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ELECTION 2020

A Look At Candidates On Disability



Joe Biden



Donald Trump

By Pat Horwell

Election Day is but a month away. Each party has its own plan of action. And the two platforms are distinctly different. Republicans are using the same platform that they had in 2016. In terms of disability-related issues, analyzing the difference between the two is akin to the proverbial comparison of apples with oranges.

Non-Discrimination

Democrats stated that they oppose any effort to weaken enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and will work to

continue non-discrimination in access to health care, building on the protections for people with disabilities enshrined in the Affordable Care Act.

They will ensure aggressive enforcement of the integration mandate affirmed in the *Olmstead* decision, regarding discrimination against people with mental disabilities. "We will rigorously enforce non-discrimination protections for people with disabilities in healthcare, employment, education and housing and ensure equal access to the ballot box," the platform reads.

Preserving Obama Programs

The Republican platform cites the ABLA Act (Achieving a Better Life Experience) and the Steve Gleason Act. The former, for the first time, lets people with disabilities maintain access to services while saving to develop assets. The legislation was supported by 85 percent of Congress and was signed into law by Pres. Barack Obama in December 2014. The latter, bearing the name of the former NFL player with ALS, provides access to speech-generating devices. In addition, Republicans

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From The Commissioner's Desk

Accessible transportation is the lifeblood of New York City. As the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and a Board Member of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), I am committed to ensuring that New Yorkers and visitors with disabilities can benefit from efficient transportation in all sectors including mass transit, paratransit, taxis and for-hire vehicles.

The City of New York has made historic progress over the past several years by increasing wheelchair accessibility in its taxi fleet, creating and expanding a now Citywide Accessible Dispatch program to connect people with disabilities to wheelchair accessible taxis, and passing first-of-its-kind rules to mandate wheelchair accessibility in for-hire vehicles bases including all app-based companies and traditional car services. That being said, the City is facing a budget shortfall of \$9B due to COVID-19 and Mayor de Blasio has recently announced five-day furloughs of many staff across the Mayor's Office and City agencies. The City needs financial support in the Federal stimulus to avoid layoffs and potential reduction in services that could impact people with disabilities.

The State-run MTA has also made strides to improve accessibility with a \$5.5B commitment to improving accessibility in its 2020-2024 Capital program, which includes elevators at 70 stations to ensure that people

will never be more than two stops away from a wheelchair accessible station within the next five years. Unfortunately, like the City, the MTA is currently facing an unprecedented fiscal crisis due to COVID-19. Capital projects, including most of the planned accessibility improvements, are currently on hold, and the MTA is in dire need of an additional \$12B in Federal funding. Without it, my fellow Board Members and I could be forced to vote on drastic actions including fare increases and service cuts in the coming months. I will work hard to ensure that accessibility remains at the forefront, but the reality is that tough choices will have to be made if Federal funding does not come through.

As such, please contact your elected officials—and specifically U.S. Senators—and communicate the urgent need for Federal support for both New York City and transit in the next COVID-19 relief package. As we celebrate 30 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we cannot let the COVID-19 pandemic turn back the clock on our progress.

Your voices are also important during the upcoming election, so please be sure to vote if you are eligible and apply for an absentee ballot by October 27th if you do not plan on voting in-person. If you need an accessible absentee ballot, you may request one from the Board of Elections by filling out an application.



Please continue to stay safe during this time. For the latest guidance from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus or text "COVID" to 692-692. If you are a New Yorker with a disability who needs resources, visit MOPD's website at nyc.gov/disability or the COVID-19 disability page at nyc.gov/disability-coronavirus. You can also call our office at 212 788-2830 (Voice Phone) or 646 396-5830 (ASL Video Phone).

Please continue to wear face coverings (if you are medically able to), wash your hands, and maintain your social distance to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Ciao,
Commissioner Victor Calise



CNLD to Expand Its Advocacy

The National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities is a volunteer organization comprised of Disabled Latinx leaders and allies from across the nation. The founders came together in 2016 to form CNLD because they shared the experience of living fractured identities (in disabled and Latinx worlds, respectively). CNLD leadership has since grown into a network of colleagues who have become like family. CNLD hosts an annual conference for disabled Latinxs and

their allies to come together once a year — many attendees describe this event as "coming home." CNLD's scholarly leaders have pioneered research to assess the needs of disabled Latinxs. Currently, CNLD scholars are prepping to start new groundbreaking research to assess the needs of immigrants and refugees with disabilities. CNLD engages in advocacy on and leads the way on spotlighting important intersectional issues. CNLD is redefining and expanding ad-

vocacy work in immigration, disability, and Latinx policy arenas.

For more information, visit www.latinxdisabilitycoalition.com.

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Senate Prioritizes Nation's Most Vulnerable

The U.S. Senate has unanimously passed critical legislation to protect the nation's most vulnerable from elder abuse. The bipartisan Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act (S.3703/H.R. 6813), introduced in the Senate on May 12, 2020 by Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine), Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), will require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop training materials to assist law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, medical personnel, victims services personnel and others who encounter and support individuals living with dementia.

"Unfortunately, people living with Alzheimer's and

other dementia are at heightened risk for experiencing elder abuse," said Robert Egge, Alzheimer's Association chief public policy officer and Alzheimer's Impact Movement executive director. "Yet too often, the professionals who deal with elder abuse have little knowledge about working with people who have dementia. This critical bipartisan legislation will address this shortfall."

People living with dementia often have difficulty understanding or explaining situations and their behaviors may be misunderstood as uncooperative, disruptive or combative. Dementia-specific training materials for these professionals will improve the quality of their interactions

with individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia and will also help protect them from elder abuse.

"As chairman of the Senate Aging Committee, one of my top priorities is protecting our seniors against abuse," said Collins, a founder and co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be increased risk for elder abuse, including elder financial exploitation. Our bipartisan bill would help to ensure that the frontline professionals who are leading the charge against elder abuse have the training needed to respond to cases where the victim or witness has Alzheimer's disease"

"I am thrilled that yesterday, the Senate unanimously passed our bill, fully recognizing we must address the fact that as the number of Americans struggling with Alzhei-

mer's disease and dementia continues to grow, so does the potential for exploitation, physical or emotional abuse and neglect," said Menendez. "We must do more to provide the education caregivers, social service and health providers, law enforcement and others need to understand the unique symptoms people with AD/ABRD may have, as well as the training necessary to ensure they are safe from abuse and can live with dignity."

The Association, AIM and its nationwide network of advocates held hundreds of virtual meetings with members of Congress to grow support for the Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act. The Alzheimer's Association and AIM will continue to work with bipartisan Congressional leaders to encourage the House to pass this legislation.

AAPD Opposes Trump's Order For Quality Adjusted Life Years

In response to the Pres. Donald Trump's executive order signed in July that would import foreign prices to Medicare Part B, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) interviewed an attorney from the National Council on Disability (NCD) to learn about their opposition to this policy, as well as the National Council for Independent Living resolution opposing the use of quality-adjusted life years in U.S. decision-making.

In November 2019, the NCD issued a report describing the dangers of basing policy decisions that affect access and coverage to health care and treatment on metrics that discriminate such as the quality-adjusted life year (QALY). Their report described how the QALY, discriminates, how it is used internationally to restrict access to care for people with disabilities, and how referencing prices in those countries would import discriminatory decision-making from foreign health care systems.

The NCD issued a statement on Aug. 5, 2020 further clarifying its opposition to importing QALY-based decisions in response to the president's executive order. Senior attorney, Ana Torres-Davis, provided AAPD with background on the NCD's recommendation that the adminis-

tration abandon its plans to use international prices in Medicare.

As Maria Town, president and CEO of AAPD has stated, "After just celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is important to remember that the United States has consistently taken a stand against the use of metrics such as quality-adjusted life years (QALY) in our public health programs due to their implications for discrimination and restricted access to care for people with disabilities.

"We should be relying on the thoughtful recommendations from the National Council on Disability, an independent federal agency, calling on the administration to rescind its proposed international price index and to refrain from pursuing means of reducing Medicare and Medicaid prescription drug costs by modeling U.S. pricing after the pricing in other countries, which may heavily rely on QALYs and often deny people with disabilities access to needed care.

"As people with disabilities fight for their lives in this pandemic, it is a time to expand access to care. Not restrict it."

Additionally, the NCIL resolution passed in 2020 opposes the use of the QALY in all decisions concerning health care coverage.

Veteran Quad Writes Christmas Book



James "Rick" Highsmith, a quadriplegic Vietnam veteran, has written a children's book. His injury was not war related, but from a motorcycle accident that happened in Florida.

