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Access To Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Summer 2018 NUMBER LVII



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THE FUTURE IS ACCESSIBLE

As Board President of Access To Independence, I support the goal of improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. I am a parent of a child with disabilities. I am working to help build a community where all people, regardless of ability, are included. It is a privilege to be part of this meaningful work.

Do you want to help too? Please join me in supporting Access To Independence with a special \$20 donation in honor of its 20th anniversary. Help us make the future accessible for all people with disabilities. Go to aticortland.org/donate today!

With gratitude,
 Mary Beth Mathey, Board Chair
 Access To Independence



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QUARTERLY QUOTE:

“Determination
 Has
 No
 Disability.”

-Robert Hensel

Celebrating 28 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. The ADA was instrumental in removing physical and attitudinal barriers to full participation in society for people with disabilities. Access To Independence (ATI) celebrated the ADA in July with the following events.

On Thursday, July 12, 2018, Access To Independence hosted an ADA Lunch & Learn, "History, Present Realities & Future Threats." The workshop featured Stephanie Woodward, J.D., Director of Advocacy from the Center for Disability Rights.

Stephanie is a nationally renowned disability advocate who discussed the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the advocacy efforts that made this law possible. She reviewed where we are now, compared to when the ADA was first signed into law in 1990. Stephanie discussed the attitudinal and legal threats to the ADA and the protections it offers to people with disabilities.

On July 19, 2018, Access To Independence joined National Disability Voter Registration Week efforts across the country with an event at the Cortland Free Library. In partnership with the League of Women Voters, Access To Independence held a voter registration and education table.

If you were unable to visit our table at the Cortland Free Library, Access To Independence staff are available to help people register to vote on an ongoing basis. There are voter registration forms available at our office.

On Thursday, July 26, 2018, from 3:30 – 5:00 pm, Access To Independence hosted its annual Americans with Disabilities Act Celebration. This fun-filled afternoon included a live radio broadcast by 101.5 WXHC, an ice cream social, celebration cake and a panel of speakers who addressed "Reflections on the Impact of the ADA."

The "Reflections on the Impact of the ADA" panel featured local youth and young adults from around Cortland County. Speakers told their stories of how they have overcome barriers in life in order to reach their goals. Youth and young adults shared their vision for how they see the future more accessible. Happy 28th Anniversary to the ADA!



Above: Staff with ADA Speaker, Stephanie Woodward, J.D.



Above: Packed Community Room for ADA

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Social and Recreational Programming

Every Wednesday we host Craft Club from 10:00 – 11:00 am. It's a great chance to socialize, create art and be a part of our community. This club likes to have fun and has a great energy. It is open for anyone to take part in and we're always looking for volunteers! All supplies are provided and you may bring your own. We have fun creating works with watercolor, stencil drawing and collage-making.

One Tuesday every month we host a Coloring Club from 2:00 – 3:30 pm. This experience is more focused and calm, which can help reduce stress. It's open to all. Supplies are provided or you may bring your own. This club works exclusively with colored pencils, crayons and markers to color in stencils or create entirely original works.

Cortland County Housing Consortium

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

August 28, 2018
8:00 - 10:00 am
November 27, 2018
8:00 - 10:00 am
February 26, 2019
8:00 - 10:00 am

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

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

My Internship



My name is Karla Hoag. I have worked in manufacturing and inspection for over 30 years. In 1995, the company I worked for closed. I worked there for 13 years. I decided to return to school to further my education. I chose to take Business Careers, to get into another field of work. I did a

few jobs in the field and couldn't find the pay I was used to making. Then, I heard of this program for older workers, called A4TD. It is a program that helps older workers get back into the work force and want to learn new skills.

I came to Access To Independence in June for an internship. Rachel Anderson is my teacher and team leader. She lets me learn at my own pace and is very helpful. I went to Office of the Aging with her for a meeting about the NY Connects program. This is a program which helps anyone needing assistance with long term services. I also help in planning the craft and coloring event for the Summer luau, many database projects, and answering phones at the front desk.

