



# Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

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

**Empowerment! Opportunity! Justice!**

**April 2007**

***Need this newsletter in an alternative format? Please let us know.***

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### Update on Disability Advocacy Collaborative Activities

**To get involved with a Regional Advocacy Network, or to find the date of the next meeting of the Network, contact the following:**

Northwest — contact: Bill Knight ([Lackerman01@snet.net](mailto:Lackerman01@snet.net))

Southwest — contact: Carol Kana ([pkana@snet.net](mailto:pkana@snet.net))

Danbury Area — contact Pam Arturi ([parturi@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:parturi@abilitybeyonddisability.org))

North Central — contact: Candace Low ([clow@independenceunlimited.org](mailto:clow@independenceunlimited.org))

Waterbury Area — contact: Mike Valuckas ([mike.valuckas@independencenorthwest.org](mailto:mike.valuckas@independencenorthwest.org))

Northeast Area — contact: Carolyn Newcombe ([cnewcombe@charter.net](mailto:cnewcombe@charter.net))

### Urgent Message from CACIL!

Paul Ford, Project Director of the Nursing Home Transition Project operated by the Connecticut Association for Independent Living (CACIL), sends the following legislative alert. The Appropriations Committee is working on the next state budget, to take effect in July. They have until April 19 to finalize a funding plan, which will cover the next two years. The Collaborative urges advocates to contact Committee members now and ask them to address the issues Paul raises!

“The PCA Waiver has reached its cap and a waiting list has been established! Only the legislature can authorize more slots. At this point it does not look like there is much that can/will happen from within DSS regarding adding additional slots to the PCA Waiver. It seems like the time has come for advocates to write/call/e-mail legislators and others encouraging them to address the issue. Below is a summary of what we know.

PCA Waiver Update: On February 22<sup>nd</sup> we learned that a waiting list for the PCA Waiver had been established and that people in the process of obtaining services as well as new

applicants for the waiver are being placed on a waiting list. In the 2007-2009 DSS budget request (prepared in November 2006), the department proposed funding to add 220 slots, increasing the cap from 698 to 920. We understand that this option was not approved.

As of today, there are more than 75 individuals on the waiting list. People are being added to the wait list, according to their original application date, when they have a plan approved by DSS Central Office.

Part of the problem is the removal last year of the age cap that had required people on the PCA Waiver to switch to the CT Home Care for Elders program or the Elder PCA Pilot. Though removing the age restriction is a very good thing, the result is a slowing of attrition from the PCA Waiver (i.e., more people staying on it beyond the age of 65)..

Under the Nursing Facility Transition Project we have four (4) individuals who are identified as being on the waiting list. Not included in the waiting list are seventeen (17) other individuals seeking transition under the NFTP who we have been identified as needing the PCA Waiver, but are not currently on the waiting list. It looks like the current PCA Waiver waiting list will mean that many people have to wait for a year or more before they can receive services, remaining in institutional settings..

It is important to remember that although Money Follows the Person will bring new supports and services, it will only be for individuals Medicaid eligible and in a qualifying institution for 6 months or more. The PCA Waiver itself is not due for renewal until the fall of 2009; about the same time that a new waiver developed under MFP would become available. Without legislative action or other intervention now, people will continue to live in nursing homes and wait long periods of time for services, or choose to leave facilities and try to manage without adequate supports.

The 220 slots proposed in the DSS Budget option is a good number to start with, however it would be important that the number of requests for the PCA Waiver, and the impact of the age cap being removed, be considered in determining the actual need. It was recently reported at a meeting of the Nursing Facility Transition Project Steering Committee, that in addition to people not "aging-off" the PCA waiver the demand for community based services is increasing. (Typically 4-5 new applications are received per month, but 21 were received in February). Close analysis of the numbers of requests for the PCA Waiver and the impact of removing the age cap should be considered in determining a realistic number to carry the state until renewal of the waiver in the fall of 2009.

It would also be important for advocates to also ask about the ABI Waiver. Though there is no waiting list at this time, we are hearing that it is quickly approaching both the cap on number of slots and its financial cap. When it does it will create a new set of problems unless there is some effort to fund additional slots and increase the financial cap on the ABI."

- Paul Ford

## Legislative Update

**Beth Leslie at OP&A shares her experiences with the Appropriations Committee, where she clerked for seven years; the deadline for the Committee to act on budget issues is April 19.**

“The Appropriations Committee usually handles its business like this: first, it passes a BUDGET (which is an actual bill, HB 7077); then it considers bills referred to the committee. When considering bills referred to the committee, the overriding consideration is this--did the committee include funding in the BUDGET for the costs associated with this bill? If the answer is yes the bill has a good chance of being approved.

If there is no funding in the BUDGET for the costs of the bill, the bill may be amended by the Appropriations Committee to remove or amend those portions of the bill that would cost money to implement. This is often the best hope to get a bill passed that makes substantive policy changes. If the bill does more than change policies, if the bill creates new services or expands current services, it is far more difficult to get the bill approved.

VERY RARELY, the Appropriations Committee decides that, even though the bill isn't funded in the budget, it addresses an important issue that simply must be addressed. In this case the Appropriations Committee may approve the bill but leaders of the committee may make a statement like this: "We acknowledge the importance of the issue addressed by this bill. But the money is not in the budget. As the legislative process moves forward we will work to reduce or eliminate the costs associated with this bill, or we will find a way to fund the bill through the budget.

Lastly, most bills referred to the Appropriations Committee simply die in committee. The committee is not required to act or vote on any bill referred to it.

So what do you do if you want to get a bill approved by the Appropriations Committee? First, you contact the Chairs and Ranking Members of the committee. You tell them about the bill, why it is important, and you ask for their support. Second, if the Chairs and Ranking Members are concerned about the costs associated with the bill, consider offering ways to change the bill to reduce the cost. You can even ask legislators themselves for suggestions on how to reduce the costs. Or try to make the case that the bill simply must be approved as is. Third, contact "rank and file" members of the Appropriations Committee, and your own State Senator and State Representative, and ask for their support and ask them to ask the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Appropriations Committee to approve the bill.”