"In Search of Christmas," is about three rescue dogs who travel around the world looking for Christmas. In the course of their travels, the dogs rescue a lost child and an injured skydiver. Eventually they find their way home. Highsmith, now 70, hopes to purchase a handicap-accessible van with the profits from his book. The illustrated book is published by A to Z Publishing and is available on Amazon for \$19.99 (hardcover) and \$11.34 (paperback).

NYC Paratransit Facing Serious Cutbacks

When it comes to getting around New York City in his wheelchair, Dustin Jones has found three methods that generally work for him.

One is the subway, with roughly three-quarters of stations in the city still not ADA accessible. There are buses, but Jones said those always tend to run a little behind where he lives in the Bronx.

And then there's a relatively new paratransit program run by the Metropolitan Trans-

portation Authority – the Access-A-Ride on-demand e-hail pilot. Launched in 2017, this pilot program allows more than 1,000 users of the MTA's paratransit service, known as Access-A-Ride, to use an app to request yellow and green cab rides on-demand for just \$2.75 per trip.

Normally, Access-A-Ride users must book rides a day in advance. "The e-hail paratransit service has been a godsend," Jones, a board member at the advocacy group center for Independence

of the Disabled, New York, said of the widely popular pilot program. "It is the only way where a person with a disability can travel and get a straight ride anywhere on-time or on-demand." But now, as the pandemic-battered MTA faces down a \$16.2 billion budget deficit through 2024, that on-demand Access-A-Ride program is one of the many services the agency says could be cut if as much as \$12 billion in federal rescue funds doesn't come through for the MTA.

During a recent MTA board

meeting, agency officials laid out a "doomsday plan" if a federal rescue package that includes billions for the transportation authority does not materialize. (The MTA already secured \$3.9 billion in federal aid in March, but those funds were exhausted by July.)

The doomsday plan spells disaster for all riders and commuters in the New York region. Subway and bus service in the city could be cut 40 percent, commuter rail service could be

Continued on page 16

DREDF Condemns ICE's Involuntary Sterilization

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) has spoken out about reports of coerced hysterectomies performed on women in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody.

On Sept. 14, Project South filed an administrative complaint on behalf of immigrants detained at a Georgia detention center. Among other allegations of medical neglect, inadequate protection against COVID-19, and hazardous living conditions,

the complaint alleges that women in the facility have been sterilized in mass without proper consent or medical necessity. Numerous women described being coerced into surgery and confused as to why the procedure was performed. Some described being yelled at by medical staff when they resisted the procedure. Many explained that they felt as if ICE was "experimenting with [their] bodies." The stories from the Georgia facility, described as a concentration camp by the im-

migrants detained there, are disturbing. They are not, however, without precedent in U.S. history.

Between 1909 and 1979, more than 60,000 men and women were forcibly sterilized pursuant to eugenics laws that directed state mental institutions to sterilize individuals they deemed "unfit to reproduce." While these laws were repealed in the late 1900s, involuntary sterilizations continue to this day in prisons across the country. In 2010, a state audit revealed that more than 250 women of color were sterilized in California prisons without their consent, and sometimes without their knowledge. In 2017, reports indicated that people incarcerated in Tennessee were offered reduced jail time in

exchange for their reproductive capacity.

While sterilization abuses have occurred in different settings over time, one fact remains constant: people with historically marginalized identities-disabled, female, Latina, Black, and/or LGBTQI+-have been overwhelmingly targeted.

ICE's alleged forced sterilization of women in their custody, like the state-sponsored reproductive violence that preceded it, is a crime against humanity, said DREDF officials. DREDF stands in solidarity with the survivors of ICE's violence in demanding that it, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the medical providers involved be held accountable for their heinous actions.



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JUSTIN DART JR.

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PWD at Increased Risk During COVID

Many people with disabilities are at increased risk of serious or fatal complications from COVID-19.

In an active community outbreak, the safest option may be to self-isolate at home, perhaps for weeks or longer. The CDC is currently recommending that people at high risk continue to stock up on necessities, including maintenance prescription medication. Unfortunately, many people with disabilities can't take this advice because of insurance restrictions.

Insurers typically refuse to cover refills on 30-day prescriptions until only three to seven days of medication remain. For certain controlled substance prescriptions, patients may be legally unable to fill a new prescription un-

til the date that the previous prescription is scheduled to run out. The American Association of People with Disabilities suggests reaching out to the state's Department of Financial Services to urge them to allow early refills and to take other measures designed to ensure at-risk populations are able to follow the CDC's guidance.

AAPD has prepared a template for advocacy organizations to use to urge their state to take these measures to protect those most at-risk. AAPD's website is keeping track of advocacy efforts and policy measures to protect the disability community for the duration of the crisis. Access the template and learn more at <https://www.aapd.com/covid-19/>. To file a complaint in New York State visit <https://www.dfs.ny.gov/complaint>.

OBITUARY

RBG, Champion for PWD Dies

By Angela Melledy

As the country mourns the loss of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, much is being made of her devotion to civil rights. She is lauded as an advocate for women, people of color and of all minorities. Much has been said of her own struggles after finishing first in her class in law school and being denied employment with any law firm because she was a woman and had a child.

But perhaps less known is her action on behalf of people with disabilities.

Ginsburg is best known in the disability community for her opinion in 1999 that asserted that people with disabilities have the right to receive services in the community rather than in institutions.

In the majority opinion in *Olmstead v. L.C.* she wrote “First, institutional placement of persons who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life.

“Second, confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement and cultural enrichment.”

Often seen as the most important civil rights decision for people with disabilities in U.S. history and based on the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Court decided that people with disabilities had the right to be free.

“She was a crusader for justice, a brilliant legal mind, and a true public servant. As the author of the landmark *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision, Judge Ginsburg freed Americans with disabilities from a life of segregation and isolation by affirming the right to live and receive services in the community of their choice,” the National Disability Rights Network said in a statement on their website. “Her opinion also expanded the pro-

tections of the Americans with Disabilities Act to people with mental health disabilities.”

The majority in the decision included Ginsburg, joined by Justices Sandra Day O’Connor, David Souter and Stephen Breyer who concurred in full while John Paul Stevens and Anthony Kennedy decided in part, and Clarence Thomas, William Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia dissented.

Ginsburg was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. and married Marty Ginsburg, in his parent’s Rockville Centre, N.Y. home. The justice’s husband’s family lived in Rockville Centre and she participated in Hofstra University programs.

“For a portion of 2007 I had the privilege of having Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a professor as part of a Hofstra University Summer law program,” said N.Y. Assemblymember Andrew Garbarino (R-Dist. 7). “She was down to earth, and made sure she spoke to everyone who participated about their background and what their goals were for the future. Whether or not you agree with her legal opinions, there is no denying the huge impact Justice Ginsburg has had on the fiber of our nation.”

“This big moment, [*Olmstead* decision] and her staunch affirmation of the human dignity of people with disabilities and their rightful place in the community of their choice, fundamentally changed the course of the lives of hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities,” said Peter Berns, CEO, The Arc.

“With this history in our hearts, we will carry on our fight for inclusion and justice for all people with disabilities,”

“Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a champion for justice,” said American Association for People with Disabilities (AAPD) President and CEO Maria Town. ...“Her life’s work directly benefited the lives of millions of individuals with disabilities and our country as a whole. We will continue to build upon her legacy and fight for justice and equal treatment under the law. May her memory be a blessing.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Justice Ginsburg guest teaching Hofstra Law students abroad. She taught a course in Comparative Constitutional Law for the school’s program in Nice, France, during the summers of 1997, 2001 (pictured here) and 2004.

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CID-NY

Locations and Partners

<p>Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY Manhattan 841 Broadway, Suite 301 New York, NY 10003</p>	<p>Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID) 27 Smith St, #250 Brooklyn, NY 11201</p>	<p>Community Health Action of Staten Island (CHASI) 56 Bay St, 4th Floor Staten Island, NY 10301</p>	<p>Bronx Independent Living Services (BILS) 4419 Third Ave, #2C Bronx, NY 10457</p>
<p>Queens 80-02 Kew Gardens Rd, Suite 400 Kew Gardens, NY 11415</p>			



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UNITED SPINAL^{NOW}

Access, Accommodation And COVID Safety

BY JAMES WEISMAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



A woman who had struggled with her large government employer for years, since the employer was reluctant to accommodate her disability on repeated occasions, told me a great COVID reopening story — because it has a happy ending.

This wheelchair-using on-site social worker had been working from home, but not nearly as effectively as she was on the job, because on the job, she had a paraprofessional to assist, essentially, to act as eyes and hands. She asked for a virtual paraprofessional to assist, and this large government agency immediately responded, since they had “work-from-home” requests from paraprofessionals, and it was a perfect match. Both employees are productive, one is still a clerical assistant, and one is a professional, both working remotely for their employer.

