

Emily Ladau, Disability Rights Advocate and Writer, Named Editor of *Able Newspaper*

One could say the road leading Emily Ladau towards this new role at The Viscardi Center started over a decade ago when she learned to drive in its, then groundbreaking, adaptive driver education program. At a pinnacle in her career, as Editor, Emily is once again in the driver's seat at Viscardi as she propels forward the vision to evolve *Able Newspaper* into a multi-faceted media platform. February marks the first issue of *Able* being published under The Viscardi Center umbrella, as a mission-based strategic acquisition was announced on October 12, 2023. *Able*, a monthly periodical founded in 1991 and long considered the 'newspaper of record' for New York's disability community, is read by disabled individuals, their caregivers and families, and professionals who serve people with disabilities. Aligning with The Viscardi Center's "3Es" (educate, employ, empower), it enhances and expands upon the Center's programs, services and advocacy for children, adults and veterans with disabilities.

A native New Yorker, Emily is a passionate disability rights activist, widely known disability-focused writer, skilled editor, storyteller, and digital communications strategist whose career began at the age of 10, when she appeared on several episodes of Sesame Street to educate children about her life with a physical disability. Her writing has been published in outlets including The New York Times, CNN, Vice, and HuffPost and her first book, *Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and*



How to be an Ally, was published by Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House, in September 2021. Her depth of work includes previously serving as editor of The Century Foundation's Voices of Disability Economic Justice Project, as well as the founding editor-in-chief of the Rooted in Rights Blog. Emily has spoken before numerous audiences, from the U.S. Department of Education to the United Nations. Central to all of Emily's work is harnessing the power of storytelling to engage people in learning about disability.

"The Viscardi Center is thrilled that a journalist and leader of Emily Ladau's considerable stature will serve as Editor for *Able Newspaper*," said Dr. Chris Rosa, President & CEO of The Viscardi Center. "Emily's experiences and insights as a journalist, writer, storyteller, social media content creator, disability culture cultivator and

activist, position her uniquely to lead *Able* into a bold, new era of news by, and for, the disability community."

"It's a true honor and joy to work with The Viscardi Center as we carry forward the legacy of *Able Newspaper*," said Emily. "I'm so proud to be part of New York's diverse, vibrant disability community, and I'm committed to amplifying their perspectives and serving as a resource throughout our state."

Emily has deep ties to Viscardi. In addition to forging a path to independence through the driving program, her collaboration with Viscardi stems back to Emily bringing strategic communications expertise as a consultant to the Center's cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to operate the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), as well as Project Accessible Oral Health – an initiative The Viscardi Center nurtured during its formative years to raise awareness of the critical need for equitable, quality and culturally competent oral health care for children and adults with a wide range of disabilities. More recently, Emily delivered the commencement speech to the Henry Viscardi School class of 2022 and in the same year, received one of the prestigious, international Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards.

After 33 years of publishing *Able*, founding publisher Angela Miele Melledy entrusted The Viscardi Center to continue and build upon its history of inform-

ing the disability community. Currently, *Able* has a print and online presence and is delivered to key locations where people with disabilities frequent. It is well-known by the disability community throughout New York state and the NYC-metro area. As the media platform is reimaged, it will include additional original content, perspectives from a variety of fresh voices, an accessible, dynamic web presence, and the introduction of new digital/video content.

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Letter From The Editor

by Emily Ladau

Of all the experiences that have shaped me, two in particular are central to who I am: having a disability and being a born-and-raised New Yorker. These identities are at the root of my story, grounding me as each new part of my life blooms. You might think I'm waxing unnecessarily poetic for an editor's letter in a newspaper, but there is nothing I find more beautiful than the fact that every person has a story to tell. Stories are how we understand each other, how we connect, how we grow. And it's my deep love and appreciation for the power of storytelling that has led me to this role as Editor of *Able Newspaper* at The Viscardi Center.

I don't take lightly the privilege of being entrusted with the legacy of this publication, which has existed just slightly longer than I've been alive. The first edition was published in June 1991, one month before I was born. Since then, it's become an institution for New York's disability community. These pages, both print and digital, have held the stories of hundreds of people whose work and wisdom have been integral to societal progress. Now, I have the honor of continuing to provide a platform for the stories about

disability that must be told.

Honestly, I find myself regularly disheartened by the gaps in mainstream media coverage of disability. Because of this, my career has been focused on building up publications that give disabled people a place where their words have a home. And I believe there is no more important mantra to inform the work I do than the common disability advocacy rallying cry: "nothing about us, without us." My promise as Editor is that I will steadfastly support, center, and amplify the perspectives of disabled people.

In this next chapter of *Able Newspaper's* story, I'm committed to carrying on our reputation as a go-to resource for disability-related information and insights. But I also hope to significantly expand our reach, because disability is far from a niche topic. I often remind people that well over a billion disabled people inhabit our planet. That means every issue is a disability issue (newspaper pun fully intended), because every issue impacts disabled people. I will do my best to ensure that we fully address as many of these issues as we can.

A key part of this is shining a spotlight on the vibrant diversity



of the disability community. I want to emphasize that I am only one person, and that I cannot and will not ever claim to be a representative of all people with disabilities. Instead, I aim to uplift and celebrate the multitude of disability experiences, and I'm humbled and excited that I get to do that through *Able Newspaper*.

Whether you're a first-time reader or you've been here since the first printing, I'm glad you're with us now. You are a part of our story, and I warmly invite you to come back and visit these pages each month as this story continues to unfold.

New York Disability News

New Accessible Entrance Opens at Penn Station



Ribbon cutting in front of the new elevator. Photo Credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW

On November 19, 2023, Amtrak and Vornado Realty Trust officially opened a newly renovated accessible entrance at Penn Station. The entrance, which is located at 32nd Street and 7th Avenue, is used by NJ TRANSIT, Long Island Rail Road and Amtrak passengers. It now has an elevator that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, three escalators, and wider sidewalks.

Honoring the opening, Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner said: "Having a direct, accessible entrance at 32nd and 7th will improve the customer experience for all passengers as they can now take an elevator, walk down wider stairs and have an added, third escalator to help them enter or exit the station."

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The deadline for the March issue is February 15th.

New York Governor Includes People with Disabilities in 2024 Agenda

By Christopher Alvarez and Emily Ladau

New York Governor Kathy Hochul's 2023 State of the State, delivered on January 9, 2024, included multiple key promises for people with disabilities. She outlined her agenda for "Achieving the New York Dream," which aims to create a "more affordable, more livable and safer New York, while opening doors to the communities and people who have historically been blocked from equal chances at success."

