Funding Available for Home Modifications

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is seeking eligible low– and moderate-income homeowners and renters that would benefit from funding to complete modifications to make their home more accessible.

ATI currently has limited funding available for Medicaid recipients with disabilities in Cortland, Broome and Chenango Counties, for low-income people with disabilities that own their own home in the City of Cortland and for veterans with disabilities in Cortland, Broome, Madison and Onondaga Counties.

Since last fall, NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) has awarded ATI $362,500 to fund these efforts.

ATI is now accepting applications from qualified candidates. For more information, call Audrey Jones, ATI Architectural Barrier Programs Coordinator, at 607-753-7363.

ATI Hosts Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is once again hosting the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the tax season.

The VITA program offers free help to individuals and couples who made less than $54,000 in 2015 and/or who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. IRS trained and certified volunteers will be available to help people complete, e-file, and set up direct deposits of your state and federal tax returns.

The VITA staff will also be offering their services at other sites throughout the county from January 20 to the first week in April 2016.

Call 211 for more information on VITA and on how you might be able to get your taxes done at ATI or at any of the other locations throughout the County.

ATI Seeking Volunteers

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is seeking motivated volunteers to help with a number of pressing initiatives this year.

ATI is currently seeking motivated volunteers to help with the planning of its 2016 fund development initiatives, including its March 5, Bowl-4-Abilities event and its October 29, Annual Gala.

ATI is also seeking volunteers to help with various local systems change initiatives that (1) aim to identify (inventory) lack of access for people with disabilities (e.g., housing, transportation, medical facilities, sidewalks, businesses, etc.); (2) increase public awareness of these deficiencies; and (3) take action to facilitate change.

For more information on how you can help out with either initiative, call: 607-753-7363, or email: volunteer@aticortland.org.
A Year in Review: A Letter to Supporters from the ATI Chief Executive Officer

2015 was a monumental year for both Access to Independence and people with disabilities in general. In addition to our year-long recognition of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ATI was active in combatting the stigma that far too many people associate with having a disability. I’d like to share with you some of the great work that our staff and Board of Directors accomplished last year.

In 2015, the ATI Board of Directors was extremely active in governing the continued growth of ATI. For the fourth consecutive year, ATI generated more than $1 million in revenue to fund staffing and programming for people in our community. Not one dollar came from city or county tax coffers, providing ATI a very important opportunity to operate and advocate on behalf of all people with disabilities without having its hands tied by the politics of the local bureaucracy.

In 2015, ATI secured $44,610 in donations from 216 individual and business donors, 64 of which were new, first-time donors. This is the second highest amount of dollars raised from donations since ATI launched its Friends of the Center campaign initiative in 2008. Furthermore, ATI secured nearly $190,000 in new grant funds from a variety of sources, including: $150,000 from the Office of Housing and Community Renewal to complete home modifications for Medicaid recipients; $30,000 from the J. M. McDonald Foundation; $5,000 from the TJX Foundation and $3,500 from the Cortland Community Foundation. Last, ATI secured the donation of an individual’s home upon their passing by way of a Life Estate Trust.

In 2015, ATI increased its number of staff to 12 persons, 11 of whom have a disability. ATI is currently working to secure funding to add a minimum of one new staff person in 2016. ATI staff credentials include a Master of Public Administration, two Masters of Social Work, a Master of Education, a Master of Art, a Certified Benefits Counselor, two Certified Aging in Place Specialists, a Retired Code Enforcement Officer and more than 200 years of experience working with people with disabilities to secure their freedom and civil rights.

In 2015, ATI staff invested nearly 1,964 hours to fight for systems changes throughout the Cortland community. ATI increased community awareness of the lack of affordable, accessible and integrated housing options for people with disabilities and fought for increased public transit options. ATI helped medical facilities become more accessible for patients with disabilities and continued efforts to facilitate increased access to social and recreational opportunities throughout the County. ATI also launched efforts to promote visibility and source of income law in the County and fought for increased accessibility on sidewalks, roadways and in businesses.

