



# Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

**“Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations”**

**Disability Rights is a Civil Rights Issue**

**January 2006**

**HAVE A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR!**

**Need this newsletter in an alternative format?  
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**If you want something to appear in the next edition please send it to us - [jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com](mailto:jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com) or [skoslosk03@comcast.net](mailto:skoslosk03@comcast.net) — or Jayne Kleinman, 55 Corrigan Ave., Meriden, CT 06451, 203-631-4800.**

**ADDRESS CORRECTIONS AND REMOVALS: If you are not interested in receiving this Bulletin, or you would like this information sent to a different e-mail address, please e-mail Jayne Kleinman at [jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com](mailto:jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com) with your request.**

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### Calendar of Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Contact</u>
<b>Jan. 5 11 am</b>	<b>Press Conference on Judge Alito nomination</b>	<b>Room 2D – Legislative Office Building</b>	<b>Coalition of civil rights organizations</b>	<b>Melissa Marshall mmarshall@mindlink.org</b>
<b>Jan. 18 4 pm</b>	<b>Planning Meeting – Regional Advocacy Network in Mansfield</b>	<b>Senior Center – Mansfield</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Collaborative</b>	<b>Stan Kosloski skosloski03@comcast.net</b>
<b>Jan 24 9 am</b>	<b>Introductory Meeting of Regional Advocacy Network in Southwest CT</b>	<b>Westport Town Hall</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Collaborative</b>	<b>Stan Kosloski skosloski03@comcast.net</b>
<b>Jan. 24 10 am – 12 noon</b>	<b>Forum on Universal Design</b>	<b>Legislative Office Building</b>	<b>DD Network</b>	<b>Jessica Jagger at jjagger@uchc.edu</b>
<b>Jan. 26 7 pm</b>	<b>Meeting of People First</b>		<b>People First</b>	<b>Jean Bowen – 203-788-3156</b>
<b>Jan. 26 5 pm</b>	<b>Meeting of Regional Advocacy Network of Southcentral CT</b>	<b>SCSU</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Collaborative</b>	<b>Stan Kosloski skosloski03@comcast.net</b>
<b>March 14 10 am</b>	<b>Meeting of Long Term Care Planning Committee</b>	<b>Rm 310 – State Capitol</b>	<b>LTCPC</b>	<b>David Guttchen – 860-418-6318 david.guttchen@po.state.ct.us</b>
<b>Sept. 16</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Collaborative Convention</b>	<b>CT Expo Center - Hartford</b>	<b>Disability Advocacy Collaborative</b>	<b>Jayne Kleinman jjk1009@hotmail.com 203-238-9391</b>

## **Disability Advocacy Collaborative Update**

Here, through bullets, is an update on the activities of the Disability Advocacy Collaborative over the last month. There is lots going on!

- Larry Robinson of Bridgeport has come on board as a VISTA Volunteer and he will concentrate on organizing disability advocacy networks in southwestern and northwestern Connecticut; for now, Larry may be contacted through Stan Kosloski (860-635-0695, [skosloski03@comcast.net](mailto:skosloski03@comcast.net))
- A web site for the Collaborative is being developed
- Candidates for Governor will be contacted this month and invited to the Disability Convention, set for Saturday, September 16, 2006 at the Connecticut Expo Center in Hartford
- Six committees have been organized to plan the Disability Convention; anyone interested in serving on one of the committees should contact Jayne Kleinman (203-631-4800, [jjk1009@hotmail.com](mailto:jjk1009@hotmail.com)):
  - Candidate's Forum Committee
  - Sponsors' and Vendors' Committee
  - Agencies' and Organizations' Committee
  - Volunteers' Committee
  - Transportation Committee
  - Public Relations and Fund-raising Committee

The Steering Committee of the Collaborative is now meeting the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at 12 noon at the UConn Center on Disability in Farmington

### **Important Press Conference on Thursday, January 5!**

A coalition of civil rights activists, including disability rights activists, are hosting a press conference this coming Thursday, January 5, 2006 at 11 am in the Legislative Office Building (Room 2D). The purpose of the press conference is to bring to public attention the civil rights record of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Judge Samuel A. Alito. On January 9, 2006, the Senate Judiciary Committee will begin the confirmation process for Judge Alito.

Judge Alito's record repeatedly demonstrates his narrow interpretation of the powers that authorize Congress to pass civil rights laws. At risk are the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Fair Housing Amendments Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and other laws of importance to people with disabilities.

