

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Residents of Neville Place Enjoy New Community Garden

The new community garden adjacent to Neville Place at 650 Concord Avenue is a showcase of accessibility and productivity! Flowers are popular, but many of the gardeners have put in a variety of vegetables. It is all very colorful. The garden plots are just a short walk on a level, stable path from this assisted living facility.



Neville Place community gardeners (from left): Sheila Dillon, Sue Yee, Agnes Dillon, Ann Peipol, Joann Peipol, and Vibeke Simonsen

This community garden has thirty-eight ground plots and six raised beds -- just the right height for someone who uses a walker and cannot easily bend down to work the ground. The whole area is surrounded by a sturdy fence that will keep out rabbits, dogs or stray soccer balls. Water and compost bins are nearby as well as benches for taking a rest.

Twelve of the plots are reserved for these seniors and their families. The rest are available to any Cambridge resident. Sue Bowdridge, Social Program Director at Neville Place, said the community garden has stimulated wonderful intergenerational cooperation.

(More on Community Gardens, page 2)

Labeled Disabled Documentary Film Review

Carol Bellamy, former director of the Peace Corps and former executive director of UNICEF, once stated, "Here once again education is crucial, it enables children to be become more aware of their rights and to exercise them in a respectful manner which helps them shape their own future."

Bellamy's statement captures the essential spirit of *Labeled Disabled*, a powerful new documentary film by Maggie Doben, which explores teaching disability awareness to children.

Through interviews with children, parents, teachers, and disability advocates, *Labeled Disabled* beautifully describes the transformation children undergo from being uninformed to fully informed about the disability experience.



"When children don't get answers to their questions, they make up their own answers," Doben says early in the film. Doben shows how children often have a tendency to fabricate information about disability to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. The most compelling (and often the most amusing) sequences in the film are the statements of the children.

(More on *Labeled Disabled* Film, page 2)

Community Gardens (cont'd)

Agnes Dillon is enjoying one of the garden beds with help from her daughter, Sheila Dillon and three grandchildren. They chose a ground plot because it was easier for the children to reach the plants.

Sue Yee, who uses a walker, is in the garden everyday, either working her raised bed or helping



Sue Yee enjoys her raised garden bed

flowers. Ann Piepol and her daughter Joanne are anxiously waiting to get started with a space.

Located in the Northeast sector of Fresh Pond Reservation, this community garden is part of an effort to open the area – named the William G. Maher Park – to more active use by the community. Besides the garden plots, there is a new youth soccer field and parking lot. There are asphalt paths that are easy for anyone using a wheelchair, scooter or walker to navigate and numerous benches where one can relax, enjoy the breeze and appreciate the scenery.

The Parkway Community Garden, bordering Fresh Pond Parkway between Concord and Huron, is also up for some renovations that will probably include some raised accessible beds.

For more information about this or other community gardens, contact Jennifer Wright at the Cambridge Conservation Commission, 617-349-4680 or <jwright@CambridgeMA.gov>. The Commission coordinates fourteen community gardens which serve more than 400 Cambridge households each year.

Labeled Disabled Film (cont'd)

“A handicap is like a little tiny parking lot for people who are in wheelchairs,” says one child in the beginning of the film, before any disability awareness education.

Many people with disabilities, including members of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, attended the premiere screening of this 48-minute documentary on May 31 in the Watertown Public Library. One CCPD member, Donald Summerfield, who was also a subject in the film, remarked, “Maggie Doben is making magic in her classroom, and in this very timely film, she is breaking down the stereotypes people often have [about disability].”

Doben, who is also a first grade teacher at the Cambridge Friends School, organized the premiere screening. It was a lively event with over 200 people in attendance - teachers, parents, kids from her classes, and the general public - and included a panel discussion with most of the individuals with disabilities who were in the film. Doben is hopeful that her film will help to change the world by changing minds: “Upon seeing this film, viewers will be inspired to rethink and deepen their own knowledge and understanding of disability.”

For more than a decade Doben has been teaching her first graders how to deconstruct and understand stereotypes, including stereotypes about people who live with disabilities. The film could be used in a variety of ways, but the primary message is to show parents, educators, and community leaders how important it is to include this kind of disability awareness learning in the elementary school curriculum. The film demonstrates the power of anti-bias education and the concept that knowledge is best acquired through concrete experience. Every school board, education committee, and diversity issues course student should see this film.

