment-related events and activities open to the entire community. This year's national theme is: "My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am." ATI's 2015 DEAM lineup in Cortland County will be our most inclusive one yet! Save the dates for these great events!

NEW! - 2015 Employment First Workshop Series:

Thursday, October 1 – Internship Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Volunteer, apprentice, intern, or fellow... there are many words to describe one of the most valuable experiences for youth and adults with disabilities who are seeking a career. Whether paid or not, we will show you how to find and create opportunities that will kick-start your job search with real world experience.

Thursday, October 8 – Community Employment: What's New, What's Next?

Now that sheltered employment is going away, many people with disabilities and parents are asking, "Now what?" During this workshop, we will show you that there is still hope for a tremendous future for our community members with disabilities. From ongoing educational opportunities, to customized supported employment, to fully integrated and competitive employment, there are dozens of experiences and opportunities waiting to be found.

Thursday, October 15 – Customized Employment & Independent Living

In this workshop geared toward local service providers, we bring national evidence-based tools and program models in customized employment and the independent living philosophy together in an innovative and useful framework for employment programs. As the landscape changes, so must we – let's work together to ensure that all people with disabilities have equal employment opportunities with the respect, dignity and wages that they deserve.

Thursday, October 29 – Entrepreneurship and Business Enterprise Programs!

Can't find the right job for you? Try making your own job! Owning a business is possible and we can show you how. This workshop will help you find the tools and resources to help you build your dream business from the ground up. While not for the faint-of-heart, you will find pride in your work and in your community.

2015 Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) – Wednesday, October 21

Also known as Cortland County Mentoring Day, DMD is a day-long celebration of job shadowing and career exploration offered to area youth. DMD will provide more than 50 area youth the ability to choose a career to job shadow and get valuable hands-on experience from local business mentors. The day will close with a luncheon where attending youth will participate in innovative workshops and hear from empowering speakers who will share their experiences with leadership and overcoming adversity. Youth exploring career options now will be a boon for their eventual careers!

Chamber of Commerce Business After-Hours – Wednesday, October 28

In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, ATI is set to host a Business After-Hours event for Cortland County Businesses. The event will promote awareness of ATI services as well as the skills and abilities that make people with disabilities a valuable asset to our community's workforce.

For more information on this year's NDEAM events, please contact Aaron T. Baier, ATI Consumer and Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

ATI Community Computer Lab

Open Monday - Friday

9:00 am - 4:45 pm

8:00 am - 3:45 pm (summer)

Computers are available for consumers only.

For more information, call (607) 753-7363.



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Barriers to Nursing Home Transition in CNY by Anne Piche, ATI Transition Specialist

In my six months working as a Transition Specialist for Access to Independence, I have found that the process of helping an individual transition out of a nursing home back into the community can take a long time.

I have provided more than 30 nursing home residents in Cortland and Tompkins Counties with information about community-based services. I have worked with these individuals, nursing home staff, and family members when appropriate, to determine which services or programs might be appropriate for the person's transition needs.

In my first six months, I have seen only two people successfully transition from the nursing home to independent living. I am beginning to understand what some of the barriers and delays are to transition.

Change is everywhere and we are all trying to keep up, especially given recent changes with the implementation of Medicaid Managed Care and Managed Long Term Care popping up all over the state.

The population of older individuals is increasing and resources are shrinking. It can sometimes be confusing to know where to turn. Even though it may be the deepest desire for you and/or your loved one to return home or to independent living, it is not a simple or speedy process.

The Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and the Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) waiver programs are a few of the programs that can provide a wonderful alternative to nursing home or institutional care. These waivers provide service

coordination where needed and a wide range of services to support independence. We will continue to have access to this resource for the foreseeable future. However, there are many steps involved in the waiver process which can generally take many months to complete.

First, participants must apply for waiver services and find housing. Accessible housing is not plentiful and most often individuals receiving Medicaid require housing subsidies. If someone qualifies for waiver services and has found or is seeking housing, first they need to find and then begin working with a Service Coordinator to determine what services they will need and begin to set up those services. This requires a service plan which is quite lengthy – it can be between 50 and 75 pages long. Then this service plan needs to be approved by the waiver staff.

When assessing a participant's need for services, the team faces the challenge of considering independence versus safety and thinking about levels of risk. We have all had thoughts like, "does it make sense for our loved one to be home alone if there is a risk of a fall," or, "what would happen in an emergency," or, "what would I do if the aide or nurse was unable to come in".