America’s instant familiarity and satisfaction with work-from-home options caused by COVID-related isolation has depressed the value of office space and impressed reluctant managers, who preferred in-person labor.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires covered employers to break down jobs into their essential functions and consider whether a person with a disability can perform essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation.

Attendance, which most managers would have considered to be an essential function of most jobs, has been rethought because of COVID. Jobs are being performed remotely, and because of communication technology, remote workers are now numerous and the “new normal.”

To state the obvious - not every job can be done remotely, but it is clear that people with disabilities have already benefitted from businesses’ new approach. Positions are being described as hybrids, i.e. part from home and part from an office.

Managers, in the process of parceling out work, are considering the functions of the jobs and determining which are essential. This process alone will cause employers to be more flexible about engaging applicants with disabilities who may not be able to be on-site every day.

United Spinal has been assisting the disability community and the organizations that represent them, and the business community, as COVID re-openings. Safety modifications in work spaces, public places and retail establishments, as well as accommodations requests from employees and customers multiply every week.

To assist in this effort, we have prepared a publication available for free online at <https://unitedspinal.org/reopening-business-in-a-covid-world/>.

The publication, Reopening Your Business in a COVID World: Safeguarding Accessibility/ADA Compliance, is a work-in-progress. We are interested in problems caused by COVID-related safety efforts that impede access. We are even more interested in finding out creative ways of ensuring access and virus safety. If you see instances of either, please take a photo and email it to me at jweisman@unitedspinal.org.

A Look At Candidates On Disability

Continued from page 1

are supportive of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), approved by Congress. Obama signed it into law in 2014. The act makes it easier for students with disabilities to pursue competitive employment.

Economic Security

Democrats will phase out the subminimum wage, expand competitive, integrated employment opportunities and protect and strengthen economic security for people with disabilities. They will take a holistic approach to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs that are essential for millions of Americans with disabilities by increasing SSI benefits, eliminating waiting periods for SSDI and eliminating the “benefit cliff” for SSDI benefits. The Republican platform makes no mention of either program.

Biden’s campaign materials state that despite Trump and Republicans’ attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which protected health care coverage for 100 million Americans with pre-existing conditions, including people with disabilities; to undermine the ADA, including by making it harder for people with disabilities to file claims; and to fundamentally restructure the Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income programs, which directly benefit people with disabilities, Biden plans to reverse Trump’s policies.

ACA Threatened

The current administration filed with the U.S. Supreme Court in June and reaffirmed its belief that the Affordable Care Act in its entirety is illegal because Congress eliminated the individual tax penalty for failing to purchase medical insurance. Trump and congressional Republicans have

long said they want to “repeal and replace” Obamacare but have not come up a plan to replace it. In a meeting with governors at the White House in February 2017, Trump said, “It’s an unbelievably complex subject. Nobody knew that health care could be so complicated.”

Paid Leave for Caregivers

Biden has promised informal or family caregivers the support they need to care for their family members by creating a tax credit –12 weeks of paid leave to care for a family member or for their own illness, allowing caregivers the ability to earn credit toward Medicare and Social Security.

Biden’s campaign has pledged additional services for the disabled community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring that people with disabilities and older Americans have healthy food at home by increasing SNAP

benefits by 15 percent; increasing funding for access to computers, broadband, assistive technology and accommodations for remote communications, raising funding to increase access to telehealth services, educational programs and telework for people with disabilities; and increasing funding for the delivery of essential items such as medications, transportation, in-home services, respite care and other family caregiver support.

People with disabilities are about 12 percent of the U.S. working-age population, according to the National Council on Disability, but they account for more than half of those living in poverty. People with disabling conditions often work in low-wage jobs and rarely have sick benefits. The Trump campaign does not address COVID-19 and the disabled community in its campaign materials.

Families Rally To Save Vital Services

Family groups fear cuts to services for loved ones with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) will return New York to the days of negligent institutional care.

On Sept. 17, the 33rd anniversary of the closure of the infamous Willowbrook and other institutions for children and adults with disabilities, parent advocacy groups Long Island Advocacy Network for Developmental Disabilities (LIANDD) and Family, Advocacy, Information & Resources for People with Intellectual & Developmental Dis-



Families gather for rally

abilities (NYC FAIR) conducted a mobile rally outside the Staten Island campus that was home to some of the worst conditions, scandals and abuses that New Yorkers with disabilities have ever had to endure. They took part in a peaceful Caravan along the Long Island Expressway and across the Mario Cuomo Bridge.

Leaders of the demonstration said with the closure of Willowbrook, New York state committed itself to provide a better life for people with I/DD, but that commitment is being abandoned for the sake of political and economic expediency.

“The fear of returning to Willowbrook is not irrational,” said Michael and Randy Bolton. The Boltons who have first-hand knowledge of the conditions said “Cuts in funding are forcing the closure of Day programs and the

shrinking of residential beds, hitting people whose family members are home with them from two sides. Tens of thousands of New Yorkers with I/DD are living without Day programs, recreation opportunities, or respite.

“We both worked at Willowbrook, the ‘Holocaust’ for the IDD community, and saw the horrors that were forced upon the people who lived there. It didn’t happen overnight but over years as budgets were cut, staffing was reduced and the voices of the families involved weren’t heard. “The Willowbrook buildings may be empty, but the atrocities can’t be erased. As parents age and there is nowhere for their children to go, they lie awake frightened that the choices left for their children will be a mirror image of Willowbrook and as bad as the old days.”

Organizers said “Families understand that New York state is in a financial crisis due to COVID-19, but the state’s continued cuts and unreimbursed expenses are putting the not-for-profit agencies that provide services to those with I/DD, at imminent risk of financial ruin. Families ask the state to carefully examine the consequences of their cuts to services for their loved ones. Staff are being laid off, programs are closing and residential beds are disappearing. Families may soon find themselves with no recourse other than bringing their family member to an overworked, overstressed emergency room with very little capacity to help those with I/DD.”

“Our family members deserve better,” said LIANDD member Terri Manzione. “We will not let Willowbrook happen again.”



Justin Bolton at Willowbrook entrance.

VOTE SAFELY

THE GENERAL ELECTION IS NOVEMBER 3, 2020.

Here are all the ways you can cast your ballot in New York State:

In-Person Voting

You can vote in-person on Election Day or during early voting for the upcoming General Election. You may see fewer open polling locations because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Contact your County Board of Elections for more information.

- County Boards of Elections are required to maintain social distancing markers throughout exterior and interior paths of travel and in the voting area.
- Pollworkers will follow protocols to clean and disinfect the spaces where voters will be.
- Pollworkers are required to wear face masks and clean everything throughout the day.
- All voters are required to wear a face mask.

Early Voting is happening in your County:
October 24 - November 1, 2020.

Poll locations are open all day on Election Day:
NOVEMBER 3, 2020.

Absentee Voting

You can request an absentee ballot today from your County or State Board of Elections. Forms are available on the NYS Board of Elections website: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee.html>.

County Board of Elections should also have the absentee ballot request form available on their website or by contacting them directly.

- You can apply online, by mail or email, or fax a completed absentee ballot application or letter request for the General Election on or before October 27, 2020 to your County Board of Elections office.
- If you miss this deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail, you can go to your County Board of Elections' office and request an absentee ballot in person.
- Voters who request an absentee ballot will be mailed a ballot, instructions, a return envelope, and an "oath envelope" that must be signed before mailing it back. It is important to read the instructions carefully before returning your absentee ballot.

Accessible Absentee Voting

If you have a disability that prevents you from voting using a paper absentee ballot, you can request an electronically delivered and markable ballot from your County Board of Elections. Voters with disabilities must first complete the accessible absentee ballot request form, found here: <https://absenteeballot.elections.ny.gov/home/accessible>, and also available through every County Board of Elections office.

- Voters will then receive by email an accessible absentee ballot that can be marked using a screen reader and other common assistive technologies.
- Voters will receive in the mail a return envelope, an oath envelope, and instructions from their county Board of Elections.
- The Accessible Absentee Ballot is not fully accessible.
- Voters must still print their marked ballot and send it back to the County Board of Elections office. Your completed ballot must be mailed to your County BOE. Addresses found here: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/Counties/CountyBoardRoster06172020.pdf>.

FEMA REGION II

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS TEAM

Get Ready Now – Earthquake Preparedness for PWD

On Oct. 15, communities around the world will observe International ShakeOut Day by hosting an earthquake drill and practicing the safety technique "Drop, Cover and Hold On."

This method involves dropping to the ground when you feel an earthquake, covering your head or body and holding onto furniture until the shaking stops. These three simple actions can reduce injury and death; however, individuals with disabilities should consider taking extra steps to prepare and protect themselves during an earthquake.

