

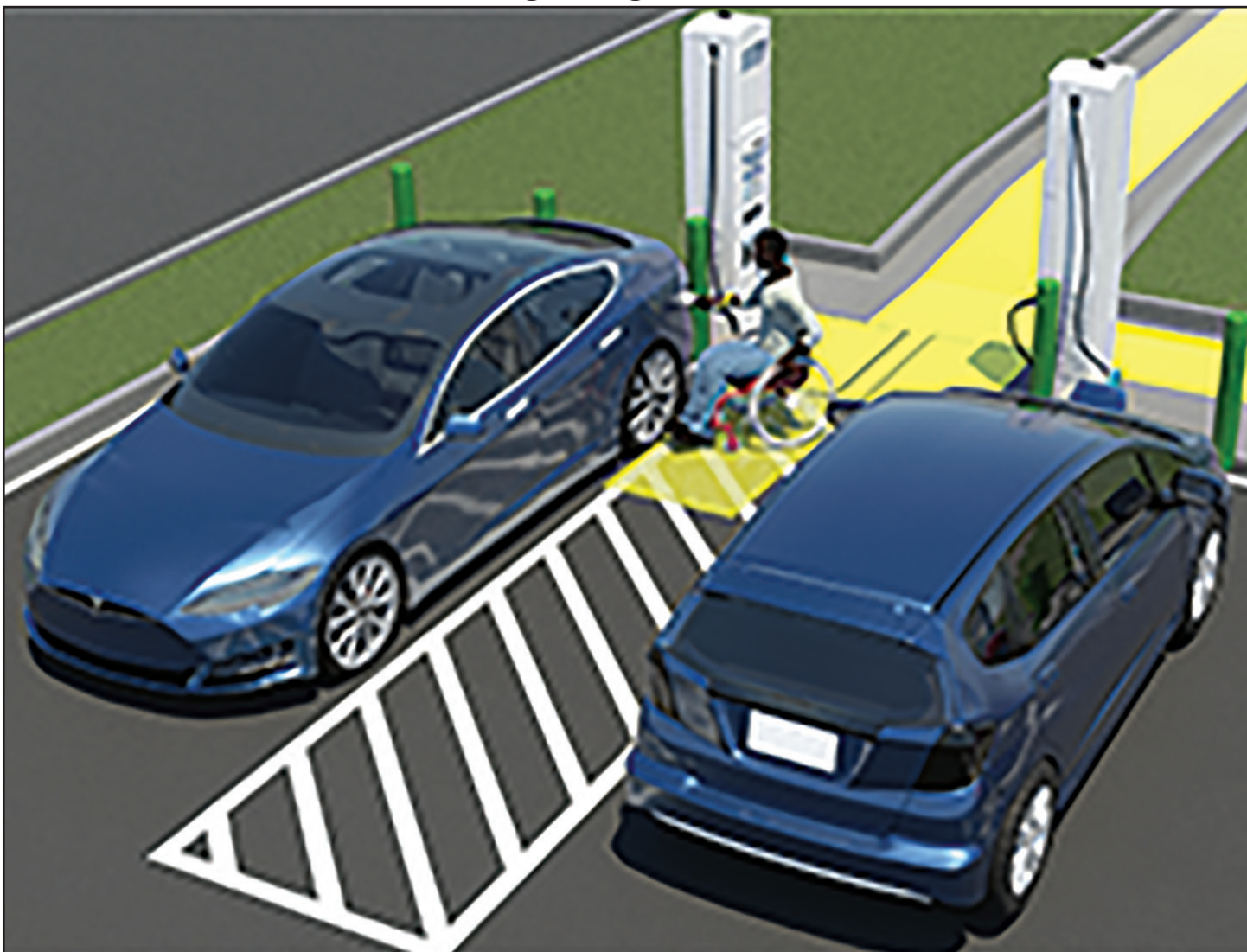
# AWARD WINNING New York **Able**



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

## CHARGING ACCESS

### Webinar Details Designing Electric Vehicle Stations



The Joint Office of Energy and Transportation hosted the webinar “Designing for Accessible EV Charging Stations,” and the recording is publicly available. The webinar included a presentation by U.S. Access Board Transportation

Systems Engineer Juliet Shultz who discussed design recommendations for accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

Shultz reviewed applicable Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), and Section 508 require-

ments and new recommendations for making EV charging stations accessible as promulgated in the board’s technical assistance document Design Recommendations for Accessible Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. This techni-

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# Three Arrested For Medicaid Fraud

Three principals of Phinaliz Communications LLC were arrested in connection with a long-running scheme to steal more than \$1 million from the Medicaid program by billing for fake transportation services, duplicating and inflating costs and paying kickbacks to Medicaid recipients, according to State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

The three defendants, Philip Mtui, Mbaga Kaiza and Tony Taylor, were arrested.

"The defendants allegedly engaged in a systematic scam to defraud the Medicaid program of millions of dollars," said DiNapoli. "Medicaid fraud impacts us all and diverts money from those truly in need. Thanks to the partnership between my office, Otsego County District Attorney Muehl, Otsego County Sheriff Devlin, Oneonta Chief of Police Witzenburg and the HHS-OIG, this fraud was uncovered and now these defendants will be held accountable."

Phinaliz Communications, based in Otsego County, is enrolled in the Medicaid program as a participating transportation pro-

vider for Medicaid recipients. Under Medicaid regulations, patients may use transportation services for legitimate appointments which are billed to the Medicaid program by the provider.

Phinaliz is owned by Mechanicville resident Mtui, 46. Kaiza, 47, is the operational manager and is also a New York state resident. Taylor, 42, is a manager, dispatcher and driver.

The joint investigation revealed that over a four-year period, Mtui and Kaiza defrauded the Medicaid program by claiming payment for rides that never occurred, and double, triple, or quadruple billing for rides that did occur. Investigators found that Medicaid enrollees were being paid kickbacks by the company to use their service and provide their information to facilitate the alleged crimes.

The crime ring was exposed through a multi-year investigation by state, local and federal authorities involving extensive surveillance and the execution of a search warrant on company headquarters. These are the first

round of arrests. The investigation is continuing.

Mtui and Kaiza were arraigned in Oneonta City Court on one count of Grand Larceny in the First Degree, theft of over \$1 million. Mtui and Kaiza both were held on \$250,000 bail. Taylor was arrested on one count of conspiracy in the sixth degree related to the kickback scheme.

The Otsego County Department of Probation, the Otsego County Department of Social Services, the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, the Oneida County Sheriff's Office, the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the East Greenbush Police Department also assisted in the investigation.

New Yorkers can report allegations of fraud involving taxpayer money by calling the toll-free Fraud Hotline at 1-888-672-4555, by filing a complaint online at [investigations@osc.ny.gov](mailto:investigations@osc.ny.gov), or by mailing a complaint to: Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Investigations, 8th Floor, 110 State St., Albany, NY 12236.

## Medicare Rights Center Applauds IRA On Meds

The Medicare Rights Center applauded the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for its prescription drug price negotiation program.

"This program will provide relief for millions of people with Medicare and reduce the difficult

choices they face when it comes to affording their medications," said the center's Pres. Fred Riccardi in a recent statement.

He referenced the center's helpline that receives calls regularly from older adults and people with

disabilities who struggle to pay for their prescriptions. "Often, they have to choose between medication and basic needs like food or rent. By allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prices with drug companies, the IRA will reduce the burden on beneficiaries and improve access to affordable care. These critical changes are long overdue."

"Several provisions already in place, such as no-cost Part D vaccines, lower coinsurance on some Part B drugs, and the \$35 monthly insulin limit, are helping beneficiaries build health and financial security," Riccardi continued.

The law is set to expand the Part D Low Income subsidy to people with incomes up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level pay for their prescriptions in 2024. It will also eliminate the 5 percent coinsurance requirement for beneficiaries who reach the catastrophic coverage phase, finally protecting Part D enrollees from limitless and uncertain costs.

"These policies will meaningfully strengthen health care access and affordability for all people with Medicare," said Riccardi.

## Dan O'Rourke Rides For Awareness



In partnership with the National Federation of the Blind, Dan O'Rourke traveled more than 2,700 miles on a bicycle across the country from Santa Monica, Calif. to Chicago, Ill. along Route 66 to raise awareness of the Federation's mission of raising expectations.

As a National Hockey League (NHL) referee, O'Rourke is used to skating on thin ice, making tough calls, and taking a few hits along the way. As the child of a blind parent, he also knows how important it is to know that blind persons are not alone.

He beat the heat wave. He fixed flat tires and he keeps smiling.

### ABLE NEWSPAPER

P.O. Box 395, OLD BETHPAGE, NY 11804  
516 939-2253 FAX 516 939-0540  
[ablenews@aol.com](mailto:ablenews@aol.com)  
[www.ablenews.com](http://www.ablenews.com)



**Published By**  
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**Publisher**  
Angela Miele Melledy

**Editorial Assistant**  
Pat Horwell  
Allison Howe

**Staff Writers**  
Beth Guarino (emerita)  
Karin Falcone Krieger

**Columnists**  
**Disabled in Action**  
Phil Beder  
Edith Prentiss (emerita)  
**United Spinal Association**  
Jim Weisman

**Production Director**  
Debbie Simko

**Art & Production**  
Jennifer Becker (emerita)  
Ann Imbrogno  
Marilyn Wheeler (emerita)

**Technical Assistance**  
Louis Melledy

**Social Media Assistance**  
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# Justice Dept Releases Language Access Plan

The Justice Department has updated a department-wide Language Access Plan to help ensure that all individuals, regardless of language used, have access to and are able to fully participate in its programs, activities and services.

