

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

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Fall 2015

NUMBER XLVI

**ATI Board of Directors Elects
New Members / Officers**

On October 20, 2015, the Access to Independence (ATI) Board of Directors re-elected five Board Members to a second two-year term and elected one new Board Member to their first two-year term.

New and returning Board Members include: Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley, Mary Betters, Kim Collins, Zach Curtis, Dorothy Dumond, Chris Hyde, Ethan Lewis, Mary Beth Mathey, Peter Morse-Ackley, Daniel Mullins, Janet Oechsle, Beth Pittman, Cynthia Schlenker and Cheryl Williams.

At the same meeting the Board of Directors elected officers for the next year as follows: Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley, Chair; Peter Morse-Ackley, Vice-Chair; Cynthia Schlenker, Treasurer; and Daniel Mullins, Secretary.

Many thanks go out to each and every Board Member for their dedication to the governance of ATI.

ATI Announces 2016 Priorities

On October 20, 2015, the Access to Independence Board of Directors adopted 2016 Strategic Imperatives & Goals. For each Strategic Imperative there is a series of five related goals. Strategic Imperatives included the following:

- Promote increased community awareness of disability issues, of the lack of equal human and civil rights for people with disabilities, and the opportunities that exist to increase independent living for all.
- Expand the Agency's capacity to provide demanded services to people with a wide-variety of disabilities, their families and caregivers, and other service providers.
- Increase Agency's retained earnings by 25% to provide improved capacity to maintain operations during downturns.

ATI's Governance Committee will oversee the Agency's progress with each of these imperatives and related goals over the next year.

**ATI Deinstitutionalization
Efforts Saved State \$2.8 M**

According to a recent report, Access to Independence (ATI) has saved New York State more than \$2.8 million since 2004 by way of its efforts to transition or divert individuals out of costly institutional settings (such as nursing homes) into the community.

During the time period, ATI has diverted (prevented) 38 individuals from institutional settings with an average cost savings of \$13,366 each. During the same time period ATI transitioned 58 individuals from institutional settings back to the community with a cost savings between \$13,366 and \$64,356 each.

As a frame of reference, it costs the state roughly \$78,000 per year to pay for a person to live in a nursing home, versus \$64,744 for a person living in the community using Medicaid Waiver services, or just \$13,754 without Medicaid Waiver services.



Above: On October 29, Marshall's presented ATI with \$5,000 in tandem with the opening of its new Cortland store.

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2015 ATI Board / Staff Retreat

On Saturday, November 7, Access to Independence held its 2015 Annual Board / Staff Retreat. Board Members and staff convened at the Cortland Regional Medical Center's Assembly Room to build momentum for a successful launch of 2016 initiatives.

Ed McCormick, of the Albany, NY-based firm McCormick Consulting Services, conducted two workshops for more than 20 participants on building capacity for community change.

Ed spent an hour and a half during the morning session on defining a community and its assets, undertaking a community needs assessment and analyzing collected data all in an effort to identify unmet needs and areas for potential growth and expansion.

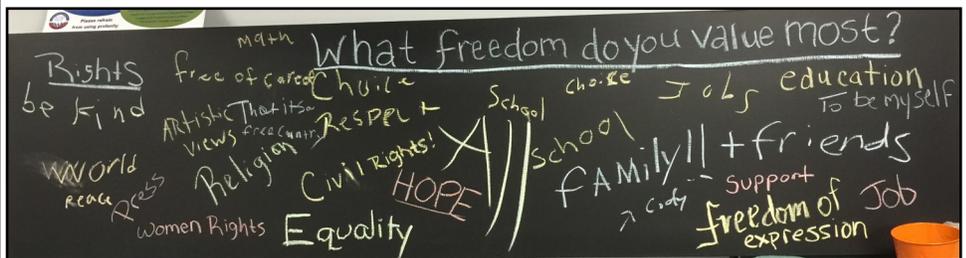
Ed spent an hour and a half during the afternoon session to talk about using the collected data to develop an Agency strategic plan. Staff and Board Members learned how to consider the Agency's mission and vision while crunching collected data to identify specific objectives, strategies and action plans.

Over the next year, ATI is set to practice what it has learned by facilitating a community assessment on unmet need by people with disabilities, their family and caregivers. ATI plans to take that data and establish a 3 - 5 year strategic plan to guide additional strategic growth.