ShakeOut organizers have published the info graphic below, providing "Drop, Cover and Hold On" considerations for individuals who use durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs, canes and walkers. Their tips include:

- If you use a cane, Drop, Cover and Hold On or sit on a chair, bed, etc. and cover your head with your hands. Keep your cane near you so it can be easily accessible when the shaking ends.
- If you use a walker, lock your wheels (if applicable) and carefully get as low as possible. Bend over and cover your head and neck with your arms, a book or a pillow. Hold on until the shaking stops.
- If you use a wheelchair, lock your wheels and remain seated when the shaking ceases. Try to get under a door frame or into an inside corner. Cover your head with your arms or other items that may be available, like a book or pillow.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Earthquake Country Alliance have shared additional guidance for individuals with access and functional needs:

- If you are able, seek shelter under a sturdy table or desk. Stay away from outer walls, windows, fireplaces and hanging objects.
- If unable to move from a bed or chair, protect yourself from falling objects by covering up your head and body with blankets and pillows.
- If you are outside, go to an open area away from trees, telephone poles, and buildings and stay there.
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, prepare yourself by identifying and testing multiple ways to receive warnings and evacuation information. Store extra hearing aids or cochlear implant batteries and chargers in your emergency supply kit.
- If you are blind or have low vision, keep in mind that earthquakes can cause items to fall and furniture to shift. Regular sound clues may not be available afterwards. Move with caution. Keep extra glasses and canes in your emergency supply kit.

People with developmental, cognitive or intellectual disabilities should keep a simple list of what to do and important information on them and in their emergency kits.

The best time to prepare for an earthquake is right now. The CDC recommends writing down your specific needs, capabilities, limitations and medications and keeping copies of this list in your purse or wallet. Identify a person to help you in case of an emergency and give them a copy of your list and a spare key to your home.

It is also important to secure your space by moving heavy furniture away from your bed, sofas, or other places where you sit or sleep. The American Red Cross suggests repairing cracks in ceilings and foundations and using straps or other restraints to secure tall cabinets, appliances, mirrors, picture frames and light fixtures to wall studs.

To learn more about International ShakeOut Day and preparing for an earthquake, visit www.shakeout.org. FEMA Region II also offers a Preparedness webinar series and publishes a biweekly Preparedness & Resilience Bulletin with tips, articles and important news. Visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/signup/13827> to subscribe for upcoming webinar announcements and the bulletin.

Task Force and Lawmakers Work to Increase Jobs

New York state Assemblymember Harvey Epstein (D-Dist. 74) and state Sen. James Skoufis (D. Dist. 39) recently introduced bills in the Legislature that would create a more equitable and diverse workforce while setting a goal of 7 percent increase in employment for people with disabilities throughout all branches of New York state government, their contractors and subcontractors.

According to Michael Schweinsburg, Projects Coordinator for Epstein, a similar goal was established at the federal level under an executive order signed by Pres. Barack Obama. Before he left office, he had achieved a 14.41 percent rate in the federal government.

Epstein worked with disability rights advocates to form the New York State People with Disabilities Employment Task Force, which is now composed of 21 member organizations and 33 individuals from across New York state. The Task Force worked to devise strategies to create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Workforce Reduction

The Task Force reported that findings from the Kessler Foundation showed a 20 percent workforce reduction among people with disabilities as opposed to a 14 percent decrease for non-disabled workers as a result of the pandemic, further widened the gap.

"This legislation is revenue-neutral yet leverages government money as a vehicle for greater and more equitable workforce participation for individuals with disabilities," said Epstein. "Faced with proof that the accommodations that have been denied for years - telecommuting - are very efficient and are being worked into the [COVID] reopening plans for nearly every business, it is vitally important for us to ensure People with Disabilities are fully a part of recovery plans and are not left behind."

"Even when the economy is doing well the employment rate for people with disabilities hovers around 30 percent. COVID-19 has turned this cri-

sis into a catastrophe," said Susan Dooha, executive director of Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY. "...We strongly urge legislators to pass and the Governor to sign these bills to help close this gap."

"ICD-Institute for Career Development has been providing training and employment services to individuals with disabilities for over a century," said Susan Scheer, CEO. "Post-COVID, unemployment, which was already much higher for our community, has soared disproportionately. As we rebuild our economy, we must ensure that individuals with disabilities are fully included. The legislation would leverage the funding power of New York State and its contractors to reduce the disability divide by hiring and advancing qualified individuals with disabilities."

Thirty Years After ADA

"Thirty years after the ADA became law, its promise for employment remains unfulfilled, but the Epstein/Skoufis bill is a chance to change the story for my community," said Jessica De La Rosa, systems advocate of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled. "One thing these difficult times have shown is that the traditional barriers to employment for people like me are crumbling, since everyone now realizes the potential of new working arrangements. With more than a million public employees in New York State and countless more funded by state contracts, the Epstein/Skoufis bill would seize this moment and capitalize on the extraordinary power the state has to expand hiring opportunities for people with disabilities."

Level The Divide

"ACBNY (American Council of the Blind) strongly supports A9118 (Epstein) and S7643 (Skoufis), establishing goals for participation by individuals with disabilities with respect to state employment, state contracts, legislative employment, and judicial employment," said Ian Foley of the American Council of the Blind. "This legislation will help to level the divide of employment for people with disabilities in our state.

"Employment for individuals with disabilities is vital to the economic stability of New York State. It creates opportunities for those to be taxpaying citizens, rather than tax receiving citizens, said John Robinson, CEO of Our Ability, Inc. and Disability:IN New York. "And, it provides NYS businesses with an untapped labor pool. By increasing standards, we increase opportunity."

Task Force member organi-

zations also include Art Beyond Sight, Disability Rights New York, Include, NYC, AHRC NYC, Visions: Services For The Blind and Visually Impaired, Lighthouse Guild, Bronx Independent Living Services, New York Association on Independent Living, Southern Tier Independence Center, Harlem Independent Living Center, .Y. State Disability Services Council and AIM Independent Living Center.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

A recent report released by the New York state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's Office found that the unemployment rate for New York City residents with disabilities was roughly 2.5 times that of those without disabilities (14.7 percent vs. 6 percent).

Rates for African-Americans and Hispanics with disabilities were even higher, 18.9 percent and 15.3 percent, respectively. Fully 65 percent of people with disabilities 18-64 were not working.

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Report Tracks Automobile Accessibility

In honor of the 30th anniversary of passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) issued its first public progress report on its Automobile Accessibility Scorecard.

The scorecard tracks progress by auto manufacturing companies toward the design and production of an accessible vehicle that can accommodate people with a wide range of disabilities, including power wheelchair users, along 29 criteria.

Currently, no manufacturer

offers a fully accessible vehicle that does not require expensive aftermarket modifications for wheelchair users. Although autonomous vehicles' (AVs) potential to remove barriers is frequently touted, as automakers pave the way with new concepts for these vehicles, it is crucial that people with disabilities are not left out and left behind.

This year's inaugural progress report found that, although industry has not yet reached the point of significant design or production progress, multiple major auto manufacturing companies

working on AVs are already tackling the challenges associated with accessible design and are expanding their disability outreach programs as they work on these problems.

Highlights from the report include:

Automakers are broadening the scope of their outreach with disability groups, with some automakers engaging with local and national disability groups in discussions of design standards and user testing.

Auto manufacturing companies are forming internal cross-departmental staff work-

ing groups on accessibility.

COVID-19 has impacted the speed of developments on accessibility research and development. However, accessibility remains a core commitment.

The next step for accessibility work is to identify and address common barriers to production across the industry, and to work with industry stakeholders to address them collaboratively.

Many of these common barriers are identified in the report.

Accessible transportation
Continued on page 18

CDC Has Back-to-School Tips for Parents

Returning to school this fall requires schools and families to work together even more than before. Schools are making changes to their policies and operations with several goals: supporting learning; providing important services such as school meals, extended daycare, extracurricular activities, and social services; and limiting the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (the viruses that cause COVID-19).

Teachers and staff can teach and encourage preventive behaviors at school. Likewise, it will be important for families to emphasize and model healthy behaviors at home and to talk to children about changes to expect this school year.

Even if a child will attend school in-person, it is important to prepare for the possibility of virtual learning if school closes or if the child be-

comes exposed to COVID-19 and needs to stay home.

The CDC has created several checklists for decision making and planning for returning to school this fall. The Back to School Decision Making Tool contains questions that are designed to help parents weigh the risks and benefits of available educational options before making decisions.

Additionally, the CDC has developed family checklists

to plan for in-person classes or virtual at-home learning.

The CDC has also shared tips to help parents, guardians, and caregivers plan and prepare for the school year.