The Language Access Plan provides guidance to department offices to help them bolster language access planning, which includes understanding the needs of communities with limited English proficiency, improving translation and interpretation services, promoting quality assurance of those services, and expanding the range of tools available to serve the public.

“Language barriers should not stand in the way of access to government services,” said Attorney General Merrick Garland. “This updated Language Access Plan is an important step toward ensuring that everyone can report crimes, access important resources, and seek help from the Justice Department when they need it.”

Last November, Garland directed the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division to work with federal agencies to improve efforts to ensure meaningful language access and to revise and update their language access plans and policies accordingly.

The Civil Rights Division

also provided in-depth technical assistance and engaged with external stakeholders to assist the department and other federal agencies update and revise their language access plans. The division brought over 35 federal agencies together for sessions that engaged experts and federal staff to identify effective use of qualified bilingual employees, how to build multilingual digital content, and the unique language access needs of people who speak Indigenous languages or have a disability.

A catalogue of language access resources is available by visiting [www.LEP.gov](http://www.LEP.gov)

“This revised Language Ac-

cess Plan underscores the Department’s continued commitment to language access in our own programs and activities,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “We look forward to publishing all revised agency language access plans on [www.LEP.gov](http://www.LEP.gov) to help ensure that all stakeholders know how to obtain meaningful language access when engaging with the federal government.”

The updated plan will be translated into a number of languages and will be available on the Department’s website using their recently launched language selector tool.

# Nondiscrimination Regulation Lauded

The Department of Health and Human Services has proposed a rule promoting nondiscrimination in health care and human services for persons with disabilities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a law that prevents discrimination based on disability by entities that receive federal funding.

The Biden-Harris Administration’s proposed rule expands Section 504 by prohibiting disability discrimination in medical care and treatment, prohibiting discrimination based on biases

or stereotypes about individuals with disabilities, judgments that an individual will be a burden on others, or beliefs that the life of an individual with a disability has less value than the life of a person without a disability.

It also bans disability discrimination in value assessments used to determine appropriate prices for healthcare goods and services and under what circumstances they will be offered to the public. The measure would ensure digital accessibility for web, mobile app, and informational kiosks in medical settings

The proposition adopts the recently announced US Access Board Accessible Diagnostic Medical Equipment Standards. It applies to all recipients of federal funding, including hospital systems, prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability against adults and children within the child welfare system and reinforces multiple standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including for service animals and mobility devices

“I am thrilled by today’s announcement from HHS. Once enacted, this rule will be one

the most substantial federal advancements towards health equity and access for disabled people in American history,” Maria Town, American Association of People with Disabilities president and CEO, said of the announcement. “Despite the fact that people with disabilities are more reliant on our health care and human services systems and experience some of the greatest healthcare costs, our healthcare system routinely discriminates against disabled people in a multitude of ways.”

# New State Laws Focus On People-First Policy

Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright, chair of the People with Disabilities Committee, sponsored two pieces of legislation that Gov. Kathy Hochul has signed.

The first bill increases representation of people with disabilities on the state planning council and changes the name of the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, updating the language in the law to comply with federal requirements for “person-first” language (A6543).

The second bill amends state statutes by updating the outdated and offensive

language “mentally retarded” to “developmental disability” (A5879A).

“It is important to myself and the state of New York that we remain up to date and respectful of individuals at all times,” Hochul said. “This legislative package will allow changes to outdated language in our state laws and continues our efforts to help strengthen the rights of all New Yorkers.”

Seawright said, “I commend Gov. Hochul for signing our bills to promote inclusion, dignity, and respect for New Yorkers living with disabilities. We are also updating

**Continued on page 18**

## Center Holds Awareness Parade



The Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL) recently held a Disabilities Awareness Parade in Kingston, N.Y. NYAIL staff and members marched with RCAL behind a New York Association on Independent Living parade banner, along with several other local partner organizations and supporters, as well as some motorcycles and horses. The parade ended with a celebration with guest speakers, Italian ices, face painting and other activities for the community.



# FEMA To Test Emergency Alert System

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in coordination with the FCC will conduct a nationwide Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) test at 2:18 p.m. on Oct. 4, with a back-up date of Oct. 11.

FEMA will initiate the test using the National Alert classification of Alert Message. While subscribers can opt out of receiving many types of WEA

messages, they cannot opt out of receiving a National Alert. As a result, all subscribers with WEA-capable devices should receive the test message, which will be accompanied by the WEA attention signal and vibration. The WEA test message will read, "This is a test of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed."

Participating CMS providers and equipment manufactur-

ers should take the necessary steps to ensure the accessibility of WEA messages to people with disabilities by enabling their WEA-capable devices to include unique audio and vibration attention signals. Further, WEA messages should be preserved in a consumer-accessible format and location for at least 24 hours or until deleted by the subscriber.

FEMA will transmit the nationwide test at 2:20 p.m. on

Oct. 4 using the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. EAS participants are required to make this test accessible.

The EAS test message will be transmitted as, "This is a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System, issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, covering the United States from 14:20 to 14:50 hours ET. This is only a test. No action is required by the public."

## Access Board Celebrates ABA Anniversary

On Aug. 12, 1968, Pres. Lyndon Johnson signed the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) into law at his ranch in Stonewall, Texas. "It is humane legislation, which had the unanimous support of both Houses of Congress. I am pleased and proud to sign it into law," he said.

The ABA is celebrating its 55th anniversary. This was one of the earliest measures by Congress to address access to the built environment by requiring federal and federally leased facilities to be acces-

sible for people with disabilities.

The impetus for the ABA involved many people with disabilities, disability advocates and organizations who fought for accessibility and inclusion. One key figure was Hugh Gregory Gallagher, who was stricken with polio at 19 years of age in 1952 and developed paralysis from the chest down. In 1962, Gallagher became administrative assistant to Sen. E.L. "Bob" Bartlett (D-Alaska) and began working on equal rights for

people with disabilities. Over the next few years, he was successful in advocating for several accessible design installations, including ramps and accessible routes at the Library of Congress, National Gallery of Art, The Kennedy Center and airports, hospitals and other public buildings.

These successes, coupled with a realization that even more significant action was needed, led Gallagher to draft the text of the bill that would become the ABA, "the first law asserting the civil and constitutional rights of disabled people ever passed anywhere."

With Bartlett as the sponsor and ten co-sponsors, the bill was introduced in the 90th Congress, 1st session, on Jan. 12, 1967, and referred to the Committee on Public Works. The bill was passed unanimously in the House on June 17, 1968 and in the Senate on July 26, 1968.

The ABA covers a wide range of facilities, including U.S. Post Offices, Veterans Affairs med-

ical facilities, national parks, Social Security Administration offices, federal office buildings, courthouses, and federal prisons. It also applies to non-government facilities that have received federal funding, such as certain schools, public housing and mass transit systems.

Several years after the ABA had become law, Congress saw that compliance was uneven and that no initiatives to create federal design standards for accessibility were underway. As Congress developed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, it decided to include Section 502, which created the U.S. Access Board (originally named the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board) and charged the agency with issuing ABA Accessibility Standards and leading the ABA compliance and enforcement program. The ABA Standards provide scoping and technical requirements that cover specifications for

**Continued on page 18**

## Check On SS Account Online

It's easy for workers to keep watch over their social security information by opening an account at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

A Social Security Statement is available to view online. It is useful for people of all ages who want to learn about their future Social Security benefits and current earnings history.

For workers age 60 and older who do not have any Social Security account, will receive a statement three months prior to their birthday.

Every year employers let Social Security know how much each person earned so

their records could be updated.

Social security calculates monthly retirement and disability benefits by looking at how much workers have earned, so it's important to make sure a record is accurate.

Apply for monthly retirement benefits any time between age 62 and 70. Payments are calculated by lifetime earnings. The amount will be higher the longer one waits to apply, up until age 70.

Account holders can apply for benefits online, change an address, request a new card, and more.

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# Novo Nordisk Caps Insulin Prices For Uninsured

New York State and Novo Nordisk Inc. have reached an agreement on the pricing of insulin at \$35 per monthly prescription for uninsured New Yorkers for five years, according to Attorney General Letitia James, who negotiated the deal.

The agreement also requires Novo Nordisk to implement a program with pharmacies to let uninsured patients know before they pay that they are eligible for the insulin cap. This agreement follows earlier settlements with Eli Lilly and Sanofi.

“New Yorkers who rely on lifesaving medication like insulin should not have to ration their doses or forgo taking their medicine altogether because they cannot afford it,” James said.

More than 10 percent of New Yorkers have diabetes, and it is estimated that 464,000 of them rely on insulin every day. New Yorkers who live in the state’s poorest neighborhoods are 70 percent more likely to have diabetes.

Approximately 16 percent of New York adults with diabe-

tes have an annual household income of less than \$25,000. James’ office found that the list prices set by insulin manufacturers for patients resulted in significant out-of-pocket costs for certain insulin users, causing some to ration their insulin or forgo it altogether. Over the past 20 years, the list prices for insulin have increased, nearly tripling from 2002 to 2013. For a person with Type 1 diabetes, annual spending on insulin averaged \$2,864 in 2012, and by 2016, nearly doubled to an average of \$5,705.

In addition to capping prices, Novo Nordisk is required to implement a streamlined process at the pharmacy counter that would allow pharmacies to automatically advise cash-paying customers of their ability to fill their monthly prescriptions for \$35 before leaving the pharmacy counter.

Novo Nordisk has also agreed to continue offering free insulin to the neediest consumers who meet income thresholds tied to the federal poverty line.

# Health Assembly Calls For Worldwide Physical Rehab Care

Worldwide, 2.4 billion people are living with a health issue that would benefit from rehabilitation care. However, in some low- and middle-income countries, more than 50 percent lack access to essential services.

