

# AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for  
Persons with Disabilities

## Women's Group Wins Access Concessions from MBTA



Universal design means creating products and structures that are designed to be maximally usable by everyone. In the case of public transportation, this means

designing vehicles and transit stations that are accessible to and usable by a wide range of riders. Experience has taught us that, the more universal design features such as bus lifts, ramps and elevators get used, the more likely it is that transit entities like the MBTA will keep these features clean and in good working order.

In fact, for some time now, the MBTA's official policy has been that anyone—wheelchair users, parents with baby strollers, or people who use walkers or personal shopping carts—can use this accessibility equipment. There is just one problem: the MBTA has never publicized this policy. For the last nine months, Women of Action, a Cambridge-based grassroots group of low-income women fighting for justice, has been demanding the MBTA publicize the right to use universal design features for anyone who needs them.

In July of 2002, Women of Action members met with MBTA officials to present three key demands:

1. No woman with a stroller shall be left at any bus stop;
2. Access to the back door lift and trolley ramps available upon request for anyone who needs them, such as women with strollers; and
3. A system of accountability for cleaning and sanitizing elevators.

(MBTA Access continued on Page 2)

## Romney Unveils Human Services Reorganization Plan

On February 24, Governor Mitt Romney and Secretary Ron Preston announced their plan for a major reorganization at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). For quite some years the structure of EOHHS has included 15 separate state agencies that provide essential services to people with disabilities and many other vulnerable residents of the Commonwealth. While each agency has programs that focus on the needs of a particular constituency, duplication of effort and lack of communication between the different agencies have at times contributed to a confusing maze of services.



The reorganization plan would group these 15 agencies into four clusters, each with its own Assistant Secretary who would report to EOHHS Secretary Preston. Within the clusters each existing agency would purportedly maintain its existing mission and programs.

These are the proposed groupings: **Cluster 1 – Disability and Community Services** under Gerald Morrissey (Dept. of Mental Retardation, Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, Mass. Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Commission for the Blind, and Chelsea and Holyoke Soldiers' Homes), **Cluster 2 – Health** under Christine Ferguson (Dept. of Public Health and Dept. of Mental Health), **Cluster 3 – Elder Affairs** under Jennifer Carey (Elder Affairs and Veterans Affairs), and **Cluster 4 – Children, Youth and Families** under Harry Spence (Dept.

(Human Services continued on Page 2)

## MBTA Access (continued)

In addition Women of Action demanded that the MBTA advertise access rights to the public. In the words of WOA member, Erin Hazard, "Access is only a right if you know you have it."

At that point, MBTA officials refused, stating that they "don't want everyone to know, because more people would use the lifts and ramps."

Women of Action responded with a campaign entitled, "What the 'T' Doesn't Want You to Know," distributing to commuters thousands of postcards and flyers listing access rights. The MBTA then unveiled a pilot program to enhance the cleaning of elevators at 23 urban transit stations. Finally, after months of advocacy, in January MBTA General Manager Michael Mulhern wrote to WOA, agreeing to "publicize the policy of offering the wheelchair lift to anyone who needs it." Exclaimed Jessica Weisberg, a WOA member, "Finally, we will have cleaner elevators and women with strollers will have access to wheelchair lifts and ramps. Now that they've agreed to this, we're going to keep speaking out."

## Human Services (continued)

of Social Services, Child Care Services, Transitional Assistance, Youth Services, and Office for Refugees & Immigrants). Where some agencies will reside has still not been decided.

Authors of the proposed plan are hoping it will provide more efficient services and foster collaboration among the agencies, eliminate some of the bureaucracy and duplication, and consolidate some administrative functions and facilities. Of course a primary goal is to meet the fiscal challenges of a greatly diminished state budget by reducing administrative costs to preserve money for essential programs.

Advocates for disability services expressed skepticism that Governor Romney's reorganization plan would ensure continuation of

essential services, and vowed to monitor the process closely.