Individuals in independent living situations need to be "safe" and within "acceptable levels of risk". But what is an acceptable level? How important is independence to someone? And it depends on who you ask - a health care professional, a family member, or the individual themselves.

When the level of assistance needed to create a safe environment for individuals or a loved one to return home is determined, home health aides are usually a large part of the solution. However, there is a shortage of people doing this important work. There are many levels of aide services. Finding the right help to provide care and assistance for the number of hours required is necessary before the service plan can be implemented.

I have had the pleasure of meeting wonderful and interesting people in the various nursing facilities in Cortland and Tompkins Counties. I have worked with dedicated social workers, nurses, aides, service coordinators, agencies and a wide range of health care professionals.

Many are dedicated to uncovering and eliminating the barriers and obstacles that are in the way of providing the best advocacy and care to individuals in our communities. There are efforts to streamline systems and provide more personalized and integrated service. We all want to work together cooperatively. We must also ensure that the participant maintains an appropriate level of choice in the process...that is the core of independent living.

For more information on ATI's Transition Program, contact Anne Piche, ATI Transition Specialist, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at apiche@aticortland.org.

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

For more information, please contact:

Chad W. Underwood, CEO

by phone: 607-753-7363; or

by email: cwunderwood@aticortland.org

ATI Concludes Spring / Summer Workshop Series

On Thursday, June 25, Access to Independence (ATI) hosted a workshop entitled: Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities. The program featured regional American Red Cross employees Leanna Severance, Disaster Program Manager and Bob Mueller, Shelter Regional Coordinator; Tom Margrave, a member of the Cortland Red Cross Disaster Action Team; Captain Dave Jensen from the Cortland City Fire Department; and Fran Pizzola, ATI's Community Education Coordinator. The event focused on what to do in the event of various types of emergencies and how to be personally prepared in general.

On Thursday, July 9, ATI hosted a two hour panel discussion and luncheon on disability rights 25 years after the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The discussion focused on past accomplishments, recent strategies and the future of disability rights. Panelists included; Beata Karpinska-Prehn, Manager of Advocacy from ARISE in Syracuse; Frank Pennisi, Disability Rights-Access Director and Co-Founder of the Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC) in Binghamton; and Fran Pizzola, Community Education Coordinator and Founder of ATI in Cortland. Christine Sears, Director of Development, from Madison-Cortland ARC, and her twin sister Kay Nowak, joined the panelists to discuss the significance of the ADA especially since Kay acquired a disability, and now depends on the ADA for her independence.

ATI Poised to Launch New Youth Transition Programming

Over the past several months, Access to Independence (ATI) continued its work on updating its assessment of unmet needs for youth with disabilities, their parents and caregivers and for providers of youth services in Cortland County.

ATI is in the process of wrapping up remaining interviews and additional work with vendors on outreach and sustainability before the report will be finalized by the end of August.

In addition to holding numerous focus groups of youth and additional, separate focus groups of parents, ATI staff has interviewed a dozen area service providers to secure input on existing services and known areas of unmet need.

ATI's Board Chair and SUNY Cortland Associate Professor, Dr. Judy Bentley, has completed a literature review on the matter and has substantially contributed to all aspects of the study.

ATI has also hired several Syracuse-based vendors to provide additional consultation throughout the process.

ATI is in the process of identifying trends of needed youth transition services in our community. ATI aims to develop a new set of innovative programming based on the findings, to launch a comprehensive outreach initiative and to launch extensive fee-based and fund development initiatives to support the programming going forward.

Throughout the assessment process, ATI has focused on four critical areas:

- Advocacy; as it relates to support to youth and parents in CSE meetings, increasing civic engagement, promoting self-advocacy and resource sharing and referrals.
- Independent living skills training includes services such as computer skills training, goal setting and planning, budgeting and bill paying, peer mentoring and support, and benefits management.
- Education includes services such as tutoring, academic support, college and post-secondary education options and planning, and early career exploration.
- Employment includes services such as work readiness training, job shadowing, internship development, supported employment, and employment retention services.

For more information on ATI's current assessment of unmet need for youth with disabilities, their parents and caregivers and service providers, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.



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What are Independent Living Skills and Why are they Important? by Susan Lewis, ATI IL Coordinator

How do you define Independent Living Skills? It may seem simple, but it is different for every person I work with in my position as ATI's Independent Living Coordinator.

Most people don't have to think about independent living skills. If you do not have a disability, you are able to get out of bed in the morning, get ready for school or work, fix dinner and get ready for bed with little or no thought.