A central focus of Governor Hochul's plan is mental health. The main goal of proposed efforts, according to Hochul's agenda, is to "fundamentally change the trajectory of the State's approach to mental health, with the goal of fixing the entire continuum of care that is necessary to keep people healthy and safe." The comprehensive package of investments and policy changes includes expanding insurance coverage for mental

health services, expanding mental health services for schoolaged children, and creating 3,500 new housing units for New Yorkers with mental illness.

Governor Hochul will also submit a waiver to expand the Medicaid Buy-In program so more New Yorkers with disabilities can work and still qualify for Medicaid coverage. Kathleen Downes, a New York resident and member of Downstate New York ADAPT, believes that "it's a positive step for those interested in the program" but like her fellow advocates, she also questions the new logistics: "will there be new premiums implemented? If so, how affordable will they be? Will there be a limit to the number of participants? Does the marriage penalty still apply?" If the answer is "yes" to all of these questions, then Downes believes that "it goes against the spirit of the program."

Further, Downes calls for "a major increase in education among social service professionals about how this program operates because a huge barrier right now is that many of the NY Department of Social Services workers are not familiar with this program."

Expanding the Medicaid Buy-In program aligns with Governor Hochul's overarching commitment to making New York a "model employer for people with disabilities," for which she will issue an Executive Order that will identify policies and practices that will help increase the employment rate and decrease the poverty rate of people with disabilities. In connection with this, based on New York City's Inclusive Internship Program, a full-time coordinator in the New York State Department of Labor will connect people with disabilities to inclusive internships with State agencies aimed at leading to

stable, long-term employment.

A week after her State of the State address, Governor Hochul re-established the Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing, appointing Christopher Woodfill as the State's first Interagency Coordinating Council Executive Director, a move that supporters say is "terrific." The council will be responsible for meeting with advocacy networks, recommending systematic changes, giving these individuals the voice in state government that they deserve, pursuing the creation of a Sign Language Interpreter Council, and much more.

These robust agenda items and the actions already being taken are essential steps in the right direction to ensuring a more disability-inclusive home for all New Yorkers.

Broadway Musical Featuring Autistic Actors Closing

History-making musical *How to Dance in Ohio* is closing on February 11 after only beginning previews on November 15 and officially opening December 19 at the Belasco Theatre. The show, which told the story of seven autistic young adults reaching social milestones while preparing for a formal dance at their counseling center, was authentically cast with autistic actors. Nuanced and joyful, the performance aligned with the advocacy mantra "nothing

about us, without us."

The production was notable for its focus on accessibility, including ensuring performances were sensory-friendly and offering cool-down spaces, providing ASL interpretation for select performances, and making educational resources on disability readily available. For those wishing to continue to celebrate and enjoy the music from the show, you can listen to the cast album, which was released January 19.



Proposed Census Changes Would Impact Disability Community

Disability advocates are speaking out against changes proposed by the U.S. Census Bureau to the American Community Survey (ACS). Currently, the survey asks about disability with a set of six yes/no questions on functioning. If a respondent answers “yes” to any of these questions, they are recognized as having a disability. The Census Bureau is seeking to change these to a different set of six questions, known as the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning, which inquires about what respondents can or cannot do in terms of levels of difficulty. If respondents were to answer at least one of those questions by choosing that they have “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do it at all,” then that person would be

deemed disabled.

Such a change would cause a notable difference in the total count of people with disabilities in the U.S., reducing the rate from 13.9% to 8.1%, which is a major undercount. The ramifications of this would be significant for the disabled population across the U.S., as the Census Bureau’s disability data is used to inform the allocation of government resources as well as the development of local, state, and federal policies.

Those who are advocating against these changes are calling on the Census Bureau to engage with the disability community and reevaluate the impact these changes would have, with the goal of ensuring better, more accurate data collection.

Proposed Bill Would Increase SSI Asset Limit

A new bipartisan, bicameral bill introduced in September 2023 would increase the asset limit for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to \$10,000 for individuals and \$20,000 for married couples, and index them to inflation moving forward. Known as the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act, this bill would be the first update to asset caps since 1984.

Currently, individuals receiving SSI benefits are limited to \$2,000 in assets, while married couples are limited to \$3,000. The maximum monthly SSI payment for 2024 is \$943 for an individual

and \$1,415 for a couple. According to a recent study from J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., “limits on federal benefits for people with disabilities create barriers to labor force participation and accumulating savings.” Moreover, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) noted in a recent report, current SSI limits are “not enough for beneficiaries to weather an emergency, let alone provide stability or save for the future.”

If passed, the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act would help ensure greater financial security for SSI recipients.



**CITIZEN IDEAS WANTED FOR
TOWN OF BROOKHAVEN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**
Town of Brookhaven residents are invited
to attend a Public Hearing on
Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 5:00 P.M.

The Town of Brookhaven, Department of Housing and Community Development will hold a public hearing to receive input on drafting its Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Plan and updating the 2023-2027 Consolidated Strategy and Plan Submission for Housing and Community Development Programs for the following four HUD grant programs:

- 1) Community Development Block Grant
- 2) HOME Investment Partnership
- 3) Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- 4) Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

The first public hearing will be held on **Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.** Citizens wishing to express their views may speak at this meeting and/or submit written comments for the record. Applications will be available on the Town’s website. Proposals for projects will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 8, 2024.

The draft of the Annual Plan will be presented at a second hearing on **Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.** followed by a 30-day comment period. Copies of the plan will be made available on the Town’s website and at our local Public Libraries throughout the Town.

For further information call (631) 451-6600.

Supervisor Daniel J. Panico

Jonathan Komreich, District 1	Michael Loguerco, District 4
Jane Bonner, District 2	Neil Foley, District 5
Neil Manzella, District 3	Karen Dunne Kesnig, District 6
Kevin LaValle, Town Clerk	Lou Marcoccia, Receiver of Taxes
Dan Losquadro, Superintendent of Highways	



ABLE Account Limits Increase

ABLE accounts, which are tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families, were created in 2014 to allow recipients of public benefits to remain financially eligible to receive them while saving up to \$100,000.

Previously, the contribution limit to ABLE accounts was \$17,000. In

keeping with inflation, it has now increased to \$18,000. Eligible individuals with disabilities are free to enroll in any state ABLE program provided that the program is accepting out-of-state residents. If you’re interested in opening an ABLE account in New York, you can enroll with NY ABLE by visiting <https://www.mynyable.org/>

Advocacy And Making Your Voice Heard

By: Sharifa Abu-Hamda and Marcus Johnson
Civics League for Disability Rights (CLDR)

For far too long, people with disabilities have been marginalized, silenced and overlooked. People with disabilities urgently need to amplify their voices, and that starts with self-advocacy. Advocacy is an essential tool for our survival—for the preservation of our health, mobility and independence.

