

# AWARD WINNING New York **Able**



THE NEWSPAPER *POSITIVELY* FOR BY & ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## EDITH'S GONE

### Disability Community Loses Dynamic Advocate

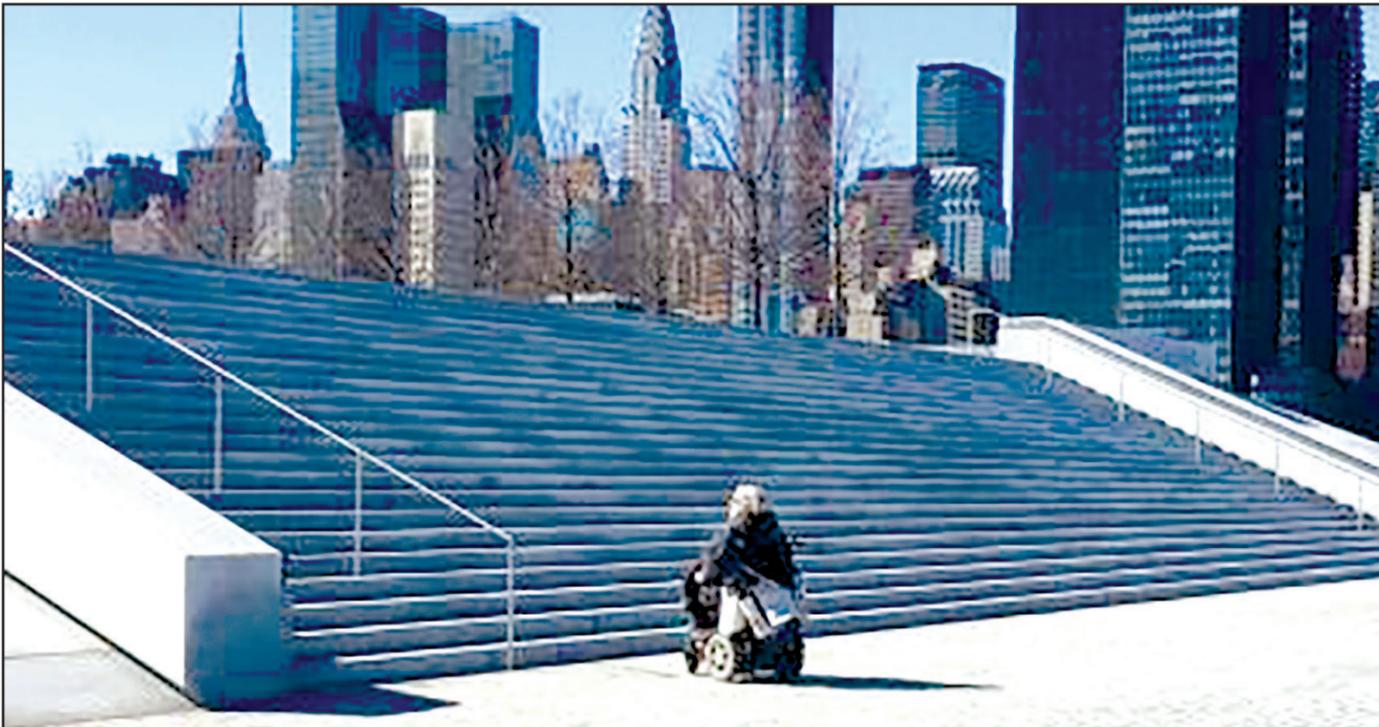


PHOTO BY JOSEPH RAPPAPORT

Edith Prentiss sits at the base of steps in Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island in 2017. The park was not fully accessible, even though it honors FDR, who was a wheelchair user.

By Allison Howe

**W**ashington Heights resident, Edith Prentiss, an outspoken and tireless advocate for disability rights, died March 16 at the age of 69 of cardiopulmonary arrest.

After being born and spending her childhood on Long Island, Prentiss, spent much of her life living in Manhattan, where she was an active member of many political, civic and disability organizations. In N.Y.C., she took part

in countless rallies, press conferences, demonstrations, meetings, hearings, the N.Y.C. disability pride parade and other advocacy events.

She was known for not backing down to community leaders or politicians, often holding their feet to the fire for causes that were important to people with disabilities.

Prentiss served as president of the 504 Democratic Club and vice president of Disabled in Ac-

tion (DIA) of Metropolitan New York. She had a long tenure as a member of her home Community Board 12 and was also the chair of the Taxis for All Campaign (TFAC).

In addition, she was a member of the New York County Democratic Committee, the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC), the Manhattan Borough President's Disability Taskforce, the New York City Office of  
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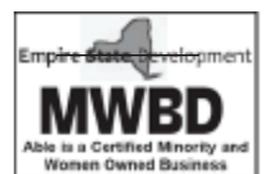
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## From The Commissioner's Desk

Hello everyone,

With the passing of the month of March we have hit a one-year milestone since the beginning of this pandemic.

Tragically, the month carries new painful meaning as we have lost Edith Prentiss, an incredibly strong, passionate and caring woman that I will personally miss terribly.

Edith Prentiss was a fierce advocate who was straightforward, knowledgeable and unapologetic but also kind and loving towards everyone. Edith advocated for anyone and everyone, understanding that the disability rights movement was not just for people who use wheelchairs but for every person with every type of disability.

Over the years she has left her mark in New York City by increasing wheelchair accessible taxis and for-hire vehicles, access in Parks programs, community board engagement, MTA matters, celebrations of disability pride and so much more. She was selfless, passionate and loved New York City with all of her being. Her advocacy, her spirit and her impact will be sorely missed.

Although it may be difficult to look past this tragedy, there is some good news on the horizon with the approval and subsequent distribution of the Johnson and Johnson Vaccine in NYC. NYC is providing in-home COVID-19 vaccinations (Johnson & Johnson) to eligible NYC residents who are fully homebound, have not already been vaccinated and do not already have access to a vaccination program. If you are interested in applying for an in-home vaccination you can call 877 829-4692 or go online to [www.forms.cityofnewyork.us/f/homebound](http://www.forms.cityofnewyork.us/f/homebound).

For more information on this and other COVID-19 updates, join our office on the first Friday of every month at 1:00pm for a virtual meeting with the disability community. During each meeting we share the latest information on City COVID response. In addition, we open the floor to listen to community concerns and questions.

I invite anyone from the disability community who is not a part of these meetings already



to join us. Registration is available on our website at [NYC.gov/Disability-coronavirus](http://NYC.gov/Disability-coronavirus). Our next virtual meeting is Friday, May 7 at 1:00 p.m. Each meeting has American Sign Language interpretation and live captioning. We hope that you can join us.

Ciao,

Commissioner Victor Calise



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### What Can We Expect From the New MTA Accessibility Chief?

As reported in these pages last month, Quemuel Arroyo was hired to the newly created position of "MTA Chief Accessibility Officer." This new position seems to be an expanded version of the job held by Alex Elegudin who was in charge of access for New York City Transit, the subdivision of the MTA that runs the buses and subways within the five boroughs.

Arroyo is being praised from all sides. MTA board chairman Patrick Foye and Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled Executive Dir. Joe Rappaport, describe him as everything from "a seasoned professional" to "immensely talented." But

a sad fact is that his success might depend on neither.

Disability rights activists are holding the MTA's feet to the fire with three major lawsuits demanding accessibility. The MTA's response has been to make promises for future access without committing to goals and timetables. They have also taken the step of expanding the role and scope of the access chief position and hired an expert like Arroyo. Increased public pressure had also motivated Mayor DiBlasio to appoint MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise to the MTA board last year. While these are positive steps, access will not be achieved without money.

According to a December 2019 "Debt Overview" report the MTA is nearly \$43 billion in the red. And that does not in-

clude the additional debt caused by keeping the system running during the COVID-19 pandemic. For far too long the MTA has been cursed by poorly managed capitol programs and used as a vehicle for political "payback" to unions and political donors. These allegations are outlined in a New York Times story that ran Dec. 28, 2017.

Debt and mismanagement are plaguing existing MTA expansion projects like the Second Avenue Subway and the tunnel connecting Grand Central Terminal and the LIRR in Queens. Gov. Cuomo and Mayor DiBlasio are hoping the Biden-Harris COVID-19 Relief package will have enough money to keep basic services running. So where are the funds to build new subway elevators?

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### ABLE NEWSPAPER

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**Deadline for the May Issue of Able Newspaper Will Be April 13**

# COVID Relief Package Benefits PWD

**P**res. Joe Biden has signed a massive pandemic relief package sending billions to special education and home- and community-based services and providing stimulus payments for many with disabilities who haven't previously qualified.

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan provides the first major investment since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic a year ago in the hard-hit disability services system.

The legislation includes \$12.67 billion for Medicaid home- and community-based services over the next year. The funding will go to states in the form of a 10 percent rise

in the federal government's share of spending on the program through March 2022.

States are expected to have significant discretion in how the extra dollars are used, advocates say. The funds could go toward helping people with disabilities come off waiting lists for services, increasing pay for direct support professionals or helping programs reopen safely, among other options. U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) helped secure the extra funding.

Disability advocates had been begging for the infusion for a year when the pandemic forced providers to shutter programs resulting in reduced

revenue at the same time that a myriad of new expenses emerged for personal protective equipment, COVID-19 testing, cleaning supplies and other items

"After almost a full year of leaving the most urgent needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities out of relief legislation, members of Congress are finally providing the resources necessary for people with disabilities to live safely, in the community, with the support they need," said Peter Berns, CEO at The Arc.

The new law will also put cash into the pockets of more people with disabilities. It in-

cludes \$1,400 direct payments to individuals earning less than \$75,000 per year, with phased amounts for those making up to \$80,000 annually. For the first time since the pandemic began, adults with disabilities who are considered dependents for tax purposes will qualify for the checks.

Separately, the legislation includes \$2.5 billion in funding for services provided to school-age students in special education, \$200 million to support preschoolers with disabilities and \$250 million for infants and toddlers served under the Individuals

**Continued on page 19**

## People Who Are Blind Need Vaccine Now

Who should be next in line to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in the United States?