- Beth Leslie

## The Legislative Nitty Gritty

The 2007 legislative session ends June 6th. Only three committees are now acting on bills: the Judiciary Committee, the Appropriations Committee, and the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. The other committees have finished their work but will take up bills that are referred to them from the House or Senate floor.

### APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE (JF DEADLINE 4/19/07)

HB 7077 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2009, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. To implement the Governor's budget recommendations. **THIS IS THE MAIN BUDGET BILL!**

SB 54 AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED ACCESS TO HOME-BASED LONG-TERM CARE. To allow a greater number of elderly persons to remain in their homes thereby reducing the long-term care institutional costs incurred by the state.

HB 7323 AN ACT CONCERNING LONG-TERM CARE. To enhance the long-term care placement options available to individuals in the state.

SB 147 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PREFERRED DRUG LISTS AND PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REQUIREMENTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAMS. To require the Commissioner of Social Services to implement measures that ensure that the department's prescription drug program beneficiaries are not being denied access to needed prescription drugs due to the implementation of prior authorization requirements or the utilization of preferred drug lists.

SB 246 AN ACT CONCERNING HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES FOR FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN. To expand the offering of state programs available to families with special needs children.

SB 1324 AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE ACCESS, QUALITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS. To improve health care quality, access and family support for children with special health care needs.

SB 977 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESTRICTION ON UNREASONABLE RESTRAINTS AND SECLUSIONS OF STUDENTS. To avoid the harmful effects of unreasonable restraints and seclusions on students.

HB 5047 AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED PERSONS. To establish a program and provide funds for rental assistance and support services for low-income, non-elderly disabled persons in existing public or private housing.

HB 5631 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE SPENDING ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES. To ensure that the implementation of community mental health services under the state Medicaid plan is operated in a manner that enhances and promotes the state's community mental health system.

HB 7130 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE-WIDE MONEY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM THAT ASSISTS LOW-INCOME ELDERLY AND DISABLED PERSONS. To provide for the establishment and funding of a state-wide money management program to assist low-income disabled and elderly persons.

HB 7279 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON PROGRAM. To expand the Money Follows the Person demonstration project so that such project provides services for up to seven hundred persons.

HB 7280 AN ACT CONCERNING AUTISM. To require the Commissioner of Social Services to take all necessary action to secure Medicaid funding for home and community-based individualized support services for adults who have autism spectrum disorders, but who are not mentally retarded.

HB 7132 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF HEARING AIDS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS. To provide financial assistance to low-income elderly persons who are in need of hearing aids.

**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE (JF DEADLINE 4/13/07)**

SB 149 AN ACT REQUIRING THE VIDEOTAPING OF CUSTODIAL INTERROGATIONS. To increase the reliability of confessions by requiring the videotaping of custodial interrogations of persons under investigation for, or accused of, the commission of a capital felony or a class A or B felony.

HB 7364 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC RECORDING OF INTERROGATIONS. To require, when feasible, the electronic recording in its entirety of any custodial interrogation of a person under investigation for or accused of a capital felony or a class A or B felony or a juvenile under investigation for or accused of a criminal offense.

SB 1194 AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO THE OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION INMATE SUICIDES AND DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES CLIENT DEATHS. To ensure that timely and complete information is provided by the Department of Correction to the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities in the event of an inmate suicide and to require the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services to promptly report deaths of individuals with psychiatric or substance abuse disabilities to said office in certain circumstances.

SB 1238 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CIVIL COMMITMENT OF PERSONS FOUND NOT GUILTY BY REASON OF MENTAL DISEASE OR DEFECT. To provide for the civil commitment of a person found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect, rather than the continued commitment of such person to the Psychiatric Security Review Board, when it is determined that such person's discharge at the end of such person's term of commitment would constitute a danger to himself or herself or others.

SB 1407 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION. To require the Department of Education to develop a plan to replace the minimum expenditure requirement with a minimum budget requirement for education includes harmful provision to cut off age of eligibility for special education the day a student turns 21, rather than let them finish the school year.

HB 5675 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DURATION OF COURT-ORDERED PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION. To extend the maximum duration of an individual's psychiatric commitment from not more than fifteen days to not more than thirty days in order to address the needs of individuals repeatedly committed for psychiatric evaluation.

HB 5676 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS. To revise requirements for proceedings concerning families with service needs and to require the establishment of family support centers to provide services for children and families against whom a family with service needs complaint has been filed.

HB 6987 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF INMATES WITH MENTAL ILLNESS. To ensure that adequate mental health services are provided to inmates with mental illness and that the rights of such inmates are protected.

### **BILLS BEFORE THE SENATE**

SB 5 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FUNCTIONS, POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING.

SB 73 AN ACT EXPANDING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS FOR CHILDREN.

SB 238 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE NONHOSPITAL COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN.

SB 1096 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FATALITY REVIEW BOARD FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

SB 1128 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS WITH RESPECT TO SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS.

SB 1129 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF AN EMERGENCY HOUSING REPAIR FUND FOR STATE ASSISTED HOUSING.

SB 1197 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSITION OF CARE AND TREATMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF MENTAL RETARDATION AND MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES.

SB 1220 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BIRTH-TO-THREE PROGRAM.

SB 1226 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM.

SB 1311 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF THE VOTING PROCESS.

SB 1326 AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

### **BILLS BEFORE THE HOUSE**

HB 5186 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EVACUATION OF PETS AND SERVICE ANIMALS.

HB 5508 AN ACT AUTHORIZING COMMITMENT TO A CHRONIC DISEASE HOSPITAL UNDER A PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY CERTIFICATE.

HB 5735 AN ACT CONCERNING INCENTIVES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

HB 6390 AN ACT CONCERNING TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR DEFENDANTS FOUND NOT COMPETENT TO STAND TRIAL.