You can pay your bills, get your groceries, drive your car, or go to a movie without any assistance. For a person with a disability, one or all of these activities of daily living can be difficult or even impossible without help from someone.

Independent living skills training can improve a person's quality of life and decrease their dependence on other people.

There are many different life situations that can lead to someone needing Independent Living Skills.

If you have lived in an assisted living environment for a period of time, you might need some help when you go home because you have become unaccustomed to doing things independently.

If you have acquired a disability that prevents you from being able to do everyday living skills the same way you did before acquiring the disability, you might benefit from independent living skills training.

Grocery shopping, using public transit, cooking and other skills may have grown a little rusty, and having a person help you to regain those skills can be crucial to your ability to stay at home and independent.

If you have suffered a stroke or other traumatic brain injury, you might need to find alternate ways to do activities of daily living because your physical abilities have changed.

If you have lost the function in your left hand, it is crucial to your independence to learn how to do things using only your right hand. I could help you find ways to compensate for the loss of movement of your left hand.

I will even help you find assistive technology to help make it easier for you to make up for the loss of movement in your hand or leg. Something as simple as tying your shoes can be a struggle if you have to do it with one hand. Believe me, I have tried and it is not easy! If you have experienced a traumatic brain injury, you might have lost your short term memory.

I can help you to find ways to remind yourself when to take your medications or get to the doctor's office when you need to.

There are several types of medication caddies that have alarms that go off when it's time to take pills. There are also very simple voice recorders you can use to remind you of things you need to do. Even purchasing an oversized calendar and putting it in a spot that you look at every day can help to remind you of the things you need to do.

When transitioning from a nursing facility, you might benefit from independent living skills training relating to transportation, budgeting and doing your own laundry again.

If you are used to having your own car and now have to take the bus because you are using a wheelchair, you may need supports to help learn what bus routes you will need, how to call for dial-a-ride, and where to go to flag down a bus.

Remembering how to budget money for bills such as rent, utilities and groceries is essential for staying independent. There are some great

budgeting programs that are easy to understand and follow. I have extensive training and experience helping people to learn how to budget their money and understand the importance of budgeting.

Something as simple as using the Laundromat can be difficult for someone who never had to do their own laundry. For a person that has spent years in assisted living or having other people do their laundry, a Laundromat can be a very stressful place. It can be noisy, hot, and filled with people you don't know.

Having a person to support you in learning this new independent living skill can decrease your stress and make it easier to learn. The sooner you are successful with this new skill, the more confident you will be in learning the next skill.

Independent living skills are a very important part of our lives that most of us take for granted. But for some, independent living skills can be a daily struggle. For those people that struggle, it is important for them to know that there is help.

For more information, contact Susan Lewis, Independent Living Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363 or by email at: susan.lewis@aticortland.org.

Join ATI's Disability Advocacy Network!

- Keep current on pressing disability issues!
- Receive email alerts on policy & budget matters!
- Fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities!
- Join 1,000+ statewide advocates to fight for change!

Email Aaron Baier:
abaier@aticortland.org

Cortland County Housing Consortium

Upcoming Meetings

August 26, 2015

November 18, 2015

February 24, 2016

May 25, 2016

All meetings are held from 8:00
- 10:00 am in Room 203 of the
Main Street SUNY Cortland
Building (9 Main Street)

For more information, Contact
Aaron Baier by telephone: 607-
753-7363 or by email:
abaier@aticortland.org.

**ATI'S NORMAL
HOURS!**

**9:00 AM TO
5:00 PM**

**RETURNS TUES.,
SEPT. 8TH.**

**Bariatric Support
Group Meetings**

September 16, 2015

October 21, 2015

November 18, 2015

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

Cortland County Housing Consortium Update

In May, the Cortland County Housing Consortium met for its quarterly meeting to discuss pressing housing issues and to review progress made on the Cortland County Consolidated Plan for Housing.

While Cortland County did not authorize a new Consolidated Plan, it did authorize the Planning Department to update statistical and demographic data within the plan to ensure it is accurate and meaningful to the many agencies that use it for their own housing initiatives.

"We need input from all stakeholders to ensure the Consolidated Plan is accurate and useful," said Kevin Pagini of the Planning Department. "The Consolidated Plan may be old, but we can do our best to give it purpose," he added.

At the May meeting, the Consortium reviewed Mr. Pagini's progress and provided revisions and feedback to help bring the Plan up-to-date. In doing so, the group discovered some areas that still need attention, including but not limited to: affordable housing, accessible housing, old and substandard housing, homelessness, and market-rate housing needs.