In some states, people with underlying conditions are now eligible to receive the vaccine based on CDC guidelines. "Blindness needs to be included among those underlying conditions," said Calvin Roberts, president and CEO of Lighthouse Guild. "We urge states across the country to include blindness on the list of underlying conditions that makes a person eligible to receive the vaccine now."

There are more than 1 mil-

lion people in the United States who are legally blind and are facing overwhelming obstacles due to the pandemic.

"Isolation has been a challenge for everyone, and in many ways even more so for those who are blind. We all want to be able to navigate our neighborhoods, but the signs and signals that sighted people use to move about in this changed world are not available to people who are blind," Roberts, who is an ophthalmologist, said.

Maintaining social distance can be a challenge since people who are blind of-

ten use touch to navigate the world.

Furthermore, when out in the community or on public transportation, people who are blind are not always able to identify if those around them

are wearing masks, making them more vulnerable.

The accessibility of vaccination sites is also a major consideration for people who are blind. Getting to and from

**Continued on page 11**

## Civil and Human Rights Conference Endorses Cardona

Wade Henderson, interim president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, has issued the following statement.

"We are elated that Dr. Cardona will soon get to work advancing civil rights and equity at the Department of Education, and we can finally turn the page on Secretary DeVos' agenda of discrimination and exclusion.

"As a civil rights agency, the department must immediately prioritize removing barriers to equal educational opportunity and ensuring students have the protections they deserve.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-standing educational inequities across lines of

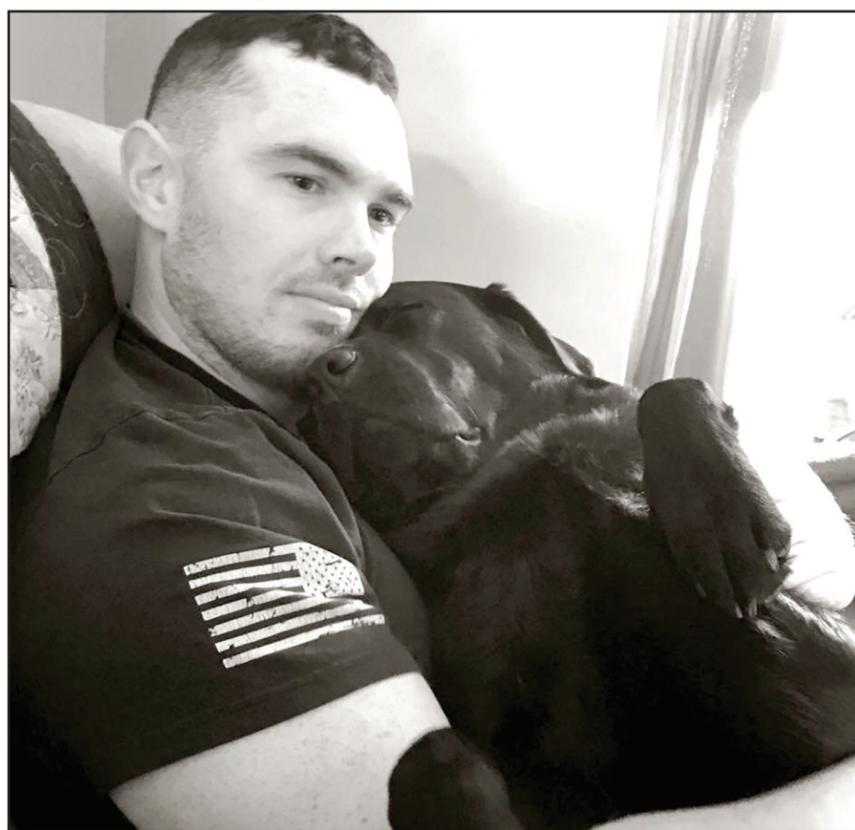
race, ethnicity, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, home language, and family income.

"Students have waited long enough for change and need robust action from early childhood through postsecondary education to ensure equal educational opportunity.

"We look forward to working with Secretary Cardona to ensure the Education Department achieves its mission to advance public education and protect students' civil rights."

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and 109 organizations had sent a letter to senators supporting the confirmation of Miguel Cardona.

## Service Dogs Help Veterans With PTSD



**Veteran Caleb with his service dog. The results of a research study completed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shows significant benefits from service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

**Veterans paired with service dogs showed less suicidal ideation and more improvement in mental health than those paired with emotional support dogs.**

**The VA estimates 20 to 30 percent of veterans live with PTSD.**

# N.Y. Implements Medicaid Easements Due to Pandemic

Easements have been implemented by New York State because of the COVID-19 emergency. The following easements apply to all Medicaid clients, including Community Medicaid, Disabled Aged and Blind, Nursing Home Eligibility, Managed Long-Term Care and the Home Care Services Program.

## New Applications

Clients may attest to all elements of eligibility except Immigration status and identity, if immigration document does not also prove identity. Copies of documents that prove immigration/identity status are required. If cli-

ents are unable to submit this documentation due to the COVID-19 emergency, the application should still be submitted. Clients will be given an opportunity to submit the documents later. Clients whose citizenship status is not verified through data sources will also be given an opportunity to submit the documents later.

Clients do not need to provide proof of their Medicare application; this requirement is waived for the period of the COVID-19 emergency.

## Renewals

During the COVID-19 emergency, no Medicaid cases will be closed for failure to renew or fail-

ure to provide documentation. Any case that is closed for failure to renew or failure to provide documentation will be re-opened and coverage restored to ensure no gap in coverage.

Renewals will be extended for 12 months. Excess resources cases will be extended for six months. Medicaid cases with authorization that ended in March through December 2020 have been extended. New York State has also authorized this easement extension for cases with authorization ending in January, February, March and April 2021.

The renewal extension applies to all renewal cases including Of-

fice of Mail Renewal, MLTC, Surplus renewals, Nursing Home Eligibility, Medicare Savings Program, MBI-WPD (entitled to six months extended grace period if loss of employment), Stenson/recipients who lose their SSI eligibility and Rosenberg/Recipients who lose their eligibility for cash assistance.

## Offices

Effective immediately, a limited number of Medicaid offices will remain open. People are asked to visit an office only if their needs cannot be met over the phone. Speak with an agent at 1-888- 692-6116 or call 311 for more information.

# Committee Advances Nursing-Home Reform Package

The Assembly Health Committee has advanced several nursing-home reform bills to improve patient safety, accountability and quality of care. These are part of an Assembly nursing home package, including bills already moved from the Health Committee and more expected to be advanced shortly.

The Assembly and Senate held hearings on the impact of

COVID-19 on nursing homes and other residential health care facilities in August. In January, NYS Attorney General Tish James issued a report that shone a bright light on the COVID-19 death toll in nursing homes, identifying concrete steps to make nursing homes safer during and after the pandemic. After the report's release, and a court order in a Freedom of Information lawsuit, the

NYS Health Department finally released long-overdue statistics showing that far more nursing home residents in New York had died from COVID-19 than DOH had previously reported.

"I have long fought to strengthen New York's regulation of nursing homes and to increase transparency of their operations and level of care. New York needs to require increased staffing and better oversight through inspections and higher fines for violations and should never again grant virtually unlimited legal immunity to institutions responsible for caring for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, even during a pandemic," said Richard Gottfried, chair of the New York Assembly Health Committee.

"We also need laws to make nursing home operators spend more money on patient care, not profits and administrative

waste. For-profit nursing homes, which have grown from one-third to two-thirds of facilities, have especially poor patient-to-staff ratios, as well as generally higher patient death rates, infection rates, and instances of bedsores. It's time to halt the expansion of for-profit nursing homes in the New York state "market." Nursing homes should be operated to care for people, not as cash-generating profit centers."

Nursing home reform bills reported out of committee include: Repeal Provider "Immunity." Nursing Home Psychotropic Drugs, Prohibition of New or Expanded For-Profit Nursing Homes, Quality Assurance Committees, Antimicrobial Resistance Prevention & Education and Facility Violations Transparency,

For the text of a bill or status, visit <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>.

# Bill Will Raise Workers Pay

The New York Senate has included a version of #FairPay4HomeCare in its one-house budget. Assembly Member Richard Gottfried has introduced companion bill A6329 in the Assembly.

If the Senate's budget is accepted by the Assembly and the governor, \$1.3 billion could be invested into home care and CDPA wages. Every worker in the state would get a raise.

Everyone can help get this passed by calling their senator ([www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator](http://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator)) thanking them for supporting #FairPay4HomeCare and

making it possible for this essential workforce to receive higher pay.

Then call their Assembly member ([www.nyassembly.gov/mem/search/](http://www.nyassembly.gov/mem/search/)) urging them to co-sponsor bill A6329 to support #FairPay4HomeCare and tell Speaker Carl Heastie that #FairPay4HomeCare is important legislation that must be included in the final budget.

Call the Governor at 518 474-8390 and urge him to support the Senate's proposal in the budget for #FairPay4HomeCare.

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# State Lawmakers Reintroduce N.Y. Health Act

Advocates and lawmakers have called for the urgent passage of the New York Health Act (A.6058/S.5474), citing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, racial inequities and poor health outcomes that underscore the critical need to establish a universal, guaranteed healthcare system at the state level.

For the first time, a majority of members of both the Assembly and the Senate are co-sponsors of the legislation.

“New Yorkers elected a Democratic super-majority in the

middle of a pandemic as a mandate to enact bold transformational changes, including the New York Health Act,” said Ursula Rozum, co-director of the Campaign for NY Health. “This bill must be central to a just and equitable recovery from this pandemic and brought to a vote this year.”

The pandemic has amplified healthcare inequities. The bill would save tens of billions of dollars in administrative waste and profit, which could be reinvested into guaranteeing care for all New Yorkers without

fear of losing coverage, restricted provider networks or facing co-pays and deductibles as barriers to care.

