Through the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Awards, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) recognizes emerging leaders with disabilities who exemplify leadership, advocacy and dedication to the broader cross-disability community.

Two individuals each receive $2,500 in recognition of their outstanding contributions and $7,500 to further a new or existing initiative that increases the political and economic power of people with disabilities.

The 2021 awards go to Elijah Armstrong and Noor Pervez.

**Elijah Armstrong**

Armstrong is an activist from Jacksonville, Florida, who received his bachelor’s degree in education and public policy from Penn State in 201, and his masters of education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2020.

With the funds from the 2021 Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award, Armstrong is going to start the Judy Heumann Award for Education Activism.

This will give monetary awards to students who have experienced ableism in education, while also driving a conversation around ableism in education that is centered around the experience of students with disabilities.

Armstrong has epilepsy and was denied accommodations in high school he was thus motivated to prevent the same thing from happening to other students. He founded Equal

Continued on page 16
Hello everyone:

With each passing month we move closer to returning life as normal. As of Feb. 14, individuals with certain "underlying conditions" as defined by New York State are now eligible to make an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Underlying Conditions that are included in the State’s current eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine are:

- Cancer (current or in remission, including 911-related)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Pulmonary disease, including but not limited to COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma (moderate-to-severe), pulmonary fibrosis, cystic fibrosis and 9/11-related pulmonary diseases
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities including Down syndrome
- Heart conditions, including but not limited to heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies or hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system), including but not limited to solid organ transplant or from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, use of other immune weakening medicines or other causes
- Severe obesity (body mass index of 40 kg/m2 or higher), obesity (body mass index of between 30 kg/m2 and 40 kg/m2)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Type 1 or 2 diabetes mellitus
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Neurologic conditions including but not limited to Alzheimers’s disease or dementia
- Liver disease

If you qualify for the vaccine based on one of the above underlying conditions, you can make an appointment by visiting nyc.gov/covidvaccine or calling 1-877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4682). Please be aware that appointments may be limited at this time, but please do check the website and calling if you are eligible.

When you schedule your vaccination appointment, you must certify you have one of the above underlying conditions. Specifically you’ll need to sign or agree to an attestation that you are eligible. You will not need a doctor’s note or other proof of your condition to get a vaccine in NYC.

You may be required to certify your condition if you are vaccinated by your usual health care provider.

As eligibility has expanded, many questions have been raised by the disability community about accessibility, accommodations and the process of signing up.

To keep all of the answers in one place, MOPD has created a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions by the Disability Community. To view this webpage visit NYC.gov/disability-coronavirus, expand the “Vaccine” category and select the link to the Q&A document.

As many of us are waiting for eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine, it is more important than ever to follow the core four principles to stop the spread.

- Stay home if you are sick
- Keep physical distancing
- Keep hands clean (wash hands often)
- Wear a mask or face covering if you are able to do so

Thank you for your support and your advocacy during this critical time.

Ciao,
Commissioner
Victor Calise

Games For The Physically Challenged Postponed

The Nassau County Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged will be postponed again this year according to a statement from County Exec. Laura Curran’s office.

“Due to the continued prevalence of COVID-19 and with the health and safety of our athletes and volunteers our top priority, Nassau County will be postponing the 2021 Games until June 2022,” said the County Executive’s statement.

“We thank everyone for their continued support of this great program and we hope that everyone will join us again next year.”

The annual event which began in 1985 hosts 1,100 children with disabilities each year for Olympic-style competition including track & field, swimming, table tennis, wheelchair basketball and archery.

The Deadline for the April Issue of Able Newspaper Will Be March 9

From The Commissioner’s Desk

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Advocates Urge Biden to Take Action

In a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Acting Secretary Norris Cochran, two leading Medicare beneficiary advocacy organizations, the Medicare Rights Center and the Center for Medicare Advocacy, urged the Biden Administration to take action to strengthen Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.

The letter asked for simplifying Medicare transitions during the COVID-19 public health emergency, enhancing Medicare outreach and enrollment strategies and increasing regulatory review efforts. Looming deadlines and unmet needs make these improvements urgent, the letter stated.

To ensure that all Medicare-eligible individuals can access their earned Medicare benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge HHS to reinstate and strengthen COVID-19 Medicare Enrollment Flexibilities, like those provided to Affordable Care Act plans in an Executive Order issued Jan. 28; define “hospital inpatient” to counteract the harm caused by hospital “outpatient observation status;” implement Telehealth flexibilities concerning Speech Generation Devices (SGDs), to prevent people who need such devices from having to access in-person care.

With respect to Medicare outreach and enrollment, the advocates requested HHS to launch implementation of the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act and guarantee objectionivity in consumer tools that in recent years have inappropriately steered people toward enrollment in Medicare Advantage (MA) plans.

To stop harmful and often last-minute policies issued by the Trump Administration, the advocates called on HHS to include the actions as part of their regulatory review process.

They asked for a pause to the New “Geo” Demonstration Model and the Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO)-based Direct Contracting Entity model; revise the Medicare Part D model that weakens the protected drug classes guarantee; suspend expansion of the Medicare Home Health Value-Based Purchasing Model (HHVBPM) (which limits access to home care for those with longer term and chronic conditions).

They also requested rescinding provisions of the final 2021 Medicare Part C & D rule, which, among other things, further complicates the Part D benefit by adding another specialty drug tier, and weakens the distinction between educational and marketing events; and rescind the SUNSET rule, which puts an arbitrary expiration date on almost all regulations issued by HHS.

With respect to policies outside of Medicare, the organizations urge HHS to ensure access to www.healthcare.gov, revoke changes to Medicaid Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements and restore Medicaid safeguards.