The Housing Consortium also discussed some updates relevant to

member agency's initiatives and programs. Nicole Anjeski, Cortland Health Department, discussed their Healthy Neighborhoods Program and its impact over the last year. Aaron Baier, Access to Independence, discussed their Visitability initiative to make more homes in the County "visit-able" by people with disabilities (*see insert*). Finally, the group discussed areas in which they want to learn more and would like presentations, including: local flood issues, homelessness and possible solutions, and the intersection of housing and transportation.

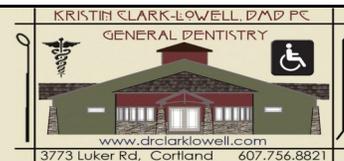
The Cortland County Housing Consortium is dedicated to improving the quality of life and community health in Cortland County through the preservation and development of safe, adequate and appropriate housing choices for all residents. The Consortium envisions a community in which all of its residents and visitors have access to quality housing of their choice to the highest degree possible and are aware of their housing rights and responsibilities.

For more information on the Cortland County Housing Consortium, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

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2015 New York State Legislative Session Update

Now that the 2015 legislative session has drawn to a close, here is an update on the progress made toward statewide disability priority issues. Not only did we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, but advocates continue to take action to ensure a more inclusive future for all people with disabilities. 2015 was a momentous year for disability rights with several exciting successes!

First, on Saturday, July 25, Governor Cuomo signed into law a bill that incorporates Title II of the ADA into NYS Human Rights Law! This law codifies protections for people with disabilities who are refused access to places of public accommodation (such as hotels, restaurants, retail stores, recreation or entertainment venues, and hospitals). The law clarifies that it is discriminatory for an operator – public or private – to refuse to remove certain architectural or communication barriers in these spaces. It also eliminates an exception for the barrier removal requirement for public libraries.

Second, the Visitability Tax Credit bill (A.1276/S.2967A) passed both the Assembly and Senate this session! If signed, this bill will provide homeowners with a tax credit to make their homes visitable. We will continue to advocate for this bill to ensure it is signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

Third, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) adopted a bill that delays the transition of the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) waiver participants into Medicaid Managed Care and requires a work group to develop recommendations to help guide that transition. Thanks to the work of advocates, DOH agreed to delay the transition of waiver participants until January 1, 2017! In addition, DOH will form a stakeholder work group to review all issues associated with the transition.

Fourth, we successfully opposed the extension of the use of lever machines in certain local elections. S.5147 (Marchione) was introduced on May 5, 2015 and

by May 27, Senator Marchione withdrew the bill. The Election Reform committee was very active all session to ensure that the NYS Legislature would not extend the use of lever machines. The bill will sunset at the end of the year, and this is a win for people with disabilities who demand accessible voting options.

Finally, we successfully advocated for the New York Achieving a Better Life Experience (NY ABLE) Act, A.7767B/S.4472D, which passed both the Assembly and Senate. If signed, the ABLE Act will allow qualified New Yorkers with disabilities and their families to create tax-deferred savings accounts to cover disability related expenses. The main benefit of these accounts is that assets will not count against programs such as Medicaid and SSI.

While our efforts have shown progress, there is much work left to be done. There remains several barriers to affordable and accessible housing, enhanced public transportation and equal employment. Advocates and community members should be vigilant of barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that still exist in our community.

For more information on ATI's Systems Advocacy initiatives, please contact Aaron T. Baier, ATI Consumer and Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

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Community Integration Beats Segregation and Unwanted Institutionalization

This is a story about an ATI consumer named Deb. Between 2007 – 2010, Deb was away from her home between being hospitalized, going to rehab for three months, and eventually being admitted to a local nursing home. Deb was very ill and was even in a coma for several months.

In 2009, while she was in the nursing home, one of the social workers told Deb about the Nursing Home Transition & Diversion (NHTD) Medicaid Waiver program. This program assists consumers with Medicaid to return to live in the community if proper supports can be put in place. This process can include helping someone to find housing, to make their home accessible, to get aide services and many other kinds of support.

Deb was very anxious to get back home to live with her husband, and decided to apply to the program. Deb selected a Service Coordinator from ATI, and soon started making plans for her return home. In order to transition home, Deb went through assessments and meetings to identify what her needs would be in order to live safely and independently in the community.

