



Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

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

Empowerment! Opportunity! Justice!

March-April, 2008

Need this newsletter in an alternative format?

Please let us know!

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Urgent Legislative Alert!

This week the State Legislature’s Appropriations Committee is finalizing the budget it will present to the full legislature. Calls are needed immediately with **the message: support people with disabilities, families, and elders by supporting those measures that allow individuals to remain living in the community, in their own homes, or return home from nursing facilities!** Legislators are asked to support the following bills which will lay the foundation for major systems change in Connecticut:

- Support SB 561
 1. Includes a trust fund that reinvests money that is saved/gained from community living initiatives (including new federal dollars) to expand necessary support services, and
 2. A 50 person pilot program, modeled after the Money Follows the Person (MFP) service, that will assist people who are in a nursing facility less than 6 months - or living in the community already - to obtain the same supports that will be available under MFP (SB 561 was passed by the Human Services Committee and is awaiting action in the Appropriations Committee)
- Support HB 5791
 1. Creates a single point of entry system that will enable people with disabilities and elders to more easily navigate the confusing system of support that currently exists (House Bill 5791 was passed by the Human Services Committee and referred to the full House of Representatives)

In addition to these proposals we are also asking that the legislature not neglect, and indeed enhance, those community living options that currently exist:

- SB 414
 1. Expands the state funded community living pilot for individuals not eligible for Medicaid (33 individuals currently being served, funding for an additional 20 has been requested)
 2. Adds 150 slots to the Personal Care Assistance waiver, which now has a waiting list of 70

- Increase funding for, and make needed program modifications in, the Acquired Brain Injury waiver

It should be noted that there are proposals on the table to increase funding by \$10 million so that nursing facilities can address the staffing issues that have been widely publicized in recent months. We acknowledge the issue, however those efforts should NOT take place at the expense of the critical need to rebalance the system and provide increased opportunities for community living. Legislators need to get this message loud and clear.

The Appropriations Committee should be asked to support SB 561 and SB 414, and provide funding for the “single point of entry” system. Its leaders are:

Sen. Toni Harp – Co-Chair
Rep. Denise Merrill – Co-Chair
Sen. David Cappiello – Ranking Member
Rep. Kevin DelGobbo – Ranking member
Sen. Joan Hartley – Vice-Chair
Rep. Deborah Heinrich – Vice-Chair
Rep. Ernest Hewett – Vice-Chair
Rep. Peter Tercyak – Vice-Chair

For list of entire Appropriations Committee members go to:

http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/MemberList.asp?comm_code=APP&doc_type=

Mailing Address:
Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-240-0390

Charter Oak Plan Assailed by Advocates

Excerpts from an Op-Ed piece written by Allen Atherton, president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Connecticut (NAMI-CT), that ran in the Connecticut Post on February 27:

“Gov. M. Jodi Rell's Charter Oak Health Plan sets a dangerous precedent - it excludes mental health parity and places limits on outpatient and inpatient mental health care services. It does this in the face of Connecticut's strong insurance law that requires all insurance plans in Connecticut to comply with mental health parity - one that is designed to protect all Connecticut insured residents from discrimination in mental health care.

The plan also restricts access to prescription drugs and durable medical equipment through the use of annual cost caps. It does these things as a calculated measure to reduce the enrollment of people who use these services most often. It is difficult to understand why the state would

expend such efforts, resources and initiative to promote the health and well-being of the uninsured only to restrict access to the services that many of the chronically ill and vulnerable are most likely to use. The plan has some very desirable features - the provision of low-income subsidies, the inclusion of wellness screening and the requirement that the plan cover people with pre-existing health conditions. Those recovering from mental illness need these options the most. Essentially, the plan is a desperately needed option for the very people it is designed to keep out.

The result is an expensive health plan that will meet the needs of only a young and healthy population that is least likely to use it ... the young and healthy can get a private insurance policy for less money that includes better coverage for prescription drugs and durable medical equipment, and includes mental health parity coverage.