Wheelchair Users Win Protections From DOH

A string of complaints from people with disabilities whose Medicaid insurance plans would not cover wheelchairs appropriate to their needs has led to new guidelines that took effect last month.

For years, vague and conflicting language in New York State’s Medicaid law has encouraged insurance plans to refuse to pay for wheelchairs needed for use outside a person’s home, leaving many with disabilities stranded.

One man with cerebral palsy who is able to get around his home with a walker but who needs a wheelchair to venture outside his home was told by his insurer that Medicaid does not pay for wheelchairs for use outside the home, a position not supported by current regulations.

While the decision denying the man a wheelchair was reversed at a fair hearing and he eventually got the equipment he needed, that process took seven months after his doctor requested that he be provided a wheelchair.

Sharifa Abu-Hamda, president of the Civics League for Disability Rights, asked state Medicaid Dir. Donna Frescatore and Jean Minkel, an assistive technology expert from Independence Care System (ICS) for a meeting to discuss the problem. Together, they developed recommendations that led to the new guidelines.

The updated Medicaid guidelines will help enable New Yorkers with mobility disabilities to lead more independent lives, Victor Calise, commissioner of the New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, said. “As a wheelchair user myself, I know firsthand how critical they are in everyday life, so these changes will ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the right mobility aids regardless of their level of ambulation inside their home.”

Susan Dooha, executive director of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York, agrees. “This is great news for New Yorkers who use wheelchairs in order to live their lives. The ability to travel outside one’s own home is an essential part of independent living. With this Medicaid update, we’ve taken one more step in ensuring all people can live their lives independently,” she said.

BOCES Students Build Accessibility Website

The students of Rockland BOCES Hudson Valley P-TECH, in association with BRIDGES, have launched a new website called www.UAccessLife.org, which assigns a score to public spaces in and around Rockland County based on accessibility. These scores provide ratings on different accessibility features such as wheelchair accessibility, BRIDGES’ missing lighting and noise levels to those with various disabilities.

The website was developed by a group of high school students at Hudson Valley P-TECH for BRIDGES, a community-based, peer-driven, cross-disability, not-for-profit organization dedicated to advocacy and leadership on behalf of people with disabilities. The site supports education to empower people with disabilities to make autonomous decisions and lead an independent life.
Andrew Imparato, executive director of Disability Rights California, DRC is one of 12 named as non-federal members of the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force, chaired by Marcella Nuñez-Smith. The task force will provide recommendations for addressing health inequities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and for preventing such inequities in the future.

“I’m so honored and humbled to have been selected by President Biden to serve on the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force,” Imparato said. He is a disability rights lawyer who has spearheaded advocacy on crisis standards of care and other factors.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague the country, it has had a disproportionate impact on some of the most vulnerable communities. Shortly after COVID-19 was first identified in the United States, disparities in testing, cases, hospitalizations and mortality began to emerge. These inequities were quickly evident by race, ethnicity, geography, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and other factors.

The twelve task force members represent a diversity of backgrounds and expertise, a range of racial and ethnic groups, and several important populations, including children and youth; educators and students; health care providers; immigrants; individuals with disabilities; LGBTQ+ individuals; public health experts; rural communities; state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments; and unions.

The twelve task force members are:

- Andrew Imparato, executive director of Disability Rights California
- Anne Halsband, President & CEO, Arc of the USA
- Peter Berns, CEO of the Arc
- Michael H. Fix, Director of the Center on_pkmporation of Crisis Standards of Care May Lead to Intersectional Medical Discrimination Against COVID-19 Patients."

Crisis standards of care are used to decide who should receive priority for treatment when there are not enough resources to serve everyone. The report explores and addresses how crisis standards of care may perpetuate medical discrimination against people with disabilities, older adults, higher weight people, as well as Black, Indigenous and other people of color in hospital care.

Many face pervasive negative biases and inaccurate assumptions about their value, quality of life, capacity to communicate and make decisions and likelihood of survival. During this pandemic, these biases can have deadly consequences when hospitals must make decisions about which critically ill patients should receive treatment.

The report provides an explanation of crisis standards of care policies implemented by states and hospital systems and how they may discriminate against marginalized individuals and communities; the principles that should apply to prevent discrimination; the relevant civil rights legal framework; and recommended strategies to ensure that crisis standards do not discriminate during the pandemic or in the future. The report highlights the deaths of Michael Hickson, a Black father of five with multiple disabilities, and Sarah McSweeney, a woman with significant disabilities, who were denied life-sustaining treatment by physicians who expressed clear biases regarding the value of their lives.

“This pandemic has highlighted existing health inequities and deeply entrenched medical biases that threaten the lives of marginalized individuals and communities,” said Peter Berns, CEO of the Arc. “The Arc has worked hard to advocate for individuals with disabilities during this pandemic and we hope that this report will educate a variety of stakeholders on how to prevent bias and stereotypes from seeping into the medical decision-making process.”

The history of medicine has long discarded the lives of disabled Black, Indigenous and

Continued on page 16
Attorneys have filed a major class-action lawsuit challenging New York City’s segregated school system for students with disabilities on Staten Island.

The lawsuit alleges that the borough’s separate school district for children with disabilities, known as District 75, denies these students an equal education, forcing them into segregated schools and classrooms without adequate resources and with no meaningful opportunity to be integrated into their community schools.

The plaintiffs (three Staten Island students with disabilities) and the advocacy group Disability Rights New York are not seeking monetary damages. Rather, they seek reforms that will compel the New York City Department of Education to provide the resources necessary so that every Staten Island District 75 student can attend their neighborhood schools if they choose.