Labeled Disabled offers a glimpse of the everyday lives of local disability community members. Jaimi Laird, a deafblind woman who is a spokesperson for Perkins School for the Blind, answers the questions of first-grade students who wonder how she learned sign

language — and then she shows them by signing into their hands. Keith Jones, a well-known hip-hop artist who is living with cerebral palsy, playfully shows students how he draws and writes with his feet. Jones also talks about his family—a wife and child. Dr. Jennifer Arnold, a neonatal physician who is a little person, talks about how she loves using one of the



Labeled Disabled director Maggie Doben (right) and Dr. Jennifer Arnold

child-friendly bathrooms in the hospital because of the “little toilet, little sink, little soap,” explaining that it’s “the only time I can ever see myself in a mirror in a bathroom!”

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities provided some of the film’s funding, including a grant for closed captioning. An additional screening is scheduled for September 24, 2008 at the Cambridge Friends School.

For more information, or to purchase a copy of the DVD, visit <www.labeleddisabledfilm.com>.

ADA Changes Pending

As the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) nears its 18th anniversary in July, two parallel initiatives in Washington, D.C. would result in a major revamping of this landmark civil rights legislation.



First, a bill in Congress, called the ADA Restoration Act, which has been languishing for several years,

now appears to be on a faster track. Legislators and representatives of business groups began meeting a few months ago to work out compromise legislation to rebuild some civil rights protections that have been eroded by negative decisions issued from the U.S. Supreme Court over the past decade and a half.

For example, the High Court has ruled in some cases that an individual was too disabled to work, but not disabled enough to qualify for protection from discrimination under the ADA. Advocates for people with disabilities argue that these court decisions have greatly limited the ADA’s scope, well below what Congress originally intended.

Currently, the ADA defines a person with a disability as one of the following: 1) Someone with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, 2) Someone who has a history or record of such an impairment, or 3) Someone who is regarded by others as having such an impairment.

But the Supreme Court has ruled that the mitigating effects of medications, and adaptations such as prosthetic limbs, should be taken into account in determining whether an individual is truly disabled. The ADA Restoration Act would make it clear that civil rights protections should not be stripped away from people who have successfully adapted to their disabilities through the use of such devices or medications.

The second major development in the ADA arena has been the issuance by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) of proposed regulations describing specific new steps businesses and state and local governments must take to avoid discriminating against people with disabilities.

Recognizing that the U.S. has growing numbers of aging baby boomers and war veterans with disabilities, the new DOJ rules will impact how more than 7 million businesses, as well as thousands of state and local government entities, build and renovate their facilities.

(More on ADA Changes Pending, page 4)

ADA Changes Pending (cont'd)

Under these new ADA regulations, more detailed accessibility standards would be set for courtrooms, playgrounds, stadiums, movie theaters, swimming pools, miniature golf courses, and other recreational facilities. The new rules would also limit the definition of "service animal" to exclude primates such as capuchin monkeys, and other animals that are not commonly domesticated. Also included in the regulations are new standards for adaptive technology, such as assistive listening devices.

The ADA, which was passed by both houses of Congress with broad bipartisan support, was signed into law on July 26, 1990. Disability rights advocates are hopeful that the ADA Restoration Act will reach President Bush's desk for signing by the 18th anniversary of the ADA. DOJ is soliciting comments on their new regulations until August 18, 2008, but the new regulations are not likely to go into effect until this fall at the earliest.

Michael Muehe – One of City's Outstanding Employees in 2008

Each spring the City of Cambridge solicits nominations and selects 8-10 employees to receive Outstanding City Employee Awards. The Cambridge

Commission for Persons with Disabilities is proud to announce that our Executive Director, Michael Muehe, was one of the City employees to be honored this year. Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Service Programs, was another of the recipients.

In presenting the award, City Manager Robert Healy noted that Michael works skillfully both with people with disabilities and with the city staff to solve problems that are often challenging and complex. Healy said that, "In addition to his expert knowledge, Michael's honesty and forthrightness have made him a consummate problem solver and resource for the City of Cambridge."



Michael Muehe

Laura Brelsford, current Chair of CCPD's volunteer board, commented that "For those of us lucky enough to work with Michael, it comes as no surprise that he has been selected for such an honor. His expertise, thoughtfulness, and (most importantly) sense of humor make him an invaluable mentor, neighbor and friend."