In 2015, ATI staff invested an additional 1,000 hours to fight for systems changes at the state level. ATI staff served in key leadership positions on several governor-appointed state councils. As a result of ATI advocacy efforts, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) authorized stop-gap funding to rural transportation systems which resulted in a payment of $32,861 to First Transit to help maintain operations. The NYS DOH also agreed to delay the transition of the Nursing Home Transition & Diversion (NHTD) and the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Medicaid Waiver program participants to Medicaid Managed Care until after January 1, 2017. Last, the NY Legislature increased funding for independent living centers by $1 million. Throughout the year, ATI staff remained active advocates with ongoing initiatives such as the elimination of sheltered workshops and the implementation of key initiatives relating to Governor Cuomo’s Employment First initiative.

Many thanks and much appreciation goes out to all of ATI’s staff, Board Members and community supporters for making 2015 a memorable year for people with disabilities in Cortland County! Just the same, our work is not done. People with disabilities in our community are still unable to enjoy the same civil rights as people without disabilities and are still unable to participate fully in all aspects of life due to persistent structural and attitudinal barriers. With your help and support, 2016 will bring even more progress in our fight for equality! For more information on the services Access to Independence provides, or to learn about how you can get involved, call Access to Independence at 607-753-7363.
ATI announces Winter / Spring 2016 Workshops Series

When compared to people without disabilities, people with disabilities in our nation remain significantly underemployed and live in poverty. According to the U.S. Census 2010 Americans with Disabilities Survey Report, less than one-half of people with disabilities aged 21 to 64 were employed during the interview month. That's 41 percent of those aged 21 to 64 with a disability, compared with 79 percent of those without a disability. By severity, 27.5% of adults with severe disabilities were employed, compared with 71.2% of adults with non-severe disabilities." Additionally, with the lower likelihood of having a job comes the higher likelihood of experiencing persistent poverty; that is, continuous poverty over a 24-month period.

Other factors that contribute to persistent poverty are income and resource limitations that individuals dependent on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid face. Currently, single people on SSI and Medicaid can only earn $825 each month and cannot have more than $2,000 in savings. Any additional income and savings above those levels would be counted against them and they would have to "spend down" their excess resources or they would not qualify for their health insurance.

Pair this with the high cost of adaptive equipment, durable medical supplies and items that are not covered by Medicaid that people with disabilities depend on and you have a "lose-lose" situation. There was a recent article about a woman in her 30’s with cerebral palsy who described the need to buy new shoes every month because of her walking pattern. Another woman talked about having to purchase special, custom-made clothing because of her body distortions. Items such as these are not covered by Medicaid.

Additional discrimination that people with disabilities face that leads to poverty is the lack of accessible transportation services. Many people with disabilities are unable to drive or afford vehicles, therefore, finding a job, getting to work and maintaining employment can be challenging and sometimes literally impossible.

To help individuals with disabilities learn how to bridge the poverty gap and break down the barriers of discrimination, Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is offering a series of educational workshops, entitled "Enhancing Your Independent Living Lifestyle." The monthly workshops will take place in ATI's Community Room on various Wednesdays from 2:00 – 4:00 pm.

ATI's March workshop, entitled “Traveling for Work or Pleasure: What You Need to Know,” is scheduled for Wednesday, March 16. Cathy Salazar, Security Manager from the Ithaca-based Transportation Security Administration (TSA), will conduct a presentation on travel protocols for people with disabilities, including exemptions for medical needs and packing tips for safe traveling. Cathy will discuss the TSA Cares Program which caters to those needing or wanting personalized assistance when travelling through the nation's airports. Rachel Stout, an American Airlines General Manager, will discuss customer service activities for those traveling with wheelchairs and other medical equipment. Regional TSA Security Officers will also attend to offer a presentation on TSA screening procedures for those with disabilities, service animals, medical conditions and equipment.

ATI's April workshop, entitled “Protecting Your Assets by Creating a Supplemental Needs Pooled Trust (SNPT)” is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13. Marsha Sweet, a Pooled Trust Specialist from the Rochester-based Center for Disability Rights, will conduct a workshop on the many benefits of creating a Special Needs Pooled Trust for people with disabilities, especially if they have excess income and need Medicaid to continue to live in the community.