Many Staten Island District 75 students attend schools located outside their communities and spend two hours or more commuting to school every day.

“The law guarantees all students a meaningful opportunity for community integration and this segregated system completely shatters that promise,” said Emily Seelenfreund, staff attorney at Disability Rights Advocates (DRA). “Students with disabilities deserve a rigorous education, and they are entitled to choose to receive that education alongside their neighborhood peers with and without disabilities.

The City must immediately invest in providing more supportive services in Staten Island community schools, so all students have the option of an integrated educational placement.”

Research has long shown that students with disabilities score higher on academic achievement tests and are more likely to graduate with a diploma as well as maintain employment when they learn in an integrated learning environment with students without disabilities. However, in many cases, being labeled as having a particular disability or needing certain supportive services has meant an automatic segregated Staten Island District 75 placement.

The plaintiffs’ complaint alleges that Staten Island District 75 students have unequal access or no access at all to school facilities, such as playgrounds, cafeterias, libraries, electives like music and art classes, and extracurricular activities like clubs and sports teams. Very few District 75 students graduate with a regular diploma, and Black students with disabilities are overrepresented in segregated District 75 schools. This lawsuit will support students with disabilities and their parents in securing quality, inclusive education in Staten Island community schools with their siblings and neighbors.

New York City has been on notice with concerns about District 75 since at least 2008, when the Council for Great City Schools issued its City-commissioned report, “Improving Special Education in New York City’s District 75.”

According to the report, “the isolation of students [is] more pronounced in the New York City school system than in other major urban school systems known to the team…leaving District 75 alone is not acceptable.”

New York education and disability advocates have also sought reforms to District 75 but the City has continued to maintain the segregated District 75 system, instead of providing expertise and resources to Staten Island community schools so that they can enroll District 75 students.
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Civilly Disobedient

BY JAMES WEISMAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

On Sept. 30, 1981, retiring United Spinal board member Denise McQuade made headlines. The first lift-equipped buses had arrived in New York City. A short-lived rule, implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, requiring accessible buses, put out by the Carter administration and promptly repealed by the succeeding Reagan administration, required lifts on half of all new buses. These buses were ordered pre-repeal and during the pendency of Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association’s (EPVA, now called United Spinal Association) lawsuit against the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

Incredibly, the MTA Board, which had been resisting access consistently since the 1970s, had lift-equipped buses driving all over New York City, but would not issue keys to the lifts to drivers or train them in their use. The federal government was requiring MTA to buy accessible buses, but the MTA Board, in its wisdom, refused to allow wheelchair users to board using them. Sounds stupid, but this was their policy.

Back to Denise McQuade. Denise, who was then coordinator of services at Independent Living for Handicapped, Inc. in Brooklyn, was on Broadway at 50th St. in Manhattan. A lift-equipped bus pulled in with just its front end at the curb and its rear end blocking traffic on Broadway. Denise, a post-polio manual wheelchair user, asked the driver to operate the lift so she could board. When he said he didn’t have the key, Denise quickly transferred from her chair to the bottom step of the bus. She said she would not move until she could board.

I received a call to come to the scene and when I arrived, the police were trying to talk Denise off the step and back into her chair. I explained to the police that it is the driver and the MTA violating New York law, which prohibited denials of admission to places of public accommodation (including public conveyances) based on disability.

The stand-off lasted 7 1/2 hours, and eventually, she was boarded to applause from a crowd. Arnold Diaz, now famous for his “Shame on You” TV journalism, was a young TV reporter. He took Denise’s side in his coverage. EPVA sued MTA in September 1979. Diaz’s 1981 coverage was the first positive reporting about disabled access to mass transit, and it was two years into the suit. Until then, all coverage made mass transit access sound like an expensive folly.

The Disabled in Action Singers immortalized her in a song called “Denise and the MTA,” and subtitled, “A true story of a woman in a wheelchair who performed a dramatic act of civil disobedience.”

This was not my introduction to Denise McQuade, however. In 1978, I received a call from a disability advocate telling me there was a demonstration on First Avenue near the U.N. The police were refusing to arrest Denise McQuade dog story. I didn’t think she needed a lawyer to help her get arrested, but I understood her frustration.

Denise left the independent living center for which she worked and took a job at, of all places, New York City Transit (NYCT) in its paratransit division. She worked for years laboring on behalf of our community, opening eyes at transit and educating and assisting those with problems.

Continued on page 15
Arroyo Named MTA Chief Accessibility Officer

MTA has named Quemuel Arroyo to the position of chief accessibility officer. He is responsible for all matters pertaining to accessibility and will report directly to MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick Foye.

In addition to fashioning authority-wide policy and initiatives in the accessibility space, Arroyo will serve as a key point of contact for the region’s diverse community of disability rights advocates. He previously served in a similar capacity at the New York City Department of Transportation and most recently was interim president and global head of community government relations.

“Quemuel is immensely talented and will provide invaluable strategic guidance and leadership on a range of accessibility related endeavors,” Foye said. “The MTA has made critical strides on accessibility issues in recent years, particularly in the realm of expanding the number of accessible subway stations throughout the system and launching innovative pilots that facilitate access to our system for all riders, but we still have much work to be done. Quemuel will help us think more holistically about what accessibility looks like across the system and advance and execute core goals. I look forward to his leadership on this important work.”

“I’m eager to begin my work at the MTA. I am a New Yorker and this is an opportunity of a lifetime,” Arroyo said. “Over the last few years, New York City Transit has made huge strides in assisting riders with disabilities. I look forward to building on the great work already being done and also to expanding the way we think about accessibility so that we can incorporate the commuter railroads into more of our initiatives as well.”