The result is that millions of

people are developing preventable, long-term disabilities, often stopping them from participating in society and maintaining decent employment. Others, who already have complications from a condition, illness, or injury, see their symptoms worsen.

In a global context of natural disasters, conflicts and an aging population, the lack of rehabilitation for all who need it is a serious public health issue and a question of human dignity, according to global disability organization, Humanity & Inclusion.

Recently, at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, 194 countries began discussions toward a landmark res-

olution vote, committing them for the first time to develop and strengthen rehabilitation in their health systems.

Their resolution sets out nine actions for governments, including a commitment to introduce and integrate rehabilitation in health systems, increase services like physical and occupational therapy, improve access to artificial limbs

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## Kennedy Space Complex Is Autism Center

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex has partnered with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to become a Certified Autism Center™. This collaboration aims to ensure that autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals can visit with confidence.

“This certification is just one way we are working to ensure that Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex is accessible to each of our guests,” said Therin Protze, COO, Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. “The extensive autism sensitivity and awareness training our staff has undergone has already impacted the way we interact with all families and children with of all abilities, but specifically those with autism and other sensory sensitivities.”

To complete this certification, the space center team completed training to better understand and welcome autistic or sensory-sensitive visitors. IBCCES conducted an onsite review to provide additional ways the visitor complex can accommodate visitors, as well as providing sensory guide signage for each ex-

hibit to help guests prepare for their visit.

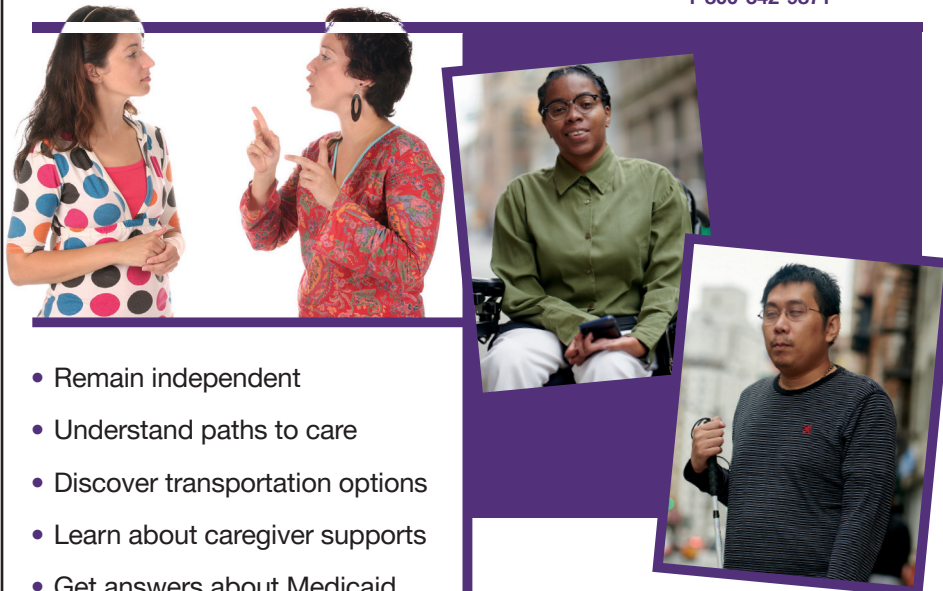
Many autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals face challenges when visiting new places or planning family trips due to a lack of staff training and understanding, potential sensory overload, or a need for flexible options and accommodations. Recognizing this need, IBCCES has developed training and certification programs for attractions, museums, hotels, zoos, aquariums and other entertainment venues. These programs ensure that all families and individuals, regardless of their sensory needs or sensitivities, can have a memorable and enjoyable experience.

In the United States alone, one in six people have sensory needs or sensitivities, and one in 36 children are diagnosed with autism. As a result, the demand for trained and certified options has reached an all-time high.

In addition to its certification programs, IBCCES created AutismTravel.com, a free online resource for families. This platform lists certified destinations and connects families to other relevant resources and communities.

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### Locations and Partners

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**Manhattan**  
 1010 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 301  
 New York, NY 10003  
**Queens**  
 80-02 Kew Gardens Rd, Suite 400  
 Kew Gardens, NY 11415

**Community Health Action of Staten Island (CHASI)**  
 56 Bay St, 4th Floor  
 Staten Island, NY 10301



**Bronx Independent Living Services (BILS)**  
 4419 Third Ave, #2C  
 Bronx, NY 10457







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## UNITED SPINAL<sup>NOW</sup>

### Autonomous Mass Transit Needs This Device

BY JAMES WEISMAN  
GENERAL COUNSEL



The universal tie-down, i.e., a securement device to hold all wheelchairs and their users securely on mass transit, has been a goal of accessible transit advocates and paratransit and mass transit operators for decades.

Wheeled mobility aids and their users come in all different sizes and shapes, but must be transported safely according to the US Department of Transportation's Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. If a wheeled mobility aid can board the bus, the transit operator cannot deny its user a ride because the device cannot be secured if the passenger desires.

There have always been factors mitigating against the development of a universal tie-down. Wheelchair and scooter manufacturers would have to agree to use the design. The manufacturer's installation of such a device on a chair suggests to the purchaser that the chair is transit-safe. Manufacturers fear liability if there is an accident on transit.

Making wheelchairs and scooters transit-safe, and requiring them to use a universal restraint device, will undoubtedly make them cost more. Since third-party payers sponsor most wheelchair purchases, Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance must be willing to cover these costs. Low-cost chairs and scooters and high-end products all must use the yet-to-be developed universal tie-down.

Life would become dramatically easier for users of wheeled mobility aids, bus and paratransit drivers and accessible taxi operators. The universal tie-down would also make flying in one's own wheelchair a realistic possibility.

If a universal tie-down is the holy grail of accessible transportation aficionados, a crusade is beginning to create this urgently-needed accessible transportation improvement.

Some wheeled mobility aid manufacturers, United Spinal Association, and some vehicle manufacturers and tech experts are collaborating, pursuant to an agreement, to develop a multi-modal universal wheelchair securement system to enable automated, independent wheelchair securement.

This agreement strives to keep whatever technology is developed in the public domain, widely available and not ownable by just one company. This is a lofty goal, but is desperately needed if public transportation is to become autonomous.

New Yorkers may not realize it, but autonomous vehicles (not mass transit) are already operating in some cities in the United States. Autonomous mass transit is upon us, but the ADA requires fixed-route systems to be accessible. To be truly autonomous, they must be self-driving and not require on-board paid personnel.

Without a self-operable, universal restraint system, someone must attend wheelchair users to assist with securement, defeating the purpose of the autonomous vehicle. Surely, some first-generation buses and shuttles will need attendants to secure wheelchair-using passengers, but the development of a universal tie-down that can secure wheelchair and scooter users without assistance will save transit dollars

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## DOE And NYPD Teach Recruits About Autism

The New York City Department of Education and the New York City Police Department have formed a partnership aimed at working with young people with autism and other developmental disabilities.

Experts from the DOE's Special Education Office led a day-long training in person at the Police Academy on behaviors and responses of students with autism and other developmental disabilities

and to educate NYPD recruits on responsible and compassionate ways to communicate with all young people. "This new initiative is an important step in ensuring that the people entrusted to protect our city are equipped to work positively and collaboratively with all New Yorkers – especially those who learn and live differently," said DOE David Chancellor Banks.

"At the heart of the NYPD's steadfast public safety mis-

sion is an unwavering commitment to work every day to more fairly and effectively communicate with everyone we serve, particularly young people with autism spectrum disorder," said NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban.

This partnership signifies the first time the DOE has been invited to directly participate in the training of NYPD recruits. Experts from the DOE will visit the Police Academy on a regular basis

going forward, holding trainings for each class of recruits, starting with the current training class.

During the training session, participants not only develop an understanding of autism and communication-based disabilities but learn strategies to support students with autism and other developmental disabilities during crises, responding effectively and increasing the use of thoughtful communication tools.

## Not All Special Ed Students Get Equal Treatment

In FY23, there were roughly 209,000 public school students, more than one in five students in New York City, who have disabilities and a corresponding Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address their needs. Under federal and state law, the City of New York is

legally mandated to provide special education services to all children with disabilities, including speech and occupational therapy, specialized individual instruction, and more.

Unfortunately, not all kids are equally having their needs met, according to city Comp-

troller Brad Lander. As a new report shows, IEP-related service recommendations for K-12 students in districts with higher economic needs are more likely to be partially provided or not at all.

Meanwhile, spending on special education services has increased 10 times over the past decade. Despite this dramatic increase, thousands of students still did not receive the special education services they are mandated to receive.

That is why the Department of Education must step up to ensure that all children with disabilities in New York City get the services they need, Lander said. By utilizing the Pay for Success model, expand the network of high-quality, multilingual providers and ultimately reduce the need for costly due process claims. His full list of recommendations can be found at <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/course-correction/#recommendations>.

## Museum Of City Of N.Y. Features Access Exhibit

In 1935, a small group of activists calling themselves the League for the Physically Handicapped staged a "death watch" at the Works Progress Administration offices in Manhattan. Their demand was New Deal jobs for New Yorkers with disabilities—which they won.

This unprecedented direct action was one of several early but disparate efforts by New Yorkers to push back against disability discrimination, from blind activists in the 1920s and returning World War II veterans to parents of children with cerebral palsy.

The modern disability rights movement, made up of a wide range of people with physical and intellectual disabilities and influenced by other social movements, took off in New York in the 1960s. Longstanding advocates pushed for the nation's first municipal office focused on the disability community in 1968. Two years later, a new generation of activists founded the Brooklyn-based grassroots group Disabled in Action.

