



Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Fall 2016 NUMBER 1

ATI Board of Directors Elects New Members / Officers

On October 18, 2016, the Access to Independence (ATI) Board of Directors re-elected two Board Members to a second two-year term and elected three new Board Members to their first two-year term.

New and returning elected Board Members include: Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley, Dorothy Dumond, Eden Harrington-Hall, Alexandra Huntington-Ofner and Lisa Perfetti.

At the same meeting the Board of Directors elected officers for the next year as follows: Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley, Chair; Dan Mullins, Vice-Chair; Mary Beth Mathey, Treasurer; and Dacia Leggé, Secretary.

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

ATI Efforts Save State \$3.6 M

Access to Independence (ATI) has saved NYS more than \$3.6 million since 2004 through its efforts to transition or divert individuals out of costly institutional settings and into community-based settings.

Since 2004, ATI has diverted (prevented) 51 individuals from institutional placement with an average cost savings of \$13,366 each. ATI has also transitioned 61 individuals from institutional settings back to the community with a cost savings between \$13,366 and \$64,356 each. ATI transitioned or diverted 22 individuals last year.

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 (MW) services, or just \$13,754 without MW services.

ATI Announces 2016 Priorities

On October 18, 2016, the Access to Independence (ATI) Board adopted the following 2017 Strategic Imperatives & Goals, based on results of a community-wide needs assessment completed last summer:

- Increase community awareness of disability issues, the lack of equal human and civil rights for people with disabilities, and the opportunities that exist to increase independent living for all;
- Increase community capacity to provide demanded services to people with a wide variety of disabilities, their families and caregivers, and other service providers, including social/recreational, transportation, home health aide, employment and youth transition services;
- Increase all aspects of accessibility in the community so that people with disabilities realize improved access to all systems, including commerce, government, education, healthcare, citizenship and employment, among others; and
- Increase ATI's capacity to fulfill its mission, vision and values by executing strategic administrative (operations, fiscal and human resource) initiatives in order to ensure that ATI remains relevant and provides value to its stakeholders and to the community as a whole.

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ATI Breaks Record: 5th Annual Gala a Success

The Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) 5th Annual 2016 Gala netted the Agency more than \$3,500 to fund advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities. ATI held the costume event on Saturday, November 5, from 6:00 – 9:00 pm, at the SUNY Cortland Alumni House.

According to the event's Coordinator, Maria Mucaria, "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 Automatic Door Sponsors: Stephen Compagni – Economy Paving; Janet & Russ Oechsle; and the Tompkins Trust Company. Additional thanks go out to this year's Accessible Parking Sponsors: Cortland Eye Center, First National Bank of Groton, McNeil Development Company, the Underwood Family; and St. Anthony's Altar Society. Additional thanks go out to all of the silent auction package donors.



Above: Grammy-award winning artist Lonnie Park kept things hopping with piano music while guests reveled in costumes.

2016 ATI Board / Staff Retreat

On Saturday, November 5, Access to Independence (ATI) held its 2016 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 2017 initiatives.

John Hoechsle, a public relations and media expert from the Central New York area, facilitated two workshops for more than 20 participants on updating ATI's messages to its stakeholders and expanding public awareness capacity.

John spent just over an hour on the first session to provide staff and Board Members with an overview of

marketing and public relations, coupled with a discussion on key stakeholders and targeted messaging strategies. Staff and Board Members brainstormed ideas on who are ATI's key stakeholders and what are the key messages ATI aims to share with them.

John spent just over an hour on a second session to identify ways to improve ATI's messaging to ensure optimal results in terms of stakeholder, customer and public awareness of ATI's brand and initiatives. The group also discussed ways to get out its message to the most difficult to reach audiences.

Over the next year, ATI is set to build on the increased capacity resulting from John's sessions and to launch strategic initiatives that aim to improve the community and ATI's various stakeholders' awareness of ATI, its programs and its advocacy efforts.

In addition to the sessions, staff and Board had ample opportunity to bond and team-build. There were several icebreakers and mini-breakout 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 John for his presentations.