“Healthcare is increasingly unaffordable, and millions of people - especially Black, brown, immigrant and low-income New Yorkers - have experienced insecurity in their access to benefits when linked to employment in the recent economic downturn. In addition, the New York Health Act will end the reliance on for-profit nursing homes, allowing people to have the choice to receive

long-term care services in their home delivered by a fairly paid homecare worker.” said YuLing Koh Hsu, co-director of the Campaign for NY Health.

Given the intensity of the healthcare crisis, support for the bill is growing and is backed by a diverse coalition representing healthcare workers, patients, disability rights advocates, birthworkers, and grassroots community organizations.

The full endorser list can be viewed at [www.nyhcampaign.org/endorsers](http://www.nyhcampaign.org/endorsers).

## Settlement Creates Accessible Housing

The Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC) has reached a resolution with defendants JDS Development LLC; 616 First Avenue LLC; 202 8th LLC; SHoP Architects LLP; Property Markets Group, Inc. (PMG); Werber Management, Inc., and 202 Park Slope LLC of a disability discrimination case involving two luxury New York City apartment buildings.

The complaint, filed by FHJC in June 2019, alleged that the defendants failed to comply with accessibility requirements in the design and construction of the 761-unit American Copper Buildings, 626 1st Ave., in Manhattan

and the 51-unit 202 Eighth St. development in Brooklyn. The lawsuit stemmed from a 2018 testing investigation conducted by the FHJC.

Under the settlement, extensive retrofits will be made to the common areas and apartments in both buildings. In the American Copper Buildings, the agreement requires retrofitting of common areas, including making restrooms fully accessible.

Within dwelling units, retrofitting will lower thresholds, place privacy latches at acceptable heights, create wider door openings and adequate maneuvering spaces throughout the apartments, create

clear floor space in bathrooms and kitchens, and make outlets accessible.

In the Eighth Street building, the agreement requires significant common area retrofits along with numerous retrofits to make the dwelling units accessible including remediation of thresholds, door openings, thermostat and outlet locations, and maneuvering spaces.

The FHJC will have access

to the buildings to inspect all future retrofits. In addition, all defendants agreed to attend FHJC-sponsored training on design and construction requirements and implement future compliance activities. Defendants JDS, SHoP, and PMG also agreed to pay \$2.9 million to resolve the case, the largest monetary settlement obtained by the FHJC to date.

## Disability Pride Visual Arts Contest For NYC Students

The NYC Department of Education (DOE) Disability Pride Visual Arts Contest celebrates the challenges and achievements of people with disabilities in their struggle for equity and equal access, opportunity and inclusion. Students in DOE schools may participate in the competition. The 10 finalists and the grand finalist will have their artwork showcased and be invited to a virtual event in Spring 2021. The theme is “Nothing About Us Without Us.” The deadline for submission is Wednesday, April 14.

Artwork must be original work produced by students and should represent the theme provided. Student work must be their own and not a copy of copyrighted material. Any artwork and or images that show copyrighted images will be rejected. Artwork may not

include characters from books, video games, TV shows or other copyrighted material. All artwork must be original and created entirely by the student. Artwork can be realistic or abstract.

Any of the following media or techniques may be used: paint (watercolor, tempera, poster, acrylic, etc.); drawing materials (pencil, charcoal, colored chalk, pastels, oil pastels, colored pencils, markers, etc.); collage materials (cut and glued papers, such as construction paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, etc.); prints (handmade stencils, gadget printing, collagraphs, block prints, etc.); sculpting materials (clay, papier-mâché, etc.); original digital illustration; and photography.

For submission information, email [DisabilityPrideParade@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:DisabilityPrideParade@schools.nyc.gov).

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<p><b>Queens</b> 80-02 Kew Gardens Rd, Suite 400 Kew Gardens, NY 11415</p>			

**DESIGNS 4 LIVING**

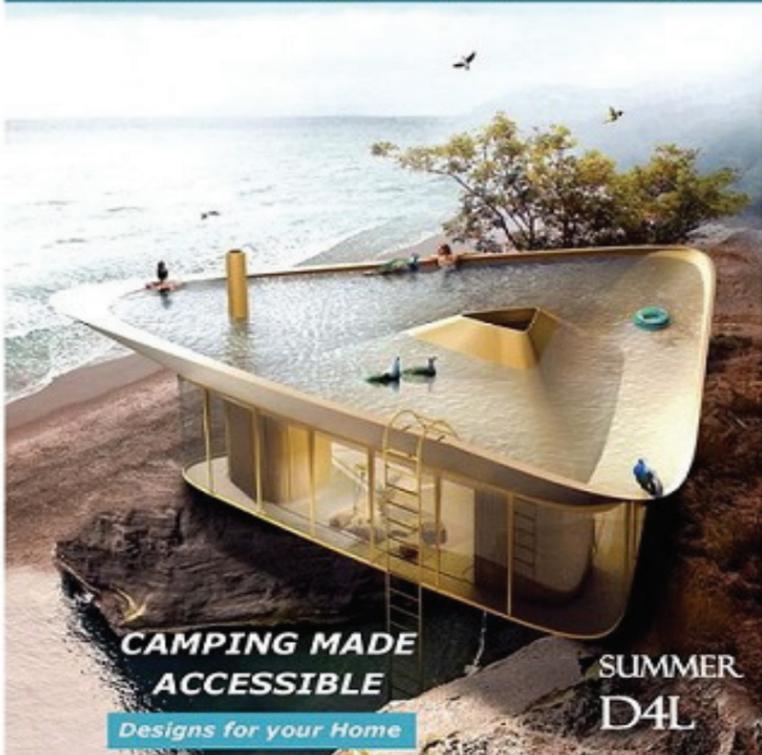
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**UNITED SPINAL<sup>NOW</sup>****Biden Era Caregiving**

BY JAMES WEISMAN  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



The sleeping giant, i.e. the need for enhanced home- and community-based services, is awakening. The Biden Administration, in keeping with a campaign promise, intends to consider the collective-care needs of our country, basically from “womb to tomb.”

Including infant care, childcare, after-school care, care for people with disabilities and seniors, this comprehensive look at care giving and care needs is a once in generations opportunity for people with disabilities to improve their ability to live in the community. It is also an opportunity to seek fair remuneration for home-care workers and personal care attendants (PCAs).

Those needing care in the disability community range from those who are physically, emotionally and intellectually incapable of caring for themselves, to emotionally and intellectually capable but physically reliant on a caregiver for assistance with activities of daily living. The latter group need the ability to manage their personal care attendants and any new plan should provide for consumer-controlled care.

The plan to deliver home- and community-based services to people with disabilities should encourage work. For decades, poverty was required (Medicaid eligibility) to receive homecare. Work incentive programs rarely allow for the ability to accumulate wealth and/or be entrepreneurial. People with disabilities with the ability to support themselves rarely make enough to pay for homecare privately, especially those just entering the labor force.

Family caregivers are a mainstay of support and care for people with disabilities. The Biden Administration plan should lessen the financial burden on family caregivers. Americans don't realize how difficult it is to obtain and afford long-term care, reside in the community – instead of a nursing home – or work with a disability that requires assistance with dressing, meals and personal care, until they or someone they love confront these problems.

Remember, the Administration is talking about all care giving, not just care for people with disabilities. Our community's needs are nuanced. Representatives of groups of varying types of people with disabilities with care needs must be at the table to ensure that each group can take advantage of a new care scheme.

Rest-assured, labor groups will be at the table. They have worked hard to ensure that homecare workers were finally included in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) minimum wage and overtime provisions. They are also pushing hard for a national \$15 an hour minimum wage. In some areas of the country, this will force Medicaid-provided homecare hours to be cut, unless there is an increased appropriation by government for care. This would have the ridiculous effect of forcing people into nursing homes, which cost far more per person than homecare.

Those of you reading this with personal care needs understand the fragility of the current system (and New York's is better than most). Those whose lives depend on reliable, responsible care by trained, compassionate care providers appreciate when the system works, and panic when it doesn't.

Many of United Spinal's members and many readers have developed relationships with PCAs and consider them family. The Administration should find a way to acknowledge these relationships and allow for live-ins and hiring by the consumer of care.

**Continued on page 19**

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# Bill Will Make Services Available to All

**A**s the nation continues to face a pandemic that has put a glaring spotlight on the health dangers facing people living in nursing homes and institutions, members of Congress have unveiled a critical bill developed with The Arc and other disability and aging advocates, that will fundamentally change how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and older adults live their lives.

The Home- and Community-Based Services Access Act (HAA) is a discussion draft bill that would eventually end waiting lists to receive disability services everywhere and help people with disabilities and older adults access the Medicaid home- and community-based services (HCBS) they need to live at home in their communities with their friends and family, instead of institutions and nursing homes. Today, there are nearly 850,000 people on waiting lists across the country. People with disabilities and their families often wait years – sometimes decades – to access these services.

People with disabilities

and older adults often need help with things like working at a job in the community, making food and eating, managing money and medications and bathing and dressing. These services are only available through a part of Medicaid called home- and community-based services, or HCBS.

Many state Medicaid programs have long waiting lists for HCBS. And these lists don't capture those who may not know there is a list to be on, or what services are available. Why the wait? Medicaid is required to cover health care services, provided by doctors and hospitals, as well as many institutional services, such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities for people with disabilities without any waiting lists. But states can treat HCBS as optional — even though they are anything but to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. This is the “institutional bias” in Medicaid and The Arc has been advocating to change this for decades.

The bill tackles another decades-long problem – low pay

for direct support professionals, or DSPs - the people who provide the services to people with IDD and older adults. DSPs are disproportionately women of color, doing critical tasks that support people with disabilities with taking medications, bathing, eating, getting out into the community, and more. Due to low wages, there is more than 50 percent turnover annually, and the average wage is less than \$11 an hour, making it difficult to provide continuity in services, provide a family sustaining wage, and threatening the quality of care. The bill will require states to ensure that the direct care workforce is paid a family sustaining wage.