Together they fought for new policies and legislation including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which took

effect in 1992. Disability rights activists in New York also waged prolonged campaigns for mobility-enhancing features like curb cuts at sidewalks, lifts for buses, and elevators at subway stations.

Recently activists brought *CIDNY v. MTA*, a 2017 lawsuit alleging that inaccessible subway stations violated New York City's Human Rights Law. Under the 2022 settlement, half of the city's 472 subway stations will have alternatives to stairs by 2035, and nearly every subway station will be wheelchair accessible by 2055.

Activists have continued to mobilize for access to the city's built environment, created resources to live independent visible lives, and formulated a proud disability identity. In the process, they made a more inclusive city for all, and helped expand thinking about the diversity of human bodies and minds.

The museum of the City of New York currently is presenting "Accessible City for All. Disability Rights in New York – 1968-2017." For ticket information, the public may visit [www.mcny.org/exhibition/disability-activism](http://www.mcny.org/exhibition/disability-activism).



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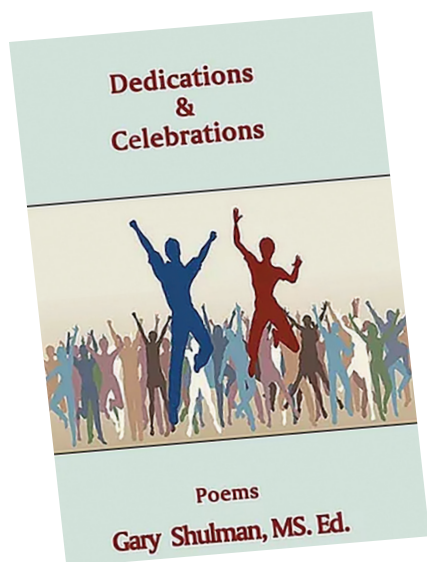
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## CIDNY SAYS

### Employment As a Disabled Person – Am I Included?

BY SHARON McLENNON WIER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) recognizes that gainful employment is a critical factor for people with disabilities. Based on the person's disability, the person with a disability may want to work full-time, part-time or engage in volunteer work.

Work is a fundamental aspiration that all people strive to attain, and this includes people with disabilities. Thus, it becomes important for us to figure out what is our vocational calling as a person with a disability. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and this is a great time to discuss the path to successful achievement of everyone's vocational aspiration.

During this month, CIDNY acknowledges the importance of work salience for people with disabilities and how arduous it can be for a person with a disability to achieve gainful and meaningful employment. The disabled person must address institutional racism and ableism, prejudice and stigma present in the work world.

Therefore, CIDNY is using this month's column to spotlight CIDNY's Department of Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. CIDNY comprehends that some people with disabilities might need help with career exploration tasks, vocational assessment, benefit advisement, self-esteem building, peer support, job readiness skills, resume writing, mock interviewing, web-based application completion, assistance with requesting for letters of recommendations from previous employment experiences and so much more.

We encourage you to call us for help with addressing this issue. Right now, CIDNY has vocational workshops that are scheduled each week through the month of November 2023. These vocational workshops are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday using a hybrid model. This means that you can join the workshop either face-to-face (in person at the CIDNY's Manhattan office) or via Zoom. We encourage all to attend. Additionally, we want to work with all consumers who are interested in working.

In New York State, a person who is interested in working competitively to earn income can begin to work at the age of 14 years with working papers. This too includes people with disabilities. CIDNY wants to assist people from age 14 and up in participating in these vocational workshops. If you have the desire to work and need help retuning or refining your skills, we can assist you. Work can be part of your life if you want it to be.

Please connect with us at [cidny.org](http://cidny.org) or call 212 674-2300. Find your passion and join the world of work.

### ACCESSIBLE CHARGING Continued from page 1

cal assistance provides guidance to those involved in the planning, designing, building, installing, and use of EV charging stations, including state and local governments, designers and developers,

electrical and construction professionals, equipment manufacturers, automakers, utility providers, charge point operators and e-mobility service providers, EV owners, and people with disabilities.



# Rutgers Launches Minor In Disability Studies

**R**utgers University–New Brunswick, New Jersey has launched a new minor this fall in interdisciplinary disability studies, designed to support the lived experience of those with disabilities and examine how society views and understands the meaning and consequences of being disabled.

“I am thrilled that the numerous schools in New Brunswick have come together to create the Disability Studies minor,” said Stuart Shapiro, professor and dean of the Bloustein School. “We are proud to be hosting the minor, which will focus on important aspects of issues related to disability studies – social justice, the expanded roles for disabled people in society, and liberatory cultural reform.”

The minor will be housed at the Bloustein School and overseen by a committee of faculty from the Bloustein School, the School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), the Mason Gross School of the Arts and the School of Arts of Sciences (SAS).

The 18-credit minor consists of three required courses: 1) Introduction to Disability Studies (SMLR); 2) Disability Policy & Law (Bloustein School); and 3) Field Experience for Special Populations (SAS and multiple other schools and programs).

The field experience requirement will enable students to pursue their specific interests in disability studies in real-world settings at matched university-based locations, local and regional nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Jeff Friedman a professor at Mason Gross, and SAS professor Javier Robles – both of whom were leaders of the multiyear effort to create the minor – pointed to some of its many benefits for students.

“This minor is an important academic credential for those planning careers in education, health care, advocacy, policy, law, rehabilitation, planning, public health, social services, performing arts and engineering,” said Friedman.

“The minor will offer students the



Faculty overseeing Disability studies minor are, left to right, Prof. Douglas Kruse and Prof. Lisa Schur, of the School of Management and Labor Relations; Assoc. Prof. Julia Sass Rubin and Asst. Dean Christina Torian of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy; Prof. Jeffrey Friedman of the Mason Gross School of the Arts; Teaching Instructor Javier Robles of the Department of Kinesiology in the School of Arts and Sciences, and Robles' service dog Delbert.

opportunity to recognize, support and advocate – depending on their own self-identifications – for themselves as disabled students and for others living with disabilities,” Robles said.

Lisa Schur, a professor of labor studies and employment relations and co-director of the Program for Disability Research, also helped

in the creation of the minor and teaches one of the three required courses.

Students interested in learning more about the minor may visit <https://bloustein.rutgers.edu/undergraduate/minors/> or contact [undergrad@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:undergrad@ejb.rutgers.edu) to set up an appointment with an undergraduate adviser.

## NAD & Princeton Review Collaborate On Accessibility

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and The Princeton Review, a leading test preparation provider, have entered into an agreement whereby TPR will collaborate with the NAD to increase accessibility for its test preparation programs.

Through the collaboration, TPR has committed to providing all deaf, deaf blind, deaf disabled, hard of hearing and late-deafened TPR students with full and equal access to all courses and programs, by providing captioning services, ASL interpretation, transcripts, and other accessibility tools for its test preparation programs. TPR will also work with the NAD to ensure the accessibility of its informational and promotional videos.

“Test preparation services serve a critical purpose in enabling people to pursue higher education and professional careers, and such services need to be accessible to all to ensure

equality and equity in those fields,” Howard Rosenblum, CEO of NAD said. “The National Association of the Deaf is thrilled to announce that as a result of this agreement with The Princeton Review, their test preparation services will now be more accessible to 48 million learners in the United States who are deaf, deaf blind, deaf disabled, hard of hearing and late-deafened.”

Joshua Park, CEO of The Princeton Review, said he was happy to work with NAD. “The Princeton Review began more than forty years ago with a mission to help students achieve their educational goals, including supporting them in overcoming barriers. In service of that mission, Princeton Review employees collaborate on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of every student we instruct. We look forward to further enhancing the high quality of our service.”

## Announcing the

### NYC Disability Rights Archive

Funded by the New York State Archives  
to be housed at the College of Staten Island, CUNY

Do you have or know about old disability rights photos, tshirts, letters, flyers, papers, etc.? We are starting a multi-year project to create an archive of documents, photographs, media, and other objects in order to preserve NYC Disability Rights history.

Learn more about the project here:

[library.csi.cuny.edu/archives/projects](https://library.csi.cuny.edu/archives/projects)

Do you have materials to contribute? Please fill out a brief form so we can get in touch:

[bit.ly/NYC-DRA](https://bit.ly/NYC-DRA)

Or email: [jmurray@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:jmurray@gradcenter.cuny.edu)



# Disability Employment Awareness Month

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Is Honesty The Best Policy?

BY CHRISTOPHER ALVAREZ



I was a junior in college in 2018 when I decided to take on the job market for the first time. I secured an interview at a daily newspaper and couldn't believe it. There were four other young journalists waiting with me to be called. Some came back disappointed while one was smirking. It was my turn to impress now so I smiled and waited to hear my name... "Christopher Alvarez," the recruiter looked up. "Oh...I'm sorry, we made a mistake. We've run out of time."

There were still 20 mins left.

What just happened? I thought. Did they see my chair? My tubings? Did they think I couldn't speak? I said "Hi" when she said my name. Why did the others get to speak and not me? At this moment, I knew I needed to pursue a master's degree so I continued my aspirations at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

I quickly gained the trust of my professors by showing them the person in the chair, the real me. One of them told to keep doing it because "honesty is the best policy" and for a brief moment I thought it true...

If we met in person, you might immediately think about my physical limitations, but I invite you to reconsider my unique strengths and not underestimate what I can bring to the table.

I am a 25-year-old, trapped in a nine-month-old's body. I was born to a Hispanic couple from Colombia. When I was two years old, I was diagnosed with Thanatophoric Dysplasia Type 2, a severe skeletal disorder in which the person affected has a narrow chest, a small ribcage, small limbs and underdeveloped lungs. Children born with this condition die soon after birth due to respiratory failure. Currently, I am the only one in the world with my disability, breaking the lifetime expectancy record with ventilator support via tracheostomy keeping me alive.