All disability rights advocates are invited to be present at Thursday's press conference. You will not be expected to speak, but your mere presence will send an important message.

To obtain background information about Judge Alito's position on disability rights, go to [www.adawatch.org](http://www.adawatch.org) .

## **MS Society Seeks Pilot Program**

The Connecticut Chapters of the National MS Society and the Alzheimer's Association are asking advocates in Connecticut to contact Governor M. Jodi Rell and ask her to include a pilot program in her 2007 budget proposal that would provide home care services to persons with disabilities between 18-64 years of age.

Many individuals with disabilities between the ages of 18 to 64 are not covered by current Medicaid waivers or state-funded programs. They need help with activities of daily living and may have limited family support, have cognitive impairment, and/or have needs that change over time. The existing Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders is only available to those 65 and older, and the Medicaid Personal Care Assistance (PCA) Waiver requires that individuals have the ability to self-direct their own care.

The pilot program being requested will be limited to fifty adults and not cost more than \$250,000, and will be offset in the long run by keeping people with disabilities out of institutional settings, where care is much more expensive. In addition, costs for individual participants in the pilot program to live in the community will be capped at 50% of the cost of nursing home care.

According to the MS Society and Alzheimer's Association, 7,436 people under age 65 received care in a Connecticut nursing facility during state fiscal year 2003. Many people who have cognitive and other significant impairments, could live in the community with the right services and supports and help managing their care. People with chronic illnesses and disabilities caused by such diseases as Huntington's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, ongoing strokes, Alzheimer's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis and HIV/AIDS are likely to be helped by this program. It could help people get out of nursing homes as well as those who are at risk of institutionalization.

Call, write or e-mail the governor today!

Governor M. Jodi Rell  
Executive Office of the Governor  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
Phone: Greater Hartford Area: 860-566-4840, Toll Free: 800-406-1527, TDD: 860-524-7397 or E-Mail: [Governor.Rell@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Governor.Rell@po.state.ct.us)

## **Universal Design Forum Set for January 24**

The Connecticut DD Network is sponsoring a Forum on Universal Design on Tuesday, January 24 at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford from 10 am – 12 noon. Kathy Gips from Adaptive Environments in Boston will be the Keynote Speaker, and she will be followed by a panel discussion on universal design in Connecticut.

Universal design is the concept that structures, technology, and other features of contemporary life should be planned from the outset with all people in mind, regardless of ability or limitation.

The DD Network includes the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service, and the state Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.

Interested individuals should RSVP to Jessica Jagger ([jjagger@uchc.edu](mailto:jjagger@uchc.edu)) by January 10. Accommodation needs should also be addressed to Jessica.

State Representative Kenneth Green, Co-Chair of the Select Committee on Housing, is co-sponsoring the Forum.

### **Between 16-22? KASA Wants You!**

CT-KASA (Kids as Self Advocates) has position openings for youth between 16-22 years of age who want to work in the advocacy field. One position is for a Co-Facilitator, who would be responsible for overseeing the organization's budget; assisting in setting organization goals, setting meeting agendas, and writing grants; and attending and leading monthly KASA meetings. This position pays \$15/hour for 10 hours a month, and a one year commitment is expected.

The second position is for a Youth Organizer, who would help recruit new members; assist in coordinating, and attend, monthly KASA meetings; and give up to four presentations about KASA per year. This position pays \$12 per hour for up to 5 hours a month.

Deadline for both positions is Friday, January 13, 2006. For more information, or to express interest, call 860-297-4316, 860-297-4380 (TTY) or e-mail [coordinator@ctkasa.org](mailto:coordinator@ctkasa.org). The mailing address for KASA is 60 B Weston Street, Hartford, CT 06120.

### **And Speaking of Youth .....**

The deadline for high school students with disabilities to apply for this summer's Youth Leadership Forum is January 13. This will be the eighth year that the four-day forum is being offered, and all activities will take place July 31- August 3, 2006 at the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus. Through a competitive process, 35-40 students will be selected to participate. It is the goal of the YLF planning committee to select students from all regions of Connecticut, who represent a wide range of disabilities and ethnic backgrounds, and there is no cost to attend the forum.

Applications may also be downloaded by accessing the YLF website at [www.ctylf.org](http://www.ctylf.org)

## People First Seeks Name Change for DMR

At the December Board of Directors meeting of People First, members voted to introduce legislation in February to the state General Assembly to change the name of the Department of Mental Retardation. The Board also voted to introduce legislation that will use respectful and People First language in all future laws.