ATI's May workshop, entitled “How Can We Improve Our Public Transit Conundrum” is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18. Ann Hotchkin, Seven Valleys Health Coalition Mobility Manager will join other transportation experts and advocates to discuss upcoming changes that aim to improve residents’ public transit experience and to identify specific advocacy initiative currently in the works that would expand the impact of public transit in Cortland County.

For more information on any of the aforementioned workshops, or to reserve your spot, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by e-mail: fpizzola@aticortland.org.
Introducing ICAN: Independent Consumer Advocacy Network

Where do you turn for help understanding Medicaid Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) or if you need help enrolling into an MLTC plan? Who do you call if you have a dispute with your Medicaid Managed Care provider?

One excellent resource is the Independent Consumer Advocacy Network (ICAN). ICAN is a network of organizations throughout NYS. ICAN is the NYS Ombudsman program for people with Medicaid who need long term care services. One of the participating agencies, Action for Older Persons, provides free and confidential help and is located right in Binghamton.

Sometimes trying to understand your health insurance options can feel overwhelming. Help from an ICAN representative can be a simple phone call away to get advice, or it may go further into making a formal appeal.

ICAN representatives are very knowledgeable about the MLTC program and processes. Even better, they are friendly and easy to talk with!

For more information look up ICAN online, or contact Anne Marie Piche, ATI Transition Specialist, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: apiche@aticortland.org.

Monroe Wheelchair Specializes In

- Cutting Edge PRODUCT Knowledge
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Let us work beside your team to get the RIGHT fit the first time.

JOIN OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS!
Access to Independence (ATI) is recruiting interested individuals with diverse backgrounds in finance, fund development, nonprofit management and/or program development to serve on its Board of Directors.

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

ATI Seeks Ombudsman Volunteers

In January, ATI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Syracuse-based ARISE, Inc. to provide essential support to the Cortland area’s Ombudsman efforts. Once superbly coordinated by the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging, ATI will now try to fill big shoes to help ensure residents of long term care and adult care facilities receive appropriate care. ATI needs your help!

ATI is seeking volunteers to become local Ombudsman. An Ombudsman is a volunteer advocate who seeks to mediate any issues that residents of long term care and adult care facilities might incur. These issues can include problems with basic living needs or complications in medical care. Volunteers will receive training to learn these skills and to understand the basics of the interviewing and investigation process.

Ombudsman are essential to ensure that people’s rights are upheld and are receiving appropriate care. To qualify to become an Ombudsman you must: have a desire to assist others, feel comfortable around medical equipment and facilities, have an investigative nature, not be employed in any capacity by a long term care facility, have no direct commercial dealings with any long term care facilities, and you cannot be the Ombudsman of a facility where a friend or relative resides. You will be asked to volunteer for about 2-3 hours per week.

For more information on the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, contact Jeff Parker, ARISE, Inc. Regional Ombudsman Coordinator, by phone: 315-671-5108, or contact Maria R. Mucaria, ATI Administrative Assistant, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: mmucaria@aticortland.org.
As we start a new year, let’s all make a resolution to refuse to be taken advantage of by any of the scams that are out there looking to separate you from your money. Here is a list of the top five scams for last year. Most of these scams are still out there today and more scams are being created every day.

- IRS imposters. This is the nation’s biggest scam. You will get phone calls from someone posing as an IRS agent who threatens you with arrest, deportation or seizure of property or your business unless immediate payment is made for alleged back taxes. Recently, bogus mailings and faxes have been added to this scam. But, the real IRS doesn’t call out of the blue or demand immediate payment, especially by prepaid debit card or wire transfer!

- Tech Support Scam. These imposters claim to be from Microsoft and other tech companies and lie about a supposed computer virus on your computer. At the end of 2015, 3.3 million Americans will have paid an estimated $1.5 billion to scammers for bogus tech support. The scammers will also have had access to your computer files and passwords for possible identity theft.

