

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

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Spring 2016

NUMBER XLVIII

ATI Welcomes New Architectural Barrier Removal Program Staff

In April, Access to Independence welcomed Shelley Knickerbocker to its family as a full-time Architectural Barrier Specialist. Shelley is a Certified Code Enforcement Officer and she recently completed training to become a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS).

Earlier this month, Access to Independence welcomed Gary Eckert to its family as a part-time Architectural Barrier Specialist. Gary has experience with architectural drawings and home building.

Together, Shelley and Gary are in the process of revamping administrative procedures relating to its various accessibility construction programs while at the same time maintaining momentum with projects already under way.

Please join ATI staff and Board in welcoming both Shelley and Gary to our team and family. Welcome!

Home Modification Funds Available for Veterans

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 County.

ATI is now accepting applications from qualified candidates. For more information, call Shelley Knickerbocker, ATI Architectural Barrier Specialist, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: sknickrbocker@aticortland.org.

ATI Celebrates Founding Day

On May 9, ATI recognized its 18th anniversary as a nonprofit corporation by hosting former and current Board Members to pasta, salad and dessert.

On May 8, 1998, founding Board Members included: Thomas Miller, Lorry Janke and Christopher Farkas. Frances Pizzola was the founding volunteer Director. At the time ATI was based in Room 200 of the County Office Building.

ATI's roots go back to the 1980's when it was known as the Cortland County Accessibility Committee (CCAC). As a local community action group, the CCAC spearheaded a number of initiatives relating to curb cuts and enforcement of accessible parking spots.

Just prior to its incorporation, ATI was affiliated with the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC), a sister center based in Ithaca.



Above: ATI recently hired Shelley Knickerbocker and Gary Eckert to take over the reins of the Agency's Architectural Barrier programs. Welcome aboard!

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2016 Bowl-4-Abilities Raises \$2,238 for ATI

On Saturday, March 5, more than 100 bowlers convened at Cort-Lanes to enjoy a half-day of rocking music, inclusive recreation fun, pizza, and door prizes donated by 14 local businesses!

ATI awarded four King Pin Trophies at this year's event. In the Individual Categories, Doug Watts was recognized for most money raised by an individual and Justin N. won for most pins knocked down by an individual. Team Leggé took home the trophy for most pins knocked down by a team. Team Racker Center took home the trophy for most money raised by a team.

The 2016 ATI Bowl-4-Abilities would not have been such a success without the ardent support of community donors and businesses. This year's event sponsors included Alpa, Inc., the Brickner Family, Higgins Supply, the Underwood Family, Ed Moscato and the Yaman Foundation.

Furthermore, we would like to thank Miss Syracuse, Meghan Sinisi, and her team of pageant ladies for their regional support of this year's Bowl-4-Abilities. Thanks also to Desiree Bach, ATI's TC3 intern for her time and support in planning the event.

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



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ATI ANNOUNCES
NEW SUMMER HOURS!

8:00 AM –
4:00 PM



TUESDAY, MAY 31 THROUGH
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2.



My Internship Opportunity and Experience By Desiree Bach

Internships can help you to develop skills and gain knowledge and experience in a particular field of study. In particular, internships are beneficial to students because they allow them to experience how their studies are applied in the "real world". Internships are highly valuable employment opportunities because experienced interns often need little or no training when they begin their first job. Access to Independence (ATI) supports the academic growth of college students and offers students valuable internship opportunities. My name is Desiree Bach. I would like to share with you my internship experience and goals.

I'm currently finishing a degree in human services from Tompkins Cortland Community College. I am set to graduate in May 2016. ATI has given me the opportunity to expand my academic knowledge and grow as a human service worker. This opportunity has helped me improve my skills and has supported my growth to achieve my career and personal goals. My goals were to develop and strengthen skills to become a better advocate.

During my internship, ATI provided me with several opportunities to participate in magnificent experiences. My favorite experience was attending the NYAIL Legislative Awareness Day in Albany to advocate for independent living and disability rights issues. I also enjoyed organizing activities for the Kidsville event, ATI's annual Bowl-4-Abilities fundraising event, ATI's annual consumer satisfaction survey and work on a number of local systems change advocacy efforts.

Now, as a result of my experience, I will be able to provide quality care and services to people with disabilities in my future. Thank you, Access to Independence, for giving me the opportunity to improve my life and the lives of people with disabilities in our community.