ATI Launches Employment Taskforce

Last month, Access to Independence (ATI) launched a new Taskforce for Increasing Disability Employment (TIDE). ATI aims to bring together area disability and employment stakeholders to collectively work toward the ultimate goal of increasing opportunities and employment outcomes for people with disabilities. TIDE will meet monthly to set annual goals, collaborate on events and activities and to coordinate community-wide, employment-related awareness efforts.

ATI's plans to focus community-wide efforts on the employment needs of people with disabilities is well-timed with changes at the State and National level. Since the passage of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act of 2014 (WIOA), State and local leaders have been scrambling to find resources and to implement new strategies to ensure that they can meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Governor Andrew Cuomo has implemented a NYS Employment First Commission that aims to reduce unemployment and poverty among people with disabilities. The NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) has pushed forward with transforming antiquated sheltered workshop practices. Vocational rehabilitation agencies have begun to refocus their efforts on pre-vocational and work readiness services as well as on job training, employer incentives and business enterprise opportunities for entrepreneurship.

ATI has identified preliminary goals that TIDE will work to achieve and plan for over the coming months and years: 1) Raise awareness of current disability employment barriers and successes through traditional and social media outlets and other events. 2) Forge new opportunities for competitive employment, entrepreneurship, and meaningful internships and apprenticeships. 3) Strengthen partnerships between local job seekers, employers and service providers to enhance the quality of services, effectiveness of outreach and elimination of discriminatory practices.

For more information on the Taskforce for Increasing Disability Employment, please contact Aaron T. Baier, Consumer & Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

2016 Employment First Workshop Series

In October, Access to Independence (ATI) hosted a four-part Employment First Workshop Series in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

On October 6, a "Create Opportunity: It Takes a Community" workshop featured panelists Sara Wright, employee at Frosted Bakery, Mary Wright, Sara's Mother, and Margaret Gucwa-Natale, Sara's Employer. Each panelist discussed their perspective on the importance of developing relationships and building support systems.

On October 13, a "Business Leader Breakfast" featured panelists Barry Tatters, Business Relations Representative for ACCES-VR, Danielle Reese, Business Office Manager for Walden Place, and Denise Soles, Supervisor at the Rescue Mission. The key takeaway from the presentation was that hiring people with disabilities may come with financial incentives, but it also offers the employers a dedicated and skilled, yet underutilized, workforce.

On October 20, an "Eliminate Mental Health Stigma" workshop featured panelists Alex Huntington-Ofner, Youth Services Development Director at Cortland County Mental Health (CCMH), Linda Martin, Peer Coordinator at CCMH, and Amy Tinker and Loreen Geiger, family members of people with mental health diagnoses. The workshop began with a discussion on the stigmas and myths that exist about people with mental health diagnoses and continued with perspectives of peers and their families about the struggles and successes they have experienced.

On October 27, a "Peer Success Stories" workshop featured panelists LaWanda H. Cook, Ph.D., Extension Faculty & Training Specialist for Cornell University, and Jessica Wickham, an aspiring writer and journalist. Panelists each shared an in-depth look into their lived experiences as people with visible and invisible disabilities and their unique perspectives on what success means.

For more information on ATI's Work Readiness Services, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

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My Internship Experience – by Tina Carden

My name is Tina Carden and I am a legally blind adult student at Tompkins-Cortland Community College who is working on a Human Services degree. I chose to do my internship at Access to Independence (ATI) because I wanted to learn how to better help people with disabilities like myself. The internship has helped me become more independent, provided me with work experience, and helped me to learn more about advocating for people with disabilities.

For much of my life, I have been nervous about traveling on my own because of my vision loss. So, my first challenge was when I was asked to help get donations for the 2016 Masquerade Gala. This meant that I had to learn and travel new routes independently. With the encouragement of my supervisor, and the help of Google Maps, I was able to locate and plan my routes to businesses that had donations waiting to be picked up. This was my first time navigating busy streets and crosswalks by myself.