Our fight for equity, inclusion, and quality care feels endless. As co-leaders of the Civics League for Disability Rights (CLDR), an independent, volunteer-led advocacy group of New Yorkers with disabilities, we advocate for ourselves and the community while sharing ideas, tools, and information about how to effect change in response to public policies, legislation, or societal barriers that directly impact our overall wellbeing.

For instance, when New York State released the 1115 Medicaid Waiver proposal to address health disparities and healthcare, and when the governor announced the formation of a Master Plan for Aging (MPA) that featured no input from people with disabilities, we've had to raise our voices to remind our leaders to include us. This is in addition to countless issues our community faces, including continued cuts in Medicaid funding for supports and services, inaccessible primary care, and looming threats to the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP).

The advocacy of the Civics League has led to many victories. For example, we've fought to ensure that people with disabilities have access to A+D Ointment as a moisture barrier cream, have additional catheters to prevent urinary tract infections, and can access wheelchairs for community use after demanding change with the New York State Department of Health. And with support from

our membership, disability rights advocates, nonprofit leaders, and physicians across the state, we were able to save Independence Care System (ICS), a Medicaid managed long-term health plan turned Health Home that provides care coordination and support for people with physical disabilities—many who require hours of home care and specialized rehabilitation and wheelchair services.

Wherever you may be on your advocacy journey, we have some guidance to share for finding your voice and fighting for the change you desire.

Listen and observe. Having a true understanding of the issues facing people with disabilities and engaging with those who can speak to those issues will allow you to gain insight and knowledge. You'll also develop a network of supportive advocates when fighting for your cause.

Educate yourself. Become familiar with the disability rights movement. Read about the latest disability news and stay up to date on current news and issues. This will help you decide how you want to direct your advocacy efforts.

Connect with different disability rights groups. Many will offer plenty of platforms, campaigns and resources for you to advocate, and provide for learning opportunities to grow as an advocate.

Tell your story. No one knows your story better than you. It's time to tell it. Whether through social media, a personal blog, or as part of a letter writing campaign, your story is a powerful advocacy tool that can inspire others to share their own, influence public opinion, and raise awareness among policymakers.

Legislation and policy play a tremendous part in advancing disability rights. Scheduling meetings with elected officials,



Left to right: Sharifa Abu-Hamda and Marcus Johnson

organizing peaceful protests, joining a letter writing campaign, making phone calls or participating in social media campaigns drives your message home.

Together, we can push back on the challenges with receiving quality care for people with disabilities and work toward a solution that will allow for equitable, accessible services. Through advocacy, your actions can be powerful enough to make

a lasting impact that supports our disability community.

Sharifa Abu-Hamda and Marcus Johnson are co-leaders of the Civics League for Disability Rights, an independent, volunteer-led group of New Yorkers with disabilities who advocate for themselves, their community and for change in the healthcare system for people with physical disabilities. To learn more about the Civics League, email civicsleague@gmail.com.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Town of Islip Community Development Agency will hold a public hearing to receive input on drafting the Town's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Plan and updating the 2020-2024 Consolidated Strategy and Plan Submission for Housing and Community Development Programs for the following three HUD grant programs: 1) Community Development Block Grant; 2) Home Investment Partnerships Program and 3) Emergency Solutions Grant.

In addition, the CDA will make available for review its most recent Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report and Budget Amendments. If you are hearing impaired or visually challenged and require special accommodations to attend this meeting, please call the Agency so that arrangements can be made to accommodate your needs.

The first public hearing will be held on **Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.** in the **Town Hall Board Room at Islip Town Hall, 655 Main Street, Islip, New York.**

Proposals for projects will be accepted at this time and until **5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 8, 2024.**

The draft of the 2024 Annual Plan will be presented at a second hearing on **Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.** in the Town Board Room at Islip Town Hall followed by a 30-day comment period.

Copies of the draft plan will be made available on the Agency website: **www.islipcda.org** on April 9, 2024.

For further information, call the CDA at 631-665-1185.

Julia E. MacGibbon
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Town of Islip
Community Development Agency

It's Time for Better Air Travel Accessibility to Take Flight

By Jim Weisman

United Spinal Association—both the national organization and the New York chapter—have made the ability to work and receive personal care services priority one for 2024. Since 1975, federal law has required school systems to educate children with disabilities. Many graduate employment-ready, but can't afford to work if they need personal care services. The problem is an enormous work disincentive, and has been identified for decades, but still goes unsolved. In almost every state, it is impossible to work and accumulate wealth if you require personal care services.

Working, successful young people with disabilities are everywhere, but many are stuck at home because of the conundrum caused by the poverty requirement of Medicaid in most states. This problem must be addressed by the New York Legislature in 2024.

The poverty requirement of Medicaid, instead of allowing working people with disabilities to “buy-in” and receive personal care services, is perplexing, decades after the passage of the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It seems a requirement of an older era.

And speaking of an older era, there is only one industry I can think of that is only slightly more accessible now than it was prior to the passage of the ADA. Can you guess the industry?

Sean Chang is a 26-year-old restaurateur from Atlanta. He's also a wheelchair user. He was traveling with his family from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport via Delta Airlines to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. Despite having made advance online reservations for assistance at the gate and an aisle chair to reach his seat, the air carrier was unprepared. There were no personnel to assist, and no aisle chair. The gate agent, after explaining that there were no available personnel or equipment, said there was nothing she could do, but if he took a later flight, he would receive the necessary and legally-required accommodation.

Sean crawled to his seat on a fully loaded plane so he wouldn't miss his flight. This is 2024.

Someone, somewhere tell people with disabilities why this is okay. Answer the question—what other business can get away with this? But the Air Carrier Access Act still does not afford individuals like Sean the right to sue. He could file a complaint with U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) under the Air Carrier Access Act, and USDOT may choose to discipline the airline, but no other public transportation business gets away with remaining inaccessible 34 years after the passage of the ADA.

It's not like the airlines are uniquely private entities that have nothing to do with receipt of federal financial assistance and the obligations that come with it under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Air traffic controllers, who are federal employees, make air travel possible for the airlines. State and local governments maintain airports. \$50 billion dollars of pandemic-era federal assistance was given to the airlines, yet it's cruise ships and buses (and even taxis and subways) that are becoming increasingly accessible and not airplanes.



It would be unheard of for any other type of company in the transportation business to permit—let alone, require—crawling to facilitate entry for a ticketed passenger. The airlines often offer frequent flyer miles or travel credit to passengers with disabilities against whom they've discriminated. Very often, these offers require “confidentiality.” That is, if the passenger wants the miles or money, they are not allowed to talk about the incident.