ATI Recognizes Volunteers: 2016 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

On April 14, Access to Independence (ATI) recognized the contributions of its volunteers by hosting them to lunch. ATI presented awards of appreciation to five individuals who went above and beyond over the past year: Michele Quinlan, Barbara Morris, Renee Waddy, Sara Askew and Jarett Withers, Karen Nielsen (not in photo).

Over the past year, 63 individuals volunteered for a total of 2,840 hours. Volunteers donated their time in various ways, including: providing clerical support, participating in advocacy efforts, participating on the Board of Directors, helping out at fundraisers, and helping out at awareness events.

Many thanks go out to each and every ATI volunteer for their dedication and commitment. Our success wouldn't be possible without your efforts!



ATI Recognizes Staff Longevity

On May 9, in conjunction with its 2016 Founding Day event, ATI recognized several longstanding staff for their service to the Agency: Susan Lewis - 14 years; Fran Pizzola - 15 years; Mary Ewing - 13 years; and Aaron Baier - 10 years.

ATI's CEO, Chad W. Underwood, presented each with a commemorative plaque in recognition of their dedication to the mission, vision and values of the Agency.

Congratulations on your milestone achievements !



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ATI Seeks Ombudsman Volunteers

Access to Independence is looking for volunteer ombudsmen to serve Cortland County.

- Are you someone with a passion to assist others?
- Do you feel comfortable around medical equipment and facilities?
- Do you have an investigative nature?
- Do you have about 5 hours per week to devote?
- Are you currently NOT employed in any capacity by a long term care facility?
- Do you have experience with loved ones in institutional settings?

If you answered yes to these questions, you should consider becoming an Ombudsman!

An Ombudsman is a volunteer who advocates, educates and empowers residents of long term care and adult care facilities on issues. 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. Ombudsmen are essential to ensure that people's rights are upheld and are receiving appropriate care.

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's 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.

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 Program Assistant, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: mmucaria@aticortland.org.

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2016 Assembly Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day

On May 16, a contingent of five Cortland area advocates traveled to Albany to join hundreds of advocates from across the State to raise awareness for disability issues and to fight for disability rights. As part of the 2016 Assembly Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day (LDAD), advocates met with their State Legislators, participated in a rousing rally and attended a full session of the NYS Assembly.

ATI advocates met with Assembly Members Barbara Lifton and Gary Finch as well as with Senator James Seward to urge support on a number of issues related to independent living, housing, transportation, and health care. Major issues included: making it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants based on their source of income; requiring new homes that are built with public funds to be “visitable” or accessible for people with disabilities; and providing for “advanced home health aides” to be certified to offer a higher level of care to their clients.

ATI advocates were also able to see the fruits of their labor when they sat in Session as Assembly lawmakers reviewed and voted on proposed bills. As a keystone of LDAD, the Assembly reviewed a package of bills that were directly related to important disability rights in NYS. Bills that were included in this package will then move to the Senate for further review and votes before they move on to the Governor’s office.

Each year, LDAD not only offers an opportunity for Assembly Members to learn more about disability issues, but also for advocates to learn more about the legislative process and to learn how their voice is critical to the democratic process. LDAD is organized by the NYS Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities which includes members of the Assembly and members of the disability community.

For more information on how to get involved with ATI’s Systems Advocacy efforts and upcoming advocacy trips, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.



Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

Please support our 2016 Friends of the Center Campaign!

- Make an unrestricted contribution of any amount!
- Sponsor an event or specific initiative for 2016!
- Every donated dollar stays local!

Make a Difference! DONATE **Fundraising Support**

For more information, call: 607-753-7363, or email: donations@aticortland.org

ATI Community Computer Lab

Open Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 4:45 pm
8:00 am - 3:45 pm (Summer only)

Computers are available for consumers only.

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

Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

Accessibility Construction Services



- Wheelchair ramps & lifts
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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded nutrition assistance program that helps income eligible individuals with the cost of buying food.

Senior citizens are our most vulnerable population when it comes to having enough money to be able to buy and prepare healthy meals. Many have to make the choice in buying food or paying for medical expenses and or paying for the high utility expenses during the winter months.

If you, yourself are in such a situation and your monthly income falls at or below: \$1,926 for a single person or \$2,655 for a couple, you may be eligible for assistance.