Along with becoming more independent, interning at ATI has also given me excellent work experience. I learned a lot about working in an office setting and working in teams and with coworkers. One event that was an amazing experience for me was Disability Mentoring Day (DMD). During DMD, students with disabilities from several schools were matched with a job site in a field of their choosing and shadowed a mentor for two hours. I was asked to be a job coach for one student, Jordan, who had an interest in farm work. My role as job coach was to help Jordan engage in meaningful conversation with his job site mentor, and ensure he understood what was being discussed. We went to Fouts Farm where the owner gave us a tour of the farm and showed us how modern farms operate. Jordan seemed quite interested and still wanted to go into farming by the end of the day.

During my time at ATI, I also realized how important self-advocacy and advocating for people with disabilities was. For example, I attended an Inclusive Recreation class at Tompkins Cortland Community College where my Supervisor was a guest speaker. Not many students in the class knew much about people with disabilities or how to include them in recreation activities. By the end of the class they had learned about the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act, different types of disabilities, independent living centers, and ATI's services. We also discussed several strategies to increase inclusion for people with disabilities into recreation activities.

As a part of an Employment First Workshop Series, I attended ATI's "Eliminate Mental Health Stigma" workshop. We discussed how anyone with any kind of disability, mental or physical, has a right to reasonable accommodations at work but many times they are afraid to ask for the tools they need. It is important for us in the Human Services field to help employees with disabilities understand their rights and to ensure that employers understand the value of workers with disabilities. We also discussed the stigma that people with disabilities face in the workplace, and ways to deal with it.

I have wanted to help people with disabilities, like myself, for a while now. My Internship at Access to Independence has had a tremendous impact on my life and my future career choices. In January 2017, I will transfer to Keuka College's Social Work program. My goal is to eventually become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker after completion of my Master's degree. I hope to someday join ATI's staff, or at least refer clients to them, once I begin work as a counselor.



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ATI Advocates for Equal Access to Health Care Services – by Fran Pizzola

When people are sick, the last thing they want is for professionals to tell them they can't help you. Imagine how difficult it is for a person with a physical disability just to get to the doctor's office when they're sick let alone having to face existing structural and attitudinal barriers? Sadly, this is one reason why people with disabilities are less likely to pursue routine preventative care than people without disabilities. Then they end up with more chronic, disabling and terminal conditions, such as heart disease, obesity, arthritis, diabetes, depression and cancer.

Accessibility of doctors' offices, clinics, and other health care providers is essential in providing medical care to people with disabilities. However, only a small number of medical facilities are in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), even though it's been 26 years since it became law! As a result, people with disabilities end up receiving unequal access to healthcare, which is discrimination and a violation of the ADA.

The ADA requires that all public accommodations, including doctor's offices, clinics and hospitals, must be accessible to wheelchair users and others with disabilities, including but not limited to accessible routes of travel, doorways and restrooms, accessible exam tables, weight scales and radiology equipment, as well.

Additionally, facility practices and protocols, must also be inclusive for people with disabilities. For example, when clients make appointments, schedulers should ask them about any accommodation(s) they might need, i.e., sign language interpreter, assistance with positioning or transferring, etc. Another example relates to people who have hearing or visual impairments. They must be afforded appropriate methods of effective communication tools at the facility, i.e., American sign-language interpreters, TTY machines, New York relay system, documents in alternative formats such as braille, large print, audio or willingness of staff to provide assistance.

In 2013, in an effort to alleviate these existing barriers, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) issued a critical mandate to all healthcare facilities, of their legal obligations to provide accessible healthcare services to people with disabilities under the ADA and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which covers facilities that receive federal financial assistance, including Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.

In 2014, ATI joined forces with the NYS DOH and initiated a project to ensure that healthcare facilities in Cortland County are accessible for people with disabilities, including our rapidly growing aging population. So far, ATI has contacted six medical facilities in Cortland County. ATI sent them resource packets, recommended that they evaluate their facilities, conducted some on-site surveys and encouraged them to create a plan to become compliant with the laws to ensure that people with disabilities have full and equal access to their services.

As the largest medical facility in operation in the area, ATI focused much of its initial efforts on the Cortland Regional Medical Center (CRMC). Over the past two years, CRMC has made renovations throughout its facilities to make them more accessible to people with disabilities, including: (1) accessible bathroom and shower units in patient rooms; (2) hospital beds that include hand-held controls to adjust the positioning; (3) the addition of ceiling track lifts to accommodate bariatric patients; (4) renovations to several units to include an accessible restroom in the hallway; (5) an accessible staff breakroom; and (6) renovations to make the endoscopy unit registration room and waiting area more accessible.