In addition to the workshops, staff and Board had ample opportunity to bond and team-build. There were several icebreakers and mini-break out sessions that focused on staff job duties and Board Member experience. One common theme throughout the day was emphasis on the consumer experience.

Many thanks go out to all Board Members and staff participants, as well as to Ed for his presentation.

Cortland County Mentoring Day: October 21, 2015



Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

Resources & Advocacy for People with Disabilities



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- Peer Counseling & Mentoring
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- Independent Living Skills
- Community Education / Outreach
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- Youth Transition
- NHTD / TBI Medicaid Waiver
- Equipment Loan Closet
- Nursing Home Transition

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2015 National Disability Employment Awareness Month

In October, Access to Independence (ATI) recognized National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) with a series of employment-related events for youth, job seekers and employers in our community. More than likely, you heard one or more of our radio ads that aired throughout the month on WXHC Oldies 101.5! The NDEAM theme this year was: “My Disability is One Part of Who I Am.”

2015 Disability Mentoring Day

On October 21, ATI facilitated 2015 Disability Mentoring Day for more than 35 area youth and young adults with disabilities. All youth participants had an opportunity to spend the morning shadowing a mentor at a career of their interest and then convened in the afternoon for empowering presentations from peer leaders.

To begin the day, youth convened at the Cortland Works Career Center to prepare for an engaging experience at their job sites and met area coordinators and SUNY Cortland students who served as their job mentors. After the orientation, youth ventured to their job sites throughout the community. Job sites included: Access to Independence, CAPCO, Cortland Child Development Center, Cortland City Police Department, Cortland Regional Medical Center, Cortland Youth Bureau, CNY SNAP, Cost-Cutters, Crossroads Veterinary Clinic, Deli Downtown, Edgecort Farms, Frosted Bakery, Kost Tires, Lavish Salon, OCM BOCES, Plan First Technologies, Price Chopper, Sun Auto Warehouse, SUNY Cortland, and the U.S. Army Recruitment Center.

After their work experiences, youth returned to the Cortland Works Career Center for a brief luncheon. Guest presenter, and youth-leader, Katie Rushlo, Central Regional Youth Partner for YOUTH POWER! Inc. spent some time talking with attendees about “Hope” and her own personal life experiences, disability, support systems, self-advocacy, and their path to success.

“Labels are for jars, not people,” Katie stated as she engaged youth in interactive activities to make them think about their wants and needs and about the importance being able to communicate those needs to others.

Youth left the event with smiles on their faces and certificates of accomplishment. Four lucky youth left with \$25 gift cards! Empowered for the next phase in their education and job search, the young people who participated agree, Disability Mentoring Day was a huge success!

2015 Employment First Workshop Series

This year, ATI introduced a new Employment First Workshop Series which focused around the theme “Finding the right job can be hard, let’s try something different!” More than 40 people attended the inaugural workshop series and not only gained insight into some new and innovative job search techniques, but also learned about trends and new initiatives to help people with disabilities become employed.

On October 1, part 1 focused on internships and volunteerism and featured guest speakers John Suarez and Cynthia Guy, of the SUNY Cortland Institute for Civic Engagement, and Diane Wheaton, Employment and Training Director at Cortland Works Career Center.

On October 8, part 2 focused on competitive community employment and new supported employment programs and featured Michelle Jordan, Employment Coordinator for the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities; Kathleen Joyce, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for ACCES-VR; and Susan Lewis, Benefits Counselor for Access to Independence.

On October 15, part 3 focused on Community Employment Successes and featured Maria DeRado, a retired School-to-Work high school teacher and now Employment Coordinator for Tompkins Workforce Solutions, as well as peer successes Sara Wright of Frosted Bakery and Bonnie Carlson of Doug’s Fish Fry and K-Mart.

Finally, on October 29, part 4 focused on self-employment and featured guest presenter Ken Homer, Senior Business Advisor for the Small Business Development Center at Binghamton University.

Thank You Sponsors!

A special thank you also goes to the Triad Foundation, Inc., Cortland Area Communities That Care Coalition (CACTC) and Tompkins Trust Company for their generous financial contributions and continued support for this year’s DEAM events!

Social Security Changes for 2016

The big story for anyone receiving Social Security benefits in 2016 is that there will be no Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). This COLA is based on a government measure of inflation, and this year the inflation rate is less, primarily due to falling gas prices.