For more information, call Trina Griffin, Nutrition Outreach and Education Coordinator at the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging, at 1-866-839-7304, extension 227.

Scammers Fake Social Security Email

The subject line says “Get Protected,” and the email talks about new features from the Social Security Administration (SSA) that can help taxpayers monitor their credit reports, and know about unauthorized use of their Social Security number. It even cites the IRS and the official-sounding “S.A.F.E Act 2015.” It sounds real, but it’s all made up!

It’s a phishing email to get you to click on a scammer’s link. If you do, a scammer can install malware, like viruses and spyware, on your computer. Or, the link might send you to a spoof site, a lookalike website set up by a scammer to trick you into entering your personal information.

Not sure if an email is really from the government? Here are a few clues. Did the email end up in your junk folder? Email providers use filters to help catch phishing scams and prevent spam from getting into your inbox. When you hover your cursor over the link, is the web address really a trusted website? In this fake SSA email, when you hover over the URL you’re invited to click on, you see the link goes to an unrelated “.com”, instead of the SSA’s socialsecurity.gov site.

If you get a questionable email, don’t click on any links, or open any attachments. Report it to the FTC by forwarding the email to spam@uce.gov, and to the real organization impersonated in the email. You also can report it to your email provider. Some email providers let you mark messages as phishing scams. When you’re done, delete the email.

2016 Masquerade Gala

Saturday, November 5, 2016

6:00 - 9:00 pm

SUNY Cortland Alumni House

Individuals (1): \$25.00

Couples (2): \$50.00

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

- Hors d'oeuvres & cash bar
- Costume or Cocktail attire (optional)
- Masks provided (or bring your own)
- Silent auction & raffles
- Live pianist

All proceeds benefit Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

May Workshop Featured Updates on Cortland's Public Transit

On May 18, ATI welcomed Ann Hotchkin, Mobility Manager from Seven Valleys Health Coalition and Steve Trickey, General Manager from First Transit for an interactive discussion on transportation services in Cortland County, including learning about what's new on the bus.

While Cortland County has public bus transportation available Monday through Friday, evening and weekend services are not available. Unfortunately, this lack of transportation service greatly limits the independence of those who are unable to drive or cannot afford a personal vehicle. That being said, public transportation in Cortland County is still underused and often looked upon with stigma or fear.

This workshop highlighted positive changes that are occurring in Cortland County and encouraged citizens to consider utilizing public transportation as an option.

According to Ms. Hotchkin, a mobile phone "app" using GPS technology has been implemented. This real-time GPS locator will actually allow someone to see exactly

where each bus is. This could help people when they are standing out in the cold or hot weather waiting for the bus. In addition, they would know when to hurry and when to take their time.

To help break down stigmas and alleviate fears, a production of a series of educational videos is underway that will demonstrate how to arrange, hail, and ride the bus. New "hail the bus" fans (red circles with a cutout) are available and free to anyone who chooses to use one. Although you can literally use it to fan yourself, more importantly, you can wave the bus down to be seen.

A few more things being implemented are bus routes postings in the bus shelters around town, and advertising being placed on the exterior of the buses, which aims to increase revenue to support Cortland County's transportation program. Lastly, the potential for a rideshare program with our Southern Tier neighbors is in the works.

For more information, contact Ann Hotchkin, Mobility Manager at Seven Valleys Health Coalition, or visit Way2GoCortland.org.

What is the 2-1-1 Helpline?

The 2-1-1 Tompkins/Cortland Helpline connects people in need of assistance or information with services available in the community. No question is too big or too small. Individuals can dial 2-1-1 or 877-211-8667 to be connected with a community services specialist.

Connecting individuals with housing services, free tax preparation, employment support, services for people with disabilities, recreational activities, medical transportation and much more, is all in a day's work for the community services specialists at the 2-1-1 Tompkins/Cortland call center.

Specialists access a database of resources available from public, private, not-for-profit, educational institutions and health and human service agencies in order to match callers' needs with available resources, and link them to agencies and organizations that can help.

In short, 2-1-1 connects people in need with programs designed to address their needs by providing a central telephone information service, online chat and services database, and walk-in service fueled by a database of community resource information.

2-1-1 is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, everyday.