Next, Deb and her Service Coordinator worked together to develop her Service Plan. This comprehensive document aims to address a participant's goals (living independently in the community) and indicates each and every home and community-based service that is necessary to facilitate the goal.

Deb and her Service Coordinator discussed a variety of options to include in her plan, including independent living skills training, community integration counseling, home modifications and aide services. After identifying the right mix of services, Deb spent time interviewing potential providers before making her selections.

Because Deb was able to provide instruction and supervision to her aides herself, she learned that she was eligible for the Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP). In this program, the consumer interviews, chooses, trains and supervises their own aides. Human resources and payroll functions for the aides (timesheets, paychecks, and benefits) are handled by a fiscal intermediary, such as CAPCO.

Once Deb's Service Plan was complete and approved by the NHTD program, she moved back into her small apartment with her husband that she had prior to falling ill. Since Deb's transition, she has continued to work with her Service Coordinator and team of community-based providers to remain in the community and to increase her independence. Deb routinely works with her Independent Living Skills Trainer, her Community Integration Counselor, and a cadre of natural supports (family members, physical therapist, nurses and doctors) to maintain her health and well-being. Almost two full years after her transition, Deb worked with her Service Coordinator to secure a new apartment and to secure environmental modifications to make it more accessible. This was a great breakthrough for Deb!

To this day, Deb speaks highly of the help she has received from the various service providers who have worked with her. She has dealt with frustration due to the large chunk of her life that she lost, and the time away from her family while in the hospital and nursing home. Deb is grateful to have the opportunity to live in the community, with her friends and family, rather than in institutions.

For more information on ATI's nursing facility transition or diversion services, call 753-7363 or email info@aticortland.org.

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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
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MAKE CORTLAND COUNTY VISITABLE!

Urge Legislators to Support Visitable Housing!

WHAT DOES VISITABILITY MEAN?

- A friend or family member with a physical disability is easily "able" to "visit" you in your home.
- All new, single-family housing integrates basic affordable and sustainable accessibility features.
- Emphasis is on the most essential access features, such as exterior entries and interior doors.
- Widespread construction change can happen more quickly.

Visitability does **not** include a long list of desirable access features or adhere to a comprehensive full-accessibility construction standard.

WHAT MAKES A HOME VISITABLE?

- **One zero step entrance on an accessible path of travel from the street, sidewalk or driveway.** A zero step entrance has no step or threshold to block a wheelchair or trip a person with limited mobility.
- **Doorways** that provide **32 inches** clear space throughout the home's main floor and **hallways / routes** that provide **36 inches** of clear width. Lever-style door handles are required.
- **Full / Half bath on main floor** with basic access is long and wide enough for a person using a wheelchair to enter and close the door. Wall reinforcement for grab bars near toilet and in showers is required.
- **Usable first-floor kitchen** with wheelchair maneuvering clearance and access to basic appliances.
- **Wall mounted electronic controls**, such as light switches, thermostats and other environmental controls must be in accessible locations, no higher than 48 inches no lower than 16 inches from the floor.

THE BENEFITS OF VISITABILITY

While no statutory requirements presently exist mandating new structure be constructed to provide access for people with disabilities, the unfortunate fact remains that people with disabilities are often isolated in their own homes or in nursing facilities away from their families and friends. More than simply supporting visitability features, requiring or incentivizing these features would contribute to a more livable Cortland County.

- Significantly reduce the costs associated with retrofitting as people age or acquire disabilities
- Increase the ease of adaptability to homes built with these design features
- Improve the quality of health and safety within the home
- Provide for a more inclusive, integrated and livable community

WHO BENEFITS FROM VISITABILITY?

- The mother with a baby in a stroller, who doesn't have to lug it up and down your steps
- The homeowner trying to bring heavy packages and tools into the house
- The son on crutches with a sports injury that has to get in the house and use the bathroom
- The visiting uncle using a wheelchair that wants to cook a meal for his family
- Grandma who wants to visit the grandkids but knows she won't be able to use the bathroom while there
- The college kid moving out with all his boxes and belongings

Everyone, not just people with disabilities, benefits in a home that is visitable!

HOW CAN YOU HELP MAKE CORTLAND COUNTY VISITABLE?

Tell City and County officials to support, incentivize or require that all newly constructed homes be built using visitability design features. Share with them how this will allow you and loved ones to "visit" one-another without fear of injury or isolation. Share why you believe visitability gives you confidence in knowing that your community is truly livable. Urge them to consider their own quality of life and the quality of life of their families and friends.

CITY OF CORTLAND COMMON COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

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