And finally, this legislation addresses an issue people with disabilities and their families face once they are getting services. Often, they end up stuck in one place, tied to Medicaid-funded services in one state that can't be

transferred over state lines. This lack of portability stops adults with disabilities from moving to be closer to their siblings or other family members, when their parents with whom they live can no longer support them or pass away. It leaves parents and siblings of people with disabilities desperate due to the lack of availability of services and long waiting lists, to get what their loved ones need in another state. The problem is particularly hard for military families that move frequently.

The HAA solves these problems by increasing Medicaid funding to states for HCBS, establishing a basic set of services that all states must provide, and providing other tools to help states build the capacity that they need to serve all people who need HCBS.

For more information on HCBS and resources, visit [www.thearc.org/medicaid-cantwait](http://www.thearc.org/medicaid-cantwait).

## Eligibility Expanded for Accessible Transportation to Vaccine Sites

The accessible transportation options for vaccine appointments have been expanded to include people with ambulatory, vision, intellectual and developmental disabilities under the age of 65.

Anyone, with a vaccine appointment who is looking for accessible transportation to the appointment, can do one of the following. Those with Access-A-Ride can schedule an appointment by calling 1-877- 337-2017.

Those with Medicaid-provided transportation, may use their usual contact number to schedule transport. Alternatively, they can call 1-844- 666-6270.

Anyone 65 and older, who has an ambulatory, vision, intellectual or developmen-

tal disability and needs an ambulette, may schedule free transport with Hunter ambulettes, by calling 516 812-9827.

If anyone is 65 and older or has an ambulatory, vision, intellectual or developmental disability and do not qualify for any of the above, may schedule a free ride with Curb at 1-646-349-0289. Minors under 18, must have their parent/guardian call to book the trip on their behalf. Individuals who use Curb/Hunter services for their first dose appointment, will receive a code which may also be used for the second dose appointment. Individuals should call Curb/Hunter directly to schedule transportation for their next appointment.



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## Low Vision Services

Low vision exams offered with strict adherence to social distancing and all safety requirements.

## Behavioral Health

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## Healthcare

Primary care and specialty physicians, diabetes care and self-management education, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

To make an appointment, call **800-284-4422** or visit [lighthouseguild.org](http://lighthouseguild.org)

## Vision Rehabilitation Services

In person and via telephone and video sessions.

To access services, call **646-874-8545**

## Tele-Support Groups

Parents, teens, young adults and adults meet by phone or online. A licensed professional leads the discussions, to offer support on how to cope with COVID-19 and vision loss; to help find resources; to provide opportunities to network and find solutions for vision-related challenges.

Learn more or register at [lighthouseguild.org/adult-tele/](http://lighthouseguild.org/adult-tele/)

We are a Medicare and Medicaid provider and accept many insurance plans. We are licensed by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH).

# CIDNY SAYS

## Dear NYC Mayoral Candidates

BY SUSAN DOOHA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It's a Mayoral election year in NYC and we're keeping watch very closely. There's no shortage of candidates and we have a message for each and every one; people with disabilities matter and people with disabilities vote. We'd like to give you some advice and ask you some questions. We want to raise problems, but also propose solutions.

There are one million people with disabilities in New York City, but you wouldn't know that by the way the city is set up. Time and time again talks to ensure civil rights law implementation to remove barriers to full participation through discussion fails. That is when people with disabilities advocate and seek legal remedies to ensure that City agencies behave in a lawful manner.

Schools are failing students with disabilities. They don't provide services required for students with disabilities by law. Many schools are not accessible. When schools segregate - have inaccessible school facilities that exclude teachers with disabilities as well as students they are not promoting "school choice" or excellence in learning for any student. When will this be a priority?

When schools fail people with disabilities, the failure falls hardest on Black and Latino/a/x students. These students with disabilities benefit more than other students in terms of job prospects and learning when they attain educational credentials.

People with disabilities face lower rates of employment (29%) than their nondisabled counterparts. We tend to be concentrated in bottom rung, low-wage jobs with lack of opportunity to advance. We are concentrated in some industries and others don't really seek candidates with disabilities. Lack of educational attainment, accessible transportation, and discrimination are to blame. But so is a lack of interest on the part of the City's top leaders on finding solutions that can have a large impact - like requiring agencies to hire qualified candidates with disabilities and City contractors to seek to attain a goal of 14 percent in employment of qualified people with disabilities with their taxpayer dollars.

Lack of accessible transportation in New York City impedes equal access to school, work, health care, civic participation and family life. For decades we've worked to get the MTA to become compliant with the ADA State and City Human Rights laws. Accessibility is more than elevators and ramps. It's visual and audio accessibility. It is access for people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities and mental health disabilities. It's paratransit. It's sidewalks and curb cuts. It's affordable access to transportation. We would love to know how the next administration plans to handle this vital issue.

People with disabilities are disproportionately poor, lack sufficient access to food and are less likely to be able to use public sources of food help because of accessibility problems. Poverty programs that the City operates create new ways of reaching people, including kiosks and robocalls that are inaccessible to some people with disabilities and have to be retrofitted to make

**Continued on page 20**



## Weisman's Career & Service Celebrated Via Zoom

United Spinal Association recently held a virtual celebration of Jim Weisman's 40 plus years of service in the disability community and his imminent retirement.

More than 100 members of the staff and friends in the disability community shared highlights from his achievements and stories and, of course, gave him a chance to reflect on his long and eventful career.

Weisman was his usual witty and engaging self as he reminded his fellow "Zoomers" of past events and triumphs.

He won't be officially retiring until later this year but has stepped down from the President/CEO position and is now part-time as General Counsel and slowly transitioning to retirement. He was joined on the screen by his wife Holly.

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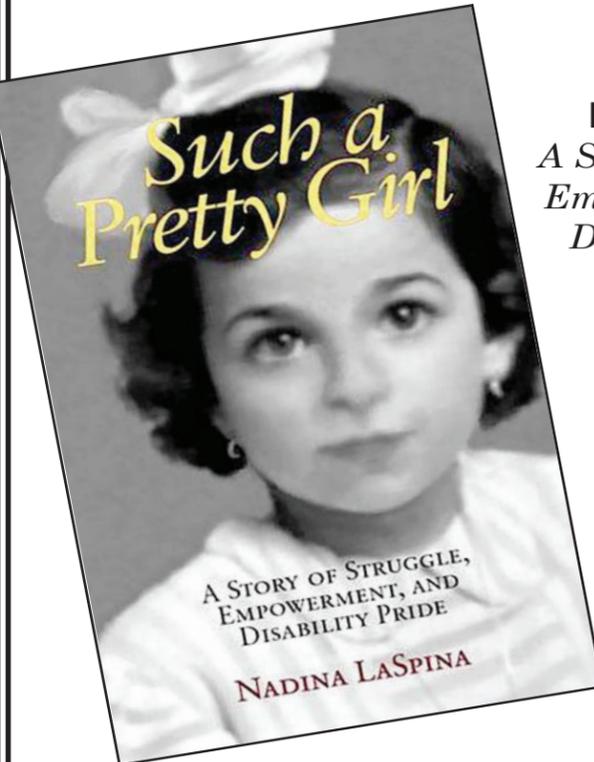
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**"Such a Pretty Girl"**  
*A Story of Struggle, Empowerment and Disability Pride*

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.**

## 'Ocean of Obstacles' Available For Pre-Order

In 2018, 12 blind teenagers who grew up in the desert defied all odds and learned how to sail at a local lake. Known as the Blind Buccaneers, they later journeyed hundreds of miles across the sea without the use of eyesight to guide them. In a moving tale about perseverance, courage and grit, the award-winning documentary, "Ocean of Obstacles," is set to be released April 13 on digital and cable VOD by Gravitas Ventures, a Red Arrow Studios Company.

The film was the brainchild of Phoenix-based director, Louie Duran, who discovered the Foundation for Blind Children and its challenge events in 2015. The challenge events are part of an ongoing effort by the foundation to inspire visually-impaired individuals to achieve more in life.

"I witnessed the strength and hope these kids possess," Duran said.

Foundation CEO Marc Ash-

ton has created the challenge events. "Whether it's to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, the bottom of the Grand Canyon or across the ocean, our kids rise to the challenge," he said. The documentary was recently awarded "Winner of Best True Story," "Winner of Special Innovation Award for Creative Storytelling" and "Most Inspirational Film" at the Las Vegas and Orlando film festivals.

"I think what I was left with was memories of the incredible experience we had, and just personally a new sense of confidence, a sense of adventure and a sense of, 'Hey they're doing it, I can do that too,'" said Kaylee Nielsen, one of the young blind cast members.

Presale orders may be placed soon on I-tunes.

To view the trailer, visit <https://youtu.be/3uHLCDOFR-c>.

For more information about The Foundation for Blind Children, visit <https://www.seeitourway.org/>.

## American Rescue Plan Aids Those With Autism

Throughout the past year, Autism Speaks has been asking Congress to assist the autism community in addressing unique challenges brought on by the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan has been signed into law, securing additional relief for individuals with autism and their families.

This legislation addressed each of the organization's pandemic-related policy priorities.

More than \$12.6 billion in emergency relief for home- and community-based services will help provide respite to family caregivers, supported employment services to autistic adults and other critical community supports that people with autism and other disabilities need to live and thrive in their communities.

Funding of \$3 billion is now dedicated for Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs to support students with autism and other disabilities who have been impacted by disruptions caused by COVID-19. Stimulus payments of \$1,400 for dependents over the age of 16 - This marks the first time dependents 17 years old and up are eligible for stimulus payments since previous rounds were only provided for dependents under age 17.

Additionally, telehealth flexibilities that have been established during the pandemic, were retained through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The funding in this bill will assist with ramping up telehealth capabilities, increasing broadband access across the country, addressing concerns of certain high cost-sharing insurance practices and permitting certain virtual home visits.

## RIGHTS & JUSTICE

BY GREGORY MANSFIELD

**The Civil Rights of the disabled people should not be subjected to a cost-benefit analysis**



*A monthly Able feature with the words of disabled lawyer Gregory Mansfield who has a Twitter following at @GHMansfield .*

## Discussion of Autonomous Vehicles Open To Public

Self-driving or autonomous vehicles (AVs) stand to revolutionize transportation in the U.S. and around the world.