These physical challenges have shaped the way I communicate with the world around me. My partial hearing loss would make some conversations difficult and my tracheostomy causes my voice to be rough. But through the years, I have constantly worked on improving my speech, by speaking in public and engaging in conversations. My listening skills have also improved with the help of hearing aids. My own struggles with communication, and a lifetime of conveying my story in a way that people understand and are inspired by it, have been a driving force as I build my career as a Latino journalist.

The above block quote was how I started my cover letter for an online newspaper and I got the six month fellowship they were offering. It was also the only real chance I got to showcase my talents. I thought I had finally made it into the New York media world, breaking news stories and making myself known among New York City and state government officials.

Luck was not on my side from there on out...the "honesty" cover letter never worked in my favor again.

More than 90 applications and 23 interviews resulted in 0 jobs because, according to interviewers, "I was overqualified;" "had very good clips;" and "may be a good fit somewhere else." Why not hire me then? Was it because my webcam just shows a floating head? Or because my voice sounds like an old radio? Or because I don't look like the usual run of the mill journalist? I think it's all of the above. For example, I had

Continued on page 12

## DOL Celebrates ADA Anniversary

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy is planning a yearlong celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Centered around the theme of "Increasing Access and Opportunity," commemoration activities will include events, speeches and new compliance assistance resources. The ADA's anniversary is a key component of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month observance this month. Signed into law on July 26, 1990, by Pres. George H.W. Bush, the ADA is a landmark piece of civil rights legislation that works to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, including employment.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act broke down barriers to opportunities for millions of American workers," U.S. Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia said. "On this anniversary, we recognize and

celebrate the access to opportunity created by the ADA. Together with our strong economy, the Act has led to historically low unemployment for American workers with disabilities."

Jennifer Sheehy, deputy assistant secretary of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, said, "The ADA ushered in a new era of opportunity for Americans with disabilities. Instead of being excluded from opportunities to contribute their skills and talents, Americans with disabilities gained access to places and public services, such as employment and training programs, that were not possible before the ADA. ODEP will continue to work alongside our stakeholders as we pursue the goal of full inclusion in America's workplaces."

Information is available by visiting [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep) and [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ADA.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ADA.htm). [dassurelatedbenefitsandrights](http://dassurelatedbenefitsandrights)

## Small Business Virtual Workshops Offered

The Viscardi Center, in collaboration with Hofstra University's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, is offering a series of five, virtual Small Business Workshops for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities. There is no cost to attend, but you must register. You can register for one or more of the workshops.

The workshops are open to participants with a broad range of disabilities, visible or nonvisible, looking to build or expand their businesses.

The workshops will be held virtually from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The dates and topics are: Oct. 10 – Funding your

Startup without Venture Capital; Oct. 17 - Marketing, the Good, and the Ugly: Putting together a results-oriented plan; Oct. 24 – Available Marketing Tools and How to Use Them Part 1 – Web sites and SEO; Nov. 7 – Available Marketing Tools and How to Use Them Part 2 – Email and Social Media; and Nov. 14 – Selling Online.

Participants who attend four of the five workshops will be eligible for one-on-one mentorship on any topics covered in the series. Space is limited.

Information and registration is available by visiting [www.viscardicenter.org/workshops](http://www.viscardicenter.org/workshops).

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# Disability Employment Awareness Month

## Alliance Focuses On Increased Job Prospects

The Alliance for Expanding America's Workforce, a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization has launched with a focus on modernizing federal procurement processes to increase inclusive, equitable employment for people with disabilities.

Founded by Didlake, Global Connections to Employment, Melwood, ServiceSource and TVS, the alliance seeks to leverage the purchasing and hiring power of the federal government to increase employment opportunities for disabled people across the federal government landscape.

"By advocating with a unified voice, we will create greater opportunities for people with disabilities and expand America's workforce," said Dwight Davis, president of AEAW and of GCE.

AEAW is built on three objectives.

Modernize and expand the AbilityOne program — The AbilityOne program should be modernized to align with contemporary disability policy and employment models. Mechanisms need to be put into statute to expand use of the program while ensuring the program remains an employment option for people who have encountered systemic barriers to employment.

It also seeks to strengthen and expand additional levers within federal procurement policy, including implementation of Sections 501 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. Explore opportunities for collaboration between nonprofits, federal agencies and private sector contractors to achieve additional opportunities and

advancement for people with disabilities. Promote the expertise of nonprofits in supported and accommodated employment to mentor and advise other federal contractors in best practices as they look to employ people with disabilities through these policies.

Finally, the alliance will advocate for disability-owned businesses to be recognized under the Small Business Administration as a disadvantaged group.

"The Alliance is different from other organizations in the disability advocacy space because we have a complete issue focus — federal procurement and federal hiring," said Larysa Kautz, president and CEO of Melwood and treasurer of AEAW. "Federal procurement is a powerful socio-economic tool that can

maximize employment opportunities for people with disabilities and increase economic stability. To fully realize the employment potential for adults with disabilities, greater coordination across government programs and policies is essential. AEAW seeks to lead that coordination."

AEAW's current members consist of nonprofit agencies experienced in providing support, employment training, benefits counseling, career counseling and employment resources for people with disabilities.

It is seeking members interested in employment issues, federal procurement, and the greater disability community. Information is available by visiting [www.expandingamericasworkforce.org](http://www.expandingamericasworkforce.org).

## Feds Plan Will Expand Work Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Labor has selected ten states and the District of Columbia to participate as core states in its National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) initiative.

The selection will help connect government agencies in California, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New York, Rhode Island and Tennessee to consulting, capacity-building support and ongoing mentoring as they seek to increase Competitive

Integrated Employment for individuals with disabilities in their areas.

Until now, NEON has focused primarily on advancing CIE by offering national provider organizations technical assistance from recognized subject matter experts and support for local provider organizations. By expanding participation to core states, NEON will focus on promoting positive changes in state-level policies and systems.

The department's Office of Disability Employment Pol-

icy has administered NEON since its 2019 launch.

Last year, NEON released the National Plan to Increase Competitive Integrated Employment in concert with five national provider organizations: ACCSES, ANCOR, The Arc, the Association of People Supporting Employment First and SourceAmerica.

"The addition of 10 core states and the District of Columbia to the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network will help support policymaking and other efforts to make Competitive Integrated Em-

ployment a reality for more people with disabilities," said Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy Taryn Williams.

"Now, effective practices used by service providers can support strategies such as blending, braiding and sequencing of funding, strategic planning, benefits counseling, and effective data collection and analysis to promote greater workplace equity."

ODEP has contracted with Economic Systems Inc. of Falls Church, Virginia, to manage, support and coordinate the NEON initiative.

### Select Companies Enroll In NOD Engagement Survey

The National Organization On Disability (NOD) is launching an engagement survey, in partnership with Rutgers University's Employer Disability Practices Center, to measure employee perceptions on the culture and climate of disability inclusion within their organizations.

Participants will receive their companies' results benchmarked against other partici-

pants; impact analysis determining which inclusion strategies are most effective; and insights plus trends.

Invitations to participate are limited to 30 employers that are NOD Leadership Council members or have completed the NOD Employment Tracker™.

Those interested can learn more by visiting [www.tfaforms.com/5058396](http://www.tfaforms.com/5058396).

### Webinar Explores Hiring And Supporting Disabled Vets

Veterans are an attractive talent pool, offering desirable traits and skills gained from their military service.

However, more than 40 percent of post-9/11 veterans have a disability and many employers struggle to retain these servicemen and women. DiversityInc's founder, Luke Visconti, will lead a discus-

sion in a webinar from 1 to 2 p.m., Nov. 9 on how businesses can create a welcoming and supportive environment where veterans with disabilities can thrive.

Registration is available by visiting [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_timCsrMHSYK7HaNiIwFYUA#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_timCsrMHSYK7HaNiIwFYUA#/registration).



# Disability Employment Awareness Month

## Free Vocational Training For Entry-Level Jobs

The Viscardi Center is offering five vocational training and career readiness programs for unemployed and under-employed adults and veterans with disabilities.

The programs, sponsored by the New York State Department of Labor are being offered at no cost to eligible individuals and a stipend will be provided to each participant to offset the cost of transportation.

While each program has its own curriculum, learning schedule and eligibility requirements, they all are designed to build skills with the goal of securing competitive, entry-level employment which will lead to a career path, improved quality of life and financial independence. As part of each program series, participants will benefit from career readiness.



### Culinary Arts

This hands-on curriculum introduces a wide variety of hospitality career opportunities from commercial and non-commercial food service to jobs in both the front and back of the house and covers kitchen essentials, food preparation, measurement conversions, range of cooking methods and experience with equipment in the lab kitchen and in a commercial cafeteria, nutrition and healthy eating, menu planning and budgeting, serving and customer service skills.

This course will be in-person or hybrid combination of on- and off-site via Microsoft Teams/Asynchronous modules at The Viscardi Center, Albertson/remote for a total of 300 module hours. Participants will earn certificate of completion of ServSafe® Food Handling Certification



### Work-Readiness Retail/Office

Participants learn appropriate

workplace behaviors and hone the interpersonal and organizational skills that lead to paid employment in retail, business, and hospitality industries. Training includes building interpersonal, communication, organizational and problem-solving skills; navigating appropriate workplace etiquette and time management; productivity, such as working quickly and accurately and meeting deadlines; point of purchase equipment, customer service; and introduction to Microsoft's business suite of products.

This program will be in-person at The Viscardi Center, Albertson, for a total of 200 module hours. Participants will earn a certificate of completion.



### Warehousing And Inventory

Trainees will obtain the variety of technical qualifications and contextualized skills needed to be successful as a warehouse worker.