While the reorganization process is not yet complete, it is by all accounts moving quickly. There will be debate and opportunity for feedback during the next two months, so watch for announcements about public hearings. The Romney administration intends to file an "Article 87 reorganization of state government" in May.

## Down by the Riverside

Finally, Full Access to the Best Calamari in Town!

By Bet MacArthur



New access ramp at Riverside Pizza

Ten years after it began, the process of making the popular Riverside Pizza & Seafood Restaurant accessible is now complete! The neighborhood eatery deserves its terrific reputation for the one of best seafood places in Cambridge—but it did not have an

accessible entrance until late last summer.

In March, 1984, two brothers, Alex and Apostolos "Paul" Goulopoulos, along with Paul's wife Heidi, opened Riverside Pizza & Seafood Restaurant at the intersection of River Street and Putnam Avenue. They combined the two separate establishments on the site into one, housing a pizza and seafood spot on one side, and a cozy, friendly neighborhood tavern on the other. Eight years later, in 1992, they finally were able to

convert the single tiny restroom into two full-sized, fully accessible ones, and built an easy ramp connecting the two parts of the restaurant. However, in the 1992 upgrade an important element was forgotten—neither of the pair of two-step entrances into the eatery was equipped with an entry ramp.

As natives of Cambridge's Riverside neighborhood, my family and I are longtime customers at Riverside Pizza. Starting at the time of the restroom improvements in 1992, I kept prodding my friends Alex, Paul, and Heidi to "do the right thing" by making the front door accessible. Cheerfully I pointed out that the store was missing out on business from the large 808 Memorial Drive apartment complex just a block away, where many people and families with disabilities live, and the equally large Putnam Gardens complex, just three blocks away.

For many years, Riverside Pizza had offered neighbors with mobility impairments the accommodation of bringing takeout orders to the curb, but this was not enough to satisfy many customers with disabilities wanting full access.

As the nineties rolled on, Alex and Paul were anxious about the impact their business might suffer from the impending opening of the big new Bread & Circus supermarket (with its two cafés) across the street. The cost of fixing their entrance might put quite a load on their business, at a precarious time. Yet by providing full access to their establishment and becoming more welcoming to the neighborhood, they could position their place to compete on a much better level (pun intended) with Bread & Circus. Surely it was only a matter of time before a dedicated fried calamari lover wanting dining-in access to

the town's best would lodge a complaint to force full compliance and a new entrance. Certainly the wide sidewalk outside could accommodate one.

Then, sure enough, late in 2001, Erin Gullage, another Riverside native who uses a motorized scooter for mobility, filed a complaint with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) in order to achieve access to Riverside Pizza.

"I filed [with MAAB]," Erin said, "because Riverside Pizza was one of the closest restaurants to my house, and its cooking has a great reputation -- I felt really excluded. I live in a large apartment building with several other wheelchair using tenants, who all were frustrated about not being able to eat at Riverside Pizza --- talking with them set fire to my mission." Gullage added, "I found out it's very easy to file; the procedure is not laborious or intimidating at all." With this unavoidable prompt, Alex and George took the plunge, completing their access improvements in 2002.

As is often the case, in honoring access code requirements the general public also benefits from sensible improvements. The new ramped entrance to Riverside Pizza incorporates a fully-framed glass vestibule and two side doors. This amenity, the owners admit, had been requested by patrons for years to eliminate the cold blasts from outdoors that entered the sports bar every winter. Heidi Goulopoulos mentions a long-time customer, formerly nondisabled, who now uses a wheelchair. He was missing for a long time, and is really pleased to be able to come back to dine with his wife, who has never given up coming here to enjoy the light, flaky fish 'n' chips, brews on tap, and other yummy fare.

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## Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

March 5      **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2 to 3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or <[woman@braintrust.org](mailto:woman@braintrust.org)> for more information.