The state of Connecticut must not back an insurance plan that treats mental health care differently than other health care treatment, and that systemically attempts to exclude those who are in most need of its services. It would be inconsistent and objectionable for a state known as a leader in mental health parity to insist on the ill-advised and wrong decision to exclude mental health parity from the Charter Oak plan.”

Allen Atherton, President
National Alliance on Mental Illness in
Connecticut (NAMI-CT)

A broad coalition of advocates, led by Sheldon Toubman at New Haven Legal Aid (stoubman@nhlegal.org), continue to represent the interests of uninsured residents who will not be helped by the Charter Oak Plan.

Legislative News from P&A

The deadline for the Appropriations Committee of the State General Assembly to act on the state budget is April 1. Usually the committee votes on the budget bill three or four days before its deadline. So the budget vote could be at the end of this week, before March 28. The P&A Bill Tracking Report, managed by Beth Leslie, is available on-line at www.ct.gov/opapd .

Legislative Update on HUSKY

Connecticut's HUSKY A program provides health care coverage for about 300,000 children and their parents or caretakers and costs about \$750 million a year. To be eligible, a family's income must be at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. Half the costs of HUSKY A are paid by the federal Medicaid program.

HUSKY B provides health care coverage to about 16,000 children (no adults are covered in HUSKY B) whose families are above the income limit for HUSKY A but still struggle to access health coverage for their children. Much of the funding for HUSKY B comes from federal SCHIP funds. These important programs have been undergoing major changes over the past two years.

The Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) which administer HUSKY are no longer responsible for delivery of important parts of the health care program, including behavioral health services, pharmacy services and, soon, dental services. Since January, the state contracts between the MCOs (Well Care, CHNCT, Anthem and Health Net) have been changed so that all medical and policy decisions are made by the Department of Social Services. The MCOs are now only responsible for administrative services to members.

On April 1, two MCOs (Well Care and Health Net) will stop contracting with the state to provide HUSKY services. HUSKY participants will have to choose from the remaining MCOs and DSS as the organization that administers their health care program. Three months later, on July 1, other MCOs are scheduled to enter into new contracts with the state to provide HUSKY health care. Under these contracts, the MCOs will go back to making medical and policy decisions for their members. All HUSKY participants will again have to choose a new MCO - for the second time in four months.

RB 5618, An Act Concerning Revisions to the HUSKY Plan, is being considered by the Connecticut General Assembly. It would require that this process slow down and that the state conduct a study of the best and most cost-effective way to deliver health care in the HUSKY system. The bill bars DSS from contracting with MCOs to deliver HUSKY health care for a year and requires a study of various systems for delivering health care to HUSKY participants, including primary care case management.

Save the Date!

The Disability Advocacy Collaborative presents the

2nd Disability Convention and Expo

Saturday September 27, 2008

At the Connecticut Expo Center
265 Reverend Moody Overpass, Hartford (off I-91 Exit 33)

10 am – 4 pm

- Meet with elected officials and candidates for Office

Visit vendors carrying the latest in adaptive equipment and technology

- Attend presentations on topics vital to the disability community, such as employment and transportation
- Get information on the many services available for children and adults with disabilities
- Bring the kids, participate in fun activities for the whole family
- GET READY TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 4!

Two for the Price of One!

On Tuesday, April 8 the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County (DRC) will hold two events that may be of interest to Bulletin readers. From 10:00 am – 1:00 pm the Medicare bus will be at the center (80 Ferry Boulevard – Stratford) to provide information and answer any questions you may have about Medicare. To make an appointment with a Medicare specialist, call Fran or Stephanie at 203-378-6977 or, for TTY users, 203-375-3248. This event is being co-sponsored by the SouthWestern Area Agency on Aging (CHOICES program) and the Department of Social Services Aging Services Division.