I am learning all about Access To Independence. They do great things for people with disabilities in the community. They help to remove barriers and help with independent living and self-advocacy. The staff are all very helpful and friendly. I really enjoy my time here!



Above: July 26, 2018 28th ADA Celebration

Access Secures Funding for Home Modifications

By: Aaron Baier, Architectural Barrier Programs Coordinator



In June, Access To Independence gratefully received four grants that set the stage for several accessibility modifications in Cortland County and surrounding areas. Over the next few months, Access will begin outreach to individuals who have been waiting for months and years to receive the help they need to stay independent in their own home. The work for these grants will take place over the next two years.

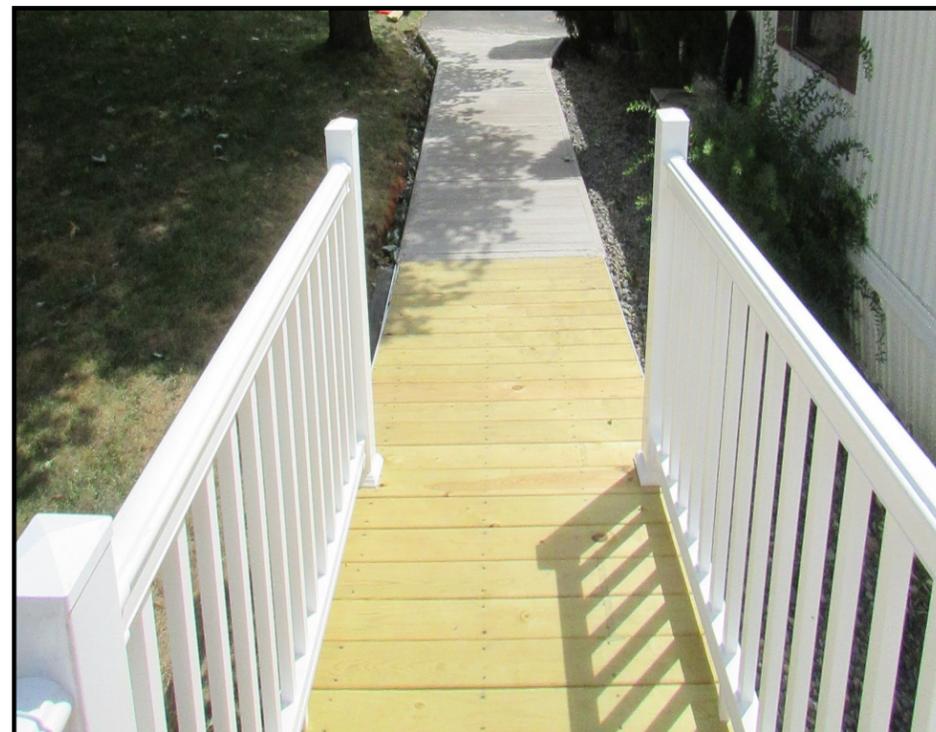
Access To Independence received three distinct Access To Home grants from NYS Homes & Community Renewal. Access To Home provides ramps and other home modifications to improve access into the home and within the home. Access To Home for Veterans will provide \$150,000 over the next year to veterans who acquired a disability during or after serving on active duty. Access To Home General and Access To Home for Medicaid will provide \$300,000 in home modifications to income-eligible people within disabilities and seniors over the next two years.

Access To Independence also received \$20,000 from the J.M. McDonald Foundation for an Emergency Access To Home program. This funding will go towards providing temporary ramps and durable medical equipment as well as small home modifications to the most in-need individuals in Cortland County.

This funding will help us begin to address the ever-growing need in our community. We are extremely grateful for the funding support and are also looking forward to new community partnerships to help us address the unmet needs. Access to Independence is working towards collaborative housing programs with other community agencies and will make announcements as they formalize these partnerships.