ADA Anniversary Events Slated for July

If you haven't already heard, Access to Independence (ATI) is foregoing its annual Picnic Celebration at the Couthouse Park this year. Instead, ATI will recognize the 26th anniversary of the ADA by offering two "Lunch & Learn" workshops and an open house anniversary celebration on July 26, 2016. The educational workshops will be facilitated by an ADA trainer from Cornell University's ADA Center.

For more information, check out the flyer insert, or call Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator at 607-753-7363.

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ATI Consumer Grievance Policy: Complaint & Appeal Process

As a consumer of Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI), you have the right to register a complaint or grievance regarding the services provided by ATI. There will be no reprisal to you for registering a complaint or grievance. However, as a consumer, you are expected to first discuss the complaint with the staff member in question. If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction then you can file a formal grievance.

In the event you need to register a complaint or grievance, it should be done within 30 days of the incident. You may contact ATI's Independent Living Coordinator at (607) 753-7363 for more information about the complaint or grievance process. You may also file a complaint or grievance by writing, calling or emailing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who will respond to your complaint or grievance within ten business days.

Access to Independence of Cortland County
Chad W. Underwood, CEO
26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045
Phone: (607) 753-7363

Email: cwunderwood@aticortland.org

In the event you are not satisfied with the response, or in the event the CEO is unable to respond within ten business days, you may file a complaint, grievance or appeal to the ATI Board of Director's Governance Committee, who will respond to your complaint, grievance or appeal within ten business days.

Access to Independence of Cortland County
Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley, Board Chair
26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045
Phone: (607) 753-7363
Email: admin@aticortland.org

In the event you are not satisfied with the response of the ATI Board of Director's Governance Committee, you may file a complaint or grievance with the NYS Education Department:

ACCES-VR Centers Administration Unit
Robert Gumson, Manager of IL Services
NYSED Building Annex, Room 580
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234
Phone: (518) 474-2925 or (800)-222-5627 (TTY)
Email: Robert.gumson@nysed.gov

ATI Attends Annual Kidsville Event: By Desiree Bach

On April 16, Access to Independence (ATI) participated in the Kidsville children's fair to provide children and their families with a fun activity and information about ATI programs and services.

ATI facilitated a balloon toss activity with youth in attendance. In this activity, children used a paper cone to toss and catch a balloon on string. This activity supported children's social and cognitive development. It also helped them build hand-eye coordination and fine and gross motor skills. While their children played, parents learned more about ATI programs and took information on services they needed.

Each year, the Child Development Council of Cortland County hosts the Kidsville event to celebrate the *Week of the Young Child*. This year, the event was held at the NYS Grange Auditorium. The community came together at the children's fair to provide information about local programs, services and resources and to support the ongoing developmental needs of children in Cortland County.

The *Week of the Young Child* is celebrated annually by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and promotes the early learning, healthy growth and development of young children across the country. Healthy growth and development of young children is essential for children to be successful in school and throughout their lives.

For more information on ATI's Youth Transition Services, contact Aaron Baier, ATI Consumer & System Advocacy Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.



Above: ATI staff pose for a picture during a recent Staff Development Day. Bookkeeper Scott Roman is missing from the photo.

This Summer: Begin the Transition!

If you are like many other students with disabilities, you may know how challenging it can be to answer the question, "What will you do after high school?" Here are a few things you should keep in mind as you prepare for a smooth and successful transition. And you can get started THIS SUMMER!

First, you should be open to **new opportunities!** An opportunity may be a chance to volunteer or try out a job for a day. An opportunity may be a chance to visit a college or attend a fun event in your community. Doing these things might help you figure out what you want to do. If you go and you don't like it, you can move on. If you love it and want to do it more, then you have learned something! Check out www.volunteercny.org to find some cool summer opportunities.

Second, you should know who your **support team** is! We all have people that are in our lives who help us and who we look up to. Your support team is made up of people you trust to help you, such as your family, a mentor or even a teacher. You can choose who they are. Talk to them about your dreams and the opportunities you have. You can even invite them to your CSE / IEP meetings or maybe they know something that you'd like to learn! Check out www.youthpowerny.org for information on finding great peer support.

Third, you should **speak up** and **advocate** for yourself! Being a strong self-advocate helps you build confidence and can lead you to awesome new opportunities. You can learn about your rights and then teach others about yourself, your needs and your dreams. Being able to communicate with people is important, because it gives you

power and control over your own life. Being a good self-advocate can also help you find that one-thing, that passion, which you want to do after high school! Check out www.fvkasa.org to learn more about becoming a strong self-advocate.