While you are there, stop by the Assistive Technology Center at the DRC to view and try out a wide variety of assistive technology devices. What you will find will be low vision aids, computer access devices, communication aids, wheelchairs, walkers, and scooters.

The DRC Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, April 4 at 4 pm.

Buses for 21st Century Mobility

The conference on Buses for 21st Century Mobility has been rescheduled for Friday, April 11, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon, in Room 2B of the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. The keynote speaker for the conference is Mr. Cal Marsella, General Manager/CEO of the Denver Regional Transportation District. Mr. Marsella is a 30-year transit veteran, has served in transportation leadership positions across the country and is a native of Wolcott. Learn how bus transit can attract "choice" riders and better connect people to their jobs and where they want to go and discuss various finance options and policy tools needed to achieve results.

Please RSVP to Kierran Broatch at the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, 203-787-0646, Ext. 117 or kbroatch@cfenv.org, by April 8, 2008.

Assistive Technology Tools for Computer Access

“Assistive Technology Tools for Computer Access” will be presented by Amy Norton, M.Ed/ATP on Friday, April 4, 2008 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm at the NEAT Marketplace in Hartford. The computer is a great tool for accomplishing a number of tasks. However, the

traditional method of accessing the computer through the standard keyboard and mouse presents a barrier to many people with disabilities. There are hardware and software alternatives that make it possible for both children and adults with disabilities to effectively utilize a computer. Participants in this workshop will learn about a variety of alternative access methods and be provided with hands-on time to explore the options available. The fee is \$50 for members and \$65 for non-members. Registration may be done on-line.

For more information, on-line registration, or directions please visit: www.neatmarketplace.org or call 860-243-2869, 120 Holcomb Street, Hartford, CT 06112. The web site includes a wide range of workshops that NEAT will be offering over the next six months.

More from NEAT

The NEAT Center will present a “Vision Open House” on Thursday, May 29, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at the NEAT Center, 120 Holcomb Street in Hartford. Learn about the latest equipment and services currently available for people who are blind or visually impaired. Representatives from several leading manufacturers and service providers will be available to provide hands on product overview and to answer questions.

For more information call 860-243-2869 or 860-286-3113 (TTY), or e-mail info@neatmarketplace.org. You can also get information about the event at www.neatmarketplace.org.

A Workshop with Rick Lavoie

The Education Connection in northwestern Connecticut will sponsor a workshop at Western Connecticut State University featuring Rick Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed. on Friday, April 4, 2008. The workshop is entitled "It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success" and will be held at the Westside Campus Center. Registration and breakfast will run from 8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. with the presentation scheduled from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Call (860) 567-0863 for more information.

KTP Supportive Housing Training

The Keep the Promise Coalition, in conjunction with NAMI-CT, will sponsor a pilot training on supportive housing on Thursday, March 27 from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at the New Haven Adult Education Center (580 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard – New Haven). To sign up, or for more information, e-mail policyassistant@namict.org or call 1-800-215-3021.

BESB Awards of Excellence

The Board of Education and Services for the Blind has announced that the agency is now accepting nominations for the 2008 Awards of Excellence. There are six nomination categories including awards for students, small and large businesses, entrepreneurs who are blind, consumers, teachers, and community boards and foundations. The nomination submission deadline is June 27, 2008. An awards ceremony will be held in October in conjunction with

White Cane Safety Day in Connecticut. Specific information about the nomination process will be available on the agency website (www.ct.gov/besb) in the near future.

NSCIA Spring Fling

A date has been set for the annual band fundraiser at Murphy and Scarletti's in Farmington, sponsored by the Connecticut Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. The activity will be held in the evening of Thursday, May 22, at the beginning of the Memorial Day weekend, with the intention of bringing summer in with a bang. To find out the details e-mail Bill Mancini at bmancini2208@sbcglobal.net.