Airlines have been committed by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg to buying accessible planes starting in 2035. That's only 11 more years of inaccessibility.

In 2024, let's push to fix antiquated policies that make success difficult or impossible, and support those trying to change the status quo.

2024 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards: Now Accepting Nominations

The Viscardi Center is pleased to announce the opening of nominations for the esteemed 2024 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards. Since its inception in 2013, these awards have served as a tribute to the memory and enduring legacy of our revered founder, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., a distinguished disability advocate who dedicated his life to expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

These awards honor and spotlight leaders, advocates, role models, and innovators within the global disability community, recognizing their positive impact on society. Over the years, The Viscardi Center has proudly acknowledged the outstanding contributions of more than 100 recipients worldwide, including notable figures such as Judith Heumann, Marlee Matlin, Tony Coelho, and Ali Stroker.



A beacon for inclusivity, the Awards provide a platform to showcase the remarkable achievements of those who have significantly contributed to the disability community. We encourage you to submit nominations for individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership.

This is a unique opportunity to highlight the extraordinary accomplishments of your colleagues, employees, or community members who are making a positive difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

The submission deadline for nominations is set for Friday, March 1, 2024. The much-anticipated 2024 class of recipients will be honored at Viscardi's Celebrity Night event on May 16 at

The Viscardi Center in Albertson, New York. For detailed information about the Awards, the past recipients, and to submit a nomination, please visit viscardicenter.org/henry-viscardi-achievement-awards

Disability History

Disability In The Kitchen, Past And Present

by Warren Shaw

When you were little and came down with a virus, were you put on a regimen of Saltines and flat ginger ale, or on clear liquids only? If so, then you were like my great uncle Simon—for whom, a hundred years ago, my immigrant grandmother supposedly cooked softened calf's liver to accommodate his "weak stomach." Namely, you were involved in what used to be called "invalid cookery."

Yes, there is a food history angle to disability, and recently I've acquired a handful of cookbooks, published over a span of more than a century, which illustrate the evolution of disability in the kitchen.

First up is *The Laurel Health Cookery* by Evora Bucknum Perkins. Published in 1911 in Massachusetts, this volume weaves together insights from an era when kitchens lacked electricity—no refrigerators, blenders, microwaves, or air fryers—along with plenty of quaint ideas and curious lore. There is straightforward advice such as, "Try to have something for a quick fire. If you are out of the reach of gas, a well-cared-for two-burner oil stove will do good service." But there are also puzzlers like this: "the cogs of an egg beater should never be wet; when they are wet once, its usefulness is impaired." It recommends using empty tin cans as food containers and calls them "gun boats" for some reason (a modern equivalent, I suppose, might be people who refer to takeout containers as "New York Tupperware").

Perkins' book is health focused, with warnings such as the following: "Very hot food ought not to be taken into the stomach . . . the stomach can become debilitated," and "Many people can digest cream better when accompanied by an acid fruit."

Remarkably enough for 1911, it is a vegetarian cookbook. It refers, oddly, to high-protein sources including nuts, beans and eggs as "true meats," and promotes meat substitutes like "trumese" (a sliceable product of nuts in gluten, invented by John Harvey Kellogg, the boxed cereal magnate).

The Laurel Health Cookery includes a chapter on "invalid foods," but those pages do little more than advocate fasting, or small and simple meals of fruit or gruel, without any explanation. There is almost no focus on what we would recognize as nutrition.

Despite the author's admonitions that "sugar clogs the system. It hinders the working of the living machine," and "the best food on this planet is ripe fruit," the suggested menus are extremely heavy in starches. Take this dinner idea: "Baked beans and brown bread; scalloped potatoes; pumpkin or water custard pie; nuts and raisins." Going through this book felt like falling into a sort of parallel universe.

Next up is *Invalid Cookery*, a guide for the student nurse and "her care of invalids." It is a slim, undated manual. I believe it was published in the 1920s though, because apparently sliced bread had not yet been invented when it was put together. The opening sections include a discussion of nutritive building blocks like carbohydrates, calories, and so forth, along with advice on presentation (small quantities of food, daintily served on trays accompanied by a flower, is best for the overall health of the patient).

There is little discussion of the healthfulness of one food over another, still less any attempt at "food X is good for Y condition." But there are recipes aplenty, provided in very short and simple terms altogether lacking in spic-

es, herbs, or flavorings. Some of them are startling, like "Brains and Bacon," or "Liver Juice" (produced by squeezing the liquid out of nearly raw liver). The authors direct that this strange nostrum should be "served cold," and that "orange juice may be taken after it." I'll pass on that, thank you very much. Likewise the "Sweet Omelette" (eggs cooked with sugar and jam).

Moving forward many years to the 1970s, we have *Cook Book*, presented by "Friend of the Disabled," in Pensacola, Florida. This is a spiral-bound collection of recipes that was apparently compiled and distributed as a fundraiser. It's a cute-looking production, with chapters marked by colored sheets of paper bearing post-hippie-era line drawings (one depicts a squirrel inhaling the fragrance of a daisy, sort of a tree-dwelling version of Ferdinand the Bull). Chapters include Appetizers, Soups, One Dish Quick Meals, Main Dishes, and so forth.

The recipes are okay—they include some unique Southern dishes, like "Frito Pie"—and the name of the contributor appears at the bottom of each entry. But despite the organization's disability-referencing name, nothing in the book's contents is disability-specific in any way.

By this point in my journey of cookbook exploration, I was becoming frustrated. Book after book implied some sort of benefit for people with disabilities, but so far not one of them actually provided any clear ideas or