It's important that they're designed to be inclusive of everyone. To promote accessibility for people with disabilities in the design of AVs, the U.S. Access Board is holding "Inclusive Design of Autonomous Vehicles: A Public Dialogue" with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living and other federal agencies. This national online dialogue is open to the public. All are invited to share their ideas for designing AVs that are inclusive of everyone, including

passengers with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.

The board is interested in design and development of AVs to ensure accessible entering, exiting, onboard maneuvering and securement for individuals with mobility disabilities; accessible ride hailing, on-board communication and interacting with AVs for passengers with hearing, visual or cognitive disabilities; and ideas for future research needs and next steps required to ensure accessible design and development of AVs for those with disabilities.

The public may join the dialogue at any time through May 5. Visit [www.transportationInnovation.IdeaScale.com](http://www.transportationInnovation.IdeaScale.com) to participate.



**NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY**



**Dating4Disabled.com** is a dating service and online community for people with disabilities. Our user-friendly features will help you meet new friends, date, chat, blog and more. Open a **FREE** card at [www.Dating4Disabled.com](http://www.Dating4Disabled.com) and join our community today!!!

# ‘Disability in the Age of COVID-19’ Published

**W**hile COVID-19 has had an impact on the lives of every American, the pandemic has amplified and exacerbated existing disparities faced by people with disabilities, communities of color, women, communities lacking adequate internet and more, often with dire consequences.

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) has conducted interviews with disability advocates and captured stories of people with disabilities affected by COVID in the book, “Disability in the Time of COVID-19.” Interviews with disability advocates revealed many gaps in systems and policies that have left people with disabilities behind and put them at risk during the pandemic and will continue to do so during future disasters unless addressed. Certain key recommendations have emerged.

Increase funding for home- and community-based services (HCBS). HCBS funding is needed to ensure that people with disabilities can access needed care from direct support professionals at home, rather than in nursing homes. While the recent passage of the American Rescue Plan by the House and Senate provides critical and overdue funding to support HCBS, this funding is time limited. Long-term systemic solutions are needed.

## **VACCINE NEEDED**

**Continued from page 3**

these sites and navigating large arenas that have Who should be next in line to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in the United States?

In some states, people with underlying conditions are now eligible to receive the vaccine based on CDC guidelines. “Blindness needs to be included among those underlying conditions,” said Calvin Roberts, president and CEO of Lighthouse Guild. “We urge states across the country to include blindness on the list of underlying conditions that makes a person eligible to receive the vaccine now.”

There are more than 1 million people in the United States who are legally blind and are facing overwhelming obstacles because of the pandemic.

Sustain and expand the Emergency Broadband Benefit established under the CARES Act. When the world moved online at the start of the pandemic, too many people with disabilities were left behind by inaccessible digital infrastructure and a lack of access to broadband internet and assistive technology.

Reform public benefits to promote financial security and resilience not poverty. The restric-

tive structure of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) limits recipients to having \$2,000 or less in assets and provides no more than \$794 per month, which only worsened poverty for people with disabilities during the pandemic.

Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and secure higher wages for direct support professionals who provide critical services and support to

people with disabilities. Many receive low wages and were not prioritized for PPE and other protections during the pandemic, which made it even harder to employ them since last March.

The stories and insights from the storybook “Disability in the Time of COVID-19” can be read through the interactive webpage or as a pdf document at [www.medium.com/disability-in-the-time-of-covid-19](http://www.medium.com/disability-in-the-time-of-covid-19).

## **New York State Independent Living Council's Third Disability Rights Hall of Fame Gone Virtual!**

**Honoring:  
Robert Gumson  
Edith Prentiss  
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# Disability Community Loses Dynamo, Edith Prentiss



Edith Prentiss is in the foreground watching Mayor de Blasio sign legislation to make Uber and Lyft more accessible.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH RAPPAPORT

## Continued from page 1

Emergency Management Special Needs Taskforce, the Washington Heights/Inwood Council on Aging and the advisory committee to the MTA/New York City Transit Riders Council.

She also involved herself with Long Island politics, while president of the 504 Democratic Club, and took on the Island Rail Road and was a member of its ADA Taskforce.

“Edith was the first chair of our emergency preparedness committee, and she worked tirelessly when New York City faced



PHOTO BY LEWIS GOLDSTEIN

Edith Prentiss with the plaque Marvin Wasserman presented naming her the Susan Schnur honoree at a Concepts of Independence event. She is joined by her niece Brooke Lynn Prentiss.

emergencies, such as 9/11 and Superstorm Sandy,” said Brad Williams, executive director of the New York State Independent Living Council. “She never missed an opportunity to “school” Amtrak about their responsibilities or the hotels about their accessible ground transportation. Edith never stopped advocating.”

One of her top priorities was to ensure the accessibility of all modes of transportation, including the installation of elevators at subway stations across the city, testing busses that the MTA considered buying or giving input about the angle of ramps for ferries. Through her work with TFAC, a federal lawsuit was brought against the city’s Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) to increase accessible yellow cabs and for-hire vehicles. The suit was settled, resulting in a 50 percent accessible yellow taxi fleet by 2020. (The rule has been delayed because of the pandemic.)

In addition, companies like Lyft and Uber finally offered wheelchair-accessible service, and Prentiss stood alongside New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio when that legislation was signed.

Prentiss worked to improve access to outdoor spaces as well as removing barriers at indoor public places, such as stores, police stations and restaurants. She was a plaintiff in many class action lawsuits based on accessibility.

She was also an intricate part of lawsuits brought by Disability Rights Advocates (DRA). According to senior staff attorney Rebecca Rodgers, a few of those suits include filings against the TLC for more accessible taxis, the MTA for the installation of subway elevators and the City of New York for improved sidewalk and police precinct access.

Prentiss worked for accessibility throughout New York state parks. This included improving

access at the Four Freedoms Park at Roosevelt Island, which was nearly impossible to navigate for those with mobility impairments. Prentiss, along with the Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled (BCID) and other plaintiffs engaged in discussions with the park operators and the New York State Parks Department, which led to the installation of a lift to make it possible for people to access the top of the staircase.

Prentiss received the Concepts of Independence’s Sandra Schnur Advocacy Award and the Freeda Zames Advocacy Award from New York City. On May 6, she will be posthumously inducted into the New York State Disability Rights Hall of Fame by NYSILC.

Prentiss used a wheelchair or motorized scooter for about 25 years. She had several serious health conditions, including asthma and kidney disease. She earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Stony Brook University and got a masters degree in medical sociology at Miami University.

“Her asthma was so bad that she couldn’t walk up a flight of stairs,” said her brother Andrew Prentiss, of St. James, N.Y. “My sister was a strong, independent woman. She took extreme joy in her work for the disabled, and her face would light up telling us stories about it. I knew she worked to make things better for the disabled, but the extent of what she accomplished is phenomenal.”

Filmmaker Arlene Schulman, a close friend and colleague from Community Board 12, has been in the process of creating a documentary titled “Edith Prentiss: Hell on Wheels.” She already

has much footage of Prentiss at work, at home and out and about in the city. Although it was still in production when Prentiss died, Schulman plans to complete the project and release the film in the near future.

Prentiss worked very closely with BCID on many projects, including opposing the ban on



Edith Prentiss tries to hail an accessible taxicab.

drinking straws. As the long-time moderator of the Disabilities Network of New York City (DNNYC) list-serve, Prentiss kept the public informed about any information regarding the disabled, such as the latest news, policy updates and events.

Prentiss is survived by brothers Andrew, Michael, Robert, William and David, as well as sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews. Due to the pandemic, the family plans to wait until sometime this summer to have a public memorial. Condolences may be sent to her family at PO Box 760, St. James, NY, 11780. The family has requested that donations in Prentiss’ name be made to ICS’ On A Roll Wheelchair Service on their website <https://icsny.org/wheelchair-services-expertise/>.



Prentiss, left, speaks at a news conference about the settlement of *Tax-Is For All Campaign v. New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC)*, which requires 50 percent of New York City’s yellow taxis to be wheelchair-accessible. With her, left to right are TLC Chair David Yassky; United Spinal Association’s C.E.O Jim Weisman; and DRA attorneys Julia Pinover and Sid Wolinsky.

# TRIBUTES TO EDITH

“I am very saddened to hear of the passing of longtime disability advocate, Edith Prentiss. She was a force to be reckoned with and pushed us all to do better and make things more inclusive for all New Yorkers. Always a straight-shooter and unafraid to speak her mind, her advocacy has led to a fairer and more just New York City. She will be missed and we will honor her memory by continuing to become a more accessible city for all.”

**New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio**

“Edith Prentiss was a fierce advocate who was straightforward, knowledgeable and unapologetic but also kind and loving towards everyone. Edith advocated for anyone and everyone, understanding that the disability rights movement was not just for people who use wheelchairs but for every person with every type of disability. Over the years she has left her mark in New York City by increasing wheelchair accessible taxis and for-hire vehicles, access in Parks programs, community board engagement, MTA matters, celebrations of disability pride and so much more. She was selfless, passionate and loved New York City with all of her being. Her advocacy, her spirit and her impact will be sorely missed.”

**Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities  
Commissioner Victor Calise**

I was distressed to learn of the passing of Edith Prentiss, my friend and comrade in arms. Edith was one of the foremost advocates for disability rights in New York City over the past 16 years or so. The 2019 documentary about her described her as “hell on wheels.” She would not be deterred if she felt she needed to be somewhere to advocate for our community, including broken elevators on subways, riding as many as many as three buses to get where she needed to be.

**Marvin Wasserman, Advocate Former Chair & Co-Founder  
Taxis for All Campaign, Pres. 504 Dems. Former Dir. BCID**

Edith was a true advocate. She was honest and always expressed herself in a straightforward, outspoken manner without pulling any punches, but she did it in a way that was endearing. I will think of her every time I am given a straw made from beets (she was allergic) or pass a curb ramp that needs shoveling. I will miss her as will all those who knew her.