HB 6391 AN ACT CONCERNING INVOLUNTARY ADMINISTRATION OF PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION FOR PURPOSES OF COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL.

HB 6642 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PUBLIC HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY FUND AND REQUIRING A COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING.

HB 7007 AN ACT RENAMING THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL RETARDATION.

HB 7055 AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL NECESSITY AND EXTERNAL APPEALS.

HB 7067 AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPOINTMENT AND POWERS OF CONSERVATORS AND SPECIAL LIMITED CONSERVATORS WITH RESPECT TO PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT.

HB 7109 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION STANDARDS FOR PERSONS PROVIDING INTERPRETER SERVICES.

HB 7144 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR CITIZENS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS.

HB 7233 AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS.

HB 7283 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LONG-TERM CARE INITIATIVE.

### **Do You Know Who your State Legislators Are?**

If you want to become active in legislative advocacy, you will need to know who your local legislators are. So check out: [www.cga.ct.gov/maps/townlist.asp](http://www.cga.ct.gov/maps/townlist.asp) and click on your town. If more than one representative is listed in your town, call your local town or city hall and give them your address so that they can tell you which representative is yours.

You may also reach your legislators (toll free) at the State Capitol:

Senate Democrats: (860) 240-8600 or (800) 842-1420

Senate Republicans: (860) 240-8800 or (800) 842-1421

House Democrats: (860) 240-8500 or (800) 842-1902

House Republicans: (860) 240-8600 or (800) 842-1423

### **Autism Day at State Capitol**

On April 11th a Breakfast/Press Conference will be held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford with the Speaker of the House Jim Amann and UConn Coach Jim Calhoun. Coach Calhoun has two grandchildren on the autism spectrum. The press conference will discuss the need for services and the bills that advocates are pursuing this session. The day starts at 10 am and ends around noon. Please contact Lois Rosenwald, Co-director of the Autism Spectrum Resource Center, if you are able to attend: 203-265-7717 (phone) or [lois.asrc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lois.asrc@sbcglobal.net) (e-mail).

### **Also on the 11<sup>th</sup>: Housing Day at the Capitol**

Wednesday, April 11, 2007 — 11:30 AM-2:30 PM  
Old Judiciary Room, State Capitol, Hartford, CT

Your legislators are waiting to hear from you... 2007 is a year of great opportunities for affordable housing at the State Legislature. Hear the latest information about legislation that is important to you and your community. Join with others from your region to meet with your state legislators. The voices of constituents are the most influential.

For more details about the event and for a registration form, please visit [www.ct-housing.org/](http://www.ct-housing.org/). For more information contact: Connecticut Housing Coalition - 30 Jordan Lane Wethersfield, CT 06109 - Tel.: 860-563-2943 - E-mail: [info@ct-housing.org](mailto:info@ct-housing.org).

### **Stand Up for Health Care!**

Health care is one of the biggest issues the state legislature is addressing this year, and there will be a Stand Up for Health Care Rally on May 5, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Bushnell Park in Hartford. Organizers hope to turn out thousands of people at this rally. All disability advocates are invited to attend.

The Universal Health Care Foundation has 25,000 copies of a flyer promoting the event at its Meriden office. If you would like copies, call Rachel Welch, Campaign Organizer at the Foundation: Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut - 290 Pratt Street - Meriden, CT 06450 - 203-639-0550 ext. 338 or 203-639-0519 (fax) or check their web site - [www.universalhealthct.org](http://www.universalhealthct.org) .

## **Hartford Courant Addresses Language Issue**

Language can help shape attitudes, and the wonderful advocacy of Chad Sinanian (Self Advocate), Lynn Warner (Executive Director of the Arc of Connecticut) and many others has produced real change at the Hartford Courant.

Here is the memo distributed to reporters at the Courant by Harvey Remer, News Copy Desk Chief. Former Arc Executive Director Peg Dignoti suggests that all of us work with newspapers -- and other outlets -- in our various media areas to educate them, too. Perhaps you could copy the Courant's directive to its staff and forward it to them. As Peg notes, "maybe the days of reading or hearing 'the retarded' are truly over! For those of us who have been trying to make that happen for years, that will be a great day!"

*From: Remer, Harvey  
Sent: Wednesday, March 21, 2007 6:30 PM  
To: Courant News Staff  
Subject: Retarded, intellectual disabilities, people first language*

*Everyone,*

*Our style on the use of the word "retarded," variations of that word and the phrase "mentally retarded" has changed. The now acceptable phrase is intellectual disabilities. I've added a style entry for "individual disabilities" and have changed the entry under "retarded."*

*The state Department of Mental Retardation recently proposed changing its name out of concern over the use of the word "retarded" and its variations, such as "retardation" and "mental retardation." That word has fallen out of favor among some people who have what are now called intellectual disabilities and most if not all of their mental health advocates. The new name will be the state Department of Developmental Services. I believe that name is intended to reflect the fact that the department serves more than just people with intellectual disabilities.*

*At the federal level, the President's Committee on Mental Retardation is now called the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. The*

*former Association for Retarded Citizens changed its name to The Arc of the United States, or locally The Arc of Connecticut.*

*So we are joining those who no longer use the word "retarded" and its other forms, except in quoted material and in historical references. I'd also like us to use what's known as "people first" language when referring to people with diseases, syndromes, intellectual disabilities and other maladies. For example, if someone has diabetes, we should refer to him or her as having diabetes, not as a diabetic. Our language might be: Jones, who has diabetes, knows a lot about insulin. This is similar to our style of saying Jones, who uses a wheelchair, rather than Jones, who is wheelchair-bound. The point of "people first" is that people are not their maladies. The maladies are a part of their lives, but they're people first. I've added a style entry under "people first language."*

*So rather than say someone is retarded, we would say the person has intellectual disabilities. Notice I said "has" and not "suffers from," a phrase we should also try to eliminate.*

*In headlines, where space will seldom allow for "intellectual disabilities," we should use "disabled" rather than "retarded."*

*Harvey "Flash" Remer  
News Copy Desk Chief  
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## **Disturbing News on Medicare Prescription Coverage!**

Eric S. Rodko, Regional Manager of the CHOICES Program of the North Central Area Agency on Aging, reports: "According to the latest figures from Medicare (Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007), there are approximately 28,754 people with Medicare in Hartford County (out of 139,925 eligible beneficiaries) that still do NOT have any prescription coverage whatsoever. That means 28,754 people on Medicare do NOT have any prescription through an employer based plan, an MAPD/HMO, the VA or coverage under Part D. Much to my own surprise, I thought Hartford County figures would be much higher in 2007 (79.5%) after going through a second round of open-enrollment (74% as of May, 2006), but we experienced less than a five-percent (5%) increase in overall prescription plan enrollments.