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

July 1 – August 31 **Accessible Sailing on the Charles River**, everyday all summer! – weekdays 3 to 5 p.m., Weekends 10 am to 2 p.m.. 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.

July 1-31 **Riot of Color art exhibit** at the Webster House Gallery from 4 to 6:30 p.m. with live music and refreshments. 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.

July 1 & 3 **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group** at Mass. General Hospital meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7 to 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.

- July 2 **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 its provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, or check website at <www.rsiaction.org>.
- July 2 **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.
- July 2 **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.
- 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 a.m. to 3 p.m. 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 7 – August 4 **Kayaking on Walden Pond State Reservation in Concord** – Experience flat-water kayaking, with adaptations and support as needed, in a safe environment with a lifeguard. Sighted guides and other reasonable accommodations are usually available upon advance request. Every Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. unless cancelled due to low enrollment (less than 3 people registered). Call *All Out Adventures* at 413-527-8980 for more information and to register.
- July 8 **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>.
- July 10 – Sept. 25 **Accessible Kayaking at Hopkinton State Park on Thursdays**, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. – 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 supports 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.
- 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
- July 11 **Green Light, says “GO!”** – What revs you up as an artist and moves you to create? How does art give you permission to be who you are? Artistically creating your own future is the theme of this national juried exhibition for young artists (ages 16-25) with disabilities. **July 11 is the DEADLINE for entries.** Grand prize is \$20,000 and selected art work will be part of an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. beginning in Sept. 2008. Eligible media include paintings and drawings, fine art prints, photography, computer-generated prints, sculpture and time-based media (video/film). Sponsored by VSA arts and Volkswagen of America, Inc. For more information go to <www.vsarts.org/VWcall>.
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- July 11 – August 22 **Accessible Kayaking on Spot Pond in the Middlesex Fells, Stoneham** – every Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. – 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>.
- July 11-13 **National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC)** – 36th Annual Convention at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston. The NDSC convention is a place to get the most up-to-date information on every aspect of Down syndrome and enjoy a giant family reunion. Pre-registration deadline was June 16; onsite registration on space available basis for extra \$25. For more information go to <www.ndsccenter.org/news/events.php>, email <Info@ndsccenter.org> or call 1-800-232-NDSC.
- 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 15 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) monthly meeting** on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
- July 17 **Autism Support Group** – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. 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.
- July 23 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 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.
- July 24 **Accessible Hiking Program at Hopkinton State Park** – Explore accessible trails and rugged paths using Terra Trek mountain wheelchairs, push joggers and lots of stops for rest. Assistive equipment and teamwork unite people of all abilities. Bring a lunch and enjoy the activities. Sponsored by *Venture Into Well-being* and *Stavros CIL*. Hikes begin at 11 a.m. Limited transportation is available. Fees: \$2 per person, \$4 for families, \$10 for groups. Call 413-259-0009 to register.
- July 26 **Know Yourself: The Key to a Better Life 2008** – Asperger's Association of New England (AANE) Adult Conference with keynote speaker, Valerie Paradiz, at Bentley College in Waltham, MA. For more information contact Dania Jekel, Executive Director of AANE at <info@aane.org> or 617-393-3824 or go to the website at <www.aane.org>.
- July 30 **Accessible Hiking Program at Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor** – See July 24 listing for details.
- August 6 **Accessible Hiking Program at Wompatuck State Park in Hingham** – See July 24 listing for details.
- August 12 **Boston Voice Users** meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at MIT. For details, see July 8.
- August 19 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) monthly meeting** 1 to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1..
- August 21 **Autism Support Group in Cambridge** – meets 3rd Thursday of month. See May 15 for details.
- August 27 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 p.m. See July 23 listing for details.
- Sept. 11 **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. (Note: no August CCPD meeting.)
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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.

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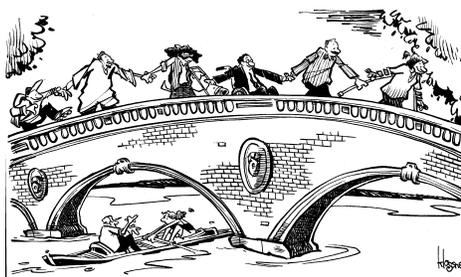
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

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

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