They will learn to operate pallet jacks and forklifts and understand the safety protocols of a warehouse environment. They will also learn the basic logistics

of receiving, processing, storing, and sending inventory. They will practice loading, stacking and organizing materials and the importance of appropriate labels on outgoing parcels. They will also review workplace math (weights, measurements, basic calculations), computer facility (basic keyboarding, Microsoft applications) and reading/understanding basic instructions.

This program will in-person at Island Harvest, Melville for a total of 157 module hours. Those who complete the course could receive Certification as a forklift/lift truck operator, via PMT Forklift Corp; Certification, OSHA-10 General Industry, via U.S. Department of Labor; Certificate of Completion in Warehouse, Inventory & Logistics, via NRF Foundation/ASCM (Association for Supply Chain Management).



### Software Engineering

This introductory course is the first step to becoming a software engineer. Participants will be exposed to JavaScript, its inner-workings, its basics, and how to manipulate data utilizing it. Par-

ticipants will then learn JavaScript, HTML & CSS and build a project that represents their understanding of the three web-technologies.

The virtual course will be for a total of 242 module hours and provide a Certificate of Completion.



### Administrative Assistant

Administrative Assistants work in almost every business sector, performing clerical and administrative tasks to support diverse organizations. This program is designed to develop practical skills to succeed in office settings. Learning modules include keyboarding, introduction to computers, and Microsoft Office®: Microsoft Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint.

This course will take place in-person at Long Island Educational Opportunity Center at SUNY Farmingdale in Farmingdale, N.Y. for a total number of 164.5 module hours and will provide a certificate of completion.

Information is available to all, by contacting Jenokov Jean-Michel, program coordinator, at 516 736-9479 or [jjeanmichel@viscardi-center.org](mailto:jjeanmichel@viscardi-center.org).

## GUEST EDITORIAL - IS HONESTY THE BEST POLICY

### Continued from page 10

a very good recommendation for an out of state newspaper. I was confident, but the editor-in-chief (EIC) didn't understand anything I was saying during the interview. Why not tell me to stop, repeat or go slower? Fear and ignorance?

Employers either don't know how to approach us or they're afraid to offend us or they get so many ideas at the sight of us that they forget to see us as a person. Whatever happened with the EIC was just another case of ignorance and discrimination.

I bounced around two other outlets shortly after – another online newspaper and another daily print paper – helping out with two stories each and suddenly my number stopped being called. The reason why is still beyond me and

one month later, the white wall-paper of my room became my only company in the fight against depression.

200 rejections more... the system was not on my side.

Fear of being open to accept and develop newcomers and ignorance toward the disabled community are two of the driving forces for the lack of opportunity in the disability community. Maybe that's why 9.5 percent of disabled Americans looked to self-employment last year. Because we can't trust the system.

According to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics data from earlier this year, despite recent spikes, only 21.3 percent of Americans with disabilities were employed in 2022 with the majority working part-time or being self-employed.

I was one of the 3,930 who worked part-time.

This is not to point the finger of blame at anyone specifically, nor is it a desperate cry to get hired, but rather it makes me wonder, what am I doing wrong? Is being "different" a bad thing? Should we forget about honesty?

*Christopher is a bilingual disability activist, reporter and filmmaker based in Queens, N.Y. Alvarez was the Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center class of 2016 valedictorian and holds a B.A. in Journalism and Economics from Adelphi University, as well as an M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University. His work has appeared in: Mas Latinos, Columbia News Service, NY City Lens, THE CITY, NBC Latino and most recently in The New York Times.*



# DISABILITY HISTORY

## AN IMPROBABLE, REPEAT BIRTHPLACE (Part Two)

BY WARREN SHAW

In the years after the 1910 retirement of disability pioneer Mae Darrach, West 72nd Street transformed. Half the fancy brownstones were replaced by skyscraping apartments and hotels a dozen stories tall and more. Most of the remaining houses got storefronts grafted onto them. The street turned to carriage-trade retail – more downtown than deluxe.

The great gangster Arnold Rothstein (who famously fixed the 1919 World Series), built himself a hotel across from the Dakota, the Franconia, whose quiet looks disguised that it was perhaps the only place during Prohibition where New Yorkers could drink openly, thanks to Rothstein's generosity with the local police.



Dorothy Walasek, circa 1967

The fun and games stopped with the Crash of 1929. The building boom dried up, the shopping wilted. Rothstein was shot to death and Prohibition was repealed, so the gangsters and the speakeasies disappeared too. For the first time in its 50 year history my old street experienced a decrescendo, as the nation, the City, and the neighborhood hunkered down for what turned out to be more than a decade of hard times, followed by the Second World War.

The voltage continued to slowly drop. Growing up there a few generations later, it sometimes seemed as if time itself had stopped on the West Side somewhere in the 1940s.

### The Depression

During the Depression's housing collapse, many of the West Side's apartments went begging for tenants and that gave an opening to less well-heeled people. That's when the Upper West Side grew its famously leftist personality. The radicals' high point probably came in 1944, when the Communist Party opened what it called a school of social science at Broadway and 72nd, right across from the old Colonial Club building.

The Colonial Club had been home to the most high-nosed moments of the street's best-pedigreed days. Despite conversion into offices, its old headquarters remained a monument to the wealthy people who'd once dominated my old neighborhood, but did so no longer.

Among the newcomers was an all-female family – a divorced mother with three daughters – who in 1941 moved into a shabby penthouse, previously reserved for on-call servants, atop a once-grand apartment house at 105 West 72nd Street. The youngest sister, Mollie, had a severe case of epilepsy, then a feared and loathed illness.

In 1953 Mollie became involved with the oddly named New York Variety Club Foundation to Combat Epilepsy, the first-ever self-help organization for people then known as epileptics. At a time when going public with epilepsy carried some risk, Mollie made an appearance on WEVD radio using her real name, on a show known as "Science For The People," to discuss the disease and the prejudice surrounding it.

Not long after, in 1955, she was joined in the penthouse by her soon-to-be husband Julie, a crutch-using polio survivor who'd been President of a Communist-front political action organization during

the 1940s. In 1958, with twins on the way, they anglicized Julie's family name from Sheikewitz to the more anodyne Shaw. And it was as Mollie and Julie Shaw that they began 72nd Street's second chapter as a birthplace of disability activism.

### Handicapped Drivers Association

The second chapter began in the early 60s, when Julie and Mollie became part of the Handicapped Drivers Association, an activist group that won New York's first-ever legal protection for people with mobility impairments – an exemption from paying parking meter fees – in a campaign that took more than five years.

Building and sustaining that effort brought the Shaws into contact with the Ansonia Reform Democratic Club. Conveniently located right across the street, Ansonia provided important resources, in particular, Democratic District Leader Dorothy Walasek and her husband Paul. Dorothy was a pretty quiet, disciplined person, quite a contrast to my parents' more brash style, but within a short time the Shaws and the Walaseks forged a working partnership. It was the 1960s version of Darrach and Erlanger, disability activists who had the backing and the networking pull of someone in the mainstream.

Over the next several years, this partnership helped make free parking at meters a reality. Not long after, on Jan. 24, 1967, came a transformative picket at City Hall, protesting a new plan to ease congestion in Midtown by prohibiting parking and towing away all parked cars, including those belonging to people with disabilities. That campaign had truly far-reaching impacts, and much of the planning and execution came out of the second-floor apartment we'd recently moved into, bolstered and amplified by Ansonia and the Walaseks.



The Shaws in 1969, are left to right, Jenina, Julie, Mollie and Warren.

### Problems At Lincoln Center

Other initiatives included the retrofitting and correction of accessibility problems at then-new Lincoln Center, a few blocks away; accessibility-related changes to the City's 1968 Building Code; and the introduction of a proposed amendment to the State Constitution to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities.

Dorothy and Julie drafted the amendment. Dorothy introduced it, and Julie testified in favor. This would have been the first constitutional protections for the rights of the disabled in the history of the United States, but the effort did not succeed in New York, then or since (though a similar amendment will come up for a

Continued on page 16



# DESIGNS 4 LIVING

SUMMER 2020

ARCHITECTURE DESIGN CULTURE ARTICLES



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

Visit us and view our E-Magazine at [BRICKHOUSEDESIGNS.NET](http://BRICKHOUSEDESIGNS.NET)

## Need Affordable Housing?



Check Able's Website Homepage at [www.ablenews.com](http://www.ablenews.com) For the Latest Listings.