“It is great to see Quemuel Arroyo appointed as the MTA’s Chief Accessibility Officer,” said Victor Calise, MTA board member and commissioner of the New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities. “I have had the pleasure of seeing Quemuel in action while he was with the New York City Department of Transportation where he helped integrate accessibility into our streetscape and improve disability awareness throughout the agency. I look forward to his leadership at the MTA as we work together to achieve our shared goal of full accessibility for people with vision, hearing, mobility and intellectual/developmental disabilities across the entire MTA system.”

In his new role, Arroyo will place a strong emphasis on deploying technology solutions that can be utilized by both New York City Transit and the commuter railroads. He’ll also work to expand public awareness around what constitutes a disability and the various ways in which different disabilities can impact transit riders.

The authority has, in recent years, launched the most ambitious set of capital goals in its history with respect to expanding the number of ADA accessible stations and Arroyo will support MTA Construction & Development in advancing and completing these critical projects.

Arroyo also plans to take on initiatives that assist those with cognitive, visual or hearing disabilities and to improve the ways in which the MTA communicates to customers with disabilities. In this role, he will serve as a conduit between the MTA board, its leadership, the disability community and the public.

Documentary ‘All Riders’ Pays Tribute to Disability Rights Activists

Two years ago, 22-year-old Malaysia Goodson was hauling her one-year-old daughter Rhylee in a stroller down a flight of subway stairs in Midtown Manhattan.

Like 75 percent of the subway stations in New York City, there were no elevators for Goodson to take. Goodson died tumbling down the stairs. Rhylee survived. The shockwaves of this incident rippled across disabled communities in New York who vowed to bring justice for Goodson.

All Riders is a documentary short that thrusts its viewers on the frontlines of the disability rights movement in New York City. Following one of its leaders Sasha Blair Goldensohn, co-founder of the Elevator Action Group at Rise and Resist NY, viewers can see behind the curtain with those that expose and combat the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA).

Granting unparalleled access to the heart of the battle for accessibility in New York City Transit, key subjects include N.Y. State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, former head of Accessibility NYC Transit Alex Elegudin and the family of Malaysia Goodson: Tamika Goodson and Dontaaysia Turner. All Riders presents a microcosm view of this long-standing fight for civil rights between the city’s largest minority group and the MTA. This is available to be seen on Youtube at www.youtu.be/42v-nBqFovhU.
Each day we call people with disabilities in nursing facilities who have asked for help with planning their move home to the community and to greater safety. Too often when we call someone who is poised to go home, we hear “Jim has died.” COVID-19 and nursing home conditions swept him away and his family and friends are devastated, we are devastated. In the last year, the death count has been unprecedented among people who hope to make their simple dream – going home – a reality.

The New York State Attorney General, Tish James, released a report exposing the stunning level of underreporting of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes. The report is stark. It shows the dangerous conditions that nursing facility residents have faced for years.

This is nothing new for our community. We have been fighting these conditions for decades. Fighting to help people leave institutions for their own homes. COVID-19 has made these horrible conditions worse. The rate of death is twice what is reported. Lack of testing, low vaccination rates, missing or reused protective gear, shockingly inadequate infection control and unbelievably low staffing levels have created a crushing wave of deaths.

The time to shift taxpayer resources from sustaining the nursing home industry to supporting people at home is long overdue. Independent Living Centers (ILCs) statewide, including CIDNY, are part of the solution. We are community-based nonprofits run by and for people with disabilities that work with people with disabilities of all ages to ensure we can live like our neighbors and be treated with dignity and respect. We back this up by providing practical education, hands-on navigational help, problem-solving support, and other assistance to help ensure people with disabilities can thrive.

In 2020 alone, we helped 150 people leave nursing facilities for their own homes and many more avoid institutionalization. Because it is very often cheaper to live in the community than in an institution, helping people leave institutions saved state taxpayers nearly $12 million in state Medicaid dollars. New York is facing a budget crisis. Savings to the state would mount if the state flipped the switch from propping up the nursing homes to paying well for high-quality care and support at home and in the community.

New Yorkers want to live at home, not in a home. It’s time for the State’s budget and policies to catch up. People tell us they don’t want to be shut away. They want to live their lives in their own homes.

And, there is a better model of care but we have to make sure that the well paid workforce is there, and get rid of incentives to institutionalize. But lawmakers won’t act without a push.

Your voices can help make the change we want to see. We are many. We make sense. We’re not going away. Let’s make sure that our elected officials hear us and are accountable.

Tell them “Our homes, not nursing homes.”
‘Getting Out There’
When Not Going Out – Networking In A Pandemic

By Jaydan Mitchell

Networking is still possible, and in some ways, even easier. Seize this time to learn, connect, and, most of all, support others. Freelance writing, website building, selling handicrafts – you name it. If there’s something a person has been wanting to try for a while, now might be the time to start. Many professionals are dabbling in new gigs that can be done from home. Freelance writing, website building, selling handicrafts – you name it. Each new customer or client served is a new member of the network. Similarly, taking an online course or pursuing a certification can also grow the circle. New classmates, new connections.

As much as the pandemic has complicated lives, it has also opened up new opportunities. Networking is still possible, and in some ways, even easier. Seize this time to learn, connect, and, most of all, support others. Eventually, the pandemic will decline, but the expert networker will remain a powerful and dynamic professional.

Jaydan Mitchell is Transitions Coordinator, Career and Youth Services, Lighthouse Guild.