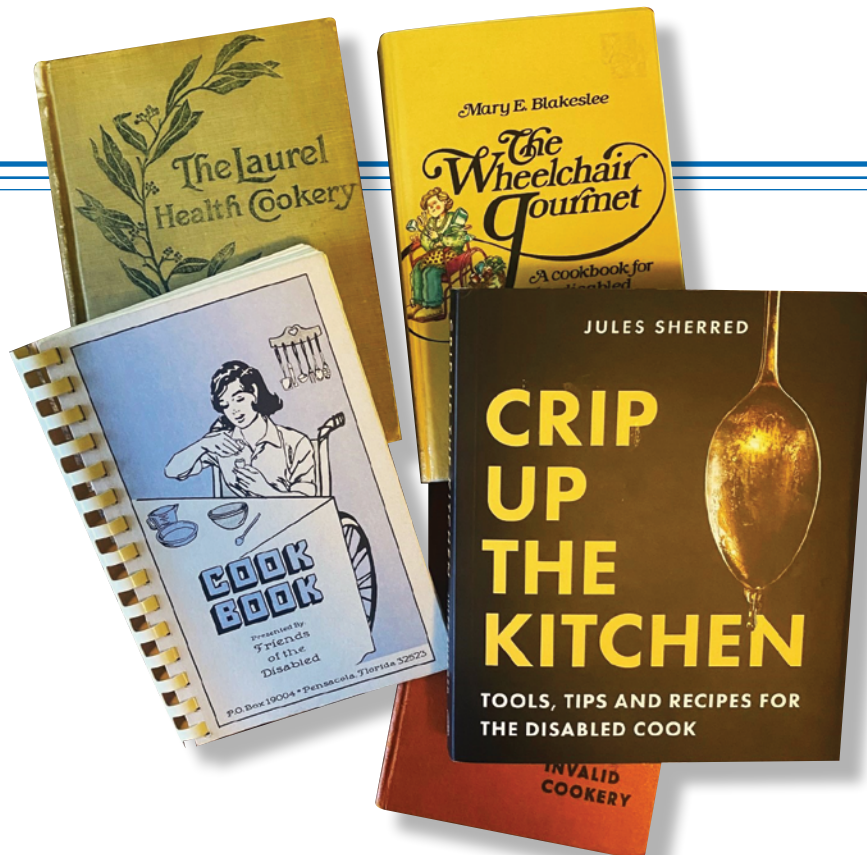
suggested any actual impacts for the health or convenience of the intended consumer. The actual food recipients were less than afterthoughts. They seemed completely irrelevant.

So, I turned with interest to the next volume, *The Wheelchair Gourmet*, by Mary Blakeslee. Published in 1981, it is subtitled "a cookbook for the disabled." Sure enough, the author is a wheelchair user. We're certain to find something of value here, I thought.

The book includes some decent suggestions for wheelchair-using cooks looking to set up ergonomically functional kitchens—things like long-handled cooking implements, an electric knife, a mirror on a stick for peering into pots on the rear of the stove, and turntables, or "lazy susans," to facilitate accessing the contents of cupboards. To this extent *The Wheelchair Gourmet* is a real advance over the books we've seen so far.

But while the author is a charming stylist, the emphasis here, as in *The Laurel Health Cookery*, is on the author's notions of how to prepare food healthfully, and in this book that means next to no use of sugar, flour or salt, and an insistence that vegetables should be eaten raw, or nearly so. I think these elements will leave most of the potential audience for this book looking elsewhere for culinary inspiration.

At this point I went online and ordered one more book, with the decidedly in-your-face title, *Crip Up The Kitchen*. I wasn't hoping



Continued on page 11

News You Can Use

How to Begin and Grow an Adaptive Sports Program

On February 8, 2024, 2:00 - 3:30 PM, the Great Lakes ADA Center welcomes the founder of the Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA) to provide an overview of the resources and planning needed to build an adaptive sports program from the ground up. The overview will include information on defining the mission, the target population to be served, key volunteers/stakeholders, building a budget, setting goals, a timeline, evaluation, and sustainability. There will be time for participants to ask questions of the speaker following the presentation. **Register at:** <https://www.accessibilityonline.org/arts-n-rec/session/?id=111099>

Find Supports for Young People with Disabilities

On February 10, 2024 from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM join the virtual IN-

CLUDEnyc Fair. Representatives from summer camps, museums, sports, music, and arts programs, and other services for young people with disabilities will be available to speak with you directly about what they can provide for your child. Join at any time and find the right resources and programs for your child, along with a network of support for yourself.

Register now: <https://includenyc.org/events/2024-includenyc-fair/>

Budget Advocacy Day

Join the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) and Consumer Directed Action of New York (CDANY) on February 12, 2024 from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM for an in-person day of advocacy about disability legislative and budget priorities in Albany. Please RSVP by February 5. **Learn more here:** <https://cdactionny.org/cdany-events/advocacy-day-in-albany/>

[february-12-2024/](https://www.includenyc.org/events/2024-includenyc-fair/)

NOD Employment Tracker™

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) Employment Tracker™ Scorecard ranks organizations in six key disability and veterans' inclusion focus areas: Strategy, Talent Outcome Metrics, Climate & Culture, Talent Sourcing, People Practices, Workplace Tools & Accessibility. Completion of the 2024 Tracker by the Friday, March 15th, 2024 deadline is required to qualify for the NOD Leading Disability Employer Seal and the Fair360 Top 50 Companies for Diversity. **Companies can enroll now:** <https://www.tfaforms.com/5096838>

2024 TD 5 Boro Bike Tour

Register to join Team #NoLimits, a collaboration between Lighthouse Guild and Foreseeable Future Foundation for the 2024 TD 5 Boro Bike Tour on Sunday, May 5,

2024, at 7:00 AM in Tribeca. It's an opportunity to be a part of a team that advocates the importance of adaptive athletics for people who are blind or visually impaired — benefiting mental and physical health.

Each solo rider, or tandem riding duo, commits to a goal of raising \$1,500 per bicycle. The ride will conclude on Staten Island. Participants must cover a registration fee as part of the mandatory fundraising goal of \$1,500 which will include guaranteed first-wave charity entry, an exclusive custom-made team jersey, light breakfast, and lunch at the Charity Partners tent.

Registration includes rider identification kit (bib & bike plate), snacks, and entertainment at rest areas along the route.

For questions or more information, email development@lighthouseguild.org, **or call** 212-769-7893.

Advocacy Opportunities

New York City Agency Accessibility Plans

Local Law 12 of 2023 mandates that New York City agencies develop and implement 5-year accessibility plans outlining their strategies to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of their services, programs, and workplaces for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Many agencies have now made their proposed 5-year accessibility plans available for public review and comment until February 16, 2024 at nyc.gov/accessibilityplans.

Accessibility of Medical Diagnostic Equipment

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) explaining proposed updates to the regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to lay out specific requirements for the accessibility of medical diagnostic equipment (MDE).

This NPRM proposes to adopt specific technical standards that state and local governments would have to follow to meet their existing obligations under Title II of the ADA for MDE accessibility.

The NPRM asks the public for comments about this proposal.

Visit <https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/DOJ-CRT-2024-0001-0001> to submit comments online on or before February 12, 2024. You can also submit comments by overnight, courier, or hand delivery to the Disability Rights Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice, 150 M St. NE, 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20002.

Congestion Pricing

A public review process is underway for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)'s Central Business District (CBD) Tolling Program, also known as congestion pricing, through March 11, 2024. Members of the public may submit written comments online and by email, mail, and fax.