The decision came after eighteen months of discussion by members in their chapters, statewide meetings and at board meetings. Earlier this fall leaders met with the Governor's Council on Mental Retardation to discuss the name change.

The Department of Developmental Disabilities was chosen as the preferred name of choice after careful deliberation. It won out over the Department of Intellectual Disabilities and The Department of Disability Support. It is important to note that members understand that the bill will only change the name of DMR and not the language in the law of who is served!

In other action the Board has selected the 4th Thursday of each month for their meetings. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26 at 7:00 pm. Contact advisor Jean Bowen at 203 788-3156 (cell) for more information.

### **A Notice from Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership about changes in the HUSKY Program (printed in its entirety)**

We are writing to tell you about changes in the way that behavioral health services are covered under HUSKY. Behavioral health services are services for mental health or substance abuse problems. Starting January 1, 2006, the Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership (CT BHP) will cover your behavioral health care. **There is no change in what services are covered.** The change is only in how the services are managed. Your HUSKY health plan will no longer cover these behavioral health services.

Under the CT BHP you:

- Need to use your ConnectCard (*the gray card*) to get services
- Do not need a referral to get behavioral health services
- Can call a provider directly to get care

If you do not have your ConnectCard, you may give a provider your client ID number.

To find a provider or for more information:

- Go to the CT BHP web site at [www.ctbhp.com](http://www.ctbhp.com) or
- Call the CT BHP at 1-877-552-8247
- If you are hearing impaired you can call TTY at (866) 218-0525.

There will be no change in the way medical services are covered. Your HUSKY health plan will continue to cover:

- Medical and dental services
- Medicines for medical and behavioral health care
- Transportation for medical and behavioral health appointments (HUSKY A only)

If you have questions about your medical services, please call your HUSKY health plan.

**Please note:** You must get care from a provider who has joined the CT BHP. To make sure your provider has joined:

- Take this notice to your provider and ask if they are in the CT BHP
- Call the CT BHP at 1-877-522-8247

If your provider wants to join the CT BHP, they can call EDS at 1-800-842-8440. From the New Britain or Hartford area, your provider should call 1-860-832-9259.

### **P.A.T.H.S. Holds Transportation Institute**

The CT UCEDD (The University of Connecticut A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research, and Service) conducted a Transportation Institute at the State Capitol on November 30, 2005. The event was attended by constituents who use transportation services, legislators, representatives from State agencies, and others. Funded through a grant from the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Institute presented findings from a series of seven forums held around the state attended by people with disabilities who use transportation services.

With a second year grant from the Developmental Disabilities Council, the P.A.T.H.S. project will continue during 2006 to partner with the Department of Transportation and other transportation providers, organizations and individuals to ensure the interests of people with disabilities are represented in the DOT State Action Plan. ConnDOT received a grant to develop a State Action Plan from United We Ride in 2005.

Copies of the forum summaries and the consolidated report can be found at [www.uconnucedd.org](http://www.uconnucedd.org) . For more information on the project or to become involved please contact Jayne J. Kleinman, MS, CRC, Transportation Project Facilitator, University of Connecticut A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research, and Service, 263 Farmington Avenue - MC 6222, Farmington, CT 06030-6222, phone: (860) 679-1575, fax: (860) 679-1571, TTY: (860) 679-1502, Toll free: (866) 623-1315.

### **New Haven Makes Top Ten List!**

The City of New Haven has qualified as one of ten finalists nationally in the Accessible American competition sponsored by the National Organization on Disability. New Haven's many programs to include people with disabilities in most facets of community life helped the city gain a coveted spot on the list, contest sponsors say.

"New Haven turned in a pretty darn impressive application," said Nancy Starnes, vice president of the National Organization on Disability in Washington, D.C. "In 1999, New Haven commissioned a private research study to determine the size and needs of the population with disabilities, including people in shelters. New Haven has gone above and beyond using census figures to identify needs."

Other Accessible America finalists included Austin, Texas; Indianapolis; Nashville and Chattanooga, Tenn.; West Hollywood and Berkeley, Calif.; Pittsburgh; Arlington County, Va.; and Cambridge, Mass. The winners stand to win \$55,000.

The Collaborative wishes Michelle Duprey and her colleagues in New Haven the best of luck.

### **Federal Budget Battle**

Justice For All (JFA) reports the last few weeks in Congress were a time of "ups and downs," "backs and forths," and all night sessions with early morning votes. And the 2005-2006 federal budget is still not done. The Senate will convene again on January 18, 2006, and the House comes back January 26, 2006 to take up unfinished business.

