

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

City Council Passes Accessibility Ordinance

On March 3, 2008, the Cambridge City Council unanimously passed an amendment to the City's Human Rights Ordinance, requiring businesses to remove barriers to accessibility. This amendment empowers the Cambridge Human Rights Commission to investigate and enforce complaints from people with disabilities alleging that a business has failed to make required accessibility improvements.

Under the new ordinance amendment, Cambridge businesses will be required to remove barriers to access, whenever it is "readily achievable" to do so. Common barriers to access include narrow entry doorways, one-step entrances without ramps, checkout counters that are too high, and parking lots without designated accessible parking spaces. This new ordinance amendment mirrors an accessibility mandate directed at businesses that is contained in the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. All businesses that provide goods and services to the public, known as "public accommodations", are subject to this mandate.

For many years, the Cambridge Human Rights Ordinance has provided civil rights protection to people with disabilities, along with several other protected categories, including age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender. The Cambridge Human Rights Commission was established to promote equal rights for all these protected constituencies. The Human Rights Commission is tasked with investigating and enforcing alleged discrimination under this ordinance.

(More on Accessibility Ordinance page 2)

Coalition Seeks to Make State a Model Employer

A grassroots group called the Employment NOW Coalition recently called on state officials to take action to make the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a model employer of people with disabilities. In an event at the Volpe Transportation Building in Cambridge on April 18, Coalition leaders pointed out that only about 2% of state employees have disabilities, whereas the population of working age adults with disabilities is closer to 15-20%.

One of the speakers at the April 18 event was Christine Griffin, Commissioner at the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Griffin described some of her specific efforts and those of her colleagues in federal government in trying to increase the percentage of employment of people with disabilities at the federal level. She explained how, upon arriving at the EEOC, she was surprised was to find out that there had been a "steady decline in the employment of people with severe disabilities" in the federal government over the past 14 years.

Griffin decided to use her bully pulpit as EEOC Commissioner to advocate for improving this picture. "In the overall scheme of things, we're not going to change society's views about people with disabilities until we are working side by side with them in huge numbers," said Griffin. Among the steps state government needed to take to hire and retain more employees with disabilities, Griffin suggested setting up centralized accommodation fund programs, something the federal government had done to streamline the process of purchasing reasonable



(More on Model Employer page 2)

Accessibility Ordinance (cont'd)

Until the recent amendment was passed, however, the ordinance did not contain an explicit requirement for businesses to remove accessibility barriers.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, which was passed by Congress and signed into law in 1990, provides broad-based civil rights protection to people with disabilities in areas such as employment, transportation, public accommodations, telecommunications, and state and local government. Among the many civil rights requirements included under the ADA is the mandate that businesses that provide goods and services to the public remove barriers to access whenever it is “readily achievable” to do so.

“Readily achievable” means easily accomplishable, and able to be done without much difficulty or expense. In other words, if it is relatively cheap and easy for business to make certain structural modifications that will improve access for their customers with disabilities, the business must provide these modifications. Unfortunately, in order to get this ADA mandate enforced, people with disabilities have had to either file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, an option that can be very time-consuming, or file a lawsuit in federal court, an option which is both costly and time-consuming.

Under the new Cambridge ordinance, people with disabilities seeking to get local businesses to remove barriers to access need only file a complaint with the Cambridge Human Rights Commission, which can be done quickly and without hiring a lawyer. The following are some examples of modifications that may be readily achievable:

- 1) Installing ramps;
- 2) Repositioning shelves;
- 3) Rearranging tables, chairs, vending machines, display racks, and other furniture;
- 4) Repositioning telephones;
- 5) Adding raised markings on elevator control buttons;
- 6) Installing flashing alarm lights;

- 7) Widening doors;
- 8) Installing offset hinges to widen doorways;
- 9) Installing accessible door hardware;
- 10) Installing grab bars in toilet stalls;
- 11) Rearranging toilet partitions to increase maneuvering space;
- 12) Installing a raised toilet seat;
- 13) Installing a full-length bathroom mirror;
- 14) Repositioning the paper towel dispenser in a bathroom; and
- 15) Creating designated accessible parking spaces.

Prior to ordination of the amendment, City Councillor Brian Murphy, Chair of the Ordinance Committee, spoke in favor of its passage: "I think it's a very exciting step forward... one where we can actually make a difference for people's lives... in very tangible ways... the readily achievable removal of architectural barriers."

Model Employer (cont'd)

accommodations for employees with disabilities, such as adaptive technology. This way, a program manager would not be forced to pay for accommodations out of a limited program budget. Another suggestion offered by Griffin, that had some success at the federal level, was designating an individual in each agency "to make sure that someone there is focusing on increasing the opportunities at the agency for people with disabilities." Disability program managers, as they are called at the federal level, oversee the process of providing reasonable accommodations, and effectively communicate goals for hiring people with disabilities to managers throughout the agency.