Online: <https://contact.mta.info/s/forms/CBDTP>

Email: cbdtpt.feedback@mtabt.org

Mail: CBD Tolling Program, 2 Broadway, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10004

Phone: 646-252-7440

Fax: Send to (212) 504-3148 with Attention to CBDTP Team

In addition to the public com-

ment period, the MTA will hold four hybrid virtual/in-person public hearings in February and March. The hearings begin on Thursday, February 29, and conclude on Monday, March 4. Members of the public who wish to speak at the hearings are required to register in advance online at <https://new.mta.info/agency/bridges-and-tunnels/cbd-tolling-hearing> or by calling the Public Hearing Hotline at (646) 252-6777, or in person. Registration will open one week before the start time of each hearing and will close 30 minutes after the beginning of the hearing. Speakers will be provided two minutes to speak.

The hearings will be hosted in person at 2 Broadway, New York, NY 10004 in the William Ronan 20th Floor Board Room. People may also register to participate remotely via Zoom or telephone. Each public hearing will be live-streamed on the MTA YouTube channel at youtube.com/@mta-live and on the project website: mta.info/CBDTP. The hearings are scheduled for:

- Thursday, Feb. 29, at 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, March 1, at 10:00 a.m.

- Monday, March 4, at 10:00 a.m.
- Monday, March 4, at 6:00 p.m.

At the public hearings, CART Captioning and American Sign Language services will be available. Members of the public who are deaf or hard of hearing can use their preferred relay service or the free 711 relay service, and then ask to be connected to the Public Hearing Hotline at (646) 252-6777 to speak with an agent. Members of the public who are blind or have low vision may submit an accommodation request online at mta.info/CBDTP or call the Public Hearing Hotline at (646) 252-6777. Please send the request at least five business days prior to the scheduled hearing.

If language assistance or any other accommodation is required, please submit a request at least five business days before the scheduled hearing date in one of the following ways: online at mta.info/CBDTP, by calling the Public Hearing Hotline at (646) 252-6777, or by sending a letter to MTA Government & Community Relations, Re: MTA CBDTP Public Hearings, 2 Broadway, D17.112, New York, NY 10004.

Understanding Your History Can Provide an Answer for Tomorrow

by Sharon McLennon Wier, Ph.D., MEd., CRC, LMHC, Executive Director for Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)

The month of February is a time that we reflect on Black history and how Black people have changed the landscape of the United States. We remember the civil rights victories that were won by Black leaders such as Harriet Tubman (who was disabled), Representative John Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and so many more. We recognize the achievements of those that solve scientific problems like Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, a Black woman who developed a vaccine for COVID-19 and Vivien Thomas, a Black man who developed a system for conducting cardiac surgery for “blue babies.” We celebrate those who shaped our legislative system, like Barack Obama, the first Black man to serve as President of the United

States, Barack Obama, and another Black lawyer who became a Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall. We enjoy the beautiful music of Stevie Wonder, a Black disabled musician. And we think of the contributions of the first Black man to teach in an institution of higher education in 1849, Charles L. Reason, and the first Black College President of Harvard, Dr. Claudine Gay. Black people—including Black disabled people—have truly shaped the landscape of our country.

And Black disabled people continue to be agents of change and prosperity right here in New York. In New York City specifically, there are over 1.5 million people with a documented disability who have many racial and ethnic backgrounds. Disability does not

discriminate. At the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY), our staff represents the people of color that we serve in New York City. We work with disabled people from all income backgrounds. For the most part, we serve low income disabled New Yorkers.

We’re here for many things, such as helping you seek the medical supports that you may need, aiding you in acquiring needed food assistance, and obtaining transportation and voting assistance so that you can access the polls regardless of your disability status. We can advocate for bills that can become law to provide a better quality of life for the disabled community. CIDNY can support you in amplifying your voice. We know that the

voice of the disabled can be powerful in numbers! Together, we can continue the legacies of so many Black Americans who have achieved great change in the world. This is why I invite you to join us on February 12, 2024, when CIDNY will hold its annual Lobby Day in Albany, New York.

CIDNY will rent a bus and take staff and consumers from CIDNY’s Manhattan office to Albany. We will leave promptly at 6:30 a.m. and return about 6:30 p.m., and food will be provided. We request that you attend a Lobby Day training to learn more about the events planned. For more information, contact CIDNY at 212-674-2300 or visit cidny.org. I look forward to hearing your voice and joining you in making your voice heard!



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- ★ **Captioning and CART Services** to make virtual/in-person events, video productions, livestreams and webinars accessible for people with hearing loss.
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Making the world more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities is at the core of The Viscardi Center’s mission. The Viscardi Center is a Long Island-based nonprofit focused on educating, employing and empowering children and adults with disabilities.

Obituaries

Founder of Suffolk Office of Handicapped Services, Bruce Blower

By Angela Miele Melledy

The Founding Director of the Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services (now the Office for People with Disabilities), Bruce Blower, died on November 4, 2023. He was surrounded by his second wife Doris Blower and members of their blended family.

Blower, born in Brooklyn in 1937, was 86 years old. He was married to Doris Blower for 32 years. They met when she worked for Handicapped Services for the Town of Islip. "Bruce was one of those people who if he said he was going to do something, he did it. His motto was 'Life's a hill, get over it.' And he had a lot of hills to get over," said Doris Blower.

He earned a degree in business administration from Hofstra University. After college, he wrote for the Long Islander Newspaper. Then, as a US Army 2nd Lieutenant. Blower was an MP (340th Military Police Company) in the 101st Airborne Division: The Screaming Eagles. In 1964, he was honorably retired after

contracting polio and becoming quadriplegic.

Determined to make a career for himself, he worked as a legislative aide to the late Assemblymember John Flanagan, former chairman of the state Rehabilitation Council. Blower soon became interested in disability and lobbied then-Suffolk County Executive Peter Cohalan to start an office to help people with disabilities. Cohalan agreed and asked Blower to lead it.

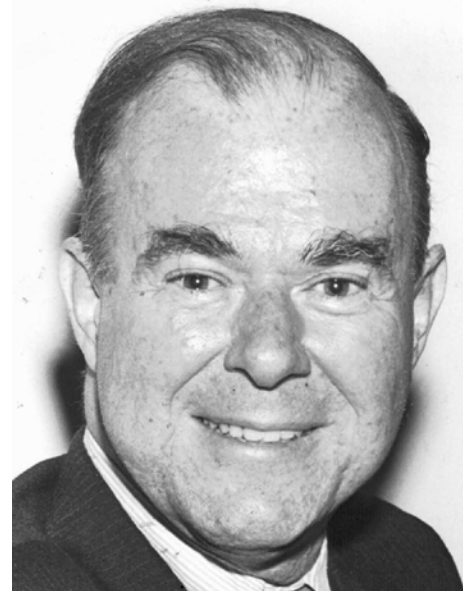
Blower established the Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services in 1980 and led it for 29 years. The office was one of the first such county departments to start a technical assistance program for local businesses, commercial establishments, institutions of higher learning, transportation providers, housing authorities, and health care systems facilities, so that community institutions could voluntarily become models of accessibility and usability. He served at the pleasure of five County Execu-

tives. During his tenure the office won 23 notable national awards for implementing groundbreaking programs.