Some good news is that most people who already have Medicare will not see a premium increase for 2016. However, there will be an increase for new Medicare beneficiaries and for people with higher incomes, but if you do not meet the higher income standard and started receiving Medicare before 2016, you will not see an increase in your Medicare Part B premium. Some bad news is that all Medicare recipients will see an increase in the amount they pay for their Part B deductible.

For folks that are working and receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the Trial Work Period amount has increased to \$810 per month. Substantial gainful activity, (Social Security's limit on earned income) has increased to \$1,130 per month.

For more information on Social Security and Social Security work incentives, contact Susan Lewis by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: susan.lewis@aticortland.org.

SSI and the NYS Supplement Program (SSP)

If you are receiving Federal SSI benefits, you now get your New York State (NYS) supplement directly from the State. A single person receiving full Federal Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) benefit should receive \$733 per month. NYS supplements this amount with an additional monthly payment of \$87, for a total payment of \$820. This supplement is now being paid directly to you in a separate check from NYS. If you are not receiving NYS supplement, it could be because you did not notify NYS of changes you made during the year.

NYS and the Social Security Administration (SSA) do not communicate on some key issues, and this can affect your NYS supplement. Going forward, you'll need to notify both the SSA and the NYS Supplement Program of the following changes: residence and/or mailing address changes; changes in living arrangement, including changes to who lives in your household; marriage, divorce, or separation; income or employment changes; and banking information changes.

You can report any of these changes to the NYS Supplement Program Customer Support Center at 1-855-488-0541 or by completing a NYS Supplement Program Living Arrangement form. To download a form, you can go to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance at <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/ssp/>.

If your SSI benefit amount has changed over the past year and you don't know why, it could be an issue with New York State, not SSA. For more information, contact Susan Lewis, ATI Independent Living Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: susan.lewis@aticortland.org.

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Disability Advocates Launch Efforts to Fulfill the Community Living Promise of the ADA

Twenty five years after the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, unwanted institutionalization remains a serious problem for people with disabilities and seniors. This was documented in a Congressional report, titled "Separate and Unequal: States Fail to Fulfill the Community Living Promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act."

This report recommended that Congress amend the ADA to clarify and strengthen the integration mandate to accelerate implementation and clarify that every person eligible for Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) under Medicaid has a federally protected right to a real choice in how they receive such services.

Over the past several years, Access to Independence disability advocates have joined others from across the nation to develop legislation separate from the ADA that would create a comprehensive solution to assuring the full integration of people with disabilities, including older individuals. This legislation, called the Disability Integration Act, would:

(1) Clarify that every individual who is eligible for LTSS has a federally protected right to a real choice in how they receive supports and services;

(2) Assure that states and other

LTSS insurance providers deliver services and supports in a manner that allows individuals with disabilities to live in the most integrated setting, including their own home, have maximum control over their services and supports, and lead an independent life;

(3) Establish a comprehensive planning requirement, comparable to the transition planning process required under the ADA, that includes enforceable benchmarks; Require public entities to address the need for affordable, accessible, integrated housing that is independent of service delivery; and

(4) Establish stronger, targeted enforcement mechanisms.

The Disability Integration Act's definition of discrimination is modeled on Title III of the ADA with a general rule and specific prohibitions. The general rule states, "No individual with an LTSS disability shall be denied community-based long term services and supports that would enable the individual to live in the community and lead an independent life."

The legislation would prohibit discrimination by a public entity or LTSS insurance provider and identifies 10 specific prohibitions to address the various policies and mechanisms that have been used to limit access to home and community-based LTSS.

Additionally, public entities

would need to assure that there is sufficient availability of affordable and accessible housing to allow people to choose to live in non-congregate, independent housing in the community.

Because public entities have failed to address these issues, even 25 years after the ADA, the Disability Integration Act would establish a robust framework for regulations. This framework would be an extension of the well-established self-evaluation and transition plan processes that already exist within this arena.

The right to live in the community is logically prior to, and necessary for, the exercise of the civil rights which the ADA was intended to secure for all people with disabilities. The lack of adequate community-based services and supports has imperiled the civil rights of people with disabilities, and has undermined the very promise of the ADA. It is, therefore, necessary to recognize in statute a robust and fully-articulated right to community living.