**Kleo J. King, Esq.  
Senior Director of Accessibility Operations & Counsel  
Accessibility Services of United Spinal Association**

Edith was a fearless force for accessibility both in New York City and in New York State. She devoted years to DIA and the Taxis For All Campaign. One humanizing memory stands out. We were going to meet with David Yassky, then Chair of the TLC, Taxi and Limousine Commission to try to get accessible taxis. Edith got the great idea to make the five activists buttons that say Separate is Not Equal. She enthusiastically made the buttons herself and we filed into the meeting wearing our buttons like mini picket signs. We tried, but it took a lawsuit to get taxi access.

**Jean Ryan, President, Disabled In Action of Metropolitan N.Y.**

I met Edith my first day on the job just a couple years ago. Immediately, she left a strong impression on me. I thought, now there’s an advocate! When she entered the room, all knew she was there. And she was not quiet about delivering her message, demanding that it got across, for the betterment of people with disabilities. I’m deeply saddened by her passing, but I count myself fortunate to have learned from her and witnessed her formidable advocacy abilities first-hand!

**Christopher Schuyler  
Senior Staff Attorney, Disability Justice Program  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**

Edith Prentiss was a force, a fighter and an extraordinary advocate with a fierce sense of justice. Edith, who headed the Taxis For All Campaign, other disability groups and was a close friend of BCID’s, died earlier this week. We will miss her deeply.

When Edith became involved in the Taxis For All Campaign, there were three – three! – accessible taxis on New York City’s streets. Now there are thousands, thanks to Edith’s leadership of our campaign over the past decade.

Anyone who worked with Edith knew that she was a tremendous ally on virtually every disability issue in New York City. She strategized, buttonholed politicians and, sometimes, sued – all to make New York City a fairer, better place.

And if you weren’t on her side, then watch out! She argued with passion and the facts, and persuaded many New Yorkers that accessibility should be a priority, not an afterthought.

Whether it was making sure all New Yorkers could use the subways, enjoy Four Freedoms Park, enter a police precinct to attend a community meeting, get a straw at a restaurant if that’s what you needed to be independent, and on and on, Edith had her hand in everything that mattered to our community. We are a better City because of Edith, and a lesser City now that she’s gone.

**Joe Rappaport, Executive Director,  
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID)**

It goes without saying that Edith was a fierce advocate. She was passionate about creating change. Her judgments were swift and based on her experience. I’ll never forget the time--we had just won a landmark lawsuit finding that the City had not been following federal civil rights law and we were implementing the settlement--when Edith came to a group of City staff and people with disabilities who were there to talk about issues in implementation of the law. Often the people who were sent by the City to talk with us didn’t have the authority to do anything other than make a powerpoint presentation. Edith got frustrated and angry that no answers were offered for very real problems. She gave the officials a tongue lashing that they won’t soon forget. She was right and was a powerful force to behold.

**Susan M. Dooha, Executive Director  
Center for Independence of the Disabled , New York (CIDNY)**

I was so sorry to hear about Edith’s passing. The disability community owes Edith a great debt. She was passionate about the rights of people with disabilities and never missed an opportunity to speak truth to power. Over many years and in many venues, Edith demanded people pay attention to how people with disabilities were treated. I admired her tenacity, her strength and her unwavering commitment to the community. NYC is a better place because Edith was who she was. She will be missed.

**Loreen Loonie, Senior VP,  
Marketing & Communications Independence Care System (ICS)**

Edith was such an amazing advocate and powerful force. She was connected to the state council (on and off) for almost two decades. Edith was the first chair of our emergency preparedness committee and she worked tirelessly when NY City faced emergencies (such as 9/11, Sandy). I’m sure she helped to raise awareness during COVID. As a council, when we met face-to-face, she never missed an opportunity to “school” Amtrak about their responsibilities, or the hotel about their accessible ground transportation, and utilized the Hoyer lift installed at the hotels (due to national advocacy) to take a swim at their pools. Edith never stopped advocating. But I will always remember our lunch breaks and how they were frequently elevated by her spirited conversations.

**Brad Williams, Executive Director,  
New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC)  
Continued on page 14**

# TRIBUTES TO EDITH

**Continued from page 13**

The first time I met Edith was at a FEMA meeting in the aftermath of 9/11; we worked together off and on over the years regarding emergency preparedness and the Deaf/disabled communities. Edith “could work a nerve”, she was relentless in holding people accountable in making the city accessible and I learned so much from her. She was passionate and she cared about the community; not just those with physical disabilities but for all of us. She would show up at a hospital to visit friends, but unless you asked she would not say how she was feeling. Edith was a colleague but she was also my friend and I will truly miss her.

**Christina Curry, M.A., MPA**  
Executive Director, Harlem Independent Living Center

“For 12 years, Edith served as president of the 504 Democratic Club and as was made clear at an impromptu gathering of 504 Dems members the evening after her passing, Edith also served as a willing and immediately available advisor to more than half of the people in the room. The consensus was that no combination of five of our greater advocates could fill the void left by her passing. She was everywhere for all people and all matters relating to Disability Rights. To say she will be missed does not begin to describe our new reality without her presence.”

**Michael Schweinsburg**  
President, 504 Democratic Club

Edith was the energetic bunny. She never stopped. She travelled by subway because the buses were too slow or her. Edith could attend 3 to 4 meetings a day.

She knew everything that was happening in the disabled community – local, state and federal.

We lost a true activist,

**Carr Massi, Activist**

It’s a loss beyond words not having Edith in my life. She was a powerhouse on the many projects we were working on together, but I will miss her friendship even more. Edith knew the deep meaning of solidarity. She never once said no, not even when she was in the hospital or at home not well. How did she achieve so much? She was incredibly knowledgeable and determined, but she also shared a deep level of caring with others who cared. A memory I’ll never forget was going around Chinatown together with Edith and our fellow advocates from the 504 Democratic Club, all part of Project Access NYC’s initiative “Businesses Committed to Access and Inclusion.” Edith worked with the store owners helping them understand not only the law, but the “why.” These storeowners cared, and she spent several hours figuring out solutions to create ADA compliant ramp access where there was little or no sidewalk. “No” was just not an option for her.

I know she’s in those pearly gates of heaven now – and that they opened with the push of a button as she rolled in.

**Elisabeth Axel, President and CEO, Art Beyond Sight**

Never one to hold back how she really felt, Edith had knowledge and historical references, not only pertaining to ADA, but everything NYC and beyond. A reliable teacher, friend and fellow Crocs (the shoes) enthusiast, she will be missed terribly.

**Donna Fredericksen,**  
Deputy Director, Paratransit Outreach

Edith Prentiss made our City a safer, more accessible place to call home for millions of New Yorkers with disabilities. She was a tireless advocate who left an indelible mark on our City. Rest in power.

**Scott Stringer, N.Y.C. Comptroller**

Edith was an important voice for the disabled, fighting for equality all across New York City and the country. Her tireless advocacy, no doubt, will live on with all of those she touched.

**Tom DiNapoli, N.Y.S. Comptroller as seen on Twitter**

Indeed, our community lost a mighty leader in Edith Prentiss and I’ve lost a lifelong mentor.

**Anastasia Somoza, as seen on Twitter**

DRA has had the privilege of working with Edith Prentiss since we first opened our New York office in 2010. I have been honored to represent her and the organizations she devoted her time to on matters such as access to taxis, subways, sidewalks, and police stations. Edith was a tenacious advocate for people with disabilities whom I learned a great deal from, and as DRA continues the work, Edith’s legacy will be in our hearts.

**Rebecca Johnson**  
Disability Rights Advocates

Edith: Irrepressible, Indomitable and Irreplaceable.

**Kathleen Madigan**

Effective advocacy makes it easier for people to do what you want than what they want. Edith made it much easier to do what she wanted than what government and elected officials wanted.

She was tenacious, intrepid and despite her physical condition, a constant presence in NYC disability advocacy.

**James Weisman, General Counsel**  
United Spinal Association

Edith was forceful when need be and got so much done for the community. She also had a gentle and caring side and I am happy to have known her. She was a friend to *Able* and contributed often.

She will be remembered in the history books and by those who fought alongside her for the cause and those who loved her.

**Angela Melledy**  
Publisher, *Able Newspaper*



Edith, left, holds a sign that says “London has them/Why not NYC?” as Disability Rights Advocates’ Attorney Sid Wolinsky, right, speaks to group of demonstrators after the court hearing that was settled guaranteeing 50 percent of Yellow Taxis would be accessible by the year 2020.

## ABA Honors D.C. Lawyers for Disability Work

The American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights honored Washington lawyer Marjorie Rifkin and global law firm Reed Smith LLP for their work on behalf of disability rights and disability diversity and inclusion, respectively, during the ABA Virtual Midyear Meeting.

Rifkin, of counsel at the public interest law firm Terris, Pravlik & Millian LLP, received the Paul G. Hearne Award for Disability Rights, co-sponsored by Starbucks Coffee Co. Reed Smith LLP received the Champions for Disability Inclusion in the Legal Profession Award, presented by Accenture.

Since 1999, the Hearne Award, named for activist and disabilities rights advocate Paul G. Hearne, has been presented to an individual or an organization/group for performing exemplary service in furthering the rights,

### File Amtrak Claims By May 29

The National Disability Rights Network was pivotal in the success of the recent settlement between the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Amtrak.

People with mobility disabilities who encountered inaccessible Amtrak stations can begin submitting claims for monetary compensation. Claims must be submitted by May 29.

Amtrak created the compensation fund as part of a settlement with the DOJ, which found the railroad had engaged in disability discrimination violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Amtrak was given 20 years after the ADA was passed in 1990 to make stations accessible, but by 2010 had failed to make progress.

Claims may be submitted by sending an email with name, address, and telephone number to [info@amtrakdisabilitysettlement.com](mailto:info@amtrakdisabilitysettlement.com), by calling the fund administrator at (888) 334-6165 or TTY (866) 411-6976, or by submitting online at [www.amtrak-disabilitysettlement.com](http://www.amtrak-disabilitysettlement.com).

dignity and access to justice for people with disabilities.