- March 5      **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- March 5      **Public Hearing on MBTA long-range vision for mass transportation**, 6 to 8 pm at the state Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza in Boston. Please NOTE: Photo identification is required for entrance to the building. This Draft Program for Mass Transportation (PMT) is the MBTA's 25-year planning document; it may be viewed at <[www.ctps.org/bostonmpo](http://www.ctps.org/bostonmpo)>. Copies in accessible formats are also available from the Central Transportation Planning Staff which may be reached at 617-973-7100 voice, 617-973-7089 TTY or <[publicinformation@ctps.org](mailto:publicinformation@ctps.org)>. A second Hearing will be held on March 6. If assisted listening device or interpreters are required for either of the public hearings, please contact Pam Wolfe, CTPS at 617-973-7141.
- March 6      **Public Hearing on MBTA long-range vision for mass transportation**, 1 to 3 pm at the state Transportation Building, Conference Room 1, 10 Park Plaza in Boston. NOTE: Photo identification is required for entrance to the building. (See details above for March 5<sup>th</sup> Hearing.)
- March 8      **Access to Theatre** is a program of Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) for teens ages 14-19. The group will meet on Saturdays at the Boston Renaissance Charter School from 12 to 4 p.m. for 12 weeks beginning March 8. For more information contact Deep Chinappa at PYD, 617-556-4075, ext. 20 (voice & TTY) or check the website at <[www.pyd.org](http://www.pyd.org)>.
- March 11     **Job Accommodations for People with Disabilities** is a one-day workshop that provides an overview of accommodations from the no-cost simple solutions to the "high tech." Legal and practical realities of requesting accommodations from employers will also be addressed. This will be presented at the Hogan Center on the Holy Cross campus in Worcester by Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) of Boston. Registration DEADLINE is 3 weeks prior to event; fee is \$75. For more information contact Drew Glazier at 617-287-4337 voice, 617-287-4350 TTY or <[andrew.glazier@umb.edu](mailto:andrew.glazier@umb.edu)>.
- March 11     **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software that meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Go to their website at <<http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users>> and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- March 12     **25<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Reception** hosted by Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council and Arc Massachusetts, 10:30 am to 1 pm in the Grand Staircase Hall at the State House in Boston. Come to network with other disability advocates, hear about legislative, budget and policy priorities, and visit your legislators. For more information contact: Daniel Krueger at the UMass Donahue Institute, 617-723-0208 voice or <[dkrueger@donahuee.umassp.edu](mailto:dkrueger@donahuee.umassp.edu)>.
- March 12     **Public Forum with federal Admn. on Developmental Disabilities** will solicit comments on effectiveness of Mass. Developmental Disabilities Council, Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities at the Disability Law Center, Institute for Community Inclusion, and Shriver Center. The forum will be 1:30 to 3:30 pm at One Ashburton Place, 21st floor, Conference Room 2. Submit written comments: by mail to Ron LeDoux, Program Specialist, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, JFK Federal Building, Rm 2000, Boston, MA 02203; by email <[rledoux@acf.dhhs.gov](mailto:rledoux@acf.dhhs.gov)>; or by fax 617-565-2493.