They suggest talking to children about precautions to take at school and they may be advised to do the following:

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

Continued on page 18

Sunset Park NSA Group I

Applications are now available for **Sunset Park NSA Group**

I, a 187-unit HUD-subsidized building designed for any very low-income family household, located at in Brooklyn. Eligibility will be based on Section 8 guidelines and HUD regulations.

Interested persons may obtain an application by writing to:

Sunset Park NSA Group I

Leasing Office

5302 6th Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11220

Completed applications must be sent by regular mail to the P.O. Box indicated on the application. Duplicate applications will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Completed applications should be received no later than the deadline date of November 30, 2020.

If you have a disability and need assistance with the application process, please contact Sheena Williams at (718) 567-8272.



MindFreedom International Expands Reach

MindFreedom International is a nonprofit organization that unites sponsor and affiliate grassroots groups with thousands of individual members to win human rights and alternatives for people labeled with psychiatric disabilities. Its goals are to win human rights campaigns in mental health, challenge abuse by the psychiatric drug industry, support the self-determination of psychiatric survivors and mental health consumers and promote safe, humane and effective options in mental health.

MindFreedom is one of the very few independent groups in the mental health field with no funding from or control by governments, drug companies, religions, corporations or the mental health system.

The majority of the organization's members are people who have experienced human rights

violations in the mental health system, or psychiatric survivors. However, everyone who supports human rights may join and become active leaders. Mental health professionals and workers, advocates and attorneys, family members and the general public are all active as equal members and leaders in the MindFreedom International family. The group is not associated with any religion, government or drug company.

Currently, the organization is working to establish regional support sites and activate independent living centers. Many disability rights advocates are seasoned warriors. Tapping into this wealth of knowledge and experience can create synergy. It is also recruiting alternative providers and attorneys in every region.

For more information, visit www.mindfreedom.org.

'Advocates for Children' Helps Families Navigate System

This is a school year like no other. To be sure, every year in New York City, many families begin the school year without knowing where their child will go to school, when their bus will come or how services like speech therapy will be delivered. But this year has taken uncertainty and confusion to a whole new level, as families throughout the city rounded the corner into the fall without knowing if school

buildings would open at all and if so, what days their children would attend and whether they would get busing to take them there.

While parents have worried and waited, the battle over school re-opening has become increasingly heated. Advocates for Children works with families on all sides of the debate — those afraid to send their children back, those desperate for them to return to school

and those overwhelmed by the stunning lack of information available to them.

The organization helps predominantly low-income, Black or Latinx families, the majority of which have children with disabilities. Many are new to the country or learning English. They do not have the option to move to the suburbs or finance their own learning pods; they have to rely on New York City to meet their children's edu-

cational needs. And they are struggling mightily in this year of scarcity, fear and upheaval.

Advocates For Children stands in their corner — providing one-on-one advice, advocacy, and legal representation; finding new ways to deliver up-to-date information they can use to advocate for themselves; and fighting for resources and policies that don't leave them behind.

For more information, visit www.advocatesforchildren.org.

Brooklyn Autism Center Offers Remote Programs

The Brooklyn Autism Center is helping parents through these challenging times by providing customized parent training modules and videos to help them to best implement behavior analytic strategies, that focus on skill development and the reduction of interfering behaviors.

Some strategies included in the videos are how to use visual schedules, effective prompting strategies, teaching self-care skills, the use of differential reinforcement, easing transitions, tolerating non-preferred activities, staying on task and managing problem behaviors.

In addition, for many students, being able to follow health and hygiene protocols related to COVID-19 (wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands thoroughly) are no easy feat.

The center has worked with families on developing these skills in order to keep students and their families safe.

Julie Russell, educational director, and her team developed parent training modules that included videos with her own daughter Sadie to provide a model for families to follow with their own children. Some examples of training included how to use a token system, how to increase attending and focus, how to develop communication skills, how to tolerate termination of a preferred activity, how to develop instructional control and others.

And during this time of remote learning, associate director Andrea Delgado has been hosting a weekly virtual dance party for students and staff. She chooses a musical theme,

sometimes taking suggestions from students and parents, puts together a high energy playlist that gets everyone moving and she even wears a thematic outfit to match.

To stay in touch, BAC Friends, the after-school peer socialization program, is now held remotely. Program coordinator, Raven Stokes set up breakout Zoom sessions between students and our peer volunteers.

Each week the groups meet using Zoom and participate in virtual games. Some groups enjoy scavenger hunts, others play Connect4, Hangman, Bingo and



Sadie and Julie Russell

Snakes & Ladders and others just talk about whatever is on their mind that day.

For more information, visit www.brooklynautismcenter.org.

NYC Schools to Have Full-Time Nurses This Year

All New York City school buildings will have a full-time nurse this school year.

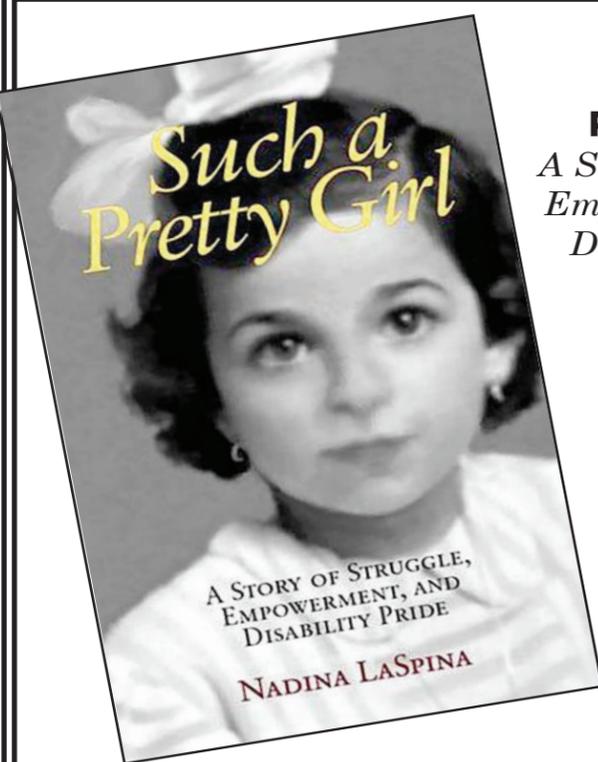
With the coronavirus pandemic lingering, officials are hiring 400 more full-time nurses for K-12 schools, seeking to fill vacancies at 359 school buildings with additional hires to cover absences and retirements.

As of the end of 2019, 116 school buildings and 137 schools serving about 70,000 students were without a full-time nurse, according to an estimate from the United Federation of Teachers, the union representing New York City public school teachers.

The city will hire another 100 nurses to cover 2,000 early childhood programs, as well

as childcare centers. Officials said these nurses will provide more broad geographic coverage of programs. The education department will also contract with a tele-health nursing provider to create a hotline for all childcare programs, which providers can call for medical-related questions.

Officials said these nurses will work full-time and will be staffed through contracts issued by the city's Health and Hospitals system. Their salaries will come out of the hospital system's budget. But these nurses will not remain in school buildings permanently — the hiring agreement will only span the upcoming school year, said Nathaniel Styer, a spokesperson for the education department.



"Such a Pretty Girl"
A Story of Struggle, Empowerment and Disability Pride

Available at NYU Press, Amazon.com & Local Book Stores

Nadina LaSpina, a disability rights activist tells the story of her liberation from oppressive standards of normalcy, showing that freedom comes not through cure, but through organizing to end exclusion from public and social life.

Lighthouse Guild Produces Podcast on Technology

Lighthouse Guild, the leading organization dedicated to providing exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to attain their goals, is launching a new podcast series. “On Tech & Vision with Dr. Cal Roberts” provides information and insights about technological innovations that are tearing down barriers for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Hosted by Lighthouse Guild president and CEO, Calvin Roberts, the podcast will also discuss what technology developers and entrepreneurs need to know to meet the needs of people with vision loss. It will provide useful information and technolo-

gy updates for people who are visually impaired caregivers, low vision service providers, vision/health organizations and the general community. “We are now seeing incredible innovations in areas like spatial orientation and artificial intelligence that can help people with vision loss live even more productive and independent lives,” Roberts said. “Lighthouse Guild is pleased to be a connecting rod between evolving technology and the people that can benefit from it.”

Roberts will interview experts in vision technology with a focus on options that can help restore lost vision, enhance existing vision and improve function. Topics for

the first three episodes of the series include:

Episode 1: Seeing with Your Ears – Translating the Audio World to Visual – how using audio can connect people with vision loss to the world around them. Roberts speaks with Yonaton Wexler about the OrCam MyEye device, which uses audio technology for this purpose.

Episode 2: A Tech Revolution in Your Hand – how using touch and sound together can create spatial awareness through the use of smart canes. Guest is Kürşat Ceylan, who developed the WeWALK, a white cane enabled with smart technologies, for people who are blind.