ATI plans to continue its work with smaller providers to help ensure increased access to healthcare services. ATI has been educating these small providers on two tax incentives that are available to help cover the cost of making access improvements. The first is a tax credit that can be

used for architectural adaptations, equipment and services such as sign language interpreters. The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural adaptations.

For more information on ATI's medical facility accessibility project, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: fpizzola@aticortland.org



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Core Advisory Group Update – Emergency Preparedness

Since September 2015, ATI has facilitated monthly meetings of a Core Advisory Group (CAG) on Emergency Preparedness. The purpose of the CAG is to engage people with disabilities to participate in the development of appropriate county-wide emergency preparedness measures.

ATI has appreciated the routine participation and support of Cortland County's Emergency Response and Communications Department (DERC), Cortland County citizens with diverse disabilities, the Area Agency on Aging, Cortland County's Health Department, the American Red Cross, Seven Valleys Health Coalition, Franciska Racker Centers and CAPCO.

Over the past year, the CAG has focused on several topics: 1. whether or not Cortland County should maintain a "special-needs" registry; 2. emergency shelter accessibility; 3. learning first-hand from individuals with diverse disabilities; 4. identifying best practices for personal emergency preparedness; and 5. identifying ways to collaborate and educate the community about becoming personally prepared in times of emergency.

The CAG decided to scrap the area's "special-needs" registry and determined that Cortland County's emergency shelters lacked accessibility. Aside from these two items, the CAG facilitated a workshop for service provider organizations in Cortland County. During the workshop CAG members spoke about best practices, provided examples of how to keep records in one place and spoke about the importance of creating a 72-hour emergency kit. After the workshop, service provider staff and individuals with diverse disabilities, participated in a Red Cross shelter exercise. Both events were well attended and provided feedback for CAG goals going forward.

In 2017, the CAG aims to expand its efforts to educate all citizens in Cortland County on becoming more personally prepared and to work with the Cortland County DERC to update its Emergency Plan to make it more inclusive to all people, with and without disabilities. The group welcomes new participants at any time.

For more information, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: fpizzola@cortland.org.

Join ATI's 2017 Advocacy Action!

In January 2017, ATI will begin a series of day-trips to Albany to advocate for the needs of people with disabilities at State Budget and Legislative Advocacy events. ATI calls upon local advocates to join us at these events and to educate our leaders in the Assembly, the Senate and in the Governor's office to support the needs of people with disabilities, to fund quality programs and to pass inclusive laws. Your voice is the most important part of the legislative process and the voices of Cortland County residents need to be represented loud and clear!

Last year, ATI attended six legislative events in Albany that focused on independent living, youth and families, mental health, people with developmental disabilities, seniors, people who need to access public transit, and people with brain injuries. This year, we will attend many of the same events, find new events, work to address new issues and secure funding for critical services and supports.

By signing up early, you will be among the first to receive specific dates for Legislative events and travel details. You will also be invited to join us for a brief Advocate Training Seminar to prepare you for legislative action meetings with state leaders. If you are interested in being a driver for any of these events, please let us know by December 30, 2016.

Sign up now for 2017 Legislative and Budget Advocacy Trips! Contact Aaron T. Baier, ATI Consumer & Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Home Mods Funding Available for Veterans

Access to Independence (ATI) is seeking veterans with disabilities who are low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters, who live in Cortland County, and who would benefit from funding to complete modifications to make their home more accessible. There is a five-year deferred loan agreement attached to all projects, whereby after five years, the loan is forgiven. For more information, call Shelley Knickerbocker, ATI Architectural Barrier Specialist, at 607-753-7363.