Rifkin has devoted her 30-year legal career, including more than 20 years with Disability Rights D.C. at University Legal Services, to advocating for the rights of disabled individuals facing unconstitutional, discriminatory and unnecessary institutionalization in prisons and

nursing facilities, as well as inaccessible housing, governmental services and public accommodations. For decades, she has fought so disabled individuals can live with dignity and self-direction, and to ensure that the nation's disabilities laws are more than theoretical safeguards.

Before joining Terris, Pravlik & Millian in 2020, Rifkin

worked with the Legal Aid Society Criminal Defense Division in New York City, ACLU National Prison Project, and the National Council on Disability and the Open Society Institute in Baltimore.

The Champions for Disability Inclusion in the Legal Profession Award recognizes a law firm or corporation that

**Continued on page 20**



marlene meyersen jcc manhattan

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# FEMA REGION II

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS TEAM

## COVID-19 Vaccine – It's Our Turn To Roll Up Our Sleeves & Get Vaccinated

It's hard to imagine a time when we didn't know COVID-19 existed. Now when people say "virus," we know what they mean.

The impact of COVID-19 on our lives, our activities, and our freedom has affected us all. The responsibility is ours, as a community, to help stop this virus. Now we have a new, safe and effective tool to help us do that — COVID-19 vaccines.

We all need to step up to beat COVID-19. We ask you to join us in protecting yourself, your family and friends and our community by getting vaccinated.

According to the CDC, a disability alone does not mean you are at higher risk of getting COVID-19, however due to where you live or how often you engage with health care providers, your risk level may be increased. Consult your healthcare provider if you have a question about getting a vaccine, how a vaccine can affect your health and if you are at higher risk from getting severely ill from COVID-19.

Getting vaccinated, adds an important layer of protection for you, your family and loved ones. Here are some things you should know about the COVID-19 vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States are very effective at preventing the disease.

The most common side effects are pain in the arm where you got the shot, feeling tired, headache, body aches, chills, and fever.

Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available – wearing masks, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, staying at least six feet apart from people who don't live with you, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, washing your hands frequently and getting vaccinated.

Getting the vaccine will make it less likely that you will contract COVID-19 and may keep you from getting severely ill if you do contract COVID-19.

We want everyone in our community to be safe and get back to hugging our families and friends and shaking hands with our neighbors.

We all play a part in this effort, and you are Key. Please sign up to get your COVID-19 vaccination once you are eligible and continue to wear your mask and socially distance.

Then, share your experience with your friends and family so they feel comfortable to get the vaccine when it is their turn.

You can use the hashtag #SleeveUp, on social media to share your story.

Please reach out to your local, state or federally run vaccination site directly if you need accommodations.

If you have questions about vaccination in New York City you can visit the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/resources/covid-19-vaccine-distribution-frequently-asked-questions.page>.

For more information Access Living has a complete list of COVID-19 resources <https://www.accessliving.org/our-services/covid-19-resources-for-the-disability-community/>.

If you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit CDC's FAQs web page <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>.

## CRAB Celebrates 30th Anniversary



**C**hesapeake Region Accessible Boating (CRAB) celebrates 30 years of providing the thrill, freedom and therapeutic value of sailing for anyone with a disability. CRAB was founded in 1991 by Don Backe, who was paralyzed in a car accident while in his 50s.

group sails, sailing camps and clinics, and regattas.

“When you see guests on our dock, often the caregivers have the biggest smiles of all. For me, that’s a great indicator of our success. We have a rich, 30-year history to celebrate”, said Board President David Hankey.

CRAB provides sailing instruction to more than 1,000 guests with the assistance of hundreds of trained volunteers every year from its base of operations at Sandy Point State Park in Maryland. Sailing programs are held every week from April through October and include family sails,

The CRAB anniversary will be celebrated with special events, including a photo contest to capture the spirit of CRAB guests, family members, and volunteers. To learn more about the anniversary schedule and other events follow CRAB on Instagram and Facebook and check their website, [www.crabsailing.org](http://www.crabsailing.org) for updates.

## Get Paralympic Games Experience With USABA

Anyone who has ever wanted to be part of Team USA can support and join the Team USA Goalball athletes and other blind and visually-impaired Paralympic athletes as they prepare for the Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Go for the gold with Team USA by joining the 100 days until the Tokyo Challenge held by the United States Associa-

tion of Blind Athletes (USABA).

The challenge, which begins May 1, is an opportunity for participants to stay active and track their activity with hundreds of blind and visually-impaired athletes, guides and supporters across the country while raising money and support for USABA. Along the way, those who join in will experience motiva-

tion, personal messages and opportunities to train with Team USA — including the opportunity to earn exclusive

USABA and Team USA gear.

For additional information visit their site at [www.usaba.org](http://www.usaba.org).

## Become An NDSS Athlete Ambassador

Registration is open for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) 2021 Athlete Ambassador Team.

Athlete Ambassadors are encouraged to be involved in local, state, national and/or international races and sporting events and be active in their community. This may include volunteering at events and races in the local area, training

and participating in events and races, promoting health and fitness and assisting NDSS with sporting events, campaigns and initiatives.

Included with the registration fee is an exclusive TeamNDSS SWAG box full of gear from NDSS partners and sponsors.

To register, visit [www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org) and click on “advocacy.”

## USABA Launches Video Series Highlighting Hall of Fame

As part of United States Association of Blind Athletes’ (USABA) year-long 45th-anniversary celebration in 2021, the association has put together a 45-for-45 series highlighting members of the USABA Hall of Fame and others. This weekly series tribute to

the pioneers and outstanding athletes, coaches and teams that have helped build and shape USABA into the thriving organization it is today.

The series can be seen on their site at [www.usaba.org/45-for-45-video-series/](http://www.usaba.org/45-for-45-video-series/).

## Blind Soccer Videos On YouTube



USABA has made a series of 17 instructional videos available on the Paralympic sport of blind soccer, also known as 5-a-side football. The videos are divided into easy-to-understand segments and are perfect teaching tools for coaches and volunteers alike.

Katie (Atkinson) Smith and her team at the Columbus (Ohio) Recreation and Parks Department produced these informative videos. Smith is the head coach and creator of Ohio’s first and only blind soccer team.

The series of 17 instructional videos in the USABA Blind Soccer Instructional Video Series playlist is available on the USABA YouTube channel.

# INFORMATION FORUM

## AUTISM RESOURCES FAIR OFFERED THROUGHOUT APRIL

The Ocean County Library will mark Autism Awareness Month with the return of its Autism Resources Fair. This year it's a month-long event.

Interested families and individuals can take part in the free virtual programs and pick up free, sensory-friendly "Take & Make" crafts at 19 library branches.

"Trivia for Teens," packed with little-known facts about music, media, and the Ocean County Library, will be available, at [www.theoceancountylibrary.org/autism](http://www.theoceancountylibrary.org/autism).

Registration for this free virtual program series is required and made available on their site at [www.theoceancountylibrary.org/events](http://www.theoceancountylibrary.org/events).

## FREE ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT AVAILABLE

ALZConnected is a free online community for everyone affected by Alzheimer's or another dementia, including people living with the disease, their care partners, family and friends.

This online support system is a safe and secure space accessible from any computer at any time.

To sign up, visit [www.alzconnected.org](http://www.alzconnected.org).

## GET VALUABLE CAREGIVER RESOURCE FOR FREE

The Coach Broyles' Playbook is a great resource for anyone caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or another dementia. The playbook is available for free (including shipping) to those who live in the Long Island Chapter service area.

To request a playbook, visit [www.alz.org/longisland](http://www.alz.org/longisland).

A staff member from the Alzheimer's Association will contact you to confirm submitted information.

## AHRC SEEKS SIBLING INPUT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

AHRC New York City's Sibling Committee is looking for siblings of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to find out how it can help them.

The committee serves as a resource for siblings by providing information about services, updates on current issues, hosting educational seminars and opportunities to network with other siblings.

For additional information, contact Annette Spallino, LCSW, AHRC New York City at [Annette.Spallino@ahrcnyc.org](mailto:Annette.Spallino@ahrcnyc.org) or call 212 780-2592.

## REGISTER FOR ONLINE DRUM CLASSES

Beginning April 5, the Music Academy for Special Learners is offering drum classes on Zoom every Monday morning at 11:30 a.m. All ages and abilities are welcome. Fees are \$35 per class per group.

To register for class or for additional information, email [admin@music4speciallearners.com](mailto:admin@music4speciallearners.com).

## NDSS PLANS VIRTUAL SUMMIT APRIL 12 THROUGH 30

Registration is open for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) Virtual Adult Summit, April 12 through April 30, featuring favorite speakers from past years as well as some new faces.

Sessions will include topics such as Women's Health, Alzheimer's and Dementia, Grief and Transition to a post-COVID-19 life.

For information and to register, visit [www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org) and click on "get involved" and then "events."

Keep up with the NDSS Ask the Expert campaign on Twitter where participants can submit their questions to be answered before the summit.

## MAGAZINE FEATURES WRITING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Behind Our Eyes is a nonprofit organization was founded to support and inspire the writing of people with disabilities, promote public awareness to develop an enlightened public opinion of people with disabilities, develop the writing craft of the members and publish such works the members generate.

It publishes a magazine, Magnets and Ladders, twice a year. The publication prints selected writings of contributors. For further information visit [www.magnetsandladders.org](http://www.magnetsandladders.org) or [www.behindoureyes.org](http://www.behindoureyes.org).

## REGISTER FOR ONLINE PANEL ON DISABILITY IN THE FAMILY

Disability in the Family, an online thought-provoking conversation on the unique challenges and opportunities siblings encounter throughout their lifespan. All interested in sibling issues are welcome to attend, Sunday, April 11, from 4 to 6 p.m.

The program will be led by Don Meyer, former director of the Sibling Support Project and creator of Sibshop, a model providing support to siblings of people with disabilities. His Sibshop trainings have resulted in 450 sibling support groups globally.