Episode 3: A “Remapped

Reality” – Using Virtual Reality to Remap the Visual Field – how virtual reality is used to remap sight for people with vision loss. Roberts visits with Frank Werblin to talk about how combining a smart phone and VR headset to modulate the visual field can help people see better. Werblin’s device, IrisVision, incorporates this technology that not only remaps vision, but leads to renewed social connections for people with vision impairment.

The podcast is available online at Lighthouseguild.org and for downloading on Apple Music, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Tunein.com. Twitter: @LighthouseGld #OnTechVision

Study Focuses on Immune System and Alzheimer’s

The Alzheimer’s Foundation of America has awarded \$518,391 in research grant funding to the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and One Mind, partners on a three-year study to examine the role of the brain’s immune

cells in the onset and progression of Alzheimer’s disease.

Scientists believe that gaining a better understanding of immune cells and inflammatory processes in the brain could be key to understanding Alzhei-

mer’s mechanisms. Despite decades of Alzheimer’s research, clinical failures have persisted particularly in the context of a focus on amyloid plaques, abnormal levels of a naturally occurring protein that clump together and destroy connections between neurons.

Studies conducted at the Broad Institute and elsewhere have identified a new insight: The onset and progression of the disease appears to be driven by the brain’s resident immune cells, the microglia. Research is showing how, with increasing age and specific genetic influences, microglia respond to amyloid-beta peptides in a particular way that causes inflammation. In turn, researchers hypothesize that this triggers microglia to inappropriately remove synapses

in the brain. The excessive loss of synapses results in dementia.

“We already know that amyloid beta peptides deposited in amyloid plaques play an important role in Alzheimer’s disease,” said Beth Stevens, an institute member at the Broad Institute, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, a research associate in neurology at Boston Children’s Hospital, and a leading scientist in this new understanding of Alzheimer’s.

“Emerging genetic evidence from the common later-onset form of Alzheimer’s disease points to failures in how the microglia handle and remove these toxic amyloid peptides. These findings suggest that therapeutic interventions targeting microglia and other immune cells

Continued on page 16

RIDGE STREET GARDENS

Waiting list has been re-opened and applications are now available for **RIDGE STREET GARDENS**, a 99-unit HUD-subsidized building for elderly and frail elderly persons over 62 years old and/or disabled person, with limited income, located at 80 Ridge Street, in Manhattan. Eligibility will be based on Section 8 guidelines and HUD regulations.

Interested persons may obtain an application by writing to:

RIDGE STREET GARDENS

Management Office
80 Ridge Street
New York, NY 10002

Completed applications must be sent by regular mail to the address indicated on the application. Duplicate applications will be dropped to the bottom of the list. Completed applications should be postmarked no later than October 30th, 2020.



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DRNY Finds Restraint Chair Abuse in New York Jails

Disability Rights New York has published a report outlining the connection between use of restraint chairs and people with mental health histories in New York county jails. DRNY reviewed data from hundreds of incident reports in 2017 and 2018 and conducted in-depth investigations into several incidents from 2016 through 2019. Based on its findings, DRNY has proposed

that New York State and its counties take immediate steps to ban their use altogether, which is consistent with the United Nations Committee Against Torture’s May 2000 recommendation to ban use of restraint chairs as methods of constraint.

DRNY investigated several instances of restraint chair use on people with mental

Continued on page 17

NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Scholarship Winners

The American Association of People with Disabilities has announced the recipients of the 2020 NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship.

The NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Scholarship, named for a former United States Representative from California and the primary author and sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act, is made possible by support from NBCUniversal.

Maria Town, AAPD president & CEO, said, "AAPD is grateful to NBCUniversal for the opportunity for us to support these talented and diverse students with disabilities as they pursue their degrees and advance disability representation in media, entertainment, and commu-

nications. Each of this year's recipients is already engaged in fantastic work through filmmaking, performance, design, and more. We hope this scholarship will bolster opportunities for the Tony Coelho Media Scholarship recipients to advance their knowledge, skills, and careers."

The scholarship program provides support to undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities who are interested in pursuing a career in communications, media or entertainment.

Award recipients received \$5,625 each to help cover the cost of education at their current college or university.

The 2020 scholarship recipients are:

Sianna Eldert – Full Sail Univ.

Sianna Eldert is 17 years old and is attending Full Sail University this fall. She will be working toward a B.S. in media communications.

Ashlyn Guidry

University of New Orleans

Ashlyn Guidry is an aspiring filmmaker who wants to make films that represent the marginalized communities. She attends the University of New Orleans where she is pursuing her M.F.A. in film production.

Cassidy Huff – AMDA

College of the Performing Arts

Cassidy Huff is an 18-year-old singer-songwriter and actress from Seattle. Huff has performed on stages all over the world including the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles and Lincoln Center in New York City.

**Kristin Kumagawa
Chapman University**

Kristin Kumagawa is a rising sophomore at Chapman University and hopes to graduate as a double major in communication and public relations and advertising. She was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus in 2014.

**Barbara Rivera
American University**

Raised in Carolina, Puerto Rico, Rivera's goal in the future is to obtain direct experience in media where she can showcase various disabilities in an accurate and positive light.

Tyler Schulze–Liberty Univ.

Tyler Schulze is a 22-year-old undergraduate student majoring in film production and content development with a

Continued on page 16

Nonprofit Advocates for Better Long-Term Care

The nonprofit Hand in Hand: the Domestic Employers Network has launched a separate 501-c4 organization that will focus on endorsing and supporting state legislative candidates who are committed to spurring greater investment in home care.

The new organization, Caring Majority Rising, will work to see candidates elected who urge better protections for home care workers as well as seniors and people with disabilities who rely on such services to live healthfully in their communities.

The effort comes as the pandemic has led to widespread deaths in nursing

homes, and the home care sector remains underfunded. "More than ever we need to invest in home care," said Ilana Berger, New York director of Hand in Hand and Caring Majority Rising. "One part of the fight to build a real long-term care infrastructure is building political power and electing people who will champion these issues."

Goals of the organization include ensuring quality home and community-based care for all who need it, regardless of income, as well as securing living wages and benefits for home care workers, personal assistants, family caregivers and other

domestic workers. The organization also supports long-term care, upping taxes on the wealthy to invest in essential programs and combating health inequities that affect access to care.

Those benchmarks could be achieved in part through increasing wages for home care workers to at least 150 percent of the highest minimum wage in each region

Continued on page 18

FCC Extends TRS Waivers

The FCC has released an order extending temporary waivers through Nov. 30 for telecommunications relay services providers to ensure relay services remain available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These waivers allow TRS providers flexibility to deal with reduced staffing and increased call volumes, to enable more of their employees to provide services from their homes, to expand the pool of contractors qualified to provide American Sign Language interpretation services for Video Relay Service

and to allow registered VRS users who are abroad to make calls to the U.S. during the national emergency.

General information on TRS is available at <https://www.fcc.gov/trs>. For further information, contact Bill Wallace, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, at 202 418-2716, or William.Wallace@fcc.gov. Individuals who use videophones and are fluent in American Sign Language may call the FCC's ASL Consumer Support Line at 844 432-2275 (videophone).



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SPORTS SCENE

9 N.Y. Schools Named Unified Champions

Nine New York high schools—including Southampton High School—have been named as National Banner Unified Champion Schools in recognition of their leadership in creating an inclusive school community where all students are accepted, celebrated and included. The distinction marks the highest level of achievement for Unified Champion Schools in the nation.

Schools achieving banner status in addition to Southampton are Churchville-Chili, Horseheads, Irondequot, Newark and Victor in the Genesee Region, Starpoint in Western New York, Ithaca in Central New York and Saratoga Springs in the Capital Region.

In a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, stu-

dents with and without intellectual disabilities play on the same interscholastic sports team, primarily basketball and bowling. These same students also serve as youth leaders who engage the entire school community in activities that encourage and promote inclusion among their peers.

“Students, coaches and educators in more than 10,000 Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools across the country are changing a generation by choosing to include all students in all activities, and our banner schools in New York are the best of the best,” said Special Olympics New York president and CEO Stacey Hengsterman.

Statewide, Special Olympics New York partners with more than 220 Unified Champion Schools and nearly 10,000 par-

ticipating students. Upstate, a partnership with the New York State Public High School Athletic Association has led to rapid Unified growth in recent years.

“There’s nothing more rewarding than being a Special Olympics New York coach,” said Unified Coach Brian Tenuity. “Every day, I see teammates with and without intellectual disabilities forming real connections by training and competing together. That connection, and that confidence, transcend the playing field. By creating an inclusive atmosphere where people of all abilities train and compete together, you expand the athletes’ comfort zone, you build their confidence, and you expand their community. My athletes walk out into the world and they feel confident because of this program.”