Charlie Carr, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, expressed his support for the idea, "I find tremendous support within the administration at all levels to come up with some type of strategy to bring people with disabilities into the state's workforce." He continued, "EOHHS [Executive Office of Health And Human Services] alone employs 25,000 people... that is a lot of jobs; then when you go across the different secretariats, there are many, many, many job opportunities." Carr

urged people with disabilities to move beyond living independently in the community and seek employment -- "with correct supports in-place and all the things that are on the horizon to make it even more feasible, I think the time is now to say 'let's get a job' -- an integrated mainstream job."

Linda Long-Bellil, co-chair of the Employment NOW coalition, detailed several other initiatives for which the coalition is working. Long-Bellil explained how the group is trying to address "youth [with disabilities] who are transitioning from the educational system to adulthood and all the barriers and obstacles they face in trying to... achieve what they want in life as they get older." In addition, said Long-Bellil, the coalition is "looking at how the state can do hiring better, including the whole issue of independent contractors," who do not receive benefits like health insurance. In closing, Long-Bellil urged anyone who was interested in joining the Coalition's push to make the Commonwealth model employer to attend the group's next meeting on Friday, May 16 at 1:30 p.m. at the Central Square branch library in Cambridge.

Accessible Taxicab Medallion Auctioned



The Cambridge License Commission auctioned a new taxicab medallion in April for

\$385,000. Once it is pressed into service, the new medallion will bring to eight the number of accessible taxicabs in Cambridge. The winner of the auction, Carnot Georges, already operates one accessible taxicab in Cambridge. Following the auction, he expressed his excitement about being able to provide more accessible taxicab service to people with disabilities.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- May 1- 8 ***Praying with Lior***, a film about people with disabilities in faith communities runs through May 8 at the West Newton Cinema, 1296 Washington Street. This documentary captures the story of Lior, a young man with Down syndrome, as he navigates his daily life towards the bar mitzvah he has long anticipated. Lior's story is a beautiful example of the contribution each individual makes to a community and the value of belonging. For details contact the theater at 617-964-6060 or <www.westnewtoncinema.com>.
- May 1-10 **Deconstruction of Metropolitan State Hospital, a Photo Exhibit** by John Hubbell. LICSW, in collaboration with Arts in Healthcare at Cambridge Health Alliance and Cambridge-Middlesex Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). This haunting reminder of the past in state institutions on display at Cambridge Hospital, Ambulatory 2nd Floor, 1492 Cambridge Street in Cambridge.
- May 6 **Riot of Color art exhibit** at the Webster House Gallery from 4 – 6:30 pm with live music and refreshments. This show will be up from May 2 to July 31. Webster House is a psychiatric day rehabilitation program of Vinfen. The Gallery is at 20 Webster Place, Brookline Village. Call 617-739-5461 for details.
- May 6 & 8 **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group** at Mass. General Hospital meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7-9 p.m. on the 4th floor in the Yawkey Building. Follow the signs. Meetings are free and open to public. For more information call 617-855-2795.
- May 7 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Support & Information Meeting** on first Wednesday of each month, 5:30 to 7 p.m. at 650 Beacon Street in Boston, 4th floor Conference Room, steps from the Kenmore Square MBTA station and near the Barnes and Noble Bookstore. RSI Action volunteers will answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, or check website at <www.rsiaction.org>.
- May 7 **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) meets in Cambridge near Harvard Square, 6 to 7:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Currently there are a few openings in this group, so if you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117.
- May 7 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 p.m. at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture; 7 to 8 p.m., on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- May 8 **Films series for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing at Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)** during May and June – *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* is the first. Many are foreign films, but all have English subtitles. Films are shown at various times in the afternoons and evenings. Assistive listening devices are

available and theater is wheelchair accessible. To get a list of films, show times and purchase tickets, go to MFA website at <www.mfa.org/calendar/sub.asp?key=12&subkey=1> or contact Valerie Burrows, Accessibility Coordinator, at 617-267-9703 TTY, 617-369-3302 voice or <vburrows@mfa.org>.