For more information on the Disability Integration Act, contact Leah Smith by email: lsmith@cdrnys.org.



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*Every single day,
ordinary people accomplish
extraordinary things.*

Medicare Enrollment Period Now Open

For every individual enrolled in a private Medicare Advantage health plan or a Part D prescription drug plan, it is time to review your coverage and make changes. If necessary, beneficiaries can make changes to their benefit packages annually. People who are currently satisfied with their plan should review their coverage. Folks that are enrolled in original Medicare can choose to switch to a private plan or choose a new stand-alone plan at this time.

During the fall open enrollment period, Medicare beneficiaries have the right to make as many changes as they need, and the last change they make on or before December 7, 2015, will go into effect on January 1, 2016.

To review your coverage options, you can use the Medicare Plan Finder tool at www.medicare.gov or call 1-800-Medicare. The plan finder has valuable information about health and prescription plans, including information about pharmacy networks, cost sharing and coverage rules. If you are not able to go to the Medicare website and are 60 or older, you can call the Area Agency on Aging at 607-753-5060 for an appointment with a Benefits Specialist.

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

Medicare Savings Program

The Medicare Saving Program (MSP) is a federal program that pays the \$104.90 Medicare Part B premium for eligible individuals. There are three different ways to qualify for this initiative:

(1) You must be a NYS resident, a US citizen or have satisfactory immigration status, and your income must be at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level; or

(2) You must be a NYS resident, a US citizen or have satisfactory immigration status, have part A Medicare and have net income between 120% - 135% of the Federal Poverty Level; or

(3) You must be a NYS resident, a US citizen or have satisfactory immigration status, and have net income between 100% - 120% of the Federal Poverty Level.

If you are eligible for the MSP, you may also qualify for extra help paying your Medicare Part D premium. For more information, contact Susan Lewis, ATI Independent Living Coordinator by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: susan.lewis@aticortland.org.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Access to Independence is looking for a few good individuals to volunteer at the Agency during normal business hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. For more information, call 607-753-7363.

2015 Holiday Gala

Saturday, December 5, 2015

6:00 - 9:00 pm

SUNY Cortland Alumni House

To purchase your tickets, call 607-753-7363,
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Tickets are \$30.00 each or 2 / \$50.00.

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. Raffles

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. Silent Auction



All proceeds benefit Access To  Independence
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Behavioral Health Medicaid Managed Care: Grievances and Appeals Process

Behavioral Health services are being carved into managed care. As a result, providers, consumers and their authorized representatives may now file complaints and appeals with their managed care plans.

There may be times when a Medicaid consumer or a provider is not satisfied with the care or services that a managed care plan is providing to a consumer. In those situations, consumers and providers may file a formal complaint with the plan, the state or both.

A provider, a consumer or a consumer's authorized representative can file a complaint with the plan. A member can send a complaint in writing, via e-mail, or by phone. Specific information about how to file a complaint can be found in the member handbook. The managed care plan will review the complaint and notify the person who made the complaint about the decision. If the person who made the complaint disagrees with the plan's decision, that person can file a "complaint appeal" with the managed care plan. If the person still disagrees with the plan's decision, he or she can file a complaint with the State.

A provider, a consumer or a consumer's authorized representative can contact the New York State Department of Health (DOH) at any time in writing or by phone at NYSDOH Managed Care Complaint Line: 1-800-206-8125.

Consumers and providers have the right to appeal a managed care plan's decision regarding payment

or approval of treatment and services. Prior to the carve-in of behavioral health services, most behavioral health providers did not have the right to file an independent appeal for behavioral health services that were denied to a Medicaid recipient. Under behavioral health managed care, these providers will have an independent right to file an appeal with the managed care plan and an external appeal with NYS Department of Financial Services (DFS). A full description of the process, instructions and time frame to ask for these appeals is included in the member handbook and provider manual. Enrollee appeal information is also provided when a plan denies coverage for a service.

There are three different types of appeals:

Internal Appeal: A provider, consumer or consumer's authorized representative can file an appeal with the plan by calling or writing to the plan. An internal appeal is available in certain circumstances. For example, when a plan denies coverage because it (a) determined that a service was not medically necessary or was not a covered benefit, (b) approved a service, but for less than the amount, duration and scope requested, (c) denied payment for a service, in whole or in part.