For more information on accessibility modifications and other home improvement support, please contact Aaron Baier by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Below: Summer 2018 Completed Accessible Ramp Project



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Access Shares A Volunteer's Story

By: Stacey Sholar, Public Relations & Fundraising Coordinator



At Access To Independence, the mission is clear, empower people with disabilities to lead independent lives. It is the role of the agency to provide resources and advocacy in our community and beyond. Access has a dedicated team working hard to achieve this goal. But it is WHO we are helping that keeps us motivated, determined and driven to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

As Public Relations & Fundraising Coordinator, I work behind the scenes in events, marketing, and fundraising to earn community support to further our cause. It's hard to know what it feels like to live with a disability, unless you walk in someone's shoes. Recently, I received the opportunity to work with a volunteer living with a disability twice a week. This came about in a natural way. Our Community Education Coordinator, Rachel Anderson, referred this volunteer to me as a possible intern. Ben expressed he was able to help with various office tasks. However, once we learned he is a local college student with a major in digital cinema, we had an idea to utilize his talents in other ways to make it a winning situation.

When I met with Ben, he shared with me that his life was as normal as anyone else's. He told me he loves movies and he has his own YouTube channel with 1,000 followers. He has a great support system of family and a caregiver to help him keep moving forward. Ben has hopes and dreams for his future. After spending time with Ben, he enthusiastically told me he would like to work in the entertainment industry someday. Each week, Ben arrives at the agency with a positive attitude, ready to take on new tasks that challenge him. Whatever I throw his way, he says to me "I am up for the challenge!"

Our goal is to make a video and Ben has video making skills that will assist us. As I worked more closely with Ben, I learned he is open about his challenges and about overcoming them. I asked him, why he came to visit Access, he told me his goal was to improve his own independence and self-advocacy. In his words, "I want to keep going in the right direction and work toward my future."

Staff at ATI enjoy seeing Ben's confidence grow and he believes his experience at Access is a "wonderful one." Ben's family member shared, he is very eager and excited to come to Access each week. Ben is passionate about his independence and expresses his desire to make sure that others living with a disability can accomplish their dreams too. He spoke to me about his desire to make sure others move in the right direction and get the supports needed for the future.

I do not know what it is like to overcome the challenges Ben faces but I do know for Ben, living with a disability does not define him. He truly is a remarkable, talented person who wears a smile every time I see him. He knows how to make a great video, among many other things.

At Access To Independence, we strive for progress every day in helping the lives of others become more independent in the community. To learn more, go to aticortland.org or follow us on Facebook.



Above: Ben with Tammy from Racker

Overcoming Architectural Barriers to Increase Independent Living

Most homes in Cortland County were not designed to last a lifetime. While the structure may stand for decades, the needs of the resident will change as they age or acquire a disability. People who find themselves in a hospital or rehabilitation facility will often need some sort of modifications in order to return to their home.

Access To Independence's staff provides a variety of specialized services to help people make accessibility modifications to increase their independence. ATI's Architectural Barrier Program have four specific services to help people with their modification needs – 1) home assessment, 2) design and scope of work developments, 3) project management, and 4) project inspection. ATI's Architectural Barrier Programs focus on home modifications, vehicle modifications and assistive technology and aim to eliminate barriers to independent living.

During the home assessment, staff evaluate the existing environment, determine the best modification solutions and provide recommendations. Staff works with the person to develop drawings and a written scope of work for the desired modification. Staff provide the scope of work to its list of thoroughly vetted and relevant contractors to ensure accurate cost estimates for the project. Staff then work with the person and the contractor with the lowest qualifying bid to see the project through to completion. Finally, staff would inspect the work to ensure successful operation of the modification, safety and compliance with all local, state and federal codes.

Some examples of home modifications, include ramps, stair lifts, barrier-free/roll-in shower units, ADA compliant toilets and sinks, grab bars and railings. Access To Independence has over 10 years of experience providing vehicle modification services throughout the region. Examples of vehicle modifications, include wheelchair lifts and ramps, and steering and driving accommodations.