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Accessibility Construction Services



- Wheelchair ramps & lifts
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 - Expanded doorways
- Bathroom modifications
 - Kitchen modifications
 - Roll-in showers



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ATI's 2016 Local Systems Change Outcomes

Over the past year, ATI facilitated 33 systems changes at the local, state and national level. Local school districts incorporated the ATI-developed Community Resource Guide for transition-aged youth into their websites and provided the information during IEP meetings and open house events. Further, medical facilities and faith-based organizations began displaying information on independent living centers, ATI services and other resources for people with disabilities. Cortland Transit even implemented a GPS tracking system to help people access the local bus system.

More than 8 sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the City of Cortland were repaired and upgraded with accessible technology over the past year. Further, local businesses, medical facilities, faith-based organizations and recreation facilities renovated restrooms, added accessible signage, added automatic doors and other accessibility improvements. A major example of this is Wickwire Pool, which was completely redesigned and rebuilt with a zero-grade entrance and a pool lift for enhanced access by everyone in the community.

Walmart and ATI provided Disability Awareness Training to more than 100 regional managers this year. Training like this helps businesses better provide accommodations to employees with disabilities and helps customer service representatives work effectively with customers with disabilities.

ATI staff and volunteers with disabilities joined several local groups to advocate for the needs of people with disabilities, including the Long Term Care Coalition, the Elder Abuse Coalition and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Board of Directors. Furthermore, advocacy on the State level led

to a law that will increase training for law enforcement to handle situations where people who are dealing with a mental health crisis.

While ATI takes pride in these changes as its own accomplishments, it acknowledges that these changes could not have happened without the support of our community and partners. Local advocates who stay vigilant and report local issues and who travel with us to Albany and Washington, D.C., are a valuable asset to ATI and the community. ATI also appreciates the work of local businesses, government entities, medical facilities, recreation facilities and faith-based organizations who work with us to actually finish the work that needs to be done.

For more information on ATI's local systems change initiatives, please contact Aaron T. Baier, Consumer & Systems Advocacy coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

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ATI's Piché Elected President of Cortland County Long Term Care Coalition

At its September 2016 meeting, the Cortland County Long Term Care Coalition (LTCC) elected Anne Marie Piché, ATI Transition Specialist, as its President.

In her role as transition specialist for the Open Doors program, Anne Marie provides people living in nursing homes with unbiased information about home and community based services. Her role often calls for her to assist in all levels of transition. Open Doors, a program of the NYS Department of Health was designed to identify and reach out to certain residents of nursing homes who are Medicaid recipients. Anne Marie has worked in this capacity with ATI for almost 2 years.

The systems for providing long term care for our aging population, as well as those with disabilities, is currently experiencing system-wide changes. We will all be learning how to navigate through these changes to ensure the continued provision of integrated, quality long term care services and supports to members of our communities.

The LTCC was established in 1982 and its mission is to develop, implement, and coordinate innovative community-based, continuing-care services. The Coalition promotes the provision of services that will enhance the quality of life for all individuals. The Coalition's goals include the coordination of long term care services in the community, examination of unmet needs in the continuum of care, education of community and policy makers regarding long term care, and enhancement of communication among providers.

The Facts: Part D Coverage

Part D enrollment is optional, but if you do not sign up for Part D you may have a late enrollment penalty if you enroll at a later time. The Part D late enrollment penalty is one percent of the national average Part D premium for each month that you delayed Part D enrollment and were not covered by creditable drug coverage.

You can delay Part D without penalty if you are currently covered by creditable drug coverage. Creditable drug coverage is coverage that has an overall value that is as good as or better than standard coverage under Part D. You may receive creditable coverage from your current employer insurance, retiree insurance, military benefits, or Federal health benefits. If your drug coverage is creditable, you should receive notice from your prescription insurance plan around September each year. If you do not receive this notice, you should contact your benefits manager to get this information in writing. Keep these notices because you will need proof of your creditable coverage if you decide later that you want to enroll in Medicare Part D.

If you drop or lose your creditable prescription drug coverage through no fault of your own, you will have a Special Enrollment Period to sign up for Part D for up to 63 days after your coverage ends. If you drop or lose your current or former employer-based prescription drug coverage, regardless of whether it is creditable, you will also have a Special Enrollment Period to sign up for Part D for up to 63 days after coverage ends. To avoid a late enrollment penalty, this employer-based coverage must have been creditable.