- Foreign Lotteries. The fact is, you can’t win some faraway lottery that you didn’t even enter! If you ever win a legitimate lottery, you won’t be forced to pay taxes, processing fees or anything else upfront before you can collect the money. If they send you a “partial payment check”, it will not be real, and you will be responsible for paying back your bank if you try and cash it. If it was a legitimate lottery, it is your responsibility to notify the lottery commission, not the other way around!

- Sweepstakes. There are many different types of contests, and they all ask you to pay in order to collect your prize (cash or merchandise). In this scam, you pay upfront, but the prize never comes. Just like the lottery scam, if you are asked to pay “up front,” it is a scam.

- Grandparents Scam. You receive a desperate call from a loved one in trouble (usually a grandchild) asking you to wire money to help them in an emergency. The grandchild or family member will ask you not to tell the parents…. just send money. The scammers find information about you and your family online or in the local paper. This scam swindles an average of 10,000 grandparents per year. Always check the facts before wiring money to any “supposed” family member in trouble.

One way to avoid these scams is to screen your phone calls. Use your caller ID and don’t answer the phone if you don’t recognize the phone number. If the caller is someone familiar, they will leave a message and you can decide whether or not to return the call.

Avoid These Top 2015 Scams and More!

ATI Community Computer Lab
Open Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 4:45 pm
Computers are available for consumers only.
For more information, call (607) 753-7363.
**ATI Breaks Record:**

**4th Annual Gala a Success**

The Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) 4th Annual 2015 Gala netted the Agency more than $3,500 to fund advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities. ATI held the elegant event on Saturday, December 5th, from 6:00 – 9:00 pm, at the SUNY Cortland Alumni House.

According to the event’s Coordinator, Audrey Jones, “ATI’s Annual Gala aims to be ATI’s premier annual fundraising event”. She said the event recognizes the lack of human and civil rights for people with disabilities, promotes the development of new friends among individuals and businesses and brings together longstanding friends and supporters.

In addition to great food and live music by Lonnie Park, the Gala offered a silent auction and numerous raffles throughout the evening.

Special thanks go out to this year’s sponsors: Stephen Compagni – Economy Paving; Audrey Jones; Dr. Baljinder Singh, DDS; Family Health Network; Deborah and Peter Morse-Ackley; Cynthia & Walter Kolt – Access Lifts and Ramps; Janet & Russ Oechsle; First National Bank of Groton; The Underwood Family; Mike Shafer; St. Anthony’s and Sheila Neville and Family. Additional thanks go out to all silent auction package donors. And a special thank you to ARACHNO SQUAD RC for their donation and attendance at the event, after the loss of a brother.

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**ATI Launches Community Assessment on Unmet Need for People with Disabilities**

The Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) Board of Directors recently announced plans to undertake a community assessment on the unmet needs of people with disabilities, their family members and their caregivers.

In addition to securing data from other area service providers of people with disabilities, ATI plans to host a series of three community forums and to facilitate a formal survey of stakeholders, including leaders, service providers, people with disabilities, family members and caregivers.

ATI plans to complete the assessment by the end of Spring. In addition to sharing the data with the community, ATI plans to base its next 3 – 5 year strategic plan on the results.

ATI has already launched data collection efforts by securing data from a number of existing resources, including: 2015 New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC) Needs Assessment, 2015 Area Agency on Aging Needs Assessment, the 2013 CAPCO Needs Assessment that is available online, 2015 Cortland Counts data and data secured from ACCES-VR (State Education Department).

ATI will hold three community forums, open to the public, in the coming months to collect qualitative input on a number of fronts. ATI will hold its first forum on Wednesday, February 24, from 12:00 Noon to 1:00 pm; its second forum on Tuesday, March 8, from 5:00 – 6:00 pm; and its final forum on Friday, March 18, from 8:00 – 9:00 am. All forums will be held at ATI’s offices, located in downtown Cortland at 26 North Main Street. ATI asks that people who are interested in providing testimony please RSVP at 607-753-7363.