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New York’s vaccination process started typically, with confusion, no clear instructions, a chaotic distribution network and an inadequate supply of vaccine. However, the important part of the vaccination rollout was that our front-line workers, doctors, nurses, EMS and their supporting staff were scheduled to be the first in line to receive the vaccine. Rightfully so, as they left their homes, traveling in most cases in public transportation to take care of individuals who are sick and exposed with this deadly virus. These are the same workers that we cheered for every day at 7 p.m. sharp to help uplift them during the darkest days of the pandemic.

This was followed by vaccinating seniors 65 and older. Again this makes logical sense because, this was the population that was more susceptible to the devastating effects of COVID-19 and were more likely to die because of it. Then something started to happen and a pattern started to develop in my mind. The city was prioritizing those who come in contact with the general public like mass transit workers, airline and airport employees, police officers, those who protect and take care of individuals like correction officers, nursing home staff and home care workers and consumer directed personal care workers.

Although the state seemed to have been doing a great job at getting the vaccine to the masses there was a population that was being left out. A lot of people take for granted that they have technology available to them to be able to make appointments to get the vaccine or have a support system, to get their family members to and from these appointments. This is not the case for many seniors or people with disabilities and those with language barriers, who have been left out of the conversation.

Seniors and individuals with disabilities are more likely to be susceptible to COVID-19 effects and are more likely to live on fixed incomes. They do not have access to technology like internet, computers or smart devices and don’t have the support system to help them navigate what is a very complicated vaccination enrollment process.

We kept waiting for weeks as family members and advocates pleaded with our government agencies to help us with this process. Only to be told that they cannot help and we should do the advocating for ourselves.

If the agencies that we are advocating to, who have the contact information to those whom we need to get in contact with and can easily start a dialogue with them cannot help us, then who can? All of our pleas and begging went unanswered or ignored, or we were told that we were asking the wrong agencies for help.

Where I started to really get upset is when our government made the vaccine available to restaurant workers, restaurant delivery drivers and for-hire vehicle drivers making it clear that they cared more about its economy than those who have already been isolated by society in general and now are even more isolated because of the fear of dying from COVID-19. Or maybe it is just ableism – believing that the able-bodied community are more worthy of the vaccine and can benefit more from being vaccinated.

Continued on page 14
Be Prepared

From the COVID-19 pandemic to the most active hurricane season on record and snowfall and freezing temperatures in the southern U.S., recent challenges remind us to be prepared for anything. We should be reviewing our preparedness plans and updating your emergency kit.

For people with access and functional needs who rely on assistance from their caregivers, taking the following steps will help you and your support system develop an effective plan and be ready for any emergency.

Revise your emergency plan. Make sure your information is proofed out throughout the year, especially after a change. Be sure to record your caretakers’ information so they can be reached when needed.

Your plan should include important information like allergies, medications (names, dosages, instructions), information on your medical conditions, dietary preferences and daily routines. Read more at https://www.ready.gov/plan.

If you do not drive, discuss with your support system how you will leave the area if authorities tell you to evacuate. You can ask your local Emergency Management Office if transportation services are available for people with your disability during an emergency evacuation.

Sign up for state or local emergency alert system. Some states have specific alert systems for people with disabilities.

Store your important documents (i.e. Social Security card, birth certificate) in a safe, secured, waterproof place such as a locked safe with the documents sealed in waterproof bags. If you have any digital documents, you can store them on a secure, password-protected jump drive or in the cloud.

Take preparedness steps such as stocking up on food and household items to last for at least two weeks, storing a few weeks’ supply of over-the-counter medications and prescriptions and having batteries for any essential medical equipment.

Learn where and how to use the controls for your water, electricity, gas and sewage system. Contact utility company to tell them your needs especially if you have durable medical equipment.

If you haven’t started an emergency fund, start one immediately. It is extremely important to have spare cash on hand in case you find yourself displaced. Learn how to build your financial resilience: at https://www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness.

Check your insurance plan to see if it covers all disasters – if not, consider another plan or enrolling in dual coverage. Make sure you have recent pictures of your home and property in case you must file a claim. You can add these to your waterproof bag.

Take preparedness steps such as putting files where they may be needed; organize important files into folders; rename and rearrange files; decide what program will open a particular kind of file; and search the entire computer or a specific location for a file. This workshop is for anyone who has trouble finding downloads or needs to de-clutter the documents folder. To register, visit https://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtdyyvQToiETwzI/HWjdXNBzZXF4wr0D2E.

DIY Tactile Drawing

Workshop meets at 7 to 8:30 p.m., Thursday, March 18.

This workshop looks at the things people use and spaces they inhabit with a chance to reimagine a better-designed world for all. Furniture and tools, kitchens and campuses and city streets, nearly everything human beings make and use is assistive technology, meant to bridge the gap between body and world. Yet until, or until, a misfit between

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ICS’ Johnson Appointed to NYSILC, CDPAANYS Roles

Independence Care System (ICS) Advocacy Specialist Marcus Johnson has been appointed to both the New York State Independent Living Council, Inc’s (NYSILC) Executive Committee and the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State’s (CDPAANYS) Consumer Board.

Johnson, a longtime ICS member and disability rights advocate who is also a leader of the Civil League for Disability Rights (CLDR), will continue his advocacy efforts supporting people with disabilities across New York State in both roles.

NYSILC supports the statewide network of Independent Living Centers and increases resources for the independence of people with disabilities in New York, while CDPAANYS, a grassroots campaign, is focused on preserving the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program, a Medicaid-funded program that allows people with chronic illnesses and physical disabilities to hire, train and supervise their own caregivers.

Johnson holds graduate degrees in rehabilitation, counseling and social work. “With all the changes happening in Medicaid and me being an advocacy specialist I know I can help make a change,” Johnson said in an email from ICS. “By being more involved, I can let the CLDR and ICS membership know what’s going on with our ever-changing Medicaid program.