Independent External Appeal: If the plan upholds its denial after the Internal Appeal because a service was not medically necessary, was experimental/investigational, or was out-of-network, a provider, consumer or consumer's authorized

representative may be eligible to ask for an External Appeal with the DFS. To find out more about External Appeals or to request an application, contact the managed care plan, call DFS at 1-800-400-8882, or visit the DFS website at www.dfs.ny.gov.

Fair Hearing: A consumer or authorized representative can ask for a Fair Hearing with the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). A consumer does not need to file an Internal Appeal or External Appeal before he or she can request a fair hearing. Providers do not have an independent right to ask for a Fair Hearing. In addition to decisions regarding denials of coverage or payment, a Fair Hearing is also available to appeal Medicaid enrollment, disenrollment, and eligibility determinations.

To request a fair hearing contact: NYS OTDA by phone: 1-800-342-3334.

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



Access To Independence
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Please support our 2016
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Cortland County Housing Consortium

2015 Meeting Schedule

November 18, 2015: 8:00 - 10:00 am

February 23, 2016: 8:00 - 10:00 am

May 24, 2016: 8:00 - 10:00 am

August 23, 2015: 8:00 - 10:00 am

All meetings are held in Room 203
of the Main Street SUNY Cortland
Building at 9 Main Street

For more information, contact Aaron Baier by telephone: 607-753-7363 or by email:
abaier@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

Bariatric Support Group Meetings

November 18, 2015

December 16, 2015

January 20, 2016

February 17, 2016

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

607-753-7363

NYS Offers Cancer Services Program

The Cancer Services Program (CSP) provides breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings at NO COST to women and men who: (1) do not have health insurance OR have health insurance that does not cover the cost of these screenings; (2) cannot pay for these screenings; (3) meet income eligibility requirements; (4) meet age requirements; and (5) live in NYS.

There are a number of services available through the Program, including: **Breast Cancer Screening** (Mammogram and Clinical Breast Exam) - Women ages 40 and older and Women under age 40 at high risk for breast cancer; **Cervical Cancer Screening** (Pap Test and Pelvic Exam) - Women ages 40 and older; **Colorectal Cancer Screening** (Fecal Occult Blood Test/Fecal Immunochemical Test Kit) - Men and women ages 50 and older at average risk for colorectal cancer; and **Colorectal Cancer Screening** (Colonoscopy) - Men and women at increased or high risk for colorectal cancer

Services are provided in local clinics, health centers, doctors' offices and hospitals in every county and borough in New York State by health care providers participating in the CSP.

Breast, cervical and colorectal cancers may not always cause symptoms, but there are screening tests that can find these cancers early, when treatment is most

successful. Consider the following:

- The risk for breast cancer increases with age. Talk to your doctor about when and how often you should be screened.
- All women are at risk for cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is one of the easiest cancers to prevent with regular screening tests and follow-up. It also is highly curable when found and treated early.

All men and women ages 50 or older should be screened for colorectal cancer. If a member of your family has had colorectal cancer, your healthcare provider may recommend starting screening earlier.

If the screening test finds something abnormal, diagnostic (testing) services are available through the CSP for eligible women and men at no cost. If breast, cervical or colorectal cancer is found, eligible women and men may be able to enroll in the NYS Medicaid Cancer Treatment Program to receive full Medicaid coverage for the entire time they are being treated for cancer. Men diagnosed with prostate cancer by a doctor in this program may be able to enroll in the NYS Medicaid Cancer Treatment Program (the CSP does not pay for prostate cancer screenings or diagnostic services).

Call **1-866-442-CANCER (2262)** to talk to someone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week who will connect you to a Cancer Services Program near you.

ATI Community Computer Lab

Open Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 4:45 pm

Computers are available for
consumers only.

For more information, call
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Congratulations to the 2015
Inaugural Recipients of the
Mary E. Ewing Award
for Independent Living

Hiland Bush
Homer, New York

Jacquelyn Moore
Marathon, New York

Why We Need a Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management

During a recent congressional testimony, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Craig Fugate, described today's reality as follows: "government can and will continue to serve disaster survivors. However, we fully recognize that a government-centric approach to disaster management will not be enough to meet the challenges posed by catastrophic incident. That is why we must fully engage our entire societal capacity", March 2010. Mr. Fugate's testimony started a national dialogue on a whole community approach to emergency management.