At the forums, ATI hopes to collect specific feedback on the following questions:

- What do people with disabilities need to live more independently in our community? ATI is interested in family member and caregiver perspectives on the question as well.
- ATI requests input on what services people with disabilities need but are unable to access in our community, whether it be due to a lack of availability or barriers.
- ATI requests input on what barriers persist in our community that reduce the quality of life for people with disabilities.
- ATI is looking for testimony on what are the most important needs that should be addressed to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their family members and their caregivers.

For more information on ATI’s community assessment, please contact Chad W. Underwood, ATI Chief Executive Officer, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: cwunderwood@aticortland.org.
Mentoring: A Life-Long Process of Peer Support:
By Aaron T. Baier, ATI Consumer and Systems Advocacy Coordinator

Every year during the month of January, Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) joins with our community in recognition of National Mentoring Month. This year, ATI, Cortland Area Communities That Care, Cortland Prevention Resources, and the Cortland YWCA, joined forces on the #80for80 campaign to promote and recruit mentors from our community. We are thrilled that we saw more than 25 community members sign up to be a mentor during January!

Mentoring brings us many amazing stories. Here is one from ATI’s own Peer Mentoring Program. A young lady, recently graduated from high school, moves on to the next adventure of her journey toward independence with confidence. Her experiences fuel her aspirations and motivate her to find new opportunities. The first thing she seeks is not housing or employment as you might expect; rather, she seeks a peer support system - she seeks a mentor.

Mentoring takes place during all stages of life and impacts all facets of who we are and who we will become. Mentoring is not simply a “big brother” or “big sister” to help us find a place in our community. They also help us to learn new skills, set higher goals, empower independent decision making, and even help us avoid hardships and pitfalls along the way. Mentors are the people we look to for advice, guidance and a listening ear.

Take a moment and remember those people who have mentored you over the years as I recount a story personal to me.

Jess, the recent high school graduate from above, joined the ATI Peer Mentoring Program in 2012. While Jess was an excellent student, she did not have the motivation to pursue the path that she had dreamt of - journalism. She felt as though her parents did not appreciate this dream, but in reality, neither Jess nor her parents really knew how to get started.

ATI matched Jess with a local reporter to serve as a mentor. During their meetings, Jess and her mentor focused on refining her writing skills for a field reporter and worked on her communication skills and motivation to seek new opportunities. Jess and her mentor journeyed into the community on several occasions to attend events and community activities which Jess would report on in the local paper. Seeing published works in a local newspaper was exciting and empowering for a young journalist and it helped build her confidence significantly.

Jess also participated in ATI’s Cortland County Mentoring Day event as the event’s reporter. Instead of a usual morning job shadow - as other students participated in - Jess visited the other students and wrote a fantastic article about the event which was featured in several local publications after the event.

These experiences led Jess to investigate college opportunities that would suit her goals. She looked for opportunities in places where she knew she would have support, from family and from other peers.

After graduation, Jess moved to the Syracuse area to pursue her college aspirations. The first thing she did was connect with peer services and a family member and friends in the area. From those support systems, she connected with a new mentor in the area. Soon, Jess found a place to live, a part-time job, and some opportunities to continue writing. All of this began with the support of her peers at Access to Independence and from her relationship with her mentor.

Today, Jess continues to maintain contact with her Cortland peer system and recounts stories of her successes over the past year. Jess began college back in September and continues to stay motivated and focused on her goals. She has found new peers and other mentors.

As I said in the beginning, mentoring is not a one-time deal, it is a life-long process. We all have mentors; those mentors may come and go; their words and lessons stay with us for life.

With Jess’s story in mind, who has inspired you in your life? Who has been a support and mentor to you?

Finally, I want to encourage you to participate in a mentoring program. Get involved for a year and be a part of another person’s life. Sometimes these relationships come naturally, but there are several mentoring programs in Cortland County that can get you started today! For more information, contact me by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.
ATI Hosts NYS Division of Human Rights Expert

On January 13, Access to Independence hosted a workshop titled "Knowing Your Rights". John Herrion, Director of Disability Rights for the New York State Division of Human Rights (DHR) presented information and answered questions during the two-hour session.