Access To independence's Assistive Technology services include a well-stocked loan closet and the ability to help people secure the equipment they need to maintain their independence. Some examples of assistive technology, include specialized shower seats, transfer and sit-to-stand lifts, specialized seating devices, and other complex rehabilitation technology that is not covered through traditional insurance coverage. If people have a temporary need for a piece of durable medical equipment, they can loan this equipment for free, for three months, or more, if necessary. If the person requires a permanent solution, staff work with the person and their medical professionals to identify and purchase the appropriate piece of equipment.

Home and vehicle modifications, and assistive technology can be costly. Access To Independence can help navigate various funding sources or help arrange financing. You may qualify for financial assistance to complete modifications. If you receive services through the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Nursing Home Transition & Diversion or Traumatic Brain Injury Medicaid Waiver, Care at Home or Bridges to Health Waivers or through a Managed Care company, you may be eligible for home or vehicle modifications or assistive technology. Access To Independence routinely applies for grants to help meet the needs of people not covered by these programs. For more information, please contact Aaron T. Baier, Architectural Barrier Programs Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.



Above: Roll-In Shower

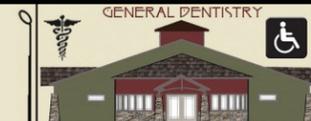
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Cortland County's First Employment Forum!

Access To Independence and the Taskforce to Increase Disability Employment (TIDE) are proud to announce Cortland County's first Employment Forum! The Employment Forum is set for Tuesday, October 2, 2018 from 8:00 am – 1:00 pm at the Center for the Arts in Homer.

Thanks to a grant from The Allen Speiser Memorial Vocational Rehabilitation Fund, the Employment Forum will promote the placement and retention of employees with disabilities in the workforce. The morning starts with a Cortland County Chamber of Commerce Business Leaders' Breakfast to recognize local

progress with New York's Employment First initiative. "Employment First" is the idea that integrated, meaningful employment should be the first choice for people with disabilities before they are forced into a life of poverty vis-à-vis government benefits. The breakfast will recognize Cortland County business leaders and employees for overcoming barriers to employment.

The Employment Forum then continues with speakers who will increase business leader awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities and the value they provide to a diverse workforce. People with disabilities are a valuable, capable, untapped labor pool for the workforce. The Forum will look at issues of employment in the Cortland County area including employer needs and concerns.

Keynote speakers include Jessica Patterson, Marketing & Business Development Director of Monroe Wheelchair, John Robinson, Our Ability, Inc. and local business professionals. This engaging panel of speakers will build the business case for employment of people with disabilities. Lunch will include a community dialogue concerning local business and hiring needs in Cortland County. This community dialogue presents an opportunity for connections and brainstorming to move forward on employment issues facing our area.

For more information or to RSVP, call Access To Independence at 607-753-7363.

Taskforce To Increase Disability Employment

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

September 24, 2018
10:00 - 11:00 am
November 26, 2018
10:00 - 11:00 am
January 28, 2019
10:00 - 11:00 am

All meetings are held at:
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September is Emergency Preparedness Month By: Rachel Anderson, Community Education Coordinator



September is Emergency Preparedness Month! The Core Advisory Group (CAG) for Emergency Preparedness will be at the NY Connects Resource Fair: Featuring Emergency Preparedness & Suicide Walk on Thursday, September 6, 2018 from 12:00 noon – 3:30 pm. This free event is in the gymnasium at the Cortland County Office Building 60 Central Avenue, Cortland.

Community agencies will have tables and demonstrations with emergency preparedness information. Some demonstrations include hands-only CPR and how to operate a fire extinguisher! Staff from Cortland County Emergency Management will be on-site to explain the Hyper Reach emergency system and to sign you up for the free service.

Learn about 72-hour kits, the Yellow Dot Program, Project Lifesaver, how to create an emergency plan and much more! There will be raffles and giveaways throughout the afternoon thanks to our friends at Care Compass Network, the Cortland County Office of Emergency Management and the Cortland County Core Advisory Group (CAG) for Emergency Preparedness.

For more information on this event or how to prepare for an emergency, contact Rachel Anderson at randerson@aticortland.org or 607-753-7363.