Next in the Series of DD Council Events

The next event in the Council on Developmental Disabilities' series on Life Threatening Public Policy will be held on Friday, April 11 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Institute of Technology and Business Development at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain. The title of this session is "A Lesson from History: The German Euthanasia Program and its Echoes in Our Own Day". The presenter will be Jack Yates, Associate Trainer, Social Role Valorization Implementation Project in Worcester, Massachusetts. Jack will focus on the systematic killing of people with impairments by the medical establishment in Germany during World War II. Participants will examine the origins of the German euthanasia program, its opponents, and its parallels today in genetic testing and selective abortion. To register call 1-860-418-6157, or toll free 1-800-653-1134, or e-mail ed.preneta@ct.gov.

Two weeks later (Friday, April 25, 2008), the session topic will be "Social Devaluation and the Killing Thought". Jo Massarelli, Director of the Social Role Valorization Implementation Project will explore why people treat each other so poorly, even to the point of wishing the other dead.

And on May 2, Jo will return to offer a workshop on "Common Life Experiences of Human Service Recipients and how they Contribute to Their Deaths". In this workshop Jo will trace the common "wounding" life experiences of people who are recipients of human services. If one is devalued in our society, one is likely to be a recipient of human services, which tends to bring with it patterns of life experiences that are limiting, wounding and even life threatening. Issues raised will include how segregation and congregation can threaten lives and the lethal effects of negative imagery, social isolation, and life-wasting activity.

Another Date to Save: May 15, 2008

The Connect-Ability program will host a Transportation Forum on May 15 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Connecticut Expo Center in Hartford. The event will take place during National Transportation Week and will include a round table discussion highlighting transportation challenges that confront people with disabilities and the opportunities available to them. More details to follow. Glendine Henry (glendine.henry@ct.gov) is coordinating the planning effort.

Disability Advocacy Collaborative Regional Contacts

To get involved with one of the Collaborative's Regional Advocacy Networks, contact the following:

Northwest -- contact: Bill Knight (lackerman01@snet.net) – meetings are held at the Litchfield Arc – next meeting April 9 at 10 am

Southwest –contact: Carol Kana (pkana@snet.net) – meetings are held at the Norwalk Police Department – next meeting March 26 at 1 pm

Danbury Area – contact Dale Brown (dbrown@wecahr.org) – meetings are held at Ability Beyond Disability in Bethel

North Central — contact: Candace Low (clow@independenceunlimited.org) – meetings are held at 151 New Park Avenue in Hartford – next meeting March 31 at 10 am

Waterbury Area –contact: Mike Valuckas (mike.valuckas@independencenorthwest.org) – contact Mike for information about next meeting

Northeast Area – contact: Carolyn Newcombe (cnewcombe@charter.net) – meetings are held at the Mansfield Senior Center – next meeting April 8 at 6 pm

Bridgeport Area – contact: Tony LaCava (tlacava@drcfc.org) – meetings are on the third Thursday of the month at various sites

North Star Presents: SuperKids

On Wednesday, March 26 North Star will host a unique presentation by representatives from SuperKids. The event will be held from 7 – 9 pm at the First Congregational Church, 137 Derby Avenue in Derby.

North Star is a support group for parents who have children with disabilities . SuperKids, with offices in Ridgefield, Norwalk and Orange, helps children and teens develop social skills through weekly groups and with special summer sessions. Therapists are trained to work with Asperger's disorder, autism, pervasive developmental delay, selective mutism, anxiety disorders, ADHD, and ADD.

Promptly at 7 pm, just prior to the SuperKids presentation, Ann Cresswell from the Lower Naugatuck Valley System of Care will distribute a brief survey for parents to fill out regarding satisfaction/dissatisfaction in obtaining services, and if they were happy with the services received.

For more information e-mail Cathy Adamczyk at cathya@ntplx.net.