## MoMA Purchases Drawing from Rayed Mohamed, Artist from AHRC NYC

Reprinted Courtesy of The AHRC New York City Rundown  
By Dylan Watton | June 16th, 2023 | General Interest

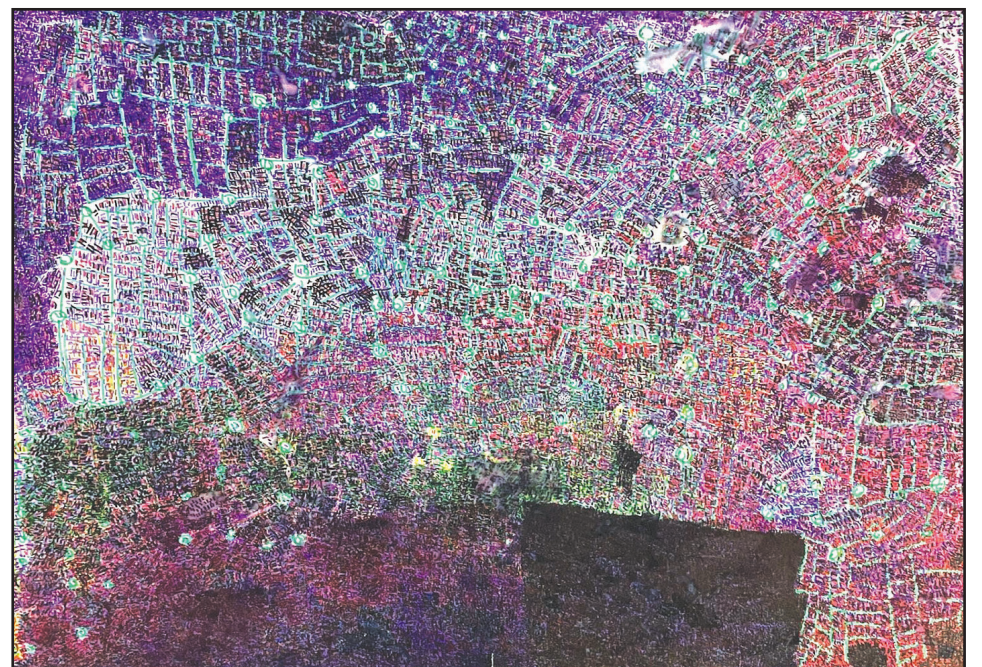


Rayed Mohamed with his work at the Museum of Modern Art

Rayed Mohamed, an artist supported at AHRC NYC's Kings Highway Day Services and the ArTech Collective, has reached an exciting milestone in his artistic career. The world-renowned Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) has purchased Rayed's piece, *Untitled*, and added it to the museum's permanent collection.

During the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when most AHRC NYC programming was conducted remotely, AHRC NYC and MoMA's Access Programs entered into a partnership. This involved meeting virtually every week, learning about the ideas and processes of artists in MoMA's collection and engaging in conversations about their own work. Between sessions, the artists were invited to create new work inspired by their feelings of isolation, change, and hope, prompting self-reflection and observations about the uncertain state of the world as well as imagining new places and possibilities.

The partnership culminated in an exhibition entitled "*How Are You?*" which was on view at MoMA from November 2021 through May 2022. This exhibition was held in conjunction with *Joseph E. Yoakum: What I Saw*, presenting more than 100 works from a pioneering outsider artist whose life story resonated with many AHRC NYC artists.



Rayed Mohamed, *Untitled 0021*, 18 x 24 inches

Rayed thrived during his time with MoMA educators. His work caught the eye of Esther Adler, Associate Curator for the Department of Drawings and Prints at MoMA. She and her colleagues believe that Rayed's work is a great fit for the museum, representing the principles and promise of inclusive contemporary art.

"The Museum of Modern Art is thrilled to acquire Rayed Mohamed's drawing *Untitled* into our permanent collection, through a generous gift by Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg," said Theresa Rodewall, MoMA's

Continued on page 16



# INFORMATION FORUM

## MILLIONS ENROLL IN CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

More than 20 million households have enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), the nation's largest broadband affordability program.

Eligible low-income households can receive a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service and up to \$75 per month for eligible households on qualifying Tribal lands. They might also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if the household contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

Information is available by visiting [www.fcc.gov/acp-consumer-outreach-toolkit](http://www.fcc.gov/acp-consumer-outreach-toolkit) or [www.affordableconnectivity.gov/community-resources/](http://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/community-resources/), including Spanish and ASL informational videos about the program. For a full list of eligibility requirements and information about the ACP are available by visiting [www.GetInternet.gov](http://www.GetInternet.gov).

## HOW A HEARING PARENT CAN READ ALOUD TO A DEAF CHILD

Leala Holcomb, an expert in deaf education and literacy, says that all children – hearing and deaf – need the experience of being read to by a caring adult.

In a YouTube video, Holcomb offers tips for making the experience fun and full of learning, including these: use your most expressive reading voice, bring your child's attention to key English words, explain the differences between similar English words, talk about English words that have more than one meaning, point out changes in font size and punctuation and talk about what it means, and switch back and forth between English and ASL.

The video may be viewed by visiting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up8WiAljr9s>.

## SUPPORTING DISABLED PEOPLE IN MAUI, HAWAII

Through the Global Alliance for Disaster Resource Acceleration (GADRA), the World Institute on Disability's executive director and CEO Marcie Roth met with Off the Grid, a hard of hearing and deaf-led organization that provides disaster preparedness and recovery support for deaf and hard of hearing people, and Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP), which helps individuals, foundations and corporations increase the effectiveness of their philanthropic response to disasters and humanitarian crises.

The three groups met to discuss Off the Grid's plans to support disabled people in Maui, Hawaii after the devastating fires in August.

## FREE MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM SET FOR OCT. 27

The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation will host its 2023 International Mental Health Research Symposium from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 27 at the Kaufman Music Center, 129 West 67 St. (between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue).

The event is free and open to the public.

Leading scientists will present their cutting-edge research on schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, children's brain and behavioral development, and mental health and intellectual disabilities.

Information and registration may be done by visiting [www.bbrfoundation.org/event/international-mental-health-research-symposium](http://www.bbrfoundation.org/event/international-mental-health-research-symposium).

## NEW YORKERS CAN SIGN UP TO TEXT WITH MAYOR ADAMS

New York City Mayor Eric Adams has started a new initiated Text with Eric to facilitate two-way communication directly with New Yorkers.

People who sign up will receive SMS communications directly from the Adams administration with information about new programs and policies, local events and more, and will be able to respond themselves to share their thoughts with the city.

"Hit me up, New York, I'm at 917 909-2288," Adams said. "We want to hear from you about how the city is doing, and we want to let you know about all the great things happening across the five boroughs. This is the most accessible administration in history, and we're excited to be in touch with you in so many ways."

## GRACE PERIOD EXTENDED FOR INDIAN HEALTH SERVICES

The Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services has announced that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is further extending a grace period previously granted to Indian Health Service facilities, including those facilities operated by Tribes and Tribal organizations under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Pub. L. No. 93-638.

This extension permits IHS and Tribal facilities to continue to claim Medicaid reimbursement under the clinic services benefit at 42 C.F.R. § 440.90 (including at the IHS All-Inclusive Rate) for services provided outside of the four walls of the facility. Under this CIB, the four walls grace period is being extended 12 additional months, from Feb. 11, 2024, to Feb. 11, 2025.

Information is available by visiting [www.medicaid.gov](http://www.medicaid.gov).

## BANNED BOOKS CLUB AT BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK LIBRARY

Banned Books Club at Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library is back for the Fall. The club focuses on showcasing and highlighting titles that have been contested, censored or banned in the United States and abroad.

Registration for the club is available by calling 212 206-5400, option 2.

Upcoming dates and titles include Oct. 7, "Fairest: A Memoir," by Meredith Talusan. DB101114; Nov. 4, "Absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian," by Sherman Alexie. DB065403; Dec. 2, "Maus," by Art Spiegelman. DB111228; and Jan. 6, "Huckleberry Finn," by Mark Twain. DB016414 or "Go Tell It On The Mountain," by James Baldwin. DB033488.

## DISABLED IN ACTION SETS MEETING SCHEDULE

Disabled in Action will be meeting on the first Sunday of every month at Selis Manor, 135 W 23rd St. All are welcome. Masks are optional.

If unsure if meeting will be held due to weather, calling DIA at 646 504-4342 after 6 p.m. the night before for a recorded message, will be helpful.

Meetings are held from 1:30 to 4 p.m., Oct. 1, Nov. 12 and Dec. 3.

The new mailing address is Disabled In Action, PO Box 1550, New York, NY 10159.

## FREE VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES FOR BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Future in Sight has a fall lineup of free, fun and beneficial activities held virtually on Zoom for those who are blind and visually impaired.

Activities include fitness workouts; technology workshops; games, trivia and more; interviews with those in different careers as blind and visually impaired employees; crafts; mindfulness meditation; a light discussion group for socializing; book discussions and cooking. And there are other activities as well.

Those interested may sign up by visiting [www.futureinsight.org/signupforactivities/](http://www.futureinsight.org/signupforactivities/).

## VIRTUAL BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK GROUP STARTS

Starting Friday Oct. 6, the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library will be holding a new virtual book group called Online Wellness Reading Group. This program will be held at noon on the first Friday of each month.

The Book for October is "Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us," by Daniel Pink, DB070276.

Those interested should call 212 206-5400 or email [talkingbooks@nypl.org](mailto:talkingbooks@nypl.org).





West 72nd Street in 1965

## HISTORY COLUMN

Continued from page 13

statewide vote in November of 2024).

Shaw-Walasek helped engineer the creation of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Handicapped, the predecessor to the Mayor's Office of People with

Disabilities (MOPD), which held its first meeting in the spring of 1968. They wangled a seat for Julie on the new body.

That same year, though, the Ansonia Club split over whether to support Lyndon Johnson's

reelection as President, among other things. Along with the Walaseks, the Shaws co-led a revolt by 350 Ansonia members. They briefly set up shop in the old Colonial Club building before moving to 130 West 72nd Street, a second floor walkup space above a Chinese restaurant, literally next door to Ansonia.

The new club's name was the Lincoln Square Independent Democratic Club or LSID. It was originally supposed to be Lincoln Square Democrats, but that got changed after someone noticed that the initials spelled LSD – a no-no in the era of Flower Power.

Shaw-Walasek came to an end in the early 1970s. Dorothy lost an election for State Assembly to Dick Gottfried, and the Walaseks began to phase out of leadership at LSID. In 1972 Julie experienced a health crisis that forced him to largely stop using crutches. He was barely able to get up to LSID's second floor headquarters after that.

### Mayor's Office For Handicapped

Nonetheless my parents continued to produce for the disability community, supporting the upgrading of the Mayor's Advisory Committee into the

Mayor's Office for Handicapped (another move towards MOPD) and waging a long, long campaign to get an elevator installed in City Hall.