- March 13     **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- March 13     **Stroke Support Group** at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For more information contact Melissa Terrien at 800-922-8290, x343.
- March 18     **Disability Policy Consortium** (DPC) monthly meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of month, 1 to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, Boston. For more information, contact Robert Snierson, Chair, <rsnierson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- March 18     **Cambridge Group for Parents with Children on the Autism Spectrum** meets the third Tuesday of each month at Cambridge Family & Children's Services, 929 Massachusetts Ave, floor 01. For more information contact Christi Papazian at the Autism Support Center, 978-777-9135 or <asc@naarc.org>. Information and newsletters are on their website at <www2.shore.net/~nsarc>.
- March 19     **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see March 5 listing for details.)
- March 19     **Forum on Accessibility at Harvest Co-Op Markets** – this is an opportunity to meet with key staff of the Harvest Co-Op Markets to discuss ways to make their cooperative markets in Cambridge and Jamaica Plain more welcoming for customers with disabilities. Forums will take place from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Wainwright Bank community room, 647 Massachusetts Avenue in Central Square, Cambridge. For more information, contact Chris Durkin, Member Services Coordinator, Harvest Co-Op Markets, 617-661-1580 x132 voice or <cdurkin@harvestcoop.com>.
- March 20     **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC Somerville Area Office at 5 Middlesex Ave., Suite 302 in Somerville. Business meeting 10 am to 12 noon; Support Group 12 to 1 pm. For more information contact Jim Fratolillo at 617-204-3854 (voice), 617-204-3847 (fax) or Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 (voice).
- March 23     **Religious Inclusion & Life Cycle Events**, Part 2 of series "In our Voices: Jews with Disabilities Share Life Experiences." How does one adapt expectations to enable all people to participate in, for example, B'nai Mitzvah, Shabbat, and mikvah experiences? Video clips show different ways of celebrating. Speakers will talk about their experiences and share information about ways the Jewish community is reaching out to people with special needs. 3-5 PM at Leventhal-Sidman JCC in Newton. For additional information contact Sandy Slavet 617-614-1940 voice or email <sslavet@jfcsboston.org>.
- March 26     **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 4. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- March 28     **Understanding Deaf History and the Evolution of ASL through Historical Films** is the topic of a lecture by Ted Supalla at the University of New Hampshire in Manchester (UNHM), 6:30 to 9 p.m. The multi-media presentation will include video segments from the film archives of Gallaudet University. In the second part of the lecture Professor Supalla will discuss his collection and analysis of data on two related sign languages, French and American, and compare them to Japanese Sign Language, a completely unrelated language. Ted Supalla is Associate Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and of Linguistics at the University of Rochester. This lecture at the UNHM Auditorium is free and open to the public. For more information contact Arkady

Belozovsky, ASL/Deaf Studies Lecture Series Coordinator at 603-641-5932 TTY, 603-641-4168 voice or <arkadyb@cisunix.unh.edu>.

- March 29      **ASL interpreted performance of *Breath, Boom***, a new play at the Huntington Theatre Company by Kia Corthron that explores life from inside the confines of an African-American girl gang. From the streets to prison the leader is ruthless, but she finds the real challenge is surviving on the outside. Contains adult language and situations. Tickets for each Deaf patron and one guest are \$27 each; order tickets by March 20, as seating is limited. For more information contact the Huntington Theatre Company, 264 Huntington Ave., Boston MA 02115 or Marisa Jones by FAX at 617-421-9674 or <mamj1@bu.edu>.
- April 2        **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see March 5 listing for details.)
- April 2        **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- April 5        **Making Healthy Connections** is a pilot project of Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) originally funded by the Mass. Department of Public Health. Through a series of 12 weekly discussions and recreational activities adolescents with disabilities and/or special health care needs will learn skills to lead active, healthy lifestyles. The group will meet on Saturdays, 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the Allston-Brighton YMCA, 615 Washington St. in Brighton. The fee is \$60; scholarships are available. The facilitators will be mentors with disabilities and other youth with similar experiences who act a peer role models. For more information contact Leslie Lockhart at PYD, 617-556-4075, ext. 15 (voice & TTY) or check the website at <www.pyd.org>.
- April 8        **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. See March 11th listing above for details.
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- April 17       **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. (See March 20<sup>th</sup> listing for details)
- April 20       **Jesus Christ Superstar Audio-Described Performance**, 7 p.m. at the Wang Theater in Boston. This acclaimed musical by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber has become a theatrical legend as powerful and compelling today as when it was first performed in 1971. Tickets are \$28-70 with seating available in all parts of the theatre. To purchase tickets, reserve headsets, request large print or Braille playbills or arrange special seating call 617-532-1104, visit the Wang Theatre Box Office at 270 Tremont Street, Mon.- Sat. 10 am to 6 pm or email <mkemler@wangcenter.org>.
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## Access Notice

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Access**Letter** is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,  
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