These figures are cause for concern and some additional outreach. For those of us who have the wherewithal through local cable outlets, newsletters and other media sources, we need to continue reaching out to the "28,000." Maybe these are persons who are not taking any drugs, but are unaware of the long term financial risks of accruing the Part D penalty (which could now be as much as 18% for those who have been on Medicare since prior to May, 2006). Maybe these are persons who import from other countries and haven't been screened yet to determine which is better, re-importation or Medicare Part D. Maybe these are people who are afraid of the associated costs and could be eligible

for Extra Help through the SSA Low Income Subsidy process or the ConnPACE program.

So, we all have some on-going outreach to do. Let's be vigilant and make sure every person on Medicare in our local community is aware of their prescription coverage options and the resources that can help them.” - Eric S. Rodko, CHOICES

### **Job Announcement - Administrative Coordinator**

The focus of End Hunger Connecticut!, Inc. is to eliminate hunger in the state through outreach, public education and legislative and administrative advocacy. Their goal is to raise awareness of hunger in the state of Connecticut, promote funding for and access to nutrition assistance programs, and to speak out to help eliminate the root causes of hunger. EHC! works toward the goal of helping low-income families and people move “beyond the food pantry” towards self-sufficiency.

Responsibilities: The Administrative Coordinator will oversee End Hunger Connecticut! and will have responsibility for efficient operations of the organization. S/he will also directly assist the Executive Director in preparing for meetings and other related tasks.

To apply: Send cover letter, resume and salary history to: Search Committee, End Hunger Connecticut!, 102 Hungerford St., Hartford, CT 06106

### **Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Update**

The Collaborative will be attempt to keep readers informed about the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), a multi-million dollar award the state Department of Social Services has received to identify and reduce barriers to employment for people with disabilities and aging workers. Here is the latest update submitted by Cathy Ludlum, MIG consultant:

“Our workgroups continue to create strategies around the transition from school to work; stakeholder education; transportation; and recruitment, hiring, and promotion. But the winter of 2007 has been focused on how to make people aware of the grant's existence and activities and to create change by sharing critical information. We have been working intensively with our public relations firm to identify key messages for an outreach campaign, and to develop what we believe will be an amazing web site.

There were many meetings and focus groups with people with disabilities, youth, and employers to study responses to sample commercials and written messages. Part of the process was to discuss each message, determine whether it resonated with each member of the audience, and to explore why it did or did not. The resulting information is being used to create a marketing campaign using traditional and nontraditional methods of distribution. Hand-in-hand with the marketing campaign is the development of a comprehensive web site. Innovative resources and tools will be made available to employers, jobseekers with disabilities, providers of employment services, and family

members; and the site itself will be studied and changed according to people's responses and needs.

The second Annual Employment Summit is scheduled for June 27. There will be many exciting features to this invitation-only event, including the unveiling of the project's new name, a first look at Phase One of our web site, employer awards, and an announcement regarding the Request for Applications which will award funding for strategic employment planning to local initiatives around the state.

For more information about the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, or to find out how you can get involved, please contact Amy Porter at [amy.porter@ct.gov](mailto:amy.porter@ct.gov) or 1-800-773-4636.

### **Come Celebrate with Birth to Three**

Please join the state's Birth to Three Program in celebrating ten years of working with families to support their infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. Many local agencies have played an integral role in the success of the Birth to Three System, and they would like you to share in this joyful event. Please plan to come to the Legislative Office Building, first floor Atrium on Thursday evening, April 12th from 5 - 7 PM for light refreshments, a few inspired words from invited speakers, and mingling with families, legislators and community colleagues. Parking is available on-site in the Legislative Garage on Capitol Avenue in Hartford. Children are very welcome!

### **Abilities Expo in NJ**

The 2007 version of the popular Abilities Expo will be held at the New Jersey Convention Center in Edison, New Jersey on April 27-29. Show hours are on Friday and Saturday from 10 am – 5 pm and on Sunday, from 11 am – 5 pm.

Abilities Expo showcases the latest products and services to enhance the lives of people with disabilities. The exhibit hall is packed with vendors, live equipment demonstrations, and special events throughout the weekend. Abilities Expo also has a comprehensive workshop program, consisting of consumer and professional tracks, with certificates of participation available to students, and education and healthcare professionals. A complete list of workshops being offered to date is located under the conference tab on their web site: <http://nyc.abilitiesexpo.com/iaenyc/v42/index.cvn?id=10000> .

### **Emergency Planning Series Being Offered in Connecticut**

The State Office of Protection and Advocacy announces “Playing It Safe: Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities.” This traveling conference will be offered at no fee in each of the state's emergency management areas. Designed to offer useful, practical information for people with disabilities, the conference will emphasize personal responsibility. Topics will include creating emergency checklists and kits; keeping pets and service animals safe; ADA considerations; the importance of community involvement; and issues for parents whose children have disabilities.

Although people with disabilities are especially encouraged to attend, the conference will also be valuable for others with or without disabilities: emergency management personnel, educators, group home staff members, and advocates.