The whole community approach is a philosophical methodology on how to conduct the business of emergency management. Benefits include: a shared understanding of community needs and capabilities, greater empowerment and integration of resources from across the community, a stronger social infrastructure, establishment of relationships that facilitate more effective prevention protection, mitigation, response, and recovery activities and an increased individual and collective preparedness. The whole community approach recognizes individuals with disabilities and those who have access and functional needs.

The term "access and functional needs" means "those actions, services, accommodations and programmatic, architectural, and communication modifications that a covered entity must undertake which aim to afford individuals with disabilities a full and equal opportunity to use and enjoy programs, services, activities, goods, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations in the most integrated setting, in light of the urgent circumstances of the emergency and the legal obligations to undertake advanced planning and prepared to the disability-related needs of individuals with disabilities as defined by the ADA amendments act of 2008.

Every individual is entitled to equal access to available services, particularly those related to emergency response and recovery activities. However, historically persons with disabilities and others with access and functional needs have been greatly impacted by emergencies and disasters and unfortunately in some cases were left behind and perished.

On September 10, 2015, Access to Independence (ATI) hosted Jim Flemming, FEMA Region II Disability Integration Specialist, to discuss the concept of embracing the whole community approach to emergency preparedness. He also spoke of the importance of creating a Core Advisory Group (CAG). He stated that such a group should primarily include people with diverse disabilities, and that local government offices and private/sector and nongovernmental organizations should learn from individuals with disabilities about their

concerns regarding access and functional needs. Too often in the past individuals' needs have been misunderstood. Therefore, bringing people together in the planning stages is a lesson that's been learned.

Cortland County has been very fortunate in that it have not had any severe disasters. The Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York (CIDNY) found that during, and immediately following, the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11) mainstream emergency responders and relief agencies did not consistently take into account the specific needs of individuals with disabilities.

As an agency that aims to model proper systems policies that are inclusive of people with disabilities, ATI has an emergency evacuation policy and plan, staff sit on committees in regards to emergency preparedness on the state level and County level and we believe in educating consumers their friends and family on being personally prepared in the event of an emergency.

ATI and the Cortland County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) have joined together in implementing the whole community approach, pairing it with the independent living philosophy to ensure Cortland County's emergency management plan is inclusive for individuals with disabilities. In addition, we have recently started a CAG and are working together to identify individuals with disabilities in the community that will need help in the event of an emergency. We are looking for your input and participation.

For more information on how to get involved, contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: fpizzola@aticortland.org.



ATI Announces 2016 Workshop Series

Access to Independence (ATI) proudly announces the launch of its 2016 workshop series. Each workshop will take place in the ATI Community Room from 2:00 – 4:00 pm.

On Wednesday, January 13, ATI will host John P. Herrion, Director of Disability Rights at the New York State Division of Human Rights (NYS DHR), who will present the following workshop: "Enhancing the Independent Living Lifestyle: Knowing Your Rights, Navigating Your Benefits & Protecting Your Assets."

The NYS DHR enforces New York's Human Rights Law, which includes protections for persons with disabilities to be free from discrimination. This workshop will provide an overview of individual rights in the areas of employment, housing and access to places of public accommodation. It will also cover two recent amendments to the Human Rights Law that pertain to service animals and access to government entities for persons with disabilities.

On Wednesday, February 17, ATI will host Jim Murphy, an attorney with Legal Services of Central New York, Inc., and Sara Hazard, Aging Services Specialist from the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging, who will provide an in-depth overview of Social Security benefits, Medicare, Medicaid and Medicare Managed Care.

Mr. Murphy will provide an overview of Social Security benefits, including Social Security Retirement, (SSR), Social Security Disability Insurance, (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). He will also provide clarification on Medicare and Medicaid benefits as well as explain local services offered by Legal Services of Central New York. Ms. Hazard will speak about Medicaid Managed Care. She will explain the eligibility criteria and the various options available and the application process.

ATI plans to announce additional workshops in the coming months. In total ATI plans to facilitate at least a monthly workshop throughout 2016 in an effort to improve community awareness of disability topics. For more information on these workshops, or to save your spot, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by e-mail: fpizzola@aticortland.org.