NYPL Offers Technical Zoom Workshops

The New York Public Library is offering the following workshops via Zoom during March.

Organizing and Finding Files in Windows 10 Workshop meets at 2 to 3:30 p.m., Tuesday March 2.

This workshop will prepare participants to put files where they want them; organize important files into folders; rename and rearrange files; decide what program will open a particular kind of file; and search the entire computer or a specific location for a file. This workshop is for anyone who has trouble finding downloads or needs to de-clutter the documents folder. To register, visit their meeting at https://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtdyyvQToiETwzI/HWjdXNBzZXF4wr0D2E.

Book Discussion – What Can A Body Do: How We Meet the Built World By Sara Hendrin, DB100228 or available at Bookshare.org

Workshop meets at 7 to 8:30 p.m., Thursday, March 18.

This workshop looks at the things people use and spaces they inhabit with a chance to reimagine a better-designed world for all. Furniture and tools, kitchens and campuses and city streets, nearly everything human beings make and use is assistive technology, meant to bridge the gap between body and world. Yet until, or until, a misfit between

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Snow in NYC – The Perennial Problem

BY EDITH PRENTISS

This winter has been exceptionally cruel with back-to-back snowstorms. New York City has been long known for its lackadaisical attitude towards snow removal except for streets and highways.

For years selected neighborhoods in the outer boroughs remain snowbound while Manhattan’s central business district is swept clean with snow carried away to be melted and the remaining water deposited into sewers.

Many people with mobility disabilities remain snowed in during inclement weather. Snow-laden plows turn corners dropping their load on shoveled crosswalks and pedestrian ramps.

Many shoveled paths to pedestrians ramps fail to meet the ramp. Instead they meet adjacent curbs leaving seniors and mobility equipment users unable to reach the sidewalk.

Accessible transportation is moot as snow plows leave ridges blocking bus stops and poor snow removal leave bus shelters unusable. Accessible taxis that load in the street require a clear area for ramps to open for wheelchair to enter and leave the vehicle.

Multiple articles about flooded crosswalks and news features barely touch upon the blight of seniors and people with disabilities trying to cross the perennial slush lagoons, although news anchors more frequently end with a question wondering how we’re surviving.

In addition to spending hours reading the Department of Sanitation’s (DSNY) 2020 Snow Action Plan (SAP) I’ve been watching YouTube’s many snow removal videos. Montreal has some truly awesome equipment in a wide range of sizes. Their snow removal is said to cost millions of dollars. DSNY also has a video showcasing its equipment.

I suspect if you polled pedestrians, as well as people with disabilities they would prefer sidewalks be cleared by appropriate sized snow removal equipment on the same time table as it is plowed from streets.

The Parks Department has narrower equipment to clear their paths and sidewalks. Many private buildings have snow removal equipment. Why can’t the Sanitation Department purchase appropriate equipment to clear sidewalks and pedestrian ramps?

Depending on adjacent buildings to clean and maintain sidewalks and pedestrian ramps is not equitable especially when the fine for failing to clean and maintain a four feet (48 inch) path begins at $10 and is capped at $350.

The major focus of DSNY’s SAP is streets and highways. Bus stops, pedestrian ramps, sidewalks and bike lanes barely rate a mention. In fact, property owners and managers are instructed “to TRY” to clear a sidewalk path. MOPD’s joint snow document is the only clear posting of the four foot (48 inch) clear path requirement.

Every winter the disability community rails as sidewalk, pedestrian ramps, bus stops and crosswalks remain mired in snow and slush. Isn’t it time that New York City considers the transportation needs of people with disabilities and seniors as important as motor vehicles?

Isn’t it time for a serious Snow Taskforce with key City Agencies, Continued on page 15

GUEST EDITORIAL

“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.

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NEW YORKABLE NEWSPAPER - MARCH 2021  PAGE 12
LATEST NYC ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE RELEASED

The new edition of Accessible NYC is now available.

It is an annual report on the state of people with disabilities living in New York City. It covers topics that include transportation, employment, education, financial empowerment, housing, health, technology and access to city services.

For information visit NYC.gov/AccessibleNYC.

NY METRO ABILITIES EXPO SET FOR OCT. 1 – 3

As the vaccine is in full swing and considering everyone's safety and the ability to again have in-person expos, Abilities Expo has secured Fall dates for the New York Metro 2021 Expo.

The New York Metro Abilities Expo will be Oct. 1 through 3 at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Ave., in Edison. All safety precautions will be taken. For information visit abilities.com.

BRAILLE STUDY GROUP AVAILABLE ON ZOOM

A Braille study group meets every Saturday at 11:30 a.m. and is led by staff and volunteers at NYPL’s Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library.

The group is open to anyone, whether a Braille beginner or fully fluent, blind or sighted. Studying Braille at a distance can be a challenge, but the group is supportive. Those enrolled in these free classes will receive free Braille materials, answers to questions about contractions and reading and writing Braille.

Although the group meets Saturdays, participants do not have to attend every session.

To register, visit http://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUlde2hqTkoG91r_zJaHFrQ8YUua1g NhFEg.

LIBRARY OFFERS ONE-ON-ONE ASSISTANCE FOR PARENTS

The Brooklyn Public Library will offer one-on-one assistance to parents, 10 a.m. through 1 p.m., March 3 in a phone-in program.

Topics can include online school and service; getting devices from your school; IEP process; getting evaluations during the pandemic; early childhood services; transition planning; community resources, transportation and more.