A Unified Champion School

receiving national banner recognition is one that has demonstrated the highest commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 standards of excellence. The standards were developed by a panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community nationally. The primary activities within these standards include: Special Olympics Unified Sports (where students with and without disabilities train and compete as teammates), Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole-School Engagement. To achieve banner status, Unified Champion Schools must also demonstrate that they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future.

To get involved in Unified Sports with Special Olympics New York, visit specialolympics-ny.org/unified or send an email to unified@nyso.org.

Rugby Player Has Sights on Tokyo



Liz Dunn

Pennsylvania native Liz Dunn is planning to be part of the American Paralympics team, which is scheduled to compete for the gold ribbon in Tokyo in 2021. She is just the second woman ever to be named to the USA Wheelchair Rugby national team.

The 29-year-old who lives in Pittsburgh went to a tryout and continued to attend camps until she was one of 16 athletes selected from a camp last December to be part of the Paralympic Training Team, from which 12 athletes were to be selected to go to Tokyo.

Things have been on hold with the team since COVID-19 started, partly because those with spinal cord injuries are in a high-risk category for complications from the disease. They have been meeting virtually, however.

“We have weekly phone calls through Zoom where we’ll get together and talk about what we can do to improve, watch video clips and film together,” she said. “Then we have monthly meetings with all the staff and team. We’re still able to communicate even though we can’t be together in person.”

When she’s not playing, Dunn works at the University of Pittsburgh’s Model Center on Spinal Cord Injury as a research associate. One current project follows up with patients one year after injury and then once every five years so researchers can use the data to find trends.

“We have people that are 10, 15 years into the study and we’re starting to follow up with people in their 20th year,” said Dunn, who has a master’s degree in nutrition and dietetics.

DESIGNS 4 LIVING

SUMMER 2020

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Look for our Magazine **DESIGNS 4 LIVING** coming out this July. Read our Contributors Stories, Accessible Home Design and So Much More.

Visit us and view our E-Magazine at BRICKHOUSEDESIGNS.NET

NEW DEATH VALLEY ACCESS GUIDE RELEASED

Now that Death Valley National Park has largely reopened after the COVID-19 shutdown, accessible travel expert Candy Harrington announces the release of her latest guidebook, "Barrier-Free Travel; Death Valley National Park for Wheelers and Slow Walkers." This access guide contains access details on all trails, attractions, and scenic drives; photos and descriptions of all accessible in-park lodging options; wheelchair-accessible attractions in gateway cities; fly-drive resources, including the location of nearby airports, and the availability of wheelchair-accessible van rentals; and information on special access passes, discounts and permits. Barrier-Free Travel; Death Valley National Park for Wheelers and Slow Walkers (\$9.95, ISBN: 978-0-9985103-7-8) is available at www.BarrierFreeDeathValley.com.

FCC CELEBRATES 21ST CENTURY ACCESSIBILITY ACT

The FCC will recognize the tenth anniversary of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act on Oct. 8 from 2-4 p.m. The FCC will host the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility and a discussion panel to highlight milestones achieved under the CVAA.

Open captioning will be provided. Other reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Email fcc504@fcc.gov or call 202 418-0530 (voice), include a description of the accommodation needed and give a contact number. Make requests as early as possible — last minute requests will be accepted but may be impossible to fill.

Registration is not required. To watch, visit <http://www.fcc.gov/live>. Email questions to livequestions@fcc.gov.

FEMA HAS PREPAREDNESS TIPS ON WEBSITE

The FEMA Region II Individual and Community Preparedness program prepares communities for disasters by providing useful information and training, inspiring people to take steps to be ready for emergencies.

In their biweekly bulletin, there are preparedness tips, upcoming webinars and events, grant opportunities and trainings to help people be better prepared.

Sign up for the FEMA Region II Preparedness and Resilience program at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/signup/13827>.

MOPD WORKING WITH NYC ON PHASE 4 OF REOPENING

NYC is in phase 4 of re-opening the city, except for indoor dining. The Mayor's Office of Disabilities has been working closely with the decision makers in this process and advocating that physical accessibility be included and maintained as they make these adjustments.

Some cultural venues, like zoos and botanical gardens, can open for outdoor activities at 33 percent of the venues' total capacity. Professional sports can resume, but without fans. Media production also gets a green light.

That's in addition to all the things that have opened in previous phases, such as outdoor dining, offices and personal care services, including hair and nail salons. Indoor dining is still not permitted.

Anyone who sees any accessibility violations should report them to 311.

AAPD OFFERING PAID SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

Paid summer internships are being offered by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) for college students and graduate students with all disabilities.

They will be placed in congressional offices, federal agencies, nonprofits and for-profit organizations within the area of Washington, D.C. Each intern is matched with a mentor who provides them with career guidance. They are also provided with a stipend, transportation and accessible housing.

The application deadline is Oct. 28. For information, visit www.aapd1995.wufoo.com/forms/q1wexxtr093rnp5.

HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 WITH FACE MASKS

The Spina Bifida Resource Network has acquired packages of five white cloth masks from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services "Project: America Strong," which can be mailed to households.

The masks are free. They have a cotton face with polyester elastic and do contain silver and copper. They can be machine washed up to 15 times.

Persons with spina bifida or other disabilities or who live in households with a person with spina bifida or other disability and are in need of masks, please fill out the information and they will send you a package. Limit is one per household.

For information visit www.thesbrn.org or call 908 782-7475.

BLACK LIVES MATTER OFFERS PSA FOR THE DEAF

"Unspeakable" is a 60-second public service announcement (PSA) that assembles diverse individuals of the deaf community. This digital presentation amplifies the voices to collectively proclaim through American Sign Language that Black Lives Matter. It is estimated that one-third to one-half of those who are killed by police have disabilities. Eric Garner, Freddie Grey, Sandra Bland, Tanesha Anderson all had disabilities, as did many more.

Written and directed by Emmy award-winner Emmai Alaquiva and a team of collaborators, this video features a diverse cast composed of members of the Pittsburgh deaf community. They collectively proclaim, through American Sign Language, that changes need to be made when it comes to Black lives.

COMPLAINT FILED AGAINST SSA FOR ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION

United Spinal has filed a complaint with the D.C. U.S. District Court for the alleged unlawful "wet ink" signature requirements imposed on persons with disabilities in connection with applications for certain disability benefits of the Social Security Administration.

United Spinal representatives said they believe the requirements interfere with the ability to pursue rights to federal disability benefits, making a cumbersome application process even more difficult.

LOCATIONS ANNOUNCED FOR COVID-19 TESTING

As the city re-opens people are encouraged to get tested for COVID-19. It's the best way to stop the spread and protect your loved ones, co-workers and fellow New Yorkers.

For testing locations visit www.NYC.gov/COVIDtest, call 311 or text 'COVID Test' to 85548.

NEWSLETTER SHINES LIGHT ON NURSING HOME ABUSE

The Elder Justice Newsletter is published jointly with the Center for Medicare Advocacy. Substandard care and insufficient staffing in nursing homes are widespread and serious problems.

The newsletter highlights citations, including deficiencies related to abuse, neglect, and substandard care; that have been identified as not causing any resident harm.

For more information, visit <https://nursinghome411.org> or email info@ltccc.org

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NYC PARATRANSIT FACING CUTBACKS

Continued from page 4

slashed in half, and much needed capital improvements like subway modernization and new subway cars could be delayed indefinitely. And while municipality rendering equivalent utility services and any communications service provider to have a dedicated, 24/7 staffed telephone line solely for the purpose of allowing customers to report service outages.

The service needs to have adequate/scalable capacity to handle a mass outage event, and the phone number must be conspicuously posted on the provider's website homepage and on page 1 of the customer's bill.

No Service, No Charge

Would create a discount on a consumer's bill proportionate to the amount of time the customer was without service through no fault of their own.

Would require that those with a documented need for electrical service to maintain their physical health and well-being be provided alternate sources of power or other accommodations in the event that service cannot be restored within a 24 hour period.

More Accountability

Would add individuals to the list of those who can report

downed power lines to an electric company to start the 36-hour window for that power line to be secured safely. Current law only allows municipal officers to start the time window, slowing the official response to these dangerous situations.

Setting Standards

Creates a definition for medical needs that encompasses a

IMMUNE SYSTEM AND ALZHEIMER'S

Continued from page 12

could be a way to combat Alzheimer's, but this research is still in its infancy," she said.

"We are excited by this team's innovative approach to Alzheimer's disease," said Charles Fuschillo Jr., AFA president and CEO. "We understand there is much work to be done in the area of immunity and inflammatory processes of the brain and inspired by Beth Stevens and her team's game plan that could lead to identifying biomarkers for early detection and guide treatment. Lack of progress for a cure demands new strategies to understand this devastating disease. It's a major growing threat to families worldwide."