Seeking Interested Individuals to work on Emergency Preparedness

Access to Independence (ATI) and the Cortland County Department of Emergency Response and Communications (DERC) invite you to join a Core Advisory Group (CAG) that has been tasked with providing both entities guidance on ensuring people with all sorts of abilities are considered when making plans for emergency preparedness.

Both ATI and the Cortland County DERC are looking for people with disabilities, caregivers and family members of people with disabilities to participate in Cortland County's emergency management planning process.

The next meeting of the CAG will take place on Thursday, December 17, from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon at Access to Independence, located at 26 North Main Street. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: fpizzola@aticortland.org.

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Heather Wineburg
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Chad W. Underwood

Program Manager

Mary E. Ewing

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November 20, 2015

Dear Friend,

As the holiday season is now upon us, we are writing to ask that you please remember Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. in your holiday giving plans this year. While preparing for a joyous holiday celebration with your friends and family, please consider setting aside part of your budget to support the work of Access to Independence with a tax-deductible charitable donation.

Access to Independence provides a number of greatly needed services to families and individuals in our community, including loans of durable medical equipment and assistive technology, accessibility home modifications, peer counseling, independent living skills training, youth transition services and home and community-based support services, to name just a few. Last year, we provided routine services to 387 community residents and we provided more than 4,000 other individuals with at least one service.

Access to Independence also provides substantial systems advocacy efforts to fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities and to promote increased access to all aspects of our community. Unfortunately, barriers persist and needs are unmet for too many people with disabilities in our community. Whether it be the lack of accessible housing and transportation, the absence of inclusive social and recreation opportunities or the shortage of employment opportunities, ATI's mission, vision and values have never been so clear.

Your donation will help ATI continue to provide all of these unfunded services for people with disabilities in our community. It will support our efforts to increase awareness of disability issues, publicize the lack of equal human and civil rights for people with disabilities, and increase the opportunity for all people to live as independently as possible. Lastly, it will invest in our vision: “to lead the community towards an all-inclusive future where discrimination and physical barriers no longer exist”.

Please call us with any questions, and thank you in advance for your generosity and support!

Happy holidays,

Chad W. Underwood, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley
Board Chair

26 North Main St.
Cortland, NY 13045
ph: 607-753-7363
fax: 607-756-4884

e-mail: [in-fo@aticortland.org](mailto:info@aticortland.org)

website:
www.aticortland.org



“Nothing More, Nothing Less For All People with Disabilities”

2016 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

10th Annual Access to Independence Bowl-a-Thon – March 5, 2016

Support more than 150 consumers, friends and family enjoy a half-day of bowling, food and door prizes at this inclusive recreation event.

- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$100!** (20 sponsors needed)

26th Anniversary: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration – July 2016

Support our annual event that celebrates the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$250!** (5 sponsors needed)
- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$100!** (15 sponsors needed)

11th Annual Employment Conference – October 2016

Support our annual event that provides independent living skills training and networking opportunities for individuals with disabilities seeking community employment.

- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$100!** (10 sponsors needed)

5th Annual Gala – October 29, 2016

Support our premiere annual ‘friendraiser’ by celebrating our accomplishments and looking ahead to future endeavors with friends, family and caring community members, while enjoying exquisite food and music.

- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$250!** (5 sponsors needed)
- Yes, we will sponsor this event with \$100!** (10 sponsors needed)

Community Room / Consumer Computer Lab – full year

Help us to continue offering the community access to our large community room for functions or meetings. Also, help us to continue offering consumers the use of a computer lab with 6 computers.

- Yes, we will sponsor the ATI Community Room / Computer Lab with \$500!** (3 sponsors needed)

Mary E. Ewing Scholarship Fund for Independent Living – full year

Support the cost of providing a \$150 scholarship to a graduating senior who emulates the spirit of independent living in each of Cortland’s five high schools. Help us to build a sustaining fund for decades to come!

- Yes, we will support the Mary E. Ewing Scholarship Fund with \$150!** (10 sponsors needed)

Newsletter – Access News – February, May, August and November 2016

Help us to distribute quarterly newsletters jam-packed with useful information to more than 4,500 people!

- Yes, we will sponsor the newsletter (business card ad) with \$100!** (20 sponsors needed)

Leadership Development / Advocacy – full year

Help us to fund leadership development and systems change efforts for youth and adults in our community.

- Yes, we will sponsor an ATI consumer with \$50!** (20 sponsors needed)

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