The first of these events, entitled "Playing It Safe", will be held on Saturday, May 5, 2007 from 9:45 am – 3:00 pm at the Southeastern Mental Health Authority – 401 West Thames Street – Building 301, in Norwich. Deadline for registering is April 30, and individuals with accommodation needs should register by April 19. There is no fee for this conference. To register or for more information, contact Elanah Sherman at 860-297-4322 or [elanah.sherman@po.state.ct.us](mailto:elanah.sherman@po.state.ct.us) .

### **ADA Workshop on Supporting Children with Disabilities**

The Northwest Connecticut Regional After School Network in partnership with Education Connection and the Connecticut After School Network invites you to *ADA & After School: Are You In Compliance?* The workshop will begin with a presentation by Attorney Linda L. Yoder and a Q & A session with a panel of experts from Education Connection including Dr. Sharon Bremner, Director of Special Education and Related Services; Vina McDermott, Autism Services; Janae Peluso, Program Manager and Occupational Therapist; and Judy Courtot, Early Childhood Consultant

The workshop will take place on Tuesday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Education Connection, 355 Goshen Road, Litchfield. The cost is \$10 for NW CT Regional After School Network members and \$20 for non-members.

For full registration details for both workshops, please visit [www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org/Quality\\_Training.html#OtherTraining](http://www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org/Quality_Training.html#OtherTraining) .

### **Aging Innovations Conference**

The Connecticut Coalition on Aging and Developmental Disabilities (formerly CCAMR), the Department of Mental Retardation, and the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities will present a conference entitled "Aging Innovations" on Friday, May 11, 2007 . The event will be held at the Artist Collaborative, 1200 Albany Avenue in Hartford, and will run from 9:30 am – 3:00 pm.

Dr. Kathleen Bishop will conduct presentations on "Best Practices In Health And Wellness for Individuals Who Are Aging with MRDD" and "Environmental Design And Sensory Processing". Dr. Bishop is currently consultant for the Arc of Oneida/Lewis County (NY) and is the Director of the Program on Aging and Developmental Disabilities., University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. She is also an adjunct on-line faculty member for Utica College of Syracuse University and the University of the State of New Mexico.

The cost for the conference is \$35 and checks should be made payable to CT AAIDD and sent to Donald N. Miller, Ph.D. Treasurer CT Chapter AAIDD - 137 Kenyon Street -

Hartford, CT 06105. Questions? Contact Beth Aura Miller at [bethaura.miller@po.state.ct.us](mailto:bethaura.miller@po.state.ct.us).

RSVPs are encouraged to [heather.phillips@po.state.ct.us](mailto:heather.phillips@po.state.ct.us)

**Foundations and Innovations II:  
Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and  
Related Disabilities**

Saturday, May 19, 2007 - 8:30 AM—3 PM  
University of Connecticut, Waterbury Campus

8:45 am - Keynote Address: “Are We There Yet? Building the Road from Scientifically Based Research to Effective Educational Policies for Children with Autism” - Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D.

9:30 am – “Research and the Recovery Phenomenon” - Deborah Fein, Ph.D.

10:45 am – “Assessment and Remediation of Speech Disorders in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders” - Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA

LUNCHEON BUFFET PROVIDED

12:45 pm – “How to Help Children and Adults with Autism Talk About Their Emotions” - Andy Bondy, Ph.D.

2:30—3:00 pm - PANEL DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Registration Fee (includes continental breakfast, luncheon buffet, and Continuing Education Credits): \$75 for professionals, \$60 for parents and students. Please send completed registration form and your check by May 12, 2007 (after May 12, add \$10 for late registration) to: CT FEAT, Inc.- PO Box 370352 - West Hartford, CT 06137 .

On-time registration is encouraged as space is limited. Walk-Ins will be accepted only as space allows. Online registration and secure credit card payments are available by contacting Roberta Daversa at [EditorCTFEAT@aol.com](mailto:EditorCTFEAT@aol.com). For purchase order payments, please enclose authorized P.O. with your registration form. Information will be available at the CT FEAT Information Hotline (860) 571-3888 and on the Web at [www.ctfeat.org](http://www.ctfeat.org) .

**What Happens to People with Disabilities at Times of Societal Stress  
or Even Catastrophe and How People Prepare for It**

Who: Presented by Professor Wolf Wolfensberger and Associates, Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency, Syracuse, NY.

When: Tuesday, June 5, 2007 - 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (check-in at 8:30 a.m.)

Registration Deadline: May 29, 2007

This workshop is a follow-up to the death of people with disabilities during hurricanes Katrina and Rita and it is intended to influence disaster preparation planning taking place at the local, state and federal level.

This presentation will review the kind of things that happen during different calamities, which people are most at risk during such times, and what puts them at risk. The presentation helps participants prepare for such events in ways that will be protective of the welfare of vulnerable people. The importance of developing and fostering a culture of informal supports which are not dependent upon governmental and service structures, but on voluntary commitments to vulnerable people, will be emphasized. The wide variety that such informal supports can take, and how they can protect vulnerable people, will be sketched.

To Register: E-mail, fax or send your name, agency affiliation (if any), address, telephone and e-mail (if any) to: CT Council on Developmental Disabilities - 460 Capitol Avenue - Hartford, CT 06106-1308 - ATTN: Training and Workshops

For information contact Ed Preneta (860) 418-6157 or [Ed.Preneta@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Ed.Preneta@po.state.ct.us).

### **Reminders of Important Events (from March Bulletin)**

**Tube-feeding At Thirty-thousand Feet:** The Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Social Role Valorization Implementation Project (SRV/IP) will sponsor a one-day workshop on people with developmental disabilities and complex medical conditions to be held on **Thursday April 12** from 10 am to 4 pm at the Institute of Technology and Business Development, Central CT State University, 185 Main Street, New Britain. Presentors will be Cathy Ludlum of Manchester, and Adam Hildebrand and Jo Massarelli, SRV/IP. This workshop is free and includes lunch, parking and handouts. Contact Ed Preneta to register: [ed.preneta@po.state.ct.us](mailto:ed.preneta@po.state.ct.us) .