For more information, call 917 751-4890.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM HELPS JOB AND INTERNSHIP SEEKERS

NYC AWORK is a program that recruits and connects New Yorkers with disabilities to job opportunities and internships with established business partners in the public and private sectors. For information visit NYC.gov/NYCatwork.

SNAP FOOD BENEFITS INCREASED THROUGH JUNE

A temporary 15 percent increase in SNAP benefits was recently authorized for New York state residents, and will be in effect until June.

Also, those who were not getting full SNAP benefits for their household will be brought up to the maximum benefit on a month-to-month basis.


MOPD ADDRESSES SNOW REMOVAL PROBLEMS

The New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) has created a snow removal guide, on their site at, www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/Snow-Removal-2020.pdf, which highlights the responsibilities of each person and agency to remove snow from city streets and sidewalks. Anyone who encounters barriers due to uncleared snow should call 311 or text 311692.

H.S. SENIORS MAY APPLY FOR ALZHEIMER’S SCHOLARSHIP

The 2021 AFA Teens for Alzheimer’s Awareness College Scholarship Essay Contest offers up to $5,000 to high school seniors.

The Alzheimer’s Foundation of America invites all high school seniors who have been affected by Alzheimer’s to enter. Applicants must submit a 1,200- to 1,500-word essay describing the impact Alzheimer’s has had on their lives and what they have learned about themselves, their family and/or their community through that experience.

For more information and to apply, visit www.alzfdn.org/scholarship.

CITY RESIDENTS ENCOURAGED TO GET ID CARDS

There are three permanent sites and several rotating sites where city residents can obtain their IDNYC municipal card.

This identification card helps New Yorkers access a wide variety of services, programs and discounts offered throughout the five boroughs. For information visit NYC.gov/IDNYC.

ABLE ACCEPTS EVENT AND PROGRAM INFORMATION

Able Newspaper will print event and program information from agencies when space permits. Send items to ablenews@aol.com.
Deadline Extended for Blind Film Reviews

The American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Project (ACB-ADP) and the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) are continuing their co-sponsorship of an opportunity for blind and visually impaired young people, in four categories from ages seven to 21 for the The Benefits of Audio Description in Education (BADE) contest.

KIDS love movies. Movies, videos, and other forms of multimedia are, these days, integral to public, private and special education curriculum. For a young person who can’t see or can’t see well, audio description provides access to all the visual images of the movies that sighted young people enjoy.

Students choose an audio described film or video from the thousands of titles available through DCMP via streaming or on DVDs at www.dcmp.org.

Or a young person who is blind can borrow an audio-described video or film from a library, and thousands of audio-described films and videos are available via streaming services. One can visit the ACB-ADP’s website at www.acb.org/adp/dvds.html for lists of DVDs and films with audio description.

Reviews may be submitted in writing, in Braille or via an audio recording. Register for the contest at www.badiecontest.org. Entries may also be submitted via email or postal to janyder@acb.org. or ACB-DCMP Benefits of Audio Description In Education, 1703 N. Beauregard St., Suite 420, Alexandria, VA 22311. The deadline for entries is Monday, March 15.

Contest winners will be chosen in April and the grand prize winner will receive an iPad Mini. Each first-place winner will receive a $100 iTunes gift card. Second-place winners will receive a $50 iTunes gift card, and third-place winners will receive a $25 iTunes gift card. Each supporting teacher who has a first-place winning student will be awarded a $100 Amazon gift card.

For information, call 202 467-5083.

Nominations Accepted for ADP Through May 9

The Audio Description Project (ADP) is a wide-ranging and production initiative with goals that include building advocacy on behalf of audio description; offering a range of educational resources and working to establish nationally acknowledged user-focused guidelines for quality description in its various genres as well as a professionally recognized certification program for audio describers.

It encourages growth of audio description with an emphasis on the involvement of AD users/consumers, especially youth.

It also disseminates information and provides general support for regional, state and local forums and encourages studies on audio description, particularly with respect to its efficacy as a technique for conveying visual images and its impact on literacy for all. One part of the project involves the recognition of outstanding contributions to the field of audio description.

This year’s ADP Awards include a call for nominations in nine categories. They are achievement in audio description – media/organizations; media/individuals; performing arts/organizations; performing Arts/individuals; museums/visual art/visitor centers/or-ganizations; museums/visual art/visitor centers/individuals; international; Dr. Margaret Pfannstiel Memorial Award in Audio Description-Research and Development; and Barry Levine Memorial Award for Career Achievement in Audio Description.

The call for nominations ends on Sunday, May 9, with winners announced during a plenary general session of the American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention in July (the 2021 Conference and Convention sessions will be held virtually via Zoom and broadcast on ACB Radio).

Nomination material, criteria and more information are available at www.acb.org/adp.

FEMA – BE PREPARED

Continued from page 11

pet-friendly shelters, have your contact information listed on your pet’s collar, and update your pet’s microchip information, if necessary. Learn more about pet preparedness at https://www.ready.gov/pets

Write out instructions for items and extra support that you will need during an emergency. This is highly recommended if you will not be able to carry your evacuation kit or if you can’t remember everything you will need to do. Make sure to give a copy to your personal support network. You can also take pictures of your prescriptions and medical equipment, and label all of your medical equipment and supplies with your name.

Make sure to practice your evacuation routes multiple times. It is recommended that you practice with the lights off and with a flashlight. This will help you remember the route during an emergency.

We protect ourselves when the virus comes to us?

Finally, beginning Feb. 15 the New York State government start handing out vaccination appointments to those in the vulnerable classes. Maybe as a direct response to the outcries for help or maybe realizing that they prioritized ableism and the economy over the vulnerable.