He is the author of six books on sibling issues and the recipient of the Sibling Leadership Network's Lifetime Achievement Award. Following the panel, join an exclusive breakout room discussion on "Finding Sibling Support" from 5:30 to 6 p.m. with Emily Holl, director of the Sibling Support Project, and Lindsay Hyland.

To register, visit [www.includenyc.org](http://www.includenyc.org).

## 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](mailto:ablenews@aol.com).

# THE ACCESS INDEX

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## LETTERS

### Continued from page 2

In fact, the COVID-19 Relief package that passed congress does have funds allocated for public transportation, but please don't start jumping for joy. There is a total of \$45 billion nationwide but most of that is for airports and airlines. A little less than \$10 billion is allocated for "Surface Transportation Block Grants" and

that is going to be shared by many cities and states. If our public officials manage to keep the buses and trains running on a normal schedule without raising fares, that will be a miracle.

Quemuel Arroyo and Victor Calise have a load of work on their plate. Priority #1 will be to figure out how to create a lot of access with

very little resources. Hopefully, when money is finally available, they will have come up with a viable plan that will provide access to a subway system that is 75 percent inaccessible.

The two big questions are, will the MTA let them flap in the wind or give them

support and resources they need? The other question is, will the disability community work with, respect and trust these men or treat them like fall guys when progress is too slow? I'm just hoping for any progress.

Sincerely,  
Phil Beder

## RELIEF HELPS PWD

### Continued from page 3

with Disabilities Education Act. More broadly, the stimulus package contains money for COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution, funding to support state and local governments and much more.

Now, attention will turn to the states, with each determining how funds for disability services will be allocated. "What happens next at the state level mat-

ters greatly," said Barbara Merrill, CEO of the American Network of Community Options and Resources, or ANCOR, which represents disability services providers across the nation.

"It will be critical for states to use the additional HCBS funding to address providers' most pressing needs and to ensure the continuation of quality services," she said.

## UNITED SPINAL NOW

### Continued from page 6

Two other wide-awake giants in the United States are immigration and working-class unemployment. Americans born today will live and work longer than any generation in world history. They will need home- and community-based services to remain productive and healthy. There's a match here. Homecare worker does not have to be employment of last resort. It can attract those with career ambitions and the desire to be upwardly mobile.

Benefits and paid-time off with opportunities to advance in employment will make the job a vocation.

In the coming months, we will hear from organized labor about this issue. Homecare workers need protections. We will support the workers, just as we will seek their support for adequate home and personal care services that incentivize work and can be consumer-controlled.

# 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.  
**A398**

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

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 phone number and photo.  
**A397**

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inappropriate. This service is intended solely for personal advertisements of singles. No ads will be accepted from couples, groups or organizations. Advertisers and respondents must be 18 years of age or older. No ads will be published seeking persons under the age of 18.

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Just write your ad and mail it with payment and coupon below to *Able Personals*, P.O. Box 395, Old Bethpage, N.Y. 11804 or email to [ableangela@aol.com](mailto: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 A# 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.

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## CIDNY

### Continued from page 8

them accessible after advocacy by the community. Why aren't the questions about whether the new program designs will work for everyone asked at the start?

People with disabilities are much more likely to be rent burdened--unable to afford their rent and are at least 60 percent of the homeless population in shelters. Where are people with disabilities who are extremely low income and need accessible housing on the City's agenda?

People with disabilities are disproportionately likely to have negative encounters with the police and the criminal justice system. Police stations are inaccessible, lack hearing loops, need materials in alternate formats. When encountering people with mental health disabilities or intellectual disabilities or who are Deaf, the police tend to see dangerous people rather than people who navigate the world differently. When is the bias in

these systems going to change? When will the rights of people with disabilities be taken into consideration?

People with disabilities are a health-disparities population. We find roadblocks to healthcare everywhere that we go to seek care - in health care facilities; in the lack of communication readiness; in inflexible appointment schedules and more. Even in building the vaccine rollout, home visits to people who are homebound were not on the agenda, captioning and alternate formats and ASL were still in the future, we hope. Why would you leave out people with disabilities who are often far more likely to be at higher risk for COVID-19 because of a higher incidence of co-morbid conditions?

There are so many wonderful public spaces, but not all can be fully enjoyed by everyone and some are segregated. Libraries and tech centers are newly built for millions and millions of dollars and are inaccessible. We need to ensure that public spaces and institutions are accessible to all. How can new segregated complex-

es continue to be built by the City when they are supposed to serve all equally?

We must be part of the conversation around these and other topics, not a footnote. We are New Yorkers and we love this city. Let's work together to make sure that this is a city for all. Will you assertively address these issues together with us? Hire people with disabilities throughout your administration? Say the word disability in your campaign? Refrain from thinking of us as pitiable or heroic - but just as folks?

Will you require that all new projects consider how they will design programs or other interventions that are accessible to all? Will you run an administration that would rather work with the community than wait until we sue and then fight on the wrong side of the law time and time again?

And to the readers of *Able Newspaper*, reach out to the 2021 NYC Mayoral candidates and tell them your thoughts and concerns. Ask them to work with the community and remind them "nothing about us without us."

## ABA HONORS ATTORNEYS

### Continued from page 15

has made measurable progress in the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement to leadership positions of lawyers with disabilities.

Reed Smith has shown commitment to, and leadership in, supporting and enhancing the professional, personal and career development of people with all types of disabilities both at the firm and within the legal profession. With its disability affinity group, LEADRS, along with the firm's Mental Health Task Force and Well-

ness Works program, Reed Smith makes disability inclusion a core component of its diversity and inclusion programs.

The firm held its inaugural Global Disability Inclusion Summit in December 2020, and forged partnerships with other organizations, including participation in Barclay's Think Talent program for prospective lawyers who are autistic or otherwise neurodiverse and hiring four graduate lawyers from that program.

## Team USA and Shiffrin Back in Action

**M**ikaela Shiffrin came back to show her speed, and she did just that recently by finishing third in the women's super-G as the alpine skiing world championships finally got underway after three days of weather delays in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

Shiffrin, coming off an early end to last season and then an abbreviated offseason, had elected to focus only on the two technical events — slalom and giant slalom — so far this world cup season. Racing her first super-G since January 2020, she made it count

The two-time Olympic champion finished just .47 seconds behind Lara Gut-Behrami of Switzerland, with fellow Swiss skier Corinne Suter taking second. The result

marked Shiffrin's eighth career medal at the world championships, tying her with Lindsey Vonn for the U.S. record. Shiffrin, the defending world champ in the super-G, was leading midway down the hill but a late correction toward the bottom slowed her down.

"It's a disappointment not to win gold. But after a year of not starting in super-G and some really, really good training in the last two weeks, I was able to ski the way that I wanted to," Shiffrin said, according to the Associated Press. "Even when I made a mistake, I still felt good about my skiing."

The women's super-G marked the long-delayed beginning to this year's world championships, which have seen multiple weather days



Mikaela Shiffrin competes in the Women's Super-G during the FIS World Ski Championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

so far this week. In a men's super-G that followed, Travis Ganong was the top American in eighth place. In 10 technical races so far this season, Shiffrin has re-

corded two wins and never finished lower than sixth.

Another world title in Cortina would put Shiffrin first among Americans. She's currently tied with Ted Ligety.

## Cookler Raises The Bar Toward Victory

By Bruce Pandolfo

In Junior High, Dawn Cookler trained daily on roadsides wearing a colorful customized shirt that declared, "no thanks i'd rather run." The slogan was the Long Island native's determined answer to the incessant offers for rides from concerned drivers who passed her struggling gait.

Now 56, she laughs as she describes her running speed "looks like walking." For the Coram resident, setting her own pace and trailblazing would prove to be a life-long motif - cerebral palsy be damned. "I get knocked down and I get up again. It's my anthem," she beams proudly at her resilience.

As a tenacious athletic student, Cookler found that she had to advocate for herself while at Old Field Junior High. She convinced the Board of Education to allow her to participate on the track team with crutches and went on to run in two five-mile races with

the encouragement from a High School gym teacher.

Her father ran alongside her for the full three hours it took to complete each time. Cookler encouraged judges and organizers to leave for breakfast and return to join her at the finish line. They did. When she unprecedentedly broke the ribbon, "Chariots of Fire" played in cinematic tribute.

In college, Cookler discovered disabled-inclusive sports. She joined the track and field team where, on her knees, she participated in shot put, javelin and discus. Although her impaired motor coordination makes turning a doorknob impossible and renders locking her gym locker a twenty-minute tedium, she developed an interest in powerlifting inspired again by her gym teacher. Specifically, she took on the bench press.

In the 80's, traveling with a team of supporters, she claimed a world record bench press and held it for 12 years.

After taking an injury-imposed 30-year break from the sport, Cookler has recently been in the gym nearly every day. "I have fun in the gym because I out-rep most people and they don't expect it, she said." In a return to form in 2017, Cookler benched 85 pounds in the Southern Powerlifting Federation.(SPF) Summer Heat Championships in Bohemia.

She has her eye on reclaiming the bench press women's para-powerlifting record in the 2024 France Paralympics. "The Paralympics are the real deal and I want to raise awareness." she says.

Cookler is training every day to the awe of fellow gym rats who help spot her. "I need a shirt that says "ADD" "she jokes, "People think I want them to take the weight off." ADD she must. Nigerian Paralympian Bose Omolago holds the current female benching Paralympic world record at 313 pounds. Phys-

ical strength and determination aren't the only obstacles. Over the coming years on her road to compete in France, Cookler will need sponsors for her journey to cover transportation needs and various expenses and logistical red tape to assure her placement and success. She will also need a trainer.

Ambition can be a Herculean burden to bear, but Dawn Cookler's outlook and childhood "I'd rather run" shirt certainly never implied "I'd Rather Run away from a challenge".

The Paralympics are the brainchild of the neurosurgeon on Ludvig Guttman. While rehabilitating World War II veterans in Britain, he observed that sporting was integral to recovery. Naturally, competitions followed. The official Paralympics debuted with a packed stadiums in Rome in 1960. Para-powerlifting wasn't introduced until 1984.