**NEAT Marketplace Expo:** On **April 27**, the New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Marketplace will host its 2007 Expo entitled “Total Access for Everyone”. The event showcases new and existing technology from a variety of manufacturers and distributors. Beginning at 9:00 am, there will be demonstrations, opportunities for hands-on-training and conversations with the professionals who make AT devices and the people who use them. Go to their website at [neatmarketplace.org](http://neatmarketplace.org) to get more information.

**IDEA Regulations:** The Klebanoff Institute of Special Education at the University of Connecticut and the University of Connecticut A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities are sponsoring a workshop on the IDEA regulations on **May 9** at the Connecticut Grand Hotel in Waterbury. Alexa Posny (Invited), the Director of Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education, and Jeanne M. Kincaid, J.D. will be presenting. More detailed information will be available at [www.uconnucedd.org](http://www.uconnucedd.org).

**“We Belong” to Hold Second Gala:** “We Belong” of Fairfield County will be holding its second annual Gala Celebration on **May 17**, honoring those in their community who demonstrate excellence in the promotion of inclusion. They are looking for nominations of individuals to be recognized, including educators, service providers, administrators, youth group leaders, recreation providers, and social service workers. Nomination should

be sent no later than March 11 to Eva Greenwald at [evagreenwald@sbcglobal.net](mailto:evagreenwald@sbcglobal.net). You may also reach her by phone at 203-554-4462.

### **Input Requested on Draft Transportation Recommendations**

The UCONN Center on Disabilities through the Plan for the Achievement of Transportation Coordination in Human Services (PATHS), funded by the DD Council, is continuing to encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in the five regional planning groups across the state. Draft recommendations for federally funded transportation for older adults (60+), persons with disabilities and individuals with low incomes will be out shortly. After further comment is received these recommendations will then go to the state Department of Transportation. The Connecticut Plan will determine how the federal funds will be spent under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU). This is a new opportunity to provide funding support that goes beyond the ADA transportation guidelines.

The five regional planning areas are looking for consumer input. If you want to participate, contact the Department of Transportation at [dotadmin.ctrides@po.state.ct.us](mailto:dotadmin.ctrides@po.state.ct.us) or the Transit Administrator, P.O. Box 317546, Newington, CT 06131 and they will direct your inquiry to the correct region.

The Connecticut Developmental Disabilities Network is planning a transportation summit to be held in June, 2007. For more information contact Jayne Kleinman, [jkleinman@uchc.edu](mailto:jkleinman@uchc.edu) or [jjk1009@hotmail.com](mailto:jjk1009@hotmail.com).

### **Renters' Rebate Program**

Connecticut renters who have a disability or who are elderly and whose income does not go over certain limits may qualify for the Renters' Rebate Program. The amount of the rebate check is based on income, rent and utility bills that you paid in 2006. Rebate amounts can range from \$50 to \$900. Application will be accepted from May 17 until September 15. Apply at your local town's Assessor's Office or your town's Social Services Department.

### **MARC to Present PATH and Community Building Workshop**

MARC, Inc. of Manchester will present a PATH and Community building workshop featuring David and Faye Wetherow from CommunityWorks in British Columbia. The workshop will take place May 14-16, 2007 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day at the Super 8 Motel & Conference Center at 20 Taylor Street in Manchester.

At the heart of helping people with disabilities move toward lives of self-determination, companionship and contribution are effective skills in organizational and person-centered planning, strategies for developing personal support networks, and patterns of inquiry that invite vision, build commitment and encourage collaboration. The workshop is an intensive practice-based training based on the internationally recognized work of Jack

Pearpoint, Marsha Forest, John O'Brien, Judith Snow, Joseph Schaeffer, and David and Faye Wetherow. In this hands-on course, participants will practice PATH, Solution Circles, the Stone Game, patterns for mapping networks of relationships and graphic recording – some of the most valued organizational and person-centered planning tools in use today. Participants leave inspired, energized, and with tools that they can immediately put into use at work and in their personal lives. Each participant gets their own personal PATH completed and helps two other participants complete their PATHs.

For more information call Kevin Zingler at MARC at (860) 646-5718 or email [kzingler@marcct.org](mailto:kzingler@marcct.org).

### **IU Turns 25!**

On June 7, 2007, Independence Unlimited (IU) will celebrate twenty-five years of serving the greater Hartford community and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. They will host their big celebration at the Farmington Club – 162 Town Farm Road – Farmington. Dinner will be served at 5:30 pm with entertainment and an awards presentation to follow. To reserve a space, contact IU (860-523-5021, TTY 860-523-7991) by May 25, 2007.

If you know someone in the Hartford community who deserves recognition for removing barriers to full inclusion for people with disabilities please let IU know. You can nominate someone by writing their contact information, your contact information and a brief paragraph about the accomplishments of the person you wish to nominate and sending it to Executive Director Candace Low at Independence Unlimited by April 20.

This year, in celebration of their anniversary, IU will have a program book with space for recognition and advertising. You can show your support of the organization by purchasing an ad. If you are so inclined, give them a call.

### **Visions from the Heart**

The Kennedy Center in Trumbull and the Bridgeport Barnum Festival are teaming up to produce a juried art exhibition for artists with disabilities. The exhibition, which will be held in the City Lights Gallery in Bridgeport, will run from June 21 – July 21 and will feature a \$200 award for First Prize. Deadline to enter is May 4. For more information contact Lois Gerety at 203-332-4535, ext. 240 or [lgerety@kennedyctr.org](mailto:lgerety@kennedyctr.org). To download an entry form, go to [www.thekennedycenterinc.org](http://www.thekennedycenterinc.org).

### **EP Magazine and Ashley**

An important statement from EP (Exceptional Parent) Magazine: “In January, the story of Ashley and her “treatment” burst out in the national news. Ashley, who is now nine years old and has significant and lifelong disabilities, was given “growth attenuation” surgery and medication when she was six years old to keep her from growing to a full adult size.