Task Force to Offer Seminar

The Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children will hold a one day seminar, “Into the Light: Children with Disabilities and the Legal System”, on May 15, 2008. The event, to run from 9 am – 4:30 pm will feature Nora J. Baladerian, PhD, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist,

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and a Board Certified Forensic Examiner. It will be held at the Four Points Sheraton in Meriden (275 Research Parkway).

For more information contact Sharon Dexler at 860-566-2106, Ext. 306.

Department of Education to Conduct Facilitated Discussion on LRE

The Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, invites parents, professionals or other interested parties to join educational consultants for a facilitated discussion on current issues/concerns for students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Topical areas will include, but are not limited to: quality programming; the LRE continuum and service delivery options; the Planning and Placement Team process; and student's access to the general curriculum.

Location: Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Cromwell

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Participants are encouraged to attend for the duration of the session, but are welcome to attend any time during those hours. There is no pre-registration necessary. Participant responses will be recorded, collected, and used for data purposes by CSDE.

For accommodations, please contact: Nikki Hendry, Education Services Specialist, SERC, at (860) 632-1485, ext 255, or hendry@ctserc.org.

For more information about the forum, please contact: Lynn C. Topper, Ed.D. Consultant, CT State Department of Education, at (860) 713-6941, or lynn.topper@ct.gov.

Survey of State Veterans Shows Trouble Adjusting to Civilian Life

The Hartford Courant has reported on a study that shows at least one in four Connecticut soldiers fit the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder after they returned from overseas deployments. It also suggested troops are reluctant to seek counseling from mental health workers, and about half said their general health was "much worse" or "somewhat worse" than before their wartime deployments.

The findings come from surveys sent to 1,000 Connecticut troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The study is being conducted by Central Connecticut State University's Center for Public Policy and Social Research with help from the Yale School of Medicine.

More than 11,000 state residents have returned from wartime deployments in the past five years, according to state officials. In the last nine months, a state hot line has fielded more than 300 calls for help from Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their family members.

The study noted several key concerns among returning soldiers. They include feelings of disconnection from the community, trouble communicating with non-veterans, feelings of being

"tightly wound" or "aggressive," and a fear that seeking psychological help would lead others to perceive them as weak. The survey also found adjustment problems for some veterans returning to jobs or enrolling in colleges. Almost 20 percent said their civilian jobs were less satisfying to them when they returned, and some who returned to colleges said they felt like outsiders on campus.

Need Help with Hospital Bills?

If you have hospital debt and need help paying the bills, call the Consumer Health Action Network at 1-888-8734585 to find out what programs are available to you. Financial assistance programs are different at every hospital and the Consumer Health Network has put together a list of the financial aid policies for most hospitals in Connecticut and will even help you apply. Call toll free with any questions.

News from AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps programs across Connecticut are currently accepting applications for the summer 2008 and the 2008-2009 program year. AmeriCorps programs improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. They address needs in the areas of education, public safety, poverty, environmental conservation, and disaster relief among others. Full-time (1700 hours), part-time (300-900 hours), and summer positions (300 hours) are available. During their term of service, members receive a modest living allowance and, upon completion of their term, an Education Award, which can be used towards school or college loans.

To serve in AmeriCorps, members must be at least 17 years of age and be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S. Most programs require a high school diploma or a GED. Qualified individuals with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply and reasonable accommodations are provided.

Prospective applicants should visit www.ctdhe.org/cccs or www.americorps.gov and contact the program(s) of their choice for more information. Organizations interested in learning more can contact Zohra Ayub at 860-947-1826 for more information.

Save the Date: Autism Awareness Day

April is Autism Awareness month and the Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC) is looking for families and interested others to help bring awareness to their cause. There will be a morning breakfast and press conference on Wednesday, April 2 with the Speaker of the House, James Amann, and other friends of the autism community.

To learn more contact: admin@ct-asrc.org .