The Broad Institute will leverage new single-cell RNA sequenc-

ing tools that allow deep characterization of individual microglia and immune cells. This could lead to new biological insight and inform the identification of biomarkers used for early detection and monitoring of progression and therapies.

ing tools that allow deep characterization of individual microglia and immune cells.

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NBC UNIVERSAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Continued from page 13

focus on screenwriting. He has worked on film

Andrew Tilloston

Northern Illinois University

Andrew "Ondrew" Tillotson is an aspiring data scientist, political organizer, and activist dedicated to fighting socioeconomic and environmental injustice.

A recent graduate of the University of Minnesota, Tillotson

was president and first-ever advocacy coordinator at the Disabled Student Cultural Center.

The key partner on this study is One Mind, a lived-experience-led brain health nonprofit, which is accelerating discoveries by funding and convening scientists in collaborative research for breakthroughs that patients can use.

was president and first-ever advocacy coordinator at the Disabled Student Cultural Center.

Jessie Zhang

University of Washington

Jessie Zhang is a deaf and hard of hearing second generation Chinese American. Born in Boston, she attended the University of Washington in Seattle to pursue her B.S. in informatics and a minor in diversity.

Plaza Apartments

Waiting list for **Plaza Apartments** will be **closed** on Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 5:00pm.

All completed applications must be sent by regular mail postmarked no later than the date specified above to:

Plaza Apartments
Management Office
5302 6th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11220

No applications will be received or distributed after 5:00pm on September 15, 2020.

If you have a disability and need assistance with the application process, please contact Sheena Williams at (718) 567-8272.



Sixth Avenue Rehab

Applications are now available for **Sixth Avenue Rehab**, a 45-unit HUD-subsidized building designed for any very low-income family household, located at in Brooklyn. Eligibility will be based on Section 8 guidelines and HUD regulations.

Interested persons may obtain an application by writing to:

Sixth Avenue Rehab

Leasing Office
5302 6th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11220

Completed applications must be sent by regular mail to the P.O. Box indicated on the application. Duplicate applications will be dropped to the bottom of the list. Completed applications should be received no later than the deadline date of November 30, 2020.

If you have a disability and need assistance with the application process, please contact Sheena Williams at (718) 567-8272.



PERSONAL PLACE

MEET A COMPANION, PHONE FRIEND, PEN PAL, OR EVEN A SPOUSE

Professional man seeks nice lady for long term serious relationship. Please include phone number. Serious replies only.. **A399**

SWM 71, looking for a phone friend. Male or Female. **A398**

I am a pretty Asian American lady in her 50's. I look Latin. 5ft 5 inches tall, looking for a pen pal or companionship with a man age 47 to 62 yrs., who likes museums, comedy clubs, board games, nature , art, music, talking and golf. I am college educated . Please provide phone number and photo. **A397**

SWM, 56, wheelchair user, seeks single female 40-55 for friendship and more. Into baseball, fishing, comedy clubs. I live in Sayville, NY. I do not drive. Send photo and phone number. **A396**

Senior Female, Nassau, looking for senior male to enjoy simple things in life, family, hugs, walking WHLI, Platters. **A395**

A God-fearing SBM, 41 seeking a God-fearing woman for long term relationship, and to spend the rest of my life with. I love going out to the movies and listening to music. I do not drive. **A394**

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RESTRAINT CHAIR ABUSE

Continued from page 12

illness, reviewing all clinical and custodial records, including full incident reports. Five case summaries fully explore the association between treatment delays and restraint chair use. People with mental health histories accounted for more than two-thirds of restraint chair use statewide in both 2017 and 2018. DRNY also reviewed data where re-

straint chairs were used as one element of a multiple use of force — specifically, other restraints, chemical agents and stun devices. Nearly 56 percent of the total incidents of restraint chair use on individuals with mental health histories also involved other restraint use.

“New York State must ban the use of restraint chairs. They

are frequently used because there is a critical lack of effective mental health treatment for people in jails,” said DRNY executive director Tim Clune.

Despite a 5.4 percent drop in county jail populations outside New York City, incidents involving the use of a restraint chair increased by 23 percent from 2017 to 2018. Restraint chair incidents involving peo-

ple with mental health histories increased at significantly higher rates than for people with no such histories.

No statewide standards exist restricting its use in jails. Moreover, restraint chair use in a correctional setting is not subject to federal and state regulations governing restraint practices in inpatient psychiatric settings.

THE ACCESS INDEX

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OR by email to ableangela@aol.com

DEADLINE:

The 10th day of the month prior to publication

AUTOMOBILE ACCESSIBILITY

Continued from page 10

is a cornerstone of participation today and present options do not meet the disability communities' needs. No major manufacturer producing a vehicle for sale to the consumer is built with accessibility as a cornerstone of the user experience. Further,

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS

Continued from page 10

more often; if water is not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Make sure they're using a safe product. FDA provides a list of hand sanitizers consumers should not use; adults should monitor children while they use hand sanitizer and it should be stored out of their reach; maintain a recommended physical distance from other people, including students; wear a mask; avoid sharing objects with other students, including water bottles, devices, writing instruments and books; monitor how they feel and tell an

no major automaker produces a purpose-built light duty vehicle that can accommodate a wheelchair user.

The average wheelchair user is forced to spend between \$10,000-\$30,000 on substantial modifications to purchase a vehicle that is ac-

cessible. This price tag is often too high for the average person.

adult if they are not feeling well. Develop daily routines before and after school – for example, things to pack for school in the morning (like hand sanitizer and a backup mask) and things to do when returning home (like washing hands immediately and washing worn cloth masks). Wash hands immediately after taking off a mask.

Be familiar with the school's communication plan for when a positive case or exposure to someone with COVID-19 is identified and ensure student privacy is upheld.

For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov>.

cessible. This price tag is often too high for the average person.

For others, such as those in the blind community, who are currently unable to attain a driver's license the AV technology currently under development by auto manufacturing companies holds the promise to help millions of people gain access to new transportation options. And with billions of dollars being invested in developing this new technology, this moment presents the opportunity to

ADVOCATES FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Continued from page 13

of the state, the organization said, and passing the New York Health Act for a single-payer health plan, with long-term care included from the start.

Additionally, passing the NY Essential Care Act would help, the organization spokesperson said. The act is a package of six bills designed to help roll back policies that push seniors into

ensure that new vehicle designs-autonomous or driven by humans-are accessible to all. The goal is full production of light-duty passenger vehicles that are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities.

As part of its role as convener of the We Will Ride campaign, AAPD developed the scorecard to track automotive industry progress toward creating an accessible vehicle. The scorecard was first announced in 2019, on the 29th anniversary of the passage of the ADA.

nursing homes. The proposed legislation also outlines protections for workers during the pandemic and beyond.

"The apex of the aging boom is going to hit in about 10 years," Berger said, adding that elected leaders can't continue to put off the issues of insufficient supports for long-term care and workforce shortages.

SPORTS SCENE

Rolling Fury Back On Courts



Head coach Chris Bacon, front left back to camera, and assistant coach Chris Noel, to his right, talk with parents and players during basketball clinic.



Players, left to right, Austin Bird, Louis Dallojacono and Emma D'Antonio participate in basketball clinics.

Participants of the New York Rolling Fury Wheelchair Basketball Organization have been enjoying outdoor youth clinics on Saturdays at the Triassic Playground Basketball Courts in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

Founder and coach Chris Bacon said that during the clinics everyone practices social distancing, uses hand sanitizer and wears their masks. Bacon wants the children to stay as active as they safely can, so they can stay healthy and not gain weight.

"This was a safe way to have kids exercise amongst their peers while also giving parents a chance to take a break.

It takes a village, but it can be done successfully with safety coming first and being a priority," said Bacon. "It's not as easy for a child with a disability to have enough space to roam around indoors while quarantining during the pandemic, especially if they use a mobility device such as a wheelchair."

Many parents agree and are grateful for the program.

"Sebastian had a good time but sore which is a good thing. It's waking up muscles that haven't been used in a long time," said Gloria Dinzey, mother of Sebastian Milan.

"Michael is feeling great, can't wait for next Saturday,"

said Valerie Abrams, mother of Michael Abrams.

"Moustafa was feeling good afterwards. We were glad to participate and see so many new

participants adding to the Fury family," said Mona Saad, mother of Moustafa "Moose" Eldeeb.

For information on contact Chris Bacon, 516 582-8936.

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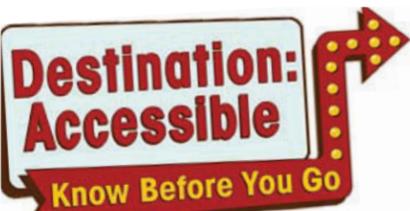
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