Her parents, in a decision that they say in their website “was not difficult,” found physicians willing to surgically remove Ashley’s breast buds, her appendix (even though nothing was wrong with it), and her uterus. She was then treated with high doses of estrogen to stunt her growth. These procedures were performed without either court or ethics committee approval. Indeed, the institutional ethics committee that the family and physicians consulted prior to placing Ashley under the knife, decided to leave the decision in the parents’ hands, rather than engaging in the comprehensive, ethical debate the procedure deserved. As one might expect, the story of the “Ashley Treatment,” the name the parents themselves coined for the procedure, generated brief but bitter debate. Things have now quieted down again.

Barely three weeks after Ashley’s story hit the press, Switzerland’s Supreme Court, to virtually no groundswell of public outcry and very little public notice, ruled that it is now permissible in Switzerland to allow assisted suicide for persons with serious mental illness, even if their condition is not otherwise terminal. Switzerland already permitted assisted suicide for people with terminal illnesses at the time this decision was announced.

The “Ashley Treatment” and Swiss assisted suicide stories came along about 15 months after a Netherlands facility announced the creation and implementation of the “Groningen Protocol.” The Groningen Protocol, named for the pediatric hospital at which it was devised, described a five-step process physicians are encouraged to follow to sanction the euthanizing of infants who are born with serious, potentially life-threatening disabilities. The end step in the Groningen Protocol is that the physicians inject medication to kill the infants, rather than letting the infants pass away as a result of their disease or defect running its course. The Groningen Protocol physicians, at the time of announcing the Protocol, also announced that they had implemented the Protocol to euthanize four infants even before the Protocol was announced. One of those was a child with Down syndrome. Despite the implications of what the Groningen physicians call “a deliberate, life-ending procedure,” the story received no substantive coverage in America outside of the medical community.

These dramatic news stories do not represent isolated instances of hard choices in hard times. Each story represents a conscious attempt to expand the number of life-ending or life-altering procedures available to physicians and parents who would choose to use them and, in so doing, rob the child of her or his human dignity. The creators of these procedures want them to be adopted and used by physicians and families throughout the world. The utilitarianism they promote in the name of compassion is nothing other than new language and new ideas designed to encourage the systematic denigration of those with disabilities, stripping them of the basic human right to life and dignity. Over sixty years ago, millions died to rid the world of people who perpetrated these same shameful acts in the name of bogus science. Have we now ignored that sacrifice and the lessons they taught us?

We see “Ashley’s Treatment,” the “Groningen Protocol,” and the Swiss assisted suicide decision as thinly veiled attempts to objectify and desensitize the value of human dignity.

It should never be acceptable in America for a care-providing parent or guardian to authorize and procure “Ashley’s Treatment” for a child and have the decision be “not difficult.” The difficult action, and the action we at EP choose to take, is to fight for the human dignity we all have the right to possess. Taking that away should not just be difficult; it should be impossible. And it should make us all angry that these efforts to strip human dignity are happening all around us in relative secrecy. We cannot let these stories fade away or our dignity fades away with them.

We need to be ever mindful of the words “...all that is needed for evil to prosper is for good men to stand by and do nothing.” Please, for our children’s sake, their children and generations to come, let us not stand idly by. Let us do something.”

### **UN Convention Open for Signatures..... (But where was the U.S.?)**

On March 30, eighty countries signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on the first day that the Convention opened for signatures. UN human rights chief Louise Arbour called it “an unprecedented show of support to empower the physically and mentally impaired”. Only nineteen more ratifications are needed before the convention comes into force. At the ceremony, speaker after speaker urged speedy approval. The frustrating news, however, is that the U.S. was not among the signing countries. Advocates must ask, why not?

The convention is a blueprint to end discrimination and exclusion of people with physical and mental disabilities in education, jobs, and everyday life. It requires countries to guarantee freedom from exploitation and abuse, while protecting rights they already have such as ensuring voting rights for people who are blind and providing wheelchair-accessible buildings.

She called the convention "a first step" in empowering people with disabilities, stressing that once it comes into force governments will have to enact legislation and change practices to ensure the rights of the disabled. She added that an international committee will monitor implementation of the convention.

The Collaborative calls on all advocates to recommit themselves to human rights, empowerment and independent living for all peoples of the world. Write Senators Dodd and Lieberman, your Representative in Congress, and President Bush today urging that the US sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **NFB and Amazon Reach Agreement!**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and Amazon.com announced today that they have agreed to work together to promote and improve technology that enables blind people to access and use the World Wide Web. In a cooperation agreement, Amazon.com pledged its commitment to continue improving the accessibility of its Web site platform, while the NFB committed to contribute its expertise in Web accessibility technologies to help further Amazon.com's efforts.

To read more, go to: [www.nfb.org/nfb/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=174](http://www.nfb.org/nfb/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=174)

### **The AFB Senior Site: A Unique Web Resource**

A major public health issue is brewing in America. Over the next two decades, rates of vision loss from diseases like age-related macular degeneration are expected to double as the nation's 78 million baby boomers reach retirement age. To help prepare for this dramatic increase in Americans with vision loss, and to help the 6.5 million Americans over age 65 currently experiencing age-related vision loss, the American Foundation for the Blind has created the first web resource of its kind – a proactive, virtual vision center that encourages older adults to live independently and productively with vision loss.

Senior Site is available via a prominent link on AFB's home page [www.afb.org/seniorsite](http://www.afb.org/seniorsite). A major component of Senior Site is the connection it provides to seniors and family members to local vision rehabilitation services through its online Directory of Services and special section—Finding Help and Support.