It is unfortunate, that individuals with disabilities and those in the vulnerable class are usually the first targets of governmental cuts and usually the last to be considered for anything beneficial.

Therefore New York State gets a D-(is)ability for its vaccine rollout.

Make preparedness a part of your routine in 2021. The steps above should be repeated throughout the year to ensure your plan is up-to-date and your emergency supplies have not expired. Additional resources are available at https://www.ready.gov/disability to learn more.
PERSONAL PLACE

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

Race, color, religion, I’m not prejudice, looking for romantic female in her late 60’s or 50’s, who wants romantic 73 year old male in her life. 

A400

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

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

A398

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

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 photo number and phone.

A394

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Just write your ad and mail it with payment and coupon below to Able Newspapers, P.O. Box 395, Old Bethpage, N.Y. 11804 or email to ableangela@aol.com. We will assign an Able personal number and forward all responses to you. Be sure to include your name and address. Just $12 for 15 words plus $1 for each additional word to appear one month.

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Put your response letter in an envelope with the AB of the person you are writing on the front. Put this envelope in another envelope addressed to Able personals, P.O. Box 395, Old Bethpage, N.Y. 11804. Enclose $2 per response to cover the cost of handling and mailing fees. Do not send cash. Checks or money orders only. Be sure to include your address or phone number. For faster response place a postage stamp on envelope.

UNITED SPINAL NOW

Continued from page 12

In 2003 United Spinal stopped being EPVA and became a national membership organization. For the first time it was not just a Veterans Service Organization, but was also a spinal cord injury/disorder organization. She became our first female civic-vilian member. It was only right.

She had worked so closely with us on making transportation accessible that we were honored to have her. She has been a board member of our organization for many years. Denise retired from NYCT and our Board of Directors and lives with her husband Larry in Brooklyn. Denise has accompanied United Spinal on several of our Rolls on Capitol Hill and had led this organization from her board position for years. Her act of civil disobedience, which embarrassed transit officials and hastened the on-set of accessible service, remains a significant moment in the N.Y.C. disability rights movement, but her career truly reflects her commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

NYPL WORKSHOPS

Continued from page 11

one’s own body and the world is acute enough to be understood as disability, people might never stop to consider or reconsider the hidden assumptions on which the everyday environment is built. To register, visit at https://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZck -demgqDguHd1VL_vePJtda -JU09x2DFUp.

iOS and Android App Swap

Workshop meets at 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 24. Come share information about your all-time favorite apps and your newest discoveries. This is an interactive, open discussion for patrons and the Heiskell tech team to share knowledge and introduce one another to something new. You do not have to present an app to join, but the group will welcome participants to present why they enjoy or use an app, along with any pros and cons, for about three minutes plus time for questions. To register visit their meeting at https://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpdO6vqzoG -dvVaWV6yz2O1dTwqS8PC-W.

Spring Conference Roundup: What’s New in Accessible Tech?

Workshop meets at 7 to 8:30 p.m., Monday, March 29. Instructors will gather the news and announcements from CES, ATIA and CSUN to bring an interactive exploration of this busy season in accessible technology news. To register visit their meeting at https://nypl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pdOupqM1H-tHmDF0TVF71WO_X_hWL-Haw.

NYPL WORKSHOPS

Continued from page 11

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LEADERS
Continued from page 1
Opportunities for Students in 2015 and published pieces in Education Post and Faces of Education.
He can be heard telling his story through his Ted Talk or his interviews with NPR. Armstrong was an AAPD intern in 2018 in the office of Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa).
He served on the DREAM (Disability Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring) National Student Advisory board for three years and branched out into other forms of activism.
While at Penn State, he helped to plan a program around sexual assault prevention and cofounded “No Hate Penn State” with three other students. Armstrong was president of the Black Student Union at Harvard.
Noor Pervez
Pervez is a queer, Muslim disability activist and community organizer working at the intersection of faith, disability, race, LGBT+ issues, reproductive justice and eating disorders.
His project aims to start the creation of an English-language Easyread translation of the Holy Qu’ran. The goal of this translation is to provide all Muslims with intellectual disabilities access to the original holy text, nuances and all, and help them participate fully in their community’s discussions about it.
The end product will also be a helpful reference for non-Muslim people with intellectual disabilities who want to better understand the Qu’ran, as well as for English language learners and people with other disabilities that benefit from Easyread.
Pervez is employed as the community engagement coordinator for the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN).

PANDEM IC BIAS
Continued from page 4
other People of Color and disabled BIPOC who live at the intersection of other marginalized identities,” said Professor Natalie Chin with the City University of New York School of Law and a member of The Arc’s Legal Advocacy Committee. “This report provides medical professionals with a strategic roadmap to confront bias and ultimately improve healthcare outcomes so that we can firmly say, ‘Yes, all bodies are valued.’”
Many of the advocates who authored this report have been involved in filing complaints with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights challenging medical discrimination by states and hospitals, including discriminatory criteria standard of care plans, no-visitor policies and inaccessible COVID-19 testing sites. Through this work, advocates have reached resolutions with several states and hospitals that make significant progress toward preventing medical discrimination during COVID-19. However, as outlined in this report, much work remains to be done to ensure every individual, regardless of their identity, receives equal access to care during this pandemic and in the future.

LEADERS
Continued from page 1
He is a student organizer turned broader community activist and takes pride in learning much of his original advocacy skills from other trans people raised in the southern U.S.
Pervez has bylines at “Disability Visibility Project” and “Rooted in Rights” and has presented at a variety of conferences and universities on the intersections of the communities he is a part of and works alongside.
The awards will be presented at the April 28 virtual AAPD Leadership Awards Gala.

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