- May 8 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)** monthly meeting – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment
- May 12 **DPC Focus Group on** – 51 Inman Street, 4 – 7 pm
- May 13 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.org>.
- May 14 **Holocaust Commemoration**, 7- 8:30 pm at Temple Beth Shalom, 8 Tremont Street in Cambridge. The venue is wheelchair accessible. For more information contact Michael Muehe at the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, 617-349-4692.
- May 14 **Transition: Planning the Next Steps for Youth 14-22** is a workshop about designing the right curriculum and supports in high school so that the student will be on the right track for becoming self-sufficient after graduation. Information and strategies will be provided to help parents and students translate individual preferences and dreams into meaningful goals in the IEP. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, 7 – 9 p.m. Register by contacting FCSN at 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- May 15 **Autism Support Group** – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Central Square Branch of Cambridge Public Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at <liacopucci@nsarc.org> or 978-624-2304.
- May 16, 2008 **Employment NOW Coalition** meeting at Central Square branch library, 45 Pearl Street, 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Our goal is to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. (See article on page 1 for more details.) To RSVP, or if you need a reasonable accommodation contact Jim @ NILP at 978-687-4288 voice/TTY, or <jljons@nilp.org> prior to May 9, 2008
- May 17 **Companionship Training: being present to another in the midst of struggle or suffering** – is the topic of a presentation by the Rev. Craig Rennebohm, founder of Mental Health Chaplaincy in Seattle. This seminar will be at Eliot Church in Newton, 474 Centre Street from 10 am –1 pm. Participants will learn basic practices of companionship: good listening, sharing the journey side by side, how to honor their own limits and support a person in building a circle of care. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. There is no registration fee; donations will be accepted. For more information or directions contact Joan Murray at <murray.joanb@comcast.net> or go to <www.eliotchurch.org/directions.htm>.
- May 20 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) monthly meeting** on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1- 3p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
- May 28 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1–3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice, or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or request Interpreters. Security measures require proper identification for access to meetings.
- May 31 **NAMI Walk – Boston 2008** –Raise awareness about mental illness by participating in this 3 mile walk sponsored by Cambridge-Middlesex Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Become a corporate sponsor, team captain, or to donate on behalf of a walker. The walk begins at Artisan Park, Brighton next to the Charles River. Check-in time is 9 am, start time is 11 am. For more information contact Karen Gromis, at <kgromis@nami.org>, 781-938-4048 or Karen McGravey-Gajera at <kajera@nami.org>, 781-938-4048.
-

- May 31 **Labeled Disabled film Premiere and panel discussion at Watertown Public Library**, 2 pm – This documentary by Maggie Doben addresses the need for disability awareness curriculum that challenges biases about disability and demonstrates that these stereotypes are not reality. Watch what actually happens in the classroom as children discuss and challenge prejudice. This screening is free and open to the public, but seating is limited; RSVP to <info@labeleddisabledfilm.com> to reserve seats. ASL interpreters have been requested; for other accommodations, submit your request by May 15 when you RSVP. The program will be in the Watertown Savings Bank Room of the Library at 30 Common Street in Watertown, 617-972-6431. Partial funding provided by Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities; sponsored by Cambridge Friends School, Watertown Comm. for People with Disabilities, and Harvard University Disability Services.
- May 31- June 21 **ACCESS ARTS: Visual Arts** is part of the inclusive arts education program for youth, ages 13-22, with and without disabilities, sponsored by Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD), Until Tomorrow Productions, VSA arts of Massachusetts and the Boston Center for the Arts. Sessions meet Saturday afternoons, 1- 4 pm. You can sign up for individual or multiple sessions; each one is \$30. For more information or to register, contact PYD at 617-556-04075, ext. 20 voice or 617-314-2989 TTY. PYD is located at 95 Berkeley Street, #109 in Boston. See July 7 for information on the **Summer Institute**.
- June 2 **Seminar for Job Developers with keynote address by Dr. Stephen Shore**, author of *Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Asperger Syndrome*. Other sessions focus on the employer as customer and cutting edge approaches with assistive technology. Hosted by Jewish Vocational Services at Royal Sonesta Hotel in Boston, 10:45 am – 5 pm. Registration fee is \$100; contact Karen Rosen at 215-854-0233 for details.
- June 9 **Tunefoolery: A Project about Music, Empowerment and Supportive Recovery from Mental Illness** – Join an ensemble, book a gig, learn more about the program and how you can be involved with Tunefoolery Concert Ensembles, a group of 50 musicians affected by mental illness that perform for all kinds of occasions, give music lessons, offer workshops and have a retreat each summer along with educating people about mental illness. Presentation at 12 noon at the Cambridge Social Club, 11 Essex Street in Cambridge. Contact Jens Rybo at 617-276-5964 or <jrybo@tunefoolery.org> so they will know how many plan to attend.
- June 10 **Boston Voice Users** meets 7:30- 9:30 p.m. at MIT. For details, see May 13.
- June 12 **Empowerment through Employment, Advocacy and Action, MRC Annual Consumer Conference** will be at Northeastern University, Curry Student Center in Boston, 8 am to 6:30 pm. The conference is Free, but the DEADLINE to register and request reasonable accommodation is May 15. For more information, contact the Consumer Involvement office at Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, 617-204-3665 voice, 617-204-3868 TTY or consumer.involvement@mrc.ma.us.
- June 12 – Sept. 25 **Accessible Kayaking at Hopkinton State Park on Thursdays**, 10 am to 4 pm – is sponsored by Outdoor Recreation of Hopkinton and the Universal Access Program of the state Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Explore a gentle lake with support as needed; \$5 fee/person covers adaptive equipment, instruction and assistance. Pre-register by calling Outdoor Recreation of Hopkinton at 508-435-3965 or contact Gigi Ranno at <gigi.renno@state.ma.us>. Limited scholarships are available.
- June 12 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)** monthly meeting – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- June 13 **Emergency Preparedness Training for People with Disabilities** -- 1:30 to 4 pm at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center. Make sure you get the assistance you need; learn about resources and procedures within your community and steps you can personally take to be ready for emergencies. It could be an ice storm that cuts off electricity for several days, an industrial explosion that forces evacuation of people from nearby homes, or a truck accident that releases toxic chemicals into the air and water supply. What would you do if you