In addition, the 10th Anniversary of the ASRC Walk/Run for Autism will be held on May 4 at the Choate-Rosemary Hall School in Wallingford. The 2.5-mile walk will take place along the sidewalks of the historic downtown. Interested parties may download the full ASRC Walk Brochure for directions and activities at www.ct-asrc.org.

Kathy Snow Coming to Connecticut

Kathie Snow is coming to Connecticut April 7, 8 and 9 in a program co-sponsored by STAR, Lighting the Way..., www.starinc-lightingtheway.org and SPED*NET New Canaan. Her visit is supported by the State Down Syndrome Congress and the New Canaan public schools.

On April 7 from 7 – 9 pm Ms. Snow will present “Disability is Natural and Other Revolutionary Common Sense” at Saxe Middle School, 468 South Avenue, New Canaan.

On April 8 & 9 there will be a two day workshop at Chatham Manor, 493 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk 06854, (203) 838-8598, www.chatham-manor.com. This workshop is for general education and special education teachers, administrators, therapists, related services, families, and direct service providers that work with individuals with developmental disabilities. Anyone who cares about someone with a disability will benefit from this conference. Please register ahead of time. Registration and breakfast: 8 to 9 am. Presentation: 9 am to 3 pm.

For more info check www.spednet.org/conferences.htm or www.starinc-lightingtheway.org.

The Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach

The Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach is introducing the Connecticut Mission of Mercy (CTMOM). CTMOM will be a large scale, multi-chair dental clinic that travels around the state annually to underserved areas. The concept is simple: to create a multi-day dental clinic in a large facility and then open the clinic door to the community. Dental services will be provided to anyone (children, adults, and the elderly) who is without dental insurance and in a low income situation and they are available for free. Patients will be screened and treated based on their most urgent dental needs. CTMOM will be staffed by volunteer dentists, UCONN dental students, dental hygienists and dental assistants. They will provide cleanings, fillings and extractions at no cost.

This year’s event will be held at the former Tolland High School, 1 Eagle Hill Drive, Tolland on Saturday, April 12 from 5 am to 5 pm and Sunday, April 13 from 5 am to Noon.

For more information, go to www.csda.com/ctmom/ctmom1.html or call Kerry Fair, 860-336-9377 or Patti Sue Brown 860-303-9954, SPAN Facilitators.

Hide and Seek Robot

The Council on Developmental Disabilities will be sponsoring a “Robot Hide and Seek” competition on Saturday, April 12 and Sunday, April 13 at Trinity College, Hartford. The event presents a scenario where a child with autism or an intellectual disability is in a fire, panics and

then runs and hides in the burning house instead of trying to exit. The robot's job is to find the child and to indicate to the firefighters where he or she is hiding. In addition to the competition, Dr. Francois Michaud of the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada will be speaking on the "Interactive Robotics for Health Care and Technologies" during an afternoon symposium to be held on Saturday, April 12 in the Washington Room of the Mather Campus Center on Trinity campus. Professor Michaud's presentation will start at 1:45 p.m. He is known for his innovative work in robotics technologies for children on the autism spectrum.

Visit <http://www.trincoll.edu/AboutTrinity/VisitingTrinity/> for directions and a campus map. The "Robot Hide and Seek" competition is in collaboration with the Trinity College Fire Fighting Home Robot Contest. For further information about how to enter and the guidelines for the robotics contest, please see <http://www.trincoll.edu/events/robot>.

For more information, please call Mary Ann Langton at 860-418-6160 or you may reach her at Mary.Ann.Langton@ct.gov.

2008 Dybwad Seminar

Communitas, Inc. and the Manchester Community College Institute on Disability & Community Inclusion and Communitas invites the public to the Gunnar and Rosemary Dybwad 2008 Seminar to be held Wednesday, April 23, 2008 from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at the Library/Fireside Commons Room at Manchester Community College. The focus for the 2008 Seminar is the present and future of children and adults with disabilities from the perspective of Stan Kosloski, Director of the Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative, and Heather Northrop, advocate for youth with disabilities and adult advisor to Kids as Self Advocates (CT-KASA).