Here's the JFA summary of how the year ended with regard to legislative matters -- particularly the budget:

\* **BUDGET RECONCILIATION** - On Wednesday, Dec. 21, the Senate approved the overall budget reconciliation bill by a vote of 51-50 with Vice President Cheney casting the tie-breaking vote. Due to last minute provisions, the bill must go back to the House now for final approval. Because House Democrats insisted on a recorded vote on the last day in session, the bill must now wait at least January 26 for any further action.

The bill passed by the Senate on Wednesday settled on \$39.7 billion in cuts to entitlements -- including \$6.9 billion over five years to Medicaid. An additional \$2.1 billion was added to the bill for hurricane relief and to support the Family Opportunity Act, SCHIP and Money Follows the Person demonstration project. Since the House will not vote now until January 26 at the earliest, the extra time gives opponents of the cuts another chance to lobby wavering GOP moderates. All Democrat House members originally voted against the bill along with nine Republican members while 16 members failed to vote.

\* **FISCAL YEAR 2006 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS** – The Congress passed this appropriations bill after taking out the controversial Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) provision. The Senate also stripped from the bill a provision which would have added \$2 billion in energy assistance funding this winter for low-income households, and contained a one percent across-the-board cut in all discretionary spending, excluding programs that serve veterans. This reduction amounted to a total of \$8 billion.

\* FISCAL YEAR 2006 DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR - HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE - EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS - The total FY 2006 funding is almost \$170 million lower than the FY 2005 appropriation. This is the first time in decades that the Congress has provided less funding for these three departments than in the previous year. Very few, if any, disability programs will actually see an increase in FY 2006 - particularly after the one percent cut.

\* MENTAL HEALTH PARITY LAW - The Senate on Thursday, Dec. 22, by voice vote passed a bill (HR 4579) that would extend for one year a mental health parity law under which health insurers cannot place caps on annual or lifetime mental health benefits unless they place similar caps on medical and surgical benefits. This extends a 1996 law scheduled to expire on Dec. 31, 2005. The House had passed a similar bill on Dec. 17.

So when Congress returns in January, in addition to issues like immigration, stem cell research, tax cuts, and (for the Senate) a Supreme Court nominee, they will also be facing matters not finalized this year which include a very contentious budget reconciliation bill.

Advocates have until January 26 to contact your representatives before they convene again and vote on this legislation.

### **Money Follows the Person Pilot Still Alive**

As noted above, a demonstration project for a Money Follows the Person (MFP) initiative remains in the Budget Reconciliation Act being considered by Congress. According to Bob Kafka from ADAPT, MFP would be funded at \$1.75 billion starting in FY 2007 if the budget bill passes.

MFP is budgeted to have the following amounts for the next several years:

2007 - \$250 MIL  
2008 - \$300 MIL  
2009 - \$350 MIL  
2010 - \$400 MIL  
2011 - 450 MIL

This money will be used to increase the federal match for states which apply to and are accepted into the MFP federal program by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

The FMAP (Federal Match) increase in the bill is not the 100% match that ADAPT requested, but it is still an incentive to create a Money Follows the Person service.

### **Deadline Extended for Summer Internships**

The American Association for Persons with Disabilities has extended the submission deadline for Summer Information Technology Internships for college students with disabilities until January 13, 2006.

Administered by AAPD and sponsored by Microsoft Corporation, undergraduate students interested in pursuing careers in information technology are encouraged to apply. Accepted candidates will work in various agencies in the executive branch of the federal government. Roundtrip air travel and housing will be provided to interns, and each student will receive a stipend. Applications now available from [www.AAPD.com](http://www.AAPD.com).

### **Next ADAPT Action Set for March 18**

ADAPT will be having its next national action in Nashville, Tennessee, Saturday, March 18, 2006 through Thursday, March 23, 2006. On Sunday, March 19, ADAPT will be hosting a day documenting the institutional bias in the American long term care system. ADAPT invites people from throughout the country who have been in nursing homes or other institutions to testify to a panel on how they managed to get out and how their lives have changed. For more information go to [www.adapt.org](http://www.adapt.org).