One major point of information that John discussed, was the difference between the New York State Human Rights Law's (NYSHRL) definition of disability as compared to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) law's definition of disability. The ADA law requires a “substantial limitation of one or more major life activities” for an individual to be considered disabled and protected under the law.

However, there is no such qualifier under the NYSHRL, and no mention of “major life activities.” The NYSHRL defines “disability” as: “a physical, mental or medical impairment resulting from anatomical, physiological, genetic or neurological condition(s) which prevents the exercise of a normal bodily function, or is demonstrable by medically accepted clinical or laboratory techniques, or a record of such an impairment, or a condition regarded by others as such an impairment.”

In other words, under the NYSHRL if an individual is perceived as having a disability or is temporarily disabled (such as undergoing chemotherapy) and faces discrimination, a complaint may be filed under the NYSHRL.

Persons who believe they have been discriminated against can download a complaint form from www.dhr.ny.gov. Complaint forms are available in alternative format, including Braille. Contact the Division’s ADA Coordinator, John Herrion, should you need material in alternative format. Persons may also contact their nearest DHR regional office to ask for the complaint form to be mailed to them, or to file a complaint in person.

Keep Income During Short Stay at Nursing Home

If you go into a nursing home, you may need Medicaid to help pay for your stay. Even if you are in the nursing home for just a short stay for rehab, Medicaid rules assume that you are staying permanently. When you become a permanent resident, you will typically receive $50 per month for personal needs and any income that pays for Medicare, Medigap or other health insurance premiums. The rest of your income will go to the nursing home.

If you DO NOT receive SSI benefits, you can request “Community Budgeting” from your local Medicaid office. This program allows you to keep $845 per month of your income plus enough to pay any of your health insurance premiums. Here’s how:

- A doctor (usually the doctor at the nursing home), must sign a form certifying that there is a “reasonable expectation” that you can return home. The physician does not have to guarantee that you will return home.
- The physician’s certification must be submitted to your local Medicaid program along with the Medicaid application to pay for your nursing home care. You may need to ask the nursing home to have this form signed by the physician and to submit it to Medicaid. The form can be submitted even after the Medicaid application was already submitted.
- Community budgeting must be renewed with a physician’s certification form every 6 months. However, it is NOT limited to just one 6 month period.

Make sure to check with the nursing home as soon as possible during your intake process to make sure this request is sent to your local Medicaid office.

For more information, contact Susan Lewis, ATI Independent Living Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: susan.lewis@aticortland.org.
ATI Launches 2016 Advocacy on State Budget and Policy Issues

Although ATI launched advocacy with state leaders and a variety of budget and policy initiatives that aim to enhance the rights of people with disabilities in mid-December, ATI is just now starting to send groups of disability advocates and other community supporters to Albany to meet with legislators and to ensure the needs of the Cortland community are met.

On February 2, ATI attended two advocacy events at the Capital in Albany. At the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) Transit Awareness Day, advocates pushed for increased funding for rural public transit systems and increased options for accessible transit and taxi services. Elsewhere in the Capital, at the New York State Council on Aging (NYSCA) Legislative Conference, advocates continued the push for increased funding for long term services and supports and better planning for Medicaid Managed Care.

On February 8, ATI participated in a joint NYAIL and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State (CDPAA-NYS) Legislative Awareness Day. Among many other asks, advocates requested that legislators increase funding for ILCs by five million dollars per year.

Advocates also encourage legislators to increase reimbursement rates for home health aides.

On February 9, ATI joined with advocates to attend the Families Together in NYS Legislative Lunch and to meet with state leaders to urge their attention to the need for increased capacity at the local level to support family development and youth transition programming.

On February 23, ATI joined with statewide advocates to attend the New York Association on Psychiatric and Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS) Legislative Day. Advocates again met with state leaders, but this time to rally for the rights of people with mental health diagnosis and to request support for improved access to services.