The event will also feature the announcement of the 2008 Gunnar and Rosemary Dybwad Award Recipient, and will provide the opportunity to meet and network with MCC students, faculty and community members interested in issues of full participation in community life by all people.

There is no fee for this event. Please pre-register to facilitate seminar arrangements. Call 860-512-2789 or e mail bevjackson02@att.net by April 14, 2008 if you will be attending.

Keep Your Utilities On!

Are you facing a utility shut-off or a payment arrangement that you can't afford to keep? There is help for you, provided by Statewide Legal Services:

- NEW BRITAIN – Saturday, April 12, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Connecticut Bar Association – 30 Bank Street (For customers of CL&P & Connecticut Natural Gas)
- WATERBURY – Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Connecticut Light and Power, 250 Freight Street (For customers of CL&P & Yankee Gas)

- NEW HAVEN – Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Center Church on the Green, 311 Temple Street (For customers of United Illuminating/Southern Connecticut Gas)
- HARTFORD – Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - CRT, 555 Windsor Street (For customers of CL&P & Connecticut Natural Gas)
- BRIDGEPORT- Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Bridgeport Social Services, 752 East Main Street
- NEW LONDON – Saturday May 3, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - OIC of New London County, 106 Truman St. (for customers of Yankee Gas and CL&P)
- STAMFORD – Saturday, May 10, 2008 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. - CTE, 34 Woodland Ave. (for customers of CL&P and Yankee Gas)
- MERIDEN - Saturday May 17, 2008 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Yankee Gas, 56 Cooper Street (For customers of Yankee Gas and CL&P)

Who can get help? Low income customers of utility companies who have some kind of income. (i.e., you must have enough income to pay both your rent and average monthly utility bills).
 NOTE: Statewide Legal Services provides budget counseling but not cash assistance. Questions? Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320.

DOJ Business Leadership Forum

On June 26th the New Haven Department of Services for People with Disabilities will be co-sponsoring with the U.S. Department of Justice and Yale New Haven Hospital a Business Leadership Forum to discuss providing accessibility to healthcare services and facilities for individuals with disabilities. If you are interested in attending please send Director Michelle Duprey your mailing address so she can put you on her mailing list:

Michelle M. Duprey, Esq., Director,
 Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities
 City of New Haven, 165 Church Street, New Haven, CT 06510
 (203) 946-7651 Fax: (203) 946-8587 TTY: (203) 946-8582

Ready to Start Your Spring Cleaning?

You can support CT-KASA (CT Kids As Self Advocates) and clean the clutter from your house, all at the same time! CT-KASA is having a series of tag sales and lemonade stands on Friday and Saturday July 11 & 12, 2008 at various locations around the state. If you would like to donate your “treasures” for this worthy cause, or you’d like to sponsor a sale at your location, please contact Heather Northrop at heathernorthrop@sbcglobal.net or 860-679-1561.

The proceeds of these efforts will promote youth advocacy, community inclusion and opportunity for all. For more information, go to www.ctkasa.org

News from the National Autism Association

The [National Autism Association](http://www.naautism.org) has created a grant program specifically for families of children with autism who are in financial crisis. If you are a family residing in the United States with a child on the autism spectrum aged birth to 18, you may qualify for the grant. The maximum you may request is \$1,500. Money from the grant may be applied ONLY to biomedical treatments, supplements or therapies for your child with autism - and the money is paid directly to vendors (not to families).

Similar grants are offered to families by [Act-Today for Autism](#), [Autism Family Resources](#), and [United Healthcare Children's Foundation](#). The important point to note is that money from these grants never goes directly to families - and it may be used only for autism treatments and related costs (not to, for example, keep the house warm in winter).