Senior Site focuses on common sense, daily living solutions to help seniors who are beginning to experience vision loss better adjust to their changing eyesight and includes the following sections related to living with vision loss: Understanding Vision Loss, Daily Living, Changing Your Home, and Fitness and Fun. Visitors to the site will also find inspiring video testimonials from seniors who aren't letting their vision loss slow them down and sections on exercise, travel and recreational opportunities for people with vision loss. In the near future, Senior Site will also contain message boards, Blogs and support group links designed to foster a sense of community among seniors with vision loss and family members.

### **New Zealand Now Institution-Free**

The IHC, a New Zealand disability organization, has announced the closure of Kimberley Center, the last institution for people with intellectual disabilities in the country. "Today, we do everything we can to ensure families are strong and are supported to care for and encourage their child with an intellectual disability in their home, within their networks and in our community," said the IHC chief executive Ralph Jones. Since IHC was established in 1949, it has lobbied for institutions to close and for people with disabilities to live supported in the community. Self-advocates also played a great role in bringing about the closure of institutions. Their voice gave the New Zealand government the needed push to make the final decision. For more information go to: [www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/disability-aboutdsd-keyprojects-kimberley](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/disability-aboutdsd-keyprojects-kimberley) .

### **New Study: Workers in Sheltered Workshops Prefer Real Work**

In a recent article published in the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, authors Migliore, Mank, Grossi and Rogan note that despite national and state policies promoting integrated employment, 76% of adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities are served in facility-based programs. The authors surveyed 210 adults with intellectual

disabilities in 19 sheltered workshops, their respective families or caregivers, and staff members in these workshops. Results show that 74% of adults with intellectual disabilities, 67% of families, and 66% of staff felt those they serve would prefer employment outside workshops, or at least consider it as an option. The majority believed that adults with intellectual disabilities can perform outside workshops if support is made available. The study highlighted the fact that the preference for employment outside of workshops is not associated with the severity of the disability. The study can be found in the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 5–19.

### **Action Alert to Protect Accessible Voting**

From the American Association of Persons with Disabilities: “Contact your members of Congress while they are home between now and April 13 and tell them to protect our right to vote privately and independently in next year's Presidential elections. The leading election reform bill, introduced by Congressman Rush Holt, H.R. 811, includes an unrealistic deadline for every voting machine to produce an accessible voter-verifiable paper ballot by next year. Tell your Congressional representatives to move that paper ballot deadline back to allow time for new voting systems to be developed, certified for use in elections, and funded.

When the Holt bill's paper ballot requirement is coupled with the access requirements of the Help America Vote Act, it will require election officials to purchase technology that does not currently exist. The Holt bill seems to acknowledge this problem because it requires the federal government to study how best to make it's voter-verifiable paper ballots accessible to voters with a wide range of disabilities, and requires the government to report on its findings by January of 2010. In the absence of these findings, how can election officials move forward with a 2008 deadline for accessible paper ballots?

Because of the requirement in the 2002 Help America Vote Act that all polling places have at least one accessible voting machine by 2006, we have seen significant improvement in voting accessibility since the 2002 elections. AAPD does not want to move backward on accessibility, and we have been advocating along with other disability and civil rights groups that any voter verification system must meet HAVA's requirements that voters with disabilities can access that system with privacy and independence. Unfortunately, we are still awaiting the development of an accessible voting machine that can meet the Holt bill's paper ballot requirement and that has been tested and certified for use in elections.

We are working with other disability advocates to convince members of the House and Senate that the 2008 paper ballot deadline in the Holt bill is unrealistic, and will in effect force election officials to either violate the paper ballot requirements of the bill or violate the accessibility requirements of HAVA and the bill. We have also been advocating that new funds must be made available to enable election officials to purchase equipment once there is equipment that meets the bill's requirements, which will likely take several years to be developed.”

## **Get Your COAT!**

A new coalition of disability organizations has been launched to advocate for legislative and regulatory safeguards that will ensure full access by people with disabilities to evolving high speed broadband, wireless and other Internet protocol (IP) technologies. The Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology, or "COAT," consists of over 45 national, regional, and community-based organizations dedicated to making sure that as our nation migrates from legacy public switched-based telecommunications to more versatile and innovative IP-based and other communication technologies, people with disabilities will not be left behind. Emerging digital and Internet-based technologies can provide people with disabilities with new opportunities for greater independence, integration, and privacy, but only if these are designed to be accessible. The guiding principle of this Coalition will be to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of daily living through accessible, affordable and usable communication technologies as these continue to evolve. For further information, contact: Jenifer Simpson, 202-457-0046, ext. 31 or Karen Peltz Strauss, 202-363-1263, or check out: [www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2006/discrimination](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2006/discrimination).

## **Assistive Technology News Launches Web Site**

*Assistive Technology News* has launched [www.atechnews.com](http://www.atechnews.com) to assist the nation's 56-million people with disabilities stay abreast of assistive technology products that enhance their independence and improve their quality of life. This web site includes new product announcements, advocate profiles, product evaluations, interviews with leaders in the public and private sectors working on disability issues, and policies that impact people with disabilities

## **Video Handsets for Signing**

People who are deaf may soon be using video mobiles to chat with their friends using sign language. Video compression tools made by U.S. researchers make it possible to send live pictures of people signing across low bandwidth mobile networks. The system cuts down on the bandwidth needed by only sending data about which parts of each frame have changed. The researchers are talking to mobile firms about how to get the technology in to the hands of people who use sign language. The research has gone so well that the team is in talks with handset makers and operators to put it on phones.

## **Entries Open to Young Artists with Disabilities**

VISA arts and Volkswagen of America, Inc. have announced "Driven"-- a call for entries open to young artists with disabilities. Eligible media includes paintings, drawing, fine art prints, photography, computer-generated prints and mixed media. According to a recent posting fifteen (15) finalists will be awarded a total of \$60,000 in an awards ceremony on Capitol Hill in September, 2007. The artwork will be displayed in a nation-wide touring exhibition that debuts at the Smithsonian. . The deadline is July 6. For more information go to [www.vsarts.org/VWcall](http://www.vsarts.org/VWcall) or call 1-800-933-8721, ext. 3885.