On March 23, ATI advocates will attend the Brain Injury Association of New York State (BIANYS) Legislative Day. ATI will join hundreds of advocates from across the state to fight for improved access to quality services for people who suffer head and brain injuries. ATI will fight for increased opportunities to help individuals receive critical services to help with their rehabilitation and re-entry back to the community.

In May, ATI will attend the Assembly Taskforce for People with Disabilities’ Legislative Disability Awareness Day (LDAD) to continue post-budget advocacy and to increase awareness of pressing legislative disability rights issues.

For more information on ATI’s Statewide advocacy efforts, or if you are interested in attending one of ATI’s remaining Albany trips, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.
Each year, ATI looks to our community to see what is and what is not accessible to people with disabilities. While there are several areas that could be improved in Cortland County, ATI sets priorities to guide its advocacy efforts over the year. Here are ATI’s priorities for 2016.

**Education:** ATI will advocate and collaborate with County-wide school districts and service providers to implement the use and adoption of an ATI-developed Community Resource Guide (CRG). ATI will advocate to ensure that there is an increase in the number of schools and service providers who change their practices to incorporate the peer-reviewed CRG as a part of their transition services to youth with disabilities.

**Employment:** ATI will advocate for increased accessible employer recruitment, training and hiring practices for people with disabilities. ATI will inventory local employers and rate their policies and practices on accessibility to job seekers. ATI will advocate to ensure that there is an increase in the number of employers that make necessary policy and structural changes to improve accessibility.

**Health Care:** ATI will continue to advocate for increased access to local medical offices, facilities and locations. ATI will inventory these facilities and rate each on their accessibility to the public. ATI will advocate to ensure that there is an increase in the number of facilities that make necessary policy and structural changes to improve accessibility.

**Commerce:** ATI will advocate for increased access to local businesses and their products and services. ATI will inventory these businesses and rate each on their accessibility to the public. ATI will advocate to ensure that there is an increase in the number of businesses that make necessary policy and structural changes to improve accessibility.

**Social:** ATI will continue to advocate for increased access to local tourist, recreation and faith-based facilities and locations. ATI will inventory these facilities and rate each on accessibility to the public. ATI will advocate to ensure that there is an increase in the number of facilities that make necessary policy and structural changes to improve accessibility.

**Citizenship:** ATI will advocate for visitable home design code/ordinance requirements throughout Cortland County, including its city, towns, and villages. ATI will also advocate for local laws that would eliminate housing discrimination based on a person’s source of income. ATI will work closely with the Cortland County Housing Consortium, local government and community advocates and stakeholders to identify appropriate measures to address these issues.

For more information on ATI’s local advocacy efforts, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@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
Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm or
Call 607-753-9364 or 607-753-1771 to request an application sent by mail.
2016 Bowl-4-Abilities Sponsorship Form
Saturday, March 5, 2016, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Cort-Lanes, 928 Tompkins Street, Cortland, New York

Company Name: ____________________________________________________________

Contact Name: _____________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________

Email: _____________________________________________________________________

Website: __________________________________________________________________

Telephone/Fax Number: _____________________________________________________

Business & Individual Sponsorship Levels

_____ $50 “Curb-cut” - mention in program

_____ $100 “Accessible Parking” - above plus name on welcome poster

_____ $250 “Automatic Door” - above plus recognition in all event publicity

_____ $500 “Spirit of ADA” - above plus banner and logo at event

_____ I would like to donate goods for use as door prizes (value of donation determines above recognition level)

PRINTING DEADLINE:
Thursday, February 25, 2016

Please mail completed forms & payments to:
Access to Independence
26 North Main Street
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 753-7363

Please make checks payable to: Access to Independence

*All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.
2016 BOWL 4 ABILITIES

Raise money to help support ATI programming & advocacy efforts!

Date: Saturday, March 5
Time: 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Location: Cort-Lanes
928 State Route 13, Cortland

Participants bowl for free!
Individual & Team Challenges!
Food & drinks!
Door prizes!

Participate on your own or get a team together!
Call 607-753-7363 to register TODAY!

Accommodations available upon request.