### **Violations of Section 504 in Federally Supported Housing Projects**

Attorney Steve Gold writes that according to HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development), 64 of the 76 public housing projects they recently reviewed had less than 5 percent of the units that met the accessibility standards for persons with mobility disabilities. In other words, HUD acknowledges that 84% of the projects surveyed were in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This revelation comes nearly 17 years after HUD promulgated its Section 504 regulation requiring that at least 5% of the units be accessible – a very sad picture of widespread Section 504 violations in 2005,

Steve Gold asks “How's your Public Housing agency doing?” and offers the following suggestions:

1. Find out if 5 percent of the public housing units in your locale are fully accessible for persons with mobility disabilities. How? Ask your public housing agency and then get the street addresses. Do a visual on-site visit of at least the exterior access and path of travel.
2. Ask your public housing agency if people with mobility disabilities are actually residing in those units that your public housing agency claims are accessible. How does it enforce this requirement?
3. Find out what, if any, plans exist to reach the 5% minimum. Has your public housing agency actually allocated capital funds? Let them show you the money.
4. What have you and disability advocates demanded the public housing agency do to remedy the past Section 504 discrimination? No wrong should go undone. What about

giving persons with mobility disabilities a preference in receiving Section 8 Housing Vouchers? What about a commitment in a specific number of years that 10 % of the total number of public housing units will be rehabilitated to be fully accessible?

You may find this information included in Steve Gold's Information Bulletin #99, which is available online, along with back issues of other Information Bulletins, at [www.stevegoldada.com](http://www.stevegoldada.com) . To contact Steve Gold directly, write to [stevegoldada@cs.com](mailto:stevegoldada@cs.com)

### **Harkin Presses for Stronger Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities**

On Friday, December 16, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced S. 2124, the Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005. The legislation will address the needs of individuals with disabilities in emergency planning and relief efforts.

Under this legislation, a Disability Coordinator would be created in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, who will report directly to the Secretary. The Coordinator would be responsible for:

- \* Working with local, state and federal authorities about the needs of individuals with disabilities in emergency planning and relief,
- \* Developing a curriculum for first responder training on the needs of individuals with disabilities,
- \* Ensure telephone hotlines and websites containing information about evacuations are accessible, and
- \* Provide guidance about the rights of individuals with disabilities regarding post evacuation residence and relocation, among other things.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005 will also require that 30 percent of temporary housing for disaster victims be accessible, and usable by individuals with disabilities, and would provide incentives to create more accessible housing during reconstruction efforts.

### **Special Issue of *DisabilityWorld***

A new issue of the online periodical of news and views, *DisabilityWorld*, has just been produced by the World Institute on Disability in collaboration with other groups active in developing disability-related resources in poor countries. Posted on December 19, the theme of the special issue is "Disability and Development" that takes a closer look at policies and projects giving mainstream assistance to disabled people within broader social and economic programs.

Often called "Inclusive Development," this approach recognizes that the estimated 10% of children, youths and adults with disabilities have been essentially left out of education

for all, poverty reduction programs and other national and international efforts to reach disadvantaged populations. Additionally, new studies by the UK's Department for International Development and Ireland's National Disability Authority strengthen the linkages between disability and poverty.

For details on *DisabilityWorld*, check it out online at [www.disabilityworld.org](http://www.disabilityworld.org), or contact the Executive Director, Kathy Martinez: [Kathy@wid.org](mailto:Kathy@wid.org), or directly by phone (510) 251-4326.

## **White House Conference on Aging Looks to the Future**

Excerpts from a *Washington Post* article by Abigail Trafford:

“Last week in Washington [mid-December], when more than a thousand delegates from across the country gathered at the White House Conference on Aging, the significant non-event was that the President of the United States never showed up. George Bush's failure to appear dominated the three-day meeting. It was the first time in nearly half a century that a president has skipped the conference, which is held about every 10 years.

Despite the presidential snub - - or perhaps galvanized by it - - the conference produced a framework for social policies that broadened the scope of aging issues from services to support the frail to opportunities for the healthy to work and serve their communities. Delegates elevated mental health, transportation and long-term care as priority issues.

Congress, too, seemed oblivious. In one ironic moment, just as the delegates made it a leading priority to increase the number of health professionals trained in geriatrics, a health committee in the House of Representatives was zeroing out of next year's federal budget a program that funded a network of 50 geriatric education centers.

The White House Conference on Aging is the forum to develop a blueprint of policies for the next decade. In the past, the conference has led to major initiatives, including Medicare and Medicaid. This was the fifth conference and it cost nearly \$8 million, with an estimated \$450,000 from private donors, the rest from taxpayers.