There may be consequences if you sign up for Part D if you have prescription coverage that is as good as or better than Part D Plan drug coverage. Ask your employer or retirement benefits administrator if you can keep their coverage and have Part D at the same time. You could lose your employer, retiree, or other benefits if you sign up for a Part D plan when you already have creditable coverage. It is important to keep this in mind if your plan covers a spouse or dependents because if you lose coverage, they will too, and it is unlikely you will be able to get the coverage back.

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

FAQ's: Choosing a Medicare Part D Plan

Choosing a Part D plan can seem daunting because there are many points to think about. Depending on your needs, financial situation, and preferences, some of the following questions and guidelines may be more important than others.

One question to ask is: does this plan cover your drugs? If you take a lot of prescription drugs, then choosing a plan that has your drugs on its formulary is an important first step. A formulary is a list of drugs that a plan covers. If a plan's formulary does not include your drug(s), then you may end up paying out of pocket for the entire cost of the drug. You can create a list of the names of the prescriptions you take, their dosages, and whether they are brand-name or generic.

You should also ask about the costs associated with the plan. If you choose a plan with a deductible, know that you will have to pay that amount out of pocket before your plan begins to cover your prescription drugs. You should also think about the most you can spend on the drug plan's monthly premium.

The plan you are considering should provide information about the expected copays or coinsurances for the medications you anticipate taking over the next year. However, it may be difficult to estimate the exact cost of pharmacy copays and coinsurance amounts because these may change over the course of the year.

Another question to consider is, are your pharmacies preferred and in-network? Many drug plans include both preferred and non-preferred pharmacies in their networks. You may pay less for drugs at preferred pharmacies than at non-preferred pharmacies. If you go to a pharmacy that's close to home or easy to get to, it could be beneficial to find a plan that categorizes that pharmacy as preferred and in-network.

Some plans have a mail-order option that may have cheaper prices than the pharmacy. If you are interested in mail-order, consider plans with that option.

Medicare uses a star rating system to measure how well Part D plans perform in different categories, including quality of care and customer service. Ratings range from one to five stars, with one being the lowest and five being the highest rating. Medicare reviews plan performances each year and releases new star ratings each fall. You can find a plan's star rating by using the Plan Finder tool on www.medicare.gov.

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

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Don't Be a Scam Victim - Stay in Control

The tax season is getting ready to pick up, and scammers are starting to come out in full force by making fraudulent calls to unsuspecting taxpayers to scam them out of their hard-earned money. While these calls may seem scary, it is important to understand that they are not legitimate.

Scammers use many tactics in an attempt to force victims to give out information, and sometimes money, via telephone or email. In Social Security related scams, they often call under a guise of helping you complete a disability application, asking you for your Social Security number or banking information.

There are some things that a government employee will never do as part of official agency business, including: (1) Call you to demand an immediate payment; (2) Demand that you pay a debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe; (3) Require a specific means of payment, such as requiring you to pay with a prepaid debit card; (4) Ask you for your personal information or credit or debit card numbers over the phone; or (5) Threaten you with arrest or deportation.

Any legitimate request from a government agency will come to you in writing. Additionally, if you do receive a call from a government official, they will be able to provide you with a telephone number and extension. If you receive one of these scam calls or emails, do not provide them with any information. You should hang up immediately.

- For Social Security impersonations, contact Social Security's Office of Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov/report;
- For IRS impersonations, contact the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) at treasury.gov/tigta, using the "IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting" page; and
- Contact the Federal Trade Commission on FTC.gov.

If you are attempting to conduct business with any government agency, or you have received a notice from such an agency, please utilize the telephone numbers provided in the notification. Additionally, you can find contact information on any ".gov" website such as socialsecurity.gov or irs.gov.