Last, but most important, as a young person with a disability, you should **be involved!** Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings aim to ensure that you have all of the resources and supports that you need to be successful in school. Other meetings you may have to attend are just as important. Only you know best what you need and can use these meetings as a way to share your needs and opinions with teachers, counselors, your parents, and other people in your support team. Visit www.findyouthinfo.gov to find more information on how you can be involved and take control of your life.

If you are a parent of a youth with a disability, seeing your child go through this process can come with mixed emotions. You are happy that they are gaining independence. You are frustrated that they won't listen to you. You are sad they may leave the nest. You are worried that they will make mistakes. While it is important that youth begin to sit in the driver's seat, it is also important that parents and supports sit in the passenger's seat with them. Let's support the next generation and help them find the skills they need to be happy and successful adults! Check out www.parenttoparentnys.org to find new opportunities to support your child toward their goals.

For more information on ATP's Youth Transition Services, contact Aaron T. Baier, Consumer & Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

Cortland County Housing Consortium

2016 Meeting Schedule

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

November 22, 2016: 8:00 - 10:00 am

February 28, 2017: 8:00 - 10:00 am

May 23, 2017: 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

June 15, 2016

July 20, 2016

August 17, 2016

September 21, 2016

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

607-753-7363

Architectural Barrier Programs: Increasing Accessibility in the Home

One of the cornerstone programs for Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is its Architectural Barrier Program. That program aims to increase the physical accessibility of homes and businesses in the community. This is no small task given the fact that most homes in the Central New York area were built 50 to 75 years ago! They have narrow doorways, lots of stairs, small bathrooms, etc., all features that are considered to be inaccessible to people with and even without disabilities.

Did you know that the largest and fastest growing age group in America is the senior population, the “Baby Boomers”. If you are part of this group, or soon will be, it’s time to think about planning to accommodate the mental, physical and physiological changes that you may soon face. Many surveys have stated that over 90 percent of homeowners 65 and older wish to remain living in their home as long as possible. Making plans now for “aging in place” can help you do that. This means being able to remain in your own home or other living environment for as long as possible, and as independently as possible. Planning to make physical changes to your home now, before you may be faced with a chronic illness or disability, is the way to go.

With the normal age-related physical changes your body may undergo (hearing loss or impairment, arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, poor vision, decreased mobility and strength, mental disabilities, dementia, Alzheimer’s and sensory loss, osteoporosis, etc.) it can be extremely difficult to interact with your living environment. To accommodate these changes to your physical body, there need to be physical changes to your home environment. Changes that occur to the body and to the home have proven to be more and more costly, and can force seniors from their homes prematurely. There are many facilities that help and accommodate seniors; however, most individuals want to remain in their home. Changes to the environment can help you to live at home safely, affordably and comfortably.

On average, 350 deaths per year in the United States occur from bathroom falls. This is almost one person per day; further, one in three adults aged 65+ experience a serious fall each year, and half of them will fall more than once. The consequences of falls are often severe. These injuries can create financial hardship, limitations in activities, decreases in muscle strength and flexibility, increased chance of falling, loss of independence, permanent disabilities and even death. Another statistic states that falls cost the health system \$2.4 billion per year. The saddest fact is, with a small investment in bathroom or other home modifications, these injuries do not need to happen.

The key to “aging in place” is to reduce or eliminate potential risks that cause accidents in the home, that is, to identify and correct any safety issues. Safety risks are unique to each individual based on your aging status, condition or disability. It is important to have your home environment assessed in order to ensure that safety issues have been addressed.

For more information on ATI’s various architectural barrier programs, including our accessibility construction and aging-in-place services, please contact Shelley Knickerbocker, Architectural Barrier Specialist, by phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: sknickerbocker@aticortland.org. You may also visit our website: www.aticortland.org. We are your accessibility experts!

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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 to have an application sent by mail



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2016 ADA Celebration Events

Lunch & Learn: Panel Discussion
Tuesday, July 26, 2016

Lunch & Learn: Hidden Disabilities
Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Lunch & Learn: Understanding the ADA
Tuesday, July 12, 2016

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Tuesday, July 12: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act

Tuesday, July 19: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Understanding Hidden Disabilities

ADA Celebration:

Tuesday, July 26: 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

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PRINTING DEADLINE:

Friday, July 1, 2016

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