Most heated was a workshop on Social Security and the controversy over its privatization. Delegates clustered in groups of six. Patrick Daly of Chicago, retired from the FBI, explained his skepticism of personal accounts this way: "I was too busy chasing spies, terrorists, and bank robbers to watch the stock market."

Delegates voted overwhelmingly to keep Social Security as is and rejected privatization as a major solution to the system's long-term solvency. At the same time, they offered alternative strategies such as raising the cap on taxed wages and putting all workers, including government workers, in the system.

So what if the president didn't show, the delegates seemed to say. Grass-roots democracy was taking over. "There are a lot of people who care passionately about what happens to

older men and women," said Rena Iacono of Lido Beach, N.Y. "That's what this White House Conference on Aging is all about."

### ***The Ringer***

The National Down Syndrome Society has joined with the Special Olympics in support of the recently released movie *The Ringer*, a Farrelly brothers' film that uses humor to challenge destructive stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities. The film opened at theaters nationwide on December 23, 2005.

*The Ringer* tells the story of Steve Barker, a young man who pretends to have an intellectual disability so he can compete in a Special Olympics event. However, Barker's attitude changes as he develops friendships with several of the Special Olympics athletes. He learns, as will moviegoers, that people with intellectual disabilities are more like the rest of us than they are different. The athletes in the film listen to music, play video games, watch the latest movies, and work together toward athletic excellence all while having fun.

Instead of tugging at the heartstrings, *The Ringer* uses the typical outrageous Farrelly Brothers humor (There's Something about Mary, Stuck on You, Shallow Hal) to promote the message that just like everyone else, individuals with intellectual disabilities are people first, each with their own interests, talents, abilities and personalities. The movie also features more than 150 people with intellectual disabilities in small parts and supporting roles.

Read a review of *The Ringer* by Gail Williamson, executive director of the Down Syndrome Association of Los Angeles: <http://www.dsala.org>.

### **“If You Can Breathe, You Can Do Yoga . . .”**

When people think of yoga, they sometimes conjure up images of students contorting their body into unusual positions and holding them for interminable amounts of time. Yoga instructor Mary Cavanaugh from Oceanside, California proved that there are much simpler ways to use the discipline that even those with mobility disabilities can practice.

#### Examples of What You Can Do

- Doing Yoga While Sitting Down
- Taking Breathing Lessons
- Receiving Positive Feedback

In November 2003, the idea for putting together a DVD sprung from Mary's success as host of Yoga for Seniors, a cable television series that airs twice daily on KCOT in Oceanside, California. "We basically looked at the shows that were the most successful, and that appealed to two audiences, seniors, and the physically challenged. We thought that we would make a DVD series and focus primarily on that market, because, with

yoga, that market is not being serviced,” says Sherry Zak Morris, producer of the *Secrets for Feeling Better* DVD series, and a student of Mary’s.

A series of DVDs is available at [www.yogajp.com](http://www.yogajp.com). “Chair exercises are not confined to people who have disabilities,” explained Cavanaugh. “They are great for everyone!”

### **U.S. State Department Forms Disability Advisory Committee**

On August 15, the members of the U.S. State Department's Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities held their first meeting in Washington, DC. The Committee serves in an advisory capacity with respect to the consideration of the interests of people with disabilities in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy and assistance. Prior to the meeting Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice addressed the eight Committee members. By the close of the meeting, members established a Committee agenda including the following priorities: review the State Department's 504 plan; provide technical assistance on the proposed United Nations convention on the human rights of people with disabilities; and, include people with disabilities in all aspects of democracy-building, human rights and development programs.

### **Working Together: Personal Assistance Training and You**

An online publication has been developed for people with disabilities or chronic illnesses who direct their personal assistance services. The resource provides information on how to recruit and interview, how to check a candidate's background and references, and covers topics like problem solving, conflict resolution, setting boundaries, and working with a PCA who may also be a friend or a relative.

For more information, go to [www.hcbs.org/moreInfo.php/nb/doc/1434](http://www.hcbs.org/moreInfo.php/nb/doc/1434) .

### **New Keyboard Shows Promise for People with Physical Disabilities**

A New Zealand invention allows people with physical disabilities to use a laser headset or hand unit to select keys on a specially designed keyboard. The product, called a Lomak, eliminates the physical demands of entering keystrokes and allowing users to have a form of shorthand. The unit is unique in that it simply plugs into any computer using a USB port. Users then point the headset at keys to illuminate their choice.

<http://www.lomak.co.nz/>

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