"Bruce was able to communicate with the disability community and effectively advocated on its behalf," said the United Spinal Association's General Counsel James Weisman. "He was an early accessible mass transit advocate, a veteran, and an old friend. He was a leader and a role model and his contribution to Long Island's disabled community is immeasurable."

Blower was appointed to the New York State Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities by then-Governor George Pataki – a position he continued to hold after his retirement in 2009 – and was also appointed chair of the Advisory Council to the State Advocate for People with Disabilities by Pataki.

"Bruce was a great friend and mentor," said advocate Roy Probeyahn. "He was a success



not only on a personal level but as a culmination of his life-long achievements. He took our county into the forefront assuring the rights and protections under the law for the entire disability community of Suffolk."

Blower was a founding member and past president of the Huntington Community First Aid Squad. He also served on the board of directors of the Suffolk Independent Living Organization and penned a column for *Able Newspaper*. He also served as Compliance Officer for Suffolk County's Federal Americans with Disabilities Act and Chairman of

Continued on page 11

Disability Advocate Naomi Lu Bodo

By Angela Miele Melledy

Longtime disability advocate Naomi Lu Bodo died on Oct. 24, 2023 after enduring progressive dementia for more than a decade.

After contracting polio as a child, she found her way to a career in public health as she volunteered in her off-time hours.

"Her extraordinary level of commitment and resilience, compassion and determination, sincere humor, endless love, and devotion truly made her a life force for all the many lives she touched during her 92 years as she shaped the world we all share for the better," said her daughter Margaret Dornbaum.

Bodo, who was born in New York City, attended Ithaca College and New York University. According to advocate Marvin Wasserman

she worked as the Director of Rehabilitation at Queens Hospital Center and headed up the Queens Borough President's Task Force on Disabled Persons.

Wasserman knew her from their involvement in politics and worked with her on the Disability Independence Day March (DIDM), which celebrated the Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the 1990s. "She was a lovely person and her heart was in the right place," he said.

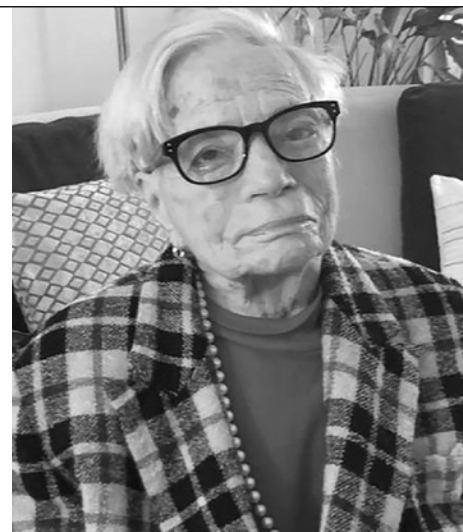
Bodo was on the board of the NYC Consortium for Independent Living and played a role in the ADA 2000 Celebration multi-city torch relay. She also served as a board member of the 504 Democratic Club and was active at Lincoln

Center's Passport Program – a program designed to introduce children, teens and adults with disabilities to the performing arts through free performances and workshops designed for families.

She also served as President of the Board of Directors of the Queens Independent Living Center.

"Many people comment to us that they never really understood Naomi to have a physical handicap from childhood polio because she always did as much, if not more than any other person they knew," said Dornbaum. "Naomi fought tirelessly for access and inclusion for all who needed accommodation or support to live, work and thrive independently."

She was predeceased in



2009 by her husband Bernard Bodo after more than 50 years of marriage and is survived by three children, Jennifer Carey, Margaret Dornbaum, and Anthony Bodo, as well as six grandchildren.

The family has suggested that donations in Naomi Bodo's name may be made to Arts and Minds and/or the Lincoln Center Passport Program.

Disability Pioneer Jack Gorelick

by Allison Howe

Jack Gorelick, who worked on behalf of disabled people for decades, died in late December at the age of 104.

Gorelick worked at AHRC New York City for about 40 years, where he became associate director and administered its clinical services.

One of his many achievements was beginning the award-winning Independent Travel Instruction Program, which is available to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who are supported through AHRC NYC's day services programs. Gorelick is also a founding member of the National Association for Travel Instruction.

In the 1980s, Gorelick began to work on services that would support siblings of people with disabilities. Along with several colleagues he created a Sibling Committee at AHRC NYC, hired a coordinator, and began offering

workshops known as "Sibshops."

Even after his retirement, Gorelick, along with his wife Helen, continued to support siblings as a board member of the Sibling Committee. They also established the Helen and Jack Gorelick Sibling Scholarship for siblings of people with I/DD pursuing higher education in an I/DD field.

In 2011, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) Director of Travel Training Peggy Groce, presented Gorelick with its Pioneer Award for founding AHRC NYC's sibling program. It is the longest running program of its kind in the nation.

"Jack's work was beneficial to the entire disability community of New York City and, eventually, to the nation. I cannot think of another individual who has done more for the rights and dignity of the I/DD disabled than Jack Gorelick," said Groce, who remained

a close friend throughout his life.

In 2019, AHRC NYC threw a party to honor Gorelick on his 100th birthday at the Beekman Hotel in New York City.

"Jack, you are a part of our foundation. You were there to help the social revolution really take hold," AHRC NYC CEO Marco Damiani said at the event.

Responding to the event's speeches, Gorelick said, "Every one of you was so dear to me. I'm a revolutionary – I haven't changed. There were 5,000 people in Willowbrook when we first got involved. It was a hell-hole, almost indescribable. Who changed that? We did. There will never be another Willowbrook in this country. You called on me – now I'm calling on you. You have to carry the mantle and keep it going."

In addition to disability rights, Gorelick pushed for workers'

rights, helping to organize the electrical workers union and its protests circa 1947-1949 in Pennsylvania, where he was born. This resulted in him being blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee, making it nearly impossible to find work.

He met his wife on one of those picket lines, they married in 1948 and felt forced to flee Pennsylvania by the following year. The pair moved to NYC, and Gorelick found a job at the AHRC Sheltered Workshop. He also attended graduate school, where he received a PhD in psychology.