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

Cortland County Housing Consortium

2017 Meeting Schedule

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

May 23, 2017: 8:00 - 10:00 am

August 22, 2017: 8:00 - 10:00 am

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

All meetings are held at:
Access to Independence
26 North Main Street
Cortland, NY

For more information, contact
Aaron Baier by phone:
607-753-7363 or by email:
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Bariatric Support Group Meetings

January 18, 2017

February 15, 2017

March 15, 2017

April 19, 2017

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

607-753-7363

Support Systems Wrap Around Youth for Transition Success

Exiting high school can be the most exciting time of a young person's life. It can also be confusing and even anxiety-inducing. Youth receive training from their school and are expected to be prepared for college, work and living independently. We also receive training when we learn to drive or learn a new job. However, we usually need a bit of support to become experts in these skills. Transition from high school is no different.

When youth leave high school, they are expected to have learned the academic skills needed to graduate. They are also expected to have some idea of the direction they want their life to go, such as college or employment. Finally, they are expected to be able to move from an environment where services are delivered to them to a much broader community where they must seek out the services they need. While we do not expect youth to do all of this on their own, we also want them to learn to be independent.

Everyone has a support system. They are the people that surround us and provide emotional support, physical assistance and mentor us to achieve our goals. Our family, friends, faith leaders, peer mentors, doctors, teachers, coworkers, counselors, advisors, and job coaches, can all be a part of our support systems. The key to a good support system is that the youth is the center of this circle and has the ability to make decisions that impact their life while receiving guidance from their supports.

Go back to the example of learning to drive. When a new driver is being trained, they must first get a permit – the academic skills to achieve their goal. Then, they will train with an experienced driver, usually a family member or a friend – this is their support system. While the youth is in the driver's seat, the support still has some control over their learning. At some point, the youth will have to put their skills to the test on their own. If they pass, they gain a whole new level of independence. If they fail, they do not give up, they get more support and try again.

Supporting a youth through their transition out of high school looks very similar. Parents may take their student to a college, to learn about counseling services or to find a mentor at a local agency. Mentors may show the youth some volunteer opportunities, take them to learn about different jobs, or even share their own life experiences for the youth to think about. This support-based learning supplements the knowledge they acquired in high school and gives them a broader perspective on life, their community and on the goals they have set for themselves.

A support system may be two people or it may be twenty. The key is for the youth to feel like they have the amount of support they need. Think about your life and your goals, do you know someone who can help you reach those goals? Do you know where you can get help if you need it?

If you feel like you need more support or want to learn more about your community, there is always a place to go. Depending on the questions you have, a good place to start would be ATI. ATI offers several youth transition services, including work readiness, benefits advisement and peer mentoring services, among many others.

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



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

Chief Executive Officer

Chad W. Underwood

November 25, 2016

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Dear Friend:

As the holiday season approaches, many of us consider it not only a time for family and good cheer, but also a time to help others. Please join us and the Access to Independence (ATI) Board of Directors in efforts to help make our community a better place to live by sponsoring an event or making an outright donation to our 2017 *Friends of the Center* Campaign!

The idea of independence has always been a cornerstone of what we do at ATI. And when you come to our offices you see the *Faces of Independence* throughout. But what does independence mean to the people whom we serve and for the community at large?

Independence means different things to different people. One individual might have the goal to live at home in the community, rather than in a nursing facility. Another might feel that getting a job is their path to independence. A young person who feels they have no place to go after high school might find that mentoring from a peer helps them to find their way. Regardless of the different paths people might take to secure their independence, a resounding note of accord relates to individual autonomy, self-determination and self-sufficiency.

When we think of independence and the *Faces of Independence*, it brings to mind the many people for whom ATI has built ramps, installed lifts, or renovated bathrooms. We think of the success stories of individuals who have diverted or transitioned from nursing facility placement, individuals who have returned to school or who have secured jobs. These *Faces of Independence* are the reason that ATI's staff and Board of Directors are dedicated to the work that we do.

Please help ATI to expand unfunded programming for people with disabilities in our community. 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. Invest in our vision: “to lead the community towards an all-inclusive future where discrimination and physical barriers no longer exist”.

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

Sincerely yours,

Chad W. Underwood, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Judy K. C. Bentley
Board Chair

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2017 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

11th Annual Access to Independence Bowl-4-Abilities – March 4, 2017

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)

27th Anniversary: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration – July 2017

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)

12th Annual Employment Conference – November 2017

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)

6th Annual Gala – November 4, 2017

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 2017

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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