To me the City Hall elevator may be the greatest of the Shaws' projects. Even beyond the enactment of legislation, the elevator meant actual physical entry to the very seat of municipal power. Instead of being relegated to a little room across the street, or making noise outside the City Council's windows, the newly organized community would finally have its say, like anyone else.

On a more somber note, our apartment building had four steps in the outer lobby, and with Julie's new health situation our lives on 72nd Street acquired an expiration date. In 1977 we moved away, to an accessible building in Brooklyn. Julie became the second Director of the Mayor's Office of the Handicapped. He served a few years until he retired.

As a political duo, the Shaws were done – So was 72nd Street's second chapter as a birthplace of disability activism.

For more of Warren Shaw's work in disability history, visit [www.DisabilityHistoryNYC.com](http://www.DisabilityHistoryNYC.com).

## MoMa PURCHASES DRAWING

Continued from page 14

Assistant educator, Access Programs. "Through the Learning and Engagement Department's access partnership with AHRC NYC's ArTech Collective from 2020–2021, I had the opportunity to engage in weekly programs with Mohamed and learn more about his artistic process and practice. Mohamed's dynamic style features bold mark-making and vibrant colors, with a sense of movement and scale that captivates the viewer. We are excited to introduce his work to our museum visitors and inspire creativity, conversation, and connection with MoMA audiences."

### About Rayed Mohamed

Rayed Mohamed, born in 1986, is a self-taught artist who currently resides in Staten Island where he lives with his family. Rayed and family are immigrants to the US from Yemen, arriving here in 1990. He has no formal art education, although from time to time he would attend a program in

Yemen when the family returned to his country for a visit.

Throughout his life, Rayed has always been attracted to drawing and visual creations. When he is asked what he is drawing he simply replies, "I am drawing" and quickly returns with an innate ability to hyper-focus on the work he is creating. His brother reports that Rayed is always drawing, and he seems to enjoy spending time in solitude with his creations.

Rayed's chosen materials are typically simple-colored marker on paper. He produces pieces that bring out different responses in the person perceiving his work which is what makes it unique and usual.

**About ArTech** – ArTech Collective provides opportunities for artists to develop and express themselves creatively through inclusive, innovative and accessible approaches to traditional and new media. ArTech Collective

was established in 2016. At the time, ArTech was a community arts center located at the Howie Stone Adult Day Center in the Bronx. Since its inception, ArTech has begun expanding its programming to all five boroughs, providing all people supported by AHRC NYC the opportunity to develop as artists. The purpose

of the studio is to provide people with tools to express their ideas through the creation of art and to develop their craft. The studio is an extension of AHRC NYC's mission to find ways for children and adults with intellectual & other developmental disabilities to live their lives to their fullest potential.

## PHYSICAL REHABILITATION CARE

Continued from page 5

and braces, strengthen the rehabilitation workforce and develop training.

By creating a global framework, government investment in rehabilitation services, which has been a major historical barrier, is expected to follow, as well as donor and private funds.

Humanity & Inclusion has been a leading voice in collective action to call for this resolution, collaborating with 17 other civil society organizations in the Global Rehabilita-

tion Alliance, which was established in 2018.

As a result, Humanity & Inclusion and partners were invited to input into the drafting of the resolution.

Humanity & Inclusion is currently supporting countries where challenges to advance rehabilitation services remain significant. In almost all the 35 countries where Humanity & Inclusion has 62 rehabilitation projects, teams also accompany and support health authorities.



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A405

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A 408

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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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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.

## AAPD Announces Coelho Media Scholarship Winners

The American Association of People with Disabilities has announced the recipients of its 2023 NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship. Funded by NBCUniversal in partnership with AAPD, the Tony Coelho Media Scholarship annually selects disabled higher education students who intend to pursue a wide range of careers in media and who demonstrate commitment to authentic disability representation and inclusion in their chosen field. The scholarship is named in honor of the former United States Congressman Tony Coelho, who played a pivotal role as the primary author and sponsor of the groundbreaking Americans with Disabilities Act in the House of Representatives.

This year's eight recipients of

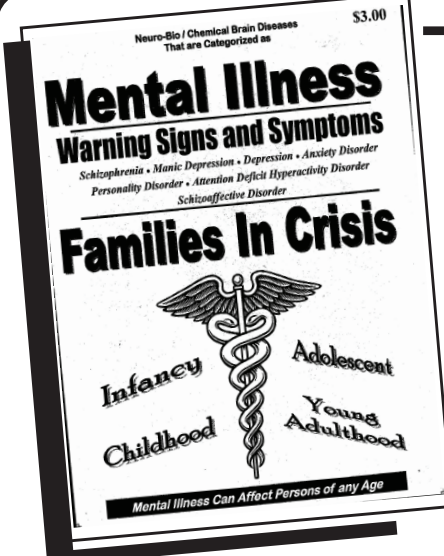
the 2023 NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship were chosen for their demonstrated knowledge and passion in media industries of all kinds. Each recipient is committed to and enhancing disability representation in the media, as well as to their own visionary ambitions to authentically include and engage the disability community in their careers.

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

The eight winners are: Cristina Arellano Chiroque (she/her/ella), Tufts University; Taiwo Adebawale (she/they), Howard University; Melina List (they/them), Emerson College; Gabrielle Whyte (she/her), University of South Florida; Devon Woodfine (he/him), California

State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Fennik Lindstedt (they/ve), Hofstra University; Kadesha Treco (she/her), University of Arkansas-Fayetteville; and Ruby Lee (she/her), Pratt Institute.

Information about the NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship, including the full bios for the 2023 recipients is available by visiting [www.aapd.com/nbcuniversal-tony-coelho-media-scholarship/](http://www.aapd.com/nbcuniversal-tony-coelho-media-scholarship/).



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## LAWS FOCUS ON PEOPLE FIRST

### Continued from page 3

the outdated and offensive language 'mentally retarded' to 'developmental disability.' These changes are a huge step in the right direction for achieving full equality for New Yorkers with disabilities."

Currently, New York law uses hurtful and outdated language, such as "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" to refer to New Yorkers living with intellectual disabilities. Though such

terms were previously used in a clinical setting, these words are now used as insults in daily jargon, as well as to mock and degrade those living with developmental disabilities. This bill will bring New York into compliance with federal standards.

Congress passed Rosa's Law in 2010, which removed the terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" from federal health, education and labor statutes.

## ABA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED

### Continued from page 4

ramps, parking, doors, elevators, restrooms, assistive listening systems, fire alarms, signs and other accessible building elements.

To this day, the board continues to enforce the ABA through the investigation of complaints. Individuals may file an ABA

complaint at [www.access-board.gov/enforcement/](http://www.access-board.gov/enforcement/), by email at [enforce@access-board.gov](mailto:enforce@access-board.gov); or by mail to Compliance and Enforcement Section, Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Access Board, 1331 F St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004-1111.

## UNITED SPINAL NOW

### Continued from page 6

and make travelers more independent.

The mother of invention is necessity, and an automatic, universal restraint system is necessary if mass transit is to become an autonomous system. The independence,

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# New Blind Baseball Team Launches In N.Y

There's now another team playing baseball in New York. Lighthouse Guild has launched New York's newest blind baseball team – Lighthouse Guild Lightning. The announcement was made recently by Calvin Roberts, president & CEO of Lighthouse Guild at a free blind baseball clinic sponsored by Lighthouse Guild and the U.S. Blind Baseball Association in Central Park.

The blind baseball clinic was attended by over 100 people



PHOTOS BY THE LIGHTHOUSE GUILD



Player, center, is escorted on the field.

who were there to learn and experience the game. Participants also gave a rousing cheer after an announcement about a new soon to be favorite New York sports team – The Lighthouse Guild Lightning. The



Player demonstrates special ball with bells inside.

event was open to individuals who are visually impaired as well as to those who are fully sighted.

The Lighthouse Guild Lightning team will be a participating member of the U.S. Blind Baseball Association (USBBA), a charitable, nonprofit organization dedicated to the development, management, regulation and promotion of Blind Baseball teams, players, coaches, volunteers and umpires in the United States. Formed earlier this year by hall-of-fame college baseball coach Donald Landolphi and Ed Plumacher, the USBBA organization is contracted by and works closely with Associazione Italiana Baseball Giocato Da Ciechi (AIBXC), the international governing body for this adaptive sport.

The sport incorporates aspects of traditional baseball while adding accessible components designed to provide players auditory cues and signals. Each player, whether batting, running or fielding, wears a blindfold to create equal ability with people with varying degrees of visual impairment. Players rely on sound, from bells inside a baseball size ball to clappers and an electronic horn for base runners to safely navigate the diamond. Fielders heavily rely on communication from their teammates at other positions to help locate the ball once it's in play. These requirements culminate in a way that teaches players to work in a

team setting and promote individual responsibility.

"I am excited to be a member of the Lighthouse Guild Lightning blind baseball team," says team member Carolina Vollo. "It's a wonderful opportuni-

ty to participate in sports and have camaraderie with others who love this sport. I look forward to competing with teams around the world, and increasing awareness of blind baseball and vision loss."

## CRAB Celebrates Successful Race



More than 650 sailors and supporters of Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating (CRAB) recently celebrated a successful pursuit race with 88 sailboats registered and seven powerboats in the poker pursuit. Guests arriving at the Eastport Yacht Club were welcomed CAISO Steel Drum Band and then danced into the night to the music of the "best cover band" in Maryland, Misspent Youth.

Congratulations to all of the class winners and to Deep State skipper Walt Pletcher, who finished first in the overall pursuit race by 20 seconds. He was closely followed by John Dodge on Kobayashi Maura and, in third place, Jamie Wright on Katsu.