If you are in search of a grant for autism treatment, these grant opportunities are legitimate resources. Many advertised grant opportunities, however, are not. An Internet search will almost certainly lead you to sites and ads for "free grants for autism." Many of these organizations will require you to pay in advance for your "free grants". If any agency or individual requests money from you as part of a grant application process, consider reporting that agency or individual to the police.

IRS Rebate Checks

In early March, the Internal Revenue Service sent notices informing more than 130 million households that they may be eligible for an economic stimulus payment (Rebate Check). In order to qualify for this payment, taxpayers must file a 2007 tax return even if you do not need to file and do not expect a refund.

Payments ranging from \$300 - \$1,200 payments will be made to eligible recipients. Individuals earning less than \$75,000 annually will receive a check for up to \$600. Couples earning less than \$150,000 annually will receive up to \$1,200. Families will also receive \$300 for each child younger than 17. The law stipulates that the rebate check may not to be considered in any federal benefits eligibility test.

To find out more about the rebates, go to www.irs.gov . If your adjusted gross income was \$54,000 or less in 2007, use Free File to prepare and e-file your taxes online. Find it on www.irs.gov.

Celebrate ADAPT's 25th Anniversary in Washington, DC

April 27th
Fun Run for Disability Rights

April 28th - April 30th
Grassroots Actions

May 1st
25th Anniversary Dinner, Exhibition and Show

For information: 512-442-0252, 303-733-9324

Food, Music, Exhibits, History, Multi-media, Faces from ADAPT's past

Contact info@adapt25.org or go to www.adapt.org/ for more information.

Abilities Expo 2008

Abilities Expo 2008 will be held from Friday, March 28 – Sunday, March 30 at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center in Edison, New Jersey. The Expo is your event for independent and assisted living products and services. It is a consumer-oriented show and open to the public. Show hours are Friday: March 28, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm; Saturday, March 29, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm; and Sunday, March 30, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm .

For more info go to: <http://nyc.abilitiesexpo.com/iaenyc/v42/index.cvn> .

Dodd Bill Would Establish Disability Savings Accounts

Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd has introduced legislation designed to allow families of Americans with disabilities to set aside money for future supports without worrying about losing their current government benefits. The Disability Savings Act of 2008 would let families save money in separate accounts with "tax-advantaged savings tools" such as a tax credit. Money could be taken from the accounts tax-free to pay for education, medical services, job training and transportation. Money set aside in disability savings accounts would not be counted as income when considering eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and other federal benefits.

“Visions of Hope and Opportunity”

The National Institute for People with Disabilities will sponsor a five day conference on “Visions of Hope and Opportunity in Developmental and Learning Disabilities” from May 5-9 at the Crown Plaza Manhattan hotel in New York City. The conference will have a special focus on autism spectrum disorders. There will be more than 180 sessions and more than 300 speakers.

For more information, go to <http://yaiconference.org/> or call 1-888-233-9527.

Children's Stake in Social Security

While Social Security is best known as a retirement program, it is also irreplaceable life and disability insurance for young families, according to a new report released by the non-partisan National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI) and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

About 6.5 million children under 18 – or nearly 9 percent of all U.S. children – received part of their family income from Social Security in 2005. They include 3.1 million children who themselves receive benefits as dependents of a deceased, disabled, or retired parent, and an estimated 3.4 million other children who do not themselves receive Social Security, but live with relatives who do. “As policymakers consider ways to balance Social Security’s long-term finances through benefit cuts, tax increases, or both, many people forget that children and their advocates have an important stake in the policy debate,” said Joni Lavery, co-author of the report and Research Associate at NASI.

Social Security often makes the difference in lifting children out of poverty. Fully 1.3 million children were lifted out of poverty by Social Security benefits in 2005. Moreover, Social Security reduced the depths of poverty felt by another 1.5 million children and their families. For more information or a PDF of the full report, Children’s Stake in Social Security, visit the NASI website at www.nasi.org.

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