"He really did change people's perceptions and behaviors with regards to respecting persons with I/DD," said Groce.

Gorelick's wife predeceased him in 2019, at the age of 96. He leaves behind his two children as well as many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Founder of Suffolk Office of Handicapped Service

Continued from page 10

the State Rehabilitation Council; the Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities; and the Commission on the Blind and Visually Handicapped.

"Bruce was very supportive of me when I took over the Suffolk Office of Handicapped Services," said Frank Krotzschinsky, current director of the office. "He was a strong advocate...and I learned quite a lot from him."

Blower is survived by his wife, five children, and three grandchildren. The Blower Family requests donations be made to Huntington Community First Aid Squad in his name.

Disability In The Kitchen, Past And Present

Continued from page 7

for too much. But once again I was mistaken.

Subtitled "Tools, Tips and Recipes for the Disabled Cook," *Crip Up The Kitchen* begins with a lengthy chapter on organizing a kitchen usable by people who are in wheelchairs, of short stature, have low grip strength, or are neurodivergent. The goal is to make food preparation both practical and fun, and to that end the author, Jules Shered, sets out a list of recommended appliances ranging from modern-like instant pots, air fryers, and vacuum sealers—to old-fashioned (a step stool). Shopping, food preparation and storage are broken down into step-at-a-time processes, ranked

by the required degrees of physical and mental resources (measured in "spoons," as per Spoon Theory). Recognizing that the disability community is often a low-income community, there is an emphasis on economy as well.

The bulk of this 200-page volume is devoted to recipes, organized in ascending order of difficulty. Among the low-intensity dishes is butter chicken; a medium-level dish is hamburger stew; a high-intensity entry is matzo ball soup. All the recipes include detailed but visually uncluttered sections on equipment, ingredients, and directions, along with estimates for prep and cooking time, type

of cuisine, level of heat, calories, and suggestions for how to store the final product.

Handsomely bound and gorgeously illustrated, *Crip Up The Kitchen* feels expensive, yet it is available in print or electronic media at a bargain price. Compared to the older books, it is revolutionary in its practical and aesthetic appeal, and in the seriousness with which it addresses cooking by people with disabilities.

So, there you have it, the disability rights revolution as told through food history—five books over 110 years. Bon appétit!

For more of Warren Shaw's work in disability history, please go to www.DisabilityHistoryNYC.com

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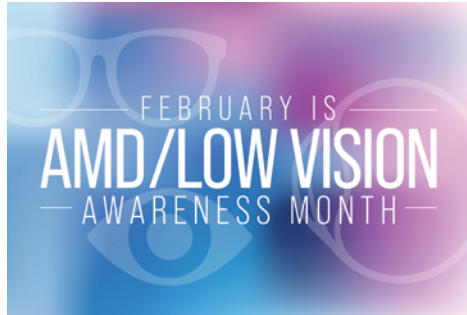


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What Should You Know About Low Vision?

By Jeremy Morak



February is Low Vision Awareness Month. According to the National Eye Institute, 3 million Americans ages 40 and older have low vision. It is crucial to understand what low vision is, how to detect it, and how to take steps toward safety and accessibility if you are living with low vision.

Low vision is a permanent loss of vision that cannot be improved with eyeglasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. Symptoms may include difficulties reading, writing, watching television, driving, recognizing faces, and managing glare. People with low vision may encounter loss of central vision (what you see when looking directly at something), loss of peripheral vision (what you see from the sides of your eyes), problems distinguishing between objects of similar tones (contrast sensitivity), or difficulty judging the position of objects (depth perception).

“The most important thing you can do for your eyes is to get a comprehensive eye exam,” says Dr. Andrea Zimmerman, Low Vision Specialist at Lighthouse Guild. “The three main causes of low vision and blindness in the United States are glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and diabetic eye disease. Only a comprehensive eye exam can detect these diseases in their early stages and help preserve vision.”

If you have vision problems, the sooner you get an eye exam, the sooner you can possibly prevent future vision loss. There are many resources and methods available to navigate the effects of vision loss. New technologies and rehabilitation skills can make daily tasks easier and enhance quality of life. Here are some practical tips for people experiencing low vision.

- **Use contrast to distinguish items**, such as a dark bathmat with rubber backing on a light floor, a light cutting board on a dark countertop, and white sheets with a dark comforter and pillows.
- **Use night lights, a flashlight, or hall or room lighting** if you get up during the night.
- **Avoid moving quickly from a dark room to a lighted area**, and vice versa; give your eyes time to adjust to changing light levels.
- **Use overhead lighting** to help eliminate shadows and keep rooms evenly lit.
- **Use shades on all light sources to reduce glare.**
- **Sit with your back towards a window or lamp.** Use a gooseneck lamp for tabletop activities.
- **Embrace technology!** Video magnifiers, audio and electronic books, smartphones, and tablets enable you to change the font size and lighting level or magnify what's on a screen. Apps are also available that can help you identify money and colors and navigate your surroundings.

Jeremy Morak is a Marketing Manager at Lighthouse Guild.



Breaking Barriers: IdeaSpark Program Paves Way for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

The Viscardi Center and the Hynes Institute of Entrepreneurship & Innovation at Iona University have joined forces to offer the IdeaSpark Program, a groundbreaking collaboration aimed at engaging individuals with disabilities in developing an entrepreneurial mindset. Participants will explore what it takes to be an innovator and entrepreneur through a series of activities that empower them to develop a business concept and explore its feasibility.

This six-week virtual Program will run from May 14 to June 27, 2024. The Program demonstrates Viscardi's and Iona's commitment to providing a fully accessible introduction to entrepreneurship that opens doors to business ownership as a viable pathway to financial independence.

Participants in the IdeaSpark Program will:

- Foster and apply an entrepreneurial mindset
- Develop a business concept into a viable model

- Enhance presentation and pitching skills
- Learn and apply creative problem-solving skills
- Build a professional network with like-minded individuals
- Receive Peer Mentor support
- Pitch their business ideas for a chance to win equity-free cash grants

Sessions will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 am to 1 pm ET beginning May 14. All sessions will be conducted remotely via Zoom, ensuring full accessibility for participants. A culminating Pitchfest event, where participants showcase their ideas and compete for equity-free grants, will take place in July on the Iona University campus in New Rochelle, New York.

The program is open to disabled individuals aged 18 and older with a defined business concept or active business launch. **The application deadline is April 5, 2024. Apply at [ViscardiCenter.org/IdeaSpark](https://viscardicenter.org/IdeaSpark)**



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