Emergency Preparedness Core Advisory Group

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

November 15, 2018
11:00 am - 12:00 Noon
February 23, 2019
11:00 am - 12:00 Noon
May 16, 2019
11:00 am - 12:00 Noon

All meetings are held at:
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Access Supports National Disability Rights

Every year, Access To Independence fights for public policy that will ensure people with disabilities can lead more independent and fully integrated lives in their communities. While much of our advocacy focuses on local and state government, Access works hard to advocate and engage citizens at the national level. To this end, Access works closely with Independent Living Centers across the country and with the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) to advocate for national issues that impact the lives of people with disabilities. Below is a summary of a few of the national priorities that we support.

First, Access supports the NCIL request for \$200 million in additional funding in the 2019 budget for Independent Living programs. NCIL continues to work with the Independent Living Administration (ILA) to actualize significant changes created by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. The ILA works very closely with NCIL as development of new regulations continues. The additional funding will help ILCs to effectively carry out the additional core services as authorized under WIOA and to strengthen America's Independent Living Program.

Second, even though community-based services are overall more cost effective and the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision requires community integration, people with disabilities are still forced into institutions. The Disability Integration Act – introduced during the 115th Congress as S.910 (Schumer-D) – aims to address this issue. Now, we seek introduction in the House of Representatives and to secure passage of this Act into law this year.

Third, along with a new Congress and new opportunities, there are also policies that do not mesh with independent living nor do they bode well for people with disabilities. Access opposes these bills. For example, H.R. 620 - the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 would call for a specific notice and cure period before any private civil actions could be taken. Not only would private citizens who seek to file a claim under the ADA need to submit written notice, businesses would be afforded nearly six months to respond to and correct the issue. Businesses have had 27 years to remedy non-compliance with the ADA and should not require written notice or a cure period to resolve issues that occur.

Fourth, housing affordability and accessibility continue to be a serious challenge for many people with disabilities across the country. Despite years of near-stagnant funding in the face of increasing costs of providing housing assistance and the higher need for housing assistance, the Trump Administration reportedly is planning a very large reduction to the Federal budget over the next 10 years, mostly impacting domestic programs such as housing. Access strongly opposes cuts to housing and other domestic programs designed to assist low-to-moderate-income households, including those with disabilities. Access supports efforts and funding that aim to increase the availability of affordable, accessible and integrated housing for people with disabilities.

To join Access' Advocacy Network, please contact Aaron T. Baier, Systems Advocacy Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

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ATI Welcomes New Staff

Access To Independence continues its transformation of staff to help fulfill the ever-changing, unmet needs of people with disabilities in our community and beyond.

Access To Independence hired

Braedon Sopp to serve as Administrative and Program Assistant.



Braedon will Provide administrative and program support for various programs. This includes administrative duties and support for several events. Braedon also coordinates mailings.

Braedon provides advanced administrative and program support for the agency's various programs. Braedon provides primary oversight of reception protocols and coordinates the Agency's consumer computer lab, community room, video & book resource loan closet, craft club and coloring club.

Please join us in welcoming Braedon to the team!

ATI Staff Attends NY Connects ACUU Training Conference

In June, Access To Independence (ATI) sent staff to this year's ACUU Conference in Albany for training on the NY Connects initiative. NY Connects is a statewide program for people with disabilities of all ages and seniors. Each individual county is responsible for facilitating NY Connects. In Cortland County, NY Connects is a partnership between ATI and the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging.

The 2018 Aging Concerns Unite Us (ACUU) conference featured several inspirational keynote speakers, including Greg Allen, New York State Department of Health, Sandy Markwood, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), and Kathleen Otte, Administration for Community Living.

In addition to networking and learning how other counties in New York State implement the NY Connects initiative, ATI staff had opportunities to attend workshops on a variety of topics. Workshop topics related to increasing inclusiveness in rural communities, managed long-term care plans, responding to individuals with dementia and memory-related disorders and many more.

For more information on ATI's participation in the NY Connects initiative, contact Todd Simmons, Transition Specialist and NY Connects Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: tsimmons@aticortland.org.

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

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