were in one of these emergency situations? Individuals with disabilities will receive a FREE “**emergency go pack**” (backpack) that contains freeze-dried food rations, water bottle and other essential items. This training is sponsored by the Mass. Office on Disability and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and hosted by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Senior Center is at 806 Massachusetts Avenue across from the City Hall in Cambridge. It is one long block from the MBTA Central Square stop on the Red Line. **RSVP** to Jeffrey Dougan at the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), 800-322-2020 ext. 27316 or go to <www.mass.gov/mod>. Contact MOD two weeks in advance for accommodations.

June 16 – August 31 **Accessible Sailing on the Charles River**, everyday all summer! – weekdays 3-5 pm, Weekends 10 am-2pm. Sponsored by the Universal Access Program of the Dept. of Conservation & Recreation and Community Boating. Call 617-523-1038, x23 to pre-register; fee is \$1 per person.

June 17 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) monthly meeting** 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1..

June 18-22 **Society for Disability Studies 21st Annual Conference** – Held this year for the first time in New York City. That means that with the 4 ½ hour express bus service between Boston and NYC this international meeting is within fairly easy reach of many New England disability scholars. The Society for Disability Studies (SDS) is a scholarly organization dedicated to promoting disability studies as an academic discipline. Sessions will cover a diversity of topics on the intersection of disability and the media, music, literature, architecture, history, medical education, teaching, and social policies. The conference will be at Baruch College at 24th Street and Lexington Avenue. For more information go to <www.disstudies.org/conference/2008/general>.

June 19 **Autism Support Group in Cambridge** – meets 3rd Thursday of month. See May 15 for details.

June 24 **Accessible Hiking Program at Walden Pond State Reservation in Concord** -

June 25 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1–3:30 p.m. See May 28 listing for details.

June 28 & July 12 **Kayaking on regional lakes and rivers** – Learn new skills in a two-person kayak adapted to meet your needs. Fee of \$55 includes equipment, individualized instruction, snacks and transportation between departure and activity site. Sponsored by Outdoor Explorations (OE) whose innovative and cooperative approach to adventure helps make the outdoors a welcoming place for people with disabilities. For more information or to register, contact OE at 781-395-4999 or <info@outdoorex.org>.

July 7 – 25 **Access to the Arts Summer Institute** is part of the inclusive arts education program for youth, ages 13-22, with and without disabilities, sponsored by Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD). Sessions meet Monday – Friday, 9 am – 3 pm for three weeks. Fee is \$300 with some scholarships available. Participants work with professional artists and have opportunity to create original productions. For more information or to register, contact Deep Chinappa at PYD at 617-556-4075, ext. 20 voice or 617-314-2989 TTY. For other details about PYD or Access to the Arts, see listing for May 31 or <www.pyd.org>.

July 10 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

Cambridge City Council

E. Denise Simmons, *Mayor*

Brian Murphy, *Vice-Mayor*

Henrietta Davis

Marjorie C. Decker

Craig A. Kelley

David P. Maher

Kenneth E. Reeves

Sam Seidel

Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.

City Administration

Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*

Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*

Ellen Semonoff, *Assistant City Manager, Human Service Programs*

Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Michael Muehe, *Executive Director*

Carolyn Thompson, *Disability Project Coordinator*

Laura Brelsford, *Chair*

Kate Patton, *Secretary*

Larry Braman

Maureen Coyne

Susan Ellis Holland

Eileen Keegan

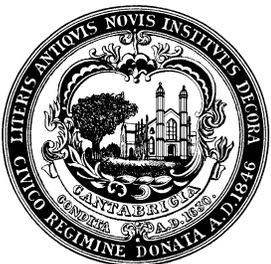
David Krebs

Owen O’Riordan

Rachel Tanenhaus

Donald Summerfield

Dave Wood



AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
part of the Department of Human Service Programs,

51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

If you would rather receive your copy of *ACCESSLetter* electronically, please provide us with your name and e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or cthompson@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

51 Inman Street, second floor
Cambridge, MA 02139